

MARRIAGE AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIP (SCOTLAND) BILL
SUBMISSION FROM SCOTTISH CATHOLIC EDUCATION SERVICE

How would you characterise your views on the Bill in general?

In opposition

In line with our previous submissions, and in full agreement with the submissions made on behalf of the Bishops'™ Conference of Scotland, we are opposed to this Bill in principle. Once again we express our disappointment that the Scottish Government is proceeding with legislation to which there was overwhelming opposition in the largest ever response to a public consultation in Scotland. We repeat our commitment to recognising the worth of every human being and to respecting the dignity of all people on an equitable basis. We urge politicians to accept that 'equality'™ is not synonymous with 'uniformity'™ and to respect the diverse characteristics and the complementary natures of male and female in human life.

How would you characterise your views on the introduction of same sex marriage, so that same sex couples can marry each other?

In opposition

We believe that this legislation is unnecessary, as current arrangements for civil partnerships bestow the same legal rights as Marriage. It is regrettable that State authorities are attempting to impose a re-definition of Marriage which has always been understood as having both a unitive and a procreative function, which are not present within a same sex relationship. We fear that such a significant change may have profound consequences for society, in particular for the nurturing of children by mothers and fathers and for how society views the complementary nature of the sexes. The apparent equality which is being sought by some may lead to greater inequalities in society, particularly for children.

How would you characterise your views on putting belief celebrants on the same footing as religious celebrants?

How would you characterise your views on the arrangements for authorising celebrants to solemnise opposite sex and same sex marriage (including the opt-in procedures)?

How would you characterise your views on civil partnerships changing to marriages?

In opposition

How would you characterise your views on allowing civil marriage ceremonies to take place anywhere, other than religious premises, agreed between the couple and registrar?

How would you characterise your views on allowing the religious and belief registration of civil partnerships?

How would you characterise your views on allowing transgender persons to stay married when obtaining a full Gender Recognition Certificate, which provides legal recognition in the acquired gender?

Would you like to comment on the wider issue of protections for those in society who may have concerns about same sex marriage?

We are not assuaged by the rhetoric of the Scottish Government, claiming that the faith curriculum of Catholic schools will not be changed by this legislation. Such claims offer no legal protection to teachers and parents who are charged with the responsibility of educating children within a tradition of Christian moral and ethical teaching. Recent history demonstrates that political assurances are worthless when Equality legislation is exploited to champion the rights of individuals over the beliefs, traditions and practices of faith communities. Catholic schools are regularly being challenged to justify their teaching, their practices and their very existence by individuals and groups which appear determined to remove the rights of parents to choose faith-based education for their children. This Bill will provide encouragement to such challenges, Parents who sincerely believe that an authentic state of Marriage can only be realised in the union of a man and a woman may be prevented from educating their children in that belief, if schools are obliged to promulgate a revised definition of what it means to be married. This may lead to many parents seeking to withdraw their children from lessons where this new orthodoxy is being advanced. This will have a significant impact on children and on schools. Ultimately it will be children who will suffer by being confused over the new meaning of words such as wife, husband, mother, father.

Would you like to comment on the wider issue of freedom of speech?

We are fearful that teachers in all schools may be compelled by their employers' responsibilities, under public sector equality duty legislation, to conform to a new orthodoxy when teaching about Marriage. We are certain that this will lead to teachers being pressurised to follow their employers' instructions, despite their own sincere conscientious objections. We urge the Scottish Government to offer greater protection to teachers than their current exhortations to Councils to follow "good employment practice".

Would you like to comment on any other wider issues in relation to the Bill that are not mentioned above?

The concerns we are expressing are not narrow in their scope and they do not merely represent our particular "denominational"™ interests. This issue has huge implications for the common good of society as a whole and we fear that its ramifications are not being fully anticipated. This legislation is another measure which will damage the role of the family within society.

Are you responding as...

a faith/belief-based organisation

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