



9 August 2010

Corey Irlam  
Australian Coalition for Equality  
By e-mail: [corey.irlam@coalitionforequality.org.au](mailto:corey.irlam@coalitionforequality.org.au); [corey.irlam@equality.org.au](mailto:corey.irlam@equality.org.au);  
[media@coalitionforequality.org.au](mailto:media@coalitionforequality.org.au)

Dear Mr Irlam,

Thank you for providing the opportunity to outline the views of the Coalition on the important issues facing your members. On behalf of the Coalition Members of Parliament and candidates I am pleased to respond to your survey in the following attachment.

The Coalition believes Labor has made the future of all Australians more uncertain.

On top of their billion-dollar waste on school buildings, their mismanaged home insulation fiasco and their soft border protection policies, Labor is growing Australia's debt by \$100 million per day.

They even removed an elected Prime Minister to suit their own political interest.

The Coalition is taking a stand in the best interest of Australia's future.

We will end the waste, repay the debt, stop the taxes, stop the boats and ease the pressure on Australian families.

Throughout the election campaign we will be progressively announcing policies outlining our commitments for Australia's future. These policies will cover a number of issues canvassed in your survey.

Once announced, our policies will be available at [www.liberal.org.au](http://www.liberal.org.au) and [www.nationals.org.au](http://www.nationals.org.au).

Thank you for helping us to communicate the Coalition's commitments to your members.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Brian Loughnane', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Brian Loughnane  
Federal Campaign Director

## **Response to Coalition for Equality**

### **LGBTI equality achievements**

The Coalition commends your organisation's dedication to the well-being of your members.

We want all Australians to be able to enjoy their life to the fullest, unimpeded by bigotry or intolerance. We condemn all forms of prejudice.

The Coalition's underlying philosophy is to treat people as individuals. It was a Liberal Party MP who first moved at the federal level in 1973 to decriminalise homosexual acts between consenting adults: Sir John Gorton, a former Liberal Prime Minister of Australia. At the state level, the first attempt to reform the law in this area was in 1972 when a Liberal member of the South Australian Parliament, Murray Hill, introduced into parliament a private member's bill decriminalising homosexual acts between consenting adults.

The previous Coalition Government took an active role in stamping out unwarranted legislative discrimination against homosexuals. We took practical and pragmatic steps. In 1999 we amended the *Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act 1993* so superannuation funds could change their governing rules to provide for binding death benefit nominations, which allowed same-sex couples to request that their accumulated superannuation benefits be paid to one another in the event of death. The last Coalition Government also agreed to extend certain service entitlements to members of the Australian Defence Force in interdependent relationships, which included members with same sex partners. Finally, our *Workplace Relations Act 1996* prohibited termination of employment based on sexual orientation.

### **Anti-Discrimination**

The Coalition condemns all forms of discrimination. We have no plans to conduct formal inquiries into Commonwealth or State anti-discrimination legislation, but we do plan amendments to Commonwealth legislation to address discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and relationship status.

All States and Territories of Australia prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in a range of areas of public life, including education and employment. The majority of states and territories also prohibit harassment on grounds of sexual orientation. We support these existing statutes.

Prevention of and punishment for violent crime are generally matters for State governments and parliaments.

We support the right of private clubs to exist with their own rules so long as they do not infringe others' liberty.

We will let senior public servants make decisions about what training is appropriate for their staff.

### **Relationships and families**

The Coalition Government acted in 2004 to define in legislation that marriage is 'the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life'. We do not support an amendment to the Marriage Act to allow same sex couples to marry.

The Coalition believes that this definition reflects the views of the majority of the Australian community.

The Australian Government does not regulate civil unions and relationship registers. The regulation of same sex relationships is a matter for the States and Territories. In that context, the Coalition has no plans to introduce civil unions or relationship registers for same-sex couples.

We will not infringe on the rights of states and territories to enact laws and regulations in the areas of surrogacy and adoption, for example, so long as they do not contradict federal laws.

We have no current plans to audit superannuation funds or relevant Commonwealth legislation. We expect all existing legislation to be fairly and vigorously enforced.

### **Aged care and LGBTI people**

The Coalition has a comprehensive aged care policy that will ultimately be of benefit to all Australians.

The Coalition will provide \$935 million over four years to provide certainty of care for older Australians and vital support for the aged care sector to prepare for future needs.

The Coalition Government will take real action to:

- Provide certainty of care through the first ever four year Aged Care Provider Agreement with the Aged Care sector;
- Establish an Aged Care Bed Incentive Programme to provide \$335 million over four years to convert up to 3,000 of the allocated bed licences to operational residential aged care beds in the first term;
- Provide Convalescent Care to assist up to 20,000 older people waiting in hospital to return home;
- Ensure a high standard of quality care and less red tape; and
- Support the continuing contribution of senior Australians.

After three years of Labor neglect, our aged care system needs urgent change to provide viable and effective aged care services for older Australians.

The Commonwealth employs very few health workers who treat patients or have vocational contact with the community. The States employ the vast bulk of Australia's public health and community workers, including hospital doctors and nurses. The Coalition would not oppose State government measures that sought to improve the skills or knowledge of their staff.

### **Sex and gender diverse Australians**

The Coalition will give serious consideration to the recommendations of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's 'Sex Files' report. The report will inform any changes made to the relevant government programs. Such consideration will be in keeping with the Coalition's history of removing legislative discrimination against homosexual people.

The Commonwealth will always work with State governments to implement sensible programmes and reforms that improve the lives of their citizens.

We have no plans to alter Medicare.

### **Strategic approaches to LGBTI health and welfare**

The Coalition supports health plans that improve the health system for all Australians. We strongly support a public health system that treats and effectively supports Australians regardless of their economic or social status or their sexuality.

We do not, however, plan to create new national health plans that are tailored to help specific groups. Such plans could divert the government's limited resources away from the essential task of maintaining an adequately resourced and efficient health system for all.

Because the nation's public finances have been run into the ground by Labor, the Coalition cannot make any new commitments to fund non-government organisations at this time.

### **Strategic approaches to LGBTI issues in education**

The Coalition is opposed to all forms of bullying. We are determined to ensure that every school has protocols in place that all teachers and parents are aware of and can follow to that deter bullying in schools.

When last in government, the Coalition rolled out a package of support measures under the National Safe Schools Framework to help schools maintain a safe environment for their students. In 2005 we built on this programme with further funding for a National Safe Schools Week. We continue to support pragmatic and constructive measures to prevent bullying.

A Coalition Government will also make the National School Chaplaincy Programme an ongoing programme and will continue funding at its present levels – \$165 million over 3 years.

The National School Chaplaincy Programme was introduced by the former Coalition Government and enabled schools to employ a part-time school chaplain, with the purpose of providing pastoral care and non-denominational spiritual guidance in schools.

The chaplaincy programme has been particularly successful in helping students with behaviour management issues and those that may have difficulties in their social relationships. The programme also helps students that battle with loneliness or bullying at schools and students who have difficulties in their families.

We will review the national curriculum in government to ensure that it is rigorous and comprehensive.

### **Research into LGBTI issues**

We have no plans to insist that government or private sector organisations collect new types of data, or monitor individuals based on their sexuality. The Coalition values privacy and is naturally reluctant to mandate that government or private organisations have more data than they really need to perform their functions.

We do, however, fully support the independence of the Australian Bureau of Statistics. We would not act to impede that organisation's plans to collect new types of data if it thought such a step were consistent with its remit.

### **Australia's international leadership role**

The Coalition supports Australia's status as a signatory of the United Nations Declaration on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. We condemn human rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity wherever they occur