

Marriage Equality

Position statement

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Purpose

This document outlines the position of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) on marriage equality.

About PSA

The Federal Government has granted the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) with national peak health body status. The Government rewarded PSA's advisory, policy formulation, education and representation of pharmacists as part of the Health Peak and Advisory Bodies (HPAB) Program.

PSA proudly represents Australia's 30,000¹ pharmacists working in all sectors and locations.

PSA's core functions include: providing high quality continuing professional development, education and practice

support to pharmacists; developing and advocating standards and guidelines to inform and enhance pharmacists' practice; and representing pharmacists' role as frontline health professionals.

Summary

PSA recognises that equality is a health issue, and is a right for all Australians, irrespective of age, culture, religion, sexuality or gender identity.

Research demonstrates that same-sex marriage policies and mental health outcomes are inextricably linked.

PSA supports marriage equality, in recognition of the link between improved health outcomes for LGBTIQ people and this type of legislative change.

PSA's Position on Marriage Equality

People who identify as LGBTIQ make up a significant part of the Australian population. It is estimated that 9% of Australian men and 15% women report same-sex attraction.² Data from the 2016 Census indicates that there are approximately 47,000 same-sex couples in Australia – a 42% increase from 2011.³

The mental health of LGBTIQ people is among the poorest in Australia.⁴ Similarly, LGBTIQ people have the highest rates of suicidality of any population in Australia.⁵ It should be noted that the increased risk of poor mental health outcomes and suicide among LGBTIQ Australians is not due to sexuality, sex or gender identity in and of themselves, but rather the consequence of discrimination and exclusion.⁶ Legislative inequality, such as the absence of marriage

equality, has not only been found to have a significant impact on mental health outcomes,⁷ it has also been found to impede access to health care for LGBTIQ people.⁸

Research demonstrates that same-sex marriage policies and mental health outcomes are inextricably linked.⁹ Indeed, research in the US demonstrated that the implementation of same-sex marriage policies was associated with a 7% reduction in the proportion of all high school students reporting a suicide attempt in the past year – with the strongest association among students who were a sexual minority.¹⁰

PSA recognises that equality is a health issue, and is a right for all Australians, irrespective of age, culture, religion, sexuality or gender identity.

This is reflected in PSA's *Code of Ethics for Pharmacists*, which states that pharmacists have an obligation to; respect the dignity and autonomy of the patient, recognise and respect patients' diversity, cultural knowledge and skills, gender, beliefs, values, characteristics and lived experience – and not discriminate on any grounds, and provide care in a compassionate, professional, timely, and culturally safe and responsive manner.¹¹

With the diverse nature of the pharmacy profession and the communities in which pharmacists serve, PSA – as the peak professional body for pharmacists in Australia, is committed to improving health outcomes for all Australians, particularly groups at significant risk of harm.

PSA is committed to ensuring that equality is achieved through the removal of structural and legislative discrimination. As such, PSA supports marriage equality, in recognition of the link between improved health outcomes for LGBTIQ people and this type of legislative change.

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