



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Marriage

SPEECH

Thursday, 20 August 2015

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Page 9112
Questioner
Speaker Giles, Andrew, MP

Source House
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Mr GILES (Scullin) (10:06): Tolstoy famously wrote that all happy families are alike, and I like to think, in saying this, he did not mean that all happy families were in any particular form; rather, that they were loving families, particularly in respect of the children in those families. Certainly, that is what I believe, and I believe this has been a key part of the journey in the communities that I represent and in this place in the debate around marriage equality since 2004. This has been at its best, in the community and in the parliament, a journey of understanding—people seeking to understand one another, respecting all people—but not always, with views that are hurtful to people. In this regard I think of some recent commentary in the media and by members of parliament around the alleged impact of marriage equality on children. Firstly, it is very clear this is a red herring; marriage is not a prerequisite to having children. Secondly, it is simply disrespectful to these loving, happy families.

Yesterday I was privileged to hear directly from some adult children of same-sex parents, and I would like to acknowledge Kate Burns, Raj Wakeling, Pru Bonnen, and Brenner and Andy, who shared their stories with me of growing up—stories distinguished by different generations, different communities, but showing a need to build understanding across the wider community that their families are just as deserving of respect as any other family. I also was privileged to meet with Maya Newell and Charlotte Mars, who are the producer and director of the film *Gayby Baby*, which is being released shortly. I understand a screening was organised by the Parliamentary Friendship Group for LGBTI Australians, and I acknowledge the work of the member for Leichhardt, the member for Moreton and Senator Janet Rice in facilitating that screening and the conversation I took part in yesterday.

In respect of the contributions of Kate, Raj, Pru, Brenner and Andy, I would like to say this: it is one thing for someone to support a matter of principle, another to directly understand how such a principle directly impacts on people's lives. These people told powerful stories about the need to have equality in marriage and equality more broadly, about the need to recognise that what unites happy families is love, not the form of the family. I would like to send a message to them and all other children of same-sex families that I will stand up in this place and in my community for them to be treated with respect and equally.