



Guy Barnett MP

LIBERAL MEMBER FOR LYONS

THE PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA - HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

ADJOURNMENT SPEECH – SAME SEX MARRIAGE PLEBISCITE

WEDNESDAY, 16 AUGUST 2017 [6.04pm]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Resources) - Madam Speaker, I stand here this evening, in favour of marriage and to say that it is okay to say no during the upcoming plebiscite.

Mr BACON - Point of order, Madam Speaker. As a matter of courtesy my understanding was that you requested there be no adjournment tonight, but we were told there was one about Vietnam Veterans Day that had to be given.

Madam SPEAKER - No, I said I was not sure what it was about, so please do not take that as gospel. You probably should have come and spoken to me about that. I was only assuming, so I cannot uphold the point of order. There is one adjournment matter on that.

Opposition members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. I am still on my ruling. If people feel they need to make a contribution I will not stop them, as I said in my email.

Mr BARNETT - As I was saying, I stand here this evening in favour of marriage and to say that it is okay to say no during the upcoming plebiscite. Many ordinary Tasmanians who have long supported marriage between a man and woman, or have legitimate questions about the strident campaign for same-sex marriage, feel uncomfortable and unwilling to express their view. These fair minded, caring Tasmanians have been brow beaten and subjected to ridicule, harassment and even abuse from pro-same-sex marriage activists. These are the same activists that publicly preach tolerance but by their behaviour are intolerant to others who hold a different view.

I agree with former prime minister, John Howard, who said last week,

'There is nothing homophobic about supporting traditional marriage.'

It is not homophobic to believe in an institution that has been the foundation of every society, across cultures and across religions for millennia. Marriage is a bedrock institution. It is an umbrella under which children are nurtured and grow. No institution has yet been found that better meets the needs of a child than marriage. It is not bigoted to believe that every child entering the world has the right to both a mother and a father. Same-sex marriage denies a child that right.

Why would those seeking change be so strident and demanding in their attempts to redefine this institution? Why are they so opposed to Australians having their say? Remember, it was only 2004, 13

years ago, that both the coalition and Labor Party unanimously supported federal legislation, confirming man-woman marriage. Why does Labor now ban its members from holding the same view, unanimously supported in 2004? Based on my own experience in public life, it can only be because there is another agenda at play. The onus is thus on those arguing for change to come clean and tell the whole story.

Experience overseas tells us same-sex marriage is only the beginning. It is the beginning of the erosion of parental rights, the sexualisation of our kids, and the loss of our freedom to speak and act in accordance with our conscience. If you thought safe schools was bad, you 'ain't seen nothing yet'. There are many more real life examples than I have time to discuss this evening.

In summary, in the countries where same-sex marriage has been legalised, individuals have been fined, fired, denied business and employment, forced to resign and even prosecuted for not agreeing with the new definition of marriage. There is no reason to think Tasmanians will not face the same threats should same-sex marriage become law.

We have already seen the chilling effect of the gay lobby's campaign on free speech and freedom of conscience. Locally, Archbishop Julian Porteous was hauled before the Anti-Discrimination Commission and subject to possible penalty for distributing a booklet in churches and Catholic schools stating the church's teaching on marriage. This is exactly why this Government is attempting to bring sensible balance through our amendment to the Anti-Discrimination Act. Until then, Tasmania is the only state in Australia that cannot have free speech or real debate on that issue.

In another case earlier this year, Mark Allaby, a senior executive of PriceWaterhouseCoopers, was forced to resign from a voluntary role with the Christian organisation because of his personal views on marriage. More recently, Tasmania pastor, Campbell Markham, has also been targeted for writing a blog in 2011 in support of his views on marriage. Hotels taking bookings for pro-marriage groups have been boycotted or subject to ferocious hate call campaigns, bakeries boycotted, businesses bullied into silence - look at the Coopers Brewery example - and offices vandalised. If this is what we are facing today, when man-woman marriage is the law of the land, what could we expect if same-sex marriage is legalised?

The other side has given no assurances that our fundamental freedoms will be protected. Labor's Bill Shorten has already pledged to oppose any attempt to allow people who believe in man-woman marriages to live according to their conscience. This anti-freedom view is pushed by the gay lobby, the self-declared proponents of tolerance, who have become the advocates of intolerance.

If these protections are not legislated, ordinary Tasmanians in Christian or faith based schools, hospitals and welfare agencies may be forced to act against their conscience. Remember that more than half our welfare services are operated by such organisations.

The very recent establishment of the Coalition for Marriage Australia is very welcome. It is possible that the browbeaten and ridiculed will stand up and say, no, giving voice to a silent majority. It is disappointing that aspects of the debate to date have not been respectful or compassionate. As a Christian who is flawed and who makes mistakes, including during question time today, I believe it is important to treat all people with respect and compassion.