

JUSTICE COMMITTEE

HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM KATIE PEARS

Dear Sir/Madam,

I write with regard to The Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill. In particular the offence of stirring up hatred, question 6 in your consultation.

6. Do you have views on the merits of Part 2 of the Bill and the plans to introduce a new offence of stirring up of hatred

The wording of this bill, which differs from elsewhere in the UK leaves those with views which differ from the norm incredibly vulnerable - especially as the wording is 'likely to stir up hatred' - whereby no hatred may have been intended or have resulted because of the comments. In this country we are lucky to have freedom of speech and people of all beliefs/faiths and none should be able to discuss and debate their viewpoints without fear of legal retribution.

This bill may also be misused or abused by people who have a personal complaint against a neighbour, colleague, politician, or against a religious group as a whole. Religious faiths must also be protected in their stance on morality - as non religious people are awarded the same freedoms. This will impact on both groups.

These issues (sexuality, gender etc) are ones which people hold different views on and which are not decided by our government or police. How different offences are measured and compared will almost be impossible to police. There is already legislation against threatening and abusive behaviour, which is never acceptable, and this new bill is not needed to add to that. The views of our communities must not be silenced in this way.

Yours sincerely,
Katie Pears

Katie Pears
21 July 2020