

Vietnam veteran and father says it's time for marriage equality



Geoff Thomas, the Vietnam veteran and plumber who famously questioned Tony Abbott as to why his gay son could not get married, says “its time for the leaders of both major parties to support equal treatment of same sex relationships”.

Geoff said “I lost my wife to cancer 6 years ago, and I have been lucky enough to meet another wonderful lady who I love and want to marry. While I have chosen to marry for the second time, our government prevents my son from marrying once. This is simply not fair or just.

“Australia prides itself on being tolerant and its acceptance of different cultures. Yet our Prime Minister Julia Gillard and opposition leader Tony Abbott still think it is ok to endorse the continued discrimination of a section of our society – people who are our parents, our children, our siblings, our neighbours and our work colleagues” he said.

“To my great shame, I was once homophobic and intolerant of gay people. It was confronting to me when my son told me he was gay. Since then I have had time to reflect on this issue. I have gone from the sideline into the game and have a far better appreciation of the difficulties gay people face in this country.

“Opposition to same sex marriage has its basis in fear and ignorance and is supported by prejudice and bigotry. Australia has a Parliament which is separate from religion. It is the obligation of MPs to ensure all Australian citizens are treated equally under the law with dignity and respect. As it stands MPs are failing our gay citizens and their families.

“I have long held the view that the Australian public is way ahead of the Parliament on this issue and it is time for the Parliament to respect the view of the public.

“Whilst change is inevitable, our gay citizens should not have to wait for equality. They contribute to society just like everyone else and should not have to fight to be treated equally.

“I ask the Prime Minister of Australia Julia Gillard and the Opposition Leader Tony Abbott to end this discrimination. I urge all parents and friends who support marriage equality to become more vocal and to contact their federal MP and tell them it is time to treat all Australians with the dignity and respect they deserve. I think all politicians should be entitled to a conscience vote on this issue”.

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