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I am excited about the Marriage Equality Bill and I ask that your deliberations and considerations of it are taken thoughtfully and seriously. This is a piece of Legislation that will give people across the country the opportunity to have their relationship recognized and officiated and respected.

I am a Priest; I own a business; I own property; I have a mortgage; I am in a committed relationship with my partner of five years; my partner and I pay taxes; we volunteer in our community and are "fully functioning" members of society -why are we not permitted the same "rights" as our neighbours, who apart from being a Priest, are the same as I - they also pay taxes, have a mortgage, have a committed relationship and volunteer etc.?

Our love is no different; our commitment is no different; but according to your Government our relationship is less important than my brothers (married for 31 years) or my parents (married for over 50 years). They; my brother and family, and my parents recognise our relationship as equal to theirs, as do the majority of Australians.

My partner and I had a Holy Union which was officiated by my Bishop and witnessed by over 200 of our family and friends. Our relationship is recognised by my church, but not my country! It seems that the government is out of step with society on this issue. 53% of Australians who identify as Christians support same-sex marriage, while 67% percent of non-Christians support same-sex marriage according to finding of a Galaxy Research poll (August 2011).

As a Priest I have the honour of marrying couples under the Marriage Act and it pains me that the same "privilege" is not permitted my partner and I. The irony of this is that I counsel couples before their marriage and I present marriage as a serious and binding obligation based on love and commitment - I use as examples my own committed relationship which share the same values of the Marriage Act 1961, (with the exemption of the definition)!

Marriage in this country which believes in equality and freedoms should not be a privilege of those who fit a Government imposed definition -it is a basic right of people to express their commitment and love in the same manner as the current "elite".

Thank you for reading my letter - I would be happy to talk further on this issue both as a woman in a same sex relationship and as a Priest who has a strong view about the equality of marriage.