Dear Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee,

In relation to the proposed amendment to the *Marriage Act 1961*, the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC) seeks to acknowledge and highlight the overwhelmingly strong support young Australians have shown for marriage equality.

According to a recent survey more than 80% of young people believe that same-sex couples should have the same right to marriage that heterosexual couples enjoy\(^1\). Past surveys have also demonstrated this high level of support\(^2\).

AYAC would also like to highlight the high rates of discrimination LGBTIQ youth face in their communities, with 79% of queer students reporting that they have been verbally or physically assaulted due to their sexual orientation\(^3\). Such discrimination and harassment has significant damaging effects on young people’s health and well being, and increases their likelihood of experiencing depression, anxiety and suicide. A move to marriage equality will help to reduce this.

AYAC urges the Government to support the proposed amendment to the *Marriage Act 1961*.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Cummings
Executive Director

\(^1\) *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 February 2012
\(^1\) Galaxy Research 2010
\(^1\) Hillier, L et al. 2010