

**Dear Senators:**

**I am an Australian working in Canada. I married my Canadian same-sex spouse in 2006 under Canadian marriage equality laws. I have been with my spouse in a common-law relationship, however, since 1996.**

**In Canada we enjoy married life as every other citizen does. We participate in society as most citizens do: we work, we pay taxes, we vote. No difference is made because of our sexual orientation.**

**The Canadian and Canadian Provincial Governments recognise my spouse and me for the contributions we make to Canada.**

**We are not denied any rights extended to all other Canadian citizens. We are not treated as 2<sup>nd</sup> class citizens. We are no longer discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation.**

**Should I predecease my spouse, I am reassured by knowing that my assets will automatically go to my spouse and vice-versa. If I am hospitalised, I am reassured by knowing that should something go amiss or a major decision needs to be made, my spouse will make that decision.**

**Canada and other 1<sup>st</sup> world nations have understood and accepted that marriage is the union between two persons. Marriage equality has in no means corrupted Dutch, Belgian, Canadian, South African, Norwegian, Spanish, Swedish or American\* societies. (\* Marriage equality exists in the states of Iowa, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont. Source: AME website)**

**Why would Australia wish to be one of the last bastions of first-world nations who purposefully treat its own citizens as 2<sup>nd</sup> class citizens? Treating a portion of society in the 1<sup>st</sup> world as 2<sup>nd</sup> class citizens died with apartheid.**

**It is time for Australia to enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century with regards to officially recognising same-sex marriage. Australia's current forthright and purposeful denial of marriage equality is shameful and frankly embarrassing.**

I have always considered my birthplace as a progressive one. I often think of how our national anthem does not apply to me: "Advance Australia Fair". Australia's same-sex marriage law is neither "advanced" nor "fair".

One day in the near future I would dearly love to return to live in Australia, my birthplace, with my spouse of 14 years. I resent the fact however that my marriage is null and void in my own country.

Yours truly,

Reece Lavender