

**Submission on the
Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Bill
To the Government Administration Committee**

From the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

PO Box 9049, Wellington 6141. Ph 04 801 6000

Summary of Submission:

The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand does not support the Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Bill and we urge Parliament not to proceed with the proposed amendment to the Marriage Act. We appreciate the opportunity to make this submission and to have our views heard.

The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand:

The Presbyterian Church is part of the wider family of Christian churches and the third largest denomination in Aotearoa New Zealand. With 400 churches the length and breadth of New Zealand, and more than 350,000 people identifying as Presbyterian in the 2006 census, our Church is a significant voice within our country. The 30,000 people who attend a Presbyterian church every week are actively involved in serving their communities.

The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand believes it is called by God to work with others in making Jesus Christ known through: teaching and nurturing people in Christian faith; loving service responding to human need; proclaiming the Gospel; seeking to transform society; and caring for God's creation.

The basis of the Presbyterian Church's opposition for the Bill:

Marriage holds deep spiritual significance for New Zealanders of many faiths and cultures. Our Christian understanding of marriage is grounded in the Bible. The General Assembly* of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand upholds the traditional Christian understanding of marriage as the loving, faithful union of a man and a woman, grounded in Scripture, and supremely revealed in Jesus' teaching about marriage, and given by God for the well-being of human society.

The Presbyterian Church therefore urges Parliament not to alter or confuse the meaning of marriage, which has always been about the union of male and female.

The 2012 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand debated the issue of same-sex marriage and resolved by majority that it does not support

same-sex marriage and opposes the proposed amendment to the Marriage Act. This decision by the Church was consistent with previous resolutions the Church's General Assembly has made relating to marriage (in 1991 and 2004), that it "values or affirms marriage between a man and a woman".

2012 declarations on same-sex marriage made by the 2012 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand:

- That General Assembly declares that it upholds the historic Christian understanding of marriage as the loving, faithful union of a man and a woman (reflecting the complementarity of male and female created in God's image), which is grounded in nature and in Scripture, is supremely revealed in Jesus' teaching about marriage, and is given by God for the well-being of human society.
- That, in faithfulness to the historic Christian understanding of marriage as grounded in the Bible and the teachings of Jesus and in consistency with previous resolutions of the General Assembly relating to marriage (1991 and 2004), General Assembly resolves that the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand does not support same-sex 'marriage' and urges Parliament not to proceed with the proposed amendment to the Marriage Act.
- That General Assembly urges Parliament not to alter or confuse the meaning of marriage, which has always been about the union of male and female, and is of deep spiritual significance for New Zealanders of many faiths and cultures; and the General Assembly also asserts that – with regard to equality – the Civil Union Act (2004) already provides for clear societal recognition and legal protection of same-sex relationships.

The Right Rev Ray Coster

Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand**

*General Assembly is the Presbyterian Church's top decision-making body.

**The Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand is the elected spiritual leader of Presbyterian Church and the spokesperson of the Presbyterian Church.