

Should the US rapper Macklemore have been invited to sing at the NRL grand final?

What they said...

*'A world so hateful some would rather die than be who they are
And a certificate on paper isn't gonna solve it all
But it's a damn good place to start'*

Some of the lyrics of Macklemore's 'Same Love'

'The entertainment does not have to come from an Australian performer. We are not that small-minded. But the act has to suit the sport, does it not?'

Will Swanton, sports reporter for The Australian

The controversy at a glance

On September 1, 2017, the NRL announced that it had invited US rapper Macklemore to sing at the opening of the 2017 grand final. The announcement met with a low-key but mixed media response as to the suitability of the entertainer's style of entertainment.

On September 12, 2017, survey forms began to be mailed out to all Australian voters to allow them to indicate their view on the legalisation of same-sex marriage. If the postal vote indicates majority support for this law change, a bill to amend the Australian Marriage Act will be put to Parliament before the end of the year.

In this context, Macklemore's appearance at the NRL grand final began to attract additional attention as one of his most popular songs, 'Same Love', has been associated with the same-sex marriage movement in the United States. The song was scheduled to be sung at the grand final.

On September 27, 2017, former NRL player, Tony Wall, started a petition on Change.org demanding the Macklemore's 'Same Love' not be played at the NRL grand final and that 'LGBTIQ politics is taken out of the NRL.'

The debate around whether Macklemore should perform and whether his 'Same Love' song should be part of his act grew as the NRL grand final approached.

Former Prime Minister Tony Abbott opposed the performance, as did, among others, Queensland MP, Bob Katter, and One Nation Senator, Pauline Hanson.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, Labor Leader of the Opposition Bill Shorten and Coalition Senator Eric Abetz are among those who have supported the rapper's appearance and the disputed song.

Background

The information on Macklemore was taken from the Wikipedia entry titled 'Macklemore'.

The full text can be accessed at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macklemore>

The information on the song 'same Love' was taken from the Wikipedia entry titled 'Same Love' and can be accessed at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Same_Love

The lyrics of 'Same Love' can be accessed at

<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/macklemore/samelove.html>

An audio of the song can be accessed at <https://soundcloud.com/macklemore/macklemore-x-ryan-lewis-same>

Benjamin Hammond Haggerty, known by his stage name Macklemore, is an American rapper from Seattle, Washington.

"Same Love" is a song by American hip hop duo Macklemore and Ryan Lewis, released as the third single from their 2012 debut studio album, *The Heist*. The track, featuring vocals by Seattle-based singer Mary Lambert, addresses the issue of gay and lesbian rights and was recorded during the campaign for Washington Referendum 74, which, upon approval in 2012, legalised same-sex marriage in Washington State.

The song reached number 11 on the *Billboard Hot 100* in the United States and reached number 1 in both Australia and New Zealand. The song was nominated at the 56th Annual Grammy Awards for Song of the Year.

The cover artwork for the single shows a photograph of Macklemore's uncle, John Haggerty, and his husband, Sean.

The song was featured as a part of YouTube's Pride Week. The video has over 176 million views on YouTube as of September 2017.

Lyrics of 'Same Love'

By Macklemore & Ryan Lewis

When I was in the third grade I thought that I was gay
'Cause I could draw, my uncle was, and I kept my room straight
I told my mom, tears rushing down my face
She's like "Ben you've loved girls since before Pre-K, trippin'."
Yeah, I guess she had a point, didn't she?
Bunch of stereotypes all in my head
I remember doing the math like, "Yeah, I'm good at little league."
A pre-conceived idea of what it all meant
For those that like the same sex
Had the characteristics
The right-wing conservatives think it's a decision
And you can be cured with some treatment and religion
Man-made rewiring of a pre-disposition
Playing God, aw nah here we go
America the brave still fears what we don't know
And "God loves all his children" is somehow forgotten
But we paraphrase a book written thirty-five-hundred years ago
I don't know

And I can't change
Even if I tried
Even if I wanted to
And I can't change
Even if I tried
Even if I wanted to
My love
My love
My love
She keeps me warm
She keeps me warm
She keeps me warm
She keeps me warm

If I was gay, I would think hip-hop hates me

Have you read the YouTube comments lately?
"Man, that's gay" gets dropped on the daily
We've become so numb to what we're saying
Our culture founded from oppression
Yet we don't have acceptance for 'em
Call each other faggots behind the keys of a message board
A word rooted in hate, yet our genre still ignores it
"Gay" is synonymous with the lesser
It's the same hate that's caused wars from religion
Gender to skin color, the complexion of your pigment
The same fight that led people to walk-outs and sit-ins
It's human rights for everybody, there is no difference
Live on and be yourself
When I was at church they taught me something else
If you preach hate at the service those words aren't anointed
That holy water that you soak in has been poisoned
When everyone else is more comfortable remaining voiceless
Rather than fighting for humans that have had their rights stolen
I might not be the same, but that's not important
No freedom 'til we're equal, damn right I support it

(I don't know)

And I can't change
Even if I tried
Even if I wanted to
My love
My love
My love
She keeps me warm
She keeps me warm
She keeps me warm
She keeps me warm

We press play, don't press pause
Progress, march on
With the veil over our eyes
We turn our back on the cause
'Til the day that my uncles can be united by law
When kids are walking 'round the hallway plagued by pain in their heart
A world so hateful some would rather die than be who they are
And a certificate on paper isn't gonna solve it all
But it's a damn good place to start
No law is gonna change us
We have to change us
Whatever God you believe in
We come from the same one
Strip away the fear
Underneath it's all the same love
About time that we raised up

And I can't change
Even if I tried
Even if I wanted to
And I can't change
Even if I tried
Even if I wanted to
My love
My love
My love
She keeps me warm
She keeps me warm
She keeps me warm
She keeps me warm

Love is patient
Love is kind
Love is patient
Love is kind
(Not crying on Sundays)
Love is patient
(Not crying on Sundays)
Love is kind
(I'm not crying on Sundays)
Love is patient
(Not crying on Sundays)
Love is kind
(I'm not crying on Sundays)
Love is patient
(Not crying on Sundays)
Love is kind
(I'm not crying on Sundays)
Love is patient
Love is kind

Internet information

On October 1, 2017, The Guardian published a report titled “‘Equality for all’: Macklemore issues emotional plea during NRL grand final’ detailing Macklemore’s performance at the NRL grand final and giving extensive background on the controversy surrounding it.
<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/oct/01/equality-for-all-macklemore-issues-emotional-plea-during-nrl-grand-final>

On September 29, 2017, The Huffington Post published a comment by its sports and environment editor, Anthony Sharwood, titled ‘Nobody Complained When the Grand Final Had a Song about a Bloke Killing His Girlfriend’
The comment suggests that complaints about Macklemore performing at the NRL grand final are inconsistent.

The full text can be accessed at http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2017/09/28/nobody-complained-when-the-grand-final-had-a-song-about-a-bloke-killing-his-girlfriend_a_23225813/

On September 29, 2017, The Australian Published a comment by its sport reporter Will Swanton titled 'Macklemore storm proves sport and politics is never a perfect marriage' The piece presents an overview of the controversy surrounding booking Macklemore for the 2017 NRL grand final and suggests that overall it was an ill-judged decision.

The comment is followed by a large number of reader posts on the issue.

The full text and posts can be accessed at <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/sport/opinion/will-swanton/macklemore-storm-proves-sport-and-politics-is-never-a-perfect-marriage/news-story/0a9a992bd749f49729b3a8d2fc9759d>

On September 29, 2017, ABC News published a report titled 'Malcolm Turnbull warns Tony Abbott not to 'cancel' free speech over Macklemore grand final show' outlining the Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull's concerns regarding Tony Abbott's call for Macklemore's performance to be censored.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-09-29/turnbull-warns-abbott-not-to-cancel-free-speech-over-macklemore/8999608>

On September 29, 2017, Yahoo 7 News published a report titled 'Politics and sport don't mix, says Dutton'

The report details the objections of the immigration minister, Peter Dutton, to Macklemore perform at the 2017 NRL grand final.

The full text can be accessed at <https://au.news.yahoo.com/world/a/37277571/politics-and-sport-dont-mix-says-dutton/>

On September 28, 2017, SBS News published a report titled 'Brandis hits out at Abbott for opposing Macklemore's pro-same sex marriage song at NRL final' giving details of the proposed Macklemore performance at the NRL grand final and the differing reactions to it.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2017/09/28/brandis-hits-out-abbott-opposing-macklemores-pro-same-sex-marriage-song-nrl-final>

On September 28, 2017, The Australian published a report detailing a wide range of views on Macklemore's scheduled appearance at the 2017 NRL grand final. The report has undergone a number of name changes on line. At the time of producing this outline it was titled 'I'll go harder': Macklemore on NRL grand final row'

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/abbott-up-in-arms-over-gay-anthem-for-nrl-grand-final/news-story/2a9d4f149f719b5ef4feefabd90ed79d>

On September 28, 2017, ABC News published a report titled 'Macklemore singing at NRL grand final like "seeping sewage into debutante ball", says Bob Katter'

The report details the opposition of Queensland MP Bob Katter to Macklemore's scheduled appearance and also presents a number of countering views.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-09-28/macklemore-singing-at-gf-like-seeping-sewage-into-debutante-ball/8998442>

On September 28, 2017, The Daily Telegraph published a report titled 'Rapper Macklemore to play same sex anthem at grand final'

The report referred to the views of those who support and oppose Macklemore singing 'Same Love' at the NRL grand final, including the views of federal immigration minister, Peter Dutton, opposing Macklemore's 'Same Love'.

The full text can be found at <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/rapper-macklemore-to-play-same-sex-anthem-at-grand-final/news-story/56c71ec0e72e10032910770e8ee27d20>

On September 28, 2017, SBS News published a report titled "'Go harder:' Frances Abbott at odds with dad Tony over pro-same sex marriage song' which details the former Prime Minister's daughter's support for the song 'Same Love'.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2017/09/28/go-harder-frances-abbott-odds-dad-tony-over-pro-same-sex-marriage-song?cid=inbody:politically-themed-items-not-banned-at-nrl-grand-final-anz-stadium>

On September 28, 2017, The Daily Telegraph published a report on Macklemore's selection to supply entertainment for the NRL 2017 grand final and outlined some of the previous interest in his song 'Same Love'.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/moment-musician-macklemore-took-samesex-marriage-mainstream/news-story/e3da387afd884a35579c34eeb5312233>

On September 28, 2017, The Herald Sun published a comment by News Corp national music writer, Cameron Adams, titled 'Same Love is exactly right for the NRL final' which argues that Macklemore's song is a highly suitable choice in the part of the NRL.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/rendezview/same-love-is-exactly-right-for-the-nrl-final/news-story/38f3b562ee5b991a81c2767e8f780923>

On September 28, 2017, Star Observer published a report detailing Senator Pauline Hanson's objections to Macklemore performing at the 2017 NRL grand final.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.starobserver.com.au/news/national-news/pauline-hanson-really-macklemore-nrl-grand-final/162382>

On September 27, 2017, Channel Nine's Wide World of Sport published a report titled 'US music artist Macklemore caught in NRL Grand Final same-sex marriage storm'

The report referred to the views of those who support and oppose Macklemore singing 'Same Love' at the NRL grand final, including the views of former NRL player, Tony Wall, who has started a petition on Change.org demanding the Macklemore's 'Same Love' not be played at the NRL grand final.

The full text can be found at <https://wwos.nine.com.au/2017/09/27/17/36/macklemore-song-same-love-to-be-played-at-nrl-grand-final>

On September 27, 2017, former NRL player, Tony Wall, started a petition on Change.org demanding the Macklemore's 'Same Love' not be played at the NRL grand final and that 'LGBTIQ politics is taken out of the NRL.'

The petition can be accessed at <https://www.change.org/p/todd-greenberg-take-lgbtqi-politics-out-of-the-nrl>

On September 27, 2017, The Huffington Post published a report titled 'Tony Abbott Joins Call to Ban Macklemore's Same Sex Love Anthem from NRL Grand Final'

The report details some of the opposition to Macklemore singing at the NRL grand final. It focuses on the view of former Prime Minister Tony Abbott.

The full text can be accessed at http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2017/09/27/tony-abbott-joins-call-to-ban-macklemores-same-sex-love-anthem-from-nrl-grand-final_a_23225265/

On September 22, 2017, Channel Nine's Wide World of Sport published a report titled 'NRL Footy Show host Erin Molan enters same-sex marriage debate after AFL controversy' The report details Molan's reservations about the AFL taking a public position on same-sex marriage.

The full text can be accessed at <https://wwos.nine.com.au/2017/09/22/08/26/nrl-footy-show-host-erin-molan-enters-same-sex-marriage-debate-after-afl-controversy>

On September 21, 2017, Channel Nine's Wide World of Sport published a report titled 'AFL House evacuated after hoax threat received' referring to a bomb hoax that occurred the day after the AFL announced its support of same-sex marriage.

The full text can be accessed at <https://wwos.nine.com.au/2017/09/21/13/01/afl-house-evacuated-after-threat-received>

On September 21, 2017, The Australian published a comment by Simone Fox Koob titled 'Elliott slams AFL: 'Don't mix politics with sport'

The opinion piece presents former Carlton president John Elliott's opposition to the AFL adopting a partisan position on same-sex marriage.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/sport/afl/afl-removes-controversial-yes-sign-from-docklands-hq/news-story/d87a339e74dfdb0c76467645622fbd30>

On September 11, 2017, ABC News published a comment by Robert Forsyth titled 'Same-sex marriage is a test of Australian maturity that we may not pass'

The piece gives Forsyth's view as to why the issue has become so contentious.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-09-11/same-sex-marriage-a-test-of-australian-maturity/8892016>

On September 1, 2017, NRL News published a media release titled 'Grand final entertainment announced'

NRL spokespeople announced the inviting of Macklemore to supply pre-game entertainment for the 2017 NRL grand final and explained its high hopes of the anticipated performance and accompanying lights spectacle.

The full text can be accessed at <https://m.nrl.com/grand-final-entertainment-announced/tabid/10874/newsid/111626/default.aspx>

On September 1, 2017, The Huffington Post published a comment by its sports and environment editor Anthony Sharwood titled 'NRL Has Perfect Answer to Alan Jones' Grumpy Old Man Macklemore Rant'

The comment explains the steps taken by the NRL to ensure it selected a suitable entertainer for the 2017 grand final.

The full text can be accessed at http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2017/08/31/nrl-has-perfect-answer-to-alan-jones-grumpy-old-man-macklemore-rant_a_23192988/

On September 1, 2017, The Australian Published a comment by its sport reporter Will Swanton titled 'Macklemore gives the NRL grand final a bad rap'

The opinion piece disapproves of the booking of Macklemore for the 2017 NRL grand final on the basis of cultural unsuitability.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/sport/opinion/will-swanton/macklemore-gives-the-nrl-grand-final-a-bad-rap/news-story/5a7b5c556e59ea40fce47c48868a4555>

On August 28, 2017, The Huffington Post published a report by political editor Karen Barlow titled 'Same-Sex Marriage Is Not A Left/Right Issue'

The report looks at the formation of a support group for same-sex marriage within the Liberal-Nationals Coalition.

The full text can be accessed at http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2017/08/27/same-sex-marriage-is-not-a-left-right-issue_a_23186898/

On April 9, 2015, the NRL issued a media release titled 'NRL launches anti-discrimination policy'

The release detailed the Anti-Homophobia and Inclusion Framework that the NRL and four other Australian sporting codes had developed.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.nrl.com/nrl-launches-anti-discrimination-policy/tabid/10874/newsid/77496/default.aspx>

Arguments in favour of inviting Macklemore to sing at the NRL grand final

1. Macklemore is a very popular entertainer picked to suit NRL fan preferences

Supporters of Macklemore note that he is a very successful entertainer whose work has sold very well and that his performance is likely to be enjoyed by many of those attending the NRL grand final.

With regard to the particular song that has been questioned, 'Same Love' supporters have noted that when it was released in Australia in 2012 it sold over 300,000 copies, spent four weeks at No. 1 and was prominent on commercial radio for even longer. It has had over 170 million views on YouTube.

Cameron Adams, News Corp's national music writer has stated, 'At the time it was the most popular song in Australia and there were no petitions, no angry tweets from politicians, no drama. Macklemore has even toured here (twice) playing the song in question to thousands of paying customers.'

Adams has further noted, 'Macklemore has had four No. 1 hits in Australia, "Same Love" is one of them, so it's no huge shock it's on the playlist alongside "Thrift Shop" and "Downtown" and his latest release "Glorious".'

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/rendezview/same-love-is-exactly-right-for-the-nrl-final/news-story/38f3b562ee5b991a81c2767e8f780923>

Huffington Post's sports and environment editor, Anthony Sharwood, has noted that the NRL took deliberate measures to select an entertainer whom NRL fans would enjoy. Sharwood has written, 'The NRL took the unprecedented step of actually asking fans who they'd like. The NRL organised a special focus group, and Macklemore emerged as the dominant choice.'

http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2017/08/31/nrl-has-perfect-answer-to-alan-jones-grumpy-old-man-macklemore-rant_a_23192988/

The NRL's Chief Commercial Officer, Andrew Abdo, has commented, 'The fact that we were able to bring an act that was specifically requested by a fan focus group is something really special.'

Abdo has further noted, 'He is one of the world's leading artists at the moment and popular with Australians and most importantly our fans. It is a real coup for him to be performing exclusively for us during his only show in Australia on the back of the release of his new album.' <https://m.nrl.com/grand-final-entertainment-announced/tabid/10874/newsid/111626/default.aspx>

As a further indication of the popularity of Macklemore's 'Same Love', the track hit number one on iTunes in Australia after former Prime Minister Tony Abbott and others opposed it. The song replaced another Macklemore track 'Good Old Days' from his latest album 'GEMINI'.

A light and pyro show will accompany the performance, in line with the NRL's theme for the decider: Let's Make It Grand. Andrew Abdo concluded, 'Our Grand Final Entertainment will once again ensure that the biggest match of the season is a spectacular event not to be missed.' <https://m.nrl.com/grand-final-entertainment-announced/tabid/10874/newsid/111626/default.aspx>

2. The lyrics of 'Same Love' are unlikely to be offensive to most fans

Defenders of Macklemore's 'Same Love' argue that the song promotes worthy sentiments that are not likely to give offense. Numerous supporters of the song have stressed the positive values it endorses and its inclusivity, in part because the song is calling for tolerance. The title stresses that homosexual love is not a better form of love; rather it suggests that at base all love is the same, however expressed.

At the 56th Grammy Awards in 2014, where Macklemore and Ryan Lewis performed 'Same Love', Queen Latifah stated, 'This song is not a love song for some of us, but for all of us.' <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/moment-musician-macklemore-took-samesex-marriage-mainstream/news-story/e3da387afd884a35579c34eeb5312233>

Equality campaign co-leader, Alex Greenwich, has also defended the sentiments promoted in the song. He has stated, "'Same Love' is a song which is about love and happiness and I think that's what Australians want to hear.' <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/latest-news/macklemore-to-donate-to-yes-campaign/news-story/b0352550dae0dbab5cc49361c9181f69>

Former Prime Minister, Tony Abbott's daughter, Frances, has also declared herself a supporter of the song, stating on Instagram, 'I still remember the first time I heard this song. I was sitting in my car, about to get out to go to work... but stopped and sat and listened. I can't think of a better song for all the hundreds of thousands of people to listen to on Saturday.' <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2017/09/28/go-harder-frances-abbott-odds-dad-tony-over-pro-same-sex-marriage-song?cid=inbody:politically-themed-items-not-banned-at-nrl-grand-final-anz-stadium>

Defenders of the song have further noted that in previous years lyrics that were far more likely to give offense have passed without comment. They have accused 'Same Love's' opponents of exaggeration and hypocrisy.

In an opinion piece published in Huffington Post on September 27, 2017, Anthony Sharwood stated, 'Back in 2014, Welsh crooner Tom Jones starred at the AFL grand final. Among the songs he performed was his hit Delilah, which graphically tells the story of a jilted man who knifes his girlfriend to death.

This song was deemed unworthy of complaint by the then Prime Minister of Australia, Tony Abbott.' http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2017/09/28/nobody-complained-when-the-grand-final-had-a-song-about-a-bloke-killing-his-girlfriend_a_23225813/

3. Same-sex marriage is not a party-political issue

Some supporters of Macklemore singing 'Same Love' at the NRL grand final argue that marriage equality is not a political issue in any narrow, party-political sense.

It is an issue that will ultimately require a political solution, in that it will require a majority vote in both houses of Parliament to change the Marriage Act to remove references to gender; however, it is not an issue that will be resolved on party lines. If a same-sex marriage bill is put to the Parliament before the end of 2017, both the Coalition and the Labor party will allow a conscience vote on the question.

On August 28, 2017, Huffington Post reported that a contingent of Liberals and Nationals, including party elders, current parliamentarians and Young Liberals and Nationals, have formed to campaign on the 'yes' case for the more conservative side of Australian politics. 'It is a broad cross-section of the Coalition parties, formed as a group called 'Libs and Nats for Yes', which...adds to the known group of Liberals; Dean Smith, Tim Wilson, Warren Entsch, Trevor Evans, Trent Zimmerman and Jason Wood, who are trying to get a free vote on parliament on same-sex marriage. One Liberal Party elder, former Howard Government minister Amanda Vanstone [has stated]... that marriage equality is a conservative, or more correctly in her view, a liberal issue, in its support for the institution of marriage.'

http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2017/08/27/same-sex-marriage-is-not-a-left-right-issue_a_23186898/

The group has federal Liberal Party President and former NSW Premier Nick Greiner as its patron. Other prominent Liberals and Nationals include Government leader in the House Christopher Pyne, Education Minister Simon Birmingham and Nationals Infrastructure Minister Darren Chester. On September 10, 2017, the Coalition Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, announced that he would be voting 'yes' for same-sex marriage and a week later publicly urged all other Australians to vote the same way. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-09-10/turnbull-wants-australia-to-vote-yes-for-same-sex-marriage/8889868>

Bill Shorten, the Parliamentary leader of the Labor Party also supports same-sex marriage, as do a large majority of Labor MPs. However, on August 6, 2017, it was reported that at least six Labor senators may oppose same-sex marriage as a matter of conscience. Therefore, the same-sex marriage question does not divide within the federal parliament along Party-political lines. <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/the-labor-mps-who-could-blow-up-rebel-liberals-samesex-marriage-plans-20170802-gxnkp7.html>

The head of the NRL, Todd Greenberg, has also indicated that the NRL is not intending to make any narrowly political statement. He has stated, the NRL was 'not aimed at making political statements' but 'just simply aimed at making the position well known. At some point in the game we need to take a position. And that's what we've done.'

<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/rapper-macklemore-to-play-same-sex-anthem-at-grand-final/news-story/56c71ec0e72e10032910770e8ee27d20>

Supporters of the NRL declaring its endorsement of same-sex marriage and inviting Macklemore to sing at the grand final argue that the NRL is doing no more than stating its position on a broad social issue such as racism, sexism and general inequality and discrimination. They argue that this is not a political statement in any partisan or divisive sense. One of Macklemore's co-performers, Mary Lambert, has stated, 'Performing "Same Love" in Australia is not about being political. It's about being human.'

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/oct/01/equality-for-all-macklemore-issues-emotional-plea-during-nrl-grand-final>

4. Freedom of speech is an important Australian value

Supporters of Macklemore being able to perform 'Same Love' at the NRL grand final argue that this is a question involving the right to free speech.

According to this line of argument, permitting a wide range of views to be canvassed is an essential element of a democracy, as it allows the electorate to arrive at an informed opinion. As part of this process, it is important that each individual with a particular view on an issue be able to express it. There are limitations on this right; however, critics note, this is only in so far as freedom of speech is not used to promote civil disorder or cause individual injury. Australia's Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull has said of the Macklemore performance, 'Trying to censor the playlist at the half-time entertainment at the grand final is not consistent with taking a liberal approach to free speech.' Turnbull has explicitly argued that to the extent that voting in the same-sex marriage survey is a democratic process, then it is being fostered by allowing different views to be expressed.

The Prime Minister has stated, 'The reality is a democracy operates by giving people their say. Now I grant you, this survey doesn't have a precedent, it's new. But it is democratic...'
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-09-29/turnbull-warns-abbott-not-to-censor-free-speech-over-macklemore/8999608>

Senator Brandis has similarly argued that the 'No' campaign, in attempting to censor Macklemore's performance, was trying to shut down freedom of speech. Senator Brandis has stated, 'It is one of his [Macklemore's] most popular songs, and for Mr Abbott or anyone else to say that it should be banned I think is a bizarre thing to say. I thought Mr Abbott believed in freedom of speech.'
<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2017/09/28/brandis-hits-out-abbott-opposing-macklemores-pro-same-sex-marriage-song-nrl-final>

After Macklemore's NRL grand final performance, Ben Fordham, a journalist and sports reporter currently working as a drive presenter on Sydney radio station 2GB and as the host of television program Australian Ninja Warrior posted a supportive comment on Twitter. Fordham stated, 'Here's my bit of free speech – Macklemore was great and I hope the precious snowflakes who wanted him censored survived those sweet tunes.'
<https://wwos.nine.com.au/2017/10/01/17/53/nrl-grand-final-macklemore-half-time-show-performance-same-love-song>

Critics of those who have sought to censor Macklemore's performance accuse their opponents of hypocrisy in supporting free speech only so long as it is their views that are being presented. Greens Senator, Sarah Hanson-Young has posted on Twitter, 'Tony Abbott and Pauline Hanson want to gag Macklemore from singing "Same Love". Free speech only if you agree with them.'
<http://www.newshub.co.nz/home/entertainment/2017/09/tony-abbott-tries-to-stop-macklemore-performing-same-love-at-nrl-final.html>

5. Tolerance of different sexual orientations is part of the NRL's attempt to foster inclusivity. The NRL has justified its hiring of Macklemore for the 2017 grand final and the addition of his song 'Same Love' in that performance by noting that both the rapper and his song are in accord with the League's declared position on inclusivity.

In common with other major sporting codes in Australia, NRL has a policy of inclusion covering all races, genders, sexual orientations, ethnic origins and religions. This policy covers all players, administrators, club officials, workers and supporters.

In April, 2015, the NRL announced its introduction of a new, stronger Diversity and Inclusion Policy aimed at eliminating homophobia and other forms of discrimination in Rugby League.

Then Chief Executive, Mr Dave Smith, stated that the NRL was committed to making everyone feel welcome in Rugby League at all levels. He said the NRL already ran an Indigenous Players Camp, Close the Gap round, Women in League round and other programs to demonstrate that everyone has a place in Rugby League.

Mr Smith joined with the heads of four other sporting bodies to present a united front against homophobia. The codes agreed to introduce policies consistent with the newly created Anti-

Homophobia and Inclusion Framework by August of 2015. <http://www.nrl.com/nrl-launches-anti-discrimination-policy/tabid/10874/newsid/77496/default.aspx>

Current NRL chief executive, Todd Greenberg, has claimed that the NRL's policy on inclusion means that its stance on same-sex marriage is merely a matter of consistency. Greenberg has stated, 'It would be hypocritical of the NRL to be promoting inclusivity while not delivering on it.'

Greenberg added, 'We're very comfortable with that, we're an inclusive game and whilst everyone will stand for their own issues and make their own decisions, we're very comfortable with where we sit.' <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2017/09/28/brandis-hits-out-abbott-opposing-macklemores-pro-same-sex-marriage-song-nrl-final>

Diver Matthew Mitcham, who was the first openly homosexual Australian athlete to win an Olympic gold medal, said he was very pleased the NRL and AFL had come out in support of the 'Yes' campaign.

Mitcham also noted that it was in accord with the codes' declared policies of inclusion.

Mitcham stated, 'It's really great to see that both the NRL and AFL are really committed to inclusion. It's part of their mission statements it to be inclusive.'

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-09-28/macklemore-singing-at-gf-like-seeping-sewage-into-debutante-ball/8998442>

Arguments against inviting Macklemore to sing at the NRL grand final

1. People come to a sporting competition to be entertained

Opponents of social or political views being promoted at sporting events argue that this is a misuse of these occasions and subverts their intended purpose.

Those with this opinion claim that fans attend sporting events for the enjoyment they derive from the skill of the players and the excitement of the competition. Spectator sport, according to this view, is an entertainment and should not be turned into a political commentary as this is not what fans either want or expect.

This view has been put by Australia's immigration minister, Peter Dutton, who opposes Macklemore singing 'Same Love' at the NRL grand final. Dutton has argued, 'People go to the AFL or NRL finals because they want to see the game of football played, they want to be entertained; they don't want to be sold political messages.'

<https://au.news.yahoo.com/world/a/37277571/politics-and-sport-dont-mix-says-dutton/>

A number of readers posting comments on news sites have endorsed Dutton's view. One commenter named 'Ian', responding to a comment in The Australian on reactions to the Macklemore issue stated, 'The NRL and AFL are setting a dangerous precedent by engaging in political comment.'

I will not be watching Macklemore but I will be watching the game.

I am so incensed by having to endure a political message during my entertainment time I have written to Todd Greenberg [NRL head] who I believed had more sense up until now.'

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/sport/opinion/will-swanton/macklemore-storm-proves-sport-and-politics-is-never-a-perfect-marriage/news-story/0a9a992bd749f49729b3a8d2fcf9759d>

A similar view was posted by 'Terence' in response to the same article. He wrote, 'Sick to death of all this SSM coverage and now it's ruined the footy final. What the NRL board was thinking is unfathomable, but I wish they hadn't ruined the grand final.'

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/sport/opinion/will-swanton/macklemore-storm-proves->

sport-and-politics-is-never-a-perfect-marriage/news-story/0a9a992bd749f49729b3a8d2fcf9759d

Former Prime Minister Tony Abbott posted a comment on Twitter on September 27, 2017, that appears an attempt to summarise the attitudes of those who do not want their sporting entertainment mixed with comment on social issues. Abbott wrote, 'Footy fans shouldn't be subjected to a politicised grand final.' http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2017/09/27/tony-abbott-joins-call-to-ban-macklemores-same-sex-love-anthem-from-nrl-grand-final_a_23225265/

2. There are more suitable entertainers for an NRL grand final than Macklemore
Opponents of Macklemore have argued that the singer will not be well known to many NRL supporters. They have claimed there are many Australian entertainers who would be more generally well-received and who would have a greater appreciation of the event at which they were singing.

This point has been made by Will Swanton, a sports reporter for The Australian, in a comment published on September 1, 2017. Swanton queried, 'Where'd they find Macklemore? In a thrift shop? What are they paying him? Ninety-nine cents?'

Swanton went on to explain why he considers Macklemore an unsuitable entertainer for the NRL grand final, stating, 'Of all the brilliant, soulful, raw and rugged Australian musicians who know a thing or two about the footy, who know what a landmark night it is on the Australian sporting calendar and who would put their hearts and souls into a performance out of the pure gratitude at being involved, the best the NRL could find was ... an American hip-hop artist who wouldn't know a Steeden from one of his Seattle beer gardens.'

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/sport/opinion/will-swanton/macklemore-gives-the-nrl-grand-final-a-bad-rap/news-story/5a7b5c556e59ea40fce47c48868a4555>

Swanton has argued that the problem is not simply that Macklemore is unaware of Australian sporting culture, but that his music does not reflect the spirit of rugby league. Swanton argues, 'The entertainment does not have to come from an Australian performer. We are not that small-minded. But the act has to suit the sport, does it not?'

The NRL has grunt. Rugby league is raw. Cold Chisel's set before the 2015 decider was when the NRL got it right.'

Swanton concluded, 'Footy is part of the national fabric and so is a certain breed of music. Why shy away from that?' <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/sport/opinion/will-swanton/macklemore-gives-the-nrl-grand-final-a-bad-rap/news-story/5a7b5c556e59ea40fce47c48868a4555>

Similar comments about Macklemore's cultural inappropriateness have been made by both North Queensland MP Bob Katter and Senator Pauline Hanson.

Katter has stressed the lingering hostility to American imports, stating, 'They said of the Americans during the war that there were three problems with them: over-sexed, over-paid and over here.'

Well, this little bloke, Macklemore, or whatever his name is, is coming over here. Well mate, go home, we don't want you here. The people that will be there at this game don't want you.' <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-09-28/macklemore-singing-at-gf-like-seeping-sewage-into-debutante-ball/8998442>

Pauline Hanson has argued that there are many Australian entertainers who would better fit the occasion. She has stated, 'It's absolutely ridiculous... We've got so many other great artists in this country that we could actually put up there. Why do we bring in someone from overseas?... Put Johnny Farnham up there. Don't bring some whoever up from overseas. I don't have a clue who they are. Put an Aussie up there.'

<http://www.starobserver.com.au/news/national-news/pauline-hanson-really-macklemore-nrl-grand-final/162382>

A similar view has been expressed by former Prime Minister Tony Abbott, who has stated, 'It's a very Australian sport. It's the ultimate Australian weekend, why do we need to import people?' http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2017/10/01/tony-abbott-says-hes-a-fan-of-savage-garden_a_23229177/?utm_hp_ref=au-homepage?benref=smh

3. Same-sex marriage is currently a particularly divisive issue in Australia

Opponents of the Macklemore song 'Same Love' being sung at the NRL grand final argue that it is inappropriate to raise such a contentious issue in a public sporting forum. There is the possibility, they claim, of sparking verbal and physical arguments.

The potential for a sporting code to provoke violence by publicly endorsing a particular position on same-sex marriage was made apparent after the AFL declared its support for the 'yes' vote. AFL headquarters had to be evacuated after a hoax bomb threat was received, only a day after the code indicated it would be supporting same-sex marriage by replacing its logo with a 'yes'. <https://www.wos.nine.com.au/2017/09/21/13/01/afl-house-evacuated-after-threat-received>

In an opinion piece published on the ABC News site on September 11, 2017, Robert Forsyth explained why same-sex marriage was such a contentious issue. He stated, 'This issue has such divisive potential because it is freighted with considerable significance by both sides of the present debate, even if many other Australians are not so concerned about it.

For some of those opposed, it is a matter as fundamental as what God wants. Others genuinely believe it concerns the real welfare of children.

For some supporting the change, same-sex marriage involves nothing less than providing a basic human right.' <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-09-11/same-sex-marriage-a-test-of-australian-maturity/8892016>

NRL Footy Show host, Erin Molan, has also expressed concern that the AFL or NRL's partisan position on same-sex marriage could foster ill-feeling rather than assuage it. She has argued that sport usually has the capacity to bring people together, but that by taking a view on same-sex marriage sporting codes may well create additional hostility.

Molan has stated, 'I love sport because it has this incredible ability to unify, so whilst I agree with the position of the AFL I also believe their actions are unnecessarily divisive and so much of the response to it has been nasty and vile, much like this whole debate.'

<https://www.wos.nine.com.au/2017/09/22/08/26/nrl-footy-show-host-erin-molan-enters-same-sex-marriage-debate-after-afl-controversy>

A similar point has been made by Coalition for Marriage spokesperson, David Goodwin, Goodwin has stated, 'Sport is something that unites all Australians, so it is pretty -bizarre that the NRL would choose to use its halftime entertainment to push a message which it knows millions of Australians disagree with.' <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/abbott-up-in-arms-over-gay-anthem-for-nrl-grand-final/news-story/2a9d4f149f719b5ef4feefabd90ed79d>

4. The NRL has a diverse fan base and should remain neutral on social and political issues

Opponents of sporting codes expressing a view on social and political issues typically argue that the only attitude these codes should adopt is one of neutrality. What lies behind this objection is the belief that all the followers of these codes cannot be presumed to hold the same view as that which is being publicly endorsed by their code. Fans will hold a variety of opinions on any given topic. Therefore, it is argued, their sporting codes should not presume to adopt one view, supposedly on their behalf

This position was expounded by an online reader of The Australian who posted the following comment on the issue on the publication's Internet site on September 28, 2017. 'Why...is it incumbent upon commercial entities such as the AFL, the NRL and Qantas, to have/express a view on same-sex marriage?

Are they now the arbiters of our cultural values? I'll wager there are as many opponents to same-sex marriage in those entities, whose views were never canvassed, as there are supporters. Commercial entities should remain neutral in the debate.'

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/sport/opinion/will-swanton/macklemore-storm-proves-sport-and-politics-is-never-a-perfect-marriage/news-story/0a9a992bd749f49729b3a8d2fcf9759d>

NRL Footy Show host, Erin Molan, has also expressed disquiet at either the NRL or the AFL publicly endorsing same-sex marriage. Molan has stated, 'I'm a very, very passionate and proud supporter of marriage equality. I've made it very public that I will and actually have the other day voted 'Yes' already.

But I represent me, just me and no-one else. The AFL and our other sporting codes represent hundreds and thousands of people, some of whom unfortunately don't agree with me. I wish every Australian believed in marriage equality, I genuinely do. But the reality of the situation is, they don't, in fact a fairly large proportion of them don't.'

<https://wwos.nine.com.au/2017/09/22/08/26/nrl-footy-show-host-erin-molan-enters-same-sex-marriage-debate-after-afl-controversy>

A similar point has been made by former Carlton president John Elliott who has supported the actions of the Carlton Football Club on the question. Carlton's position statement reads, 'As a club, we respect that this is about personal choice, and as such don't intend to campaign on the issue.' The club went on to declare its commitment to equality and opposition to discrimination, but clearly refrained from promoting a particular view on same-sex marriage. The club appears to be respecting the differing opinions of its fans and recognising that each will form his or her own view.

Elliott stated, 'I think it's a very wise idea what Carlton did. I don't think you should be mixing politics with sport. It is each individual's decision to vote yes or no.'

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/sport/afl/afl-removes-controversial-yes-sign-from-docklands-hq/news-story/d87a339e74dfdb0c76467645622fbd30>

5. Children, in particular, should not be forcibly exposed to political messages

Opponents of Macklemore singing 'Same Love' at the NRL grand final claim it is particularly inappropriate to expose children to lyrics dealing with homosexuality and same-sex marriage. Former NRL player, Tony Wall, has started a petition on Change.org demanding the song not be played and that 'LGBTIQ politics is taken out of the NRL.'

The Change.org petition posted by Wall features a stock photograph of a mother and father sitting on either side of a daughter, with the girl's mother using her hand to cover the daughter's eyes. The implication of the graphic appears to be that Wall wishes to protect his and other children from exposure to the material Macklemore is to present. <https://www.change.org/p/todd-greenberg-take-lgbtq-politics-out-of-the-nrl>

Wall has claimed that his family would feel uncomfortable if they heard the song on Sunday. He has further stated, 'As a No voter, it will be very difficult to watch the NRL Grand Final with my wife and five young children as the event will be heavily politicised.'

The implication of Wall's comment appears to be that it should be a matter for parents to decide when they will raise particular social and political issues with their children. Also implicit in Wall's reference to his family's probable discomfort is that he believes his children are too young to be exposed to this issue. <https://wwos.nine.com.au/2017/09/27/17/36/macklemore-song-same-love-to-be-played-at-nrl-grand-final>

A similar comment has been made by Immigration Minister Peter Dutton, who has stated, 'My kids love the footy and I want to take my boys to watch the footy and I don't want the betting ads jammed down their throat.'

Dutton has indicated there are other positions to which he does not want his children forcibly exposed.

Dutton has stated, 'I don't want the gay marriage message jammed down their throat at the football.'

<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/rapper-macklemore-to-play-same-sex-anthem-at-grand-final/news-story/56c71ec0e72e10032910770e8ee27d20>

Complaints about the suitability of Macklemore's lyrics for young listeners have occurred in the past.

In October 2015 a group of parents at an Orange County High School protested about a proposed visit by the rapper to their children's school. The children had won the appearance in a competition;

however, some parents and school administrators believed Macklemore's lyrics were unsuitable

because they promoted 'misogyny and drug use'. Ultimately the issue was resolved when only those children with parental permission were allowed to attend.

<http://www.ocreger.com/2015/12/16/macklemore-in-orange-county-why-its-controversial-for-the-rapper-to-be-at-aliso-niguel-high/>

Further implications

Behind the question of whether Macklemore should have performed the song 'Same Love' at the NRL 2017 grand final is the issue of whether corporate bodies should or indeed can remain neutral on topical social issues. Corporate declarations regarding same-sex marriage have proved contentious in this regard.

On March 16, 2017, thirty-three leaders of Australian corporations declared their backing of same-sex marriage and called on the Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, to put enabling legislation before Parliament. The chief executives of Apple, ANZ Banking Group, AGL Energy, Commonwealth Bank, Holden, Qantas, Telstra, Westpac and Wesfarmers were among those who signed the joint letter which said marriage equality would be good for customers, business and the nation.

<http://www.equalitycampaign.org.au/businessleaderletter>

The corporate leaders' position was met with some criticism from those who challenged whether corporate bodies had the right either to speak on behalf of their employees, product users and clients on topical issues or whether they were entitled to attempt to influence community views in this way.

Immigration minister, Peter Dutton, has challenged the right of corporate heads to espouse what he considers political positions from outside the political system and without a constituency. Dutton has stated, 'If people want to enter politics, then do that, but don't do it from the office overlooking the harbour...'
<http://www.afr.com/business/big-business-backs-marriage-equality-campaign-20170315-guyrn4>

In an analysis published in the Financial Review on March 16, 2017, analysts Fleur Anderson and Michael Smith noted, 'The role of big business in the debate has been a contentious issue, with some chief executives privately worried there would be a backlash against their business if they spoke out. The Catholic Church last year asked some companies to drop their marriage equality campaigns... Telstra... backflipped on its support for marriage equality following [this] pressure...but later rejoined the campaign.'
<http://www.afr.com/business/big-business-backs-marriage-equality-campaign-20170315-guyrn4>

The question seems to be as much one of economic self-interest as it is the social conscience of corporate leaders. It might appear that corporate neutrality would be the best option; however, depending on the issue and the extent of popular engagement, corporations may be pressured by employees, product users and clients to adopt a particular position. The initial position of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra (SSO) on same-sex marriage, as determined by its eight-person board, was that while it 'strongly supported' all citizens' right to have a say on the issue, it 'does not feel it has the right to take a position and commit our stakeholders to one side or the other and has decided it should remain neutral'. The reaction on social media to the board's original stance was immediate and disapproving and a large number of subscribers called to cancel subscriptions. The SSO has now declared its first position 'ill-judged' and is publicly supporting same-sex marriage.

<http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/music/sso-boards-dramatic-uturn-on-samesex-marriage-20170930-gys1it.html>

The NRL has similarly had to meet the various requirements of its stakeholders. It has, in fact, together with other Australian sporting codes, been addressing issues related to diversity and inclusion for over a decade.

Sport has functioned like a microcosm of Australian society, in which physical and largely male sporting environments have forced a number of social issues to the fore. On- and off-field racism, homophobic sledging, off-field sexist behaviour (including sexual assault), excessive alcohol consumption, drunken brawls and illicit drug-taking have forced all Australian sporting codes to address these issues, adopt positions on them and put protocols in place. Regarding racism, sexism and homophobia, their response has been to adopt policies of education and inclusion, targeting players and officials and the broader sporting community.

With sports' prevailing policy of gender inclusion and support for those of same-sex sexual orientation, support for same-sex marriage was a natural progression. AFL chief executive Gillon McLachlan declared his code's support for marriage equality in 2014. The NRL's chief executive officer, Todd Greenberg, declared the NRL's support of same-sex marriage in September this year. Both codes clearly believe it is a position in line with the views of a majority of their supporters. Having Macklemore sing 'Same Love' at the 2017 grand final was simply an extension of a policy position that has been years in the making.