

Dear Senator Crossin,

I would like to make a submission to the Inquiry into the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2009 in support of marriage equality for same-sex couples.

The *Marriage Act 1961* (Cth) is a civil law which applies to all Australians. I believe the *Marriage Act* should be amended to ensure same-sex couples have equal rights to marry in Australia. I believe section 88EA of the *Marriage Act* should be repealed so that overseas same-sex marriages are recognised in Australia in the same way as opposite-sex marriages between consenting adults.

Freedom Centre (FC) is a peer support and information service for young people (under 26) with diverse sexuality and gender (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersex, queer and those questioning). FC is a service of the WA AIDS Council and is funded by the WA Health Department's Division of Mental Health as part of the National Suicide Prevention Strategy. Freedom Centre has provided services to the community for 15 years and has developed a unique reputation for its youth-owned, peer-based approach to early intervention and prevention Mental Health service provision. Freedom Centre is primarily concerned with the health and well-being of young people with diverse sexuality and gender. Therefore the motivation for this submission is the positive impact Marriage Equality would have on LGBTTIQ young people's health and wellbeing. Discrimination in the Marriage Act sends the message that same-sex relationships are inferior and do not deserve the same respect and recognition as other couple relationships between consenting adults. Same-sex couples should have the same choices available to heterosexual couples for the recognition of their relationships. It is about equality and human rights. Equal recognition of our lives and relationships are important factors contributing to our health and wellbeing. The Freedom Centre's Senate Inquiry into the Marriage Equality Amendment Act 2009 Submission has been informed by engaging the community through the Faces for Freedom project (FFF). The Faces for Freedom project is photography project by LGBTTIQ people and their supporters. It's simply an online blog ([www.facesforfreedom.blogspot.com](http://www.facesforfreedom.blogspot.com)) of a series of individuals holding a sign that makes a statement to have their voices heard. FFF was a way of our community making a statement against homophobia, and for relationship recognition rights in Australia. The project asked participants to submit photos of themselves holding a sign which makes a statement against homophobia, transphobia, biphobia and heterosexism and for Marriage Equality and relationship recognition regardless of gender. The Freedom Centre's Senate Inquiry into the Marriage Equality Amendment Act 2009 Submission is supported by the statements in the photos at [www.facesforfreedom.blogspot.com](http://www.facesforfreedom.blogspot.com) As Freedom Centre is a peer-based social support and early intervention and prevention mental health service, our focus for this submission is to represent the voices of the community members who participated in the Faces for Freedom project to support and inform Freedom Centre's Senate Inquiry into the Marriage Amendment Act 2009 Submission. Each photograph with an individual or individuals holding a statement speaks for itself. It is essential that each of the submissions at [www.facesforfreedom.blogspot.com](http://www.facesforfreedom.blogspot.com) be considered in the Senate Inquiry into the Marriage Equality Amendment Act 2009. The Faces for Freedom project, and therefore, Freedom Centre's submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2009, has been widely supported by the Western Australian, Australian, and international community of LGBTTIQ people and their families and communities. People who submitted were of all sexual orientations and gender identities, all ages, and were parents, sons, daughters, friends & colleagues of LGBTTIQ people. The Freedom Centre community

strongly supports Marriage Equality for couples regardless of gender. We trust the Senate will recognise and consider our submission and the Faces for Freedom project.

It is time to ensure that discrimination against same-sex couples in the *Marriage Act* is removed.

Yours sincerely,

Freedom Centre