

Statement Opposing the Legislation (Definitions of Woman and Man) Amendment Bill

The Methodist Church of New Zealand Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa expresses its concern regarding the Gender Definitions Bill and respectfully opposes its enactment. Our opposition arises from our commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which calls us to uphold the dignity, worth, and humanity of every person. We believe that public policy should promote social cohesion, compassion, justice, and the wellbeing of those who are vulnerable. In our view, the proposed legislation risks undermining these values.

The Methodist tradition has long affirmed that all people are created in the image of God and are deserving of respect, care, and protection. Throughout our history, we have sought to stand alongside those who experience marginalisation and exclusion. We are concerned that the Bill's approach to defining sex and gender may contribute to the further stigmatisation of transgender, non-binary, and gender-diverse people, many of whom already face significant challenges in their daily lives. We recognise that questions of sex, gender, identity, and human flourishing are complex and cannot be adequately addressed through narrow statutory definitions that may have unintended consequences for individuals, families, communities. As a Church, we believe that all young people should be able to grow and develop in environments characterised by safety, respect, truthfulness, and compassionate support. Public policy affecting young people should be informed by robust evidence and should avoid language or provisions that could contribute to exclusion, bullying, or diminished mental wellbeing. We also affirm the importance of religious freedom, freedom of conscience, and freedom of expression. These freedoms are essential in a democratic society, however, protecting these freedoms does not require legislation that diminishes the dignity or legal recognition of transgender and gender-diverse people.

The Methodist Church calls on Parliament to reject the Gender Definitions Bill and instead pursue approaches that encourage respectful engagement, social inclusion, and careful balancing of rights. We urge lawmakers to listen to a broad range of voices, including those with lived experience of gender diversity, healthcare professionals, educators, faith communities, legal experts, and human rights advocates. In the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, we see a consistent concern for those who were excluded, marginalised, or pushed to the edges of society. Jesus met people with compassion, affirmed their dignity, and challenged barriers that denied their full humanity. As followers of Christ, we believe our public witness should reflect that same commitment to justice, mercy, inclusion, and the sacred worth of every person.

Ngā manaakitanga

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