



# How the Irish Marriage Equality Referendum Was Nearly Lost in 2015

## A Personal Perspective

by Kieran Rose

October 2025

## For Eoin Collins (1963 - 2022)

Key strategist of same-sex  
marriage in Ireland



Yes Equality's "speech bubble" posters on display at South Great George's Street, Dublin, May 2015.  
Photo: Peter Morrison

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Eoin Collins, former Director of Policy Change for GLEN. Played a key role in achieving marriage-like Civil Partnerships and later Civil Marriage.

**“A campaign that should be won but could very easily be lost.”**

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## Summary



Bride Rosney, right, former special advisor to Mary Robinson, left, Bride was a member of the Yes Equality Strategic Advisory Committee  
Photo: RTE

A Memo from the independent members of the Yes Equality Strategic Advisory Committees to the Yes Equality Executive Committee on 10th March 2015 warned in the strongest terms that the Yes Equality campaign was "taking victory for granted" (see Appendix 1).

"The campaign does not feel like one that is only 73 days or 10 weeks from its conclusion. All our experience and the campaign research shows that this is a campaign that should be won but could very easily be lost."

"We are deeply worried at the lack of ownership for the campaign by supportive organisations outside of the three founding members of Yes Equality."<sup>1</sup>

The Memo set out an urgent objective for Yes Equality to "become an organisation which is more representative of the broad based campaign we want to run and give ownership of the campaign to a wider base of supporters".

The actions recommended included:

"Expand the Yes Equality Executive Committee to ten or twelve members to include broader stakeholders with experience of national campaigns from civil society, political parties, NGOs and the trade union movement."

The Chair of the Executive Committee should be independent i.e. not be from any of the three founding organisations." The founding organisations were the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN), Marriage Equality and the Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL).

Those who produced the Memo were some of the most experienced political operators in Ireland. Chaired by Mark Garrett former chief of staff to Tánaiste Eamon Gilmore, the group included Bride Rosney former chief advisor to President Robinson, Fergus Finlay former chief advisor to Dick Spring leader of the Labour Party, Noel Whelan renowned political analyst, Martin Mackin former General Secretary of Fianna Fáil, and Gary Joyce a Fine Gael strategist.

GLEN strongly supported all the Memo recommendations. I had been saying frequently to the Yes Equality Strategic Advisory Committee earlier in 2015 that the initial organisational structure controlled by Marriage Equality, GLEN and ICCL was no longer fit for purpose in the heat of a Referendum campaign. This advocacy annoyed the Marriage Equality representative.

At the same time Bride Rosney, then chair of the Strategic Advisory Committee, and myself were discussing our mutual concerns about the urgent need to open out ownership of the Yes Equality campaign. I was also communicating my concerns to people like Mark Garrett, and Peter Ward. Peter played a key role in the 1995 Divorce Referendum and was later to be the Labour Party representative on the Strategic Advisory Committee.

In February 2015 I wrote a two page document 'Referendum Strategy' that set out various recommendations including that civil society groups be given a greater role in Yes Equality campaign decision making.<sup>2</sup>

The establishment of the independent review of the Yes Equality campaign structures was an outcome of those discussions. The review took a month because of difficulty in getting the agreement of a few stakeholders. Bride Rosney told me later that one stakeholder on the Marriage Equality side was suspicious and asked 'is this a GLEN ploy?'. Of course it was a GLEN 'ploy' to open out ownership of the Yes Equality campaign to wider civil society groups in order to win the Referendum.

I first met Bride Rosney in 1992 when she was chief advisor to then President Mary Robinson. This was when the LGBT community were welcomed into Áras an Uachtaráin for the first time, a hugely important symbolic invitation and a great boost for our gay law reform campaign.

A few days after the Memo of March 10th was received, the Yes Equality Executive Committee met to discuss it. GLEN was dismayed that Marriage Equality and ICCL wanted to reject almost all of the recommendations.

It seemed that the positive opinion polls at the time had caused them to become very complacent about victory in the Referendum.

But I remembered how positive opinion polls melted away under attack from the Right in previous referendums. The 1986 Divorce Referendum was defeated by a 63% No vote despite initial encouraging opinion polls. The Divorce Referendum of 1995 barely passed with a Yes vote of 50.28% despite strong opinion polls earlier.

I was centrally involved in the Cork Anti Amendment Campaign in 1982/83 when the anti-abortion amendment to the Constitution was passed overwhelmingly with 67% of the votes cast. The Cork Gay Collective more or less disbanded to throw itself wholeheartedly into the Anti-Amendment campaign in Munster. The No vote in Cork South Central was 44%, one of the highest votes in the country. Catherine Forde was the chairperson and she was later to become a founder member of Lawyers for Yes Equality in 2015 along with Peter Ward and others.

That meeting in March 2015 to discuss the Memo was the most dispiriting point of the campaign for me and for Brian Sheehan, Executive Director of GLEN. It seemed to me that Marriage Equality and ICCL were showing themselves to be strategically unaware as if a Yes vote in the referendum was already guaranteed. Their negative reactions confirmed the criticisms of the Yes Equality campaign set out in the Memo. After that meeting I thought we could lose the Referendum.

Marriage Equality and ICCL were brushing aside the considered analysis of some of the most successful political experts in Ireland. People who had huge success in winning national elections, whether general elections, presidential elections or referendums.

Neither Marriage Equality nor ICCL or GLEN had experience of running a national election campaign.

After the meeting, Marriage Equality, ICCL and GLEN tried to agree via email a joint written response to the Memo. The email thread is revealing (see Appendix 2), and includes confirmation that Marriage Equality and ICCL wanted to keep control of the Yes Equality campaign. They did not want to open out ownership to the wider civil society groups.

Bizarrely there was questioning of Noel Whelan's proposed full-time pro-bono work for the Yes Campaign. Noel was already on the Strategic Communications Committee of Yes Equality and went on to play a crucial role in the Yes Equality success as Strategic Advisor to the campaign. For a number of months Noel had been speaking at GLEN events on strategies to win the Referendum.

The statement of fact that GLEN, Marriage Equality and ICCL disagreed in their response to the Memo should be deleted in the response to the Memo. They even wanted to refuse the invitation to meet with the members of the review group that prepared the Memo. There was an incredible sense of hubris.

Sometimes it's important to compromise to achieve your goals, sometimes it's vital not to compromise in order to achieve your goals. In this case I thought it essential that the recommendations in the Memo be implemented fully.

There was no halfway house between the positions of GLEN and ICCL and Marriage Equality. The Civil Marriage referendum was far too important and too urgent to compromise on campaign strategies and structures. I was determined that the recommendations of the independent members be implemented in full to ensure we would have the best structures and strategies for a successful Referendum campaign.



The HQ of Cork Yes Equality featuring campaign volunteers, May 2025  
Photo: X @Redmondch1



Mark Garrett – Former chief of staff to Tánaiste Eamon Gilmore. Chaired the Memo group and later the Yes Equality Strategic Advisory Committee



Martin Mackin - former General Secretary of Fianna Fáil and member of the Strategic Advisory Committee



Peter Ward – Divorce campaigner, co-founder of Lawyers for Yes, and member of the Yes Equality Strategic Advisory Committee



Gary Joyce - Fine Gael strategist and member of the Strategic Advisory Committee

## Background

I had been involved in too many Referendum campaigns that were lost like the Abortion Referendum of 1983 and the Divorce Referendum of 1986. I remembered how effective the Right were at campaigning, what it was like to lose and I remembered the damage caused subsequently. How it emboldened the Right.

The 2006 Colley Working Group on Domestic Partnerships was a pivotal event. Eoin Collins, Director of Policy Change for GLEN was a member of the Working Group and managed to persuade them that they should go way beyond their remit and recommend Civil Marriage for same-sex couples, or full Civil Partnership with all the statutory rights of marriage if marriage was Constitutionally vulnerable. This laid the basis for all the subsequent progress, the Labour Party Civil Unions Bills of 2006 and 2007, the Civil Partnership Act 2010, and Civil Marriage in 2015.<sup>3</sup>

There had been fundamental strategic disagreements between GLEN and Marriage Equality about the most effective ways to achieve Civil Marriage. GLEN accepted in late 2006 the overwhelming political and legal position that Civil Marriage for same-sex couples would require a referendum to amend the Constitution. The High Court decision of December 2006 in the Zappone Gilligan Constitutional case confirmed the view that a referendum to amend the Constitution was necessary if same-sex marriage was to be enacted.

So we strongly supported the marriage-like Labour Civil Unions Bill of 2006 and the later Civil Partnership Bill which would give immediate statutory equal rights to same-sex couples. At the time I said it would be unconscionable for GLEN to know that Civil Partnerships would give immediate legal solutions to same-sex couples' urgent needs, but to reject such statutory rights in favour of a Referendum at some indeterminate time in the future.<sup>4</sup>

Around 2008 Atlantic Philanthropies who were funding both GLEN and Marriage Equality tried to mediate between the two groups. At a dinner hosted by Atlantic, the mediator described GLEN as taking a pragmatic

approach and Marriage Equality as taking a principled approach. I disagreed strongly and said I thought there was nothing principled about dismissing immediate legal solutions for vulnerable same-sex couples. On RTÉ Morning Ireland I described our approach as 'principled pragmatism'.

Eoin Collins told me that when he was discussing Civil Partnerships with a leading person on the 'marriage or nothing side', and Eoin put the case that Civil Partnership would deliver immediate benefits to vulnerable couples, their response was 'hard cases make bad law'.

The impact of Civil Partnerships was transformative for vulnerable same-sex couples. Eoin Collins describes one such couple:

*'I had met this Filipino woman, who was a nurse and called in to the GLEN offices about the immigration status of her partner. Before civil partnership, her partner couldn't even get into Ireland on a tourist visa - due to visa restrictions on countries such as the Philippines. And as a result of civil partnership, not only did her partner get in .. but they had a civil partnership. And her partner then was entitled to live and work in Ireland as a result.'*

*'I went down to their civil partnership in Capel Street... there was such incredible joy there. The two of them wanted to buy a house together, and they now had a sense that their lives could now begin.'*<sup>5</sup>

The GLEN strategy was that Civil Partnership legislation would also achieve a cultural shift to open out Civil Marriage to same-sex couples, so laying the basis for a majority in a Referendum to follow.

Eoin Collins describes the cultural shift well:

*'As a result of all those civil partnerships across the country ... I had been at two of them, one of them must have had 800 people at it, older people and whatever. The impact of this, its like when you take just one couple who do this civil partnership, how many people have*

*they invited to take their relationship seriously? Your work colleagues, your family, your friends, and in your neighbourhood. It's like all these little bombs going off all over the country. Happy bombs.'*<sup>6</sup>

In the Irish Times on May 9th 2015, the conservative columnist Breda O'Brien wrote that the GLEN strategy of Civil Partnerships paving the way for Civil Marriage 'must be the most successful "acculturation" in Irish history.'

In 2009 Eamon Gilmore Leader of the Labour Party set out their strategy to achieve Civil Marriage building on their Civil Unions Bill. He said: 'our Bill offers same-sex couples the greatest measure of equality possible under our Constitution'. It would achieve a cultural shift. With all the statutory rights of marriage in place, the only issue in a Marriage Referendum would be to 'change the name to marriage'. This he said was based on the second successful Divorce Referendum where all the legislation for separation was in place beforehand, so the net question in the Referendum was not the right to divorce but the right to remarry.

*'In the meantime, there are immediate, unmet needs that should not be postponed until such time a Referendum is held. Waiting for the best should not be a reason for delay in bringing about the better.'*<sup>7</sup>

This was exactly the GLEN strategy for Civil Marriage. Get all the statutory rights in place quickly whether through Civil Unions or Civil Partnerships and any other necessary legislation to meet same-sex couples urgent needs. Then the question put to the people in a Marriage Referendum wouldn't be about taxation or immigration or children, but about giving full Constitutional equality to LGBT people.

In late 2013 GLEN had a meeting with Mark Garrett, chief of staff for Tánaiste Eamon Gilmore. He asked about a Referendum in 2014, 2015, or in the lifetime of the next Government. We said we were happy with 2015 as we wanted the Children and Family Relationships legislation passed before the Referendum was held. Our priority was to have the Referendum passed successfully and that needed all the related legislation to be in place. The Children and Family Relationships Bill was introduced into the Dail in February 2015 and signed into law by President Michael D Higgins on 6th April 2015.

Some said that there was no need for a Constitutional

referendum and the Oireachtas could simply amend the Civil Registration Act 2004 to include same-sex couples. Strangely no TD or Senator including Senator Katherine Zappone introduced a Private Members Bill. Nobody made a case to the 2013 Constitutional Convention that a Referendum was not necessary.

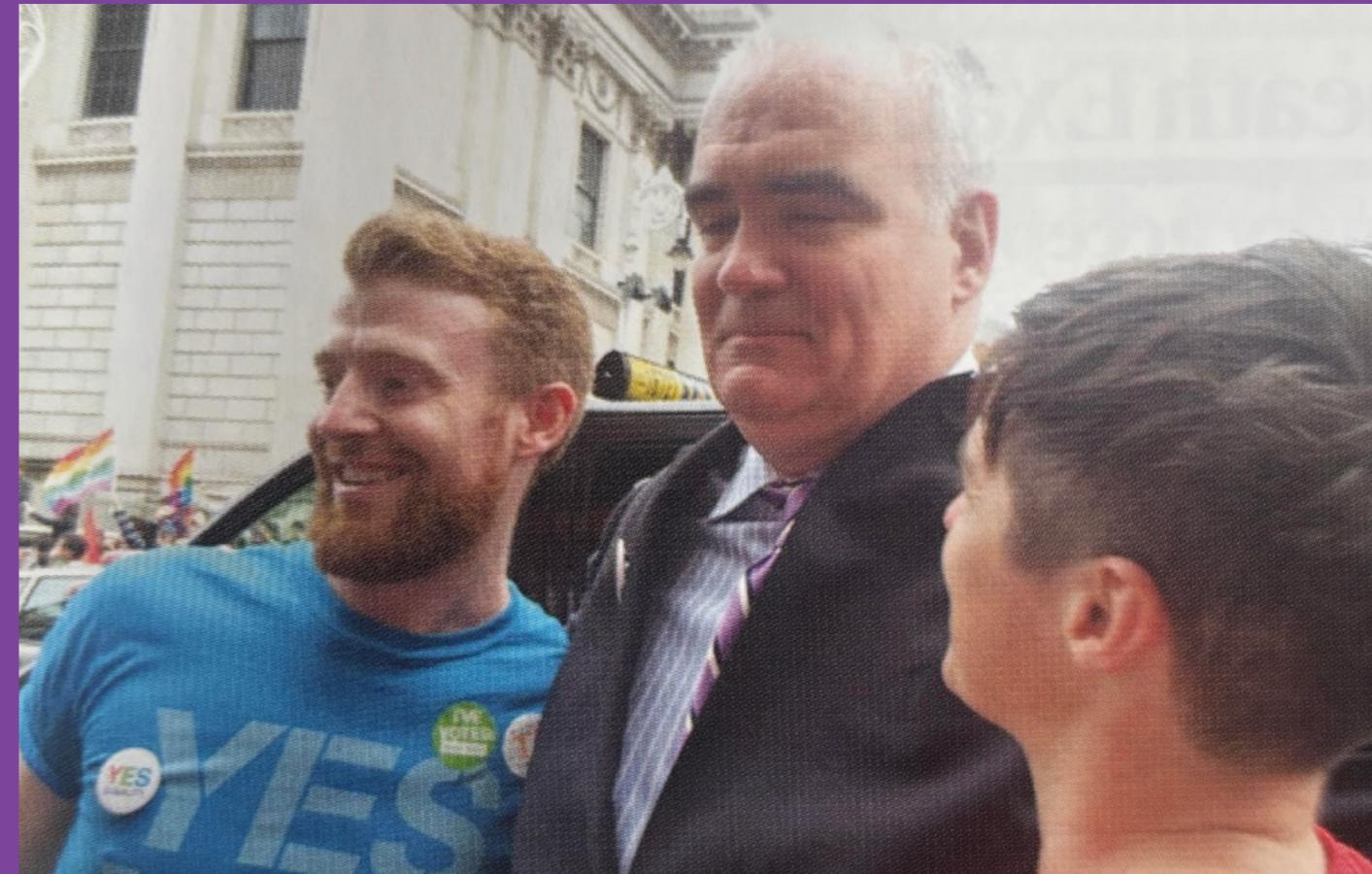
Marriage Equality's and others campaign for Civil Marriage morphed into a campaign to stop the Civil Partnership Bill and later to downgrade Civil Partnerships. They published a booklet 'Missing Pieces' in 2011 claiming to show the many differences between Civil Partnerships and Civil Marriages. One of the most significant differences they could find was that the family home of Civil Partners is called a shared home, but with all the protections set out in the family home protection legislation. According to Dr Fergus Ryan the Shared Home Protection part of the Civil Partnership Act 'replicates for civil partners the provisions of the Family Home Protection Act 1976'.<sup>8</sup>

The Civil Partnership Bill was so close to Civil Marriage that it needed such differences in nomenclature to fireproof it from Constitutional challenge. Speaking in the Dáil in June 2010 Alan Shatter TD: 'In other words, the [Civil Partnership] relationship is marriage in everything but name. The Bill plays with semantics in the hope it is constitutionally on the right side of Article 41'.

'Missing Pieces' was basically misleading propaganda and I thought that it was also incredibly mean spirited in trying to undermine the joy of all those same-sex couples who were having their relationships recognised by the State with marriage-like statutory rights. It was also strategically counter productive as a way of trying to convince elected representatives to move towards a Referendum.

Eoin Collins puts this well:

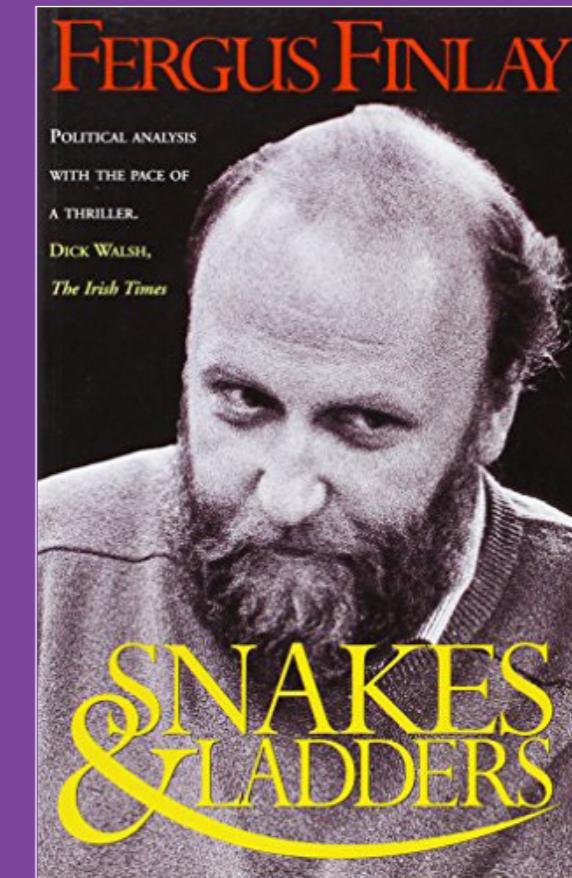
*'.. it was better to emphasise how close civil partnership is to marriage in order to get marriage rather than to emphasise the differences .. I think it was much better to say, which I think is true, is that the Oireachtas legislated for as close to equality as they could get under the Constitution, rather than to say that the Oireachtas deliberately legislated for inequality. I don't see the rationale for arguing the second one. Or I don't know how that would bring us closer to marriage.'*<sup>9</sup>



Noel Whelan – Barrister, political analyst, and Strategic Advisor to Yes Equality, with revellers in Dublin Castle on referendum day



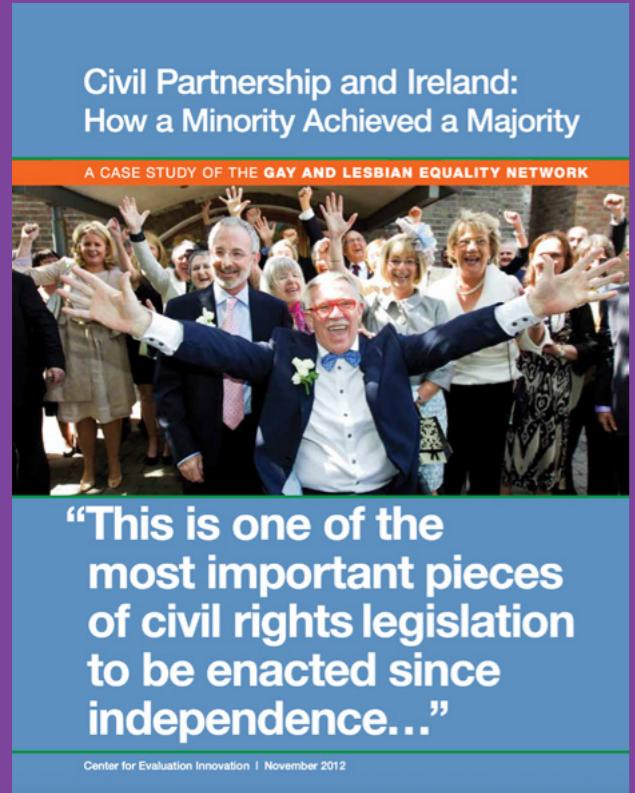
Brian Sheehan – Executive Director of GLEN and Co-Director of Yes Equality



Fergus Finlay – Former chief advisor to Dick Spring, member of the Yes Equality Strategic Advisory Committee. *Snakes and Ladders*, 1998



Christopher Robson - Co-founder of GLEN, key advocate of Civil Partnerships as route to Civil Marriage



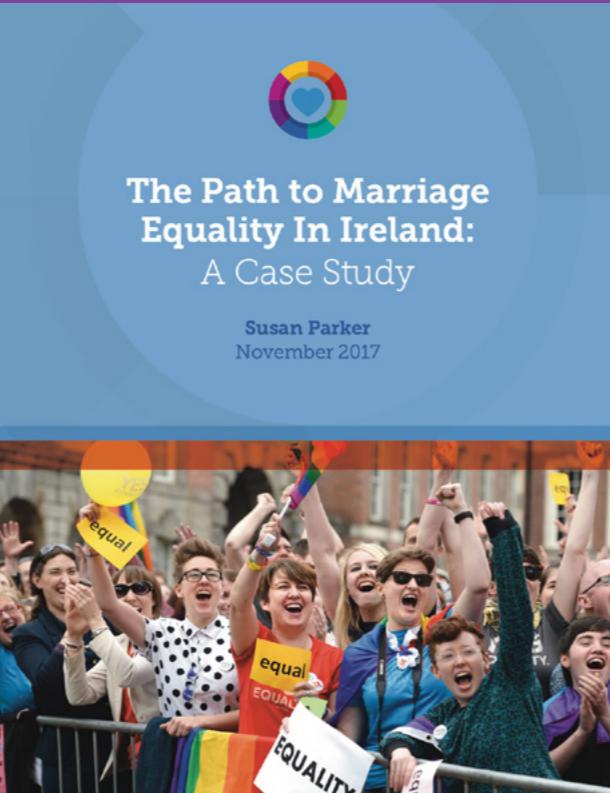
Civil Partnership and Ireland, 2012



GLEN Submission to Constitutional Convention, drafted by Eoin Collins, 2013



Protest against Civil Partnership outside Leinster House, 2010  
Photo: Karl Hayden



The Path to Marriage, 2017



Dáil gallery was packed to capacity with LGBT people as the Civil Partnership Bill was introduced in 2009. Meanwhile outside Leinster House some LGBT people protested against the Bill  
Photo: RTE

'Missing Pieces' also was also a hopeless strategy to try to convince people to vote Yes in a Marriage Referendum i.e. saying our elected representatives had deliberately voted for inequality. It was worrying that in a Referendum campaign, Marriage Equality might continue their campaign against Civil Partnerships and it would be exposed by journalists as misleading, introducing all kinds of 'red herrings', confusing the voters, distracting from the key remaining issue of Constitutional equality, and weakening the case for a Yes vote. That was one of the reasons I thought it essential that control of the Yes Equality campaign be opened out to wider civil society.

Another reason was the ripping up of the Civil Partnership Bill at the rally at the end of the Dublin Pride Parade in 2009. I thought this act was incredibly mean spirited and self indulgent performance politics. They were ripping up the dreams and aspirations of those vulnerable same-sex couples who urgently needed legal solutions to their problems. As we approached the Marriage Referendum I thought this was exactly the type of zealotry that could derail a campaign to win a majority of the Irish people.

Ironically the Catholic Bishops and the lay Right were also strongly opposed to Civil Partnership. The Bishops described the Civil Partnership Bill as marriage 'in all but name' and said it was unconstitutional. 'The Civil Partnership Bill represents a fundamental revolution in our understanding of marriage' according to 'Why Marriage Matters: Statement of the Irish Bishops Conference on the Civil Partnership Bill' March 2010.

'By making Civil Partnerships as like Marriage as possible, the Bill is preparing a situation where, in the future, calling same-sex unions "marriage" will seem only a small step. In day to day language and in the media, Civil Partnerships will be referred to as "marriage", the Bishops Statement continued.

'Ireland's Catholic bishops are "very concerned" about the Civil Partnership Bill and have discussed whether to take a Constitutional action should it become law the Bishop of Elphin, Christopher Jones, told a press conference in Maynooth yesterday', according to Patsy McGarry in the Irish Times on 11th March 2010.

With Civil Partnership being attacked by both sides and with significant opposition in Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael there was a danger that the Bill would not get through. On the day of the publication of the Heads of Bill in June

2008 more than 30 Fianna Fáil TDs and Senators signed a motion against Civil Partnership.

I went on RTE Morning Ireland twice in the one week praising the Fianna Fáil republican traditions and their role in introducing gay law reform and equality legislation, and now Civil Partnership. There was a certain amount of plámás involved. Taoiseach Brian Cowen defended the Civil Partnership Bill and referred to his predecessor Bertie Ahern's speech at a GLEN event in 2006 when the then Taoiseach was very positive on further legal progress for LGBT people.

Noel Whelan wrote a very interesting article in the Irish Times about Senator Jim Walsh and others delaying tactics. They weren't too worried about the publication of the Bill, they just wanted it delayed so that it never was enacted.

A major communications problem for GLEN was that we could not highlight how close Civil Partnership was to Civil Marriage for fear of increasing the opposition of conservative Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael TDs and Senators. Our priority was to have the Civil Partnership Bill enacted as soon as possible.

The Civil Partnership Bill was debated in the Dáil in June 2010 and supported from all sides of the House and passed unanimously. The speeches were generous and insightful. Minister Dermot Ahern said, 'I believe this Bill is as comprehensive as possible consistent with the requirements of the Constitution'. The Bill was described as a stepping-stone to Civil Marriage. Only three Fianna Fáil Senators voted against the Civil Partnership Bill, the earlier significant opposition in Fianna Fáil had melted away.

The Right had been promoting the idea that there should be exemptions or 'spoilers', for Civil Registrars and others on the basis of their religious beliefs. Minister Dermot Ahern robustly dismissed such proposals: ' .. there is no basis for providing a right to discriminate against a class of persons on the grounds of freedom of religion or conscience'.

Recognising the quality and importance of the speeches, GLEN decided to publish them in two volumes. In a foreword I wrote: 'The speeches collected here are a powerful demonstration of our legislators commitment to implementing radical progress for lesbian and gay

people in Ireland'.

We launched the volumes with very enjoyable and celebratory events in the Royal College of Physicians on Kildare Street attended by TDs and Senators from all political parties. It was our way of saying thanks. How you win is as important as what you win. We were laying the basis for future engagement with the TDs and Senators on moving to Civil Marriage.

The successful introduction of marriage-like Civil Partnerships was not a given. Minister Pat Carey said in a speech in July 2010 that: 'there was a serious danger that [the Bill] wouldn't get through at all .. there was never an element of inevitability about the introduction of Civil Partnerships in this country .. the dedication of GLEN, and others, has been admirable. It has been a long road and sometimes a difficult one. Quite frankly we probably wouldn't have done it without you'. (See [www.eoin-collins.ie](http://www.eoin-collins.ie))

President Michael D Higgins highlighted the importance of Civil Partnerships saying in July 2012:

*'On a wider scale, one of the landmark achievements in this country in recent years must be the bringing into law of Civil Partnership for same-sex couples.'*<sup>10</sup>

In January 2015 Bryan Dobson on RTE Six One News interviewed myself and David Quinn of Iona on Civil Marriage. David Quinn floundered, he was contradicting himself, he didn't seem to be clear himself what his position was. In February 2015 I wrote a two page document on the strategic issues I thought were crucial in the Referendum campaign (see Appendix 6).

The following is the section where I stressed the need for the Yes Equality campaign to have a very clear, simple and definite description of what the Referendum was all about:

*'I think we have to be really clear about what is net question the people of Ireland will be asked to vote*

*We have to accept and say clearly that civil partnership and the children's legislation gives us most of statutory rights responsibilities .. if we try and dodge this one .. we will be exposed by journalists*

*I was asked that by Bryan Dobson on 6.01 "do you not*

*already have most of the rights and responsibilities" [of marriage]*

*And [I] was able to answer very clearly .. "yes .. but what we don't have is full and equal citizenship"*

*Meanwhile David Quinn was floundering .. he was for equality .. but no he wasn't .. exposed by Bryan Dobson very gently probing what exactly was his position .. '*

*Fergus Finlay has written a formidable analysis of the 1995 Divorce Referendum<sup>11</sup> and how it was nearly lost:*

*'The opinion polls encouraged our complacency, giving us a clear and unassailable lead before we started ..'*

*'They forgot' Fergus writes:*

***'It's easier to make people afraid than to make them hope. It's easier to appeal to that fear rather than to encourage generosity. And Ireland possesses some of the most skilled and experienced practitioners of the politics of fear there are.'***

The 1995 Divorce Referendum was barely won with 50.28% of the votes. I was listening to the counts on the radio at home and it was so close, too close, the Yes side was ahead by a small margin, then the No side was ahead again. I couldn't stand the tension so I phoned my great friend and fellow GLEN activist and we went into town to have lunch and wander around to await the final result. We hugged with joy when we saw a television screen that said the Yes side had won.

Fergus Finlay concludes:

*'We almost blew the divorce referendum through a mistaken analysis of what was necessary. I was determined that that wouldn't happen again.'*

I think both Fergus and myself were determined that the Marriage Referendum would not be blown.

I first met Fergus Finlay in the early 1980s when he was the full-time official for the Local Government and Public Services Union in Cork and I was seeking his support as a Union member when I was preparing to come out on local radio.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s when Fergus was the

key advisor to Dick Spring Leader of the Labour Party, we liaised closely on gay law reform and the wider GLEN campaign for equality. As the gay law reform campaign was coming to a close and igniting, myself and Christopher Robson used to meet Fergus in the palatial splendour of Iveagh House when Dick Spring was Minister for Foreign Affairs. We stressed to Fergus that the gay law reform had to be on the basis of equality.

I thought it was vital that Fergus would be centrally involved in the Yes Equality campaign, and I circulated his article on the 1995 Divorce Referendum to the Yes Equality team. Fergus Finlay was one of those who wrote the Memo on changes needed for the Yes Equality campaign that Marriage Equality and ICCL wanted to reject.

Sometimes people say after a successful campaign that the success was inevitable, or after a defeat that defeat was inevitable. Neither is usually true, in many cases, success or defeat is down to having effective campaign strategies and structures.

For example with the proper strategy, GLEN was able to win all its radical demands for gay law reform on the basis of equality and inclusion of sexual orientation in the Unfair Dismissals Act in 1993, despite the huge opposition of the Catholic Church and the all-powerful secular Right. This was the first major statutory defeat for the Right on a civil rights issue. At that time GLEN had no funding, no office or paid workers.



GLEN and allies outside Leinster House celebrating the Seanad passing of the Civil Partnership Act, July 2010  
Photo: Karl Hayden



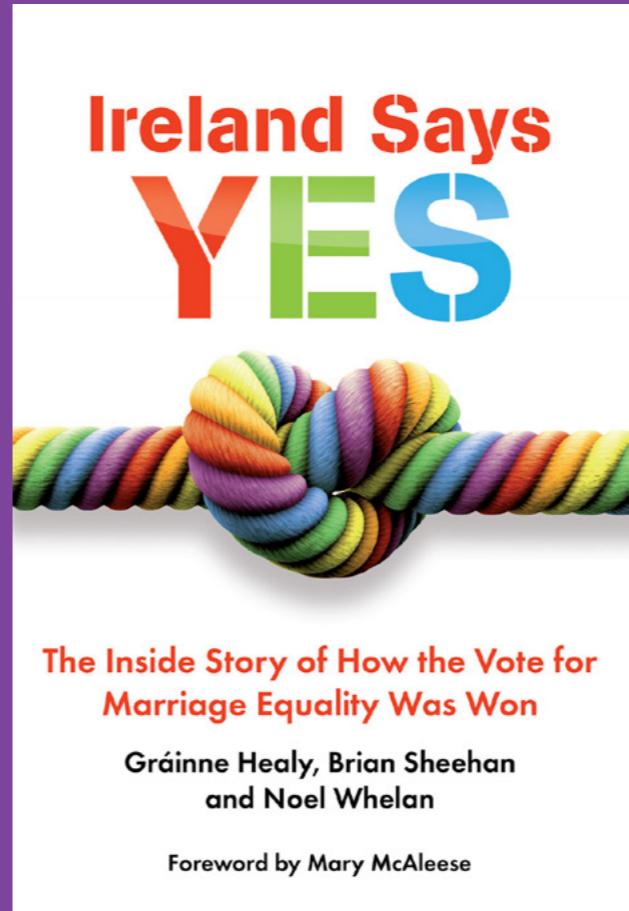
Green Party support outside Leinster House at a demonstration for Civil Partnerships  
Photo: Karl Hayden



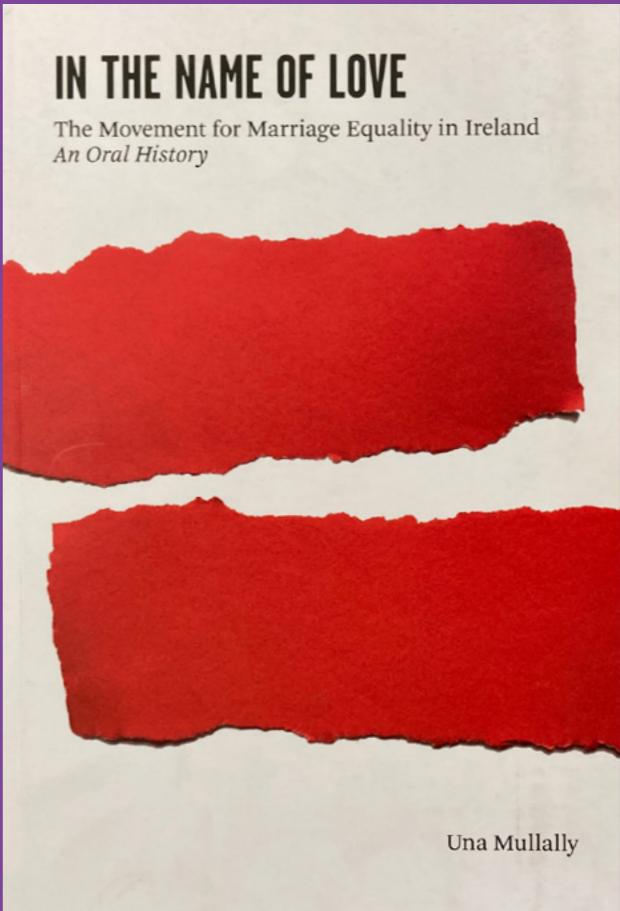
Joint GLEN and Green Party press conference in GLEN offices in Fumbally Court Dublin 8 June 2009 welcoming publication of the Civil Partnership Bill. John Gormley, Leader of the Green Party and Minister for the Environment, Kieran Rose, Roderic O'Gorman, and Ciarán Cuffe TD. Photo: Tommy Clancy



Eoin Collins, Minister Dermot Ahern TD and Josep Adalla at signing of commencement notices for Civil Partnership Act December 2010. Photo: Karl Hayden



Ireland Says Yes, 2016



In the Name of Love, 2014  
Una Mullally



Kieran Rose presented with IMPACT Yes Equality poster by Paul O'Halloran at the IMPACT Conference, Galway 2015



Eoin Collins with Michael McDowell TD, Minister for Justice and Equality, and Niall Crowley, CEO of the Equality Authority, at a 2006 conference on the legal status of same-sex couples jointly organised by GLEN, the Equality Authority and the Colley Working Group where Eoin made a presentation.  
See [www.eoin-collins.ie](http://www.eoin-collins.ie) for more.



Eoin Collins with Brian Lenihan TD, Minister for Justice and Equality, and Anne Colley, chair of the Colley Working Group, at the launch of the GLEN Annual Report in 2007. In his speech the Minister said he would introduce Civil Partnership legislation speedily and would no longer await the Supreme Court decision in the Zappone-Gilligan appeal. This was a major breakthrough largely due to advocacy by Eoin Collins with the Minister and others. See [www.eoin-collins.ie](http://www.eoin-collins.ie) for the Minister's speech.



Michael D. Higgins and Mary O'Rourke with Trevor Sargent TD, Brian Sheehan and Aengus Ó Snodaigh TD. Launch of Dáil Debates on Civil Partnership, June 2010  
Photo: Tommy Clancy



Kieran Rose with Minister Dermot Ahern at the launch of the Seanad Debates on Civil Partnership, July 2010  
Photo: Tommy Clancy

## Conclusion

Marriage Equality and ICCL soon backed off from their objections and the recommendations of the Memo were implemented. This included opening out ownership of the Yes Campaign to wider civil society with Mark Garrett as independent chairperson and Noel Whelan as full-time pro bono Strategic Advisor. The Strategic Advisory Committee was expanded to include Fergus Finlay and Peter Ward as the Labour Party representative. Séamus Dooley head of the NUJ in Ireland became the trade union representative (see Appendix 3), with David Joyce being the formal liaison with ICTU.

The trade union movement played a key role in progress for LGBT people since the early 1980s and played a key role in the Yes Equality Referendum campaign.<sup>12</sup>

There was now a robust structure and strategy in place to allow for effective campaigning throughout the country and across all sectors. Many Yes campaign groups were self-generated and operated autonomously and dynamically, and with the support and encouragement of the Yes Equality national team. The Marriage Equality propaganda against Civil Partnerships was dropped.

The GLEN strategic framework for success in a Marriage Referendum was now in place and working.

Also, in many respects the values and approach of the Yes Equality campaign mirrored those of GLEN in its various campaigns including to get Civil Partnership enacted. This included being confident and optimistic that we could win the support of the vast majority of the people, calmness, generosity, listening, a 'hearts and minds' approach appealing to people's values and aspirations, and avoiding 'culture wars' (see 'Winning Civil Partnership in Ireland' Appendix 10).

The Referendum was held on the 22nd May 2015 and was passed overwhelmingly with a Yes vote of 62%.

A new Article was entered into the Constitution:

### Article 41.4

*'Féadfaidh Beirt, gan beann ar a ngnéas, conradh pósta a dhéanamh de réir dli.'*

*Marriage may be contracted in accordance with law by two persons without distinction as to their sex.'*

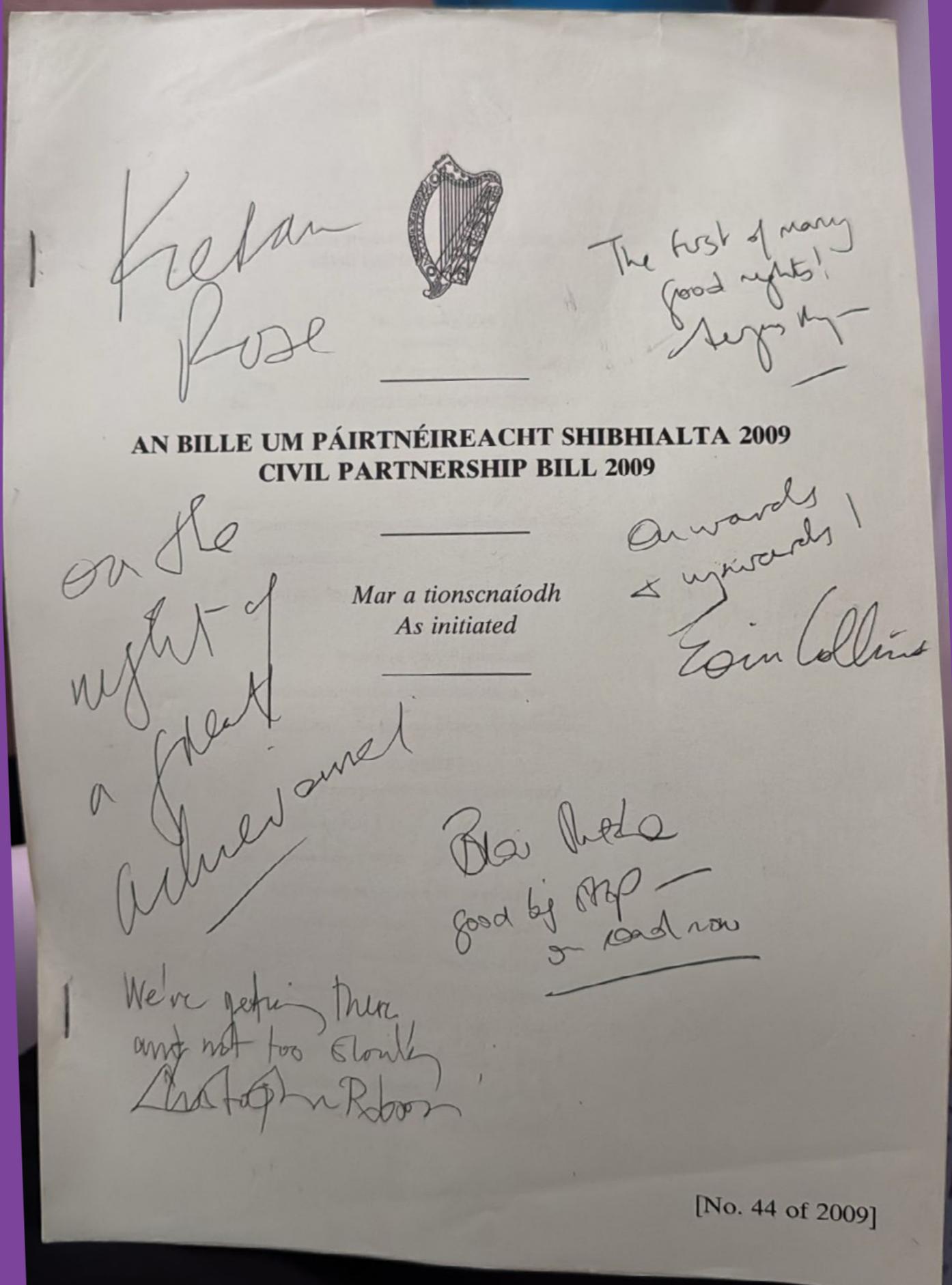




Eoin Collins and husband Josep Adalla



Hugh Walsh and Barry Dignam, the first couple to enter a Civil Partnership



Civil Partnership Bill signed by Eoin Collins, Christopher Robson, Brian Sheehan, Kieran Rose, and Fergus Ryan on the night the Dáil passed the Bill.  
Photo: Karl Hayden

[No. 44 of 2009]



Cover of "Dáil Debates on Civil Partnership," published by GLEN, June 2010



Cover of "Seanad Debates on Civil Partnership," published by GLEN, July 2010

**TRADE UNIONISTS  
FOR CIVIL MARRIAGE EQUALITY**  
THIS VALENTINE'S WEEKEND...  
**CAMPAIGN LAUNCH:**  
**FRIDAY 13TH FEBRUARY 2015**  
AT 6.00 P.M., LIBERTY HALL, DUBLIN 1

A showing of the film PRIDE - the BAFTA nominated movie that tells the story of how a group of gay and lesbian activists supported the miners during their lengthy strike in the summer of 1984

Music From The Dublin Gay Men's Chorus  
Special Guests  
Suggested Donation €20

**A Labour of Love:  
Trade Unions and  
the Road to  
Marriage Equality**

Featuring a panel discussion with activists and trade unionists reflecting on the union movement's role in the campaign.

📍 Liberty Hall, Dublin  
📅 Tuesday, 17 June

**STRONGER TOGETHER  
CONGRESS**  
Irish Congress of Trade Unions

Poster for "A Labour of Love: Trade Unions and the Road to Marriage Equality," panel event at Liberty Hall, Dublin, 17 June 2025



'A Labour of Love' ICTU Pride event in Liberty Hall on 17 June 2025. Panel Discussion on Trade Unions and progress for LGBT people feat. (L to R) Karl Hayden FSU (Chair), Kieran, Faye Cunningham formerly of ESBOA and Irish Women United, Seamus Dooley NUJ, Ethel Buckley SIPTU, Rachel Mathews-McKay SIPTU, 2025

Photo: David Joyce



GLEN bus marking the first anniversary  
of Civil Partnership, 2011  
Photo: Alan Betson



Trevor Boland and Nevan Bermingham celebrate  
the first anniversary of their civil partnership, 2012  
Photo: Alan Betson

## After the Referendum

Success empowers people including elected representatives and the success in the Marriage Referendum opened the door to further progress.

According to a subsequent opinion poll carried out for IHREC, the proportion of people who thought that Ireland is a leader on Human Rights and Equality rose by 15 points after the Marriage Referendum was passed (see [www.ihrec.ie](http://www.ihrec.ie) ). A progressive Gender Recognition Act was enacted later in 2015.

The success in the Marriage Referendum also had benefits for the campaign to repeal the 8th Amendment to the Constitution, the anti-abortion amendment passed in 1983. 'Repeal suddenly seemed winnable' according to the study 'Road to Repeal: 50 Years of Struggle in Ireland for Contraception and Abortion'. 'The outcome was significant for choice activists as it signalled a major shift in attitude to sexual politics across 26 counties'<sup>13</sup>. The Referendum to repeal the 1983 anti-abortion amendment to the Constitution was passed with a Yes vote of 66% in 2018.

# Appendix 1

Memo of 10th March 2015 from the Yes Equality Strategic Advisory Committee to the Yes Equality Executive Committee

## MEMO

**To:** Yes Equality Executive Committee  
**From:** Strategic Advisory Committee  
**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup> March 2015 (73 days to polling day)  
**Re:** Recommendations on Next Steps

Over the last month the Strategic Advisory Committee has held weekly meetings in order to assess and advise on the structure and direction of the 'Yes Equality' campaign.

After those initial four meetings we would like to take the opportunity to provide some broad feedback and recommendations on how best to set up the campaign for the success it is necessary to achieve on 22<sup>nd</sup> May.

Clearly there is a lot of activity within the campaign that is building on the energy and passion of the three founding organisations of 'Yes Equality'. The establishment of the Campaign Office is a positive step and the launch event on 9<sup>th</sup> March has provided a focal point for the campaign. We also are glad to see that there are moves underway to address the capacity issues on the Media & Communications side of the campaign.

Even with all the investment to date and the positive goodwill that is evident for the Yes campaign we have a number of significant concerns:

- We believe that the current decision-making structures within the 'Yes Equality' campaign are unlikely to be able to cope with the pace and inevitable turmoil of a contentious national referendum campaign. The current structures are more evident of three separate organisations that are cooperating rather than a single campaign with a single purpose.
- We are deeply worried at the lack of ownership for the campaign by supportive organisations outside of the three founding members of 'Yes Equality'. There are many supporters of the campaign, including civil society groups, the political parties and individuals who are passively looking to 'Yes Equality' to set the tone and lead the Yes campaign. The biggest concern here is that they do not yet feel part of the overall Yes campaign and their passive support is far short of what is needed to ensure a successful campaign.
- We are concerned about the current communications capacity / infrastructure of the campaign and the potential lack of bandwidth to cope with media volume when the campaign moves into full swing. We are equally concerned at the lack of a communications programme setting out content and themes from now to polling day.

- The current tone and pace of the campaign is being interpreted by many as taking victory for granted. The campaign does not look or feel like one that is only 73 days or 10 weeks away from its conclusion. All of our experience and the campaign research show that this is a campaign that should be won but could very easily be lost. There is a very large element of soft support for the referendum which could melt away during the white heat and confusion of a contentious campaign.

As we are quickly coming to the final stages of this campaign we believe there are a number of clear objectives that should be set and actions taken without delay.

### Objectives:

- Ensure effective decision-making and management to ensure that the campaign is robust enough to absorb the stress, stains and shocks that will come at some point in the campaign.
- Become an organisation which is more representative of the broad based campaign we want to run and give ownership of the campaign to a wider base of supporters
- Inject pace into the campaign as we reach the final phase
- Think as one organisation with a critical and demanding job to do in a very tight timeframe – rather than as three organisations with a job more or less done!

### Actions:

- Reluctantly accepting that it has not been possible to find a Campaign Director it is time to make a pro-active decision to recognise the de-facto position and give day-to-day decision making responsibility to Grainne Healy & Brian Sheehan
- Expand the 'Yes Equality' Executive Committee to ten or twelve members to include broader stakeholders with experience of national campaigns from civil society, political parties, NGOs & trade union movement
- The Chair of the Executive Committee should be independent i.e. not be from any of the three founding member organisations
- From St Patrick's Day the 'Yes Equality' Executive Committee should meet more frequently and at least every second day at 8am with key campaign staff in the campaign HQ. For the final six weeks of the campaign the Executive Committee should meet daily.
- Minutes of these meetings should be kept and actions assigned to specific members of staff and/or the Committee
- Ensure a highly skilled and experienced political Communications person is in place on a full-time basis by St. Patrick's Day
- Stand down the two advisory committees in order to simplify the structure and use those resources through the expanded Executive Committee or as direct advisors to senior campaign staff.

## Appendix 2

Alongside the memo, there was a set of email exchanges between members of the Campaign Executive. The main contributors here are Ailbhe Smyth, Mark Kelly and myself, but the chain also included Brian Sheehan and Gráinne Healy.

These emails were part of the discussion on how to respond to the Strategic Advisory Committee memo. They highlight the differences of opinion over governance, inclusivity, and campaign structure, and they show how decisions were being debated among the leadership at a critical moment.

What follows is a selection of those emails, reproduced in full to reflect the tone and detail of the discussion.

### Email from Ailbhe Smyth

From: Ailbhe Smyth <[REDACTED]>  
Date: Wed, 18 Mar 2015, 17:36  
Subject: Re: Draft Response  
To: Brian Sheehan <[brian@glen.ie](mailto:brian@glen.ie)>, Grainne Healy <[REDACTED]>, mark kelly <[mark.kelly@iccl.ie](mailto:mark.kelly@iccl.ie)>, Kieran Rose <[REDACTED]>

Hi Brian,

Thanks for your email - and many thanks to Grainne and yourself for drafting the response to Mark Garrett.

In most respects, I think the draft response captures the sense of our meeting on but there are one or two areas where this isn't so, I believe (marked on text below).

1. We agreed that our response would go to Mark Garrett and that we would seek a meeting with Mark to discuss. My clear recall is that we agreed this would be the most effective way forward. I believe it would be unhelpful to have a meeting with the larger group on these issues.

2. I don't think it's necessary - or appropriate - to include sentence on the nature of our discussions.

3. I wasn't aware that Noel Whelan would be working full-time on the campaign. I'd be looking for clarification on this, and on his precise role as we already have our campaign co-directors.

4. In the final para, I'd suggest adding 'wider' (as marked in text) to describe our responsibilities'.

Others may have suggested amendments too of course, so I assume the draft will come back to us for confirmation before it goes to Mark Garrett.

As I mentioned at our meeting on Friday, I'll be away from tomorrow until next Monday evening, but available on Tuesday for a meeting.

All the best,  
Ailbhe

### Email from Ailbhe Smyth, continued

#### **-- Draft response to Strategic Advisory Committee memo:**

Firstly, thank **you** all very much for giving such serious consideration to the current position and direction of the campaign, as you have over the last number of weeks.

The five of us met (AS, GH, MK, KR, BS) on Friday and discussed the memo, and would like to meet with you to discuss further. **In our discussions there were different responses and as a group there wasn't a consensus on all of ways forward that you had suggested.**

Some of the key issues arising from our discussions we would like to share with you below. They are:

#### **Daily/Operational:**

The decisions that are necessary to be taken daily to manage the operation of the campaign: We agree with your recommendation that day to day responsibility should rest with Grainne and Brian, they will be known as Directors of YesEquality for the duration of the campaign. Additionally, Noel Whelan has indicated that he would be willing to work directly **and full time** with the campaign (except for some prior commitments) from end March timeframe.

#### **Strategic Decision Making:**

We actively want to draw in the expertise that is around the Advisory Group and Communications Group tables – expertise of running national political/GE/referendum campaigns.

Your proposal of an Executive Group – meeting from weekly up to daily in the last few weeks of the campaign was considered by the group. There was an alternative suggestion to set up a group – which would be the five from the three founding orgs and additional members of the current Advisory/Comms group and a small number of others – who would meet frequently to discuss key strategic issues. These meetings could be more frequent in the last weeks of the campaign as this group sees fit.

#### **Coordination:**

There are a range of other civil society campaigns for Yes that are crucial to winning the referendum – for example, the Trade Unions, Political, USI, Amnesty, BeLonG To etc. There is a need to coordinate those other campaigns and align them with the YE campaign. In a political context this will happen through ongoing YE multi and bi-lateral meetings with all the political parties. The suggestion was to have a 'Coordination Group' that would meet regularly (weekly up to the last few weeks, and more regularly thereafter as necessary), comprised of those groups who are also running (large scale) civil society Yes campaigns, and likely to include representatives of the political party campaigns also, to coordinate activities.

#### **Governance:**

The legal entity for the YE campaign is LGBT Equality Ltd. The three organisations (ME, ICCL, GLEN) undertake governance, as proxies for LGBT Equality Ltd, and for staffing matters pertinent to each of the organisations, also in particular finances/SIPO related matters. As a result of these responsibilities the Central Executive Group (KR, AS, GH, BS, MK) will continue to meet to discharge their governance **and wider** responsibilities to the campaign and the founding organisations.

## Email from Mark Kelly

On Wed, Mar 18, 2015 at 6:01 PM, Mark Kelly <[mark.kelly@iccl.ie](mailto:mark.kelly@iccl.ie)> wrote:

Actually, that was easier than I thought, thanks to Brian/Grainne's good drafting and Ailbe's perceptive comments.  
I agree with Ailbe's comments, and have included some more of my own in-line below.  
This has been really helpful in clarifying our thinking, but may now best be communicated to the MG orally rather than in writing?  
When suits for our next Campaign Executive Group meeting?  
Thanks and have a nice evening.  
Mark

### **– Draft response to Strategic Advisory Committee memo:**

Firstly, thank **you** all very much for giving such serious consideration to the current position and direction of the campaign, as you have over the last number of weeks.

The five of us met (AS, GH, MK, KR, BS) on Friday and discussed the memo, and would like to meet with you to discuss further. **In our discussions there were different responses and as a group there wasn't a consensus on all of ways forward that you had suggested.** [Agree this highlighted text is not necessary]

Some of the key issues arising from our discussions we would like to share with you below. They are:

#### **Daily/Operational:**

The decisions that are necessary to be taken daily to manage the operation of the campaign: We agree with your recommendation that day to day responsibility should rest with Grainne and Brian, they will be known as Co-Campaign Directors of YesEquality for the duration of the campaign [This is important because YesEquality has its own legal Directors; we should avoid confusion – also we are talking about specific daily/operational responsibilities here, which we will probably need to clarify in more detail shortly]. [Additionally, Noel Whelan has indicated that he would be willing to work directly **and full time** with the campaign (except for some prior commitments) from end March timeframe.] I would suggest that we simply delete this for now; we need to discuss how we consider Noel's talents might best be deployed in the interests of the campaign; again, something that should be clarified in detail in advance of his taking up any such day-to-day role, in the interests of all concerned].

#### **Strategy Group [I don't think we agreed any decision-making role for this group – it remains advisory]:**

We actively want to draw in the expertise that is around the Advisory Group and Communications Group tables – expertise of running national political/GE/referendum campaigns.

Your proposal of an "Executive Group" [add quotes] – meeting from weekly up to daily in the last few weeks of the campaign was considered by the group. There was an alternative suggestion to set up an enhanced Strategy Group – which would be the five from the three founding orgs and additional members of the current Advisory/Comms group and a small number of others – who would meet **more** frequently to discuss key strategic issues. These meetings could be more frequent in the last weeks of the campaign as this group sees fit. **We consider that this would be the best use of the talents of the people concerned,**

#### **Coordination:**

There are a range of other civil society campaigns for Yes that are crucial to winning the referendum – for example, the Trade Unions, Political, USI, Amnesty, BeLonG To etc. There is a need to coordinate those other campaigns and align them with the YE campaign. In a political context this will happen through ongoing YE multi and bi-lateral meetings with all the political parties. The suggestion was to have a 'Coordination Group' that would meet regularly (weekly up to the last few weeks, and more regularly thereafter as necessary), comprised of those groups who are also running (large scale) civil society Yes campaigns, and likely to include representatives of the political party campaigns also, to coordinate activities.

#### **Executive Functions / Governance:**

For legal and practical reasons, the campaign's executive and governance functions will remain vested in the three core campaign organisations, ME, ICCL and GLEN. The legal vehicle for the YE campaign is LGBT Equality Ltd. The three organisations (ME, ICCL, GLEN) have governance responsibilities, as proxies for LGBT Equality Ltd, and executive functions in relation to employment / staffing matters pertinent to their own staff, fundraising, campaign expenditure and SIPO related matters. As a result of these responsibilities the Campaign Executive Group [this existing name describes the functions quite well, I think – Central Executive Groups sounds a little Stalinist?] (KR, AS, GH, BS, MK) will continue to meet to discharge their governance and wider executive [suggest to add this word also here, for the avoidance of doubt] responsibilities to the campaign and the founding organisations.



Left, With An Taoiseach Enda Kenny TD at the 'Yes for Marriage, Yes for Business, Yes for Ireland' event, 16 April 2015  
Below, invitation  
Photo: Sharpix



GLEN invites you to join **An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, T.D.** and business leaders from technology to discuss how marriage equality will benefit business in Ireland.

**With**  
Stephen McIntyre, Managing Director, Twitter Ireland, VP EMEA Sales  
Chris Horn, Co-founder and former chair and CEO of IONA Technologies; partner, Atlantic Bridge Capital  
John Hamill, CEO and Co-Founder, Vennetics  
Ann O'Dea, CEO, Editor-at-large, Silicon Republic  
Kieran Rose, Co-Chair, GLEN

**When**  
8:00 - 10:00am, Thursday, 16<sup>th</sup> April. Light breakfast will be served.  
Digital Exchange Building, Crane Street, (off Thomas Street)  
[Click here](#) to RSVP by Friday, 10<sup>th</sup> April

**Media Partner:**  
★ siliconrepublic'



Peter Ward SC speaking at the launch of Lawyers for Yes Equality, with Mary O'Toole SC (left) and Muriel Walls, family law solicitor and GLEN board member (right)

# Appendix 3

Membership of the Yes Equality Strategic Advisory Committee, Yes Equality Executive Committee, and GLEN people on the Yes Equality HQ Team

## Yes Equality Strategic Advisory Committee

*After the recommendations of the Mark Garrett Memo were accepted the membership was widened to include Fergus Finlay, Noel Whelan, Peter Ward and Seamus Dooley.*

Mark Garrett

Independent chairperson and former chief of staff for Tánaiste Eamon Gilmore Leader of the Labour Party.

Noel Whelan (1968 - 2019)

Strategic Advisor to Yes Equality campaign full-time and pro bono. Political analyst and Irish Times columnist. Author of 'Fianna Fáil, A Biography of the Party' 2011.

Bride Rosney (1949 - 2023)

Key strategist for Mary Robinson Presidential election campaign and former special advisor to President Mary Robinson

Séamus Dooley

Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) representative. Head of the National Union of Journalists in Ireland, member of the Executive Committee of ICTU, co-founder of Trade Unionists for Civil Marriage Equality, member of the Board of GLEN.

Martin Mackin

Former General Secretary of Fianna Fáil and director of leading public relations firm Q4.

Peter Ward

Labour Party representative. Key campaigner in the 1996 Divorce Referendum campaign. Co-founder of Lawyers for Yes Equality.

Gary Joyce

Fine Gael strategist and public relations expert.

Mark Kelly

Executive Director of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties. Ailbhe Smyth

Founding member of Marriage Equality and later co-leader of Together for Yes, the campaign to Repeal the 8th Amendment to the Constitution.

Senator Katherine Zappone

Gráinne Healy

Co-Director of Yes Equality campaign and chairperson of Marriage Equality.

Brian Sheehan

Co-Director of Yes Equality campaign and Executive Director of GLEN.

Denise Charlton

A co-ordinator of fundraising for Yes Equality and founding member of Marriage Equality.

Cathy Madden

Head of Media for Yes Equality and former Deputy Government Press Secretary for Tánaiste Eamon Gilmore

Kieran Rose

Chairperson of GLEN

## Yes Equality Executive Committee

Ailbhe Smyth, Marriage Equality

Gráinne Healy, Marriage Equality

Mark Kelly, ICCL

Brian Sheehan, GLEN

Kieran Rose, GLEN

## GLEN people on the Yes Equality HQ Team

Odhrán Allen

Tiernan Brady

Séamus Dooley

Craig Dwyer

Ross Flanagan

Marie Hamilton

Alan Hatton

Sandra Irwin-Gowran

Simon Nugent

Eimear O'Reilly

Davin Roche

Brian Sheehan

Patrick Sweeney

And Will Peters former Board member of GLEN



GLEN staff, Board members and friends outside the Round Room of the Mansion House when GLEN received a Lord Mayor's Award from Lord Mayor Críona Ní Dhálaigh in 2016

L-R: Jeanne McDonagh, Alan Hatton, Simon Nugent, Marie Hamilton, Patrick Sweeney, Craig Dwyer, Kieran Rose, Sandra Irwin-Gowran, Davin Roche, Séamus Dooley, Ross Flanagan, Muriel Walls, Brian Sheehan. Not pictured: Odhrán Allen, Tiernan Brady, and Eimear O'Reilly

Photo: Karl Hayden

## Appendix 4

Eoin Collins response to criticisms of GLEN's strategy for Civil Partnership and Civil Marriage. Eoin was board member and former Director of Policy Change for GLEN.

I think the issue that has been hugely difficult for me is the view put about that GLEN had accepted civil partnership in preference to marriage due to a lack of interest in equality on our part or that we were arrogantly purveying some theory that it had to be civil partnership first.

The reality however, is that we held out for civil marriage as long as we could, but circumstances changed and we had to respond to that reality. In particular:

- We were asked by the Labour Party in 2006-2007 to support their civil unions bill, which was the same as marriage in everything but name. They said the legal advice they had was that marriage would not be constitutional.
- What were we to do? We couldn't say that their legal advice was wrong. The Zappone/Gilligan case had just failed. And McDowell was at this time saying he would bring in legal recognition that was not based on marriage, that lesbian and gay people did not want marriage. The Labour Party on the other hand was saying that it should be as close to marriage as possible – hence civil unions. So we supported it (as did most LGBT people at the time).
- Then the election happened and we pushed again for marriage – and when the Greens and Fianna Fáil negotiated the Programme for Government we pushed and pushed. But they could only get a commitment for civil partnership, but closely based on marriage.

From then on in, civil partnership was the only option being presented that had a realistic chance of being passed. We supported it for a range of reasons:

- There were a huge amount of people who needed the protections immediately. I remember one couple where one partner, a Cuban American, was facing deportation back to the US for not having a work permit but his Irish partner could not accompany him there as he had been illegal there and would not be let back in. Or a couple where one partner

was dying but could not pass on his pension to his partner who was also old but had no pension of his own.

- What were we to say to these people? We could not get any support for the proposition that civil marriage did not require constitutional change. The ICCL had this view, Fergus Ryan had this view and in any event, every single party, including the Greens had this view.
- And on the plus side, we believed that civil partnership, closely based on marriage as it was, would break the ideological back of the opposition to marriage. It is funny now to read people from Iona say they supported the civil partnership legislation when I actually debated them on the radio about it at the time. And their view was that because it was so closely based on marriage it would normalise it.

As it turned out, thousands of people have got civil partnerships across the country and many more have had the marriages they entered into abroad given legal effect at home. We are now having a referendum where every single political party is supporting a Yes vote. And if organisations such as Marriage Equality believed that a referendum was not required they should have argued this at the Constitutional Convention. They didn't and here we are.

In all of this I have to admit a personal dimension. Because of the difficulties in getting legal recognition in working in the Republic, Josep, my now husband, worked in Belfast from 2002-2005. Almost every week I had to take a call from Cavan Garda station telling me that they were holding him in the station and were putting him back on the bus to Belfast.

And when he came over from the US for my father's funeral in 2008 he was held in the airport and was only let through as my mother made a personal plea to Brian Lenihan.

The civil partnership legislation sorted this and many other problems out for people. On this point I find the most difficult points in the book those expressed by some of the proponents of marriage or nothing that GLEN was acting out of privilege and patriarchy. This was not true nor was it possible to engage anyone in a conversation about what strategy they would follow to pursue marriage if we rejected civil partnership.

We now have a referendum. I hope it gets through so much. But if it doesn't, LGBT people and everyone else who supports equality in marriage can continue to advocate for marriage knowing that civil partnership and the recent family law bill means that they are protected on an equal basis in law.

Given all of this, it's hard to read what you say in the book about the civil partnership route to marriage being a theory that you don't buy. Getting civil partnership through was not a theory to us, it was based on political circumstances at a time of enormous stress and it has meant a huge deal to me and to other people.

*Eoin*

## Appendix 5

Notes circulated by Kieran to GLEN people and the external experts we had been bringing together including the late Noel Whelan, Bride Rosney, Peter Ward, Mark Garrett and others. The last recommendation is about 'Civil Society for Yes' which was ultimately reflected in the Mark Garrett / Strategic Advisory Group memo about restructuring the Yes campaign.

### *Positioning*

Has to be in centre ground; taking and giving leadership to the vast majority of the Irish people. We must campaign on our ground ... equal citizenship ... the right to marry under our Constitution.

### *Tone*

Tone is all-important. Hopeful, happy, friendly, optimistic, generous, respectful.  
"Healing ... not bitter and divisive."  
Confident that we can win over a good majority.  
No anger or shaming; we have all agreed on this. But we did anger on TV and shaming more recently. Every time we do that, we lose votes.

### *Election Strategy*

- Consolidate/mobilise our supporters
- Win over the doubtful
- Pacify those opposed

There is no threat to your deeply held traditional or family or religious values ... the proposal is to build on such values ... amplify them.  
Link to 2016 ... proclamation of Democratic Republic based on equal citizenship.

Equal Citizenship under the Constitution & The Right to Marry & Clarity  
I think we have to be really clear about what is the net question the people of Ireland will be asked to vote on.

We have to accept and say clearly that civil partnership and the children's legislation gives most of statutory rights and responsibilities. If we try and dodge this one ... we will be exposed by journalists.

I was asked that question by Bryan Dobson on 6.01

... "Do you not already have most of rights and responsibilities?"

And was able to answer very clearly ... yes ... but what we don't have is full and equal citizenship.

Meanwhile David Quinn was floundering ... he was for equality ... but no he wasn't ... exposed by Bryan Dobson very gently probing what exactly was his position.

### *Journeys ... Narratives ... Stories*

Ireland has been on a journey:

- Decriminalisation based on equality in 1993
- Equality legislation
- Civil partnerships in 2010 ... everyone delighted with all these steps ... strengthened us as a society

### *Similar journeys for women in Ireland.*

For heterosexual couples ... to plan their families. Individuals have been on journeys ... family members who realise that brother/sister etc is gay.  
Taoiseach ... Pat Carey ... Varadkar etc etc.

### *'Unexpected Supporters'*

We need more Pat Careys ... he was such a brilliant boost.

### *Responsibilities and Commitments of Marriage*

Stress these as much as "love."

### *Children and Family Relationships Bill*

This should not be "rushed" through ... giving "No" side an opportunity to further muddy the waters ... Government is up to something tricky.

### *Title of Referendum Bill*

Should be "right to marry" ... not "marriage."

### *'Civil Society for Yes'*

This group should be set as an autonomous one ... can meet on its own (i.e. without GLEN/ICCL/ME?) so it can be agile ... nimble ... responsive.  
Get speaking slots on broadcasting media.

*Kieran  
16 February 2015*

## Appendix 6

### *Policy Statement on Access to Civil Marriage*

*Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, February 2015*

A strong policy statement from IHREC saying that opening out Civil Marriage to same-sex couples is 'a matter of human rights and equality'.

As a Commissioner I had been making the case that IHREC had to take a policy position in favour of Civil Marriage for same-sex couples. There had been some opposition and delaying tactics, so eventually I said to a plenary meeting of IHREC, 'it's a very simple question, does IHREC believe that opening out Civil Marriage to same-sex couples is a matter of human rights and equality, or not?' That seemed to resolve the matter.

I had decided beforehand that I would resign as Commissioner if IHREC did not support opening out Civil Marriage to same-sex couples. I thought it would be seriously damaging to the authority of the Commission if it didn't take a clear position in favour of human rights and equality in this very important case. I also thought I couldn't remain in a leading role in the Yes Equality campaign if I couldn't convince IHREC to support opening out Civil Marriage to same-sex couples.

The Policy Statement of IHREC was very important for the campaign for a Yes vote as it framed the issue in a Human Rights and Equality context. Some of those opposed to Civil Marriage for same-sex couples complained to the Chief Commissioner Emily Logan and the media contesting the IHREC policy but Emily dealt effectively with their objections.

IHREC is the result of a merger of what was the Irish Human Rights Commission (IHRC) and the Equality Authority. IHRC did not consider Civil Marriage for same-sex couples to be a Human Right in their 2006 policy statement 'The Rights of De Facto Couples' by Judy Walsh and Fergus Ryan. See RTE News report 'Same-Sex Recognition' 12 May 2006, reporter Will Goodbody, RTE Archives, Eoin Collins expresses disappointment that IHRC did not recommend Civil Marriage.

Katherine Zappone was a Commissioner at the time, I can never understand how Katherine Zappone thought she could convince the High Court or the Supreme Court of her right to marriage if she couldn't convince her fellow Human Rights Commissioners, and why she didn't resign from the IHRC on this key Human Rights principle.

Meanwhile in 2006 Eoin Collins was able to convince the Colley Working Group on Domestic Partnership to recommend Civil Marriage as the full equality option.

The Equality Authority supported Civil Marriage for same-sex couples since 2002 when it published its policy statement, 'Implementing Equality for Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals'. Later it strongly supported the marriage-like Civil Partnership Bill, as a stepping-stone to Civil Marriage and an immediate statutory response to same-sex couples who urgently needed legal solutions to their problems. I was on the Board of the Equality Authority in 2007 - 2014.

[www.ihrc.ie](http://www.ihrc.ie)

## Appendix 7

*'Right to Marry for All Key to Progressive Republic'  
Kieran Rose, The Irish Times, 10th April 2012*

The move to civil union for gays and lesbians is not an immense legislative leap, but an incremental step built on civil partnership law.

The right to marry is a basic human right, as set out in the UN Charter of Human Rights and other human rights treaties. In a democratic republic based on equal citizenship, civil marriage should be open to all citizens, including lesbians and gay men.

The fact that our Constitution and its provisions relating to marriage have been interpreted by the courts to exclude same-sex couples from this fundamental human right is deeply regrettable. While this constitutional barrier is in force, lesbians and gay men will not have full equality under our Constitution.

Public opinion is in favour of opening out civil marriage to same-sex couples. In a recent Government opinion poll, 73 per cent were in favour of same-sex marriage. There is an all-party consensus, with Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil voting in favour of civil marriage for all. The Equality Authority and other bodies have also called for civil marriage.

Equally, the introduction of civil partnership in April last year has had a transformative effect on social attitudes and in the status of gay people in our society. In the nine months from April 2011 to the end of the year, more than 500 couples went to their registry offices in all counties and before the registrar solemnly affirmed their love and commitment to one another.

These legal commitments are then followed by joyful celebrations where family, friends, colleagues and neighbours give their affirmation of the profound commitment the couple have just given to one another.

These new civil partnership celebrations are extraordinary in their parallel to traditional wedding celebrations. One might have thought that this new status of civil partnership and the consequent celebration rituals would

take some time to be established and widely accepted.

However, almost overnight and as if by some "hidden hand", gay couples and their families and friends have adopted the traditional wedding rituals of the hotel reception, speeches with laughter and some teary moments, children running around, dinner, dancing ... and the Fields of Athenry!

There has been an enthusiastic general welcome for these new wedding celebrations, as evidenced by the high-profile media coverage of delighted couples, including on the front pages of local newspapers throughout the country.

I suggest that the people of Ireland, in this open-hearted welcoming of civil partnerships, have spoken and are saying we are entitled to marry. The hundreds of lesbian and gay couples who have publicly celebrated their civil partnerships have brought the day of civil marriages much, much closer.

To move to marriage now is not a massive legislative leap; it is an incremental step building on the powerful civil partnership legislation. With the singular exception of parenting (where reform is urgently needed) civil partnership provides almost all of the responsibilities and rights of civil marriage.

The Colley Working Group Report on Domestic Partnership (2006) laid the foundations for progress in this area, and was the intellectual basis for the civil partnership legislation and for the Labour Party's Civil Unions Bill 2007, both closely modelled on marriage. The Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN) representative, Eoin Collins, successfully persuaded the working group that civil marriage was the ultimate solution. The Colley group report makes the powerful point that: "The introduction of civil marriage for same-sex couples would achieve equality of status with opposite-sex couples and such recognition that would underpin a wider equality for gay and lesbian people."

For example, the introduction of full constitutional equality would be another great signal and support for young people who are coming out, perhaps feeling isolated and vulnerable to bullying in school, that this State says that they are equally cherished under our Constitution.

The opening out of civil marriage to all couples would enhance our shared national values of equal citizenship and would have resonance in related areas of difference and inclusion such as ethnic origins.

I suggest that the "court of public opinion" has spoken, and that now is the time to take the next incremental step to the right to marry. In nearly all other countries that now have civil marriage, it was on the basis of civil partnership providing the "stepping stone."

The Civil Partnership Act is a great achievement for Irish society and for the Oireachtas. Despite significant opposition at times, our legislators co-operated to get this complex piece of legislation on to the statute books in record time.

In 1993 we achieved decriminalisation of gay men based on equality, followed by powerful equality legislation, civil partnership, and now progress towards civil marriage.

In a relatively short period of time, Ireland has moved from being one of the most unwelcoming countries to gay people, to being one of the most progressive globally.

The constitutional convention provides a forum to further build a solid consensus for civil marriage and to tease out all the issues. GLEN looks forward to this opportunity for further engagement so that civil marriage for lesbians and gays can be achieved as soon as possible.

*Kieran Rose is chair of GLEN, a member of the board of the Equality Authority, and of the Working Group on the Merger of the Irish Human Rights Commission and the Equality Authority.*



Kieran Rose giving Irish Labour History Society Annual Lecture 2025 on 'Trade Unions and Progress for LGBT People'

Photo: Eddie Soye



Navan Pride 2025, giving talk on 'Trade Unions and Progress for LGBT People'



Speaking having received Labour Youth Jim Kemmy Thirst for Justice Award 2025 at their Tom Johnson Summer School  
Photo: Labour Youth



Breno Raphael, Kieran Rose and Patrick McDonagh at Bród 93/23 event in Leinster House 2023  
Photo: Patrick McDonagh

## Appendix 8

Editor's Letter Brian Finnegan GCN August 2012 Issue  
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# EDITOR'S LETTER

## GAY AND LESBIAN COUPLES WHO HAVE CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS ARE THE ONES DRIVING THE ACCEPTANCE OF MARRIAGE EQUALITY HOME.

**THE FIRST WORD**

**I**n June, I was asked to play an integral part by my friends, Manny and Cathy, in their civil partnership ceremony, including doing a reading at the Unitarian Church ceremony and later, speaking at the reception. While I was doing my church reading, I had a revelation. I looked at Manny and Cathy at the top of the church, so in love and proud to celebrate their commitment to each other, and I looked at the faces of all the people in the pews, from young to old, who had gathered in loving support of their friends' union, and I suddenly realised I was at a wedding.

When civil partnerships were first legislated for in Ireland I urged people to resist calling them marriages or weddings. My fear was that with the introduction of civil partnerships, the fight for marriage equality would be sidelined. The language of marriage would be connected to civil partnerships and people would forget that the legislation does not grant full equality.

As it turns out, this has been far from the case. As civil partnerships have become normalised in Ireland, the campaign for civil marriage has intensified, with all the gay rights organisations actively involved in achieving that goal. A Red C poll found that 73% of Irish people support gay marriage, and all the political parties are bringing their policies in line with that support. In June, during Dublin Pride, Tánaiste Eamon Gilmore – the country's second most senior politician – called the fight for same-sex marriage the "civil rights issue of our generation".

In the past year, 738 pairs of lesbians and gay men have entered civil partnerships. They have stood in front of their families, their friends, their communities and their country and said to each other, 'I love you and I want to share the rest of my life with you'. Until Manny and Cathy's wedding, I didn't realise the actual power of this.

Most of the people attending a civil partnership don't differentiate between civil partnership and marriage. To them the people at the top of the room are celebrating their wedding, committing to each other in the same way as any heterosexual couple. The fact that they don't differentiate has turned out to be a good thing.

Writing in the *Irish Times* in July, UCC law lecturer Conóir O'Mahony argued that the government can legislate for same-sex marriage without holding a referendum. All eyes, however, are on the forthcoming constitutional convention, which has same-sex marriage as one of the eight issues it will discuss. The recommendation that comes from it may be for the government to hold a referendum, and if they choose to do so, then we will have to fight hard for a 'yes' vote.

If there is a referendum, saying 'yes' will be a no-brainer for those people who have been at civil partnership ceremonies. They will have already attended what they perceive to be a gay or

lesbian wedding; they will have already accepted the validity and celebrated the value of same-sex marriage.

This goes beyond the moment when the couple tie the knot before an intimate gathering of witnesses. The regional papers regularly report individual civil partnerships. Pictures of happy gay and lesbian couples make front pages in Offaly and Clare and Donegal, and the people reading those pages are learning to accept the validity and the value of same-sex marriage.

When they asked me to prepare a speech for their reception, Manny and Cathy told me to be political. They wanted to use the occasion of their wedding to give their assembled guests a message about what it means to have the right to legalise their union in this country.

In my speech, I could have said that while we fully celebrate Manny's and Cathy's civil partnership, it is still not equal marriage. But I felt that would be deeply insulting to my friends, who absolutely deserve to be celebrated as equal. Here is a snapshot of what I said:

"All weddings are a reason for celebration, a chance for us to witness the loving commitment of two people that we care about – and it's actually powerful, because throughout history this thing we call marriage has been the foundation of the family, and the family is the cornerstone of our society.

"All weddings are special and important. But I believe this wedding is a very special and important one. Because today we are all standing shoulder-to-shoulder, not only Manny and Cathy, but with their children too. We are standing shoulder-to-shoulder with their family and saying that we believe their family is special and equal, just as every other family in the world is.

"Lesbian and gay people have not always had this respect, and in many countries they still don't have respect at all. By being here you are all actually part of a historic civil rights movement.

"Today, while Manny and Cathy are the ones at the top of the church, or at the top table, everyone here is doing something very important too. I want you to know how incredibly empowering and moving it is for Manny and Cathy to have you here, because in being here with them, you are standing up and saying you believe their love for each other is wonderful and it is good."

While this issue of GCN reports on fundamental differences in the strategies of gay rights' groups to achieve marriage equality, and looks at the importance of political lobbying behind the scenes; no matter what's going on at that level, I believe that it is with the groundwork done by couples having civil partnerships that full equality will be driven home.

As Kieran Rose of GLEN says in our report: "They are heroes of this move towards civil marriage; they are pioneers in this civil rights movement."

**www.gcn.ie**

## Appendix 9

Review of *In the Name of Love* by Una Mullally  
By John Gormley, Village Magazine, December/January 2014

# JOHN GORMLEY 'In The Name of Love'



A refreshing and open evocation of the evolution of the fractious civil partnership legislation

**W**HEN excerpts from 'In the Name of Love', which was written and compiled by the journalist, Una Mullally, appeared in the *Irish Times* recently it sparked quite a bit of debate in Green Party circles. A lot of the discussion centred on why Roderic O'Gorman was not included in the long list of interviewees. Roderic was probably the person who worked hardest to ensure the introduction of civil partnership legislation. While he does receive honourable mention, the lack of a direct interview is a serious omission in what is otherwise a comprehensive and stimulating account of an important social movement.

I should declare my own interest here: I was interviewed by Una Mullally for the book and later answered a series of questions by email. I realise now that my written replies were not entirely in keeping with the spirit of the undertaking. It is, after all, an oral history, and it's the free and sometimes discursive manner of direct speech which is the real strength of this book. The interviewees talk honestly about how the movement for marriage equality evolved, providing some fascinating insights, interesting anecdotes, and claim versus counterclaim.

Refreshingly, unlike the professional historian, Mullally allows readers to draw their own conclusions. Reading the text revived memories of a fraught period in government. While we were attempting to introduce the civil partnership legislation we were also dealing with an economy in meltdown. To make matters more complicated and acrimonious, elements within the marriage equality movement decided to portray those who opted for an incremental approach as sellouts and traitors.

I don't have a clear recollection of the much-referenced meeting with the LGBT representatives in Government Buildings, but I do recall a lesbian couple visiting my clinic and accusing me of enshrining discrimination in legislation. And how did I react to these accusations? Well, according to Gráinne Healy of Marriage Equality there may have been a 'touch' of resentment on my part. Believe me, it was more than a touch. I was livid. They were so successful in discrediting the legislation that David Norris was going to vote against it. He only changed his mind when Senator Rónán Mullen tried every means possible to filibuster and block it.

The book is revealing in so many ways. Dermot Ahern, the former Minister for Justice, features extensively. He rejects his categorisation as socially conservative. His Fianna Fáil colleague and opponent of the legislation, John Hanafin, is adamant that the Bill would not have happened without a major push from the Greens in coalition.

The book also shows the extent of the distrust and hostility between the fundamentalists and pragmatists in the LGBT community. Kieran Rose of GLEN concedes that Marriage Equality and Noise won the 'communications battle', and indeed I remember the rather muted 'victory' celebration in the POD nightclub. In a separate chapter, devoted to the organisation Noise, Annie Hanlon explains how it was formed by members of the Labour Party LGBT group when their private members bill was defeated.

To complete the social history the book looks forward to the forthcoming referendum.

Churchill once commented that history would be kind to him because he intended to write it. Those with power and influence control the historic narrative, and whereas for generations the LGBT movement was marginalised and suffered real discrimination, it now enjoys overwhelming support in the newspapers and broadcast media.

The tables have turned quite dramatically in a relatively short space of time: our Taoiseach makes an appearance in the Panbar, elected representatives from the mainstream parties are coming out, and commentators who question gay marriage have become pariahs. Breda O'Brien, a sincere critic of marriage equality, felt her personal safety was at risk at the time of Pantigate. She expresses the hope that "the oppressed do not become oppressors" now that the liberal revolution is almost complete.

With the winds blowing so strongly in the right direction, and with every political party supporting the proposition, it would appear that victory in the referendum for marriage equality is assured. But such an assumption would be a mistake. The electorate is in an unforgiving mood right now. If the political establishment tells them to vote a certain way, they might just take a notion to do the exact opposite. The bookies might tell you otherwise, but this pragmatist says it's not a certainty. \*

**IN THE NAME OF LOVE**  
The Movement for Marriage Equality in Ireland  
Una Mullally  
Irish History Press  
€16.99

34 December-January 2014

# Appendix 10

## 'Field Dispatches: Winning Civil Partnership in Ireland - Q&A with the Gay & Lesbian Equality Network'

Atlantic Philanthropies interview with Eoin Collins and Kieran Rose, September 2010

In early July of this year, both houses of the Irish Parliament passed a landmark Civil Partnerships law, guaranteeing new rights to same-sex couples. The bill – “one of the most important pieces of civil rights legislation in 90 years” – was signed into law 18 July 2010. For the Gay & Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN), the victory is the culmination of years of hard work. The Atlantic Philanthropies spoke with Kieran Rose, Chair, and Eoin Collins, Director of Policy Change in GLEN, and asked him what the victory means for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual (LGBT) community, and what lessons gay rights advocates around the world can take from it.

### AP: What does the victory mean for the LGBT community in Ireland?

GLEN: Civil partnership is of major practical and symbolic value to LGB people. It extends most of the rights and obligations of civil marriage to same-sex couples. It provides for legal recognition in many areas not covered in state level marriage in the U.S. such as recognition on a par to married couples in immigration, social security and national taxation. Civil Partnership also involves the same public registration process as civil marriage.

Civil partnership has been enacted with the support of all political parties in the Oireachtas (Irish Parliament). Recognition of children/same-sex parenting is a major gap in the legislation, but there was agreement from all parties in the debates on civil partnership that this can be addressed through further change in family law.

### AP: Does this law accomplish your goals fully, or does GLEN plan to advocate for marriage rights beyond civil partnerships?

GLEN: GLEN has always sought civil marriage and we have welcomed civil partnership, which is closely based on marriage, as a radical step toward that goal. The critical challenge to achieving marriage is the consensus that now exists across all political parties that opening out civil marriage to same-sex couples will require a referendum to change the Irish Constitution.

The legal case taken by Katherine Zappone and Ann Louise Gilligan to have their Canadian marriage recognised in Ireland did not succeed in the High Court, following a detailed judgement in 2006. An appeal has been lodged with the Supreme Court with the hearing hopefully to be held by the end of the year, although no specific date has been set as yet.

A critical immediate goal of GLEN is for legal recognition of same-sex families. Important policy opportunities for advancing such recognition now exist. At an institutional level, this includes the work of the Law Reform Commission on the legal aspects of family relationships. Considerable political support was also expressed in the debates on civil partnership by politicians across political parties for further progress to address gaps in legal recognition of children being parented by same-sex couples.

### AP: Describe the campaign: how long has GLEN been working for civil partnerships and what role did it play in the victory?

GLEN: From 2005, GLEN based its campaign for marriage and equality-based family law reform on intensive engagement with Government, politicians across all parties, state agencies and the wider Irish public. Critical milestones included:

- The launch of GLEN's strategic plan by the Irish Prime Minister in 2006 where he set out the Government's commitment to equality and legislative reform.
- GLEN's engagement with three successive Ministers for Justice and politicians across all parties to put legal recognition on the political agenda. Every political party committed to legal recognition of same-sex couples in the 2007 general election, which gave a mandate for legislative change.
- Appointment of GLEN by the Government to its 'Colley' Working Group, which put forward just two equality-based options for legal reform. These were marriage, and if not marriage (due to Constitutional issues), then full civil partnership giving the same legal protections and recognition as marriage but without the Constitutional recognition given to marriage.
- Intensive and successful engagement with Minister for Justice, all politicians in the Oireachtas (Irish Parliament) and the wider public to ensure that at least full civil partnership based on marriage was enacted as opposed to earlier proposals (which

continued to be supported by those opposed to change for same-sex couples) for a civil partnership model based on informal cohabitation with no conjugal status for same sex couples and limited protections.

### AP: In 2006 GLEN adopted an aggressive, multi-faceted strategy "Building Sustainable Change," to win systemic long-term change in Ireland. How does this victory on civil partnership impact on the rest of its agenda and public perception of LGBT issues?

GLEN: In the debate on the Civil Partnership Bill in the Seanad, the Minister for Justice and Law Reform Dermot Ahern stated that "The level of support for the Bill shows that securing the civil rights of gay people is a mainstream goal and that ignorance and homophobia which gay people and their families – fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters – lived with in the past has no place in modern Ireland."

In placing progress for LGB people in the mainstream, civil partnership has contributed to major progress in other areas of GLEN's strategy for equality. This includes:

- Education: GLEN has worked with the Government Department of Education and Science on its first major policy dealing with sexual orientation at second level, a policy supported by all education partners, including Catholic school management bodies.
- Employment: There has been a significant demand from employers for support on workplace equality – which has included information on civil partnership that establishes a range of workplace provisions including equal treatment for married couples in taxation, pensions, immigration and workplace benefits.
- Health and Well-being: Major policy developments with health professionals and providers in making health services accessible and appropriate to the needs of LGBT people.

### AP: What lessons can civil partnership and same-sex marriage advocates in other parts of the world take from this victory? What campaigning tactics and strategies were most effective?

GLEN:

- A Key Starting Point: GLEN was confident and optimistic that we could win the support of the vast majority of Irish people.
- Engagement: Calm, consistent and professional

engagement with Government, legislators and the wider public. (Having significant resources from The Atlantic Philanthropies and other sources was critical to the professionalism of GLEN events and publications)

- Listening: Focused on winning people over by listening to their concerns and responding to them respectfully but on a principled basis, yet still highlighted equality as our goal.
- Hearts and Minds: GLEN appealed to people's hearts, values and aspirations as well as their minds in building support.
- Political Strategy: Appealed to the best in the traditions of each political party and in wider Irish society. For example, opposition of 30 Fianna Fáil TD's and Senators to CP whittled down to three by appealing to the Republican and secular traditions of Fianna Fáil.
- Avoided "Cultural War": Did not present campaign for marriage as a cultural war with winners or losers but rather as progress in which everyone can take pride.

An overriding lesson for further progress is that how you win is as important as what you win. This is particularly important for laying the ground and motivation for further progress. Especially important in this respect was that:

- All political parties saw civil partnership as a major achievement in which all have played a role.
- Irish people have seen civil partnership as an achievement. This was evident to the very positive reaction of the public to GLEN winning a People of the Year Award, the nearest thing Ireland has to an honours system. Speaking at the televised awards ceremony, the Minister for Justice and Law Reform said "In the Civil Partnership Bill, I think they [GLEN] approached it really amazingly well in that they targeted everybody; they didn't just target the people who were on their side."
- Civil partnership was also achieved despite the opposition of the Catholic Church and lay religious organisations. However, the legislation was not presented as a defeat for anyone, but as an achievement for all of society and for Irish democracy.

# Appendix 11

## Further Reading

Most of these documents are available on [www.kieranrose.ie](http://www.kieranrose.ie), [www.eoin-collins.ie](http://www.eoin-collins.ie) or [atlanticphilanthropies.org](http://atlanticphilanthropies.org)

'Civil Partnership and Ireland, How a Minority Achieved a Majority, A Case Study of the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network', Center for Evaluation Innovation in New York for Atlantic Philanthropies, 2012

'The Path to Marriage Equality in Ireland, A Case Study', Susan Parker for Atlantic Philanthropies, 2017

'GLEN and the Remarkable Journey to Marriage' Brian Sheehan and Kieran Rose, article in 'Crossing the Threshold, The Story of the Marriage Equality Movement' edited by Gráinne Healy, 2017.

Séamus Dooley 'Looking Back With Pride' ICTU blog May 28th 2025 [www.ictu.ie](http://www.ictu.ie)  
Very useful summary of the role of the trade union movement including Trade Unionists for Civil Marriage Equality

SIPTU short video to mark 10th anniversary of Marriage Referendum, see [www.kieranrose.ie](http://www.kieranrose.ie)

GLEN, 'Progress Report 2010 - 2012'  
Includes a timeline on Civil Partnership and Civil Marriage 2005 - 2012 with photographs.

'Ireland Says Yes, The inside story on how the vote for marriage equality was won', Noel Whelan, Gráinne Healy and Brian Sheehan, 2016.

The Colley Report 2006, Options Paper prepared by the Working Group on Domestic Partnership chaired by Anne Colley presented to the Minister for Justice and Equality Michael McDowell.

'In the Name of Love', The Movement for Marriage Equality in Ireland, An Oral History', Una Mullally, 2014.  
Good documentation of the strong differences in strategy between those like GLEN who saw Civil Partnership as a necessary step towards a successful Referendum on Civil

Marriage and those like Marriage Equality who wanted to reject and undermine Civil Partnerships.

Transcript of Una Mullally's interview with Eoin Collins for her book 'In the Name of Love' see above. Crucial document to understand the history of the achievement of Civil Partnerships and Civil Marriage, see [www.eoin-collins.ie](http://www.eoin-collins.ie)

John Gormley former leader of the Green Party review of 'In the Name of Love' by Una Mullally in Village magazine December/January 2014, see Appendix 9

GLEN Submission to the Constitutional Convention March 2013, drafted by Eoin Collins

'The Remarkable Journey Towards Equality and Civil Marriage for Lesbian and Gay People'  
My presentation to a Conference organised by the Centre for Criminal Justice and Human Rights UCC March 2014

'The Road to Civil Marriage'  
Kieran Rose presentation to the Immigrant Council of Ireland September 2012

Editor's Letter, Brian Finnegan in GCN August 2012 Issue 272  
'Gay and Lesbian couples who have Civil Partnerships are the ones driving the acceptance of marriage equality home', see Appendix 8

Eoin Collins response to criticisms of GLEN's strategy on Civil Partnership and Civil Marriage, April 2015, see Appendix 4 [www.eoin-collins.ie](http://www.eoin-collins.ie)

'Same-Sex Recognition' RTE News report broadcast on 12 May 2006 on the launch of Irish Human Rights Commission (IHRC) report 'The Rights of De Facto Couples'. Reporter Will Goodbody.  
Eoin Collins expresses disappointment that IHRC does not recommend Civil Marriage.

'Why Marriage Matters: A Statement of the Irish Bishops Conference on the Civil Partnership Bill' 2010

'Bishops weigh up [Constitutional] action on Civil Partnership Bill' Patsy McGarry Irish Times 11th March 2010

'Ministers dismiss bishops claims on Civil Partnership'

Carol Coulter Irish Times 18th June 2010.  
Government Ministers dismiss claims by the Catholic Bishops that the Civil Partnership Bill was unconstitutional because it was too close to Civil Marriage.

Eoin Collins (1963 - 2022) 'Rights Activist and Key Strategist of Same-Sex Marriage in Ireland'  
Obituary in Irish Times 26th February 2022.

'GLEN Evaluation of the Building Sustainable Change Programme', Joan Hart PA Consulting Group, 2010.  
Contains an assessment of the GLEN campaign for Civil Partnership and Civil Marriage.

'Referendum Strategy', Kieran Rose, February 2015  
Two page strategy document I wrote in February 2015 and circulated to GLEN and others including Bride Rosney, Mark Garrett, Peter Ward.

'Building on the Success of Civil Partnerships/Civil Unions', GLEN briefing for the Labour Party Oireachtas members July 2012, part of the GLEN campaign to build on the popularity of Civil Partnerships and move to Civil Marriage. We gave similar briefings to Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael in Leinster House.

'Right to Marry for All Key to Progressive Republic', Kieran Rose op-ed Irish Times 10th April 2012

'Proposed Civil Partnership is a great achievement', op-ed by Eoin Collins in the Irish Times 26th June 2008 welcoming with some reservations the publication of the Civil Partnership Heads of Bill.

'Creating a climate where everyone enjoys equality', op-ed by Eoin Collins in the Irish Times 29th June 2009 welcoming with some reservations the publication of the Civil Partnership Bill.

'GLEN Campaign for Legal Recognition of Same-Sex Relationships and Families: A Chronology of Key Events', 2010

'Immigration and Same-Sex Couples: Current Provision', GLEN December 2010  
Shows the huge progress for same-sex couples in immigration rights after the Civil Partnership Act.

'Civil Partnership, Your Questions Answered - A

Comprehensive Analysis of the Civil Partnership Bill', GLEN and Dr Fergus Ryan, 2009  
GLEN held a number of information meetings around the country explaining what was in the Civil Partnership Bill.

'Civil Partnership: An Overview', GLEN and Dr Fergus Ryan, 2009

'Dáil Debates on Civil Partnership', GLEN June 2010

'Seanad Debates on Civil Partnership', GLEN July 2010

Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabits Act 2010  
124 pages, amending 130 other Acts

'Know Your Rights, The Rights and Obligations of Civil Partners and Other Same-Sex Couples', ICCL and GLEN, 2012.

Shows the similarity of the statutory rights of marriage and civil partnerships.

'Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabits Act 2010', Dr Fergus Ryan, 2011  
Outlines the similarity in rights and obligations under Civil Partnership and Civil Marriage such as Registration of a Civil Partnership, 'In many respects it is identical to the formalities set out for the celebration of a civil marriage' p13.

'The Reminiscences of Eoin Collins'  
Oral history interview with Eoin Collins by George Garvilis for the Atlantic Philanthropies Oral History Project, Columbia Center for Oral History, Columbia University, 2015

'The Reminiscences of Kieran Rose'  
As above

'The Reminiscences of Brian Sheehan'  
As above

'Equality in Ireland: A 20/20 Vision', presentation by Eoin Collins to Equality Authority Conference October 2010

'High Ambitions: Benchmarking Ourselves Against the Best', presentation by Eoin Collins to conference on 'The Legal Status of Cohabits and Same-sex Couples' conference co-organised by GLEN, Equality Authority and the Working Group on Domestic Partnership, May 2006

'We were always building not knocking: Eoin Collins, A summary of his work', Kieran Rose 2023 [www.eoin-collins.ie](http://www.eoin-collins.ie)

'Gay campaigners deserve huge praise as we step into the future' Noel Whelan Irish Times 10th July 2010 on passing of the Civil Partnership Bill  
'... Constitutional change will one day follow' see also [www.atlanticphilanthropies.org](http://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org)

See other articles by Noel Whelan in the Irish Times on Civil Partnership and Civil Marriage including on Senator Jim Walsh delaying tactics to stop Civil Partnership and, 'Time may have arrived for a referendum on same-sex marriage' Irish Times 14th April 2013.

'Same-Sex partnership "one of the biggest changes in 90 years" Fionnan Sheahan Irish Independent July 2nd 2010  
'The Bill passed all stages in the Dáil shortly after 8.40pm ... there was applause from the public gallery'  
See [www.atlanticphilanthropies.org](http://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org)

'Seanad passes Partnership Bill' Harry McGee Irish Times July 8th 2010  
Interesting account of the many wrecking amendments introduced by opponents of the Bill and their attempted filibuster. The Bill passed by 48 votes to 4. See [www.atlanticphilanthropies.org](http://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org)

'Partnership is a civil institution - not a religious one' Angela Kerins chairperson Equality Authority op-ed Irish Times 30th June 2010 see [www.atlanticphilanthropies.org](http://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org)

'Jolly John's Pride and Joy' Irish Independent 27th June 2009  
'John Gormley was the very picture of contentment as he arrived at the offices of GLEN'  
GLEN and Green Party press conference in GLEN offices in Fumbally Court Dublin 8 welcoming publication of the Civil Partnership Bill

'Dublin Pride celebration soured by anger over Civil Partnership Bill' Irish Times 29th June 2009 see also [www.atlanticphilanthropies.org](http://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org)  
The Civil Partnership Bill was torn up on the Pride stage. An incredible insult to the many vulnerable same-sex couples who urgently needed legal solutions their

problems.

'Victory for Equality' Kieran Rose Irish Examiner 1st May 2012 see also [www.atlanticphilanthropies.org](http://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org)

'Fianna Fáil Senator [Jim Walsh] leads campaign against Civil Partnership Bill' Irish Independent 27th June 2008  
30 Fianna Fáil TDs and Senators signed the motion to the Parliamentary Party opposing Civil Partnership. In 2010 only 3 FF Senators voted against Civil Partnership.

Dan Boyle 'Without Power or Glory, The Greens in Government 2007 - 2011' (2012)  
Includes an account of the Civil service Bill, Dan was one of the Green Party representatives who negotiated the Programme for Government.

National Library of Ireland, Kieran Rose Archives, Boxes 6 and 7 Civil Partnership and Civil Marriage

'A Day in May, Real Lives, True Stories', Charlie Bird, with a Foreword by Colm Tóibín, 2016

'Anatomy of a Campaign', article by Christopher Robson in 'Lesbian and Gay Visions of Ireland, Towards the Twenty-first Century' edited by Eoin Collins and Íde O'Carroll (1995). An analysis of the successful GLEN campaign strategy for gay law reform on the basis of equality, broad Equality legislation, and inclusion of sexual orientation in the Unfair Dismissals Act. This campaign strategy replicated in later GLEN campaigns such as Civil Partnership and Civil Marriage.

Christopher Robson (1941 - 2013) Dictionary of Irish Biography [www.dib.ie](http://www.dib.ie)

'Diverse Communities, The Evolution of Lesbian and Gay Politics in Ireland', Kieran Rose, 1994

'Sexual identities, national identities: the politics of gay law reform in the Republic of Ireland', Richard Dunphy, Contemporary Politics Vol 3, 1997. A critical analysis of the GLEN campaign strategy for gay law reform and equality legislation.

'Divorce and Breakdown' in 'Snakes and Ladders' by Fergus Finlay 1998. An analysis of the 1995 Divorce Referendum campaign.

Bride Rosney (1949 - 2023)

'Brilliant Strategist who Shaped Mary Robinson's Presidential Election Campaign'  
Obituary in Irish Times 30th September 2023

Noel Whelan (1968 - 2019)  
'Political Campaigner, Barrister, Newspaper Columnist, and Pundit'.  
Obituary in the Irish Times 11th July 2019

'Equality Now for Lesbians and Gay Men', ICCL, 1990, included a call for domestic partnership legislation as well as Equality legislation and gay law reform on the basis of equality, [www.iccl.ie](http://www.iccl.ie)

'Our Demands', GCN November 1989, an article setting out the GLEN programme including legal recognition and protection for same-sex couples and their children. See [www.archive.gcn.ie](http://www.archive.gcn.ie)

'Gay and Lesbian Equality Network, Phase Two 1994 - 2005, A Personal History', Kieran Rose, 2024.  
Includes a chapter on 'Civil Marriage/Civil Partnership/ Legal Recognition of Same-Sex Couples'.

'Trade Unions and Progress for LGBT People: A Personal History', Kieran Rose, 2024.  
The trade union movement has played a crucial role in progress for LGBT people going back to 1982 including the achievement of Civil Partnerships and Civil Marriage.

'Remarkable Journey, A Resource List on Criminalisation and the Campaign for Gay Law Reform and Equality' April 2023 Kieran Rose LGBT Restorative Justice Campaign [www.lgbtdisregard.ie](http://www.lgbtdisregard.ie)

'Dáil and Seanad Debates: Decriminalisation of Homosexuality' GLEN June 2013

'Road to Repeal: 50 years of Struggle in Ireland for Contraception and Abortion', Editors Therese Caherty Pauline Conroy Derek Speirs, 2022

Catherine Rose 'The Female Experience: The Story of the Women's Movement in Ireland', 1975, Arlen House

Yes for marriage, yes for business, yes for Ireland, An Taoiseach Enda Kenny TD' [www.siliconrepublic.com](http://www.siliconrepublic.com) 16th April 2015

## Footnotes

1. The three founding groups of Yes Equality were ICCL, Marriage Equality and GLEN.

2. See Appendix 5.

3. See transcript of Una Mullally interview with Eoin Collins for her 2014 book *In the Name of Love* [www.eoin-collins.ie](http://www.eoin-collins.ie).

4. See Eoin Collins response to criticisms of GLEN's strategy on Civil Partnership and Civil Marriage in Appendix 4.

5. The Reminiscences of Eoin Collins, Interview with George Garvilis for Atlantic Philanthropies Oral History Project, Columbia Center for Oral History, Columbia University, p2-70. See [www.eoin-collins.ie](http://www.eoin-collins.ie).

6. Una Mullally *In the Name of Love* 2014, p208. See also GCN editorial by Brian Finnegan August 2012 Issue 272 in Appendix 8.

7. See GLEN Briefing to the Labour Parliamentary Party: Building on the Success of Civil Partnerships/Civil Unions July 2012 [www.eoin-collins.ie](http://www.eoin-collins.ie).

8. Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act 2010, Dr Fergus Ryan, 2011, p14. See also Know Your Rights, The Rights and Obligations of Civil Partners and Other Same-Sex Couples, GLEN and ICCL, 2012.

9. See transcript of Una Mullally's interview with Eoin Collins p10.

10. See GLEN Briefing for the Labour Party July 2012.

11. See Appendix 6 Further Reading.

12. See Séamus Dooley "Looking Back With Pride," ICTU blog May 28th 2025 [www.ictu.ie](http://www.ictu.ie) and Kieran Rose Trade Unions and Progress for LGBT People, A Personal History May 2024.

13. Road to Repeal: 50 Years of Struggle in Ireland for Contraception and Abortion editors Therese Caherty, Pauline Conroy, Derek Speirs, p112.

14. See for example "Partnership is a civil entity - not a religious one" Angela Kerins Chairperson Equality Authority op-ed Irish Times 30th June 2010.



The Cork Gay Collective more or less disbanded to throw itself wholeheartedly into the Anti-Amendment Campaign in 1982/83.



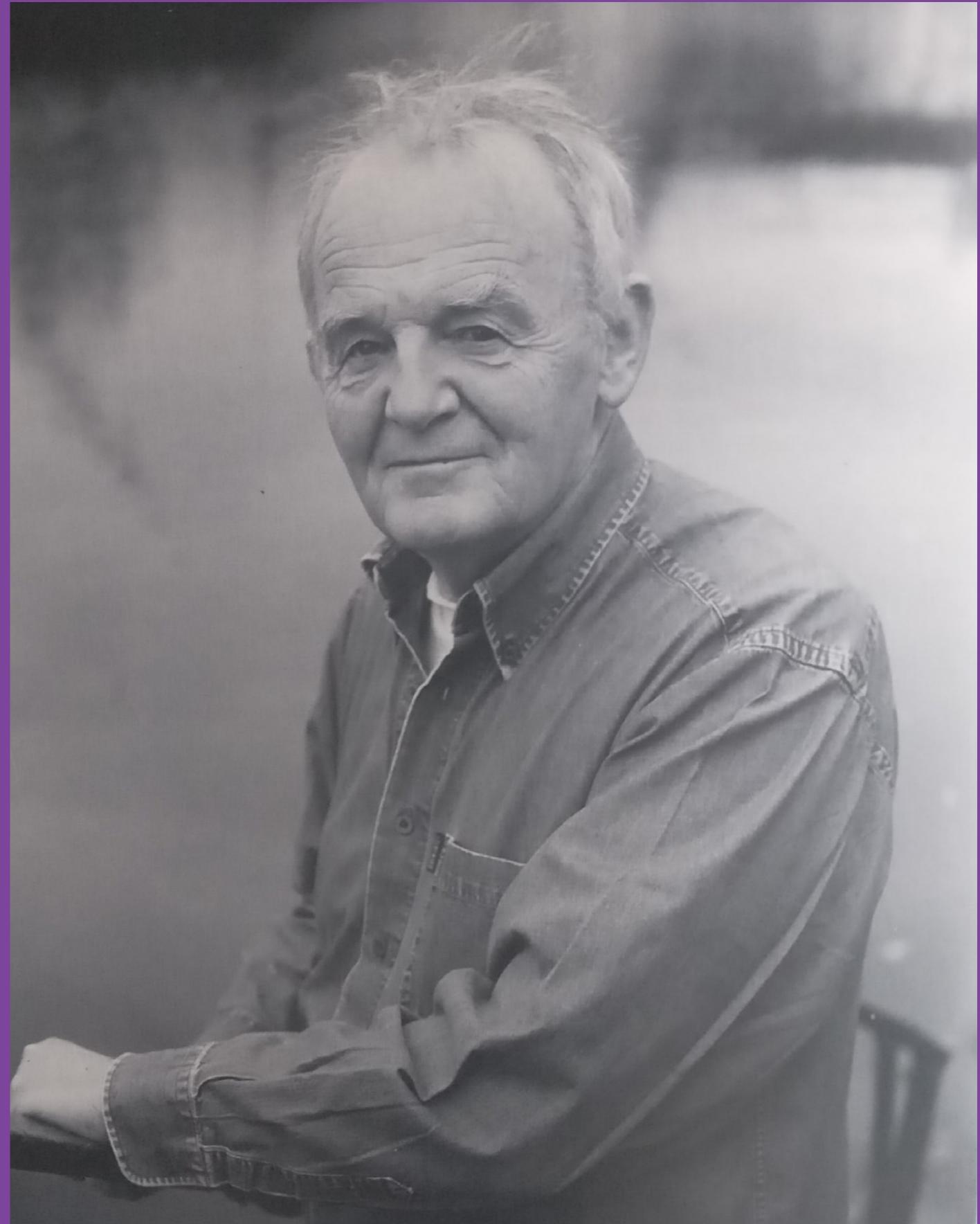
From left to right, Kieran Rose with former Minister for Justice Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, Seanad Cathaoirlach Jerry Buttmer, Senator David Norris and former co-chair of GLEN Suzy Byrne. December 2023. Houses of Oireachtas hosted a special event Bród 93/23 to commemorate and celebrate the 30th anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexuality.

Photo: Oireachtas



On stage with Maire Geoghegan Quinn, Senator David Norris, Suzy Byrne and Senator Jerry Buttmer Cathaoirleach of the Seanad at Bród 93/23, Leinster House, 2023

Photo: Oireachtas



In the late 1970s Arthur Leahy was one of the first people in the country to speak on television about being gay. He is a founder of the Cork Gay Community Project and has had a long-term involvement in Cork's Quay Co-operative initiative. He is also a member of the Board of GLEN.

Photo: John Minihan



## Trade Unions and Progress for LGBT People: A Personal History

by Kieran Rose

May 2024



## Gay and Lesbian Equality Network Phase Two 1994 - 2005 A Personal History

by Kieran Rose

June 2024

Trade Unions and Progress for LGBT People, 2024

Gay and Lesbian Equality Network: Phase Two, 2024

**“A campaign that should be won  
but could very easily be lost.”**