

Flood of same-sex weddings in January, after historic parliamentary vote

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

The first same-sex weddings will be celebrated early in the new year, after the historic change to the marriage law passed the House of Representatives with only four MPs voting against.

MPs clapped and hugged each other after the private member's bill, which had cross-party and crossbench sponsorship, went through on the final day of the year's parliamentary sitting. There was ecstatic scenes in a packed public gallery, with people draped in rainbow flags singing "I am, you are, we are Australian", and some MPs joining in from the chamber floor.

The four "no" votes were from Victorian Liberal Russell Broadbent, Queensland Nationals' Keith Pitt and David Littleproud, and Queensland crossbencher Bob Katter.

Prominent conservatives who had made an unsuccessful push for extra religious and other protections, including Tony Abbott, Andrew Hastie, Michael Sukkar, Kevin Andrews and George Christensen, abstained from the vote.

Attorney-General George Brandis said the reform will start on Saturday.

"As from Saturday, same-sex couples will be able to lodge a Notice of Intended Marriage to commence the one month minimum notice period required before the solemnisation of marriages under the Marriage Act," he said in a statement.

Moving the bill's third reading, Malcolm Turnbull said: "What a day! What a day for love, for equality, for respect! Australia has done it. Every Australian had their say and they said it is fair, get on with it!"

He said this great day belonged to "every Australian. The 45th parliament is doing its job delivering, getting on with it, it is fair, we have done the work, we have done it together. Let's do it, let's finalise the deal right now!"

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Opposition Leader Bill Shorten said: “Australia, we are going to make marriage equality a reality in minutes. The Australia of tomorrow begins with what we do today. At long last, LGBTIQ Australians will be equal under the law.”

Excited onlookers in the lower house’s public gallery had pre-empted the final stage of the legislation, clapping, cheering and waving flags.

The bill went through unchanged. All the amendments to insert extra protections for religious freedom and free speech moved by Coalition conservatives were voted down, a repeat of what happened [last week in the Senate](#) .

Turnbull was on the losing side of the vote on a handful of amendments, including to protect charities and religious freedom, but was not present for most votes on amendments.

Abbott made repeated contributions, arguing for more protections for religion, free speech and parental rights.

He said there was an absence of the detailed consideration of freedom of speech and religion that Turnbull had pledged. “The promises that were made from the top were not adequately delivered on,” he said.

“We do not want to see politically correct discriminations substitute for old discrimination,” Abbott said. “Do we want today to be a day of unity or do we want today to be a day of division?”

Liberal backbenchers who have been leaders within the Coalition of the reform cause, including Warren Entsch, Trent Zimmerman, Tim Wilson and Trevor Evans, spoke strongly against various attempts by the conservatives to circumscribe the legislation.

Zimmerman said the bill did not have one clause or one word that restricted Australians’

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religious freedoms. He questioned whether a proposal about parental rights was either workable or constitutional.

The amendments were all defeated by varying wide margins.

Amendments for extra religious protections, including to have two definitions of marriage spelled out in the legislation, were moved by Sukkar and voted down 97-43.

Amendments moved by Western Australian MP Andrew Hastie, including to allow parents to take children out of school classes if they objected to teaching about marriage, lost 87-56.

Treasurer Scott Morrison sought to insert more protections for faith-based charitable organisations. He said these organisations were simply seeking to assure the “status quo” prevailed; the changes did not threaten same-sex marriage, he said. Entsch said nothing in the legislation would impact on charities. The move lost 59–82.

Labor, which like the government had a free vote on the bill for its MPs, voted as a block against key amendments.

Independent Cathy McGowan said people in regional Australia were behind the legislation.

Wilson told Turnbull the passage of the legislation “will be a marker in your legacy”.

During the debate Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce, whose private life had been the subject of rumour during the New England byelection campaign – much to his anger – announced he was separated. He abstained on the vote. Morrison also abstained on the final vote.

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Michelle Grattan does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organization that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond their academic appointment.

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