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**ACON WELCOMES SUCCESSFUL PASSAGE OF HISTORIC**

**SAME-SEX MARRIAGE BILL**

ACON, NSW leading LGBTI health organisation, has welcomed the passing of legislation by the Australian Parliament that removes marriage discrimination and affords same-sex couples the right to marry.

ACON President Dr Justin Koonin said today’s historic vote for same-sex marriage finally brings to an end years of marriage discrimination endured by LGBTI Australians, and paves the wave for equality.

“Marriage is an important legal and social institution in Australia. It carries with it certain rights and privileges. The relationships of those who are married are afforded legitimacy and validity, not only in the eyes of the law, but also in the gaze of family, friends and society. Today’s vote will finally allow LGBTI Australians access to this central institution.”

Dr Koonin said the marriage equality debate has had a significant impact on the health of LGBTI people.

“We have seen the negative health impacts the protracted discourse on marriage equality has had on LGBTI people. The Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey subjected our communities to an unnecessary and divisive debate, which caused many people distress. As a result, we saw increased demand for our client services across the state.

“We hope that the passing of same-sex marriage legislation today will help heal some of the trauma and begin to build on people’s health and wellbeing.”

Dr Koonin praised the many advocates who have fought for this important reform, and commended parliamentarians for their efforts in passing the legislation.

“We thank the many advocates and allies who have worked tirelessly over the years to achieve marriage equality in Australia. Their passion, commitment and zeal for equality has truly been remarkable,” Dr Koonin said. “And we commend our elected representatives for listening to the Australian public and finally legislating for marriage reform.

“Australia is a nation with strong egalitarian values built on a solid foundation of fairness and opportunity. Today’s landmark vote will facilitate greater acceptance, reduce discrimination and, over time, improve the health of LGBTI Australians.”

**ENDS**

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