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

In support

I fully support the Bill - it is the right time for it to be passed through the Scottish Parliament in the name of Equality For All. Firstly, I wonder why the Scottish Parliament has chosen to exclude mixed-sex Civil Partnerships with this Bill when this was one of the core statements at the outset. Is this being done because Westminster chose not to include it? If so, it is extremely disappointing for those couples who were expecting a part of the Bill to include same-sex Civil Partnerships as an outcome of one of the original core concepts of the Bill. What I am also very concerned about is the fact that, with the amendment in respect of Gender Recognition Act of 2004, where a couple is married and where one is seeking to be gender re-assigned and one of them objects to the granting of a Gender Recognition Certificate, the objecting spouse must not be allowed to hinder the progress of the other one in gaining a Gender Recognition Certificate [GRC]. If the gender change is likely to be the cause for divorce, the one seeking a GRC must not be prevented from doing so by their spouse. Let the one obtain a GRC first and then let the other seek a divorce on those grounds. It would be inconceivable that the introduction of the Bill should give rise to more problems for the person seeking a GRC - this safeguard needs to be built into the Bill firmly in the strongest terms and the text amended to give the trans-gender person rights over his or her own status without interference from the spouse in an effort to prevent this being granted. That is a provision which must be within the Bill.

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

In support

I think that same-sex couples should have the same rights to Marriage or Civil Partnership those who are in different-sex relationships. If people have a religious objection to same-sex Marriage or to same-sex Civil Partnership they are free to choose not to do so. If a religious body or a belief body is willing to conduct same-sex marriages and if there are ministers of religion and of belief who are willing to conduct same sex marriages, the should be allowed to do so. They should not be prevented from doing so and more than they or we would force anyone to conduct such marriages against their conscience. This is a matter of equality for all people without exception and will end once and for all the discrimination which people are suffering at the moment.

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

In support
It is my opinion that belief celebrants should be on the same footing as their counterparts in religious organisations. I would also add that, where there is a religious celebrant who is an Independent celebrant of a Faith tradition, but not of a particular

**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)?**

In support

This is a key issue and one which must be considered most carefully and have the necessary safeguards enshrined in the language and provisions of the Bill. Celebrants who are willing to solemnise same-sex marriages should be authorised to do so in addition to solemnising opposite-sex marriage. If they are of a Faith tradition which does not endorse the solemnisation of same-sex marriages but feel personally that they would be willing to do so, then there is likely to be an issue between the celebrant concerned and his or her particular faith tradition. This may be decided by the Executive Body of the Faith tradition concerned. There needs to be a protection in law put into place for such celebrants who wish to perform same-sex Marriages so that they may "opt-in" without being subjected to any form of penalisation. Conversely, there should be protections built into the Bill for those celebrants and Faith communities who do NOT wish to solemnise same-sex Marriages or Civil Partnerships so that they are not censured or subjected to any form of persecution or coercion. In either case, the views of one group [pro Same-Sex Marriage] should not be allowed to override the views of others groups who are opposed to Same-Sex Marriage and to be imposed upon them against their wishes. This applies both ways - neither group must be allowed to dominate the debate and there should be a completely FREE CHOICE without prejudice for different communities and congregations to "Opt-In" or to "Opt-Out" according to their choices.

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

In support

If couples who have previously had a Civil Partnership wish to convert this into a Marriage they should be allowed to do so. Conversely, the same should apply to couples who have had a Marriage previously to be able to convert this into a Civil Partnership if they so wish. Both states should carry equal standing both Lawfully and Socially as well as by convention or custom. In both instances, costs to make this conversion should be kept to a minimum and not seek to make a profit at the couples’ expense! I think that all Civil Partnership and/or Marriages wherever they have taken place [both within the UK and outwith the UK] and have been recognised should also be recognised and accepted in Scotland by Scottish Law.

**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
I believe that Civil Marriage ceremonies should be allowed to take place in any venue of the couples’ choice which has been approved and registered as a premises for such ceremonies. Where these premises may belong to a Church or other Faith community, th

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

In support

If couples wish to have a religious or belief registration of Civil Partnerships they should be allowed to do so. I see no barrier to this to be implemented. Many people have a civil marriage followed by a religious or faith Blessing. To allow the religious and belief registration of Civil Partnerships would eliminate the need for two separate ceremonies.

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

I am very concerned about is the fact that, with the amendment in respect of Gender Recognition Act of 2004, where a couple is married and where one is seeking to be gender re-assigned and one of them objects to the granting of a Gender Recognition Certificate, the objecting spouse must not be allowed to hinder the progress of the other one in gaining a Gender Recognition Certificate [GRC]. If the gender change is likely to be the cause for divorce, the one seeking a GRC must not be prevented from doing so by their spouse. Let the one obtain a GRC first and then let the other seek a divorce on those grounds. It would be inconceivable that the introduction of the Bill should give rise to more problems for the person seeking a GRC - this safeguard needs to be built into the Bill firmly in the strongest terms and the text amended to give the trans-gender person rights over his or her own status without interference from the spouse in an effort to prevent this being granted. For those who wish to remain married after having obtained a full Gender Recognition Certificate it should be equally possible for this to be written into the Bill as Law which protects each of the parties who are in the marriage. In addition - there should be a "fast track" procedure put into place at the earliest possible time for those people who have already made the transition and are now gender re-assigned.

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, as it has been formulated already, has been assiduous in providing the necessary protections for those in society who have concerns about Same-Sex Marriage. There should be no doubt about this nor should people who have concerns fear for themselves or for the future.

Would you like to comment on the wider issue of freedom of speech?
All members of society have the right to freedom of speech and this should continue, provided that what is said does NOT incite hatred or prejudice or provoke acts of violence against those of the opposite persuasion. We may not all agree but we will have to agree to disagree! The rights to freedom of speech must continue to be protected by Law as they are now.

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

The introduction of this Bill will be a landmark in the history of Scotland. It will provide a better opportunity for a more equal society and will provide a means to put right the many wrongs which have been perpetrated in the past against people who have been persecuted for their gender status.

**Are you responding as...**

an academic/private individual

Dr Rebekah Gronowski
23 August 2013