

Adoption: “For every child, a mother and a father”

Submission on the review of the *Adoption Act 2009*

To the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee

Dr David van Gend

General Practitioner

President of the *Australian Marriage Forum*

October 3, 2016

Same-sex adoption is being considered under this review of the *Adoption Act 2009*. It is typically presented as a matter of equality for gay adults, while the interests of the child are brushed aside. No lawmaker who takes seriously the fundamental rights of the child can support a proposal for same-sex adoption, as this submission will explain.

The structure of this submission is as follows: I discuss three key points, as below, then attach two reference chapters on (1) the testimony of adults who grew up in same-sex households, (2) the evidence of social science that shows the disadvantages – even harm – that comes, on average, from same-sex parenting.

Key points:

- 1. There are so many childless married couples, and so few children for adoption**
- 2. Preserving the natural context for a child's development**
- 3. Minimising further challenges for a traumatized child**

Reference sections:

- 1. Children speak of the grief and loss of same-sex parenting**
- 2. Social science: the disadvantage – even harm – of same-sex parenting**

Conclusion:

Respect same-sex couples but put the needs of children first

As a GP I know one thing above all: that a mother matters to a child. The relationship between mother and baby is the most profound human bond, and the relationship between an adopting mother and an adopted child is the closest we can come to meeting that need for that child. But that mother-child relationship is broken if a baby is adopted by two men. That child has to live with no mother figure in her life, just to meet the emotional needs of two men for a child of their own, and in my view that is wrongly placing the desires of adults ahead of the child's needs.

Likewise, any boy needs a father's companionship and example to help him become a man; no matter how competent and caring a lesbian partner may be, she cannot be a father figure to a little boy.

Family formation is about something much deeper than civil equality among adults; it is about the rights and needs of a child. We must preserve the natural emotional and developmental context for an adopted child – the relationship with both mother and father - as closely as we can. A child should not be adopted to a same-sex couple because there are always man-woman couples available for the tiny number of adopted babies.

1. There are so many childless married couples, and so few children for adoption

In 2014 only 317 children were adopted in Australia, the lowest number on record. Most of these children (72%) were ‘unknown’ to the adults who adopted them.ⁱ

There are so many infertile married couples – high quality couples, intensively vetted and intensely motivated to do a good job - waiting for the chance to adopt so few babies, ready to give them the closest thing possible to a normal life with a mother and a father, and there are so few babies available for adoption. The queue of childless married couples is years long, and most will never get a chance to adopt. Why, then, would policy makers consider adopting children out to same-sex couples?

Consider the scenario where you have to make the decision to place a child either with a man-woman married couple or a same-sex couple. Everything else being equal – i.e. where the married couple and same-sex couple have identical educational level, economic wellbeing and good character so that the only difference between the couples is that one gives a child both a mother and father figure in her life and the other does not - how can any lawmaker argue that it is *better* for a child to be placed with a single-sex couple, and so be deprived of the experience of a mother relationship or father relationship?

Of course, there are already tragic situations where a child cannot have both a mother and a father, such as the death or desertion of a parent, but that is not something we would ever wish upon a child, and it is not something a government should ever inflict upon a child. But a policy of same-sex adoption *will* inflict that deprivation on a child. We should not allow the situation where government facilitates the deliberate creation of motherless or fatherless families by legalising same-sex adoption.

All Australian states allow adoption by married couples, and until recent years no states allowed adoption by single people or same-sex couples, because that is not considered in the best interests of the child.ⁱⁱ At present, Queensland and South Australia, retain this principled limitation of stranger adoptions to a mother-father model of family. In my view as a family doctor, that is the correct decision: same sex stranger adoption cannot pretend to be in the best interest of a child when there are so many infertile married couples ready and able to give the child the relationship to both a mum and a dad.

2. Preserving the natural context for a child’s development

The natural context of male and female parents is the biological and psychological context within which we have evolved. The father of modern anthropology, Claude Levi-Strauss, notes that throughout recorded history the human family is “based on a union... of two individuals of opposite sexes who establish a household and bear and raise children.” The human family of mother, father and child is not a social invention to be cut to shape according to political whim; it is a timeless biological reality which predates all societies and all laws. That natural context is where the human child needs to be.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognises this truth, describing the nuclear family as “the natural and fundamental group unit of society, deserving of protection by society and the state”. Parliament must respect and protect the natural and fundamental unit of mother, father and child – the natural context for a child’s emotional and identity development - and not foolishly equate it with a household of two men and an adopted child.

Complementarity in the parenting roles of man and woman and diversity in the emotional connections to mother and father matter deeply to the developing child. We should not propose a policy that would deliberately deprive a child of their natural developmental context.

3. Minimising further challenges for a traumatized child

Because children up for adoption have, by definition, been through family trauma, the only responsible thing to do is to give them a new home where the stress levels are minimal. That does not apply if we place them in a same-sex household, for a number of reasons.

1. *The peer-stress of being in an atypical household*

In Australia only one in a thousand children of couple families are raised by same-sex couples, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013. It is a very rare situation, and of course (human nature being what it is) an unusual situation invites the curious eyes of other children.

The French National Assembly's "Mission of Inquiry on the Family and the Rights of Children" in 2006 cited the concern that adopted children already suffer a great deal of insecurity and a deep need to be 'like other kids', and it only adds to their sense of insecurity and difference being placed in a homosexual household. Why put this unnecessary extra challenge in the path of a child who is already emotionally overwrought by family trauma?

The eminent psychiatrist, Pierre Lévy-Soussan, an adviser to the French Ministry of Health, said "It is in the child's best interests to join a nuclear family that is already socially accepted so that he or she does not have to take on the additional task, following a history of abandonment, of adapting to a family that is, for whatever reason, 'non-standard.'"

A similar insight came from Janice Peyré, president of *Enfants et Familles d'Adoption*:

Adolescents or adults who have been adopted ... attest to a private feeling of being different when they grew up—a feeling accompanied by a very deeply experienced desire for normalcy. In their view, having homosexual parents would simply add to the sense of difference and the curiosity that adoption already engenders ... Bringing an adopted child into a society in which he or she will have the same rights and the same place as other children—as the Hague Convention provides—requires that the child be received into pre-existing family structures, already recognized as such, and not serve as an instrument for obtaining recognition of new family structures.

Are children being used as political footballs? Is the push for same-sex adoption best explained as a political means "for obtaining recognition of new family structures", as Ms Peyré said; as a means to obtain legal recognition of homosexual relationships as being identical to that of a married man and woman?

Other relevant considerations for minimising the trauma for adopted children include two established findings: that same-sex couples are less stable than heterosexual married couples, and homosexual people suffer more depression and substance abuse (even in jurisdictions where social stigma is negligible, such as the Netherlands). Statistically speaking, a child placed in a same-sex adoptive household is therefore more likely to be exposed to future family breakdown and parental depression and substance abuse.

2. *Instability:*

Of all couple types, lesbian couples are the most unstable and yet they are being proposed as suitable couples for the adoption of children. For example, a longitudinal population study in Norway and Sweden (including registered same-sex partnerships in Sweden) found that male couples were 1.5 times as likely to break up as married heterosexual couples, and lesbian couples were 2.7 times as likely to break up as married heterosexual couples.ⁱⁱⁱ

3. *Substance abuse & depression:*

Homosexual people are more prone to substance abuse and depression, and yet they are being proposed as suitable environments for the adoption of children. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reports that gay people have close to double the rate of substance abuse, both alcohol and drugs, compared to the heterosexual population and that this is associated with increased depression.^{iv}

In Canada, where gay marriage was legalised in 2005, homosexual lobbyists in 2009 still cited drug and alcohol abuse as much higher amongst gays.^v Likewise, depression rates among gay people remain higher in countries like the Netherlands where there is essentially no social stigma.

Therefore any legislator who votes to place children in same-sex households is deliberately exposing them to a household that is statistically more likely to break up again and that carries a greater likelihood of parental substance abuse and depression.

How is that responsible child-centred family policy? Especially when there are so many childless married couples, with statistically lower risk of breakup or substance abuse / depression, seeking to adopt the very few children that become available each year?

REFERENCE SECTION 1

CHILDREN SPEAK OF THE GRIEF AND LOSS OF SAME-SEX PARENTING

*My father's absence created a huge hole in me, and I ached every day for a dad.
I loved my mom's partner, but another mom could never have replaced the father I lost.*

Heather Barwick.^{vi}

'She can't be a father'

If the central concern with normalising 'same-sex parenting' (such as by a law for same-sex adoption) is that it deprives children of either their mother or father, then the central voice in this debate should be children who can tell us what that deprivation feels like. Such voices have been raised in recent times despite the personal distress of doing so. They have spoken out, as one woman says, because they are sick of reading in the media that genderless parenting is "all the same" from the child's point of view. "But it's not", wrote Heather Barwick, who was raised by a loving lesbian couple:

Same-sex parenting withholds either a mother or father from a child while telling him or her that it doesn't matter. That it's all the same. But it's not. A lot of us, a lot of your kids, are hurting.^{vii}

Brandi Walton was also raised by a lesbian couple and wrote in April 2015,

I yearned for the affection that my friends received from their dads. I wanted to know what it was like to be held and cherished by a man, what it was like to live with one from day to day ... My grandfathers and uncles did the best they could when it came to spending time with me and doing all the daddy-daughter stuff, but it was not the same as having a full-time father, and I knew it. It always felt second-hand. People need to know that some children of gay parents do not agree with gay adoption and marriage, just like some gay people themselves don't agree with it, either! But you will notice that fact is not making headlines.^{viii}

It did make headlines, briefly, in Australia in August 2015 when Katy Faust, as mentioned earlier, spoke with Tony Jones on *Lateline*:

Faust: I recognised that while my mother was a fantastic mother and most of what I do well as a mother myself I do because that's how she parented me, she can't be a father. Her partner, an incredible woman - both of these women have my heart - cannot be a father either. Children have a right to be in relationship with their

mother and father whenever possible, and as a society, we shouldn't normalise a family structure that requires children to lose one or both parents to be in that household. I got into this discussion primarily because what I heard from the gay lobby was that children don't care who's raising them, right? That children are just fine if it's two men or two women. And the reality is that anybody that's talked to a child who has lost a parent, whether through divorce, abandonment, third-party reproduction or death, kids absolutely care. Family structure matters to children.^{ix}

Faust explained this further in an open letter to the US Supreme Court in 2015:

I am not saying that being same-sex attracted makes one incapable of parenting. My mother was an exceptional parent. This is about the *missing* parent. If you ask a child raised by a lesbian couple if they love their two moms, you'll probably get a resounding "yes!" Ask about their father, and you are in for either painful silence, a confession of gut wrenching longing, or the recognition that they have a father that they wish they could see more often. The one thing that you will not hear is indifference.^x

These women give voice to the grief of missing out on a father's love in their formative years. They are brave enough to stand up and try to spare future children the same grief, which will increase with the formal institution and promotion of homosexual parenting – such as through a law for same-sex adoption.

Other voices have emerged in Australia, not eloquent writers of opinion pieces or guests on *Lateline* but previously unheard of people who ring talkback radio or post a video blog to say they, too, are hurting. A young woman called Amy rang in to speak with me and host Peter Janetzki on Brisbane 96.5FM:

Peter: Amy, hello. What would you like to share with us?

Amy: Hello Peter. I'd like to share my story. Please be patient with me, I get nervous telling you this. I am the adopted daughter of a lesbian relationship. I am 21 years old. Growing through these years was really hard for me because I desperately wanted a daddy. It didn't worry me so much until I got to about 13 and we had sex-ed at school and everybody talking about male and female, and I immediately as a young girl knew that was the way it was meant to be between a man and a woman, and the relationship that my supposed mums had was not normal. When I turned 18 I went searching for my Dad. It was very confronting for him and he was very aggressive at first, but I was persistent. And then he broke down and told me that he was in love with my mother, and that when she found out she was pregnant with me she admitted that she was in a lesbian relationship. She admitted she only used him to have a baby so that she and the woman that she was with, who was my supposed mother, could have the child, so they wouldn't have to go through adoption papers and everything. That's when he snapped and has never been in a relationship ever since. It was hard for me to take that. Obviously I was very angry at my mother - how dare she try and take my life and use it how she wanted it - but I gained a great relationship with my biological father. To this day we have talks - my mother doesn't know ... if she did know I don't know what would happen to me. I just keep it under covers and every single night we chat. His birthday was two weeks ago so we celebrated. It was really lovely; it was at his house. It was a great feeling but it was really different because I'd never known what it was like to be with a daddy...^{xi}

Where is the justice in same-sex parenting by a lesbian couple if that means forcing future children like Amy, Heather, Katy or Brandi to miss out on the love of their father? Or Millie. This young Melbourne woman, raised by a lesbian couple, posted an impassioned video-blog in March 2015 about "equality for kids". In a wide-ranging reflection entitled "The real problem with same-sex parenting from a child's point of view", Millie had this to say about "equality": "There's all this talk about equality for women, for gay people, for everybody, but where's the equality for children when it comes to this? ... I am in a position to explain to you the kind of damage it does to a child."^{xii} At a seminar on children's rights at Parliament House, Canberra, Millie gave an insight into the pain of fatherlessness:

The truth is that growing up with two mothers forced me to be confused about who I was and where I fit in the scheme of the world. And it became increasingly obvious as soon as I hit school. You would see every other child embracing who they are on mother's and father's day ... and there I was sitting back wondering what is wrong with me, and why don't I have that connection with my father? Was he such a bad person that that could not be facilitated for me? When I was age 11 I was finally able to meet my father, and it was one of the happiest days of my life. I felt stable and at peace for what was probably the first time in my childhood. I saw my future, I saw my heritage, I saw my other family. And that was something that I am so grateful to have been given at such a critical time in my development. And I cannot believe that LGBT is trying to push an agenda that says that my feelings were not important.^{xiii}

We are invalidating and violating primal bonds when we cut a child off from her father, and the wound is real. We dress the wound with a rainbow bandage saying "Love is Love". As Katy Faust writes,

Now we are normalizing a family structure where a child *will always* be deprived daily of one gender influence and the relationship with at least one natural parent. Our cultural narrative becomes one that, in essence, tells children that they have no right to the natural family structure or their biological parents, but that children simply exist for the satisfaction of adult desires.^{xiv}

'I was confused'

A number of children of homosexual households speak of another obvious problem with single-gender parenting: the social challenge for a child who has no example of the daily interaction of mother and father, man and woman. This affects boys as much as girls. Robert Lopez wrote "Growing Up with Two Moms: The Untold Children's View".^{xv} He reflects that "I had no male figure at all to follow, and my mother and her partner were both unlike traditional fathers or traditional mothers."

Quite simply, growing up with gay parents was very difficult, and not because of prejudice from neighbors. People in our community didn't really know what was going on in the house. To most outside observers, I was a well-raised, high-achieving child, finishing high school with straight A's. Inside, however, I was confused. When your home life is so drastically different from everyone around you, in a fundamental way striking at basic physical relations, you grow up weird. My peers learned all the unwritten rules of decorum and body language in their homes; they understood what was appropriate to say in certain settings and what wasn't; they learned both traditionally masculine and traditionally feminine social mechanisms. Even if my peers' parents were divorced, and many of them were, they still grew up seeing male and female social models. In terms of sexuality, gays who grew up in traditional households benefited from at least seeing some kind of functional courtship rituals around them. I had no clue how to make myself attractive to girls. When I stepped outside of my mothers' trailer, I was immediately tagged as an outcast because of my girlish mannerisms, funny clothes, lisp, and outlandishness.^{xvi}

A Jewish woman and academic, B.N. Klein, testified with pain and some anger to the deprivation of family role models and suppression of her own heterosexuality in her mother's lesbian household:

When I was growing up only a tiny percentage of the people in the [LGBT] community had children, often the unsightly remnants of their parents' former marriages. Children in the lesbian section of the gay community were seen as the result of male oppression or later as proof that women don't need men and everything is "even Steven". Well, it isn't. I had never seen or could even fathom how families operated. It had all been presented to me as something on a much lower level than what the gay community was striving for. I had no idea what the daily interaction between a husband and wife looked like. I had no idea how two heterosexuals behaved toward their children as mother and father ... I had never had a boyfriend or any male interest

because while my mother was preoccupied with my sexuality she was only preoccupied if it matched her values. So in some ways I was not allowed to have sexuality. I was not allowed to express in physical dress anything feminine - this was mocked as tasteless and vulgar and silly (unless it was a butch-femme couple, which was much rarer than butch-but). I was allowed to knit and sew but this is because their utilitarian value exceeds their female category. I did not know how to flirt or dress.^{xvii}

Dawn Stefanowicz was traumatised by two things: exposure to her father's exuberant homosexuality at home, and the message from the gay male subculture that women were redundant:

For a little girl to grow up in a gay home and GLBT subcultures damages her sense of femininity and budding womanhood. Women are not the primary recipients of love and kindness; male and female are not considered equal and necessary. I wasn't surrounded by average heterosexual couples. Dad's partners slept and ate in our home, and they took me along to meeting places in the GLBT communities. I was exposed to overt sexual activities like sodomy, nudity, pornography, group sex, sadomasochism and the ilk. There was no guarantee that any of my Dad's partners would be around for long, and yet I often had to obey them. My rights and innocence were violated. I had a twisted view of sexuality, gender, marriage and did not want to marry or have children. While still a girl, it seemed better if I had been born a boy - Dad even encouraged me to dress manly and wear men's cologne. I felt very stressed and afraid.^{xviii}

The same lesbian judgement that considers men unnecessary as sexual partners also considers men unnecessary as parents. As Heather Barwick observed:

I grew up surrounded by women who said they didn't need or want a man. Yet, as a little girl, I so desperately wanted a daddy. It is a strange and confusing thing to walk around with this deep-down unquenchable ache for a father, for a man, in a community that says that men are unnecessary.^{xix}

How does a child cope with this "strange and confusing" clash between her own natural needs and the messages of the adults around her? Typically, by falling in with the values of the homosexual adults until she is old enough and independent enough to assert her own mind. Katy Faust says she had this down to an art form:

I remember how many times I repeated my speech: "I'm so happy that my parents got divorced so that I could know all of you wonderful women." I quaffed the praise and savored the accolades. The women in my mother's circle swooned at my maturity, my worldliness. I said it over and over, and with every refrain my performance improved. It was what all the adults in my life wanted to hear. I could have been the public service announcement for gay parenting. I cringe when I think of it now, because it was a lie. My parents' divorce has been the most traumatic event in my thirty-eight years of life. While I did love my mother's partner and friends, I would have traded every one of them to have my mom and my dad loving me under the same roof. This should come as no surprise to anyone who is willing to remove the politically correct lens that we all seem to have over our eyes. Kids want their mother and father to love them, and to love each other.^{xx}

Heather Barwick likewise considered herself a poster-child for lesbian parenting until she was able to think and speak for herself. She described her process of 'coming out' very sensitively in her open letter in *The Federalist*, March 2015, entitled "Dear gay community: your kids are hurting":

It's only with some time and distance from my childhood that I'm able to reflect on my experiences and recognize the long-term consequences that same-sex parenting had on me. And it's only now, as I watch my children loving and being loved by their father each day, that I can see the beauty and wisdom in traditional marriage and parenting.^{xxi}

‘We are either ignored or labeled a hater’

It takes courage for children of homosexual homes to speak out about the problems of same-sex parenting. Heather Barwick touched on the fear of rejection:

Kids of divorced parents are allowed to say, “Hey, mom and dad, I love you, but the divorce crushed me and has been so hard...” Kids of adoption are allowed to say, “Hey, adoptive parents, I love you. But this is really hard for me. I suffer because my relationship with my first parents was broken...” But children of same-sex parents haven’t been given the same voice. It’s not just me. There are so many of us. Many of us are too scared to speak up and tell you about our hurt and pain, because for whatever reason it feels like you’re not listening. That you don’t want to hear. If we say we are hurting because we were raised by same-sex parents, we are either ignored or labeled a hater.^{xxii}

Millie Fontana-Fox also reveals the pressures she felt in speaking out on same-sex parenting:

Even though I stand here with full conviction in what I’m saying, guilt still hovers over me because I do not want to hurt the people that I love. Not all children will turn out to have these issues, but in truth a lot of us are just too scared to speak up because what is at stake is a family, our lifestyle, our friends. We are considered discriminatory or homophobes more often than not for coming out against the LGBT agenda.^{xxiii}

Robert Lopez points out that children still living with homosexual parents are in too dependent a position to express their sadness or anger at missing out on a mother or father. Even adults who do so risk professional repercussions, as he discovered in his capacity as a Professor of English in California.

I cherish my mother’s memory, but I don’t mince words when talking about how hard it was to grow up in a gay household. Earlier studies examined children still living with their gay parents, so the kids were not at liberty to speak, governed as all children are by filial piety, guilt, and fear of losing their allowances. For trying to speak honestly, I’ve been squelched, literally, for decades.^{xxiv}

Dawn Stefanowicz agrees that surveys of still-dependent children of gay households are worthless and misleading: “The special interest-groups attempt to tell decision makers and the public that there is no harm to children, often by using *dependent* children, teens and young adults who have not yet left the extraordinary bullying influences of the GLBT environments.”^{xxv} She recalls the pressure to stay silent as a child in an essay from April 2015:

As a dependent child and teen, I was not allowed to say anything that would hurt the feelings of the adults around me. If I did, I could face ostracism or worse. Due to media silencing, political correctness, GLBT lobbying efforts and loss of freedom of speech, it is very hard to tell my story. But I am not alone. Over 50 adult children from alternative households have contacted me. Very few children will share their stories publicly.^{xxvi}

What chance is there for the public to reach a fair understanding of the experience of grief and loss for children of homosexual homes? Adults who attempt to speak out are largely ignored or intimidated into silence; other adults and children who tell a positive story of same-sex parenting are given the red carpet treatment. Credulous validity is attached to positive reports by children despite their obvious compromise by being dependent on same-sex parents. And government funding, as always, goes with the ‘progressive’ point of view: the *Gayby Baby* movie received federal government money^{xxvii} and the Victorian Government will fund it along with the compulsory roll-out of “Safe Schools”.

The public understanding of the consequences of same-sex parenting would be improved if two guidelines were observed. First, beware of asking children of homosexual homes questions they are not free to answer until they are independent adults. Second, don't demonise adult voices, like these, who testify to the loss and unintended hurt of homosexual parenting.

'This debate, at its core, is about children'

It is inspiring when people speak out with nothing to gain for themselves but ostracism. They speak out about something of incomparable importance: a child's bond to her mother and father. They know from experience that same-sex parenting deliberately breaks this bond and therefore hurts the child. We can learn from their experience and understand why they say, "Don't do it!" Let Katy Faust sum up:

This debate, at its core, is about one thing. It's about children. There is no difference between the value and worth of heterosexual and homosexual persons. We all deserve equal protection and opportunity in academe, housing, employment, and medical care, because we are all humans created in the image of God. However, when it comes to procreation and child-rearing, same-sex couples and opposite-sex couples are wholly unequal and should be treated differently for the sake of the children. This is not about being *against* anyone. This is about what I am for. I am *for* children! I want all children to have the love of their mother and their father ... We are just the tip of the iceberg of children currently being raised in gay households. When they come of age, many will wonder why the separation from one parent who desperately mattered to them was celebrated as a "triumph of civil rights," and they will turn to this generation for an answer. What should we tell them?^{xxviii}

*

REFERENCE SECTION 2

SOCIAL SCIENCE: THE DISADVANTAGE – EVEN HARM – OF SAME-SEX PARENTING

We should disavow the notion that "mommies can make good daddies," just as we should disavow the popular notion that "daddies can make good mommies." . . . The two sexes are different to the core, and each is necessary - culturally and biologically - for the optimal development of a human being.

David Popenoe, Rutgers University sociologist.^{xxix}

The false claim that children in same-sex households do 'just as well'

In 2013 the Australian Institute for Family Studies (AIFS) published a review entitled "Same-Sex Parented Families in Australia", a sympathetic treatment of the topic authored by Deborah Dempsey, a founding committee member of the Victorian Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby.^{xxx} Nevertheless, it contained the important admission that "numerous scholars now agree it is not possible to sustain a claim frequently made in the earlier literature that there are no differences between children raised in same-sex and heterosexual parented families."^{xxxi}

One might have expected the AIFS abandonment of the “no difference” fallacy to filter through to the public debate, but no: advocates for homosexual ‘marriage’ still repeat “no difference” at every media opportunity. Such a claim neutralises public concern for the wellbeing of children of homosexual households, and as such it is a valuable falsehood.

Among the “numerous scholars” cited in this context by Dempsey is Professor Loren Marks. In 2012 he published a detailed critique of all the small, unrepresentative studies that were the basis of the “no difference” claim for same-sex parenting:

Social science research with small convenience samples has repeatedly reported no significant differences between children from gay/lesbian households and heterosexual households. These recurring findings of no significant differences have led some researchers and professional organizations to formalize related claims. Perhaps none of these claims has been more influential than the following from the 2005 American Psychological Association (APA) Brief on “Lesbian and Gay Parenting”: “Not a single study has found children of lesbian or gay parents to be disadvantaged in any significant respect relative to children of heterosexual parents.” Are we witnessing the emergence of a new family form that provides a context for children that is equivalent to the traditional marriage-based family? Many proponents of same-sex marriage contend that the answer is yes. Others are skeptical and wonder - given that other departures from the traditional marriage-based family form have been correlated with more negative long-term child outcomes - do children in same-sex families demonstrably avoid being “disadvantaged in any significant respect relative to children of heterosexual parents” as the APA Brief asserts?^{xxxii}

It is important to understand that studies which do not meet the ‘Gold Standard’ of objective research cannot be used to make broader public policy claims. To make such claims, research must demonstrate (1) random, representative sample selection, and (2) sufficient size to achieve statistical significance. That is, they must be large, random and representative. Without this ‘Gold Standard’, research might be of anecdotal interest but cannot be generalised to the population. Whenever you hear of some new study touted in the media as showing how kids in same-sex homes do “just as well”, ask the two questions: is the sample random or biased? Is the sample big enough to be statistically valid?

In his review of the 59 studies which the APA Brief used to justify their claim of “no difference”, Marks makes the devastating finding that not a single study achieved this ‘Gold Standard’! The hugely influential APA declaration, therefore, was never justified by the small, unrepresentative studies it cites:

To restate, not one of the 59 studies referenced in the 2005 APA Brief (pp. 23-45; see Table 1) compares a large, random, representative sample of lesbian or gay parents and their children with a large, random, representative sample of married parents and their children. The available data, which are drawn primarily from small convenience samples, are insufficient to support a strong generalizable claim either way. Such a statement would not be grounded in science. To make a generalizable claim, representative, large-sample studies are needed - many of them.

Numerous other scholars, including those arguing for same-sex parenting and marriage, have acknowledged the severe limitations of those earlier studies. Consider a few of the scholars cited in the AIFS review. Wainright (2004) writes: “existing research is still sparse and based on small samples, the representativeness of which is generally difficult to assess.”^{xxxiii} Stacey & Biblarz (2001) write: “There are no studies [of same-sex parenting] based on random, representative samples of such families. Most studies rely on small-scale, snowball and convenience samples drawn primarily from personal or community networks or agencies.”^{xxxiv} Rosenfeld notes in his US Census study (2006): “The universally small sample sizes in the existing literature has left room for several critiques, including the argument that small sample

sizes would not have the statistical power to identify the effects of homosexual parents on childhood outcomes even if such effects did exist.”

Marks concluded that the state of same-sex parenting research in 2012 could not sustain any generalised conclusions, and that sweeping claims of “no difference” such as that made by the APA in 2005 should not have been made:

Some opponents of same-sex parenting have made “egregious overstatements” disparaging gay and lesbian parents. Conversely, some same-sex parenting researchers seem to have contended for an “exceptionally clear” verdict of “no difference” between same-sex and heterosexual parents since 1992. However, a closer examination leads to the conclusion that strong, generalized assertions, including those made by the APA Brief, were not empirically warranted. As noted by Shiller (2007) in *American Psychologist*, “the line between science and advocacy appears blurred”.

Take a glance at the “Public Interest” policies of the American Psychological Association and you will find its advocacy hard to distinguish from any Green-left political party.^{xxxv} One former president of the APA, Nicholas Cummings, wrote that “the APA has chosen ideology over science” and that “advocacy for scientific and professional concerns has been usurped by agenda-driven ideologues who show little regard for either scientific validation or professional efficacy”.^{xxxvi} Hard words, but the APA is not a unique offender; other professional bodies in different areas of public policy seem to have compromised their scientific objectivity for the greater cause of ‘progressive’ politics. For policy makers and the public, clinical truth is harder to come by if researchers and peak bodies are compromised by politics. They lose our trust.

The best Australian effort to promote ‘no difference’

At this point, let’s look at the best-known Australian research: the much-trumpeted “Australian Study of Child Health in Same-Sex Families” (ACHESS) under the auspices of the University of Melbourne.^{xxxvii} Will it impress us with its ‘Gold Standard’ rigour? It certainly impressed the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) when the study was published in July 2014: their headline declared, “Children raised by same-sex couples healthier and happier, research suggests”.^{xxxviii} The lead researcher for ACHESS, Simon Crouch, is himself raising children in a homosexual relationship, which might raise questions of conflict of interest in the average reader’s mind. Given the lead author’s apparent vested interest in this subject, one would expect the study to be scrupulous in avoiding any perception of bias - either selection bias in the recruitment of subjects or reporting bias in the gathering of information. Alas, the study fails on both counts.^{xxxix}

On recruitment of subjects, we read in the report: “The convenience sample was recruited using online and traditional recruitment techniques, accessing same-sex attracted parents through news media, community events and community groups.” That is a textbook case of selection bias, a self-selecting sample, and gives an immediate ‘fail’ on the ‘Gold Standard’ of random subject selection. And for good measure, the sample of parents was unrepresentative of the general population, being better educated and wealthier.

The study fares no better on the matter of reporting bias: “Parents reported information for all children under the age of 18 years.” Good for them – that means all the data in this study of “child health in same-sex families” was gathered by asking the same-sex parents themselves what they thought about such things as their child’s “self-esteem”, “general behaviour”, “family cohesion”, “emotional problems”. Surprise, surprise, the proud parents thought things were pretty rosy. It is interesting, given this intoxicating mix of biases, that the reported emotional advantage for children of same-sex households was only a few percent: “On the Child Health Questionnaire, after adjusting for socio-demographic characteristics, the overall mean

score for general behaviour, general health and family cohesion was 3%, 6% and 6% higher respectively for children from the ACHES compared to population data.”

To Crouch’s credit he acknowledges the limitations of his study: “The self-selection of our convenience sample has the potential to introduce bias that could distort results. It is clear that the families from the ACHES are earning more and are better educated than the general population.” At that point he could consider pulping the study and desisting from politically charged interviews with the ABC, but he continues: “Whether there are real differences between the ACHES sample and the normative population or not, it is clear that there are aspects at play in our sample of same-sex families that allow improved outcomes in general behavior, general health, and in particular family cohesion.” With respect, what is clear is that well educated and motivated same-sex parents recruited through gay networks in the context of a politically charged debate on gay marriage could be expected to report that they have exceptionally well-behaved healthy kids and a cohesive family. QED.

And most regrettably, Crouch takes the opportunity to promote the “no difference” mantra despite acknowledging the obvious bias risks of his non-random, unrepresentative study:

The findings suggest that there is no evidence to support a difference in parent reported child health for most measures in these families when compared to children from population samples, which was also found with the previous smaller studies and those of lesbian families.

If this sort of research is touted (modestly, by Crouch) as “a significant contribution to the literature”, is there any way we can have confidence in the rest of the research literature on same-sex parenting? Are there any studies sufficiently free of bias and with sufficient statistical power that we can use them to inform public policy? Yes there are, but very few. Professor Marks notes that, “To make a generalizable claim, representative, large-sample studies are needed.” So if we are to have any scientific basis for informing public policy on same-sex parenting, and therefore same-sex ‘marriage’, we have to look for the “representative, large-sample studies” of the effects of same-sex parenting on children. And you will be glad to know that, as best I can ascertain as of March 2016, there are only nine such studies.

What do the nine valid studies show?

The Australian Institute for Family Studies (AIFS) review tallied up the statistically valid studies that were published by 2013:

There have now been several randomly sampled comparative studies published on educational outcomes for children from same-sex and heterosexual families (Potter, 2012; Rosenfeld, 2010), and also social outcomes (Regnerus, 2012; Wainright, Russell, & Patterson, 2004).^{xi}

Potter and Rosenfeld will get passing mention below. Regnerus we have touched on, and will revisit. Jennifer Wainright and her colleagues (including Charlotte Patterson, a principal researcher for the APA “no difference” position on same-sex parenting^{xli}) in fact published three separate studies using the same database (and therein lies a tale - stay tuned).^{xlii} Add to those six the three more recent studies we have already mentioned: Douglas Allen’s on high school completion rates and Paul Sullins’ two studies of emotional problems in children of same-sex households, which we will return to in the next part of the chapter. Then add one more study published by Sullins in 2015 which found increased rates of ADHD in children of same-sex parents compared to opposite-sex parents.^{xliii} That gives a total of six “representative, large-sample studies” published by 2013 and four published after, giving a total of ten for our consideration.

But didn't I say there were only nine? Yes, because in my view the Rosenfeld study needs to be scratched from the field.^{xliv} It used US Census data that had previously been shown by researchers at the California Centre for Population Research (CCPR) to be corrupted by miscoding.^{xlv} His study found that "children of same-sex couples are as likely to make normal progress through school as the children of most other family structures" but his modest "no difference" conclusion is discredited by the fact that his data was, to put it mildly, compromised. Up to forty per cent of the "same-sex couples" he claimed for his study were actually opposite-sex couples. Awkward, that! Until Rosenfeld's study is reanalysed using the correct coding, his study, in my view, remains in the sin-bin.

That reduces the total to just nine "representative, large-sample studies" which address the question of whether same-sex parenting has adverse effects compared to opposite-sex parenting. That's all the studies there are! All the small shabby studies that give big happy headlines in newspapers about how "kids of gay parents do best" must be dismissed as of anecdotal value only. These nine are the only ones, to my best knowledge, that are sufficiently powerful to allow generalisation to the population and therefore deserve consideration by policy makers. For a tallying up of these nine studies and what they say about the harm or lack of harm to children in same-sex households, skip to the next section, "Partly settled science". For now, for completeness, a quick comment on the last two studies on our list.

Potter does the math; Regnerus is roasted

Daniel Potter published "Same-Sex Parent Families and Children's Academic Achievement" in 2012.^{xlvi} He analysed the database of 19,000 children in the USA Early Childhood Longitudinal Study - Kindergarten Cohort which included 72 same-sex parent families. Importantly, his number crunching included the one comparison that really matters: children of same-sex homes with children of *married* biological parents. He found that "Children in same-sex parent families appeared to have lower baseline math scores, on average, than their peers in married, two-biological parent families, and this association was robust to select sociodemographic factors". This decrease in a key measure of school performance is what we would expect under the "broken biological bonds" hypothesis of this chapter. Also, as we expected, it is not specific to same-sex parenting. In this study, children of all disrupted family structures (single parents, divorced and blended families) suffered disadvantage similar to the same-sex parented children when compared to children of married biological parents. Potter chooses to attribute the adverse finding to the trauma of past family breakups, shared by all groups except "married, two-biological parent families" saying "the difference was nonsignificant net of family transitions". Attentive readers will note that he is merely confirming the "settled science" outlined at the start of this chapter. His results show that same-sex step parenting carries the same disadvantages as other forms of biologically disrupted family; in all such cases, children have necessarily undergone "family transitions", or family deconstruction, and lack the presence of their two biological parents. Are you starting to see a pattern?

One study remains, Mark Regnerus' 2012 analysis of data from the New Family Structures Study, "How different are the adult children of parents who have same-sex relationships?"^{xlvii} It caused a political furore for daring to find a wide range of harms to children who had a parent in a same-sex relationship at some point in their childhood. One of the best defences of the Regnerus paper is found in the Amicus Curiae brief to the US Supreme Court in 2015 under the auspices of the American College of Pediatricians (with professors Sullins, Regnerus and Marks as co-authors).^{xlviii} They outline the study and its limitations:

Regnerus published the findings of a retrospective study based on representative national sample of 2,988 adults, including 248 whose mother or father had been in a same-sex relationship at some point during their

upbringing ... Regnerus found that well-being for the adults who reported a parent having been in a same-sex relationship (during the respondent's childhood) was significantly lower than in the general population, particularly when compared to persons who had grown up with parents who are still married or were married until one of them died. The differences were striking ... The Regnerus study was limited in that few of the reported same-sex parents had been in a same-sex relationship for very long. Critics pointed out, correctly, that factors other than parental sexual orientation may account for the differences observed. Nevertheless, the study demonstrated that, even with an attenuated sample, large statistically significant differences were present where the "consensus finding" body of research had long claimed there were none. And the burden to show that other factors (rather than exposure to or residence with a same-sex parent) explains the differences rests with the critics, not Regnerus. So far, none have done so.

Important findings of the Regnerus research stand firm, as do the Sullins findings - which suffered a similarly ferocious ideological attack. Valid data cannot be erased by vitriol. These authors were attacked, in my view, because they challenged the rainbow party line that "science shows there is 'no difference' for children of same-sex households and therefore politicians should support gay 'marriage'." Sullins hinted at the politicisation of this field of social science in the conclusion of his second study:

As noted in the introduction, a steady drumbeat of dozens of studies based on small, non-random samples has been celebrated by the American social science establishment as definitive proof that having same-sex parents is innocuous for child wellbeing. In the face of mounting evidence to the contrary, the American Psychological Association continues to claim: "Not a single study has found children of lesbian or gay parents to be disadvantaged in any significant respect relative to children of heterosexual parents." The present study definitively demonstrates that statement to be false. To those convinced that the no differences thesis is true, the evidence presented in this study is unexpected and possibly inconvenient. Whether future evidence upholds, modifies or rebuts these findings, they suggest that much of the received social science wisdom about such relationships is mistaken, and we have just begun to try to understand the effect on children of having two parents of the same sex.^{xlix}

Additional harms of same-sex parenting

The previous section showed the mischief of the "no difference" campaign and demonstrated that same-sex parenting carries the same disadvantage for children as other forms of biologically disrupted family structures. This final part goes further. It considers the evidence for additional harms from same-sex parenting above and beyond the expected disadvantages of step parenting generally. If those additional harms exist, it would be negligent beyond belief for legislators to establish same-sex 'marriage' and parenting as a norm.

Those additional disadvantages are found, on present evidence, in the field of emotional and psychological harm to children. We will ask sociology professor Paul Sullins to be our guide.

A closer look at the first Sullins study of emotional harm

Sullins' study "Emotional problems among children with same-sex parents" (2015) is one of the largest random-sample representative studies yet conducted in this field.ⁱ His findings are statistically robust and were published in a journal that has one of the highest rankings possible for rigour of the peer-review process.ⁱⁱ Drawing on the US National Health Interview Survey database of 207,000 children, including 512 from same-sex households, Sullins concluded that "emotional problems were over twice as prevalent for children with same-sex parents than for children with opposite-sex parents". Specifically, serious emotional

problems were found in 17.4% of children with same-sex parents versus 7.4% of children from opposite-sex parents.

Sullins was careful to address the inevitable criticism that the worse psychological outcome for a child of same-sex parents was due to something other than their experience of same-sex parenting, namely the experience of family instability (e.g. going through divorce). The fortunate group of children with their own married biological parents had been spared this trauma. Sullins eliminated this possible confounding factor of “instability” in the obvious way: he compared the children from same-sex stepparent families with the children from opposite-sex stepparent families. All these children had been through transitions, so this compared instability with instability, apples with apples. And the findings? The increased risk for children in same-sex stepparent families remained higher than children in opposite-sex stepparent families, at 2.2 times the risk.

That is among the most robust evidence we have that there is additional harm to children from same-sex parenting above and beyond the disadvantage expected of all step parenting.

What did the “no difference” crowd make of these ruggedly objective findings, where most of the differences are statistically significant at 0.001? The American Psychological Association (APA) and the American Sociological Association (ASA) tried three main lines of attack on the Sullins study, each of them more intellectually embarrassing than the one before. Far from praising Sullins for his efforts to address the question of family instability by making the apples-with-apples comparison of homosexual stepparent families with heterosexual stepparent families, the APA said that “creating more differentiated categories of children of opposite-sex couples (children residing with married versus single or divorced parents)” was a “methodological flaw”. Some people are just hard to please. Be sure that, if Sullins had not differentiated the categories, the APA would have criticised him for not controlling for the role of family instability in his findings! To read more of the ASA’s and APA’s attempts to discredit this research, including misguided criticism of coding classifications and unwarranted sneering at the publishing journal, see the endnote.^{lii}

Sullins was also careful to test for any role of stigmatisation and bullying in the adverse emotional outcome for children of same-sex homes, and his findings were a surprise: “Contrary to the assumption underlying this hypothesis, children with opposite-sex parents are picked on and bullied more than those with same-sex parents.” Did you catch that? In one of the largest random, representative samples of same-sex households ever studied, children of gay parents were bullied *less* than other kids, not more. Therefore stigma and bullying could not plausibly be the explanation for the worse emotional state of children from same-sex homes.

Sullins’ high quality study finds a significant increase in serious emotional problems for children raised by same-sex parents compared to children raised by opposite-sex parents, especially when compared to the subgroup of children raised by their married biological parents. While that research stands - and it does, despite the contortions of its detractors - no policy maker should support the deliberate institution of same-sex ‘marriage’ and therefore same-sex parenting as an ideal in our law. We cannot knowingly consign children to a family structure that carries double or quadruple the risk of emotional harm.

The second Sullins study and more ‘unexpected harm’

In a second study in 2015, Sullins reanalysed a 2004 study by Jennifer Wainright and her colleagues, “Psychosocial adjustment, school outcomes, and romantic relationships of adolescents with same-sex parents”, which drew on an in-depth database of over 20,000 young people between age 10 and 17, the US National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (AddHealth).^{liii} Her study revealed a significant

advantage for children of lesbian households in the criterion of “school connectedness”, whatever that term means. But this is where it gets interesting. Sullins identified serious database errors in the Wainright study. Of the 44 cases of children of “lesbian parents” identified by Wainright from the AddHealth database, most of them were not in fact children raised by lesbian parents. The questionnaire actually reported that 27 of those children had both their father and mother living with them. What sort of lesbian household has the child’s father living with the child? Even if the mother was having a lesbian affair on the side, an essentially mother-father household does not meet any definition of “same-sex parenting”.

Sullins reanalysed the data using only the genuine lesbian and gay couple households and found that children of same-sex households suffered a statistically significant increase in anxiety compared to their peers from mother-father households. On the positive side of the equation, the corrected Wainright data in Sullins’ study still finds better “school connectedness” for children of lesbian homes, and indeed a new finding of higher average GPA score at school in the children of lesbian households. This is plausible: children who are anxious about their home situation might find security in “connectedness” with their peer community, and parents know that the more anxious child is often the more diligent with homework. So yes, there appears to be marginal higher achievement in school for children of homosexual households, but in my view - surely any parent’s view - that advantage is outweighed by the adverse finding of elevated emotional distress in such children.

Summing up the science

So where does all this “large-sample representative research” - Sullins, Allen, Potter, Regnerus and the reanalysed Wainright study - leave the complacent APA claim from 2005 that “Not a single study has found children of lesbian or gay parents to be disadvantaged in any significant respect relative to children of heterosexual parents”?

To return to the tally room, as promised: of the total of nine ‘Gold Standard’ studies, six found various adverse educational and emotional outcomes for children raised by same-sex parents. One of the remaining three studies by Wainright shows a mixed picture of benefit and unexpected harm once the coding is corrected, where the benefit in terms of higher GPA and “school connectedness” is weighed against higher levels of anxiety. The other two Wainright studies (as I understand) have not yet been reanalysed using the uncorrupted database, and their findings cannot be relied on until that is done.

The findings so far are overwhelmingly one-way: children raised by same-sex parents suffer disadvantage on many different measures. As a general baseline, they suffer similar disadvantage to children raised in other biologically disrupted family structures. On the specific question of emotional harm, evidence so far suggests they suffer at about twice the rate of children in other biologically disrupted family structures.

If that is the case, why would legislators deliberately place an adopted child in a same-sex household, when opposite-sex households are available and are known to be, on average, better for the child?

The unsettled question of sexual abuse

Regrettably, this final question cannot be ignored. In the Amicus Curiae brief to the US Supreme Court mentioned above, the most disturbing question raised was the apparent higher rate of sexual abuse of children in same-sex households.^{liv} Let me state at the outset that I am not convinced that the size and quality of the databases – even though they are among the largest and best we have – gives sufficient confidence about these troubling findings. What I am convinced about is that further research is imperative

to confirm or dismiss any statistical association between same-sex households and increased rates of child sexual abuse.

The Amicus brief refers to worrying data in two key studies of same-sex parenting by Sullins and Regnerus.^{lv} On the Regnerus study it states:

Some of the largest, and most sensitive, differences were in reported childhood sexual abuse: the children of lesbian mothers were, as children, ten times more likely to have been sexually touched by a parent or other adult and four times more likely to have been forced to have sex against their will.^{lvi}

In the other study, the AddHealth database used by Sullins was noteworthy for being one of the few large-scale questionnaires to ask adolescents about possible sexual abuse and to ask it in a way that allowed for a frank and confidential response. Sullins comments on the methodology and findings:

To increase accuracy, adolescents entered their answers to these sensitive questions anonymously into a laptop computer in response to recorded questions they heard using earphones. Adolescents who had ever had sexual intercourse were given a series of follow-up questions that included being asked about forced sex ... 10% to 12% (SE .73-.92) of those with opposite-sex parents reported having been forced (or forcing someone) to have sexual intercourse. This proportion doubles with same-sex unmarried parents (24% SE 23), and almost triples again with same-sex married parents. Over two-thirds (71% SE 30) of the children with same-sex married parents who had ever had sexual intercourse reported that they had been forced to have sex against their will at some point. All the “yes” responses for this group are from female adolescents, meaning that these are all reports of being forced, not forcing someone else, to have sex relations. In fact, strikingly, every sexually active female adolescent living with married same-sex parents (which are all lesbian parent couples) responded “yes” to having experienced forced sex.^{lvii}

What are we to make of this disturbing, yet statistically fragile finding? I cannot be confident in findings based on so small a number of individuals, and yet given the fact that, of all couple households with children, only one in a thousand are same-sex households,^{lviii} it requires very large studies to get sufficient numbers to achieve greater confidence. If the AddHealth study surveyed some twenty thousand young people to get just a couple of dozen subjects raised in same-sex homes, it would take a study of five or ten times that size to achieve the certainty we need on questions such as child sexual abuse. I cannot see that happening any time soon.

We are left in a disturbing predicament: if we take these preliminary and tentative findings seriously, we will be accused of casting generalised aspersions on the character of homosexual couples. If we sweep these hints of hidden tragedy under the carpet and they do indeed reflect an aspect of a hypersexualised, radical gay and lesbian subculture that puts children at risk, then we are abandoning children.

We should not dismiss this dilemma lightly. We can already hear the voice of abuse and abandonment in testimony like this from B.N. Klein in her submission to the US Court of Appeal, fifth circuit, in 2014:

I grew up with a parent and her partner in an atmosphere in which gay ideology was used as a tool of repression, retribution and abuse. I lived with gay abuse for years ... By the time I was 11, I also found that the gay community had an obsessive unhealthy invasive preoccupation with their children’s sexuality. They in fact encouraged sexual activity - because “they were open...” I do not believe that children abused in the gay community have the ability to safely come forward or be received and protected and believed. In the current climate, people are too afraid of being called homophobic and a bigot ... Within the gay community, abusers have complete impunity and complete protection from a code of honor that puts gay adults first. Then there is a network of social and legal services that do not and will never consider the best interest of a child. If you

imagine that children are not aware of this you are mistaken. I certainly knew that no one would help me ever no matter what.^{lix}

That is her story. No responsible person can read an account like that (and others) of growing up in a homosexual subculture, then read the Sullins and Regnerus data on sexual abuse in homosexual households, and then just turn a blind eye. Nor can any reasonable person make generalised conclusions that are not substantiated by the present preliminary data.

The one thing necessary is for our government to commission research to settle this distressing question. If the statisticians say we need a few hundred young people raised in same-sex homes to achieve certainty on the question of sexual abuse, we would need to survey a few hundred thousand adolescents – with the same comprehensiveness and provision of privacy as the AddHealth survey. We are capable of that as a sophisticated nation, and we have a duty to seek the truth on this matter - for the sake of future children like B.N. Klein.

Summing up

This survey of the science has confirmed that same-sex parenting confers on a child the disadvantage that all biologically disrupted family structures confer, but that it also confers additional disadvantage – even harm - above and beyond the expected harm of any biologically disrupted family structure. This tough truth is politically incorrect in the present climate, but as Sullins, Regnerus, Marks et al conclude:

The longer social scientists study the question, the more evidence of harm is found, and the fact that children with same-sex parents suffer significant harm in that condition, compared to children with opposite-sex parents, particularly among same-sex parents who identify as married, has been established beyond reasonable doubt. Despite intense political bias to suppress the findings set forth herein, evidence from large, nationally-representative studies has demonstrated that children raised by same-sex parents, particularly those who identify as married, do not fare as well as those with opposite-sex parents, and many experience substantial harm.^{lx}

The social science shows that the best environment for children is with opposite-sex married parents – and that is where adopted children should, therefore, be placed. The evidence shows that same-sex parenting, on average, confers various forms of disadvantage or harm on the children of such households. How could any politician be so indifferent to the best interests of the child as to support the institution of same-sex adoption in our law?

*

Conclusion: Respect same-sex couples but put the needs of children first

Frank Brennan, the former Chair of Australia's National Human Rights Consultation Committee, shows the civil way forward on this conflict between the rights and needs of the child and the neighbourly respect due to homosexual adults. He says: "I think we can ensure non-discrimination against same-sex couples while at the same time maintaining a commitment to children of future generations ... being reared by a father and a mother."

Non-discrimination against same-sex couples is exactly what federal parliament achieved in 2008, when more than 80 pieces of legislation were amended by a bipartisan majority. There is now no unjust discrimination against same-sex couples.

Commitment to children of future generations requires that we discriminate, justly, between two quite distinct social projects: the widespread public task of marriage-and-family (including an adoptive family) and the rare private commitment of gay partnerships. The number of same-sex couples in Australia is indeed very small, just one per cent of all couples, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 2013. Respect even for tiny minorities is necessary, but appropriate discrimination in favour of adoption by married couples and therefore in favour of a child's right to be reared by a mother and a father is also necessary.

Justice has been done: homosexual couples now enjoy equality with male-female couples in every way short of the compound right of "marriage and family formation". It must stop short of "marriage and family formation" (including adoption), because the demands of adults must end where the rights and needs of a child begin.

While there are so many childless married couples willing to adopt the tiny number of children available in Australia each year, and while there are valid concerns about the relative stability of same-sex couples, the increased propensity to substance abuse and depression in same-sex households, and the adverse emotional outcomes of same-sex parenting identified in the only statistically valid studies done to date, the 'precautionary principle' requires that we do set children adrift in these uncharted waters.

Thank you for considering the evidence and child-centred arguments in this submission and I am happy to present more detailed information to any committee of enquiry into this vital matter.

Yours faithfully,



Dr David van Gend

President, *Australian Marriage Forum*



ⁱ Adoption stats for 2014 at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-12-10/australia-adoption-rate-falls-to-lowest-annual-number-on-record/5956204>

ⁱⁱ Adoption laws at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_Australia#cite_note-119

ⁱⁱⁱ Andersson, Gunnar; Noack, Turid; Seierstad, Ane; and Weedon-Fekjaer, Harald. "Divorce-Risk Patterns in Same-Sex Marriages in Norway and Sweden," Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America, April 1-3, 2004, pages 1-28.

^{iv} Substance abuse rates in Australia <http://www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=10737421314>

^v Canadian homosexual complaint to the Human Rights Commission at <http://www.xtra.ca/BinaryContent/pdf/human%20rights%20complaint.pdf>

^{vi} Barwick H., "Dear gay community, your kids are hurting," *The Federalist*, March 17, 2015, accessed July 1, 2016, <http://thefederalist.com/2015/03/17/dear-gay-community-your-kids-are-hurting/>

^{vii} Ibid.

^{viii} Walton B., The Kids Are Not Alright: A Lesbian's Daughter Speaks Out, *The Federalist*, April 21st 2015 <http://thefederalist.com/2015/04/21/the-kids-are-not-alright-a-lesbians-daughter-speaks-out/>

- ^{ix} Faust K, interview by Tony Jones, *ABC Lateline*, August 12, 2015, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-08-12/interview-katy-faust-who-serves-on-the-academic/6693296>
- ^x Faust K., "Dear Justice Kennedy: An Open Letter from the Child of a Loving Gay Parent," *Public Discourse*, February 2, 2015, <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2015/02/14370/>
- ^{xi} "RADIO: 'Amy' re childhood in lesbian household. AMF 2015," YouTube video, from talkback radio 96.5FM Brisbane on March 22, 2015 (abridged and edited excerpt), posted by "Australian Marriage Forum," March 28, 2015, <https://youtu.be/43P9Xd2t9Ug>
- ^{xii} "The real issue with same-sex parenting from a child's perspective," YouTube video, posted by "Millie Fontana," March 9, 2015, <https://youtu.be/FCrZKsrZ1eg>
- ^{xiii} "Child of Gays, Millie Fontana, speaks at Parliament House, Canberra," YouTube video, address at Parliament House, Canberra, August 2015, posted by "Millie Fontana," September 23, 2015, <https://youtu.be/7g4vphO1SkE>
- ^{xiv} Faust K., Amicus Curiae brief, US Court of Appeal of the Fifth Circuit, August 2014 <https://www.scribd.com/doc/240312274/Katy-Faust-Amicus-Briefs>
- ^{xv} Lopez R., "Growing up with two mums: the untold children's view," *Public Discourse*, August 6, 2012, <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2012/08/6065/>
- ^{xvi} Ibid.
- ^{xvii} Klein B.N., Amicus Curiae brief, US Court of Appeal of the Fifth Circuit, August 2014 <https://www.scribd.com/doc/240312276/B-N-Klein-Amicus-Brief>
- ^{xviii} Stefanowicz D., Amicus Curiae brief, US Court of Appeal of the Fifth Circuit, August 2014 <https://www.scribd.com/doc/240313523/Dawn-Stefanowicz-Amicus-Brief>
- ^{xix} Barwick, "Dear gay community."
- ^{xx} Faust, Amicus curiae.
- ^{xxi} Barwick, "Dear gay community."
- ^{xxii} Barwick, "Dear gay community."
- ^{xxiii} Millie Fontana-Fox, "Child of gays"
- ^{xxiv} Lopez, "Growing up with two mums."
- ^{xxv} Stefanowicz, Amicus curiae
- ^{xxvi} Dawn Stefanowicz, "My father was gay. Why I oppose legalising same-sex marriage," *The Daily Signal*, April 13, 2015, accessed July 1, 2016, <http://dailysignal.com/2015/04/13/my-father-was-gay-why-i-oppose-legalizing-same-sex-marriage/>
- ^{xxvii} "Supporters," Gayby Baby, accessed July 1, 2016, <http://thegaybyproject.com/supporters/>
- ^{xxviii} Faust, "Dear Justice Kennedy."
- ^{xxix} Popenoe D., *Life without Father: Compelling New Evidence That Fatherhood and Marriage Are Indispensable for the Good of Children and Society* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 197.
- ^{xxx} "History: 1997 Overview," Victorian Gay & Lesbian Rights Lobby, accessed July 1, 2016, <http://www.vglrl.org.au/about/history/1997-overview>
- ^{xxxi} Dempsey D., "Same-sex Parented Families in Australia", AIFS (2013), <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/same-sex-parented-families-australia/introduction>
- ^{xxxii} Marks, "Same-sex parenting and children's outcomes."
- ^{xxxiii} Wainright J. et al, "Psychosocial adjustment, school outcomes, and romantic relationships of adolescents with same-sex parents," *Child Development* 1886, 1888 (2004).
- ^{xxxiv} Stacey J, Biblarz T, "Does the sexual orientation of parents matter?" *American Sociological Review* 159, 166 (2001).
- ^{xxxv} "Public Interest Directorate," American Psychological Association, accessed July 1, 2016, <http://www.apa.org/pi/index.aspx>
- ^{xxxvi} Cummings N. and Wright R. eds., *Destructive trends in mental health: the well-intentioned path to harm* (Routledge, 2005), 14.
- ^{xxxvii} "Australian Study of Child Health in Same-Sex Families (ACHESS)," University of Melbourne, 2012-2014 <http://www.achess.org.au/>
- ^{xxxviii} "Children raised by same-sex couples healthier and happier, research suggests," *ABC Radio AM*, July 7, 2014 <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-07-05/children-raised-by-same-sex-couples-healthier-study-finds/5574168>
- ^{xxxix} Crouch SR, McNair R, Waters E and Power J, "The health perspectives of Australian adolescents from same-sex parent families: a mixed methods study," *Child Care, Health and Development* 41, no. 3 (2015): 356-364, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/cch.12180/full>
- ^{xl} Dempsey, "Same-sex parented families," op.cit.
- ^{xli} Patterson C., "Lesbian and gay parenting, Summary of research findings," American Psychological Association (1995), <http://www.felgtb.org/rs/648/d112d6ad-54ec-438b-9358-4483f9e98868/a85/filename/apsa-lesbian-and-gay-parenting.pdf> and subsequent papers.
- ^{xlii} Wainright J, Patterson C, "Delinquency, victimization, and substance use among adolescents with female same-sex parents," *Journal of Family Psychology* 526 (2006); Wainright J, Patterson C, "Peer relations among adolescents with female same-sex parents," *Developmental Psychology* 117 (2008); Wainright J. et al, "Psychosocial adjustment, school outcomes, and romantic relationships of adolescents with same-sex parents," *Child Development* 1886, 1888 (2004).
- ^{xliii} Sullins D.P., "Child Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in Same-Sex Parent Families in the United States: Prevalence and Comorbidities," *British Journal of Medicine and Medical Research*, ISSN: 2231-0614, Vol: 6, Issue: 10 (2015), <http://www.sciencedomain.org/abstract/7834>
- ^{xliv} Rosenfeld M, "Nontraditional Families and Childhood Progress through School," *Demography* 755, 757 (2010), http://web.stanford.edu/~mrosenfe/Rosenfeld_Nontraditional_Families_Demography.pdf
- ^{lv} Black D. et al., "The measurement of same-sex unmarried partner couples in the 2000 US Census," *California Centre for Population Research* (2007), <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/72r1q94b#page-3>
- ^{lvi} Potter D, "Same-Sex parent Families and Children's Academic Achievement," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 74 (2012): 556 – 571, <http://www.baylorisr.org/wp-content/uploads/Potter.pdf>
- ^{lvii} Regnerus M., "How different are the adult children of parents who have same-sex relationships? Findings from the New Family Structures Study," 41 *Social Science Research* 752 (2012) <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0049089X12000610>
- ^{lviii} American College of Pediatricians et al, Amici Curiae.
- ^{lix} Sullins, "Unexpected Harm," 20.
- ⁱ Sullins, "Emotional Problems."
- ⁱⁱ In a recent independent assessment of peer review at over three hundred scientific publishers by Science, the world's premiere scientific journal, the publisher of Sullins' studies attained the highest ranking possible for peer review rigor, a distinction earned by only the top 7% of journals worldwide. See John Bohannon, "Who's Afraid of Peer Review?" 342 *Science* 60, 60–65 (2013) at 64; quoted in American College of Pediatricians, Amici Curiae brief op.cit.
- ⁱⁱⁱ "The true objection of the APA and ASA to Sullins's articles has nothing to do with their scientific rigor, but with his findings, which do not conform to the ideology of harm denial," quoted in American College of Pediatricians et al, Amici Curiae brief, 20-29, http://www.supremecourt.gov/ObergefellHodges/AmicusBriefs/14-556_American_College_of_Pediatricians.pdf
- ^{liii} Wainright, "Psychosocial adjustment."
- ^{liv} American College of Pediatricians et al, Amici Curiae.
- ^{lv} Sullins, "Unexpected Harm"; Regnerus, "How different are the adult children."
- ^{lvi} American College of Pediatricians et al, Amici Curiae.
- ^{lvii} Sullins, "Unexpected Harm," 14, 15.
- ^{lviii} Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013, "How many same-sex couples have children?" <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features10July+2013#children>
- ^{lix} Klein B.N. testimony (excerpted and abbreviated), Case 14-50196 – August 15, 2014, US court of appeal for the fifth circuit <https://www.scribd.com/doc/240312276/B-N-Klein-Amicus-Brief>
- ^{lx} American College of Pediatricians et al, Amici Curiae, 45-46.