



1 September 2016

Dear Members/Senators,

I am writing on behalf of the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ), which is the peak community youth affairs body in Queensland. With over 470 individual and organisational members from across Queensland as well as 25 years of consulting and representing the sector at policy and advocacy level, YANQ is the main voice for issues faced by young people.

YANQ is writing to express its concerns about the proposal for a Same Sex Marriage Plebiscite.

YANQ was engaged by the Metro North Brisbane Medicare Local in 2013 to research the health needs of young people. As part of this research we undertook specific research on the health issues impacting young people who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT).

The research identified that LGBT young people¹:

- are more likely to experience stress as part of the process of sexual and gender identity thereby impacting their mental health;
- experience greater risk of using alcohol and drug use, due to stress of sexual and gender identification;
- are more likely to experience mental health issues such as depression and anxiety;
- **are more likely to suicide than other young people;**
- are more likely to experience bullying, harassment and physical assault. **80% of LGBT young people experience abuse in schools.**

¹ Leonard, William. et al. 2012. Private Lives 2: The second national survey of health and wellbeing of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GBLT) Australians. Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health & Society, La Trobe University.

We ask everyone involved in this decision to consider the impact of a 'No Case' against a plebiscite on Same Sex Marriage on these young people, who are already experiencing considerable harm due to their sexual orientation or gender identification. A decision to create a public debate by organising a plebiscite will significantly increase the stress already experienced by LGBT young people and contribute to worsening the mental health of these young people, leading to greater health costs to the government and loss of productivity due to sick leave.

Leaders of the LGBT have spoken out about the wisdom of this decision. They are not politically motivated in their condemnation of the decision. They speak from learnt knowledge of how it will impact their community.

The Same Sex Marriage Plebiscite is not the way forward for this issue.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Siyavash Doostkhah', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Siyavash Doostkhah
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