

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

21 December 2012
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Response to Exposure Draft of Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination
Bill 2012.

Dear Senate

Living Positive Victoria is a community-based organisation that works to advance the human rights and wellbeing of people living with HIV. Our mission is to educate, support and advocate on behalf of all people living with HIV in Victoria, as part of a society-wide response that seeks an end to the HIV epidemic. We believe and support people with HIV to live in dignity in order to be able to lead valued and meaningful lives as full participants in society.

We believe that discrimination against any person on the basis of sexual orientation and/or gender identity has profound and marked effects upon their health and well-being and impacts upon their production and contribution to civil society. In turn, our communities, our culture and our care are compromised into the future.

Our diversity is what makes us strong and encourages others to face their fears and objections with rationale and logical insights. For example, we have learnt that by providing HIV positive speakers to community groups, businesses, schools and religious organisations, we have changed their misconceptions and promoted a greater sense of understanding and value of diversity.

If we exclude or marginalise others we promote division and derision. This is not the premise of a 'fair go' and denies the basic human rights and liberties which make Australia an enviable place to live on the world stage.

"Each of us has shadows that make us vulnerable to stigma and fuels our potential to stigmatise others. Stigma is powerful, painful, and often confusing because it resonates with our own internal fears. Overcoming it takes persistence, courage, a strong sense of self, and a willingness to work with others"

If public or private organisations feel that they must exclude others then they should have to disclose this information upfront in a transparent and accountable manner. It is not ok, that prejudice and discrimination is allowed to be held 'behind closed doors' never to see the light of day and those holding such views are not held up to scrutiny and defence.

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We call upon the Senate to not only ensure the safety and wellbeing of all Australian citizens, we encourage all Senators to call out discrimination, stigma and fear of others by supporting the passage of this Bill and further to support community and public action that brings our communities together not divide them.

Sexuality and gender diversity is an inherent value of human existence. It allows us all to see other ways of being very much like culture, faith and relationships of all types.

Yours sincerely

Brent Allan
Executive Officer

Sam Venning
President

ⁱ David Fawcett PHD, LCSW from *Spoilt Identity: Gay Men, HIV and Stigma*

