

The Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY ON:

**The Same-sex Relationship (Equal Treatment in Commonwealth Laws-Superannuation) Bill 2008**

The institution of marriage is a positive benefit to society for the following reasons:

- It expresses the natural complementarity of men and women
- It provides a safe and healthy environment for the nurture of children
- It gives children the security of growing up in the care of their biological parents
- It provides a natural training-ground for the next generation of citizens
- It provides a centre and focus of social interaction which produces positive community involvement ( e.g. in education, sporting/recreation clubs, community welfare)

Marriage is much more than simply a “couple-relationship”. It is, properly understood, a life-long commitment to mutual self-giving. In delivering benefits to the community, spouses are called upon to make personal sacrifices in order to properly fulfil their role as husband, wife, and parents. The majority of hard-working, faithful spouses make huge sacrifices in order that their children should be educated and provided for, thus delivering undeniable positive benefits to society.

The fact that some marriages are deficient in the quality of the relationship between spouses, the standard of upbringing of children, or the degree of positive social interaction does not mean that the institution itself is at fault. The rate of breakdown and anti-social behaviour in non-marriage couple-relationships is certainly no less – and is arguably higher – than what is seen in marriages.

The current high rate of divorce reflects more on the lack of support which society gives to the institution than on the value of marriage itself. Rather than legislating to devalue the marriage, the state should be encouraging its citizens to embrace marriage more than ever before.

The proposed legislation to open up the benefits enjoyed by married couples to people who are not married does not make political sense. Non-marriage couple relationships cannot deliver the same benefits to society as marriage can, so why should they be rewarded?

I oppose any change to the law which would remove the current definition of marriage.

Your truly

Bernard Hennessy