

EO Files (June 2011)

“THINGS WE DO, PEOPLE WE MEET - Reflections in Brief”

Towards Equal Protection for All:
Addressing Concerns from the LGBT Community

Due to the absence of legislation against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) does not have jurisdiction to investigate into the issues surrounding the Social Welfare Department's recent training for social workers on working with gay and lesbian youths. Nevertheless, we believe that sexual orientation and gender identity are private matters and should be so respected.

The EOC understands that members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community face much prejudice and discrimination in their daily lives. We believe that no one should have to struggle to enjoy their basic rights, and everyone should have equal opportunities to be who they are.

We are aware that there are differing views on the Social Welfare Department's choice of trainer for its social workers on this subject. While it is important, in an open society, to learn about different viewpoints, care should be given to ensure that no group is put at a particular disadvantage and that the dignity of all is respected.

On 17 June 2011, the United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) passed its groundbreaking resolution condemning discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. This is a key international effort towards protecting the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

These recent developments shed light again on the need for anti-discrimination legislation for the protection of LGBT people. We call upon the Government to seriously review its policies and practices to ensure that they are inclusive and non-discriminatory. The EOC also continues to advocate for legislation against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

While the EOC does not presently have the authority to investigate into this issue, we urge all parties to work together towards a truly inclusive society. We will continue to work to advocate for the right of the LGBT community to equal protection under the law.

LAM Woon-kwong
Chairperson, Equal Opportunities Commission

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