MARRIAGE AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIP (SCOTLAND) BILL
SUBMISSION FROM BI COMMUNITY NEWS

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

In support

We welcome the introduction of same-sex marriage. Our reader survey last year showed great support for this. We echo concern about the amendments to the 2004 Gender Recognition Act to have the "spousal veto". Legislation like this should be gender-free, not discriminatory against trans and other minority gender people. It is a shame, despite initial indications, the Scottish Govt is not planning to introduce mixed-sex Civil Partnerships too - our reader survey showed clear support for opening up both marriage and civil partnership regardless of gender.

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

In support

A positive step. We believe that the current segregation encourages biphobia and homophobia, and especially highlights to bisexual people that their relationships are treated differently and with differing amounts of respect in law according to the gender of their partner. We further believe that there is no good reason to restrict willing religious and faith organisations and their willing celebrants from conducting religious and faith-based marriage ceremonies for same-sex couples.

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

In support

One system for all, all treated with equal respect and no special privilege.

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)?

Neither

We are troubled by the lack of symmetry between authorising bodies. If a religious or belief celebrant does not wish to solemnise a same-sex marriage, even when their religious or belief body permits this, then they are not compelled to do so; we support this. However, if a celebrant wishes to solemnise a same-sex marriage when their religious or faith body does not, then they are not permitted to do so, and this seems unfair. In one case, the wishes of the celebrant are allowed to override the position of the body; in the other they are not.

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

We think it should be possible to convert for the longest possible period of time. Many people may have accepted Civil Partnership as the Best Option Available rather than their preferred arrangement, and there may be a host of reasons why people cannot make a speedy switchover from one to the other.

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

Let marriages reflect the lives of those being married.

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

In support

It should be allowed and regardless of the genders of the couple.

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?

In support

Support and without 'spousal veto', this is a matter for the trans person themselves and noone else. “Fast track” procedures for people who have been transitioned for a long time should be permitted.

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

The Bill provides protections for people who due to personal bias do not wish to perform religious same-sex marriages. We believe that people carrying out civil same-sex marriages are not taking part in a faith or belief ceremony and therefore should not be allowed to refuse on the grounds of religious conviction - it is a matter of "goods and services" provision.

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

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

10 years ago, how a bisexual person's relationships were seen in law varied hugely dependent upon the gender of their partner. After the Civil Partnership Act, this remained the case still. This is a first step in the law starting to respect bi people's loves and choices, but it will not complete that process.
Are you responding as...

an LGBT group
Community Press publication

Jen Yockney
Bi Community News
23 August 2013