



From Lord Avebury

P1322073

July 22, 2013

Dear Secretary of State,

We understand that you have decided not to start the consultation on the legislation to include caste in the Equality Act protected characteristics until after the EHRC research you commissioned from them has been completed.

I have now seen the 'competitive contract notice' on the EHRC website and I would be grateful if you would explain the logic of this delay.

The research "to provide baseline information on the extent of caste discrimination, which would form the starting point for a comparative assessment after five years" is not going to be useful until that comparison comes to be made. The Government acknowledge discrimination occurs on grounds that would be caught by the inclusion of caste to the protected characteristics, but the extent of that discrimination is not relevant to the implementation, any more than it was in the case of the other nine protected characteristics.

On the definition of caste, may I assume that you don't intend the preferred outcome to be embodied in legislation, but only in guidance for the benefit of those subject to the public sector duty? If that is the case, the result only becomes needed when the provision itself comes into force, and not before the consultation begins.

If on the other hand, the research is intended to steer the consultation in the direction of an option emerging from the research that is preferred by the [Government](#), wouldn't that diminish the freedom of stakeholders to influence the decision, which one might hope was inherent in a genuine consultation?

Of course, if the real intention is to kick the whole idea into the long grass by stringing out these processes until the general election, as I believe Helen Grant would like to do, I can understand the strategy. In this connection, I attach a copy of my letter to the Prime Minister complaining about Ms Grant's alleged breach of the Ministerial Code.

Yours sincerely
Eric Avebury

The Rt Hon Maria Miller MP,
Department of Culture Media and Sport
2-4 Cockspur Street,
London SW1Y 5DH