



Neurodevelopmental and Behavioural
Paediatric Society of Australasia

NBPSA Administration
E: admin@nbpsa.org
W: www.nbpsa.org
ABN: 30 282 719 189

CHILDREN ARE NOT HARMED BY HAVING SAME-SEX PARENTS, OTHER THAN BY SOCIETAL STIGMA

AUSTRALIAN MARRIAGE LAW POSTAL SURVEY

The Neurodevelopmental and Behavioural Paediatric Society of Australasia (NBPSA) is a professional body representing over 350 specialist paediatricians and doctors in Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Malaysia, who support children with, or at risk of having, neurodevelopmental and behavioural challenges, in order that they have successful childhoods and reach their personal potential.

In the context of the current Australian Marriage Law postal survey the NBPSA has become aware of statements in the Australian public debate, claiming that children are disadvantaged or harmed by having same-sex parents. As specialists in child development and behaviour, we draw on scientific evidence and our extensive experience in working with diverse Australian families, to clarify for the Australian public the evidence on this issue.

Australian families are changing, and many children do not grow up in households with married, heterosexual, biological parents.¹ The evidence, and our clinical experience, do not support the concept of “an ideal family”. Whether a child is raised by biological or non-biological parents or by grandparents does not *per se* significantly impact their wellbeing.² Physical, psychosocial, psychological and educational outcomes for children in same-sex parented families are not different to children raised in heterosexual families.^{1, 3, 4, 5}

Children of diverse families including same-sex parents do, however, experience the negative effects of stigmatisation of themselves and their families. Poorer health outcomes and increased rates of suicide have been documented^{6,7,8}, and are exacerbated by prolonged public debates and ongoing discrimination.^{9,10} The NBPSA believes that such discrimination needs to be highlighted and eliminated.

Good public policy should be predicated on solid evidence. We understand and respect that there are diverse views in this matter. We urge all those involved in the debate to avoid harmful stigmatization of young people living in LGBTI families.

Claims based on misrepresentation of the evidence, or beliefs not substantiated by evidence, do the claimants no credit and harm children.

Gehan Roberts
President
20 October 2017

Contact: Greg Rochford, CEO
g.rochford@nbpsa.org
0412 196 172

Addendum:

An article "[The kids are OK: it is discrimination, not same-sex parents, that harms children](#)" was published in the Medical Journal of Australia (MJA) shortly after this position paper. The NBPSA position statement and the MJA article were developed independently of each other; each supports and strengthens the other.

References:

1. Dempsey D. Same-sex Parented Families in Australia (CFCA Paper No. 18). Melbourne: Child Family Community Australia, Australian Institute of Family Studies. 2013.
2. Lansford JE, Ceballo R, Abbey A, Stewart AJ. Does family structure matter? A comparison of adoptive, two-parent biological, single-mother, stepfather, and stepmother households. *Journal of Marriage and family*. 2001 Aug 1;63(3):840-51.
3. Biblarz TJ, Stacey J. How does the gender of parents matter?. *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 2010 Feb 1;72(1):3-22.
4. Bos HM, Knox JR, Van Rijn-van Gelderen L, Gartrell NK. Same-sex and different-sex parent households and child health outcomes: Findings from the National Survey of Children's Health. *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics*. 2016 Apr 1;37(3):179-87.
5. Pawelski JG, Perrin EC, Foy JM, Allen CE, Crawford JE, Del Monte M, Kaufman M, Klein JD, Smith K, Springer S, Tanner JL. The effects of marriage, civil union, and domestic partnership laws on the health and well-being of children. *Pediatrics*. 2006 Jul 1;118(1):349-64.
6. Raifman J, Moscoe E, Austin SB, McConnell M. Difference-in-differences analysis of the association between state same-sex marriage policies and adolescent suicide attempts. *JAMA pediatrics*. 2017 Apr 1;171(4):350-6.
7. Hatzenbuehler ML. The social environment and suicide attempts in lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth. *Pediatrics*. 2011 May 1;127(5):896-903.
8. Crouch SR, Waters E, McNair R, Power J. The health perspectives of Australian adolescents from same-sex parent families: a mixed methods study. *Child: care, health and development*. 2015 May 1;41(3):356-64.
9. Fingerhut AW, Riggle ED, Rostosky SS. Same-Sex Marriage: The Social and Psychological Implications of Policy and Debates. *Journal of Social Issues*. 2011 Jun 1;67(2):225-41.
10. Hatzenbuehler ML, McLaughlin KA, Keyes KM, Hasin DS. The impact of institutional discrimination on psychiatric disorders in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: A prospective study. *American Journal of Public Health*. 2010 Mar;100(3):452-9.