



12 September 2016

**STATEMENT BY MOST REV. ARCHBISHOP ANTHONY FISHER OP,
CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOP OF SYDNEY
AND CHAIR OF THE
BISHOPS COMMISSION FOR FAMILY, YOUTH AND LIFE**

The causes of poor mental health problems such as anxiety, depression and suicide are complex and require serious study and compassionate treatment. It is far too important an issue in our community and we should not play politics with mental health.

Treating people who believe in the traditional understanding of marriage as proponents of bigotry or hate-speech, is beneath our country. It exhibits disregard of the views of millions of Australians.

Discussions about marriage today are difficult enough: it is not helpful to trivialise mental health issues and create false alarm as well.

Reasonable disagreement does not equal hate. Offering people the chance to express their views on the definition of marriage at the ballot box does not equal hate. Financially assisting the putting of fair cases for both sides before a vote does not equal hate.

We are a respectful and intelligent nation. The Australian people must be allowed to have their say on this issue and the government needs to ensure that a well-informed and balanced debate can take place.

Most Rev Anthony Fisher OP
ARCHBISHOP OF SYDNEY