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

In support

I believe it will bring more equality to our Scottish society and embed a stable, mutually agreed and mutually supportive relationship as a recognised key element in that society. I also believe that the Bill balances freedom of religion and belief with demands for equality quite well and that it is right not to force religious groups to officiate at same-sex marriage ceremonies if they do not believe in it, while allowing those religious groups who do wish to, to conduct such services.

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 believe that it is only right that same-sex couples who declare their love and commitment for each other should be accorded the same legal and civil status as those mixed-sex couples who do the same. This public commitment to a loving and fulfilling relationship which will enhance the other partner is where I would place the definition of marriage, regardless of gender, and as an advance from earlier definitions which made the woman the property of her husband or simply the means to his acquiring land or a legal heir.

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

Neither

In my experience humanist celebrants have already recognition to conduct mixed-sex marriage ceremonies. I agree that they should not be counted as "religious celebrants" but be able to marry two people of whatever gender, if they choose so to do.

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

I think that this is appropriate so that religious freedom can be respected and those wishing to opt-in can do so. Furthermore I think it is good to have made provision for individual celebrants to be nominated without the entire religious organisation necessarily being prescribed,, as this allows for flexibility and sensitivity to individual beliefs.
How would you characterise your views on civil partnerships changing to marriages?

In support

I believe that this should be possible for those who wish to do it, including those who have a civil partnership solemnized in another country before they come to live in Scotland.

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 am in support of this freedom, apart from the restriction of "religious premises". I think that it is up to the owner of the "religious premises" to say if these premises can be used for a civil marriage ceremony and to have the freedom to say yes or no to it, whereas at the moment this seems not so. If a community centre is used for church services on Sundays, are these "religious premises"? What about a former church, now a community centre? Why can't couples have spiritual material in their non-religious wedding service?

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

In support

I do not see why those seeking civil partnerships should be barred from expressing a religious faith as part of their commitment to each other so I welcome this change in the law.

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 support the principle of allowing transgender people who are married to obtain gender recognition without being required by the state to divorce. I also believe that spousal consent should not be required for the granting of gender recognition, but should instead be required for the subsequent re-registration of the marriage and the issue of a new marriage certificate.

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

I agree that the Bill is fair to religious celebrants, allowing those with concerns to opt-out and religious organisations with concerns not to opt-in. I also think it is fair that registrars should not be able to opt-out on grounds of personal belief as they are representing the state in their job. As for teachers, I think they too are public servants and must at all times treat their pupils with respect, regardless of personal
religion views. Some of their pupils may be gay or may have gay parents. They should be able to impart to their pupils a questioning and open mind, accepting of diversity but respecting equality. Therefore I do not think they should have recognition of "opting out" of teaching the law and equality, although they should be able to say they personally disagree with same-sex marriage without being sacked.

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

I think there can be freedom of speech without condoning abusive or intimidatory behaviour. Disagreeing personally with same-sex marriage can be freedom of speech but it shouldn't result in restricting other people's freedom to access equal marriage.

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

Mixed-sex civil partnerships should be allowed as part of the new law.

Are you responding as...

a private individual

Mrs Rosemary Potter
21 August 2013