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Subject: Submission to the Family Law Amendment Bill 2008

Dear Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee,

I would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to make a submission into the Family Law Amendment (De Facto Financial Matters and Other Measures) Bill 2008 Inquiry. I support the Bill which will allow both heterosexual and same-sex de facto couples in most states and territories to access the Family Court in relation to property and financial matters upon the breakdown of a relationship.

All States and Territories currently recognise same-sex de facto couples within their de facto property division regimes. This Bill will ensure a consistent approach is taken across most of Australia.

For de facto couples with children, this Bill will ensure that matters relating to children and property can be dealt with before one Court. At present, de facto couples must pursue claims before State Courts in relation to property and the Family Court in relation to children. This makes the breakdown of a relationship a more difficult and costly exercise, both financially and emotionally.

I support the Bill's recognition of children living in same-sex families for the purposes of property division. However, I believe that same-sex families should be consistently recognised in all aspects of the Family Law Act, including in relation to parenting matters upon the breakdown of a relationship.

Yours sincerely,

Claire Watkins