



## Same-sex marriage law approved

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Cape Town - The national assembly's home affairs committee adopted the controversial civil unions bill on Thursday, amid objections from opposition parties and disillusionment from gay and lesbian lobby groups.

Only ANC members of the committee voted in favour of the bill, with opposition parties either abstaining or voting against the legislation.

"This is a messy piece of legislation, and the ANC did not give us an opportunity to go through the bill clause by clause before voting," said Democratic Alliance spokesperson **Tertius Delport**, whose party abstained from voting.

The African Christian Democratic Party, which opposed the final draft of the legislation, said it was disappointed with the outcome of the parliamentary process.

"We, together with thousands of people and groups that made submissions to parliament, have consistently stated that same-sex marriage should not be legalised, and that our constitution should be amended to protect the sanctity of marriage," said party spokesperson Steve Swart.

### **'Separate but equal'**

The legislation - whose objective is to satisfy the Constitutional Court's ruling that parliament devise a law affording same-sex couples the same legal status and recognition as married heterosexuals - also drew criticism from the gay and lesbian community.

A gay and lesbian lobby group, the Triangle Project, said the legislation discriminates against gays and lesbians.

"It allows heterosexuals to get married either under this new legislation or the customary Act, while on the other hand it restricts gays and lesbian to this new legislation," said spokesperson Vista Khalipha.

"In other words the new legislation says we are separate but equal, and to us this is still discrimination."

### **'Historic moment in the country's democracy'**

While the committee's chairperson, Patrick Chauke, described Thursday's adoption of the bill as yet another "historic moment in the country's democracy", he said he would not be surprised if certain sections of society were unhappy.

"We had to strike the balance between the Constitutional Court ruling and the opinions of various sectors of society.

"We are glad that our people were given the opportunity to express their views on this matter.

He dismissed the DA's accusation that the voting process was irregular, saying the DA wanted to use the process to introduce a new debate.

"This bill will be tabled at the national assembly on Tuesday, where the DA will get an opportunity to engage in such a debate," he told Sapa.

