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Minister Shatter Commits to enact new Family Legislation, including for LGBT families, by end 2014.

The Minister for Justice and Equality, Alan Shatter TD, in a speech today at the Marriage Equality conference *LGBT Parenting in Ireland* reiterated his commitment to bringing a Bill to recognise the ‘reality of the diversity of family life in today’s Ireland’ through the Oireachtas by the end of 2014.

“We strongly welcome Minister Shatter’s commitment to update parenting legislation by the end of 2014 to recognise the diversity of family forms in Ireland” said Kieran Rose, GLEN Chair.

Minister Shatter in his speech at the conference stated that the objective of the Bill is **‘to remove the legal inequalities’ experienced by the many children who do not live in a constitutional family based on marriage.** He stated that he wanted to put in place ‘a legal architecture to underpin diverse parenting situations’ and acknowledged that many of the issues that need to be addressed are common to both LGBT and opposite-sex parents.

“There are lesbian and gay couples all over Ireland who are bringing up children. These families urgently need legal recognition and protection, the lack of which carries significant consequences for their children” continued Rose.

The Minister confirmed that the family law changes to include LGBT families are ‘of direct relevance today in the context of civil partnership’, and are needed regardless of the outcome of any referendum on access to civil marriage for lesbian and gay couples.

The Minister expected to bring a Draft Bill to Cabinet shortly. The Bill would then be forwarded to Oireachtas committees for consideration, which would include a consultative process. Recognising that the issue of children and parental rights is **‘a key issue that needs to be addressed in advance of the referendum’** the Minister said that he aimed to publish the Bill prior to the summer Dáil recess and that it would then be debated in the Oireachtas in the autumn and passed by the end of 2014.

“With the comprehensive rights and obligations of civil partnership already in place and forthcoming family legislation, civil partners, including those parenting children, would have almost all the legal rights of marriage except equal protection in the Constitution. The Government recent historic decision to hold a referendum on marriage in 2015 would be the final step in a remarkable journey to full constitutional equality for lesbian and gay families in Ireland” concluded Rose.

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For further details contact:

Brian Sheehan GLEN (086) 2330417
www.twitter.com/@GLEN_news www.glen.ie

Editors Note:

1. Minister Shatter's speech at the conference is available [here](#).