



BUILDING OUR COMMUNITY'S
HEALTH & WELLBEING

29 April 2011

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Committees
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

(Via email to legcon.sen@aph.gov.au)

Dear Committee Secretary

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the *Family Law Legislation Amendment (Family Violence and Other Measures) Bill 2011*.

ACON is the largest community based gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) health and HIV/AIDS organisation in Australia. ACON works to improve the health and wellbeing of GLBT communities and their families as well as people with HIV. The Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project (AVP) is a key project of ACON and its core business includes addressing homophobic violence - as well as domestic violence in GLBT relationships - and supporting those affected.

In regards to domestic violence, the AVP has a history of working in collaborative partnership with the NSW LGBTIQ Domestic Violence Interagency, the Inner City Legal Centre and other key agencies to prevent GLBT domestic and family violence and support GLBT individuals and communities affected by domestic and family violence.

I am writing to you to strongly support the submission to this inquiry made by the Inner City Legal Centre. ACON is specifically concerned that GLBT people, couples and families who do not meet the definition of 'de facto' relationship may not be fully protected under the legislation proposed in the current version of the *Bill*.

ACON is aware of many GLBT people in intimate relationships who might not share a domestic address or meet the current standard definition of 'de facto' couple. We are also aware that abuse experienced within the context of an intimate GLBT or same sex relationship can be equally severe and just as damaging as the violence experienced in a heterosexual de facto relationship and indeed, may be further compounded by homophobia/transphobia or heterosexism.

courage ● empathy ● diversity ● equality ● partnership ● community

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ACON acknowledges the support of its primary funder, NSW Health

For heterosexual couples, the ability to create a relationship through marriage means that even if a married couple does not reside in the same residence, they would still be protected under the proposed *Bill*.

We therefore respectfully urge the Committee to consider recommending amendment to the legislation to explicitly recognise the diversity of relationships and families and to ensure that the protections contained in the Bill are accessible to all Australian families.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of several fluid, overlapping strokes that form a cursive name.

Nicolas Parkhill
Chief Executive Officer