

To Whom It May Concern:

I have been a Transgender for nearly 20 years and live my life as a woman and enjoy most of the aspects of my new life, except for few rights one being Marriage. When I was a lot younger and had only just begun my transition, I met a man who fell in love with me and after a time we decided to get engaged. I am very feminine looking and his side of the family did not know of my past and at the time (1991), there was no light at the end of the tunnel for us at this time to ever envisage the day when we could actually get married and continue our life as any other couple could. We were in love and just wanted to celebrate this with our engagement but before long the pressure of the reality that our inability to marry would eventually unveil the truth of our situation, among other issues took its toll and we separated. Since then I have watched the world around me slowly change and finally bit by bit except and include the LGBTI community in basic laws and rights that others have taken for granted as second nature and an everyday reality. I am a Transgender rights activist and proudly uphold and fight for the rights of Transgender people to be respected and included in all areas of society and law reform. Recently I have met an amazing man who loves me for me and accepts all the aspects that go with being in a relationship with a Transgender. It is only early days for us now, but I would like to know that we were able to marry if we chose to make things more official in the future. It is appalling in my opinion that in this day and age there is still debate over this issue of equality and all that goes with it. It is unbelievable that as a community we are being denied the right to marry the one's we love and in doing so show the world what they mean to us and at the same time protect them with all the legal rights that go with this union. Love is love and no other minority group is ostracized from society and told that they cannot partake in the institution that is marriage; it would be outrageous to even consider. So why is it that the LGBTI community is discriminated against in this way and why is this even an issue, its wrong end of story. It is in as far as I am concerned a direct violation of the Bill of Human Rights to continue with this out dated idea that Marriage is solely the privilege of the Straight community. Article 17 states in black and white that all humans have the right to marriage and that it is a breach of this right to deny humans this action. Of course this is a 60 year old document and I would guess that the ones who wrote this bill did not envisage a day when same sex couples would ever be recognized let alone demand the right to this institution. All I can say is it states that all humans have the right to marriage and the last time I checked, LGBTI people are human too. Take a step back and imagine yourself in a world were you are denied rights for hundreds of years, ostracized, bashed, criticized, ridiculed and mocked and then eventually get thrown legal life lines and rights slowly but surely up until a time were finally most of society accepts and respects your way of life and then to realize a basic right that most enjoy is denied you simply because you were born LGBTI. It is just not good enough and the laws must change fully to include us all, and to protect us all. If the shoe was on the other foot the straight community would be doing the same as it is a basic human trait to want to be included in society in all its aspects. It will send a message to the world that Australia is the thinking nation, progressive and bravely entering a new age were all humans are celebrated for their uniqueness regardless of their sexuality or gender identity. If our money is good enough to support the whole community with infrastructure through taxes, then there should be no further question about this topic and inclusive law reform should

be a natural step forward to bring inline a country that for the most part is a fair and beautiful place to live.

Yours Sincerely,  
Robyn Whittaker.