



# CONVERSATION

## STARTER KIT

### TALKING TO PEOPLE YOU KNOW ABOUT MARRIAGE EQUALITY

We are now closer to winning marriage equality than at any point in Australian history. **And we've come too far to stop now!**

To achieve equality for all Australians, we are going to have to talk to more people in more ways than ever before. **Research shows real-life conversations are incredibly powerful. They're what change hearts and minds.**

Moreover, the people you know - whether friends or family, work colleagues, people at church, your local sporting club - will be far more influenced by their personal conversation with you than by any ad or message they see from a third party. **Same is true for your elected representative: Meeting with a local constituent who cares about this issue will have greater impact.** Speaking with real people helps them become supporters and advocates for equality.

**That's why right now, marriage equality supporters are igniting thousands of conversations all across Australia.** Some of the people we talk to will already be on board. Others won't have thought about it much yet, or won't be sure where they stand.

**Research shows only a small group of Australians firmly oppose marriage equality. It's actually something two-thirds of the population support!**

But lots of people who may show 'soft' support marriage equality still have questions. The evidence from overseas tells us that by listening, sharing our experiences and approaching this as a conversation rather than a furious debate, we have a much better chance of bringing as many people as possible along with us. **And with that, convincing our MPs not to delay equality any longer.**

No doubt about it, these personal conversations can sometimes be confronting. But they can also be incredibly respectful, beneficial and even joyful. Creating an open space for people to reflect on this, ask questions and share their concerns means we're campaigning in-line with the values that we stand for - including respect, dignity and love. And it means we're making this journey more positive and unifying, rather than divisive and difficult.

**The information below is to help you, but it's a suggested guide only.** For more, see our FAQ on our website: [equalitycampaign.org.au/faq](http://equalitycampaign.org.au/faq)



	Question	Background rationale
<b>Introduce the issue</b>	<p>How do you feel about marriage equality?</p> <p>(Note: They may not understand that phrase – if so, maybe explain that some people describe this as ‘same-sex marriage’.)</p>	<p>Start with an open question – you are never going to find out what someone thinks unless you let them tell you first! And remember, this may be the first time they have really thought about this issue, so give them the time and space to work this through for themselves before you start digging deeper into the discussion.</p>
<b>If they strongly support it</b>	<p>Me too!</p> <p>Why do you support it?</p> <p>I personally feel strongly about it because...</p>	<p>This gives them a chance to really think about why this issue is important to them – which means they are more likely to be clear about why they support this – and for you to share why this issue is important to you too.</p> <p>It might also open the door for you to ask them to meet your local MP together, speak to your local church, and so forth!</p>
<b>If they sound like they are not sure about it</b>	<p>It sounds like you are not 100% on this, but you see some good reasons to support marriage equality.</p> <p>What part of you is leaning towards supporting marriage equality?</p> <p>For me, it means that...</p>	<p>There are people who support equality but nonetheless are not sure about marriage. That might be because they grew up without any openly gay people around them or in an environment where it was frowned upon. Many people have come a long way but need a chance to talk through their questions to take those last steps to supporting marriage equality.</p> <p>You can help in part by moving this from being about an ‘issue’ in their minds, to actually being about a person they care about. So listen, but also share respectfully why it matters to you.</p>
<b>If it sounds like they have quite a few reasons against supporting marriage equality</b>	<p>It sounds like this might be a difficult question for you. Do you want to talk to me more about that?</p> <p>What makes it difficult?</p>	<p>If this is difficult for them, they might need time to talk through their questions.</p> <p>If they’re not wrestling with it as a question then they have probably made up their minds. Don’t take this personally. It can be hard when people you know don’t see things in the same way or share your values. But all it means is that for now they are someone who cannot take that last step with you on this issue.</p>
<b>Don’t forget to thank them for the conversation</b>	<p>Thanks for talking to me about this today. And I’m here if you want to talk about it more.</p>	<p>If they’re not 100% sure now or need more time to think, let them know the door is open for future conversations</p>

Concern	Response	Questions you can ask
<p><b>If it was so important, why not have the plebiscite?</b></p>	<p>The plebiscite amounted to a \$175 million public opinion poll. Politicians wouldn't even agree to make the result binding. Now we can just ask them to do their jobs, and have a free vote in Parliament.</p> <p>Also, imagine growing up an LGBTI kid in a small town, and seeing months of advertising against your rights to equality, love and happiness. Or being the child of a lesbian or gay couple and seeing months of taxpayer-funded ads telling you that your family is wrong. Lots of mental health experts asked the government not to do this.</p>	<p>Do you think our politicians should be given a chance to vote their conscience on this, and we can get it done tomorrow?</p>
<p><b>Don't children do best with a mother and a father?</b></p>	<p>Decades of research confirms that children do best in a family with loving parents, regardless of whether those parents are straight or gay. And lesbian and gay people have been successfully parenting in Australia, including adopting, for many years. Marriage equality won't change this but will offer stronger security and belonging to all families.</p>	<p>Does it seem fair to exclude some children from the security that comes from marriage?</p>
<p><b>Why marriage? Aren't civil unions enough?</b></p>	<p>Marriage matters to Australian society and it matters to many couples regardless of gender.</p> <p>It's great that we have civil unions and same-sex law reform. However, they still fall short of full Constitutional equality. Only marriage can achieve that.</p> <p>Many parents and grandparents realise they may have gay children or grandchildren today or in the future. No one wants second best for their child. We all want our children to be able to grow up with the same aspirations and chance for love and happiness.</p>	<p>Why did you get married/do you want to get married?</p> <p>Is your marriage important to you?</p> <p>Can you see how it might be important to other couples too, regardless of gender?</p>
<p><b>But does this mean schools will have to deliver programs I don't support?</b></p>	<p>State Government and your local school decide what gets taught in the classroom, and updating the Marriage Act will not change that.</p> <p>This is just about whether two individuals should be allowed to marry. Ultimately, we'd love to see our laws updated to teach the values to our kids that we're most proud of as Australians - that all people should be treated equally.</p>	<p>Parents are the people who shape kids values and beliefs - do you think that allowing same sex couples to get married will change that?</p> <p>What do you want to teach kids about lesbian and gay people?</p>

Concern	Response	Questions you can ask
<p><b>This goes against my faith/churches shouldn't be forced to marry gay and lesbian couples</b></p>	<p>Civil marriage is different and distinct from religious marriage. Rest assured that no religious group will be forced to marry a lesbian or gay couple against their beliefs (just like some won't marry people who are divorced).</p> <p>Marriage equality won't take anything away from the religious freedom of those who oppose it, but it will restore and uphold the religious freedom of those who support it.</p> <p>Over 100 prominent Christian ministers, including several Anglican bishops, have spoken out publicly in support of marriage equality. And research shows most Australians of faith support marriage equality.</p>	<p>What my faith teaches me is that God is love. Is that something you believe too?</p>
<p><b>I'm just not sure what might happen</b></p>	<p>This is really just about whether all Australians should have the right to marry the person they love – nothing else can or will be changed by changing the Marriage Act.</p> <p>And we can now look to 21 other countries that already have marriage equality: including the UK, New Zealand, Ireland and the US. The sky hasn't fallen in!</p> <p>But it has made a lot of people very happy. Including the father who can now walk his lesbian daughter down the aisle. And the grandmother who can dance with her gay grandson at his wedding.</p>	<p>How do you think your life would be different if all loving, committed couples could get married?</p> <p>Do you think it would be a good thing for Australians to be able to celebrate all of our friends' love and commitment equally?</p>