Dear Senate Committee;

I am writing to tell you that I support the Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Bill 2012 and I urge the Committee to recommend the bill be passed before the next election.

As a lesbian who has spent the last 40 years working hard to end discrimination I feel we have reached a crucial stage where I am at last considered to be a citizen worthy of human rights. Not a situation I as in during my life during which I endured violence, abuse and disadvantage for daring to be openly lesbian in order to forge a path forward for lesbians.

Finally I find that instead of being bashed, verbally abused, fired, excluded, looked down upon, evicted, hospitalised and any other number of horrible consequences for me and my lesbian friends there is hope at the end of the tunnel. When you have watched your lesbians sisters literally (not figuratively) get their teeth kicked in (for daring to dance together) and fought of gangs of men threatening to rape and kill you, and had bricks thrown through your bedroom window and burning rags pushed into the letter slot of your home and many such other incidents you kind of welcome the new dawn of social acceptability. But you don't rush open armed into trust. After all it was the police who waved football socks at my friends and yelled "Wait till we get you in the lock up," during the height of the deaths in custody era. I have known of many rapes and bashings of lesbians by police, and firemen and others.

Yes. All this has been my genuine personal experience because I was not a lesbian who hid in the closet. I have paid a big price for being myself. Those who stayed in the closet for relatively greater safety paid another kind of price. The severe psychological price of living a lie. I most horrible fate. In my opinion it is a worse fate than being assaulted for being visible.

All the same, for the first time in my life I have joined social clubs which consist mainly of heterosexual people because I feel that now they just may not ostracise me if I happen to come out. Though I don't come out - just in case.

Therefore I urge you in particular to remove the still existing discriminations.
All government organisations and government funded services must be prohibited from discriminating against us.

Of particular concern is the way that religious organisations have had exemptions. This especially a problem as they provide so many social services that we may be dependent upon. Such as aged care services. So many aged homes and services are run by religious people and they must be told that they cannot discriminate in employment or service provision. It is totally unfair that they get special dispensations.
If they are by some fault of your allowed to keep persecuting and discriminating then at the very least they should be required to make public statements to that effect on all brochures, websites and display prominently in their offices and foyers that they will not be treating us as human beings but as second class scum citizens.
Then at least we will be told clearly where we stand and may be able to avoid their ill will. Unless of course one is homeless or sick or frail aged and has no where else to go. Then we will know where to be careful and dishonest and circumspect so that we get a bite to eat or a bed for the night.

Yes, indeed. You will be most lax in your duty in representing the citizens of this nation if you allow blind faith to allow blind persecution. Religious prejudices are no excuse.

There are plenty of people and types of people I don't like - but I don't believe that the laws of the nation should give me licence to treat them with contempt, disdain and deliberately endanger their health and well being. In the end neglect is a kind of violence and the neglect by religious organisations to respect their fellow citizens who just may happen to be lesbians is a kind of violence in its end effects.

I have witnessed the very real trauma and suffering of lesbians treated such as this. Not allowed to attend their loved partner in hospital or on the death bed. Not allowed at the funeral. Disinherited. Badly treated in hospital themselves - what are the physical consequences of that? As bad as a bashing - I hope you realise.

Don't forget to recommend that a Commissioner responsible for Sexual Orientation Discrimination be appointed.

Yours most sincerely;

Chris Sitka