



**An Roinn Forbartha  
Tuaithe agus Pobail**  
Department of Rural and  
Community Development

22/4/19

## **Circular Letter CVSP 6/2019**

### **Referendum on the Thirty-Eighth Amendment of the Constitution (Dissolution of Marriage) Bill 2016 Advice to Public Participation Networks (PPNs)**

A Chara,

Following on the advice given to publicly funded bodies in recent years, the purpose of this communication is to alert you to the advice received from the Office of the Attorney General regarding the implications of relevant court judgements concerning the Government's role in referendum campaigns, for the above-mentioned Referendum.

A Referendum Commission has been established and is being provided with public funding to carry out its statutory responsibilities. There is no publicly-funded Government information campaign for the referendum. In that regard, bodies under the aegis of this Department **which includes PPNs** are not entitled to spend public money for the purpose of promoting a campaign for a particular outcome.

Where a body or agency **receiving public money** is disseminating any information relative to the 38<sup>th</sup> Amendment, they must ensure it is equal, fair, impartial and neutral. The Department cannot and will not act as an assessor or evaluator of any such material and, in this regard, the strong advice to all is to **remain totally impartial**.

It is also recommended that in the interests of impartiality, the display/distribution of any literature relating to the amendment including but not limited to brochures, badges, leaflets, newsletters, notices, posters etc. in offices or premises of a body or agency receiving public funding be avoided. Where public space is shared with a host or other organisation, the PPN must ensure total impartiality on its part and that of its staff in this regard. Websites and social media sites of PPNs should not be used to promote for a particular outcome.

Individual members of PPNs are entitled **in their own right** to advocate, participate or campaign for a particular outcome. Such individuals however, either when formally representing the PPN or when presenting themselves as a representative/member of the PPN, are not entitled to advocate, participate or campaign for a particular outcome or to further a particular side of the debate.

Mise le meas,



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