

Dear Committee Secretary,

I am a woman, a wife, a mother, I am also an ordained minister within a mainstream Christian Church.

I support marriage equality because I believe that marriage is a covenant between two consenting adults, two people declaring their love, offering their lives to one another in shared unity, two people sharing a journey together through the ebb and flow of life. Two not becoming one, but rather two uniquely created people coming together in a union and commitment to one another.

The Bill proposes:

Civil and military celebrants are able to refuse to carry out their duties on grounds of religion or conscience.

This is not currently the case, therefore I suggest that to allow and permit this is to enable those with the power to exercise this duty to opening oppress and discriminate based on sex, sexual orientation, gender identity. People in positions of power are being enabled and empowered to abuse their position based on fear and hate. To hold a position of power requires the exercising of that power be done so in a way that is ethical and just not based on personal moralistic understanding.

I would suggest a more appropriate proposal or course of action would be that any person holding a celebrants licence who is not able to perform their duty on these grounds be asked to relinquish their licence.

Allowing the denial of wedding related services to people identifying as LGBTIQ based on religious grounds.

Once more to suggest such and exclusion is the enabling and empowering of people to discriminate, openly express fear and hate of another person. There may be many reasons for refusing service provision but enabling refusal because of a religious understanding, that I would suggest is more of a misunderstanding is once more not ethical or just.

The two proposals above, I believe, stand in complete contradiction to the Sex Discrimination Act sections 5A, B and C. There should be no discrimination enabling sections of a marriage equality bill.

The right of consenting adults to marry should be based upon their capacity to make legal decision, their decision to enter into a union together, to journey through the ebb and flow of life together, regardless of gender, sex or sexual orientation. The journey of two people who have consented to marry one another, who are committed to a relationship with one another should be empowered and enabled.

We need to work against discrimination, against fear, against hatred, we live in a world where fear and hatred breed violence - it is the fear and hatred we need to be denying, not services to people who are wanting to commit to one another in love and companionship.

Peace

Susan Pickering