

**JUSTICE COMMITTEE**

**HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL**

**SUBMISSION FROM RHONA KETTLES**

I am writing in response to question 6 plans to introduce a new offence of stirring up hatred. I have been brought up in Scotland “the land of the free”. I believe in freedom of speech. I believe that open debate is important to society at large and the individual. It is important to listen to others views and so form our own opinions and beliefs. Individuals should be allowed to change their opinions and this is often by listening to views which are contrary to our own. If legitimate debate is stifled there will be no freedom of speech. The bill covers any abusive behaviour likely to stir up hatred. This is very subjective and could lead to people committing an offence without meaning to or even realising their words could be abusive.

The law as it stands does not allow for threatening or abusive behaviour likely to cause fear and alarm. I see no reason why a new law is required which would diminish our country’s freedoms and criminalise legitimate debate.

Rhona Kettles  
19 July 2020