

**Simon Rice: Is an Equality Act the best next step?**

Submissions to the Senate's recent inquiry into the effectiveness of the Sex Discrimination Act called for a national Equality Act, in part to address intersecting forms of discrimination and to harmonise the existing diverse anti-discrimination mechanisms. The inquiry report recommended a public inquiry into the merits of replacing the existing federal anti-discrimination acts with a single Equality Act. Such a proposal assumes that we agree on what we want when we say we want 'equality', that the many communities who are 'unequal' in society are all best served by the same remedial measures, that legislation continues to be an effective means of achieving equality, and that the political will - informed by perceptions of public sentiment - exists to undertake the task. I will examine the validity of these assumptions, in light of theory, pragmatic considerations, and the example set by the Equality Act (UK) 2006.