

Dear Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee,

This is my submission to your inquiry into marriage equality. I fully endorse the submission made by Australian Marriage Equality in favour of the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2009.

A member of my partner's family, has been living in Canada for many years in a legal same-sex marriage. I would like to return to live and work in Australia, and coming here this month for a job interview. However, if he is successful in obtaining work here, it will be difficult for him and his partner to live here without their marriage being recognised under Australian laws.

I believe that a marriage that is a union of two people who love and commit to each other is valid, regardless of their genders. I find the fact that same-sex couples does not have the same rights and protections as other married people in this country to be unfair and discriminatory.

I would like to see the federal Marriage Act amended so that same-sex partners can marry in Australia and same-sex marriages that have been legally entered into overseas are recognised here.

The meaning of marriage has changed over time, as has the make-up of the family unit, to reflect changing social attitudes. I am pleased that we have loosened many of the conservative and restrictive societal demands about how we should live our lives. My life as a woman is much easier and fairer than years ago. I look forward to the freeing up of further unreasonable restrictions on our personal lives, such as marriage equality for same-sex couples.

Today's relationships and families are many and varied. Today's marriages may, or may not, involve religion, children, fidelity, healthy loving and sexual relationships, and sharing of incomes, possessions and lives. I believe that we do not have the right to dictate to two loving people what form their marriage or family should take. I also believe that diversity in all areas of life is essential to encourage healthy societies to evolve. I believe in freedom as long as we do not harm others. I strongly believe that our laws must not abuse human rights and must be updated as soon as possible in order to grant equal rights to all citizens.

I believe that opinion polls show a majority of Australians support marriage. Many key Australian organisations are now recognising same-sex marriages from overseas, including ANZ Bank, Commonwealth Bank, Kogarah Council, Qantas Airways, Telstra and Westpac Banking Corporation. As a shareholder of some of these companies and a resident in Kogarah, I totally support their stance. I am also encouraged by the fact that the Australian Bureau of Statistics acknowledges same-sex partners and will include statistics on whether they are married in the next census.

I am still highly concerned at the level of endemic homophobia in our society, and believe that the refusal to grant equal rights to same-sex couples only reinforces this prejudice, and the resulting hate and discrimination against same-sex couples and relationships. Amending the Marriage Act to include same-sex marriages will encourage the development of a tolerant society that respects each person's right to love and marry who they choose.

For the record, I do not require my name to be withheld from publication and am happy for my submission to be made public.

Robyn Tassicker