



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Main Committee**

**CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS**

**Same-Sex Relationships**

**SPEECH**

**Wednesday, 24 August 2011**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Wednesday, 24 August 2011  
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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Morrison, Scott, MP

**Source** House  
**Proof** No  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Mr MORRISON** (Cook) (11:57): While I need no reminder from the member for Melbourne about the need to consult my constituents, I am happy to report on what is important to my constituents. I regularly consult them on all issues and prior to the last election I conducted an electorate-wide survey that received more than 2,000 responses. Eighty-four per cent felt the government's border security controls were too soft; 79 per cent were concerned about the level of care available for senior Australians; 63 per cent were concerned about the size of the government's debt; 62 per cent were concerned with traffic and the condition of local roads; 59 per cent were opposed to the government's changes to the private health insurance rebate; only 17 per cent believed there should be a carbon tax to tackle climate change, while 88 per cent believed it would increase electricity prices. The issue before us today did not feature.

Today in my electorate my constituents are concerned about the future of more than 5,500 small businesses who employ between one and 20 people, more than 400 manufacturing businesses and the future of Qantas and Caltex, which each face a difficult future under this government's policies, in particular their carbon tax and increased regulation. My constituents are concerned about the incompetence of this government, their mismanagement of the economy, the rising debt and their addiction to taxes and spending. They are concerned about the bungling of everything they touch, whether it is border protection, pink batts or school halls. They are frustrated that this incompetent government has been placed and kept in power by the Greens in return for pursuing their own agendas.

While the member for Melbourne is out consulting, perhaps he would like to listen to the millions of Australians who are opposed to his carbon tax and his party's alliance with the government or perhaps he thinks, like his leader, they are just whingers or, like the minister for transport, they are of no consequence. It strikes me that the member for Melbourne has some selective hearing.

Since entering the parliament and before I have held a very clear, consistent and public view supporting the current definition of marriage as a voluntary union for life of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others. I maintain this view and issued a statement to my electorate on 19 November last year to initiate feedback from my constituents. In my statements I have always consistently supported the view that no Australian should have to pay a dollar more in tax or receive a dollar less in benefits or superannuation because of their sexual preference. During the last parliament laws were passed to give effect to this objective with the support of both major parties.

The fundamental reason for my position was well summarised by former Prime Minister John Howard, who stated when legislating the current definition:

Marriage, as we understand it in our society, is about children ... I think if the same status is given in our society to gay unions as are given to traditional marriage we will weaken that bedrock institution ...

For me this is fundamentally about a child's natural right to a mother and a father. I believe that this right should be protected in all Commonwealth laws, especially the Marriage Act. I am extremely disappointed by the decision of the New South Wales parliament to legalise same-sex adoption. However, I do not consider that this error should be compounded by the federal parliament.

Religions and cultures over centuries have held that family is ultimately based on the union of a man and a woman. I do not believe that the tested wisdom of centuries has been overwhelmed by more contemporary arguments. I acknowledge that in today's society too many heterosexual marriages fail. Family breakdown is the primary cause of poverty, disadvantage, mental illness and related conditions in our society today. The biggest victims of marriage failure and family breakdown are children. The social and economic costs of family breakdown are incalculable. This is a genuine national tragedy, not an argument for same-sex marriage. Legal recognition of same-sex unions does not, and should not, require the redefinition of marriage.

Marriage, as I have said, is a union between a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others for life. Legal recognition of a same-sex union should be termed something else. I have no objection to some other form of legal recognition of such relationships in the form of a type of civil union provided such unions do not provide any automatic access to adoption. I appreciate there are many in the community who hold a different view to those I have expressed in this place. Of those who contacted me by mail, petition and email who I was able to identify in my electorate, more than 850 were against changes to the Marriage Act, while over 50 were in favour. I do not seek to represent this as a representative poll—my position will not be determined by such polls—but it would appear that of those who feel strongly about this issue a majority were in favour of retaining the current definition rather than changing it.

As we look at this issue, though, I think we need to be mindful of what the real threats to marriage are in the context of this debate, and I believe that such threats are posed more from within than from without. This debate should remind us that anniversaries in marriage are earned, not arrived at, and we should all work on the sanctity of marriage. *(Time expired)*