



youth affairs network qld

30 June 2015

Dear Senator/MP,

I am writing on behalf of the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland, which is the peak community youth affairs body in Queensland. YANQ is writing to express our concern about your government's decision to hold a plebiscite for Same Sex Marriage.

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 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.**

We ask the government to consider the impact of a 'No Case' against Same Sex Marriage on these young people, who are already experiencing considerable harm due to their sexual orientation. Your 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 of their mental health. This of course will have a financial impact beyond the \$160 million for organising the plebiscite. There will be an increase in health costs 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.

We ask you to reconsider this decision.

Yours sincerely

Siyavash Doostkhah

Director

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.