

Dear Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee,

My name is Eleanor Bath and this is my personal submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2009.

I am a 20 year old student and live in xxxx, xxxx. I am personally discriminated against by a definition in the Marriage Amendment Act 2004 specifically introduced for this purpose.

I want to see this legislation changed.

This discrimination means my relationship is denied the same formal and legal recognition afforded to heterosexual couples. I am currently denied the right to marry my partner should we wish to do so.

This discrimination is also faced by a number of my friends and members of my family, some of whom are in relationships which are denied the same formal and legal recognition afforded to heterosexual couples and all of whom are currently being denied the right to marry a partner of their choice should they wish to do so.

As a same-sex attracted person, I have been lucky enough to have a supportive family and friends. Yet I, and others I know, have had firsthand experience of the discrimination that is prevalent in Australian society. While acknowledging that there may be bigots who discriminate against people for no better reason than their skin colour or sexual orientation, it astounds me that the Australian parliament seeks to entrench this discrimination in the Australian legal system.

Sexual orientation is not a choice. Just as heterosexual people do not choose who they are attracted to, neither do homosexuals. In the same way that people cannot choose their racial background or their gender, same-sex attracted people do not choose to be homosexual. Who would choose to be part of a minority that is discriminated against, where in places you can fear for your life just because of who you are? In Australia we pride ourselves on our tolerance and believe that people shouldn't be discriminated against for any reason, particularly just because of who they are. We have legislation to end discrimination against women, against people with different racial backgrounds, against people with disabilities, yet we have laws that blatantly discriminate against people with a particular sexual orientation.

I urge you to recommend that the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill be passed to give same-sex couples the same rights as everyone else. Do not condone the discrimination that is now a part of Australian society by refusing to allow this bill through. Everyone has rights, and now is the time to ensure that they can enjoy them.

Eleanor Bath