

NATIONAL MARRIAGE DAY

Statement

HON NICK GOIRAN (South Metropolitan) [9.49 pm]: Today is National Marriage Day and so, inspired by a speech given by my hardworking friend the member for Southern River, Mr P. Abetz, MLA, last week on 8 August, I will make a brief contribution in respect of National Marriage Day. In particular I will speak in defence of the traditional definition of marriage between one man and one woman. I draw member's attention to a debate that occurred in Britain's House of Lords earlier this year on 3 June on a bill known as the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill. Baroness Royall, who is Labour's leader in Lords, said that marriage —

has a special status in our society ...

She further stated in *Hansard* —

I firmly believe that our society will be strengthened when more couples are able to choose to make a lifetime commitment to each other, and when all members of our communities are able to celebrate their identity and relationship within the institution of marriage.

She is saying that when more couples are able to choose to make a lifetime commitment to each other, our society will be strengthened. I will now give a hypothetical example of why what Baroness Royall said does not stand. I will talk about the hypothetical case of a gentleman by the name of Ethan and a lady by the name of Stephanie. These two people share the same father but have different mothers. Due to custody arrangements, Ethan and Stephanie have not spent much time together but when Ethan moves back in with his father, he falls in love with Stephanie and they choose to get married. They are half-brother and sister and, according to Baroness Royall, society will be strengthened when they are married. The intricacies that arise when Ethan and Stephanie want to marry are innumerable. Some intricacies are measureable; however the genetic combinations are not measureable. When this couple decide to have children they are, in essence, playing Russian roulette with recessive traits and birth defects. The amount of time they will spend in hospital with their sick child is measurable. The immeasurable complications come with the results and family dynamics of a brother and sister marrying and, of course, the question has to be asked: what would happen if the relationship were to end in divorce? None of the ensuing consequences for Ethan or Stephanie or the physical and mental health of their children would, in my view, in any way strengthen society. But for some reason whenever we talk about this topic, we talk about love and we are all too quick to permit almost anything whether it be good for society or not, or good for children or not.

My view is, and others may disagree, that once we start to alter the definition of marriage, we give it a new status quo. It is a bit like a basketballer saying, "I want to play football but I do not want to become a footballer. Instead, I want to change the rules of football so we use a hoop instead of goalposts, and I do not want to use a football but I want to use a basketball. The equipment has changed but we are still going to call it football." My view is that football is football, basketball is basketball, and marriage is between one man and one woman who are unrelated. Sometimes when we discuss this topic people who disagree with it are very quick to cry hysteria or that these "what if" scenarios will never take place. However, as we know, and as these debates have been going on in recent years, there has already been a movement with respect to polyamory, which involves multiple partners being married together. The hypotheticals are perhaps not so hypothetical after all because people are interested in these things. In the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 2004, there was an article about a brother and sister fighting the law to get married. Having more couples making a lifetime commitment to each other does not strengthen society, just as divorce and illegitimacy does not strengthen society. Marriage between a husband and a wife based on love and trust has been proven to strengthen society and statistics prove this; I have talked about it before. Couples in a heterosexual marriage are, on average, healthier. Children who live with parents in a stable married relationship are, on average, happier, healthier and do better at school. They are less at-risk from abuse and financial hardship. If we are going to be serious about strengthening society, we have to get real and uphold traditional marriage, not blur the lines, water it down and make a significant change to the foundational unit of society.

The key to a happy marriage is to create and keep building a story between husband and wife. Like any really good story, there will be times of joy and times of sorrow and difficulty, which makes one even more appreciative of the joyful times. There are times when the unexpected happens, times when our children will throw us a curveball, and times when a man looks at his wife and gazes at her in awe and wonder. If a man and a woman are committed to building a story, to work on creating unexpected moments and memorable incidents, and if they are both prepared to work through the really hard stuff and to put each other's needs first, they create a wonderful story and legacy of security for their children. I am convinced that the reason why marriage between one man and one woman works so well is because of the eternal mystery that accompanies marrying a member of the opposite sex. Women do not know what it is like to be a man. A woman can empathise with a man but she will never fully know what being a man feels like and she will never completely understand a man's spirit, his

pride or essence. Equally, men cannot know what it is like to be a woman. A man can try to understand how a woman feels but because he is not a woman, he will never completely understand her spirit. A husband may be intrigued and captivated by his wife, but he will never fully apprehend how she thinks or why she does many of the things that she does. This eternal mystery that hundreds of thousands have written about, studied and dissected will never be fully understood. I suggest that we protect the meaning of marriage to mean the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life. This is in truth what will strengthen society.

In closing, I acknowledge Warwick and Alison March, who have been appointed as National Marriage Day ambassadors for 2013–14. These two very honourable individuals, whom I have had the privilege of meeting on a number of occasions, have worked tirelessly for the Dads4Kids Fatherhood Foundation. Members would be aware from a previous speech of mine that I passionately believe that if we want stop providing bandaid solutions to the problems in our society, we need to create a culture that empowers men in particular to take a lead role in fighting against dysfunction in families. This can be done, in part, by having a minister for men’s interests. That view is shared by Warwick and Alison March. I acknowledge and honour their contribution in this nation with regard to everything they do for the Fatherhood Foundation and particularly for their tireless efforts to support the traditional definition of marriage.