

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.

I believe this legislation is long overdue. It is a critical first step in providing legal and financial equality for same-sex couples. I hope to see future legislation implementing the remaining recommendations contained in the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's Same Sex: Same Entitlements report.

I support the Bill's inclusion of married, heterosexual and same-sex de facto couples under the straightforward and practical category of "couple relationship". Same-sex de facto couples should be treated in the same way as heterosexual de facto couples.

I reject suggestions that same-sex couples should be recognised as "interdependents", along with other caring non-couple relationships. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission says that past interdependency definitions in private superannuation have failed to provide same-sex couples with real equality. Interdependency definitions do not give the clear and certain protection that de facto definitions provide.

I support the recognition of children with same-sex parents under the Bill. This definition acknowledges the reality of family diversity in Australia. 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.

After all the UK has managed to give people equality without conditions or caveats. In the UK gay people can celebrate their partnership with a legally recognised ceremony. Anything less than that is not acceptable. The institute of marriage has not been threatened as a consequence of giving gay people equality in the UK so why should it here. For too long the Australian Government has denied our rights, made excuses. This must stop. For too long Government has pandered to religion and used it as an excuse to discriminate. Consider this, replace the word "gay" with the word "black" and you will see how repugnant continued discrimination is - not only to gay people but to society in general. It might be OK for the likes of Pell and Jensen to slander gay people as "disordered" but it is not acceptable for my Government to discriminate against me. Any form of discrimination whether it be in terms of recognition of relationships or superannuation, indirectly contributes to homophobic violence on the streets simply because if the thugs think that the government thinks gay people are not equal that legitimises their homophobic violence.

subf1a_9.txt

Yours sincerely,
Dr. Richard J. Murphy