

From: Linda K Baccaul-Petrie
Friday, 4 November 2011

To: Research Director
Legal Affairs, Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services Committee Parliament House,
Brisbane
lapcsesc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Re: Civil Partnerships Bill 2011

Dear Sir or Madam,

As a lesbian and transgender Queensland, counsellor and advocate for the Queensland LGBTI communities I wish to express my support for the proposed Civil Partnerships Bill 2011.

In December 2010 the Premier Anna Bligh requested I form a delegation of peak activists from around Australia to discuss this and Marriage Equality and Civil Unions with her and her Attorney General's senior policy advisers while, in 2002, the passing of legislation recognising Same Sex couples in Queensland defacto couples legislation was a direct result of the consultation process I established between the Queensland government and the LGBT communities at the behest of Premier Peter Beattie.

Like this proposed legislation, that defacto legislation also provided a much needed matrimonial type alternative to heterosexual couples as well as those in same-sex relationships.

However I write today to express my request that serious consideration be given to this Civil Partnerships legislation for two specific reasons.

The first is that personally on one occasions this issue wrecked a potentially lasting relationship.

In 2006, when the pressures of being in a lesbian environment, where the other was under the scrutiny of work superiors in a hierarchical academic environment within the health sector, the continual pressure of being 'outed' as being in a socially unacceptable lesbian 'relationship', over time added so much worry to her as to be the catalysts which saw it not so much as 'breakdown' as much as never getting off the ground in the first instant!!

Had a civil union arrangement been available who knows the story of our interaction may have turned out to be something entirely different? As it was it was experienced so lightly, without any future in solidarity, it barely ever had a chance to be hoped to exist.....But emotionally crushing? You bet.

Without the mechanism of same-sex civil unions becoming available, this type of draconian environment will continue to put so much pressure to bare on some gay and lesbian relationships it will continue to destroy lives and futures and potentially happy, productive Queensland unions.

Our communities already suffer suicide rates, some four times higher than our heterosexual counterparts. Lack of legitimizing relationships for ourselves and our families in the eyes of the communities will only continue to add to those statistics as long as the situation is allowed to continue by government.

My second reason for supporting the Civil Partnership legislation is, as I explained to Kevin Rudd some years ago - who received the news with an acknowledgement of dread—that while ever public figures and leaders say unsupportive, veiled or outright prejudiced things about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in this country the very next day ‘gay’ children and adolescents in schoolyards and ‘gay’ men and women in workplaces across the State will be in for another serve of prejudice and harassment or may even go home to self-harm, or even take their own lives.

Lack of a mechanism for community recognition and legitimizing same-sex couples sustains that silent community homophobic prejudice by those who delight maintaining it.

As a counsellor for over twenty one years I have attended, heard of and tallied statistics of too many ‘Gay’ suicides, too many LGBTI people lying, some dying, in gutters as a result of street bashings, in deed which I myself almost lost my own life to years ago.

Civil Unions for LGBTI people are as much as any State government can do since the Marriage Act is a Federal issue *BUT* they are *NOT* merely the ‘*most legislative common-sense conclusion to come to*’ they are ‘*The right thing to do*’.

You will receive many arguments about the legal benefits of civil unions for ‘gay’ people and there is absolutely no doubt in my mind too that, next to full-marriage recognised in federal legislation, civil unions will present an answer for many of the issues faced by same sex couples. Including improvements to some of the overall social stigma experienced by LGBTI citizens.

However I fervently ask you to consider that –

the government that introduces Civil Unions for lesbian and gay people (be they transgender or not as well) not only also provides authoritative State-strong imprimatur to the case for changes to the Marriage Act to include same-sex couples, but also clearly sends the message to the prejudiced red necks of any that State that “***we don’t do ‘hate’ here anymore!***”

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