

14 June 2007

Media Release

“Liberty Victoria welcomes the VLRC report on Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) and Adoption, and urges the government to introduce legislation to implement it in full as soon as possible”.

Liberty welcomes the Government's and the VLRC's emphasis on the need to accord the rights of children paramount importance. This is an important principle of international law and human rights. Current laws on ART and adoption do not obey this principle, but pander to out-dated prejudices against single mothers and same-sex couples.

Children of same-sex couples, and of single women, are here right now, and the law must first of all recognise that fact. It is in the children's best interests that their parents and grandparents are accorded the necessary legal recognition as parents and family to ensure they have the legal powers to protect and support those children, as the report recommends. Denying recognition to the birth mother's female partner as a parent, for example, is discriminating against the child and denying the child necessary rights and social recognition, in just the same way as the old prejudice against so-called illegitimate children harmed children because of social prejudice against the parents.

Discrimination in law against children of unmarried parents was abolished some 30 years ago. Discrimination against children of same-sex couples must be ended now, as the VLRC has recommended.

Liberty urges the Government not to pander to the predictable negativity of religious groups, whose history of discrimination against lesbians and gay men, and of child abuse, is a matter for shame, not reward. In a civilized society based on human freedom, equality, dignity and respect, as Victoria's Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities so eloquently and rightly proclaims, the strictures of the religious should be confined to those who freely wish to belong to this or that group and obey its rules. Such strictures should not be allowed to be imposed, like sharia law, on society as a whole.

The Government should listen to its Law Reform Commission, whose measured conclusions have been delivered after widespread public consultation over several years. It should heed its own Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It should remember the ideals of freedom, dignity, equality and respect. It should act now to implement the recommended reforms.

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