

Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
Parliament House
Canberra
ACT 2600

Dear Sirs and Madams,

I would like to take the opportunity to comment on *The Same-Sex Relationship (Equal Treatment in Commonwealth Laws-Superannuation) Bill 2008*.

Specifically, I am concerned that the Australian Government, in its admirable eagerness to address the wishes and the dignity of all its citizens, is not considering the full impact of its proposed amendment on the fabric of Australian society.

It is incontestable that all human beings are important and worthy of respect. It is also incontestable that traditional marriages (those between a man and a woman) are the best forum for raising children, and have by far the most steady effect on society. I am thus unconvinced of the wisdom of the proposed amendment.

In countries such as Holland and Denmark, where defacto and same sex marriages receive almost the same legal consideration as traditional marriages, it is noteworthy that these non-traditional relationships remain short-lived (an average of two years for same-sex marriages in Holland) and pose a great burden on society in their necessarily-complicated aftermath. In Australia, the Family Court is already stretched with settlement of marriage break-ups, and I believe it should not be burdened with the settlement of more casual de facto relationships, including same-sex relationships.

Marriage should not be devalued by treating it as just another "couple relationship" along with same-sex relationships. To use the phrase "couple relationship" when describing the beautiful, life-giving institution of marriage is a shamelessly disgraceful exercise in disrespect for families around the world. Its use will insidiously and irreversibly affect the quality of Australian society and I strongly voice my dissent.

Traditional marriage is unambiguously centred around protecting the nurturing environment it creates for children and it deserves special protection from law makers. As the United Nations Charter states, "The family is the basic unit of society and it is entitled to protection."

The legal and economic privileges of marriage should therefore be reserved for men and women who are prepared to officially declare their commitment to a lifetime of protecting and nurturing their families. To extend these privileges to non-traditional marriages says saddening things about this Government's view of how important stable, loving families are to this country and to the larger world.

I close by firmly requesting that you do not pass this Bill.

Yours sincerely,

William Schaefer