

Heather Morton

Dear Scrutiny Panel members

I am aware of the new proposals relating to the Marriages and Civil Status Law, and I have a few concerns:

1. The lack of protection for non-clergy involved with marriage ceremonies. These would include members of churches who arrange flowers, provide music, clean, decorate, prepare the church for the occasion, providing access to the building for family and friends of the couple, and in various other ways.

2. The lack of protection for Christians who in their business, social or other settings are requested to provide goods or services for such occasions. These would include cake makers, caterers, florists, dress-hire, jewellers, hotel staff, photographers, registrars and others.

3. The legal penalties that may be incurred by people who are living out their faith. This would criminalise members of the community who currently provide so many services on a voluntary basis. This would jeopardise the provision of such activities as play groups, support for single parents, assisting people in need of many kinds, and in many ways.

Human Rights are important, and the legislation that guarantees the human rights of all our islanders seems to be challenged by the proposals. Specific areas of concern relate to the following sections of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Article 7 equal protection of the law – for everyone

Article 12 not subject to interference or attacks on reputation

Article 18 freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and to manifest that belief in teaching, practice, worship or observance

Article 19 freedom of opinion and expression, freedom to hold opinions and to seek, receive and impart information

Article 29 acknowledges that we all have duties to our community, and in practice this involves respect for those who differ in opinions or sincerely held beliefs. Statistics indicate that almost one in three people worldwide is of the Christian faith indicating the significance of Christian belief, as found in the Bible. News stories have shown that there are very real threats to the integrity and livelihoods of Christians who because of their beliefs are unable to provide services relating to “gay

marriage". Even when Christians are courteous and kind, and respectful of those who request their involvement in such ceremonies, there is evidence of attempted coercion and questioning integrity for those of faith. Christians are not the only ones who are troubled by the lack of protection they receive in these proposals.

I know of many who are troubled by the concept of "gay marriage", but who also have many friends who are gay, or otherwise part of the LGBTQ part of our community. This is certainly not a homophobic stance, but one of mutual respect for individuals with differing views.

Your consideration of the above is appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Heather Morton