



IWD Meanjin Brisbane



TO:

[legal@humanrights.gov.au](mailto:legal@humanrights.gov.au)

I write in support of the exemption application submitted by the Lesbian Action Group in Victoria to enable the women to hold a lesbian event in the Pride Centre to mark International Lesbian Day.

To be honest, I am both horrified and more than a little disgusted that lesbians must seek an exemption from the law to enable them to lawfully hold a lesbian event in this day and age. It seems like something that better belongs a hundred years ago. These women are today legally able to marry but they are unable to hold a publicly advertised lesbian social event.

I understand the women seek an exemption on the grounds of both sex and sexuality ie they seek to exclude both men and non lesbian women. I am a non lesbian woman. In common with every other non lesbian woman I know, I would never seek to attend an event I knew was being held only for lesbian women. Because I respect that right. I do not believe there would be a non lesbian woman in the country who would seek to spoil or disrupt a lesbian event by forcing their way in where they were not wanted. I know, however, there are men, who fancifully 'identify' as lesbians, who do not want lesbians, or any other women, to be able to hold events where men are not welcome. And it is in the interests of these men, who know they are not women but demand to be called women, that State and Federal policies and laws have been changed.

I have been holding events for some years that bring together women, and occasionally men, who seek to protect women's rights and children's safeguards against recent policies and laws passed in Australia and elsewhere. When men are invited a small number attend, when they are not invited they respect women's right to organise on our own. Trans identified men go to extraordinary lengths to learn where we are meeting so they can disrupt, they pressure the owners of the venues I hire to cancel the events I organise. On one occasion, last November, they succeeded and the venue cancelled my event. The Manager of the venue made it clear to me he was not cancelling because of any problem he had with my event but because gender ideologues had abused and threatened him and his staff, via email and phone, if he didn't cancel. The Manager took the coward's way out because he was fearful of trans retaliation.

Within my memory, lesbians have been abused, threatened and bashed, lost custody of their children, had family connections severed, lost jobs – ALL because they are lesbians. Lesbians are

same sex attracted women. The Victorian and Australian Governments are taking us right back to those bad old days of job loss and violence. Unless an exemption to this law is granted, the Australian Human Rights Commission is sending a very clear message that lesbians are fair game to the bigotry and hatred of yesteryear.

The Pride Centre refuses to allow lesbians to use its premises to meet as lesbians yet it encourages trans people to use the Centre to hold trans-only events. This is the very definition of discrimination based in lesbophobia. That public funds are used to perpetrate lesbophobia in 2023 is a disgrace.

Next month in Meanjin Brisbane I will hold a conference for women-only. Titled 'Lesbian Lives: Visibility, Activism, Women's Rights', it will be attended only by women, both lesbians and non lesbian women. No men will attend because women have the right to meet, assemble, speak with and organise AS women. Every speaker is a lesbian, all chairpersons are lesbians, even the videographer is a lesbian. Non lesbian women are more than willing to support this event by taking registrations and raising funds to ensure the event proceeds.

You have the opportunity to bring a semblance of fairness to an extremely unfair situation. Please take the opportunity, grant the exemption.

Anna McCormack

28 August 2023