



Senator Nick Sherry

Labor Senator for Tasmania

26 July 2011

John D Harrower OAM
Bishop of Tasmania
GPO Box 748
HOBART TAS 7001

Dear Sir

Thank you for correspondence, date 26 July 2011, regarding same sex marriage.

There are different views in the community, and we recognise that this is an issue on which many people in the community have a strong view on.

The Government has supported an amended motion calling on Members of Parliament to gauge the views of their constituents on equal treatment for gay couples, including marriage.

It is the day-to-day job of Members of Parliament to talk to their constituents, and we think this is an issue that is worth including in those discussions.

The Government's position on same-sex marriage has not changed.

Government's position on same-sex marriage

The Government believes that the definition of marriage in the Marriage Act—that marriage is between a man and a woman—is appropriate. This is Labor Party policy, decided by the National Conference.

The Government believes that couples who have a mutual commitment to a shared life should be able to have their relationships recognised.

While not supporting same-sex marriage, the Government does support a nationally consistent framework for relationship recognition to be implemented by the States and Territories.

Victoria, ACT, NSW and Tasmania have established relationship recognition schemes and relationships recognised under these schemes are now recognised in a wide range of Commonwealth laws.

The Government will continue to encourage other jurisdictions to develop such schemes.

The Federal Attorney-General has written to State and Territory Attorneys-General and will continue to raise the issue with my state and territory colleagues.



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Relationship recognition

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Victoria, ACT, NSW and Tasmania have established relationship recognition schemes and relationships recognised under these schemes are now recognised in a wide range of Commonwealth laws.

The Government will continue to encourage other jurisdictions to develop such schemes.

The Attorney has written to State and Territory Attorneys-General and will continue to raise the issue with his state and territory colleagues.

Government's commitment to remove discrimination

The Government's commitment to removing discrimination was demonstrated by its reforms to remove discrimination from 85 Commonwealth laws.

These reforms, which passed in 2009, removed discrimination and equalised treatment for same-sex couples in areas of taxation, social security, health, aged care, superannuation, immigration, child support and family law.

These reforms extend to same-sex couples the same entitlements and obligations that apply to opposite-sex couples. Equal treatment means some same-sex couples will get access to benefits they could not previously access.

Government support to enact protections against sexuality discrimination

The Government supports enactment of legislation prohibiting discrimination on the basis of a person's sexual orientation or gender status, and the removal of such discrimination from Commonwealth legislation.

During the election, the Government confirmed that it will be introducing legislation to protect against discrimination on the basis of a person's sexual orientation or gender status as part of its review and consolidation of federal anti-discrimination laws into a single Act.

The Government will undertake consultation with stakeholders on the proposed single anti-discrimination law

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Nick Sherry', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Senator Nick Sherry