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Media release

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Leading Human Rights Lawyers welcome Senate Select Committee Report on Same-Sex Marriage Bill

Australian Lawyers for Human Rights (ALHR) welcomes the recent Senate Select Committee Report on the Marriage Amendment (Same-Sex Marriage) Bill of 15 February 2017 and calls for a free vote on an amended bill.

While the bill as originally proposed sought widespread exemptions to antidiscrimination law on the grounds of religion, the Committee report tempers these changes. Article 7 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* states that all persons are equal before the law and are entitled to live without discrimination and with equal protection of the law. This principle extends to marriage equality and religious freedoms should not be expanded at the expense of the LGBTI community.

ALHR's LGBTI Subcommittee Co-Chair, Nicholas Stewart said, "The move for marriage equality should not be accompanied by further unnecessary exemptions for the religious community. We must send the message that we as Australians recognise LGBTI relationships as equal and end the psychological harm that discrimination creates."

On the subject of gendered language ALHR calls on the Commonwealth Government to remove gendered language from the marriage equality bill. Any state-sanctioned marriage should be described at law as between any two consenting adults, not two men or two women recognising that "Male", "Female" and "Other" are legally accepted gender identities.

LGBTI Subcommittee Co-Chair, Kathryn Cramp, said, "We call on the Federal Government to stop further delay on this issue. Polls have shown that the majority of Australians want a free vote on marriage equality. There is no time like the present to correct a national history of exclusion and discrimination."

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