

LAPCSESC
Civil Partnerships
Submission 1675

From: Narelle Oliver

Sent: Friday, 4 November 2011 4:45 PM

To: Legal Affairs Police Corrective Services and Emerg Svc Committee

Subject: Civil Partnerships Bill 2011

Importance: High

Attachments: Letter to Premier Bligh re Civil Unions.docx; Letter to Prime Minister Gillard regarding same sex marriage.docx

Dear members of the Legal Affairs, Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services Committee

I am excited about the Civil Partnerships Bill 2011 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 Queensland the opportunity to have their relationship recognized and officiated and respected.

I am a lesbian and a Priest in the Independent Catholic Church of Australia. 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 the state! It seems that both the Federal and Queensland State 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). This is a compelling argument to put an end to the difference and discrimination.

I also believe that this legislation will provide an opportunity for heterosexual people who are in relationships have their relationship given status other than defacto. I have a number of heterosexual people ask me to perform commitment ceremonies because they do not have a religious belief and they are also opposed to the current definition of the Marriage Act. A Civil Partnership provision provides a mechanism for these people to also have their relationship recognized and officiated. This Civil Partnerships Bill gives people choice and gives people such as my partner and I dignity to our relationship.

I attach a letter I recently wrote to Premier Bligh and the Prime Minister and I ask that it be read and tabled to this committee.

Your sincerely and Warmly

Narelle
Rev. Narelle Oliver
Parish Priest
Indepdent Catholic Church of Australia

Reverend Narelle Oliver
Parish Priest - Community of St Mary Magdalene
PO Box 4431,
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The Hon Julia Gillard MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Gillard,

I appreciate the Government's commitment to removing discrimination and enacting protections against sexuality discrimination, however this Government is discriminating against me by denying my right for recognition of my relationship with my life partner.

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.

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.?

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 the state! 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'.

Ms Gillard, I urge you to be the voice I elected you to be! If you have a personal issue with same sex marriage I still urge you to at least take my message to the Parliament and let my voice be heard somewhere.

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.

Warm wishes

Narelle

Reverend Narelle Oliver
Parish Priest - Community of St Mary Magdalene
PO Box 4431,
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Dear Premier,

Today (21 September 2011) the Tasmanian Parliament debated and passed a motion in support for marriage equality. I watched on the Parliament of Tasmania House of Assembly Webcast. What an historic moment this was and one that I was proud to witness – the first time an Australian Parliament has passed a pro-marriage equality motion.

I couldn't help but think how much more historic and meaningful it would be for me as a Queensland to see the same motion passed in our House. What a wonderful moment this would be for so many, many people in committed same sex relationships and their families.

Surely Premier, this is a compelling message of support that will be sent to the Federal Parliament and surely a message for Queensland to follow in the footsteps of Tasmania and put an end to this discrimination of Gay and Lesbian people.

I am a lesbian and a Priest in the Independent Catholic Church of Australia. 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 the state! It seems that both the Federal and Queensland State 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). This is a compelling argument to put an end to the difference and discrimination.

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 and a belief in Civil Unions.

Warm wishes

Narelle