

EMBARGOED UNTIL
TUESDAY 13TH JANUARY AT 13:00



Same sex marriage ban must be lifted, says LGBT Network.

Independent gay rights advocacy group the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Network has today launched a petition to the Scottish Parliament, calling for an amendment to the Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977 to allow gay and lesbian couples to legally marry.

The petition also calls on the law to be changed to allow a same sex marriage to be performed by a faith group, if the religious institution consents. The Civil Partnership Act 2005 currently forbids any mention of religion when conducted, forcing all Partnerships to be strictly secular.

Furthermore, legal marriages performed abroad between two people of the same sex in countries such as Canada, South Africa and Spain are automatically replaced with a Civil Partnership when the couple comes to Britain.

LGBT Network Director Nick Henderson stated:

“Equality means all citizens should be treated the same, and that everyone must have the same rights under law. Yet the status quo ensures a system of one law for straight couples and another for gay couples. Whatever the similarities between civil partnerships and marriage; separate but equal is inherently unequal.” He added “Marriage is the strongest word we have for a declaration of total love and commitment to one another; and to deny any person that opportunity is to deny the full measure of dignity and humanity that we are all endowed with”

The High Court and the UK Government have both denied gay couples full equality under the law. Senior High Court judge Sir Mark Potter refused to recognise a British couple’s legally performed marriage in 2006[1], and Lord Bach, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in the Ministry of Justice has set out the UK Governments continued opposition to marriage equality.

“We made a distinction in it [the Civil Partnership Act] and did not call single-sex partnerships marriage... it did not call those partnerships marriage, and that remains the Government’s policy.”[2]

We want to see gay couples being allowed to have a religious, as well as a civil marriage, if the faith group allows it. There is a huge diversity of opinion among faith groups on same sex marriage; churches, temples and synagogues should be able to decide if they want to marry couples or not. Government is wrong to assume that being religious and being LGBT are incompatible with each other; nor should the state say that one religious group is right and the other is wrong.

[continues...]

The LGBT Network wants everyone, gay or straight, Scottish or not, to add their name to the petition if they truly believe that no one should be a second class citizen because of their sexuality; and that everyone is entitled to equal treatment, and respect, under the law.

Director Nick Henderson also called on all who believe in equal marriage rights to participate in the fight to achieve it: "It is incumbent on all of us who wish to live in a more equal world that we do not let someone else fight for a right we wish to enjoy. This cannot just be the LGBT Networks campaign for marriage equality, the change must come from all of us."

You can find a full opinion piece on the need for same sex marriage on our website: www.lgbtnetwork.eu/same_sex_m.pdf

[Ends]

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Notes to editors

[1] *Wilkinson v. Kitzinger* 2006

<http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Fam/2006/2022.html>

[2] *Hansard*

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200708/ldhansrd/text/81023-0001.htm>

The LGBT Network is an independent advocacy organisation that is committed to enabling the fullest participation of all members of the community in influencing policy making, and achieving equity for LGBT citizens.

We have previously petitioned the Scottish Parliament for a review in the blanket ban on gay and bisexual men giving blood.