

Dear Mr Hallahan,

I would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to make a submission into the Same-Sex Relationships (Equal Treatment in Commonwealth Laws - Superannuation) Bill 2008. I fully support the objectives of the Bill, to remove discrimination against same-sex couples and their children in relation to Commonwealth superannuation and related benefits, and sincerely hope that it is the first of many steps to address the recommendations contained in HEREOC's Same Sex: Same Entitlements report.

I am in a long-term heterosexual relationship, and will receive no direct benefits from any change to the laws in relation to same sex couples. I strongly believe, however, that changes to Australia's laws to recognise same sex couples as equivalent to married or de facto heterosexual relationships are long overdue. Discrimination against same sex couples benefits no-one and imposes significant hardship on many. People in same-sex couples are often outstanding citizens and parents, and treating them as such would reflect the values of Australia in which I would like to live.

The straightforward category of "couple relationship" proposed in the legislation seems practical and equitable. I do not believe that the alternate category of "interdependents" proposed by some parties opposed to the legislation adequately recognises or establishes the rights of same sex couples, as discussed in the HEREOC report.

I strongly support the recognition of children with same-sex parents under the Bill. This definition acknowledges the reality of family diversity in Australia; the traditional concept of the nuclear family is an inadequate reflection of life in Australia today. The legal recognition of families and the equal access to entitlements is in the best interests of children.

I urge the Committee to commend the Bill to parliament in order to ensure that the discrimination faced by same-sex couples can be removed as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Kate Small