

10 June 2012

Dear Committee Members

It concerns me greatly that the Rev Ron Brookman has given false and misleading information to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee re the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2010 on Friday 4 May 2012 at Melbourne when he represented National Marriage Coalition along with Mr Bill Muehlenberg. Therefore I am presenting this supplementary submission to my [previous](#) one.

I refer to statements below made by Rev. Brookman as recorded in the [Hansard](#)

**Rev. Brookman:** *For over 30 years I was homosexual and I desired nothing more than to find a male partner with whom I could share the rest of my life. I experienced grace over many years and much counsel that enabled the transformation of my sexuality to heterosexuality, and I have now been happily married to Ruth for over 18 years—and joyfully I am the father of three children. For 30 years I yearned for homosexual union with all my being, but I became disillusioned with both the superficiality and the transience of gay relationships. Gratefully I have found stability and depth of love that I could never experience in my homosexual attempts. I am now a minister of the Uniting Church and leader of a ministry called Living Waters, which resources churches and supports people who struggle with issues of sexuality and relationships—not just gender issues but abuse, addiction et cetera. In the last six months I have celebrated with two ex-gay men, who have married beautiful wives, and with another two couples who have given birth to babies who would never have been born had the man not converted from homosexuality. I believe that something greater is at stake here for our nation and the rights of one minority group.*

*The narcissism of male homosexuality, which I know a lot about, diminishes the value of femininity; it really does. The frequent enmeshment of lesbianism tends to judge masculinity as not desirable, quite dispensable and even dangerous. Male homosexual unions by their very essence often become open unions and include other partners because the visual stimulus of two males causes them to mutually look beyond themselves lustfully, lacking the feminine otherness to bring the boundary of exclusivity. Lesbian relationships are often subject to enmeshment and to emotional power struggles that thrive in the absence of male objectivity. Same-sex union neutralises gender, celebrates their confusion, and so tears at the glory and the essence of humanity. These are very important points.*

After appearing before the committee Rev Brookman was interviewed as a 'former' homosexual by the Australian Christian Lobby and this was put up on their site Tuesday, 8 May 2012.

<http://www.acl.org.au/2012/05/ron-brookman-on-the-political-spot/>

Statements made by Rev Brookman in this interview further identify the falseness of his representations and the agenda behind appearing before the committee. In this interview he is recorded as saying:

**Ron Brookman:** *Well, I think perhaps the most confronting evidence was the fact that I had transitioned from homosexuality. The basis of the Bill is that homosexuality is innate, that homosexuals are born that way and cannot be changed. So for me, not only to say that for thirty years I struggled desperately with this issue; every fibre of my being was homosexually oriented, but through grace, had been able to have transition in my life, and the fact now that I'm married to a beautiful wife and with whom I have two beautiful children, but, also leading a ministry of transformation not just in the area of homosexuality, but broken sexuality in general, having in the last two months, sorry, in the last six months, celebrated with the marriage of two men who have come also out of homosexuality to take wives, and another two separate families where the husband also had transitioned from homosexuality! But the wives had given birth to, in this case, both*

***bouncing little baby boys who wouldn't have been born had the husbands not made that transition from their previous lifestyle.***

### **Introduction:**

I have known Rev Brookman and been familiar with his ministry, Living Waters, for at least 8 years. Rev Brookman and I have spoken at forums together, appeared in documentaries and had personal one on one meetings.

From these interactions I know the impression Rev Brookman has made to the committee that he was once a homosexual but has now become heterosexual is clearly false. It also concerns me that he has irresponsibly claimed that he encourages those who have 'struggled' with homosexuality to enter heterosexual marriage and that this is also evidence that homosexual people can become straight. The premise behind such false, misleading and irresponsible claims is that gay and lesbian people can become heterosexual and therefore, if change is possible, are not entitled to same sex marriage equality.

### **Rev Brookman's homosexual thoughts and temptations.**

Even though he didn't do so in front of the committee, Rev Brookman has admitted publicly on numerous occasions that he still has homosexual thoughts and desires but doesn't act on them. This is clearly not a change in orientation but a suppression of his true sexual identity or that he is indeed bisexual.

Firstly Rev Brookman and I were filmed by a lecturer from the Assemblies of Bible College presenting both sides of the debate on homosexuality and Christianity. In this interview Rev Brookman freely admitted, more than once, that he got sexually aroused reading my autobiography. My autobiography, *A Life of Unlearning*, details my personal journey as high profile preacher in Australia's mega-churches, being married and finally having to admit I was still gay and then resolve the perceived conflict with my faith and sexuality. A copy of the interview Rev Brookman and I had is on DVD and can be obtained from the college.

Secondly whenever Rev Brookman is pressed if he still experiences homosexual thoughts or feelings he admits it still happens but he doesn't act on them. This happened when he was interviewed for the recent documentary *The Cure* which was about the damage 'ex-gay' groups in Australia do to individuals who are either referred to or seek out help from groups like Living Waters. There is a section in the documentary which is particularly incriminating when Rev Brookman speaks about the attention he recently gave to a young man's thighs he was looking at. There is even more incriminating footage that didn't go into the documentary which can be obtained from the producers.

Another journalist interviewed me about ex-gay ministries recently and she also had the same problem with Rev Brookman being too revealing about his thought life when she filmed his story.

Had he been asked the important question 'do you still have homosexual thoughts and feelings' by committee members he most likely would have admitted this is the case thus discrediting his claims.

### **Rev Brookman's previous sexual addiction and story**

Rev Brookman's story is very familiar to me. The thing that stands out when Rev Brookman tells his story publicly is his sexual addiction. This is what he is referring to when he says ***I struggled desperately with this issue; every fibre of my being was homosexually oriented.*** As a closeted gay man he was plagued and tormented by a sexual addiction that played out in sex venues and frequent anonymous sexual encounters. It is interesting to note that heterosexual people (as well as homosexual people) can also have addiction problems but heterosexuals don't feel the need to blame their orientation for it or to change it. The problem is the addiction .....not the orientation. This inability to

understand that these are separate issues is the fundamental problem and is often reflected in the testimonials of people like Rev Brookman. They are frequently tormented closeted gay men whose out of control behaviours cause them great stress.

### **Rev Brookman – not straight but a situational heterosexual**

I have written extensively on this subject and have coined the phrase '[situational heterosexuality](#)' to describe the experience of 'ex-gays' who marry straight partners or make claims, as Rev Brookman has, that they have been '*enabled to transform/transition from homosexuality to heterosexuality*'. 'Situational heterosexual' has also helped people gain a clearer understanding of what really happens when someone who is homosexual marries someone of the opposite sex and claims change. Confusion about what really happens in these situations still exists and often wrongly reinforces the 'homosexuality is a choice' and 'homosexuals can change' concepts.

The term 'situational homosexuality' is used to describe same sex behaviours in prison, the military, single sex boarding schools, or other sex-segregated communities, where members of those communities might engage in homosexual activity or relationships. Once they come out of that situation they have not become homosexual, they revert to their natural orientation; sex and relationships with the opposite sex. It's only the situation that created the behaviour; the orientation wasn't changed. This is also true of those like Rev Brookman who claim they are now straight as they are married and have fathered children.

Rev Brookman has stated to the committee. *In the last six months I have celebrated with two ex-gay men, who have married beautiful wives, and with another two couples who have given birth to babies who would never have been born had the man not converted from homosexuality.* Whilst Rev Brookman might encourage a few 'ex-gay' men into a heterosexual marriage he doesn't have to deal with the large aftermath when these marriages fail. As I work in this area I see the end results for the vast majority.

When I pointed out on my Facebook page the false evidence Rev Brookman had given the former wife of an 'ex-gay' man, Grace Willem, wrote this below which demonstrates the tragedies that occur when Rev Brookman's 'counsel is followed.

#### **[Grace Willem](#) [Ambassadors & Bridge Builders International \(ABBI\)](#)**

*I'm sad for Ron Brookman's wife, and for the wives (and children if these marriages don't make it) of the other two men he talks about in this interview. I'm sad for everyone who will believe what he says. I'm sad for myself... separated, now divorced from my Christian, closeted, gay-in-denial ex-husband (also in ministry). I'm sad for my ex-husband's first wife and 5 children. I'm sad that he quite possibly will do this again to a 3rd woman because of fear and shame, and because of messages like this one from Ron Brookman that say that it's possible to be a "former homosexual". I support equality in marriage. I support honesty, authenticity, and integrity. I'm a Christian, but sadly the ACL doesn't want or welcome my point of view. And... I should also have said that I'm very very sad for my ex-husband, and for all the unnecessary anxiety, depression, fear and shame that keeps him in the closet.*

### **'Ex-gay' organisations**

I am also very familiar with the types of organisations such as Rev. Brookman's Living Waters as I have been [deconstructing the 'ex-gay' myth for 12 years now](#). Not only did I attend one of the first of these in Australia by submitting to a residential program back in the early 70's and also married with children but I have worked with 100's of people who have been a part of these organisations. The emotional and psychological damage these people experience include depression, suicidal thoughts and attempts and other mental health issues. To say nothing of the trauma caused when eventually these people, who believed heterosexual marriage would solve their 'problem' find their marriage falls apart.

A United States based organisation called [Exodus International](#) is the umbrella organisation for about 270 small Christian based organisations such as Living Waters. These organisations came to the fore in the mid to late 70's when mental health professional organisations were realising that homosexuality was not an illness. Christian based ministries believed homosexuality is a sin/sickness that could be healed by God's power through prayer and faith. These ministries have nearly four decades of failures and damaged and traumatised 1,000's of people.

In January this year, the head of Exodus, Alan Chambers, finally [publicly admitted](#) that a change in orientation is impossible. "*The majority of people that I have met, and I would say the majority meaning 99.9 percent of them, have not experienced a change in their orientation or have gotten to a place where they could say that they could never be tempted or are not tempted in some way or experience some level of same-sex attraction*".

### **Mental health professional organisations and scientific research**

All mental health professional organisations have stated that.

1. As homosexuality is no longer considered an illness or pathology there is no need for anyone to change their sexual orientation.
2. There is no reliable scientific research that demonstrates a change in orientation is possible.
3. It can be harmful to the individual to attempt to turn from gay to straight.

[http://www.psychology.org.au/Assets/Files/reparative\\_therapy.pdf](http://www.psychology.org.au/Assets/Files/reparative_therapy.pdf)

[http://www.psychology.org.au/publications/tip\\_sheets/orientation/#s9](http://www.psychology.org.au/publications/tip_sheets/orientation/#s9)

<http://www.healthyminds.org/More-Info-For/GayLesbianBisexuals.aspx>

To counteract the false information and stress these organisations were causing amongst youth in the USA [Just the Facts about Sexual Orientation and Youth: A Primer for Principals, Educators, and School Personnel](#) was published and endorsed by: American Academy of Pediatrics, American Association of School Administrators, American Counseling Association, American Federation of Teachers, American Psychological Association, American School Counselor Association, American School Health Association, Interfaith Alliance Foundation, National Association of School Psychologists, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Association of Social Workers, National Education Association, School Social Work Association of America.

Whilst I must respect Rev Brookman's right to marry a woman and have children I cannot stand by and allow him to present such false, misleading and irresponsible information to the Senate committee.

It is because of these facts above that I felt I had to make a supplementary submission to the Senate.

If you require any further information or have any questions I am happy to discuss this further with you.

Sincerely

**Anthony Venn-Brown**

**Founder and Director of Ambassadors & Bridge Builders International (ABBI)**

*Creating a better world for LGBTI people of faith through education, information and dialogue*

Author of '[A Life of Unlearning - A Journey to Find the Truth](#)'

Honoured to be voted one of the [25 Most Influential Gay & Lesbian Australians](#) (2007 & 2009) and finalist for the 2011 ACON Community Hero Award

Tel: + 61 (0)2 9699 2448 Mobile: +61 (0)416 015 231

E: [anthony@gayambassdor.com](mailto:anthony@gayambassdor.com)