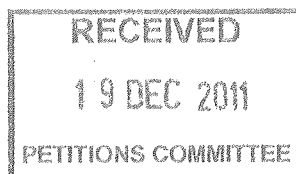




ATTORNEY-GENERAL
THE HON ROBERT McCLELLAND MP

30 NOV 2011

AG-MC11/12458



The Hon John Murphy MP
Chair, Standing Committee on Petitions
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Murphy

Thank you for your letter of 31 October 2011 regarding the petition submitted to the Standing Committee on Petitions, opposing changes to the *Marriage Act 1961*.

The Australian Government believes that the current definition of marriage in the *Marriage Act 1961*—‘that marriage is between a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life’—is appropriate.

The Government believes that couples who have a mutual commitment to a shared life should be able to have their relationships recognised. The Government supports a nationally consistent framework for relationship recognition to be implemented by the States and Territories. New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory have established relationship recognition schemes, where the relationship is legally recognised by the act of registration. Relationships registered under these schemes are also now recognised in a wide range of Commonwealth laws. The Government will continue to encourage other jurisdictions to develop such schemes.

I hope this information is of assistance to the Committee when considering this petition.

Yours sincerely

Robert McClelland