

## SUBMISSION ON THE MARRIAGE EQUALITY AMENDMENT BILL 2010

Dear Committee Secretary,

As an Australian who believes same-sex couples should be able to marry, I wholeheartedly support the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2010. The Bill is an important step towards providing legal equality for same-sex partners and removing discrimination against them. It removes the final bastion of sanctioned discrimination against same-sex couples. The significance of this reaches far beyond just marriage; it cements the message that discrimination on the basis of sexuality is not ok, leading society as a whole to grow towards greater acceptance and tolerance of each other's differences.

The Bill also provides greater recognition of relationships. Marriage is a widely recognised and well respected institution. De facto status does not provide the same level of security, understanding and status. Consider a de facto couple who have been together 10 years, compared to a couple who have been recently married, but have been together for one year. The married couple instantly commands greater respect from society due to the formal commitment they have made to each other. As a result, married couples are automatically provided with the status of each other's next of kin, power of attorney etc. These rights are not afforded to same-sex couples, who may find themselves having to prove their relationship status in often distressing or grievous circumstances.

Some states have passed legislation allowing civil unions/partnerships. I oppose civil unions as a substitute for full equality in marriage for same-sex partners. While mimicking marriage in all but name, civil unions in effect create a second class status. The message that is sent is a strong one: that same-sex couples are not worthy of marriage, that same-sex partners are less committed to each other, that same-sex relationships are second class relationships.

Australia is a secular country, governed by civil law, not religious law or biblical text. Marriage also falls into this category. A marriage can be a religious or civil ceremony. I support provisions of the Bill which allow religious celebrants to refuse to marry same-sex partners. The religious argument against same-sex marriage is thus invalid, as religious celebrants may refuse to marry couples whose relationships they don't agree with.

The outcome of allowing full marriage equality to all Australians will not be an apocalypse, nor will there be a surge in paedophilia, polyamory or bestiality. It will not affect the ability or the rights of heterosexual couples to get married. No, allowing same-sex couples full marriage equality will simply lead to same-sex couples getting married (with a resultant growth in the wedding industry!).

Thank you for your consideration,