

To remain confidential

Re: Inquiry into the provisions of the same sex: same entitlements Bill 2007

There have been many groups throughout history, and Australian history that have suffered injustice – and by and large progress has been made for these groups. From the women’s liberation movement to the end of the White Australia Policy and rights for Indigenous Australians, there has been some recognition of these people and groups as relevant and worthy parts of the community. I am regretful that this same progress has not been made for GLBTI people in Australia.

I have been with my partner for almost three years now – and it’s her first lesbian relationship. It’s been hard for her because she has always believed that if you are a good person that people and organisations will treat you appropriately. I am writing this submission on her behalf because she is unable to because of her work situation.

My partner has really opened my eyes to how much overt discrimination there is towards people who are in same-sex relationships. I am a police officer and I had an incident at work that meant I had to go to the hospital for treatment and testing. It was eye opening in that my partner could not sign me out of hospital – that she is not recognised as my spouse.

One of the most debated topics is about same-sex marriage – and it’s something that my partner is very passionate about. She believes that we contribute to society just like those in a heterosexual relationship, so why should we be excluded from benefits and other ‘normal’ things. But marriage is just one issue in the overall gamut of recognition. There seems to be a feeling from the major political parties that they are happy to tolerate (sometimes not even that) same sex couples or homosexuals, but they are not willing to recognise us or bring our rights in line with most other Australians.

There is so much in government policy and legislation that very discretely, but very deliberately discriminates against same-sex relationships. Why do we have to spend twice as much as a straight couple before we qualify for the Medicare safety net? Why, in certain industries, are life partners not able to access the same benefits if their partner dies? I read that Michael Kirby’s partner will get next to nothing if something was to happen to Mr Kirby, but a wife would get a sizeable portion of the allocated super. Why is this allowed to happen? This is discrimination in every sense. Most Australians talk about a fair go – this is certainly not a fair go. The problem is that equal rights and recognition for same sex couples is not a ‘sexy’ topic. Parties don’t want to voice pro-gay intentions or policies, because by and large it’s not an election winner. But it’s something that really needs to be brought into the public consciousness. Women got the votes, and Indigenous Australians were recognised in the census because a large portion of the community said ‘this is not acceptable’. We need the same thing to happen for same-sex relationships.

Relationships are about love, honesty and commitment – it’s not about anatomy. Why are we discriminating on body parts?