

Written evidence from D Leithall [HAB0167]

I am responding to this Call for Evidence as a citizen concerned for the best for our country and its people.

Marriage was instituted by God so it is not surprising that it is best for:

1. The couple themselves; e.g. physical and mental health
2. Any children they have
3. Society as a whole

Governments should seek to do all they can to strengthen marriage. This would include, but is not limited to, financial incentives for married couples and promotion of the benefits of getting married. Successive governments in this country have failed in this mandate, so it is not surprising to see an increase in couples choosing not to get married.

Marriage is a commitment by a man and a woman to be together for their whole life, so it is correct for there to be rights for a married couple in the event of death, etc.

Cohabiting couples are not excluded from getting married, but, sadly, many choose not to get married. The government should not cheapen marriage by conferring similar rights and benefits upon those who do not choose to get married.

If there is a lack of awareness about the legal status of cohabiting couples compared to marriage, the solution is not to give the same legal status; instead the government should raise awareness of the benefits of being married and the legal problems of cohabiting.

The cited issues for cohabiting couples can already be resolved by various other means; for example, they can write a will to cover the eventuality of death.

Provision for children is not a good reason for reconsidering the rights of cohabiting couples. The major impact on children is the instability of their parents' relationship. More than half of children of cohabiting parents will experience their parents' separation by the age of five, compared to only 15 percent of children of married parents. Without the parents committing to marriage, this will not change, so the situation will not improve for children. The government should instead encourage parents to get married.

In conclusion, there should be no change for cohabiting couples.

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