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MARRIAGE EQUALITY ANNIVERSARY

Today marks the first anniversary of the announcement of the results of the postal vote on marriage equality, in which 61.6 per cent of people voted to allow same-sex couples to marry in Australia.

The AMA argued strongly for marriage equality, recognising the significant mental and physical health consequences of discrimination on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer/questioning (LGBTIQ) Australians.

“The AMA supports the right of any two consenting adults to marry, regardless of gender,” AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said today.

“We released a Position Statement on Marriage Equality in May last year, and called on the Australian Parliament to legislate for marriage equality, and end the divisive public debate.

“We held a rally in Sydney in September 2017, advocating for a Yes vote. The medical profession backed our call, with more than 2000 doctors signing a petition in favour of legalising same-sex marriage.

“We received criticism from some quarters for our position, but we were steadfast in our conviction that structural discrimination has a severe, damaging impact on mental and physiological health outcomes.

“This position has been backed by research from the University of Queensland, which found a strong link between poorer outcomes in terms of life satisfaction, mental health, and overall health in the lesbian, gay, and bisexual community, and areas with a higher No vote.

“The researchers found that, in areas with the highest No vote, marriage equality attitudes had a two-to-four times higher impact on health than other social determinants such as unemployment and relationship status.

“The researchers confidently conclude that ‘low community levels of support of same-sex marriage (an indicator of cultural stigma) have deleterious effects on the health and wellbeing of Australian LGB communities’.

“The AMA is proud to have been a strong voice supporting marriage equality during such an historic campaign, although we acknowledge that the campaign itself was a time of distress and trauma for many LGBTIQ Australians.

“One year on, there is still a long way to go, with LGBTIQ Australians continuing to suffer higher levels of mental illness and suicidality than the general population. The AMA supports an end to all forms of discrimination against LGBTIQ Australians.”

More than 4,500 same-sex couples have married in Australia since marriage equality legislation passed the Australian Parliament in December 2017.

The AMA Position Statement on Marriage Equality 2017 is at <https://ama.com.au/position-statement/marriage-equality-2017>.

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