

## ***Inquiry into the provisions of the Same Sex Same Entitlements Bill 2007:***

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on this important topic.

1. Legislators must understand that this debate is **not** about sex. It is about love and companionship; mental health and fairness; social stability and the right to live unmolested in a community. Sex can be found anywhere, but loving companionship is only to be found in a stable relationship.
2. Laws mould public opinion. Thus, laws that discriminate against some citizens, instil bigotry, intolerance and suspicion in the hearts of other citizens. When the state refuses to take seriously the loving commitment of same-sex-oriented people, then family, friends and workmates also find it difficult to take them seriously. I've heard from many gays in the United Kingdom that it was astounding when the laws were passed legalising same sex unions, that suddenly family and friends treated them and their partners quite differently. They realised that their son's relationship and commitment was as valid as any other, and communications with family, friends and workmates became less stressed and much more enriching.
3. Everyone needs someone to love – a partner to share ones life, to care for and to cherish. Studies have proven that couples in loving relationships are healthier, live longer and remain independent longer than single people. The health benefits alone, therefore, should make the government think again about recognising the validity of same sex partnerships. I repeat – it has nothing to do with sex, it has to do with love and caring and companionship. Laws either value those things, or they do not. Nor is it about having children. Most same sex couples aren't interested in children, although studies in both the U.K. and Holland indicate that gay men make excellent parents.
4. Thanks to decriminalisation of homosexual activity, it is now relatively easy to be a single gay man in Australia. Most people feel comfortable with them, because gays are supposed to be lonely misfits. However, it remains **very** difficult to be a gay couple. We are viewed with suspicion and mistrust and are sometimes the recipients of derision and abuse. This is because the government refuses to legally recognise same gender couples, thus fuelling the same prejudices as single gays endured for so long. The rationale being; if the government doesn't approve, it must be bad.
5. Another important reason for the continuing difficulties of same-sex-oriented people, is that Australia has no effective anti-discrimination laws. The only groups that preach discrimination and hatred against gays are religions. But all religions have been granted exemptions! Consequently, harassment and violence both verbal and physical are rife against same-sex-oriented people every day, starting in the junior classes of primary school and continuing through into the workplace, on the streets and even at home. As a result, more than half of all youth suicides are by gay boys whose lives have become intolerable – not because they are gay, but because they cannot live with the contempt and hatred spewing from pulpits, classroom teachers, fellow pupils and, sadly, parents. The government must share the blame for this misery and death because it expressly permits religions to foment lies about same-sex-oriented people, and to discriminate against them in all their activities. An honourable government would force all religions to obey anti-discrimination laws. The fact that someone believes in an invisible superman in the sky is no reason to grant them the right to persecute fellow citizens!
6. On the practical front, I want to know that if my partner becomes sick I have the right to visit him in hospital, agree or not to his treatment and so on just as any heterosexual spouse has the right to protect and care for their partner. I want to be sure that if I die there can be no contesting of my will by relatives. I want to be able to arrange my partner's funeral, or he mine, and to have no hassles about my right to act on his behalf, or he on mine. Until the law recognises our union as valid, however, I will never have that security and peace of mind.

Peter Rigby Taylor