

# **Toni McLennan Speech**

## **Hear Our Voice**

**Gay and Lesbian Equality Rally**  
**12 August 2007**

I am really pleased to be here today to support the rally and introduce myself and tell you about HEAR OUR VOICE, a new political party dedicated to the principles of honesty, equality and fairness.

HEAR OUR VOICE was created because we want to right some wrongs – in particular we want to campaign to get more women in politics – we also want to crusade for better benefits for senior Australians and we will fight for gay and lesbian people until they have the same rights under the law as other Australians!

It is because of inequality and injustice that I stand here today and I will continue this journey until I see equity and fairness reign in these areas.

Gay and lesbian people deserve a strong voice in parliament, not just words from the major political parties because they want your vote this election year.

HEAR OUR VOICE believes that gay and lesbian people have a right to the same opportunities and rewards as other Australians, and we will fight to remove all discrimination in the law and our society.

HEAR OUR VOICE will work toward including same sex couples in the definition of de-facto spouse across all laws, including employment, superannuation, social security, tax, family law, veterans' affairs entitlements, workers' compensation, aged care and migration.

HEAR OUR VOICE recognises that love and relationships come in many forms and that unity and commitment are just as strong in same sex families as they are in heterosexual ones.

HEAR OUR VOICE will stand strong on this issue and we will not only fight to change the laws for gay and lesbian people, but we will work hard to change community attitudes so that persecution, discrimination and alienation are things of the past.

By not having equal rights under the law, it sends a message to other Australians that there is something wrong with being gay and lesbian.

There is nothing wrong with the way you are. You are perfect - and it was nature who made you so. What is wrong is that gay and lesbian people are discriminated against and persecuted for something they have no control over.

How would the Government and society react if people with red hair were treated the same way as gay and lesbian people are treated – they have no more control over the colour of their hair than gay and lesbian people do over their sexuality.

If people with red hair were discriminated against there would be outrage, so should there be outrage for the way gay and lesbian people are treated.

We not only need to change our laws, we also need to change our attitude. We need people in parliament who are going to lead us to be a more tolerant and caring society.

It is a lack of understanding and intolerance that stops us from being the truly great country we are destined to be. HEAR OUR VOICE will strive for an Australia where all people are considered and treated as equals.

What happens in Australia at election time is that people tick a box above the line and hope for the best – but look what hoping for the best has got us. We need different voices in parliament – not more of the same.

There are politicians in parliament who have been there for decades – what would they know about your life and the lives of your friends and family.

The current government is creating an economy, but HEAR OUR VOICE believes it is more important to create a community. We need to make better choices in selecting our politicians and this is where our power lies.

In the upcoming election we need to ensure that neither major party has control of the Senate – look what the Howard Government has done since taking control of the upper house – workchoices legislation to name one.

HEAR OUR VOICE is currently struggling to be heard by mainstream media – it is because we are standing up for the rights of marginalised and disadvantaged groups that this is happening.

So I need your help. HEAR OUR VOICE needs 500 members so we can register the Party with the Australian Electoral Commission – being a registered political party would give us a real chance at the federal election.

We need the 500 members before this Wednesday and I will be walking around the crowd handing out membership forms. Membership is free and you don't need to do anything as a party member – I just need 500 members so I can register the party.

Just because we're small at the moment doesn't mean we're not mighty, and we won't stop demanding equality until our voice is heard.

In parliament HEAR OUR VOICE will do all it can to ensure that all Australians, irrespective of age, income, gender, education, sexual orientation, religion and cultural background, are valued and given every opportunity to reach their full potential.

Together we can change our Nation for the better - through courage and strength and holding firm to our convictions.

I want to thank you for allowing me to speak today – it is an honour to be part of this movement and I look forward to the day that equality rules!

Thank you.