

SPEECH

House of Assembly_ SAME SEX MARRIAGE BILL_25th July 2013_Page 6646

SAME SEX MARRIAGE BILL_Debate_25.7.13

Mr BROCK (Frome) (12:24): I congratulate the member for Port Adelaide for bringing the bill to this house to be debated. Firstly, let me say that this is a very important issue, not only for South Australia, but for all of Australia. Whichever way we vote today, and whatever people say in this chamber, I do not think anyone should be victimised or criticised. Everyone should be able to say what they feel and what they represent and share their views without any retaliation from either side.

As the member for Giles has already indicated, I will say that I am not married. I am a widower, and I raised a couple of children when they were younger for a period of time. I am in a relationship now with my partner, Lyn, and we have five children between us and 14 grandchildren. Therefore, I am not married and my partner is not married; she is divorced. We do have a relationship. We do not want to get married, because the fact is that we believe we are having a relationship. We are very civil about the whole thing, and we are still in a loving relationship.

I must congratulate the member for Newland who gave a very eloquent speech about how he considers the Marriage Act and things like that. The other thing I have concern about—and the member for Chaffey mentioned it a minute ago—is that this is a conscience vote, as I understand it, from the government's point of view. That is fine. The opposition has said that it is a party view, and they would have the opportunity, I would assume, within their party room to have their say and things like that.

Is a conscience vote to do with the party itself in the finish, is it to do with the member of that particular electorate, or is it the personal view of the member of parliament, in my case being the member for Frome? Is it my vote that I should be putting here, or as the member for Chaffey indicated a minute ago, should it be for the majority of the constituents of our electorates? We represent people. We should not represent parties in this chamber. We should not represent ourselves as individuals. We represent people and constituents out there. They are the ones who we should be taking into account.

The member for Fisher has indicated that he is going out to his people to get their views. I have already started doing that. The member for Chaffey—I congratulate the member—is also getting the views from his constituents. The people in the electorate of Frome, the ones who have responded—and there have been many, many hundreds—have overwhelmingly advised me, after explaining to me and getting a copy of the proposed bill, to vote against this bill.

The other thing is that I also have many friends who are in same-sex relationships, whether they are two males or two females. Not once have they asked me in my discussions to support this bill. They have a relationship and, as the Premier has also indicated in the 2007 bill, they have equal rights. They are protected in relation to their property values and things like that.

It is interesting that No. 15 on the *Notice Paper* is the Civil Partnerships Bill. That would overcome a lot of the issues in relation to the recognition of same-sex couples, as I understand it. It was an adjourned debate on the second reading on 18 October last year. Here we are dealing with a private members' bill which was introduced afterwards—with all due respect to the member for Port Adelaide and I congratulate her for getting it up there—when we could be dealing with the earlier bill and discussing the same issue about civil relationships, but it has been deferred. It has been buried down in the *Notice Paper*. I am intrigued by that—very intrigued.

I have attended many functions in this house and elsewhere, and I have had meetings with people from the churches, where I have listened to people who are for this and against this. At this stage, I have not been convinced that I need to vote for this particular bill. The thing that I would really like to see is the legal constitutional side.

The member for Giles said, 'Have some gumption and actually do not worry about those sort of things; make a decision', but I, like the member for Chaffey, do not want to make a decision that is not going to be ratified by the commonwealth or is going to be the cause of a High Court challenge. We have seen all those. I, along with the member for Fisher, would rather see the Civil Partnerships Bill (which is No. 15 on the *Notice Paper*) brought on and discussed and to look at what opportunity that offers.

As I said, a lot of my friends are gay, and not once have they asked me to come into this chamber and vote for this. They have said that they are very happy with that relationship. I will not mention this person's name but a close friend of mine, who is married with three children, was going through a stage in his life when he thought he was gay, so he changed, and he had the experience and he experimented, and he went into that line for a while. If this bill was passed, he would have divorced his wife and separated from his children, and he would have then married his male partner at the time, but as the time went on, after six or eight months, his feelings changed.

So I question that, if this bill was in place then, and he had divorced and married his same-sex partner, where would he be then? Divorced again. He has now gone back to his wife and his family, and he is in a happy relationship again. Our emotions and feelings always change. Certainly, at this stage I am not convinced to vote for this bill, and therefore at this particular point I will be voting against it.