

Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2009

Personal Submission

27th August 2009

My name is Justine Dalla Riva. On the _____, I was born at the _____ to _____ and _____. I was the fourth of what was to be five beautiful, healthy children. They took me home to the family house in North Balwyn, where I started my journey to who I am today.

My parents are Catholic and I was educated at the local Catholic primary school and then at _____ in _____. In my first year at _____, we were having a religious education class and our teacher asked us what we wanted to do when we grew up. There were many answers and varied dreams, mine as I confidently professed to the group was 'to be the first woman to win the Brownlow medal!'. My teachers' reaction to this was to tell me that 'that will never happen'.

I'm now 38 years old, I live in _____ in a house I have bought with my female partner of 10 years and our 3 and a half year old daughter and I seem to be asking another question 'I want to get married' and the answer seems to be the same 'that will never happen'.

My response to both answers is also the same, why? I know now that I'm too old to win a Brownlow medal (not mention my lack of football prowess), but why is it that my family, my relationship with my partner, our life is not equal to those of my siblings, my friends, my colleagues, the wider community. How are we different, if simply for the fact that we are of the same sex. The United Nations charter on equal rights states that people should not be discriminated on the base of gender, race, religion or sexual preference. Why then is it, that marriage a civil right, is not open to me and my partner.

When it's explained to me that marriage is only a union between a man and a woman, it's demeaning. It is an argument that has no logic, no basis in human rights, or acknowledgement of the commitment, love or respect that two people can have for one another. It is an argument of exclusion, hate and fear. I am surprised that after so much work has been done in changing laws to acknowledge same sex relationships that the only thing that has not been amended is the one thing that carries the greatest recognition of all for a committed relationship – marriage.

I urge the members of the Australian parliament to consider my situation and how not allowing my partner and I to marry, adversely affects us and our daughter.

Justine Dalla Riva