

Dear Sir / Madam,

I am writing to express my strong support for any law that would extend equality to same sex relationships, including through equal access to the celebration of marriage.

While Manager of the People Living With AIDS Program at the Victorian AIDS Council 1989 to 1991, I had occasion to commiserate many times with the partners of recently deceased. In many instances the surviving partner, after many years together, had provided months of terminal care for the deceased. Terminal care for someone dying of AIDS is demanding, to say the least. If the deceased passed without a will, and on at least two occasions that I know of, even if there **was** a will naming the partner as next of kin, estranged parents often moved in and took control of final medical decisions, the funeral, and even the disposition of the deceased's assets.

This left the surviving partner alienated and in some instances literally homeless.

I would not wish in anyone the pain of sitting in a church hearing a priest who never knew the deceased read a lesson from St Paul on filial loyalty chosen by estranged parents who threw their son out of home decades earlier.

This could have been absolutely avoided if the couple had been allowed to marry.

It's not so much the legal rights – which often require formal mechanisms to assert (difficult in times of crisis) – it's the symbolic rights, the unequivocal clarity of being recognised by family, friends and all associates as “married” that would have prevented these awful events.

I sincerely urge you please to draft and pass a Bill to extend equality – both legal and the important symbolic equality – to all loving couples, gay or straight, so that we don't need a lawyer or a court for those around us to recognise and respect the meaning of our relationships.

Sincerely,

Chris Gill