

**Submission
No 553**

INQUIRY INTO SAME SEX MARRIAGE LAW IN NSW

Name: Miss Chloe Conroy

Date received: 13/02/2013

To the esteemed members of NSW parliament,

I am writing to you today to entreat you to consider allowing marriage equality in the state of NSW. Seeing this reform take place, would mean the world to me. But not just to me. To my friends, my family, and the thousands of other Australians who are currently being denied one of the most basic of human rights.

Up until a few short years ago, I wasn't actually aware that there were many people who actually believed that marriage equality wasn't a necessity. Call this child-like innocence, call it naivety, call it what you will, the fact is, that I was blissfully under this impression. It is then that I discovered, quite shockingly, that this was not the case. The LAW itself actively discriminated against the LGBTQI community, and by not even allowing them to get married.

I was incredulous. How could it be that a society which prides itself on 'a fair go for all' and it's genuine egalitarian principles, could blatantly discriminate against so many?

There are numerous laws that prohibit discrimination, the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW) is one such example. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Article 16 states that "Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family." Despite all of this, despite the fact that discrimination has generally been abhorred throughout throughout the world, Australian law regarding marriage is in direct contrast to this notion. The notion that we are all equal.

Allowing marriage equality would bring so much joy, and so much hope to so many people. The positive repercussions would be exponential. It will allow established couples to finally gain the recognition of their relationship which they deserve. It will allow them stability, security and above all, a feeling of acceptance. That they are in fact, valued members of this society.

For younger members of the LGBTQI community, it will provide hope. Hope for the future. That things will get better. That one day they can be recognized in the same way that heterosexual couples currently are. This in turn can help change attitudes for the better. It can cement the notion that 'gay is okay' and that no one has the right to treat such people as anything less than human, regardless of sexual orientation.

I may not be a lesbian myself, but that doesn't stop me from feeling pain everytime I hear stories from my friends about how they have been singled out as different, labelled as a lesser being.

One experience that has particularly resonated with me, was a story from a bisexual friend of mine. When she was 16 she knew who she was. She had come to terms with it, and was comfortable sharing that information, with being herself. At one point she was involved in a class discussion, and happened to reveal the fact that she was attracted to individuals of both sexes.

The very next day, she was greeted at the school gates by two of her classmates from the day before. They took it upon themselves to empty an ice-cold drink all over her. Staining her clothing, drenching her and leaving her mortified. Naturally, she informed the administration, and the perpetrators of this act were suspended. However, that is not the end of the matter. The girls who targeted my friend then informed the administration that the reason they had done this, was because of the fact that she was bisexual. At this point, the administration of the school, revoked the suspension.

Needless to say, this sent a very clear message that the abhorrent behaviour of these girls was excusable because of my friend's 'unfortunate' sexual orientation. Where is the justice in that?

Hearing this story broke my heart, as I'm sure it shall anger and upset most of you. Unfortunately, this is not the only hateful act that members of the LGBTQI community have had to deal with. Nor will it be the last.

It takes a cold hearted person indeed not to feel some sort of anguish at this unfairness.

There is, however, a way that this situation can be improved.

By allowing marriage equality.

Sure, this isn't going to solve everything, homophobia is not going to cease immediately after legalizing same-sex marriage, but it is an excellent place to start.

Currently, every member of the LGBTQI community faces discrimination on a daily basis, because of nothing more than being who they are.

Can you imagine, just for a minute, what it would be like in their shoes? The simple act of holding hands with your significant other in a public area wouldn't turn heads for a heterosexual couple, but when it comes to gay and lesbian relationships? Such couples are greeted with homophobic slurs,

sneers, pointed looks. All of this, almost everyday, because of something that you have no control over. Due to something that is a part of you. Something you couldn't change, even if you tried.

This treatment is wrong. So very wrong, and so hurtful. It mus end.

Currently, the best way to achieve that, to achieve equality for all citizens, is to allow marriage equality in the state of NSW. Governments globally are realizing that allowing marriage equality is the right thing to do, and it is about time that Australia did the same. One state at a time if that's what it takes.

I want to thank you very much for taking the time to read this submission, and I beg you to carefully considers the points that I have raised. Unlike same-sex couples, you have a choice. Make the right decision...support marriage equality.