



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Federation Chamber**

**BILLS**

**Marriage Legislation Amendment Bill 2015**

**Second Reading**

**SPEECH**

**Monday, 12 October 2015**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Bandt, Adam, MP

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

**Mr BANDT** (Melbourne) (13:25): I rise today to speak on this important and historic cross-party bill, the Marriage Legislation Amendment Bill 2015, which will remove discrimination from our marriage laws and achieve marriage equality in this country. I am proud to join the six other MPs to cosponsor this very important bill.

I say to the honourable member for Leichhardt, Warren Entsch, who has moved this bill: for years, you have been a champion for equality in this place. You have gone up against the hard-right and oftentimes homophobic wing of your party to fight for what is right. You faced up to the former Prime Minister and you forced his hand to accept that his views were not fit for our modern Australia and that we will achieve marriage equality in this country. For your courage and your work, I thank you, and I know that millions of Australia across this country thank you too. And, to all the cosponsors on this bill: it has been a pleasure to work with you across the political spectrum and to achieve this important reform.

But our work is not done. We must redouble our efforts because, on this fundamental issue of equality, Australia is lagging behind the rest of the world. We are now the only developed English-speaking country to not have equal marriage laws. Our laws continue to send the message to people who are same-sex attracted and in same-sex couples that their love is not equal and that they are not equal. Our homophobic marriage laws are part of a system that for years has told young people who are understanding their sexuality and identity: 'If you're not straight, you're not equal. You're different or you're wrong.' They have been part of a system that has allowed the tragedy of young people who are same-sex attracted or gender diverse committing suicide at rates many times greater than their heterosexual peers. But that is not what most people in Australia think and it is not what most people in this parliament think. This bill is a chance to take another important step away from this discrimination and pain of the past, and into creating a world where all people know and feel that they are equal regardless of who they love. It is a chance to say that love is love, that love knows no gender and that love is beautiful and equal.

As a country we are faced with the perverse situation now where the leaders of the three largest political parties all support marriage equality, yet this parliament is prevented from making marriage equality a reality. The Greens, as a whole, stand ready to support this bill, but the old parties' political factions stand in the way. The Greens have long stood for the rights of same-sex attracted and gender diverse people and couples. I am proud to have introduced the first ever bill to achieve marriage equality into the House of Representatives in 2012. As a party, Australians know they can trust us to vote for equality—every MP, every vote, every time. But the other parties are forcing delays, and loving couples across the country are having to wait. The deals of the Leader of the Opposition, Bill Shorten, with Labor factions mean Labor MPs, unlike virtually any other decision of their party, are not bound to support the bill. Our new Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, says he supports marriage equality, but because of the deals that he made to become Prime Minister he is continuing with Tony Abbott's policy of delay by insisting it be taken to a plebiscite after the next election.

But Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull's pandering to the conservative rump of his party is not good enough. His shotgun wedding with the right wing of the Liberal party cannot be allowed to stand in the way of equality. Australians are ready for equality. They have been ready for years. And there are loving couples who are now running out of time, who can no longer be forced to wait to celebrate their love and their relationship with their loved ones and to have their love recognised as equal under our laws. The Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, should have the courage of his convictions and allow this bill to proceed. He should stand up to the bigots in his party and let this parliament do what the country wants and vote for equal love.

This is a chance for Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull to prove that he is not just Tony Abbott in a better suit. This is a chance for the Prime Minister to show us that he is better, not just slicker. And in the end it is not what we say; it is what we do that matters. So, I call on Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull: let us go-ahead and vote on and pass this bill, because the numbers are there. Or if they are not there yet they will be there, when every member of every political party knows that they have the right to vote in the way that their constituency wants them to and

that the Australian people want them to. Let us use this parliament for what is meant for. Let us take a stand for equality and do something that matters to so many Australians. Let us open up our arms and our hearts for love.