

Dear Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee,

This is my submission to your inquiry into marriage equality.

In 2008 I married my partner \_\_\_\_\_ in a civil union in New Zealand, since there is so comparable marriage pathway available to same sex partners in Australia.

Our marriage is in no way recognised by Commonwealth Law in Australia, leaving us vulnerable to anyone or any organization wanting to challenge the validity of our marriage as it relates to our Australian finances, assets, businesses and our domestic affairs. The recent recognition of our de-facto relationship under Commonwealth Law protects us to a degree, but the burden would be on us to prove the existence of our relationship, whereas an amendment to the Marriage Act in Australia (to include Same Sex couples) would make proof a simple matter of showing our Australian Marriage Certificate.

While our marriage ceremony was very special to us, it was very difficult to involve our wider circle of friends and family, since the closest geographical place for us to marry was an international flight away. The cost of traveling to New Zealand was prohibitive to most people, and we did not expect anyone to spend alot of money to be at our wedding.

Consequently the funds we spent on travel, and the basic costs of a civil union in New Zealand, meant that we were not able to support Australian businesses in the celebration of our marriage. Whilever the "pink dollar" for same sex marriage goes to overseas economies, the Australian "Marriage Economy" will suffer as a result.

I also object to the continued denial of the right to marry for same sex people - there is no rational argument in a 21st Century Democracy against allowing any two people to marry, regardless of gender or sexual orientation. Objections to Same Sex Marriage in Australia are now in the minority at less than 40% of respondents in a 2009 Galaxy Poll. A 60% "yes" vote would be enough to allow Same Sex Marriage in any referendum.

I encourage the Committee to make a recommendation that the Marriage Act be amended to allow same sex couples to marry in exactly the same way as couples of the opposite gender. The acceptance that such an act shows would have long term positive effects for people in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Communities in Australia, too long burdened with low self esteem as a result of government ignorance of our basic human right to marry under the full protection of Commonwealth Law.

I also encourage the Committee to amend the Marriage Act to comply with the recommendation of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission into Same Sex relationships, which recognizes the equality of same sex relationships under Commonwealth Law.

I also encourage the Committee to amend the Marriage Act and follow the lead of major Australian Businesses (eg: QANTAS and Westpac Banking Organization) which already recognize the validity of same sex marriages conducted overseas.

Yours sincerely,  
Michael Burge