

Monday, 24th August 2009.

Submission to the Australian Senate Inquiry inquiring into the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2009.

I'm a 21-year old Australian citizen currently in a long-term relationship with a same-sex partner who resides in the USA. Presently I'm studying my Honours year in a Bachelor of Psychology program, and expect to graduate in 2009. Being part of the younger generation of graduates entering the workforce, I find it difficult to believe that the current policy on marriage is one reflecting a society that does not value the contributions—academically, culturally, economically—I hope to make to Australia.

As a student of Psychology, this inequality is highlighted by the unanimity in psychological research condemning the ill effects of legal discrimination against gay and lesbian couples, particularly those with children. There is a clear inconsistency between research on same-sex relationships and the unfounded legal presumptions used to deny or restrict civil marriage rights of lesbians and gay men.

With a unanimous positive scholarly appraisal of gay and lesbian relationships and parenting, it is surprising that courts and politicians across Australia still rely on outdated personal prejudices or unfounded concerns for the 'best interests of children' when making custody and marriage-recognition decisions affecting the very lives of thousands of dedicated and loving same-sex couples (and an even greater number of children). It is therefore paramount that a union of expert opinion and legal decision-making occurs, such that the sexual orientation and gender identity of couples is not a factor in the legal definition of marriage. A rapidly growing number of countries and jurisdictions have called for the legalisation of same-sex marriage in order to protect the fundamental rights of gay and lesbian couples and their children. If meeting the best interests of children is a basis for marriage, then denying gay or lesbian parents the right to say "I do" undermines this purpose.

Like many people my age, I hope to one day marry a partner of my choosing in a country that values and respects its gay and lesbian citizens. I would love that country to be my home one, Australia.