

## JOINT SUBMISSION

To the : *Justice and Electoral Select Committee*

On the : *Civil Union bill and Relationships (Statutory References) bill*

### Introduction

1. This *PRO FORMA* submission is from the Reverend Paul Prestige, Pastor Carey Clow, Pastor Christopher Lee and other members of The New Plymouth Christian Leaders Network (NPCLN) as attached on page 3.  
We represent a relational network of pastors and ministers from various diverse churches in New Plymouth under the umbrella of NPCLN (see below).  
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2. This submission is on behalf of the NPCLN
3. We wish to appear before the committee to speak to our submission at a location as near to New Plymouth as practical.
4. About NPCLN: The New Plymouth Christian Leaders' Network is an open network of clergy and other Christian leaders within the city of New Plymouth.

### General Position:

- **Civil Union Bill: We are opposed to the intent and effect of this bill and do not want it to proceed.**
- **Relationships Bill: We are opposed to the effect of this bill and do not want it to proceed in its current form.**

### **Introduction: As representatives of Christian community we are concerned with the effects of this legislation on our members as well as the wider community of New Plymouth.**

Our everyday work involves helping individuals, couples, families and wider social groups develop and nurture constructive and life-affirming relationships. Our views reflect the strongly held predominant view that marriage is a unique vehicle within society and the best foundation for building a society. This is a view implicitly understood through the ages by nearly every culture. We consider this proposed legalisation to set dangerous precedents. The promotion of this wide sweeping legislation is brought about to please a small minority with a marginal and aberrant view on these matters. We maintain therefore that these Bills are anomalous with respect to the breadth of historical practice, common sense, and the vast majority of New Zealander's current thinking. Further we maintain that it is in the interests of New Zealand society that the State privilege marriage above other forms of 'de facto' and same-sex relationships.

## **PRO FORMA SYNOPSIS**

### **Civil Union Bill**

1. Society has an interest in the privileging of marriage due to
  - a. It's natural beneficial outcome for children, and their health and welfare
  - b. General social and educational outcomes
2. The intention to remove the privileged position of marriage is anomalous with respect to the breadth of human experience throughout time. Marriage and its associated family structures have been and are normative throughout the cultures and societies of the world for good reason. In particular marriage is widely recognised as the best environment in which to raise children.
3. The increasingly multicultural nature of contemporary New Zealand society reinforces belief that most New Zealanders believe marriage should be uniquely privileged and protected by the State.
4. The Civil Union Bill appears to be driven by an overemphasis on individual rights at the expense of the collective responsibilities we owe each other. This proposed legislation has got the balance wrong.
5. Marriage celebrants should not be put in a situation where they are accused of prejudice because they refuse to officiate at the proposed Civil Union ceremonies.

### **Relationships Bill**

6. Relationship neutrality, the guiding principle of this Bill, is counter productive to society's interest in privileging marriage.
7. Recognising the privileged status of marriage requires that legislation must discriminate in favour of this relationship. This is not prejudice, it is good governance.
8. Therefore there should be fiscal implications associated with whether one is married or not.
9. In fact, the vast majority of New Zealanders do not believe in 'relationship neutrality'. Even though the gradations of relational commitment leading to marriage have changed for many people in recent years, marriage continues to be viewed as the most important and ultimate sign of commitment by a vast majority of New Zealanders. This Bill is therefore out of step with public opinion.
10. This bill should be altered to fix particular unwarranted legislative discriminations without foisting relationship neutrality upon the general populous. That is to say, current legislative discriminations which are patently unfair to married couples, de-facto or same sex couples should be addressed and altered on a case to case basis (as compared with blanket legislation).
11. As Christians we are concerned that this proposed legislation may open the way for some to employ legal means to restrict our ability to proclaim and practise our faith in respect to Christian marriage.

