

Committee Secretary  
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

30 March 2012

Dear Committee Members,

**RE: Submission to Inquiry into the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2010**

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission to the Senate Inquiry into the *Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2010*.

SDA Members for Equality is an organisation of workers across Australia that formed in 2011 in protest against the leaders of our union – the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association (SDA) – for their discriminatory stance on marriage equality.

SDA Members for Equality supports the *Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2010*, and urges the committee to recommend in favour of equality. We believe workers should not be discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other status. Such discrimination causes great harm to gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people by sending the message that they do not belong and are not equal in the eyes of society.

The SDA is a diverse union, and includes many different workers from the retail industry, including shop assistants, butchers, bakers, cleaners, call centre workers and hairdressers. The majority of these workers are young, and so are statistically more likely to support marriage equality. (See Galaxy polls by Australian Marriage Equality here: <http://on.fb.me/HnEfiy>)

We wish to make it clear that the SDA leadership – and in particular, its National Secretary Joe de Bruyn – is not representing the majority of SDA members by speaking out against same-sex marriage.

Despite repeated requests, the SDA has refused to survey its membership to ascertain their views on marriage equality. We know that many SDA members support the issue because we have received tremendous support and encouragement from them. We also know many workers in the retail industry who have resigned from the SDA – or refused to join from the outset – because of the union's opposition to marriage equality. These workers are left unprotected in the workplace because their union does not represent them on issues like marriage equality.

The SDA has often claimed to be speaking “on behalf” of its members when opposing marriage equality. This is a betrayal of those many members who support the issue, and an even greater betrayal of those members who are LGBTI. Unions are meant to advocate *for* the rights of their workers, not *against* them – but this is exactly what the SDA does.

Mr de Bruyn has been National Secretary of the SDA for almost 34 years, but the union’s voting structure means that ordinary members and their views are not represented in

leadership ranks. As a result, Mr de Bruyn's views are now dramatically out-of-step with those of most members.

We urge the committee to support the *Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2010*, and to be mindful that any representations by the SDA against marriage equality are not true reflections of the views of the union's membership.

Yours Sincerely

Duncan Hart  
National Convener  
SDA Members for Equality