

Press Release: Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2013, Dublin

## **CAMPAIGNERS WELCOME CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION'S "HISTORIC" ENDORSEMENT OF EQUAL MARRIAGE**

### **Joint News Release**

#### **Marriage Equality, Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN), Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL)**

In a joint statement this afternoon (14 April 2013), advocacy groups Marriage Equality, the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN) and the Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL) have welcomed the strong endorsement today by the Constitutional Convention of equal marriage as "an historic step".

Following a weekend of presentations and discussions involving supporters and opponents of equal marriage, the constitutional reform body voted today by 79% in favour to recommend that the Government take steps to provide for equal recognition of marriage for same-sex couples.

The weekend's deliberations followed an unprecedented 1,000 plus submissions to the Convention, more than three quarters of which favoured marriage equality. The Convention, as per its Terms of Reference, will now submit a recommendation to Government to provide for equal recognition of marriage for same-sex couples. The Government will publish its decision on what it proposes to do with the recommendation within 4 months, including a decision on whether or not to hold a referendum on the issue.

Welcoming the outcome of the Convention's deliberations today, Marriage Equality Director, Moninne Griffith said:

"we are delighted with today's result at the Constitutional Convention on the issue of same-sex marriage. This proves that Ireland is ready for equality for same sex couples and wants equal access to civil marriage for loving committed lesbian and gay couples. Recent polling reflects the vote today. Now is the time. We call on the Government to implement this positive recommendation as soon as possible to provide for 'same-sex marriage' in the constitution by putting this issue to the people of Ireland in a referendum."

GLEN Director, Brian Sheehan said:

"This is a historic day. It is a major milestone on the remarkable journey to full constitutional protection for lesbian and gay people and families in Ireland. It builds on the extraordinary progress we have achieved over the last 20 years, and clearly demonstrates that Ireland is ready to take the next step to complete that remarkable journey."

There have been two days of moving and emotional debate. We are delighted with the result, as will the hundreds of thousands of lesbians and gay people throughout Ireland. We would like to thank the members of the Convention, both ordinary citizens and political members, for the

thoughtfulness, care and respect with which they dealt with the issue over the last two days. Their discussions were a powerful demonstration of the commitment to equality and further progress for lesbian and gay people in Ireland. This makes us even more proud citizens of Ireland."

ICCL Director Mr Mark Kelly said:

"This is landmark moment in the human rights history of Ireland. The Convention has voted by a decisive majority in favour of changing the Constitution to allow for civil marriage for same sex couples. The vote sends a clear message to Government that the time is right to ask the Irish people to remove one of the last bastions of official discrimination in Ireland. Successive polls have indicated that such a move is favoured by a majority in this state. Public engagement with the Constitutional Convention, and today's vote, bear this out. The ICCL looks forward to further engagement with the public on the subject of equal marriage in the coming months".

ENDS

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NOTES TO EDITOR

- The Convention on the Constitution met on the weekend of Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 April with a view to reporting recommendations to the Houses of the Oireachtas on the constitutional provision for marriage for same-sex couples. For more information on the Convention on the Constitution see [www.constitution.ie](http://www.constitution.ie). The sessions took place in the Grand Hotel, Malahide.
- Presentations and panel sessions by legal and academic experts, and by advocacy organisations, took place on Saturday 13 April, with closed deliberations and voting by Convention members taking place on Sunday 14 April.
- The ICCL, GLEN and Marriage Equality jointly made the case for opening up civil marriage in Ireland to same-sex couples. The Convention also heard contributions from a number of religious organisations opposed to extending civil marriage to same-sex couples, including the Knights of Columbanus, the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference and the Evangelical Alliance.
- The ICCL's, GLEN's and Marriage Equality's submissions to the Constitutional Convention are

available on the Hear Our Voices website at <http://www.hearourvoices.ie/submissions>. Hear Our Voices is an initiative of The Irish Council for Civil Liberties, working to ensure that the voices of civil society organisations will be heard in an effective way during the constitutional convention process.

- About Marriage Equality

Marriage Equality is a national not for profit organisation working for equality for same sex couples, families and their children through access to civil marriage. Marriage Equality was launched in February 2008. It grew from the KAL Advocacy Initiative: a group set up to support the case to recognise the Canadian marriage of two Irish citizens - Drs Katherine Zappone and Ann Louise Gilligan.

With over 3,000 supporters throughout Ireland, the organisation has had significant impact on public and political opinion in relation to the issue, through a combination of media and communications, research and policy, advocacy and lobbying work. Public support for marriage equality has grown from 56% in 2008 to 75% in 2012.

For more information please visit [www.marriageequality.ie](http://www.marriageequality.ie)

- About the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network

The Gay and Lesbian Equality Network is a non-governmental organisation that campaigns for equality for lesbian, gay and bisexual people in marriage, at home, at school, at work and in the wider community. [www.glen.ie](http://www.glen.ie)

- About the Irish Council for Civil Liberties

The Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL) is Ireland's independent human rights watchdog, which monitors, educates and campaigns in order to secure full enjoyment of human rights for everyone. Founded in 1976 by Mary Robinson and others, the ICCL has been campaigning for over three decades for full equality for same-sex couples. [www.iccl.ie](http://www.iccl.ie)