



We proclaim a crucified Christ

1 Cor 1.23

To the People, Religious and Clergy of the Diocese of Broken Bay

Tuesday 15 August 2017

Dear Friends in Christ,

The Federal Government has announced its intention to hold a national postal survey, seeking the opinion of Australians before it considers changing the legal definition of marriage by an Act of Parliament to include same-sex couples.

Whatever the outcome of this significant development in the life of our country, the Church's understanding of marriage will remain - that marriage is a covenant of love between a man and a woman for life, and open to life. Our teaching is about the nature of marriage itself, not its legal status.

I intend to write in more depth to you about this important issue in early September when the actual question in the national postal survey is known.

At this time in the public debate, however, I wish to make it clear that the provision of any new freedom in law needs to be measured in terms of already existing freedoms, especially those of religious, conscience and speech freedoms. One freedom must not usurp another.

A change in the legal status of marriage may affect what can be said and done in our faith-based organisations, including our schools, hospitals, charities, and social support agencies.

With this in mind, I write to you:

- Firstly, to ask, if eligible, that you are accurately enrolled to vote before 24 August.
- Secondly, to share with you that I will vote 'no' in the postal survey.

I will do so given both my understanding of the nature of the relationship of marriage, and because the proposal for a change is being presented without sufficient provision for the protection of other significant freedoms.

In the public debate that will follow, it is important to understand three principles:

1. That it is never just for a Christian to call into question the full dignity due to each and every person, no matter their sexual orientation.
2. That all families striving for what is good for their members, especially children, ought to receive all the proper protections in law that will aid their flourishing.
3. That it is perfectly legitimate, and not bigoted or intolerant, to publicly support marriage between a man and a woman, as a continuing good for our society.

Our Diocesan website has further links and information for your consideration.

I ask that you actively seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit as you consider in conscience, informed as it is by our Catholic Tradition, how you intend to vote.

Most Rev Peter A Comensoli
Bishop of Broken Bay