

Marriage Equality and Health

Despite the voluntary nature of the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey, 12,727,920 (79.5%) eligible Australians voted, and by a margin of 61.6% to 38.4%, Australians have said 'yes' to the proposition: *Should the law be changed to allow same-sex couples to marry?*

LGBTIQ* persons are a minority population group that suffer poorer health outcomes than the general population. This can be attributed to minority stress, where LGBTIQ persons struggle for validation and societal acceptance.

Stigma and institutional discrimination targeting LGBTIQ persons exacerbate minority stress. Numerous historical examples are well documented with the most recent example of institutional discrimination being the exclusion of same-sex couples from civil marriage.

In 2004, the Australian Government excluded same-sex couples from the institution of civil marriage by introducing an amendment to the *Marriage Act 1961* to define marriage as 'the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life'.

In July 2007, the Australian Government removed discrimination against same-sex couples and their children across a range of other legislation and policy settings, which included giving same-sex couples de facto relationship status.

Currently, LGBTIQ Australians do not enjoy equal treatment under Australian law. Some jurisdictions offer civil unions, which are not widely understood, respected or given equal weight to marriage.

Marriage equality would confer societal acceptance and would provide significant health benefits to LGBTIQ Australians. The ability to choose to marry a consenting partner is a basic human right.

There is no scientific basis for the assertion that LGBTIQ persons are not fit to marry. Studies, such as the 2016 evidence review from the Centre for Social Research in Health, show that the introduction of marriage equality results in greater feelings of social inclusion along with better health outcomes for LGBTIQ persons.

AHHA POSITION:

- ✧ The Australian people have spoken, and the Australian Government must act immediately to legislate marriage equality
- ✧ Regardless of sexual orientation, any adult and their consenting adult partner should have their relationship recognised under the *Marriage Act 1961*
- ✧ The definition of marriage can be simply changed by removing the words 'a man and a woman' and replacing them with 'two people'
- ✧ While legislation should balance equal access to marriage while protecting religious freedom in relation to marriage, any attempt to rollback anti-discrimination measures are reprehensible and not acceptable
- ✧ Marriage equality reduces discrimination and marginalisation of LGBTIQ persons, improves equity and enhances the health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ persons, their children, their family, their friends and the broader Australian community
- ✧ Bringing an end to the negative impacts of marriage inequality is an important step towards greater wellbeing for all Australians
- ✧ The Australian Government should pursue policies and actions that promote the acceptance and the celebration of healthy, safe and respectful relationships, which includes marriage equality

* Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer