

15 June 2010

The Executive Director
Australian Law Reform Commission
GPO Box 3708
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Via email to violence@alrc.gov.au

Dear Ms Sabina Wynn

Re: Family Violence: Improving Legal Frameworks

ACON welcomes the inquiry into the legal frameworks around family violence and child protection. As Australia's largest GLBT health organisation, our particular interest in the area of family violence is same-sex domestic violence.

ACON has worked in the field of same-sex domestic violence for over 5 years and is a member of the NSW Same-Sex Domestic Violence Interagency, which is a partnership of government and non-government agencies that aims to educate and promote awareness of same-sex domestic violence. In our experience, same-sex domestic violence is still often misunderstood by mainstream service providers and the police. It is in this context that ACON strongly supports proposal 4-5 and 4-22 in the *Family Violence: Improving Legal Frameworks Consultation Paper*.

These proposals would introduce into the legislation some illustrative examples of same-sex domestic violence, and the impacts of family violence on GLBT families. This is important because same-sex domestic violence has unique aspects that set it apart from other forms of domestic violence. These unique aspects include using societal homophobia as a tool of control (including the threat of 'outing') and the barriers of access to services such as health and justice services due to fears of homophobia and breaches of confidentiality.

Recognising these unique aspects in legislation would provide a strong impetus for service providers and the criminal justice system to better address same-sex domestic violence. This would enable a more socially inclusive sector so that clients who are from same-sex couple families can access the same services and legal protections that the broader community have access to.

courage ● empathy ● diversity ● equality ● partnership ● community

If you would like further information into this issue, please do not hesitate to contact Karen Price, Director, Policy, Strategy and Research on 02 9206 2048 or email kprice@acon.org.au.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nicolas Parkhill', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Nicolas Parkhill
Chief Executive Officer