



Attention:

**Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia
Email: legcon.sen@aph.gov.au**

Dear Committee Secretary,

RE: Submission to the inquiry on the *Marriage Equality Amendment Bill*

I write on behalf of Minus18 Inc. to express the support of our organisation for the *Marriage Equality Amendment Bill*.

Minus18 is Australia's leading youth-led organisation supporting the health and wellbeing of same-sex attracted and gender diverse young people. Minus18 strives to build an inclusive community in which young people of diverse genders and sexualities feel comfortable and confident in their sense of self, free from homophobic and transphobic attitudes.

Same-sex attracted and gender diverse youth are 200% more likely to experience a mental disorder¹ and 300% more to attempt suicide² than their heterosexual contemporaries. Minus18 strongly believes that the institutionalised discrimination embedded in the current definition of marriage under the *Marriage Act 1961* detracts the development of same-sex attracted and gender diverse young people by sending the unacceptable message that Australian society considers them second-class citizens. Minus18 believes that all young people have a right to feel respected and valued by their community. Minus18 believes that, in a secular society, no individual should be systematically excluded from a social institution on the basis of personal characteristics.

Minus18 further rejects the creation of a two-tier system with civil partnerships on the grounds that such a system reinforces the notion that same-sex attracted and gender diverse individuals are second-class citizens. Minus18 resolutely believes that 'separate but equal is not equal'.

Minus18 believes that the passage of the *Marriage Equality Amendment Bill* is vital in supporting the health and wellbeing of Australia's same-sex attracted and gender diverse young people now and well into the future.

Yours Sincerely,

James Campbell

Chairperson
Minus18

¹ Beyond Blue 2008, *Mental health, depression and anxiety in same-sex attracted people*, Beyond Blue, Melbourne VIC.

² Hillier, L 2006, *'Writing themselves in again: 6 years on' A national report on the health and wellbeing of same-sex attracted young people*, Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, Melbourne VIC.