



19 October 2015

Research Director
Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Re: Submission — Relationships (Civil Partnerships) and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2015

Dear Sir/Madam,

I write in regard to the *Relationships (Civil Partnerships) and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2015*, which was recently introduced into the Queensland Parliament by the Attorney-General, The Hon. Yvette D'Ath.

My submission is made on behalf of the Social Responsibilities Committee (SRC) of the Anglican Church Southern Queensland. As the current serving chairperson of the Committee I am authorised to make this submission and the statement contained therein.

Submission

The Social Responsibilities Committee offers its support to the *Relationships (Civil Partnerships) and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2015*.

Four years ago, the SRC similarly offered its support to the *Civil Partnerships Bill 2011*, which sought to provide legal recognition and registration of relationships of couples, regardless of gender. We did this in the belief that the Bill addressed what philosopher John Rawls called a foundational principle of justice: that is, that *Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all* (from *A Theory of Justice*).

Thus, recognising the union of same sex couples does not reduce the liberty of other couples to enter into legally- and socially-recognised partnerships — so there is an inherent injustice in preventing same sex couples from doing so.

The proposed legislation reinstates the rights removed in 2012 by the *Civil Partnerships and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2012* (amendment Act). It provides a single legal institution of civil partnership which is common to same-sex and opposite-sex couples.

We are confident that the proposed legislation does not affect the right of churches or other religious groups to celebrate marriage according to their own understanding and religious beliefs. The Marriage Act clearly enables conduct of both civil ceremonies and those conducted by ministers of religion. We believe that the act and legitimacy of religious marriage is not denied or denigrated by enabling same sex couples — or opposite-sex couples who have different (or no) spiritual beliefs — to publicly commit to each other in a way that is legally and socially recognised.

Thus, the Social Responsibilities Committee supports the proposed *Relationships (Civil Partnerships) and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2015* because it removes discrimination, affords equal rights to same sex and heterosexual couples in civil partnerships, and recognises the pluralistic nature of our society.

I commend this submission to the Inquiry for your consideration.

Peace

The Very Reverend Dr Peter Catt
Dean, St John's Cathedral
Chair, Anglican Social Responsibilities Committee
Anglican Church Southern Queensland