

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Legal and Constitutional Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia
Via: legcon.sen@aph.gov.au

Urgent request for redress re unauthorised use of my name

Dear committee secretariat,

I am writing to draw your attention to a submission to the *Inquiry into the Same-Sex Relationship (Equal Treatment in Commonwealth Laws-Superannuation Bill 2008)* which erroneously contains my name.

The submission by the Australian Family Association (no. 22) contains an attachment (attachment A) to a publication titled 'Marriage Manifesto' published by the 'National Marriage Coalition' and dated 18 September 2007. It appears here:

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Legal_and_Constitutional_Affairs/Completed_inquiries/2008-10/same_sex_entitlements/submissions/sublist

My name appears under 'Signatories To This Document' on p.10, as 'Melinda Tankard-Reist Australian Women's Forum'. While both names are incorrect – my name is Melinda Tankard Reist and the organisation of which I was at that time a Director is Women's Forum Australia (WFA) - the inclusion of these names would give the appearance to most readers that I had in fact signed this document. To set the record straight: I had never seen the document before it was published in hard copy and posted on various websites, nor asked to sign it or give permission for my name to be added, nor had any member of the WFA Board. Neither myself, nor the WFA Board, had any involvement in the 'National Marriage Coalition' or the issue, which was not in the charter of WFA.

When my initial attempts, made verbally, to have my name removed from the document failed, WFA Board Chair Katrina George wrote to Executive Directors of the National Marriage Coalition, Neil and Jane Rookes on December 2, 2008, formally requesting removal of our names from the document. In response, Ms George was provided a PDF of

the revised version of the Manifesto (attached), on December 3, 2008, with the names removed. The email from Neil and Jane Rookes stated:

The inclusion of your organisation as an unauthorised signatory as mentioned in your letter has been removed in the reprint of The Marriage Manifesto. We have not published an online version of the document ourselves, but we will continue to contact those organisations who currently have made it available on line and recommend that the updated version be added.

Please feel free to bring to our attention any remaining places that the original and incorrect version of the document is available and we will respond immediately by contacting those organisations and sending an updated version of the document.

We were satisfied by this response and took it on good faith, believing this was the end of the matter and the record would be corrected.

However, it has just come to my attention that this 'updated' version did not replace the original false version. The original false version is hosted on the 'Gender Matters' website which is administered by Mr Warwick Marsh of the 'Fatherhood Foundation' <http://gendermatters.org.au/Marriage.html> and also hosted on the Australian Family Association's website https://family.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/attachments_221_443375_ISSUES_-_MARRIAGE_-_MARR.pdf. I also discovered to my significant disappointment that the original incorrect version is the one which continues to appear as 'Attachment A' to the AFA's submission to your inquiry.

Given this issue remains unrectified since 2007, and given the attachment to the AFA submission purports to give my personal authorisation to its contents, and given that I have been falsely reported in media as having signed it, I request removal of my name from any copies hosted by your committee and/or removal of any attachment containing the unauthorised use of my name, so that the misrepresentation is corrected.

I am sure you will agree that ensuring the integrity of the operation of parliamentary committees and the very valuable and important function of inviting, considering and publishing submissions from individuals and community groups, is a serious responsibility in a democratic society. Regardless of differing viewpoints on controversial issues, ensuring submissions are not given added weight by the inclusion of names of individuals who never signed them, is part of protecting the vital role of parliamentary committees and ensuring accurate historical records.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Melinda Tankard Reist

March 3, 2020