

Submission to Select Senate Committee Inquiry into the Same-Sex Relationship (Equal Treatment in Commonwealth Laws- Superannuation ) Bill 2008

It has recently come to my attention that this legislation is being considered to amend the current superannuation laws to extend cover under this legislation to include same-sex couples. Overall, I have no concerns with these changes being made to extend legal provisions for superannuation to same-sex couples as this is fair and equitable. It is a concern however that the proposed changes will denigrate and devalue the marriage relationship.

This denigration and devaluing will occur because all references to marriage, spouse, husband and wife are to be removed. These changes will undermine marriage and weaken it. Marriage is a foundation stone of Australian society and to weaken and undermine it will destabilize and ultimately destroy Australian society. The proposed legislation does this by implying there is no difference between relationships which express far less commitment and marriage.

In 2004, Australians, many of whom were Christians, responded in unprecedented numbers in support of an amendment to the Marriage Act affirming that marriage is a lifelong, exclusive and voluntary union of a man and a woman. This set a new record for the number of submissions to a Senate Inquiry (over 16,000 compared to an average of about 1,000).

It is wrong to assume that all relationships are the same. Marriage is a unique relationship involving a public commitment to each other, and as I have already stated, is a foundation stone of our society; no other relationship type does this. Marriage has been shown to offer greater benefit and stability to spouses and children than other forms of partnership which are, by definition, less committed and therefore less stable.

Due to its uniqueness and place in Australian society, marriage should not be denigrated and subsumed into a new category of 'couple relationships'. Marriage should be treated separately and all existing references to spouse, husband and wife must be retained in the superannuation law. The legislation should refer to '**marriage and couple relationships**', '**spouse and partner**'. Provisions for same sex couples would be included under the new category of **couple relationships**. These provisions would allow for same sex couples to benefit from each other's superannuation, and do not give up all reference to marriage in the process, thereby denigrating marriage or weakening society in the process.

Brian Paul