

MARRIAGE EQUALITY

Statement

HON SALLY TALBOT (South West) [5.19 pm]: This weekend we will see a momentous day when, starting at midnight tomorrow night, marriage equality in Australia will become a reality for the first time. Same-sex couples will be able to marry for the first time on Australian soil in the Australian Capital Territory. Among the people marrying this weekend will be two of my dearest friends. I want to share with the house that I will be there to celebrate with them this wonderful occasion. It will be a wonderful occasion for them as they celebrate their life and, of course, a wonderful occasion for Australia as we move beyond the exclusion of same-sex couples from the right to marry. I feel bold enough to say that none of the people marrying this weekend under the new ACT laws will be marrying to enforce their property rights or to enforce their parental obligations. They will be marrying because they embrace the very idea of marriage; that is, they embrace the possibility of being able to formalise a loving, caring, enduring and secure relationship in a loving framework.

As I have said before in this house, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex people like marriage. We know that marriage is meaningful; we know that marriage is deeply significant. We also know that it is not the only way of acknowledging deep love and commitment to another person; it is a way that has long been recognised in our society and from which GLBTI people have for too long been excluded. Speaking as someone who, through personal recent experience, counts herself as a bit of an expert on marriage and happiness, I can tell my friends that marriage will be very good for them. It will be very good for them; it will be very good for their relationship; it will be very good for their children, should they have any; it will be very good for their families; and it will be very good for their friends who will celebrate their love and our love this weekend and for the rest of our lives together. As a tribute to all those people, including my dear friends who will be married this weekend, I want to share with them and honourable members one of my favourite quotes, by Sir Hugh Walpole, about marriage —

The most wonderful of all things in life is the discovery of another human being with whom one's relationship has a growing depth, beauty and joy as the years increase. This inner progressiveness of love between two human beings is a most marvelous thing; it cannot be found by looking for it or by passionately wishing for it. It is a sort of divine accident, and the most wonderful of all things in life.