



**MEDIA RELEASE – For Immediate Release
1 AUGUST 2013**

LGBTI organisations welcome new Federal anti-discrimination protections

LGBTI human rights organisations today welcomed the commencement of federal protections on the grounds of 'sexual orientation', 'gender identity', 'intersex status' and 'marital or relationship status'. The new laws mean that from 1 August 2013 LGBTI Australians, who have been discriminated against on the basis of the new protected attributes, may take their complaint to the Australian Human Rights Commission and ultimately the Federal Court.

The new laws will help address the alarmingly high levels of discrimination experienced by Intersex, Transgender and Gender Diverse people across every aspect of their lives. Advocates welcome the recognition that trans and intersex issues were uniquely addressed in this legislation.

"This Commonwealth discrimination protection will make a significant and positive impact on the daily experiences of many people. A Gender Agenda particularly welcomes the inclusive definition of gender identity and protection on the basis of intersex status." A Gender Agenda Executive Director Peter Hyndal said.

"We welcome the full, authentic inclusion of 'intersex status', a biological attribute, in anti-discrimination law for the first time. We have not previously been recognised in law, and our inclusion is of huge practical benefit." said OII Australia President Gina Wilson.

"The new law will greatly assist systemic change to improve lives and make processes easier for trans and gender diverse individuals in the case of a complaint." added Transgender Victoria spokesperson Sally Goldner.

Victoria's and NSW's gay & lesbian rights lobbies also welcomed the historic commencement of these new federal protections.

"These laws will have an immediate, practical benefit for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex people, including protection from discrimination for the first time for federal employees and ensuring access to services such as Centrelink and Medicare on an equal footing with all other Australians," said Victorian Gay & Lesbian Rights Lobby Convener Anna Brown.

Dr Justin Koonin, NSW Gay & Lesbian Rights Lobby Co-convener said, "These laws represent the culmination of over 25 years of advocacy, and will provide much-needed protection at a federal level to LGBTI people. Particularly significant are the reforms around aged-care service provision, which will make discrimination unlawful in any Commonwealth-funded service in the country."

OII Australia's Gina Wilson said, "We welcome the recognition that people born with intersex are not subject to religious exemptions, and we urge states and territories to add 'intersex status' to their legislation".

In today's announcement the Attorney-General indicated that people who take an action in direct compliance with a state or territory law would be exempt from the new federal laws, while the Federal Government spent the next year discussing with state governments laws that were appropriate for a permanent exemption. As part of this discussion the Attorney General Mark Dreyfus indicated he will work with states and territories towards nationally consistent recognition of sex and gender, including in birth certificates..

"It is important to ensure that these laws provide a new national standard to protect LGBTI people from unfair treatment and harm, including using this 12 month period as an opportunity to audit outdated state and territory laws and remove the last remnants of unjustifiable discrimination from our statute books," said VGLRL's Anna Brown.

"A Gender Agenda notes that many existing State and Territory based identity recognition provisions do not currently comply with the SDA, and urges State and Territory Governments to use the next twelve months to consult with key stakeholders and make appropriate amendments." said Peter Hyndal.

"We also urge state and territory governments to amend their definitions of gender identity in line with the new federal definition to ensure simplicity and effectiveness for all parties," added Sally Goldner.

More information about the new laws and the national complaints process can be found on the Australian Human Rights Commission Website - <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/new-protection-against-discrimination-basis-sexual-orientation-gender-identity-and-intersex-status>

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