

Dear Senator Crossin,

I would like to make a submission to the Inquiry into the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2009 in support of marriage equality for same-sex couples.

The *Marriage Act 1961* (Cth) is a civil law which applies to all Australians. I believe the *Marriage Act* should be amended to ensure same-sex couples have equal rights to marry in Australia. I believe section 88EA of the *Marriage Act* should be repealed so that overseas same-sex marriages are recognised in Australia in the same way as opposite-sex marriages between consenting adults.

I support gay marriage as a civil ceremony. I believe marriage to be an important step in society and that having a marriage in front of your family and friends in a legally formalised loving way gives a recognition of your relationship that only marriage can bestow. I don't want a civil union, a two tiered system in our country, which allows me to be almost married but not quite. Which has connotations of 'these people are different, strange and are to be avoided.' I already have this and see no reason that civil unions will give me equal rights; in fact I think that they will allow the discrimination of same sex couples to continue under a different guise. I don't want to be civil unionised. My god... how do you even introduce yourself to anyone? This is my civil union partner? We're not married but? How will others know how to treat us? How will companies and health care professionals know their obligations easily and transparently. Are their and our obligations the same under law? It is like a subtle discrimination that allows other people, straight people, to feel 'special' to feel that they alone can marry. That their relationships hold THE validation as the 'gold star' of relationships that only straight people can obtain. It allows us to be forcibly 'outed' just by the definition of our relationship. It allows others, both individuals and organisations the ability to know that we are gay regardless as to whether it is actually needed to be known by them or not. You can say I'm married and not have to disclose that your partner is same sex or not. But you can't say I'm civil unionised and have the same level of privacy. Saying I'm married is recognised throughout Australia and the world. It and its connotations are easily understood. It says to everyone, your family, your friends, work colleagues, strangers, and anyone you meet that you have a relationship that forsakes all others, that you have chosen to bind yourselves together in law, under your country's privileges and protection. I want to marry the person I love just like everyone else... just like my brother can, like my sister can, like my mother and father did. I want the right which I believe in my heart to be just and fair, to be able to CHOOSE whom I marry regardless of their sex. I NEED my country to treat me as a worthwhile member of society. I hate the fact that I am less than my brother and sister and my friends who can marry whomever they wish just because they have been so 'fortunate' to be attracted to the opposite sex. I hate the fact that my family is not recognised the way theirs are. I hate the fact that their kids can say 'Oh, my parents are married!' and that mine cannot. I hate the way that we are offered pseudo recognition that says 'here we will give the crumbs, we will give you equality under law but we will not allow you to marry the person you love because...' because why? Am I less than you? Is my love not the same as your love for your partner? Is my family not worth recognising? Are my children not worth recognising? Please tell why I can't have a CIVIL ceremony which has NOTHING to do with religion? I don't want to strip others of their beliefs; they can be free to choose their partners under whatever feels true for them, but please allow me the dignity to do the same.

It is time to ensure that discrimination against same-sex couples in the *Marriage Act* is removed.

Yours sincerely,

Angela Wray