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YWCA of Adelaide submission to the Social Development Committee Inquiry into Same-Sex Parenting

To the Social Development Committee Inquiry into Same-Sex Parenting
Parliament House
ADELAIDE
Via email: sdc@parliament.sa.gov.au

“In the eyes of our child she is one half of his entire world. In the eyes of the law she is invisible.”

Sam, biological mother of Tom speaking about her partner Alex

The YWCA of Adelaide welcomes the Social Development Committee Inquiry into Same-Sex Parenting. As the leading voice for young women in South Australia the YWCA of Adelaide provides advocacy, support, empowerment and leadership opportunities for young women under 30 through services, programs and campaigns.

As part of the world’s oldest and largest women led membership movement we have been working with and for young women in Adelaide since 1880. We have therefore advocated for women on diverse subjects from winning the right to vote, divorce, open their own bank account, remain in the workforce after marriage, and receive equal pay. We continue to campaign for rights and equality for women in areas including - but not limited to - women’s leadership development, reducing violence against women and girls, closing the gender pay gap, and reducing the sexualisation of girls and women. We note that for women in same sex relationships, they experience a double discrimination on all concerns of equality for women.

Experience over 130 years through our Membership shows that when people receive entitlement, acknowledgement and visibility through legislative reform their self worth, self esteem, sense of identity and belonging, economic, social and cultural currency all increase. Legal rights also afford greater protections and for same sex parents and their children this can equate to increased tolerance, reduced homophobia, and improved access to services and supports.

Sam is a 35 year old Adelaide woman in a relationship with Alex. They have a three year old son Tom.* Sam has shared some of her experiences with YWCA of Adelaide for this submission.

“One of the biggest problems is the inconsistency between Federal and State laws. At a Federal level we are recognised as a couple, but at a State level we aren’t. This means I cannot access any single parent benefits at a Federal level, but we have no protection at a State level.” Sam

The YWCA of Adelaide notes the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child's four core principles of: non-discrimination; devotion to the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and respect for the views of the child. "Every right spelled out in the Convention is inherent to the human dignity and harmonious development of every child". Unicef

"A lot of people go interstate to have their babies so they can have both parents' names on the birth certificate. I could not imagine being separated from my family and friends at the crucial time of giving birth. It is the time in your life more than any other when you and your new baby need support, and if you leave your home town, you lose your entire support network." Sam

YWCA of Adelaide supports legislative reform to:

- Allow same sex couples in South Australia to access adoption, assisted reproductive technology, surrogacy and foster caring, and
- Recognise the non-biological parent

"For Tom's birth certificate, his passport, and for Centrelink, his documentation says 'Father unknown'. I know who his father is, but I have lied, because if his father is listed he has to legally be involved in all sorts of decisions. But he is not Tom's parent. I am listed as his mother but my partner, his other parent, is not recorded or recognised anywhere. She is not even meant to sign for him when she takes him to the Doctor, or enrolls him at school. Some places are ok about it and they let her sign for him, but she isn't meant to. Legally, she has no rights." Sam

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this Inquiry. Please contact YWCA of Adelaide on 8203 9400 if you wish to discuss this submission further.



Winnie Pelz
Acting Chief Executive

** names have been changed at the request of this family*