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MEDIA RELEASE

**Australian Lawyers for Human Rights Supports Marriage Equality Legislation**

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Australian Lawyers for Human Rights ('ALHR'), a national network of over 2000 Australian lawyers and law students active in practising and promoting awareness of human rights has made a submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee in support of the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2012.

Stephen Keim, President of ALHR, said: "ALHR supports the Bill on the basis that the rights to non-discrimination and equality are fundamental human rights and ensure the universal enjoyment of human rights. International human rights law prevents discrimination on the basis of a person's sexual orientation. As marriage is also a fundamental human right, ALHR argues that to deny a person the right to marry on the basis of sexual orientation is a breach of international human rights law. It is a systematic denial of rights to a particular group of people which is not based on reasonable and objective criteria."

Mr. Keim said that: "The lack of reasonable and objective criteria is plain when it is considered that 319 million people now live in jurisdictions that support same-sex marriage. Further, the majority of Australians support same-sex marriage. Recent polls suggest that around 60% of Australians support same-sex marriage including 53% of Australian Christians."

"ALHR believes", said Mr. Keim, "that the current definition of marriage as 'the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life' constitutes unjustifiable discrimination against persons who wish to marry someone of the same sex. ALHR considers that there may be advantages in simplifying the definition of marriage to simply 'the voluntary union of two individuals', in that such a definition would better reflect the contemporary practice of marriage, and better preserve the ideal of marriage for all people."

“To deny some persons the right to marry, on the basis of sex, sexual orientation or gender identity, undermines the inherent dignity and equality of those persons and that of their families, causing unjustifiable harm and denying to them the enjoyment of fundamental human rights. ALHR considers that the proposed amendments would bring Australia, as a modern, liberal and democratic state, into line with developments in other countries that have, in recent decades, moved to liberalise the concept of marriage.”

The full text of ALHR’s submission can be found on the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee website:

[http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate\\_Committees?url=legcon\\_ctte/marriage\\_equality\\_2012/submissions.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=legcon_ctte/marriage_equality_2012/submissions.htm)

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