

**JOINT MEDIA RELEASE: IRISH COUNCIL FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES (ICCL),
GAY AND LESBIAN EQUALITY NETWORK (GLEN) AND MARRIAGE EQUALITY**

MEDIA RELEASE: 5TH NOVEMBER 2013

Campaign Groups Welcome Government Commitment to Marriage Referendum

The Cabinet today (November 5th) accepted the recommendation of the Constitutional Convention and will hold a referendum on civil marriage for lesbian and gay couples in 2015. The decision has been welcomed by campaign groups GLEN, Marriage Equality and the ICCL.

Kieran Rose, GLEN Chair said “We are delighted with the Government’s decision to hold a referendum to provide equal access to civil marriage for lesbian and gay people in 2015. **The Government’s acceptance of the Constitutional Convention recommendation is another historic step in the remarkable 20 year journey from gay law reform to full Constitutional equality for lesbian and gay people in Ireland.**”

Grainne Healy, Chairwoman, Marriage Equality said, “Marriage Equality is confident that the people of Ireland overwhelmingly support the extension of civil marriage rights to lesbian and gay people. **The Government announcement sets a process in motion whereby lesbian and gay couples and our families will finally be accepted as equal citizens in Irish law.**”

Mark Kelly, Director of ICCL said “**The Constitutional Convention’s landslide vote in favour of allowing same sex couples to marry was a clarion call for equality which the Government has heard today.** When the people of Ireland vote on this issue in 2015, we will be participating in a final act of legal recognition of the full equality of our gay and lesbian colleagues and neighbours, friends and family”.

Ms Healy of Marriage Equality continued, “This referendum is unlike most other referenda, it’s not concerned with politics or economics, it’s about Ireland valuing its citizens equally. **Introducing marriage equality to Ireland would strengthen our reputation as champions for human rights and equality. It would solidify the global belief in Ireland as the place of warm welcomes, warm welcomes to people from abroad, and to our own at home, regardless of sexuality.**”

Kieran Rose continued “Civil Partnership, introduced in 2010, which provides marriage-like rights and obligations for lesbian and gay couples has been a resounding success with widespread public welcome. **The 1,500 civil partnerships that have been celebrated all across Ireland have shown that the love and commitment of lesbian and gay couples is the same as that of other couples.** The next step to ensuring equal citizenship for lesbian and gay people is to provide equal access to civil marriage through a Constitutional referendum.”

Mark Kelly from ICCL said “**Social attitudes in Ireland have changed profoundly – and for the better – over the last twenty years and the ICCL is confident that the vast majority of Irish voters will enthusiastically embrace this opportunity to play their part in creating a more equal nation**”.

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Editors Note:

1. Timeline of progress for lesbian and gay people

1993	Equality based legal reform that abolished old criminal laws on homosexuality
1993	Unfair Dismissals Act updated to protect lesbian and gay workers
1996	Ireland becomes one of the first countries in the world to offer explicit protection from persecution to lesbian and gay people in the Refugee Act
1996	Irish Government support ensures inclusion of sexual orientation protections in the EU Amsterdam Treaty
1998	Lesbian and gay employees protection in all aspects of employment and recruitment in Employment Equality Act
2000 & 2004	Protection for lesbian and gay people in the provision of all goods and services in the Equal Status Act
2010	Civil Partnership Act provides marriage-like rights and responsibilities for lesbian and gay couples. This includes equal treatment in inheritance, next of kin, maintenance, shared home protections, pensions, immigration and protection from discrimination.
2010	Social Welfare amendment Act provides for equal treatment for civil partners and cohabiting same-sex couples in all social welfare provisions.
2011	Finance Act provides for equality in tax provisions for civil partners
2011	Lesbian and gay civil partners treated equally in citizenship.
2013	Constitutional Convention votes overwhelmingly to support marriage for lesbian and gay couples and to update family legislation to recognise and support lesbian and gay families.
2013	Government announces referendum on marriage for lesbian and gay couples