
Cathy Brown |

Committee Chair
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
Department of the Senate
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Dear Committee Chair,

Submission to the Same-Sex Relationships (Equal Treatment in Commonwealth Laws – General Law Reform) Bill 2008

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the inquiry into the *Same-Sex Relationships (Equal Treatment in Commonwealth Laws – General Law Reform) Bill 2008*.

I would also like to take this opportunity to commend the Committee for its **Recommendation 1** in the report of the inquiry into the *Family Law Amendment (De Facto Financial Matters and Other Measures) Bill 2008*. Full recognition of same-sex headed families is long overdue.

I strongly support the objectives of the Bill: to eliminate discrimination against same-sex couples and the children of same-sex relationships in a wide range of Commonwealth laws.

While the amendments to social security, Medicare and taxation level will bring me personal benefit; I am really extremely pleased to see the Government amending the *Aged Care Act*.

I am currently working on a research project about aged care services for GLTB people. GLTB people face specific needs in older age that are currently not addressed in government policy. Under the *Aged Care Act*, same-sex couples are means-tested as individuals - even where they jointly own property – on entering aged care facilities. This can lead to financial hardship for the partner not entering the aged care facility, at a time when they are already facing an emotionally difficult time. These changes will make an enormous difference in the lives of people facing difficult decisions about growing older.

I also made a submission to the Committee's inquiry into the *Same-Sex Relationships (Equal Treatment in Commonwealth Laws - Superannuation) Bill 2008* and I would like to reiterate a point I made in that submission, namely that "I urge the Committee to commend the Bill to parliament in order to ensure that the discrimination faced by same-sex couples can be removed as soon as possible."

I commend the Federal Government for this important legal initiative.

Thank you again for the opportunity to make a submission to this inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

Cathy Brown