



ACT HUMAN RIGHTS  
COMMISSION

21 September 2017

## Keeping the ACT Safe and Inclusive

Commenting on the marriage equality survey ACT Discrimination Commissioner, Karen Toohey said:

I support a yes vote for marriage equality because I support equal rights for everyone in our community. I also support an inclusive, diverse and safe community, which is usually what the ACT is.

As predicted, we're seeing an increase in reported cases where people taking a stand on marriage equality is leading to them being vilified, harassed or, in some cases losing their jobs.

We're seeing letters being distributed in Canberra spreading misinformation about the LGBTIQ community and the Safe Schools program designed to influence people to vote 'no'.

At the Human Rights Commission we hear terrible stories of exclusion, abuse, violence and the harm to physical and mental health, self esteem and well being that follows.

I understand the terrible effects that flow from discrimination, exclusion and vilification because of who you are.

When an individual experiences discrimination or vilification it damages our community.

The Commonwealth has passed a law regulating debate about the survey that seeks to protect people from vilification, threats and intimidation because of the views they hold, or people think they hold.

That law is complex and time limited to events that occur up until November 15.

In the ACT, the *Discrimination Act* protects people from discrimination on the basis of marital status, gender identity, sexuality and religion in areas of public life like education and employment.

The ACT community is also protected from vilification in any public place on the basis of gender identity, religion, disability or race.

I encourage people in the ACT to contact the Commission if they experience or witness vilification, harassment or abuse on either side of the debate.

We can give you information about your options for addressing those issues or, if we can't help you, we can refer you to someone who can.

Everyone in the ACT wants a safe, diverse, inclusive community. That means all of us should act if we see harmful behaviours we can do something about.

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