



17 August 2017

The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister,

The Religious Society of Friends, commonly known as Quakers, supports the right of adult couples in loving and committed relationships to marry, regardless of gender. We also support the right of such couples to have their marriages accorded equal recognition and respect under the law of Australia.

Our faith prompts us to recognise the divine in all people. It is a basic Quaker principle that all people are equal in the Spirit.

As part of the journey to live our faith, we have worked to support the equal treatment of all persons regardless of sex, race or religion. The way has been hard at times, and we recognise that true equality will always remain a direction to be travelled rather than a destination to be reached.

In 2010 Australian Quakers came together and agreed to celebrate marriages within our Meetings regardless of the sexual orientation or gender of the partners. Quakers have long held that marriage "is the Lord's work and we are but witnesses". The question before us was simply whether to open our hearts to these marriages that already existed among us.

The law currently prevents Quakers from facilitating the same legal recognition for same-sex marriages that we do for other marriages. This legal prohibition is fundamentally inconsistent with Quaker faith and practice. True religious freedom would encompass the freedom to include, celebrate and recognise the commitments of LGBTIQ couples, as both spiritual *and* legal marriages.

Australia Yearly Meeting

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We recognise that everyone will be at a different point in the journey. Some have purported to speak on behalf of all Christians in opposing marriage equality. Such people do not speak for us. We invite them to continue to follow their path with integrity, while asking that they recognise that their way is not for all people of faith.

Quakers consider that a majority vote in a voluntary public poll is an inappropriate way to decide the legal rights of minorities who are subject to discrimination. We are also concerned about the impacts on LGBTIQ people, their children and families. But if such a vote is held, we encourage everyone to open their hearts, to choose love over fear, and to support marriage equality in Australia.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J.R. Jordan".

Jo Jordan
Presiding Clerk
Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia

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