



Submission to the
**Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee Inquiry
into the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2010**

Submitted by
The Union for Progressive Judaism

The Union for Progressive Judaism (UPJ) represents 26 congregations and communal organisations across Australia, New Zealand and Asia and has more than 7,000 members.

The UPJ fully acknowledges the rights of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) people in our own community and throughout the world. In accordance with the values of equality and egalitarianism, we believe that the GLBT community should be afforded full rights, equal to all other peoples. As it says in Genesis "And God created humans in God's own image, in the image of God, God created them; male and female God created them." (Genesis 1:27). Accordingly we acknowledge that all people are made *B'Tselem Elohim*, in the image of God and that each person should be treated with dignity and respect regardless of race, gender or sexual orientation.

The UPJ therefore condemns all forms of homophobia and discrimination based on sexual orientation. There is no justification for such abuse and disrespect and it is essential that all perpetrators of homophobia are prosecuted and held responsible for such offensive comments both in the eyes of society and before the law.

Similarly, legislative changes made in recent years to acknowledge same-sex partnerships have helped to decrease the level of discrimination written into our legal system. However, these changes must be part of larger changes to make same sex partnerships the equal of heterosexual partnerships. This includes making marriage an option for all people, not just heterosexual couples. The UPJ joins with our rabbinic council, the Moetzah, in calling for full marriage equality to be written into Australian law. We also call for these changes to be written into the law of all countries in our region and across the globe.

Australia has overwhelming public support for marriage equality, and the UPJ supports the move to act in accordance with the interests and feelings of the majority of Australian citizens. We believe that this includes recognition of same sex marriages held both here and overseas.

Jewish people have suffered discrimination throughout our history. We oppose prejudice in all forms, not only when it is directed towards us. We are therefore compelled to stand with the GLBT community in their fight for equality and respect. The UPJ and its constituents will make every effort to give equal opportunity to GLBT members in relation to membership, leadership and learning. We also welcome all partners of GLBT members and treat GLBT couples equally to heterosexual couples and families.

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