

Dear Senator Crossin,

I write to you in order to make a submission to the Inquiry into the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2009, in support of marriage equality for couples of the same gender. As the Marriage Act 1961 (Cth) is a civil law which applies to all Australians, the explicit denial of same-sex couples to be recognised under this act sends a clear message of discrimination on the basis of sexuality and gender.

Despite the laudable reforms enacted in 2008 that granted same-sex de facto couples and their children the same rights and responsibilities as married couples in federal law, the continued denial of marriage to same-sex couples sends a very powerful symbolic message that homosexual unions are somehow inferior to heterosexual ones. Speaking from my own experience, such messages sent from the very highest levels of government and enshrined in Federal law can have a profound effect upon how an individual perceives themselves in, and their relationship to, society. When I was a young child, the knowledge that upon growing up I could never have a family or partner that was recognized by society – as most Australians can take for granted – was a cause of considerable anxiety and grief. Growing up with the knowledge that you are gay can be a very isolating experience, especially if you don't happen to live in a capitol city. However, knowing that you can have access to all the opportunities that your family and friends have, including the ability to marry the person that you wish to spend the rest of your life with, would go a long way to addressing this.

The past few years, both here and abroad, have thus given me a lot of encouragement, as increasingly people and the governments that represent them have increasingly appreciated that all relationships, regardless of gender, should share the same rights, responsibilities, and recognition. It has therefore always been of considerable surprise to me the way in which Australia is falling behind the rest of the world in regards to this issue. For a country that has always regarded itself as being a very multicultural and tolerant one, we seem to be sadly lacking in redressing an issue of equality towards a part of the Australian community. I have always been very proud to be an Australian, as generally we have a very fair, open society with a very strong human rights record. This, however, is one area where I feel ashamed that the government has been so reticent to address an area which the majority of Australians, along with much of the developed world, is fast seeing as an injustice.

For these reasons, I believe that the Marriage Act should be amended to ensure that same-sex couples are allowed to marry, so that everybody, regardless of their sexuality or gender identity, can feel valued, respected, and equal before society and the law

Yours sincerely,
Steven Kennedy