



PRIME MINISTER

15 June 2015

Bishop Irinej
The Serbian Orthodox Metropolitanate of Australia and New Zealand
PO Box 512
ALEXANDRIA NSW 1435

Dear Bishop Irinej

It was good of you to let me know your views (and that of other religious leaders) about marriage. You won't be surprised that I largely agree.

Marriage has been described as an "institution" because it represents the historic foundation on which societies and civilisations rest.

As you may recall, both the Coalition and the ALP entered the 2010 election supporting marriage between a man and a woman. This had been the shared position over many years.

During the last term, the ALP changed its policy but the Coalition did not. The Coalition went into the 2013 election stating that the definition of marriage would be a matter for the Coalition party room to determine should legislation come again before the Parliament.

As you know there are now a range of views inside Parliament and inside parties on this issue. Decent people can differ. Different views should be respected.

Affirming the time honoured definition of marriage is not bigotry. It is respect for an institution that has stood the test of time.

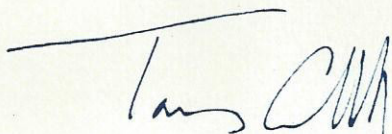
Like you, I welcome the removal of all discrimination against people on the grounds of their sex or sexuality and the much better appreciation all of us have of the complexities of human love.

Currently there are a number of private members' bills to change the time-honoured definition of marriage. Ordinarily, these private members' bills would not proceed to full debate and vote and there would need to be a strong push by a cross party coalition for the bills not to lapse.

I would however be surprised if same-sex marriage were to come before the Parliament for a vote any time soon as the Government's priority concerns are economic and national security.

In the meantime I would encourage you to foster a respectful conversation with the community about the reasons why, until very recently, no culture or civilisation has thought to expand marriage to include other partnerships.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Abbott', with a long horizontal line above the first name.

TONY ABBOTT