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MEDIA RELEASE

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Secular Party of Australia Strongly Supports Immediate Marriage Equality for Same Sex Couples

Marriage in Australian law is a secular and civil institution and, like all secular and civil institutions, must be governed by the principles of equality and non-discrimination.

For this reason the Secular Party of Australia strongly supports amendments to the Marriage Act allowing same-sex couples to marry.

Furthermore, the Secular Party of Australia opposes attempts to legally recognise same-sex relationships that fall short of marriage equality. While we support alternative schemes for the recognition of partners who do not wish to marry, we do not support these alternative schemes as a substitute for allowing same-sex couples to marry. There is no substitute for the right to marry one's partner. In the absence of marriage equality, the enactment of a national scheme for the recognition of same-sex and other relationships would

- a) reinforce the separate, second-class status of same-sex relationships,
- b) reinforce the myth that marriage is a religious institution that same-sex couples should not be a part of, and
- c) delay the achievement of full marriage equality for many years. This has already been the case in the UK and New Zealand. Australia must not make the same mistake.

Therefore the Secular Party of Australia makes the following commitment to Australia's GLBTI community and all those Australians who support full legal equality: we do not support a national scheme for the formal recognition of personal relationships, such as civil unions, civil partnerships or registered relationships, before same-sex couples are allowed to marry.

A move by any political party to institute such alternative methods of relationship recognition prior to the establishment of full marriage equality represents a betrayal to those same-sex couples that deserve the ability to formalise their relationship with marriage.

We will seriously consider supporting such schemes when or after marriage equality is achieved, and at a state and territory level. But marriage equality must be the highest priority for all those who support an egalitarian, inclusive and secular Australia.

For further information and comment

<http://www.secular.org.au/>

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