

Project/event details

Happy Anniversary? REFLECTING ON MARRIAGE EQUALITY 12-13 November 2018

This symposium explored various debates as well as considering diverse national and international perspectives surrounding marriage equality. The event was designed to reflect critically on marriage equality. There were heated debates about gender and marriage equality, and how the campaign was managed. The capacity for different sides on these debates to engage with one another was challenged by decisions of people to exclude themselves from particular sessions, or parts of the event. These disruptions, throughout the event, spoke to the ways in which marriage equality exposed divisions within the Australian queer community.

There was strong media coverage of the event and a number of strong publication outputs. Keynotes caused some controversy – complications related to different and highly controversial takes on gender and equality and their relationship to marriage debates.

Less well known perspectives also surfaced at the conference. I was especially engaged by Shea Macdonough's presentation. Shea is a woman with Down Syndrome who spoke about her experience of being disenfranchised by the referendum process.

I couldn't even vote: Fighting for my right to be part of the postal survey

Shea Macdonough & Patsie Frawley

"My name is Shea Macdonough. I am 31 years old. I have Down syndrome." Shea will tell the story of her fight to participate in the postal survey and what she learned from standing up for herself. Together Amie and Shea will talk about how peer education and a focus on rights equipped Shea to advocate for herself. We will show how ideas of capacity and personhood mean that Shea's story is just one example of the exclusion of people with intellectual disability in discussions about sexuality and rights.

For the names of speakers or panellists, with a short biography on each—see attached Program

Media Reporting

Tiernan Brady, the Director of the marriage equality campaign, did an interview related to the event on the ABC radio in Canberra. The event was also advertised by SBS.

<https://www.sbs.com.au/topics/sexuality/agenda/article/2018/11/01/where-celebrate-one-year-marriage-equality-australia>

And there was an associated book launch at Muse book store in Canberra.

<http://www.musecanberra.com.au/events/2018/11/11/quinn-eades-going-postal>

Impact

There were approximately 50 participants, including three international keynotes, and two keynotes from interstate.

ECRs and PhD students presented papers and co-authored publications from the event. All of the publications involved authors from different academic levels.

Two thirds of the participants were from outside the ANU.

Publications:

Going Postal, which was launched at Café Muse on the day before the conference spoke to these divisions.

Tears and rage were purged - often documented as poems, photos, short stories, status updates, tweets, blog posts, political cartoons, and videos. Many were shocked at the vitriol directed at 'Yes' voters – to faces, in letterboxes and online, even in 'secret' Facebook groups. By the end, many were truly exhausted. And yes, the legislation went through. Yes, more people can get married now. But many have been left wondering whether it was worth it. Many are living with the ongoing grief of having their lives and those of their loved ones up for public debate.

1. Copland, S and Rasmussen M (2017) Safe Schools, marriage equality, and LGBT youth suicide. In Jones T (ed), Bent Street 1 – 2017, Clouds of Magellan: Melbourne (with Professor Mary Lou Rasmussen).
2. Copland, S (2018). The Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey and the limitations of vulnerability-based politics, *Australian Feminist Studies*, 33(96): 261 – 274
3. Hegarty, B, Marshall, D, Rasmussen, M, and Cover, R. (2018) Heterosexuality and Race in the Same Sex Marriage Postal Survey, *Australian Feminist Studies*, 33(97): 400 – 416
4. Rasmussen, M and Copland, S (2019). Safe Schools, marriage equality, and LGBT youth suicide. In Duggan S, Finn K, Gagnon J, Gray E and Kelly P (eds), *Social Justice in Times of Crisis and Hope: Young People, Wellbeing, and the Politics of Education* Peter Lang Publishing
5. Neary, A & Rasmussen, M 2019, 'Marriage Equality Time: Entanglements of sexual progress and childhood innocence in Irish primary schools', *Sexualities*
6. Thomas, A, McCann, H and Fela, G (2019) 'In this house we believe in fairness and kindness': Post-liberation politics in Australia's same-sex marriage postal survey, *Sexualities*,



Subtitle



Subtitle



Subtitle

From left to right!

Person I don't know, Professor Rosemary Auchmuty (Conference Keynote) , Anne Macduff
and Mary Lou Rasmussen

Rob Cover and Daniel Marshall

Nida Mollison, Hannah McCann, Gemma Killen and Isabel Mudford