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Opposition frontbencher Richard Marles tells Liberal MP Sarah Henderson to lobby for a parliamentary vote on same-sex marriage

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Richard Marles has urged Federal Member for Corangamite Sarah Henderson to lobby the prime minister for gay marriage.

OPPOSITION frontbencher Richard Marles has urged Liberal MP Sarah Henderson to lobby the Prime Minister for a parliamentary vote on same-sex marriage.

Attorney-General George Brandis has indicated a plebiscite will be held later this year on the controversial issue if the Turnbull Government is re-elected, although the Prime Minister's office declined to set a time frame.

“I think if you’re a supporter of same-sex marriage, and Sarah Henderson is, then the best way of achieving change is through a vote in Parliament,” Mr Marles said.

“Every member of Government, including Sarah Henderson, ought to be making their views known to the Prime Minister and she has indicated she feels strongly about this issue.

“It’s heartbreaking for the LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex) community to not have marriage equality and to have government inaction on an issue that’s so important, not just to them but to many Australians.”

But Ms Henderson said the Government appreciated that many Australians had strong personal views about same-sex marriage.

“That is why, last year, it was decided that this issue should be resolved through a plebiscite that gives every Australian the opportunity to have his or her say,” she said.

“On a matter as important as this, we believe it is thoroughly democratic to ask the Australian people whether the Marriage Act 1961 should be amended to allow for same-sex marriage.

“We have just seen a Labor senator resign from Parliament because of Bill Shorten’s handling of this issue.

“The Turnbull Government is absolutely committed to a plebiscite on same-sex marriage as soon as possible after the election.”

A plebiscite, a non-binding vote by all Australians of voting age, has not been held since 1977 when the Fraser Government initiated a poll over the national anthem.

The Coalition parties decided at a marathon meeting last August that they would advocate for a same-sex marriage plebiscite at the 2016 election. Malcolm Turnbull has maintained backing for a plebiscite since he replaced Mr Abbott as prime minister in September.

Ms Henderson declared her support for same-sex marriage in June 2015 and also called for a free vote for Coalition MPs on the issue.

She told the *Geelong Advertiser* at the time that marriage equality was consistent with fundamental Liberal values, which embraced freedom of the individual and stable, long-term relationships.