

Kirin beer company toasts same-sex marriages to its employees

With same-sex partnerships now officially recognised in some parts of Japan, companies have made public announcements in support of greater LGBT rights and awareness within their corporations and in society in general. On the heels of that announcement last year, beer and soft drinks giant Kirin Holdings, Ltd. has changed its guidelines to ensure there is no discrimination based upon sexual orientation or gender identity, and to recognise employees' same-sex marriages from this month. Common-law marriages will be similarly recognised.

Company rules regarding things like condolence leave, company housing, and other benefits will be rewritten so that common-law or same-sex couples receive the same treatment the same way as their married colleagues currently do. Medical leave will also be expanded to allow time off for procedures such as hormone therapy, which were previously not covered. They have also announced they will be holding workshops to raise awareness amongst employees and customers.

The Kirin craft beer subsidiary Spring Valley Brewery also supported this year's Rainbow Pride event and had a booth there, with the rather catchy slogan that "different people and beers are all different, and are all good."

While these are clearly positive changes and show a move in the right direction towards equality, there is still a lot to be done. It's fair to say that the support from these companies will go some way to influencing smaller companies and their workers through a trickle-down effect, although that may not create change as fast as some might hope.

While the LGBT community faces challenges all over the world, sometimes in countries that appear to have more hurdles than many other developed countries, as [this](#) shows, and so these announcements, and those of housing organisations like