

NSS welcomes Eric Pickles' exit from Cabinet

Posted: Wed, 13th May 2015

The removal of Eric Pickles from the post of Secretary of State at the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has been welcomed by the National Secular Society.

Mr Pickles often used his ministerial position to traduce secularism as "intolerant and aggressive" in official Government press releases and recently steered through parliament an Act allowing local authorities to hold prayers during council meetings – reversing a previous High Court ruling on the matter.

The former Communities minister, himself a Christian, has also insisted Britain is a "Christian nation" and that "militant atheists" should "get over it" and not impose their "politically correct intolerance on others."

Mr Pickles has now been replaced at the Department for Communities and Local Government by Greg Clark MP.

Stephen Evans, National Secular Society campaigns manager, commented: "Eric Pickles frequently misused his position to evangelise and wilfully misrepresent secularism. We hope the new Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government will take a more conciliatory and inclusive approach, and recognise that in our religiously diverse society - in which a majority of people do not consider themselves to be religious, secularism is a pre-requisite to the creation of a society in which people of all religions or none can live together fairly and cohesively.

The new Secretary of State said he was "honoured to be following Eric Pickles as Secretary of State" and said he looked forward to "working with all our communities on a big agenda."

Mr Pickles, the MP for Brentwood and Ongar, has now left the cabinet to become 'anti-corruption tsar'.

The vacant Minister for Faith role, inherited by Mr Pickles and originally created for Baroness Warsi, has not yet been filled. It is unclear if the post will be abolished, something the NSS [has called for](#).

Mr Evans added: "We hope the 'Minister for Faith' role will be left unfilled. The post was a nonsense in the modern, multi-faith and largely irreligious Britain that exists today. [Most people aren't religious](#); and those that are shouldn't be privileged with a special ministerial role to promote a religious agenda in Government."

Meanwhile, Caroline Dinenage, the MP for Gosport who previously said the state had "no right" to redefine marriage, and who voted against same-sex marriage, has been appointed Minister for Equalities. Since her appointment, Ms Dinenage has stated that she now supports same-sex marriage equality and LGBT equality.

- [Share on What's App](#)
- [Share on Facebook](#)
- [Share on Twitter](#)
- [Share on Email](#)

- [Subscribe to RSS Feed](#)

Tags: [FoRB](#)

Related Campaigns

-

[Freedom of religion or belief](#)

Secularism protects freedom of religion or belief for all.

[Read More](#)

Related Articles

[The universality of human rights needs defending](#)

Seventy-five years on from the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, its promise of freedom and equality remains a distant dream for those living under religious rule, says Stephen Evans. [Read More »](#)

[Freedom of religion or belief must include the freedom to 'blaspheme'](#)

The freedom to question and criticise religious ideas in the same manner as any other kind is foundational to a democratic... [Read More »](#)

[Established church hinders religious freedom, NSS tells UN expert](#)

The NSS has told a UN expert that lack of separation between Church and state is undermining freedom of religion or belief in the UK. [Read More »](#)

[Study: Jurors could be biased against people who don't swear to God](#)

Bias against people who don't swear a religious oath in court may lead to hundreds of additional convictions, researchers... [Read More »](#)

NSS welcomes shelving of Bill of Rights

The National Secular Society has welcomed the government's decision to shelve its plan to replace the Human Rights... [Read More »](#)