

MARRIAGE AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIP (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM CATRIONA MACPHERSON

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

In opposition

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

In opposition

I have already given my views on this in the consultation and to MPs. The very nature of marriage is for one man, one woman, for life and is of great benefit to society and stability for any children. It is the best for society and encourages faithfulness. Redefining it is extreme and unnecessary. This issue wasn't in any manifesto and has been rushed and pushed forward, despite such a huge response to the consultation. The government should be focussing on and spending our money on other matters. Civil partnerships already allow all the same rights to gay couples as marriage, so it is unnecessary to allow marriage and at the same time therefore re-define the whole profound meaning of the institution. What new rights could there be? Why re-define marriage, when they already have the same rights? Why should this be imposed on the whole of society, when such a minority actually want it and so many are against?

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

In opposition

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

As above. I am opposed to the re-definition of marriage.

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?

In support

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

In opposition

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?

Yes. I am very concerned about this. I feel that there will be repercussions and consequences far greater than has been foreseen and that even the freedom to have and express your own beliefs, thoughts or conscience is under threat. I am a teacher and am extremely concerned, obviously about the effect on our children, but also for teachers. No teacher is forced to teach religious education or take a religious assembly - an atheist or agnostic or a disinterested teacher can express their views freely to other staff, but not be forced to teach it. They also wouldn't lose their job. Neither would someone who believed in same-sex "marriage". Will the same be allowed for teachers who are against same-sex "marriage"? Will they be allowed to express their views and not be forced to teach it? Could they lose their job, just for expressing their conscience? People should be allowed to be "conscientious objectors" and be able to express these views, without fear of repercussions, or even of losing their job (and I have heard of several cases of this already) Similarly for parents - at present, parents have every right to withdraw their children from religious observance. Will they be protected by law if they wish to withdraw their children from teaching about same-sex "marriage"? I also think that the school should be obliged to tell parents when such lessons were to be taught. But it is more than a legal thing too. Freedom of speech is under attack, but only for those who are opposed to same-sex "marriage", which is NOT the same as homophobia, but is commonly, ignorantly labelled as this. Adoption is another area where the law needs to protect those not in favour of same-sex "marriage" and who are keen to adopt. This shouldn't be a deciding factor in who is allowed to adopt, or not. I know of cases of this already and I have heard that some agencies have been told to get rid of their policies in favour of traditional marriage. I think that faith - based charities and adoption agencies need to be better protected by the law, or society loses out on all they can offer, apart from anything else. I feel that in every walk of life, those who uphold a traditional view of marriage need to be protected by law. Those who believe in same-sex "marriage" are free to believe in it and to express these views. But there is an increasing danger that those who believe in traditional marriage are in danger of losing jobs or being forced into situations against their deeply held beliefs or conscience. Are there laws in place to protect a church or minister who refuses to conduct a same-sex wedding? Could they be taken to court? Could they be forced to conduct such a wedding? In any job serving the public, are people opposed to this, protected? Are they free to express their deeply held beliefs without fear of losing their job or being forced to express agreement?. There need to be laws to protect people who are "conscientious objectors".

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

Yes. I am extremely concerned about this. We live in a free , democratic country which values freedom of speech. Everyone has a right to their opinion and to be able to express it freely. However, it seems that freedom of speech is only becoming allowed, if what is believed is 'politically correct'. People who believe in traditional marriage and who say so, are branded as "homophobic" or accused of discrimination or of being bigots and I feel that there is a growing sнесе of fear of expressing one's opinion.. We have a right to express our beliefs, without fear, fear of punishment or consequences , losing a job or being forced to "take back " and apologise for what was said, just as those who believe the opposite have a right to express their views. There needs to be safeguards and laws to protect those who are opposed to same-sex "marriage". Equality laws need to protect religious beliefs and freedom of speech and the freedom simply to discuss issues, without fear of being branded a bigot. Discussing such issues or openly expressing opposition isn't discrimination.

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

Society will reap the consequences.

Are you responding as...

a private individual

Catriona Macpherson
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