

Dear Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important issue.

When I was growing up I remember hearing about a time when women and indigenous Australians could not vote. I thought how glad I was to live in a progressive society now.

We look back on those discriminatory laws and think how wrong it was to tell a group of our community that they are not smart enough, or good enough to participate in an important part of our culture. Clearly these discriminatory laws were unjust and frankly, backward.

The current discrimination against in the Marriage Law against same sex couples is equally as unjust and backward. By excluding gay people from the very important cultural ceremony of marriage our Government and the Australian society is completely devaluing my relationship with my partner

Not allowing gay people to marry devalues gay relationships. I know for years I totally devalued many of the relationships I had because I am constantly given messages by our society that I am less than a straight person. I deserve less. These subtle and sometimes blatantly obvious messages do affect the mental health of gay people. It took me some years to accept this discrimination and gain my self respect.

I have been with my partner for five years. I love her madly and can't wait to start a family over the next two years. I have three siblings. All three are married. It's disgusting to me that I am not allowed to get married like my three siblings. It is also disgusting that the Howard government changed the Marriage Law so that when I celebrate the marriage of people I love, I have to listen to the line 'EXCLUSIVELY ENTERED INTO BY A MAN AND A WOMAN'. It's a slap in the face every time I hear it.

Coming out is hard enough in a very straight world. There are so many messages that tell us we (gay people) are different, wrong, not as good, just being rebellious, etcetera. Not allowing gay people to get married sends a message to the people of Australia that it is wrong to be in a gay relationship. It sends a message to me and my family that my relationship is less important than the one my sister has with her male partner or the relationships my brothers have with their female partners. The truth is my relationship with is just as important and should be valued as such. Not allowing gay marriage sends the wrong message. It sends an unjust message.

I am sick of listening to politicians justify the discrimination against gay people with the comment, polls tell us and majority of Australians do not agree. The Government is democratically voted in and it should lead the people on important issues. The majority of Australians would probably stop much of our immigration – and yet the Government leads on this issue because immigration is not the evil many naive Australians believe it is. Being gay is not the evil many naive Australians believe it to be.

Recently the Government has made legislative changes to rid many laws of discrimination against same-sex couples. Centrelink has a great advert stating 'Couples are Couple' to advertise that the same laws will now apply to same-sex couples as they do to straight couples. Again this advert is a slap in the face every time I see it. It hurts because I know there is a fundamental part of the Australian culture that does not recognise equality for couples. How can the Federal Government change so many little laws to try to make the law equal, but leave out one massive cultural celebration – Marriage?

Please change this situation now and show some leadership on creating a society with greater justice and love.

Many thanks for you timeJacqueline Davis