

Media Release

RACP supports marriage equality for LGBTI Australians

8 September 2017

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) reaffirms its support for marriage equality and calls on the Australian Government to remove discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex (LGBTI) Australians in same-sex relationships and their families.

RACP President Dr Catherine Yelland said:

“We believe the public health case for marriage equality is strong and that changing the legal definition of marriage will be an important step towards ensuring legal, societal and health equity for all LGBTI Australians and their families.

“Importantly, we don’t support the claim that children raised by same-sex couples experience poor psychological health. If a child is raised in an environment that is characterised by love, consistency and stability, their psychological health and needs can be met.

“In 2004, the Australian Government amended the *Marriage Act 1961* to exclude same-sex couples from the institution of marriage by defining marriage as ‘the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life’.

“This explicit exclusion is a significant example of institutionalised discrimination. It has served only to stigmatise and marginalise LGBTI Australians and their families and reinforce negative mental and physical health outcomes that result from socially isolating these members of our community.

“Evidence suggests that changing the legal definition of marriage to include LGBTI Australians and affording them the same social validation and legal status of committed heterosexual relationships will bring about improved health outcomes for this population.

“The RACP stands with LGBTI Australians on this issue. We call on the Australian Government to support marriage equality so that same-sex and transgender couples can marry, regardless of their gender identity.”

References that have informed the RACP’s position are below:

- Bansel P, Denson N, Ovenden G, Davies C. 2014. *Growing Up Queer – Issues Facing Young Australians Who are Gender Variant and Sexuality Diverse*. Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre – University of Western Sydney.
- Crouch. S.R, Waters. E, McNair. R, Power. J, Davis. E. (2014) *Parent-reported measures of child health and wellbeing in same-sex parent families: a cross-sectional survey*. BMC Public Health 2014 14:635. Available from: <http://bmcpubhealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1471-2458-14-635>
- Crouch, S. R., Waters, E., McNair, R. and Power, J. (2015), The health perspectives of Australian adolescents from same-sex parent families: a mixed methods study. *Child Care Health Dev*, 41: 356–364. Available from: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/cch.12180/full>
- Australian Institute of Family Studies (2013) *‘Same-sex parented families in Australia’*. CFCA Paper No. 18 Published December 2013. 26 pp. Available at: <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/same-sex-parented-families-australia/introduction>
- Hatzenbuehler ML, McLaughlin KA, Keyes KM, Hasin DS. 2010. *The impact of institutional discrimination on psychiatric disorders in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: a prospective study*. *American Journal of Public Health* <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20075314>
- Hatzenbuehler ML, O’Cleirigh C, Grasso C, Mayer K, Safren S, Bradford J. 2012. *Effect of same-sex marriage laws on health care use and expenditures in sexual minority men: a quasi-natural experiment*. *American Journal of Public Health*. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22390442>
- Herd, G. R Kertner, 2006 *I Do, but I Can’t: The Impact of Marriage Denial on the Mental Health and Sexual Citizenship of Lesbians and Gay Men in the United States*. *Journal of Research and Social Policy*, March 2006
- Lennox, K. B. Acosta, K.L. Wright, E.R. (2015) *‘State-Level Marriage Equality and the Health of Same-Sex Couples’*, *Am J Public Health* June 2015; 105(6): 1101–1105.

Media contact: 0415 111 503

About The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP): The RACP trains, educates and advocates on behalf of more than 25,000 physicians and trainee physicians across Australia and New Zealand.

The College represents a broad range of medical specialties including general medicine, paediatrics and child health, cardiology, respiratory medicine, neurology, oncology, public health medicine, occupational and environmental medicine, palliative medicine, sexual health medicine, rehabilitation medicine, geriatric medicine and addiction medicine. Beyond the drive for medical excellence, the RACP is committed to developing health and social policies which bring vital improvements to the wellbeing of patients.

The College offers 60 training pathways. These lead to the award of one of seven qualifications that align with 45 specialist titles recognised by the Medical Board of Australia or allow for registration in nine vocational scopes with the Medical Council of New Zealand.

Follow the RACP on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/TheRACP>