

Submission in support of the "Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Bill 2012"

I have been and continue to be the victim of sometimes severe discrimination on the grounds of Sexual Orientation over a long period. From areas such as discrimination in housing where other tenants have been free to make highly offensive and personally hurtful comments (only to be laughed when complaining to landlords who seem to think that if you are Gay you should just put up with it), assault due to sexual orientation, being insulted publicly by complete strangers on perception of my orientation and even being charged with "offensive behaviour" by The Victorian Police because my boyfriend and I were spotted by them when giving each other a peck on the cheek.

At school the teachers and headmasters turned a blind eye to homophobic bullying which occurred on an almost daily basis of my Secondary school years.

Frankly, I have had a complete gut full of these often brutal and scarring forms of discrimination. Life is hard enough without these burdens.

I can only assume that those with gender identity issues and intersex people have it as hard, if not harder.

The toll on mental health caused by discrimination in all of its forms is too much for individuals (equal under our constitution) to bear and often leads to suicide. Add to this the financial cost of providing mental health services to the many who suffer the consequences of discrimination and the problem also becomes one of money.

Religious organisations, particularly those providing residential care, should not be immune from the proposed changes. Naturally any organisation receiving government funding should not be immune.

To insure that the legislation is carried out it would seem sensible to appoint a commissioner as happens to a lesser degree with the Equal Opportunity Commissioner in Melbourne. The Tasmanian model is one which seems to cover all bases successfully.

The proposed Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Bill 2012 will go a long way to let the community know that such behaviour is totally unacceptable. It sends a message that we are all different but enjoy the same rights. I am passionate that the Senate Standing Committee to commend this bill to the Parliament and for it to be voted on before the next Federal election.

Please show the rest of the world what truly inclusive, just and sophisticated law making looks like.

Yours Sincerely, Brendan Cameron