

Chief Executive  
ACT Dept Justice and Community Safety  
PO Box 158  
Canberra ACT 2601

Thursday 14 July 2005

Dear CEO

**Submission on the recognition of same sex relationships in the ACT.**

We write to support the principle of enabling people of the same sex to enter into legally recognised union. This is a civil rights issue.

Civil Liberties Australia (ACT) concurs with the statement of the Chief Minister that every individual is entitled to participate fully in society, whatever their sexual orientation.

Same sex partners currently suffer discrimination in several areas. For example, gays cannot make medical decisions for their partners in an emergency. Instead, the hospitals go to the families who may have been estranged for decades, who are often hostile and frequently totally ignore gay wishes regarding the treatment of their partners.

Upon death, in many cases, even very carefully drawn wills and durable powers of attorney have proven to not be enough if a family wishes to challenge a will, overturn a custody decision, or exclude the partner from a funeral or deny him or her the right to visit a partner's hospital bed or grave.

If a gay is arrested, their partner can be compelled to testify against them or provide evidence against them, which legally married couples are not forced to do.

Civil Liberties Australia (ACT) supports the option of marriage, but is cognisant of the possible difficulties in this course of action. We therefore conclude that the practical alternative is option of civil unions.

We commend the ACT government in bringing this important issue to public attention.

(Dr) Kristine K. Klugman  
President

Bill Rowlings  
Secretary