

**Submission to the
Senate Constitutional and Legal Affairs Committee**

Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2010

22 February 2012

Dear Senators

My submission is in support of Senator Sarah Hanson-Young's bill.

I am a gay man who has had the good fortune to be in a stable relationship of 30 years duration with my partner. Our families, our friends and local community members accept us a loving couple.

However, as we are prohibited from marrying under Federal law, we have registered our relationship under Tasmanian law and have recognised one another as enduring guardians with power of attorney over one another's affairs. We have also established complementary wills that ensure that our wishes are carried out in the event of our individual or simultaneous decease. None of this would have been necessary had we been able to legally marry.

However, my concern in supporting this bill is much more about younger GLBTI people. Research, including that conducted by the [Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society](#), has clearly established that the mental health outcomes of young people who are same-sex attracted, or whose gender identification does not accord with their perceived sex, are far worse than those of their age peers. In short, simply because their orientation is not the norm, they suffer harassment and discrimination that leads to higher levels of drug abuse, self-harm and depression, and ultimately to higher rates of suicide.

My belief is that much of the harassment and discrimination suffered by those of us who are 'different' stems from the discrimination against us that is enshrined in the Marriage Act. Stable, loving relationships such as that between my partner and me are not officially recognised. I believe that this, in turn, gives others licence to harass and discriminate against anyone whose orientation or relationship does not comply with the 'man and woman' norm specified in the Marriage Act.

If the proposed reform were to be passed into law, I believe that the whole basis for discriminating against those of us who are different would be undermined. School children could be taught that diversity in all its forms is truly valued by our society and supported by the law.

I urge you to commend the bill to your parliamentary colleagues.

Yours sincerely

Michael O'Halloran