



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Disability Bill (Agnes' Law)**

*Landmark Disability Rights legislation published by Government today: The Disability Bill, a tribute to the late Mrs Agnes Valarino, is to be referred to as Agnes' Law*

The Minister for Equality, the Hon Samantha Sacramento MP, has published the Disability Bill, new legislation that is modelled on the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and shall refer to this as Agnes' Law in memory of the late Agnes Valarino, former Chairperson of the Disability Society.

The Disability Bill upholds and safeguards the inherent dignity of people with disabilities by setting new standards and aspirations on how the Government and the private sector should ensure that the rights of people with disabilities are protected and promoted. Once the Bill becomes law, public bodies and private institutions in Gibraltar charged with the development of any policy or programme will be obliged to have regard to the rights of people with disabilities.

A lot of substantive work to improve rights and policies has already been undertaken by this administration and the new legislation will lead to stronger and fulfilled protection against disability discrimination. Above all it will promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and respecting their rights.

Through the Ministry of Equality, its implementation will be fully supported by training and awareness which will be carried out within the public sector and will also be offered to the private sector. The Ministry's goal is to ensure that everyone is made aware of their obligations and work together to offer support and guidance to bring about this change.

Minister for Equality, the Hon Samantha Sacramento MP, said: "I am extremely proud to propose legislation that will provide a framework to further protect and promote the interests of people with disabilities; All the more so because this has been a personal journey. While in private practice as a barrister, I met with the Disability Society in January 2006 and offered to help them in their mission to legislate for disability rights in Gibraltar, given the vacuum that existed at the time. I have a very vivid memory of that meeting over 10 years ago where I was presented with a draft piece of legislation that had been prepared by Agnes Valarino. Mrs Valarino had previously been the Chair of the Disability Society and at that meeting when the committee presented me with their proposed draft legislation they referred to it as Agnes' Law because they wanted a fitting tribute to a lady who had worked so hard to progress the rights of people with disabilities. I promised to help. Little did I know how literally I would do so! A true pioneer and champion of the rights of people



with disabilities, it felt that it was right and fitting that Mrs Valarino's wish to legislate for protection be honoured by referring to the Disability Act in her memory.

"The Disability Society inspired me then and they, and the values that they represent, continue to inspire me today. The Society promotes the interests of people with disabilities and I will continue to work closely with them and all stakeholders in the implantation of the legislation as well as the development of Government policy.

"For me, the Disability Act will be more than just new legislation, it will be about ensuring that rights on paper become a reality.

"I have a strong, motivated and dedicated team at the Ministry for Equality and I will be working very closely with my Ministerial colleagues in educating their departments in giving effect to Government policy. My Ministry and I will also work closely with the private sector to fully support them. Encouraging businesses, employers and the rest of the private sector to embrace and make themselves aware of how they can meet needs and break down any barriers that may be in the way.

"Working together we will break down barriers, promote equality and achieve a more inclusive society."