

Senate Inquiry into Marriage Equality:

My partner and I have been together for 11 years and are raising three children. We pay taxes, we participate on the lives of our children, contribute to school and sporting activities. Both our names appear on the birth certificate of our youngest child, who was born into the relationship. Yet we cannot legally marry.

In the ACT a relationships register has been established. We have resisted the temptation to 'register' our relationship with the ACT Government as we see this as equivalent to registering our dogs, car or trailer.

My family is being sent a clear message by our federal law that it is acceptable to exclude lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered persons from a central social institution and that our relationships are inferior.

Unless we can marry we cannot be the same under law. The *Marriage Act* continues to discriminate against same-sex couples as long as it prohibits same-sex marriage. Opposite-sex couples have a choice of marrying or remaining de facto partners but this choice is not open to my partner and I.

Our children have attended weddings of other family members and would like to attend their parents' wedding and cannot see why there is a need to discriminate against our family. Our 9 year old tells her friends that "*the government won't let my parents marry each other because they are women*".

This doesn't seem fair to our kids. It doesn't seem fair to us either.

We are hopeful that our Parliament can hear our voices on this issue.