



Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
By e-mail: legcon.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary

Inquiry into the Sex and Age Discrimination Legislation Amendment Bill 2010

YWCA Australia thanks the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee for the opportunity to comment on the Sex and Age Discrimination Legislation Amendment Bill 2010, and for providing us with an extension of time in which to comment.

YWCA Australia is the national association of YWCAs in Australia and is part of the World YWCA movement. We are a women-led organisation that achieves positive change by providing advocacy, programs and services for women, families and communities.

YWCAs undertake advocacy and deliver programs and services that develop the leadership and collective power of women and girls; support individuals, their families and communities at critical times; and promote gender equality and community strengthening.

Equality Rights Alliance submission

YWCA Australia endorses the key points of the submission to the Committee made by Equality Rights Alliance dated 1 November 2010.

Recognition of kinship in family and caring responsibilities

YWCA Australia would also like to comment on the recognition of kinship in family and caring responsibilities.

In our view, the definition of 'family responsibilities' in section 4 of the Act should be extended to include broader family and personal relationships for whom people may have caring responsibilities, including caring responsibilities associated with family kinship and community responsibilities. Such a definition would cover family kinship and community responsibilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, in particular, often care for children, relatives with disabilities, and elderly relatives beyond their 'immediate' family and should be protected from discrimination on the grounds of those caring responsibilities.

We refer the Committee to paragraph 9 of the Agreed Resolutions of the 53rd Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women which, in the context of discussing the unequal sharing of caregiving labour between men and women and its impact on women's lives, recognised the broader scope of caregiving labour:

The Commission recognizes that caregiving work at the household, family and community levels includes the support and care of children, older persons, the sick, persons with disabilities, and caring associated with family kinship and community responsibilities¹.

For your information, the Australian Government delegation to the Commission introduced the language on family kinship responsibilities which was then picked up and adopted by our international colleagues. We therefore urge the Committee to recommend that the definition of 'family responsibilities' in section 4 of the Sex Discrimination Act be extended to include broader family and personal relationships for whom people may have caring responsibilities, including caring associated with family kinship and community responsibilities.

More information

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission.

Yours sincerely

Dr. Caroline Lambert
Executive Director
YWCA Australia

15 November 2010

¹ *Report of the 53rd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, 2009*, available at <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/283/98/PDF/N0928398.pdf?OpenElement>