

New Zealanders cannot be discriminated against on grounds of sex, marital status, religious belief, ethical belief, colour, race, ethnic or national origins, disability, age, political opinion, employment status, family status, or sexual orientation. But when's the last time you heard of truck drivers being denied the right to legally marry their partners and adopt children as a couple? (1) Homosexual couples are the only members of society denied a chance to create a family this way. In my opinion, a serious issue in society could be solved, if these couples were given the legal right to foster or adopt children (2).

In New Zealand there is an estimated 10,000 foster families (3) and in America alone there are more than 118,000 children waiting to be adopted. The numbers of children in foster care are a huge problem (4) both in New Zealand and globally. Many of these children will never be adopted and therefore never have a family to care for them. Research shows that children who live in foster care are statistically more likely to become unemployed, drop out of school, and become involved in criminal activities (5). In the USA roughly only 54% of foster children graduate from high school, 25% become homeless, and over half become unemployed. Doesn't it make sense to increase the number of parents who want to look after these children by giving homosexuals this right?(6)

Although currently there are no specific barriers stopping gay individuals from adopting children, homosexuals cannot adopt as couples. Some argue that gay couples shouldn't become parents because children need both a mother and father but why isn't this issue argued in relation to single parents? (7) Single parenting is not seen as a major issue even though the child will only have one parent while homosexual families have two. It makes me wonder if this is just plain old discrimination on the grounds off sexual orientation (8).

Despite all the research that has been conducted on this issue, there has not been a single study which proves that the children raised by same sex couples have any long term problems as a result of their family situations. In fact, Girls raised by lesbian mothers were rated above average in academic and social abilities in a recent survey targeting lesbian parents and their children (9). The 17 year old girls also had lower aggression and behavioral problems than children raised in an 'average' family. In the same survey, the children themselves said that they did not feel disadvantaged by having two lesbian mothers. Child welfare organisations in America have even gone so far to retract former claims that same sex parents shouldn't be permitted to adopt (10). Instead of excluding parents from adopting just because of their sexual orientation, adopting should be a case by case program which looks at the best interests of the child (11).

This by no means proves that all homosexuals will make good parents. Not everyone, whatever their sexual orientation is, will be perfect parents (12). However, by permitting gay couples to foster and adopt, more children would have homes which would result in a happier, healthier life for them, ultimately benefiting society.

