

I am a lesbian mother of two children aged 6 and 11. The older of the children is my biological daughter and the younger was borne of my ex-partner, also a lesbian.

We planned, conceived and raised both children together and equally share their care and costs.

We have a personal arrangement that we believes fills some of the gaps for our children - as they are not protected by law.

Since our partnership broke down some 18 months ago we have shared care arrangements for our children whereby they live with each of us on a week-about basis. It is very important for us that our children are raised as siblings and continue to live together.

We honoured personal arrangements to halve our superannuation earnings as well as other assets and liabilities when we broke up.

For Centrelink and ATO purposes we are only recognized as having one child each and our children are not recognized in Federal law as siblings.

Despite this our family is recognized socially and within our extended families, schools, doctors etc.

Our children are almost of the age to question this anomaly. It will be from the social framework within which they live that they will fail to understand WHY and HOW a just and civil society can make these distinctions on their behalf and render their family structure 'less than' their contemporaries brought up in heterosexual households.

As parents we are educated, politically informed and financially stable. We believe we have put measures in place to counteract the systemic discrimination that we and our children face. Why should we have to do this? Why do we not have the same protection as any other family? How do we teach our children to be decent, socially compassionate and fair citizens in a land that enshrines bigotry, ostracism and prejudice in law?

Try getting a passport for a non-biological child... Try working out child care rebates for after school care for a non-biological child... Try explaining these issues to my kids. They know that we share the costs and care of their upbringing, they know they are loved and secure in both their homes. What they don't know is that this, 'the lucky country' we all call home, sees them as invisible, inferior to and struggling for the rights other children take for granted.

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