

**PE1514/E**

Ned Sharratt  
Assistant Clerk  
Public Petitions Committee  
T3.40  
Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh EH99 1SP

20 June 2014

Dear Mr Sharratt

**CONSIDERATION OF PETITION PE1514**

Many thanks for your letter of 8 May, seeking the EHRC's view on PE1514, which calls on the Scottish Parliament to

...ensure that each year its weekly Time for Reflection fulfils its ambition of being representative of the diversity of religion and belief in Scotland by limiting representatives of religious denominations to one half of the presentations and ensuring that twenty five per cent of all sessions are presented by atheists.

At the committee meeting on 6 May, the petitioner suggested contacting the EHRC to seek our views on "whether time for reflection meets the Scottish Parliament's legal obligations in relation to equal opportunities" (Col 2236). To clarify, it is the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body (SPCB) which is subject to the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty, not the Parliament as a whole. The decision on which individuals and organisations speak at Time for Reflection lies with the Presiding Officer, not the SPCB.

We note that the guidelines for Time for Reflection make clear that contributions may come from individuals and organisations of any faith or none, and those contributions must not "denigrate another faith or those without a faith"<sup>1</sup>.

We also note that, as the SPICe fact sheet on contributions to TFR in the current parliamentary session (June 2014)<sup>2</sup> makes clear, it is perfectly possible for

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[www.scottish.parliament.uk/PublicInformationdocuments/TimeForReflectionGuidance111011.pdf](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/PublicInformationdocuments/TimeForReflectionGuidance111011.pdf)

individuals (or, presumably, organisations) to write directly to the Presiding Officer with nominations for contributors. Individuals may also wish to ask their MSPs to propose particular contributors to the Presiding Officer. This approach, rather than a rigid quota system, or treating the matter as a legal compliance issue, may prove more proportionate and productive.

I hope this information is useful. If I can be of more assistance, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely

**Alastair Pringle**  
**National Director, Scotland**