

**Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee**

Submission from Helen Stitt, University of Melbourne, to the Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs

Inquiry into the Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Bill 2012 – Exposure Draft Legislation

I strongly urge the Commonwealth to provide for express protection of members of the GLBTI community in the proposed Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Bill.

As a lesbian I know from personal experience how often its members face discrimination in the workplace. They also frequently suffer discrimination as service recipients, from amongst other providers, education, social welfare, health and aged care services.

A law that includes protections on the grounds of sexual orientation and relationship status is necessary to ensure fair treatment for all Australians. Providing this protection of human rights to members of the Australian GLBTI community would also improve the mental health of its members, maximise their potential in the workplace and combat prejudice against them from the broader Australian community.

The most important single factor in promoting positive change and greater community acceptance of diversity is for members of the wider community to realise how many GLBTI Australians they know: in both family, social and work circles and in public life. Knowledge of positive role models is also essential to the well-being of GLBTI youth.

Without legal protection against discrimination, members of the GLBTI community are too often afraid to disclose their sexual orientation or relationship status. They feel forced to protect themselves by living closeted lives. This leads to social isolation and poor mental health outcomes. It also exacerbates a lack of community understanding of both the needs of the GLBTI community but also, most importantly, the many positive contributions it makes to Australian society.

I strongly support the adoption of a Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Bill to protect the rights of the GLBTI community, safeguarding a just treatment for all.

Regards

Helen Stitt