

Dear Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission concerning the protection of freedom of religion or belief. I would like to restrict my submission to the Australian scene and, in particular, the use of state and territory anti-discrimination laws by homosexual activists to suppress the religious freedom to express one's beliefs.

There can be no doubt that the right of religious expression is integral to religious freedom. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 18 recognises the right of freedom of religion to include the right "to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance." And Article 19 explicitly recognises the more general right to freedom of expression as well.

Surely then, the right to simply disagree with the homosexual activists and defend marriage as the life-long union between a man and woman should be protected in Australia?

But many state and territory laws do not protect this right. For example, Toowoomba GP, Dr David Van Gend had a complaint laid against him by a gay activist for simply stating his view that marriage is the union of a man and a woman, as requested by the Courier-Mail newspaper which published his article alongside another opinion piece in favour of same-sex marriage. And Archbishop Julian Porteous of Hobart (and all members of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference) were prosecuted under Tasmania's Anti-discrimination Act for providing a Bishops' Statement on marriage to parents of children in Catholic schools in his own archdiocese.

I recognise that the committee does not have any direct influence over state or territory legislation, but it does exercise some influence over whether the Federal Parliament passes homosexual 'marriage' legislation. I urge the committee to recognise that if the Federal Parliament does pass homosexual 'marriage' legislation, this will only serve to increase the grounds for religious persecution already exercised by homosexual activists. Please, therefore, report on this danger to religious freedom and recommend the parliament does not legalise homosexual 'marriage.'

Yours faithfully,

Mr. Joel David van der Horst

The following 29 people submitted versions of a Form Letter which were identical or substantially similar to Form Letter 5.

Joel David van der Horst
Robyn Lah
Cheryl Young
Anthony & Patricia Gregory
John Young
David & Ruth Vernon
Maryanne Millington
Geoffrey & Judith Grayden
Dr Kwok-Keong Lam
Josephine Cory
John Rieffel
Janet Cowden
Tony & ElizaBeth Pearse
Geraldine Lee
Alan & Marie Alford
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Dr Mark & Jenny Harwood
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