

AN OPEN LETTER FROM Arc@UNSW

We, the undersigned, representing an institution from Australia's higher education sector and Australia's not-for-profit sector, write to express our support for Marriage Equality.

Australian universities and Australian student organisations have an important role to play in promoting inclusion and tolerance. We support diversity in the higher education sector and recognise the rights of our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) students and employees to learn, live and work, free of prejudice and discrimination, with all the essential freedoms enjoyed by other members of our university community and the broader population.

We believe the rights and liberties of all individual are sacrosanct. They are essential in the creation of a healthy, harmonious and open society. An equitable society, free of discrimination, allows all members to function at their best. Legalised discrimination in one area allows discrimination to flourish in all areas.

Australia is a robust democracy with a proud history of social reform. We believe this should continue, with all citizens being treated equally, including those who are currently excluded from the institution of marriage.

Globally, over twenty countries have passed laws to allow same sex marriage, including countries that are culturally similar to ours like New Zealand, the United States of America, Canada, and Great Britain. These countries did so with lower support for marriage equality than Australia is seeing right now.

On 22 May 2015, the Republic of Ireland held a referendum to sanction same sex marriage. A Yes vote was supported by the Government, all major political parties and the voters themselves. On 26 June 2015, the U.S. Supreme court returned a judgement in favour of legalising same sex marriage across all 50 states. These two events see Australia isolated amongst countries with English as a first language.

Learning and academic achievement flourish when all members of the university community have their dignity and equality recognised. Universities are also international communities who draw upon global talent. A lack of recognition of same-sex marriage will impact on the abilities of universities to attract this talent and to be competitive and productive in the international market. Equal Marriage is the only truly fair way forward and it is important for creating a climate where knowledge, achievement and intellectual output can flourish.

As a student organisation within the higher education environment we understand that multiple viewpoints may exist on this issue, and whilst we strongly support marriage equality, there may be Arc-affiliated organisations who oppose this view. We respect and acknowledge their democratic right to disagree and encourage them to express their views in a respectful fashion.

Equality in places of higher learning is fair and just. Discrimination is not. Arc@UNSW is committed to putting the wellbeing and happiness of our students first to continue to cultivate an inclusive learning space for everyone.

Yours faithfully,

Brad Hanagan

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