

Civil Partnerships and Sexual Orientation Team  
Women and Equality Unit, DTI  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3BQ

16 September 2003

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Civil Partnership – a Framework for Legal Recognition of Same-sex Couples**

Rights of Women warmly welcomes the publication of the Government's consultation paper on civil partnership. We are greatly encouraged by the proposal to create an institution intended to end discrimination against same-sex partnerships, and that the proposals closely follow the rights and responsibilities due to married couples. We believe that a partial award of rights and responsibilities to same-sex couples would, by comparison, entrench existing discrimination further. We urge the Government to bring forward progressive legislation on this matter as soon as possible.

We fully endorse the written response of the Lesbian and Gay Lawyers Association to this paper. In addition we would like to emphasise that we are strongly in favour of increasing the protections afforded to cohabiting couples, whether same-sex or opposite-sex. We also look forward to the passage of the forthcoming Gender Recognition Bill, and in particular the provisions which that legislation should make on allowing people to marry or undertake civil registration within their new gender.

Rights of Women is an industrial and provident society, which was founded in 1975 to promote the interests of women in relation to the law. We run a free, national confidential telephone legal advice help line for women. We specialise in advising in family law, especially domestic violence and Children Act matters. Rights of Women works to attain justice and equality by informing, educating and empowering women on their legal rights. We are a membership organisation and our activities include producing publications, organising conferences and training courses, and doing policy and research work.

Yours sincerely,

Ranjit Kaur  
*Director*