



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

9 October 2015

s33(a)(iii)

Florida House of Representatives
319 The Capitol
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee FL 32399

Dear s33(a)(iii)

Thank you for your letter of 11 August 2015 to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon Julie Bishop MP. The Minister has asked me to respond on her behalf.

We were heartened to hear of your activism on behalf of LGBT individuals in your District and your contribution to the American marriage equality debate.

Australia is a strong advocate for non-discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and intersex (LGBTI) persons. We believe that human rights and universal, indivisible and interdependent and that all people – including LGBTI individuals – are entitled to dignity and legal protections regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

As a legislator you may be interested to know that Australian legislation contains express prohibitions against discrimination of LGBTI individuals. In 2013 our federal *Sex Discrimination Act* was amended to introduce new protections from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status in many areas of public life. These protections have been recognised as world leading by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

These protections are complemented by the *Australian Government Guidelines on Recognition of Sex and Gender*, which standardise the gender classification system and the evidence required to change a person's gender as recorded on personal records held by the Australian Government.

I note also that National Human Rights Institution, the Australian Human Rights Commission, has just conclude a national public consultation aimed at identifying any remaining areas of Australian law and practice that discriminate against LGBTI individuals. You may be interested in reviewing the consultation report which can be accessed online at: <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sexual-orientation-sex-gender-identity/projects/sogii-rights>.

While Australian law defines marriage as being between a man and a woman, Australia has some of the world's strongest protections of the rights of LGBTI individuals within relationships. I note also that Prime Minister Malcom Turnbull has recently indicated his support for proposals to put the issue of same sex-marriage to a public vote.

The Australian Government is also actively engaged in protecting and promoting the human rights of LGBTI persons internationally; particularly through multilateral fora such as the UN General Assembly, Security Council and Human Rights Council. We are a member of the UN LGBT Core Group and we actively seek opportunities to further this issue in our multilateral and bilateral engagements.

As an active advocate on these issues I encourage you to continue seeking all opportunities to share your experiences both domestically and internationally. The voices of active supporters adds to the international conversation around strengthening LGBTI rights globally.

Yours sincerely
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Acting Assistant Secretary
Human Rights Branch

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