



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## EQUALITIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

Rosemary Agnew  
Scottish Public Services  
Ombudsman

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23 May 2018

Dear Rosemary Agnew,

### **Inquiry into Human Rights and the Scottish Parliament**

In September of 2016 the Parliament extended the remit of the Equal Opportunities Committee to include human rights:

“Human rights, including Convention rights (within the meaning of section 1 of the Human Rights Act 1998) and other human rights contained in any international convention, treaty or other international instrument ratified by the United Kingdom”.

Some early concerns were expressed by a few stakeholders that adding human rights to the remit of the Equal Opportunities Committee would impact on our ability to scrutinise equalities issues. They considered we may need further resources to support this dual focus or that human rights should be the remit of a separate committee or sub-committee.

In addition, the Scottish Human Rights Commission<sup>1</sup> and civic society groups made representations to the Commission for Parliamentary Reform (the

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<sup>1</sup> CPR032 Scottish Human Rights Commission submission to the Commission on Parliamentary Reform:  
[https://test123582.files.wordpress.com/2017/02/cpr\\_032\\_scottishhumanrightscommission1.pdf](https://test123582.files.wordpress.com/2017/02/cpr_032_scottishhumanrightscommission1.pdf)

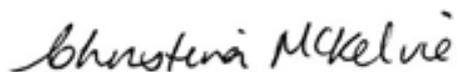
Commission) for the Parliament to have a strengthened role in the promotion and protection of human rights in Scotland. This culminated in the Commission referring the matter of human rights to the Committee to address in its inquiry. The Commission recognised, in the time available, it could not do justice to the complex and important issues raised about the Parliament becoming an effective human rights guarantor (Recommendation 30)<sup>2</sup>.

On 21 January 2018, we formally launched an [inquiry](#) into 'Human Rights and the Scottish Parliament' with a [call for views](#). Our inquiry seeks to examine how the Scottish Parliament could enhance its approach to protecting and promoting human rights in Scotland as well as looking at the role of the Equalities and Human Rights Committee. Responses are available on our [webpage](#).

We held our first evidence session on 29 March. On [19 April](#), we heard from Marie Anderson, Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman, who told us about the human rights based approach she takes to her complaints remit. We are interested to learn about the approach you take and how this might assist Parliamentarians when we are examining policy approaches or scrutinising legislation and the downstream impacts on individuals and their rights.

A response Thursday 14 June would be helpful.

Yours sincerely,



Christina McKelvie  
Convener  
Equalities and Human Rights Committee

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CPR032:1 Scottish Human Rights Commission submission to the Commission on Parliamentary Reform: Belgrade Principles on The Relationship Between National Human Rights Institutions and Parliaments: [https://test123582.files.wordpress.com/2017/02/cpr\\_032-1\\_scottishhumanrightscommission.pdf](https://test123582.files.wordpress.com/2017/02/cpr_032-1_scottishhumanrightscommission.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Commission on Parliamentary Reform Report June 2017, Taking forward human rights in the Scottish Parliament, paragraphs 157-160. <https://test123582.files.wordpress.com/2016/10/commissiononparliamentaryreformreport-june20171.pdf>