



Dáil Debates on Disregard Bill 2025 and 2026

LGBT Restorative Justice Campaign

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Contents

1 - Introduction - Kieran Rose	4
2 - Debate on Introduction, 1 July 2025	12
3 - Second Stage Debates, 16 April 2026	16
4 - Timeline	44
5 - Disregard Bill - Explanatory Memorandum	50
6 - <i>Ireland's anti-gay laws have left a long and dark legacy</i> - Irish Times, 2 March 2026, Brian Sheehan	54
7 - <i>Justice is in sight for men convicted under anti-gay laws</i> - GCN, April 2026, Karl Hayden	58
8 - Resources	62

1

Introduction

We have gathered these Dáil debates together to mark and celebrate the very fine and thoughtful contributions by all the speakers on the Private Members Disregard Bill. The debates are a major milestone in the journey to achieve Disregard Legislation to exonerate gay men and juveniles convicted for consensual intimate behaviour before gay law reform.

The anti-gay laws were repealed in 1993 after a winning European Court of Human Rights case and a comprehensive campaign by LGBT+ activists and allies such as the women's movement and the labour movement. Those Victorian-era laws are now rightly considered as one of the most egregious human rights violations by the State and for which the State apologised on the 25th anniversary of the repeal of the laws. Redress campaigns have continued since then to exonerate the men convicted under the anti-gay laws and for a restorative justice approach to the recognised broader harms done to LGBT+ communities. The anti-gay laws were originally imposed by the British State so in that sense Disregard Legislation is part of the process of decolonisation.

The debates were wide-ranging and included references to other human rights violations such as Magdalen Laundries, forced adoption, Industrial Schools and incarceration in psychiatric hospitals.

The contributions dealt with key aspects of the history of the oppression of LGBT+ people in Ireland including the murder of Declan Flynn, the Garda witchhunt of gay men following the murder of Charles Self, the Tullow prosecutions, the HIV/AIDS crisis, forced emigration and other issues.

Contributions also highlighted current challenges for LGBT+ people such as

the new increase in homophobia and transphobia. LGBT people in other countries are facing increasing oppression and hopefully Ireland enacting Disregard Legislation will boost their spirits.

The Private Members Disregard Bill co-sponsored by Aengus Ó'Snodaigh TD and other Deputies is based on the 2023 draft Disregard Bill prepared pro bono by Barristers Céile Varley and Cillian Bracken in association with Clifford Chance, A&L Goodbody, Gay Project Cork and the LGBT Restorative Justice Campaign. The 2023 Bill incorporates the human rights and equality framework of the Final Report of the Working Group on Disregard Legislation. It carries on from the pro bono research by Clifford Chance of Disregard Legislation in Spain, Germany, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the UK.

Criminalisation of male same-sex desire was one of the worst human rights violations by the Irish State and it had wide-ranging damaging effects beyond the prosecutions, convictions, and imprisonments. At the height of the HIV/AIDS crisis in the 1980s, Gay Health Action was refused funding by the Department of Health to carry out safer-sex education campaigns because State funding for safer-sex education would be contrary to 'public policy'. This undoubtedly put the lives of gay men at greater risk.

There was a class-based inequality in the enforcement of the anti-gay laws. 'The vast majority of those arrested ... were either poor or working class', according to Dr Averill Earls in her 2025 study.

The 'homosexual panic' defence was allowed to be used in our Courts to minimise the guilt of the killers of gay men and effectively blaming gay men for being

killed. One of the most chilling examples was the trial in 1983 of the killer of John Roche, a 26 year old Cork hotel porter. "Accused 'had to kill' hotel porter" was the headline in the Cork Examiner 10th May 1983. According to the Irish Times report of 15th June 1983, the Barrister for the defence said, 'the accused man was not really killing John Roche. "His real intention was to rid himself of the shame and degradation he had got involved in ... "'

Our most august institutions such as the Courts and the Universities betrayed their principles and gave into homophobia. According to Ruadhán Mac Cormaic in his book 'The Supreme Court', the Chief Justice Tom O'Higgins majority judgement in the David Norris case upholding the constitutionality of the anti-gay laws, 'has a strong claim to be one of the worst the Supreme Court has produced'. The judgement of the Chief Justice, 'was poorly reasoned, virtually devoid of human empathy and, more to the point, law'.

Tom Cooney chair of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL) writing in their great 1990 book 'Equality Now for Lesbians and Gay Men', described the dissenting judgements of Justice Séamus Henchy and Justice Niall Mc Carthy as 'standing out like beacons on a dark night'.

All the Universities with the exception of TCD refused to recognise gay societies denying them funding and the ability to book College meeting rooms. The various Student Unions were strongly supportive of the gay societies, for example booking College rooms for them, and supporting the campaign for gay law reform and wider equality.

Deputy Aengus Ó'Snodaigh highlighted the need for historical research and 'to look

at funding a piece of research to see the level of persecution in the State and the effects it had on people'. Such historical research into criminalisation would be a way of remembering and commemorating the victims of the anti-gay laws (see recommendations 77 and 86 of the Working Group report). It would be a great contribution to our LGBT history and the wider history of Ireland. It would also be important internationally in documenting how LGBT people fared in one postcolonial country.

There was a very positive sense in the Dáil with both Opposition speakers and the Minister for Justice Jim O'Callaghan TD agreeing on the need for early introduction of Disregard Legislation. The Minister thanked Aengus Ó'Snodaigh TD and other Deputies for bringing forward the Private Members Bill, indicating that he would introduce his Disregard Legislation in May. Tributes were also paid to the campaigners, lawyers and others for their work on Disregard Legislation.

As Deputy Ó'Snodaigh said in his wrap-up speech:

"I wish it was this good all the time."

- Kieran Rose

Member of the Working Group on Disregard Legislation 2021 - 2023

THE IRISH TIMES

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DUBLIN, FRIDAY, JUNE 25, 1993

No. 43,634 CITY

Minister eases penalties on provisions concerning prostitution

No vote as Sexual Offences Bill passes all stages

By Geraldine Kennedy, Political Correspondent

THE Dáil passed the committee and all remaining stages of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill, 1993, designed to lift the 135-year-old prohibition on homosexual acts, without a debate or vote yesterday.

The word "homosexuality" was only mentioned once in the course of the two-hour debate, which concentrated exclusively on the prostitution provisions in the Bill.

The Minister for Justice, Mrs Geoghegan-Quinn, proposed two amendments easing the penalties for soliciting, importuning or loitering for the purposes of prostitution. She proposed that the penalties would be £250 for a first conviction, and £500 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding four weeks — or both — for a third or subsequent conviction, instead of the Bill's original penalty of £1,000 and/or three months' imprisonment.

Three members of Fine Gael's liberal wing engaged in a filibuster on the committee stage of the Bill, thereby ensuring that their own parliamentary party's amendment, proposing to raise the age of consent from 17 to 18, could not be moved. They also called for a vote on a minor amendment to ban the advertising of brothels which the proposer, Mr Michael McDowell and Ms Mary Hanery of the Progressive Democrats, were willing to

speakwoman on labour affairs, intervened in the filibuster to say that while many deputies would have views on "the homosexual issue", she continued to bring "an opinion" on the prostitution question. Ms Flaherty, together with Mr Alan Shatter, Fine Gael spokesman on justice, and Ms Niamh O'Connell, deputy party leader, kept the debate on the PD amendment going for some 20 minutes before calling a vote on it, in order to ensure that their party's amendment on the age of consent could not be reached.

The Independent TD for Wicklow, Mr Johnny Fox, was the only deputy to call for a vote when the final stages of the Bill were put to the House. But, since no one supported him, the Bill passed all stages without a vote.

Senator David Norris, who has campaigned for nearly 20 years to decriminalise homosexual acts — taking case to the High Court, Supreme Court and the European Court of Human Rights — sat in the Distinguished Visitors' Gallery for the final stages of the debate. Members of the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network quietly applauded when the Ceann Comhairle, Mr Seán Treacy, announced that the Bill had passed all stages.

The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill, 1993, repeals the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act, 1861 and the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1885 forbidding homosexual acts, and sets the age of 17 for sexual activity between consenting adults.

"For the first time, I feel I am a full citizen of my own country," Mr Norris said as he was leaving the Dáil chamber yesterday evening. "I also believe that there won't be a lot of young people living in the shadow of the criminal



A bigger splash: Mr Kieran Ruse (left) and Mr Chris Robson, co-chairmen of the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN), with Mr Phil Moore of Parents Enquiry, and Ms Sazzy Byrne, co-chairwoman of GLEN, celebrating the passing by the Dáil of the Bill decriminalizing homosexual acts outside Leinster House yesterday. Photograph: Alan Betton.

Renewed criticism of Major as Mates 'falls on his sword'

From Frank Miller, London Editor, and Rachel Borvill

THE Conservative Party yesterday sighed in collective relief as the Northern Ireland Minister, Mr Michael Mates, "fell on his sword" and resigned amid mounting controversy over his role in the Asif Nadir affair. The relief was expressed by renewed criticism of the British Prime Minister, Mr John Major, as he reluctantly parted with his third minister since last year's general election.

Mr Mates's hopes were briefly revived mid-morning, when Downing Street officials indicated the prime minister's continuing support for his beleaguered minister. But following the *Daily Mail's* disclosure of a letter written by Mr Mates to the Attorney General on behalf of the fugitive tycoon, his case was already lost.

Party whips assessed the mood of backbench MPs in an emer-



Mr Michael Mates: Resigning amid Nadir controversy

One hour after that, Mr Major silenced the House of Commons and brought the swirling speculation to an end. Mr Major told

senior politicians and commentators believed those reports, which have not been denied by Mr Mates, rendered impossible his position as a minister himself with security responsibilities.

The tone of Mr Mates's resignation letter seems to preclude an "explosive" resignation speech by him in the Commons next week, but Mr Major has no assurance that the Asif Nadir affair will subside. Mr Mates has raised important questions about the conduct of the Nadir investigation by the authorities, and fresh controversy is guaranteed by suggestions that some of his representations have been based on "misinformation".

Scotland Yard said last night that a letter written by Mr Mates to the Attorney General, complaining about the behaviour of two police officers was based on misinformation. The letter claimed two Metropolitan police officers had made extensive inquiries in northern Cyprus about Mr Nadir and his assets. Scotland Yard confirmed their visit but

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IRA kills former member of UDR

From Martin Cowley, in Belfast

IRA GUNMEN killed a former member of the Ulster Defence Regiment outside his home in Linn Grove near the estates of Lurgan, Co Antrim, yesterday afternoon. The victim, named locally as Mr John Lyons, who was married and understood to be in his late fifties, had just got out of his car when two attackers ran from an entry and fired a number of shots at him.

Although he managed to draw his personal protection weapon, it appears he did not have time to return fire and he died at the scene. Neighbourhood said they heard four or five shots. The killers, dressed in cycle shorts, yellow shirts and peaked caps, are believed to have escaped through Lurgan Park on bicycles, the RUC said.

Around the time of the killing, a security operation was nearing completion on the Donagh-Tyone border to retrieve the body of a second murder victim. He was

INSIDE

BUSINESS THIS WEEK

- Smurfit hints at lower profits
- Irish Permanent completes £70 million fundraising
- British tax increase in prospect
- Survey of latest mortgage rates
- Dublin hotel trade picks up
- Asif Nadir in profile
- Five pages of jobs

12-PAGE COLOUR SECTION

PAINTING WITH SOUND

Tony Bennett is 66 and has never sounded better

PAGE 10

EXAM TIMES

Reaction to yesterday's Junior Cert and Leaving Cert papers

PAGE 6

KURDS SURRENDER

A group of Kurdish militants who took some 20 people hostage at the Turkish consulate in Munich surrendered late last

The Irish Times front page, Friday 25 June Coverage of gay law reform passing the Dáil



Disregard and Redress

Restorative Justice for people
impacted by Ireland's anti-gay laws

November 2022

Disregard and Redress 2022
Featuring cover photo of 1982 protest
outside Pearse Street Garda Station
on harassment of gay men in Garda
investigation of the murder of Charles Self
Photo Clodagh Boyd



An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt
Department of Justice

**Working Group to Examine the Disregard of
Convictions for Certain Qualifying Offences Related
to Consensual Sexual Activity between Men: Final
Report**



Department of Justice final
report, 2023, from the Working
Group on the disregard of historic
convictions related to consensual
sexual activity between men



GLEN banner on Dublin Pride Parade 1993, held the Saturday after the Dáil passed gay law reform, becoming a joyful celebration of equality.

From right: Eoin Collins, John Brady, Suzy Byrne (holding banner) and Feargus McGarvey.

Christopher Robson Collection, National Library of Ireland



Kieran Rose Cork Gay Collective speaking outside
GPO at 1984 Dublin Lesbian and Gay Pride with
Ciarán McKinney holding megaphone

Photo by Christopher Robson

"We all had a dream that one balmy summers day we would celebrate being full and equal citizens of this Irish Republic. This is the day. It is a victory for all those struggling for equality in this country.

These reforms are a great achievement for Irish society and its lesbian and gay community. Today we can be here, proud to be Irish citizens and proud to be lesbians and gays. We really believe that Irish people are progressive, that Irish people do support the lesbian and gay community, do support human rights and equality and have no time at all for bigotry.

I think we also have to say that this law reform that we have got was not inevitable. It could have been delayed, we could have got the British reform. I think we've got equality because of the Irish tradition of struggling for civil, political and religious freedom.

Everyone here did it. Everyone here helped.

Everyone one who came out to their parents, everybody who said I'm not going to put up with discrimination."

Extract from speech by Kieran Rose co-chair of GLEN at Dublin Gay Pride Parade
June 26th 1993 just two days after gay law reform providing for equality with
heterosexuals was passed by the Dáil. The Parade became a carnival celebrating the
radical gay law reform.

Thanks to Patrick McDonagh for sourcing the text.

2

Debate on Introduction: 1st July 2025

Disregard of Historic Offences for Consensual Sexual Activity Between Men Bill 2025: First Stage



Aengus Ó Snodaigh,
T.D.

I move:

That leave be granted to introduce

a Bill entitled an Act to make provision for a process for the disregard of certain historic criminal convictions arising from consensual sexual activity between men; to amend the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014; and to provide for related matters.

“Tá fir aeracha fós ag fulaingt mar thoradh ar choiriúlú atá 30 bliain thart.”

Aengus Ó Snodaigh, T.D.

As Dublin marked Pride this weekend, LGBT+ people faced slurry in Ballymena, bans in Budapest and shootings in New York. We think of them as we work to undo the past criminalisation of consensual gay sex in this State with this disregard Bill, one of the 95 recommendations of the working group’s report. I thank the six parties that have signed this Bill. I thank, in particular, Deputies Nash, Rice, Paul Murphy, O’Gorman and Catherine Connolly for cosigning the Bill, as well as the LGBT restorative justice campaigners. Curim fáilte roimh those in the Gallery today. To them I say “Well done”. I also thank the legal drafters, Ms Céile Varley and Mr. Cillian Bracken, the law firms Goodbody and Clifford Chance, and everybody else

who contributed to the legislation.

Conor Sheehan, T.D.

Many men live with the trauma inflicted upon them by a society that told them they should not exist. Despite an apology in 2018, no action has been taken by Government to put a process in place to disregard these convictions. Many men are living with the shame and stigma of these convictions. The shame and trauma drove many people to their graves. Gay men were driven underground by this criminalisation. This Bill is long overdue and I urge the Government to support it. I stand here as a gay man. I am fortunate to live at a time when I can openly express who I am.



Pádraig Rice, T.D.

I thank Deputy Ó Snodaigh and the members of the LGBT+ Restorative Justice Campaign,

Kieran Rose, Brian Sheehan, Karl Hayden and others, for their work. I am delighted to co-sign this Bill on behalf of the Social Democrats. It is now 32 years since homosexuality was decriminalised, but some men are still living with the negative impact of criminalisation. Let us be clear:

“These arrests and convictions destroyed lives.”

Pádraig Rice, T.D.

the prosecutions and convictions of gay and bi men for consensual sex was a gross violation of their human rights and did immeasurable damage. These arrests

and convictions destroyed lives. The laws also had a negative impact on those who were not convicted because the threat of prosecution was used to harass people in the community. The archaic laws also had a major impact on the provision of public services, including HIV-AIDS prevention. The State must right the wrongs of the past. We are running out of time for some of these men. The Government must urgently act to disregard these historical convictions and must deliver true equality for LGBTB people in Ireland.



Paul Murphy, T.D.

I thank Deputy Ó Snodaigh and the campaigners on this issue. It is outrageous that

there are still people today walking around with historical convictions for the so-called crime of being gay. The Government, of course, will say no one should be criminalised for consensual sexual activity, but a working group was set up to examine disregarding those convictions back in 2021 and still nothing has been done. The Minister has promised there will be heads of a Bill in due course, but due

**“... love is love and
homosexuality is
never a crime.”**

- Paul Murphy, T.D.

course in this case is decades overdue. Here we have an answer. This is not just a matter of righting an historical wrong; it is about sending a message at a time when LGBTQ rights are under attack in this

country and globally that love is love and homosexuality is never a crime.



**Roderic O’Gorman,
T.D.**

I thank Deputy Ó Snodaigh for bringing forward this legislation and the

campaign group for highlighting the issue. I want us to recall the original provision under which these men were convicted. Section 61 of the Offences Against the

**“...this is why it is so
important we are
moving to disregard
those convictions.”**

- Roderic O’Gorman, T.D.

Person Act 1861 states that “Whosoever shall be convicted of the abominable crime of buggery, committed either with mankind or with any animal shall be liable ... to be kept in penal servitude for life”. It is worth recalling the framing of homosexuality in that legislation from the 1860s, the absolute moral condemnation and the attempts to heap all sorts of condemnation on being gay. We know this same approach is adopted today. It was adopted in Poland up to the recent change after the general election there, and it is adopted in Hungary today. We see this same language online. I think this is why it is so important we are moving to disregard these convictions.



Catherine Connolly, T.D.

Go raibh maith agat. I thank the campaigners and Deputy Ó Snodaigh

for bringing forward this Bill. It aims to provide for the disregarding of certain criminal convictions that arose from a

“It was homophobia at it’s worst...”

- Catherine Connolly, T.D.

selection of legislation all through the 19th century and, indeed, one Act going back to the 17th century, as well as the Common Law. It had nothing to do with justice or fairness. It was homophobia at its worst and a set of values that had nothing to do with love between two people. It is high time we got rid of it. We are not only recognising the injustice but actually setting up a process that will allow us to undo that injustice and to finally bring fairness.



**Verona Murphy, T.D.,
An Ceann Comhairle**

Is the Bill being opposed?



**Mary Butler, T.D.,
Minister of State at
the Department of
the Taoiseach**

No. Question put and agreed to.

An Ceann Comhairle

Since this is a Private Members’ Bill, Second Stage must, under Standing Orders, be taken in Private Members’ time.

Aengus Ó Snodaigh, T.D.

I move: “That the Bill be taken in Private Members’ time.”

I would love if the Government also adopted this legislation as quickly as possible.

Question put and agreed to.

3

**2nd Stage Debates:
16th April 2026**

Disregard of Historic Offences for Consensual Sexual Activity Between Men Bill 2025: Second Stage



Aengus Ó Snodaigh, T.D.

I move: "That the Bill be now read a Second Time."

Is iontach gur

shroich muid an Stad seo leis an mBille seo. Bhí sé seo foilsithe ach ní raibh muid ag súil go roghnófaí é go tapa is a bhí don díospóireacht ar an Dara Chéim. The Bill states:

...it is declared and recognised that all those, whether applicants or otherwise, who were prosecuted or convicted of offences arising from consensual same-sex sexual activity between persons of full capacity are entitled to and hereby receive an apology and an acknowledgement that maintaining such offences was, on the part of the State, improperly discriminatory and contrary to human dignity and that it infringed human rights including in particular the right to personal privacy and autonomy.

That is the basis of the Bill I move today. Tá áthas orm an Bille um Neamhaird a Thabhairt ar Chionta Stairiúla i dtaobh Gníomhaíocht Ghnéasach Chomhthoilíúil Idir Fir, 2025 a bhogadh ar an Dara Chéim tar éis don Dáil glacadh leis an Chéad Chéim d'aon guth nuair a foilsíodh é i mí Iúil 2025. Gabhaim míle buíochas leis an LGBT restorative justice campaign, go háirithe na daoine a bhunaigh é, lena n-áirítear Kieran Rose, Karl Hayden agus Brian Sheehan. Bhí siad ag brú na ceiste seo chun tosaigh.

They addressed TDs and Senators in the

audiovisual room of Leinster House earlier this week. Throughout the process, they have been in contact with me and other spokespersons on this issue. Some of them are here in the Gallery this evening.

Gabhaim míle buíochas leo siúd who contributed to the drafting of this legislation, which in many ways I plagiarised from them: Céile Varley, Cillian Bracken and the law firms, Goodbody and Clifford Chance. Gabhaim buíochas leis na Teachtaí eile a shínigh an Bille seo – Teachtaí Ged Nash, Pádraig Rice, Paul Murphy, Roderic O’Gorman agus iarTheachta Dála agus Uachtarán na hÉireann reatha, Catherine Connolly. Is é seo an Bille deireanach a thionscain sí agus tréaslaim léi as an éacht atá bainte amach aici ó shin. Is Bille é seo a chuirfidh deireadh leis an éagóir a rinneadh ar fhir leis na glúnta de réir géarleanúna coilíní.

“This was also the time of the Magdalen laundries, the industrial schools, forced adoption and record incarceration in psychiatric hospitals.”

- Aengus Ó Snodaigh, T.D.

The fact that this Bill has been co-sponsored by TDs from Sinn Féin, the Labour Party, the Social Democrats, People Before Profit, the Green Party and the Independent Catherine Connolly before her election as President indicates the groundswell of support and consensus across this House on this issue.

Not alone was the Opposition united on the need for a disregard process, but the Minister, Deputy Jim O’Callaghan, indicated at the time that he was not opposed to

this. He has also indicated that he will not oppose the legislation on Second Stage and, in fact, intends to bring his own proposals forward in the very near future. I know he has promised that before, but he promised me that it would be within weeks this time. I hope we can then get the Government's approach to the need for this legislation before us and then we can deal with the amendments shortly. This will allow us to put to an end once and for all the wrong committed for many years. Every day wasted is a day where we are failing to account for the nation's dark history when it comes to the persecution of gay men.

That persecution can be traced way back to Act for the Punishment of the Vice of Buggery (Ireland) 1634, which was imposed by a British colonial regime. That law remained on the books in this State until 1993 along with the other draconian laws from the Victorian era that criminalised men who engaged in consensual sexual activity with other men. The first law stated it was for "the detestable and abominable Vice of Buggery committed with Mankind or Beast". Consensual same-sex activity was lumped in with bestiality. It also stated that offenders shall suffer such pains of death and losses as felons be accustomed to.

When the Free State was founded, this homophobic bigotry was enshrined in law again in the running of our Defence Forces where consensual activity was deemed a military offence subject to court martial. That was reinforced as late as in the Defence Act 1954.

When the Government of the day was finally dragged kicking and screaming into decriminalising consensual sex between men in 1993 following the famous case taken by our good friend in these Houses, David Norris, who took the case all the

way to the European Court of Human Rights, there was little acknowledgement then or since of the lives that were utterly destroyed by the horrific penal system that existed for generations or of the lived reality of being gay in this State and the climate of fear in which gay men lived or left Ireland to escape. There was no space for people who did not conform.

This was also the time of the Magdalen laundries, the industrial schools, forced adoption and record incarceration in psychiatric hospitals. For gay men, the State was against them, the church was against them and in many cases their communities were against them. At the very least, they feared that their own families were against them. The criminality associated with gay sex meant that there was little support during the AIDS crisis and sometimes homophobic violence was normalised in our society, which meant that they lived in fear of their life with nowhere to turn.

Decriminalisation came ten years after the brutal murder of Declan Flynn in Fairview Park, which sparked the first Pride march in Dublin in 1983. In the ten years leading up to the decriminalisation, the State commenced criminal proceedings in 309 cases, resulting in 94 convictions. Dozens more cases of buggery were known to the Garda in 1993 and more men could well have been prosecuted. We must remember that the mere threat of prosecution was used to blackmail gay men. They would be named and shamed in the newspapers. They might lose their jobs or their families. In some cases, they faced judges whose unbridled homophobia was plain for all to see as they spoke openly about how they would have given a higher sentence if they could.

Some local gardaí also demonstrated particular vindictiveness. Of the 68 criminal

proceedings commenced in 1969, 20 were charged in Tullow, in County Carlow, alone, including teenagers aged 15, 16 and 17. So much for protecting children, when children were in fact being criminalised by the State. Imagine the fear that was felt by those largely working class men and juveniles whose sexual activity became the talk of the town. It was talked of as a crime, and they were expected to pay extortionate bail bonds.

I have done a bit of research since I embarked on this legislation and the passage of First Stage. It is only a cursory snapshot through the papers that are online. These are the files here in my hand, and each one of them is just one story out of one paper, a snapshot in time, but they reflect the attitudes of the day. The attitudes from the first one I have, from 1929, remain the same right up to the last one I have found at this stage. My work is not complete. I am missing two decades of research. This is only from a search for “gross indecency”, which was what most men were charged with. I can and will continue, but I hope in all this that we look at this and that when the Minister produces legislation, we get into looking at funding a piece of research to see the level of persecution in the State and the effects it had on people.

In the Irish Independent, on 26 October 1929, it says the following. It is short enough because these were very short notices. Exemplary Sentence.—Judge Davitt sentenced Victor Furley, who pleaded guilty to a large number of counts of gross indecency, to 15 years’ penal servitude, and in commending Det. Officers Madden and Cryan, who had assisted in bringing the accused to justice, said it was revolting that police officers and Irishmen should have to be employed in detecting such crimes.

That is from 1929, and it does not stop there. As I said, this is a cursory glance through snippets in time. I go up to one that I found quite horrendous in The Nationalist & Leinster Times on 25 March 1950. It records the following case. It is quite a substantial report, which usually is not the case. They were usually one or two lines, but this one went into quite some detail. His Lordship [that is, the judge] said to the accused that it was sad to see a man of his stamp in court in a case of this kind. As Counsel said, his case was one more for scientific medical treatment than one for ordinary imprisonment.

“Dempsey, are you determined to make a manly effort to cure yourself of this trouble?” his lordship asked.

Prisoner [who was obviously scared to death of what was in front of him]—I am. That is the type of fear there was. I will not read out any more but I have done a job of work and, as I have mentioned, there was a piece of work done in relation to Tullow. It just shows that, in certain areas, certain gardaí or certain judges had a specific bent towards convicting and persecuting those who they felt were criminal. That was their approach.

This Bill does not accomplish everything that was set out in the report, which was to address our failings. The justice Minister at the time, Charlie Flanagan, and the Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, issued apologies on behalf of the State in June 2018 to those affected, but the criminal records of the convictions still remain. A first effort and progress to expunge those convictions using confidential Garda email addresses failed utterly as nobody came forward. It is unsurprising that victims of injustice would feel that they would have to go back to the perpetrators to seek their help.

Between 2021 and 2023, the working group

was set up to examine the disregard for convictions. It produced a comprehensive report outlining the harsh realities of this gross human rights abuse. It proposed 95 recommendations for a disregard scheme. As I said, this Bill does not address all of those. It cannot. There are restrictions on us as Opposition TDs. We cannot put a charge on the Exchequer. Such practical things like resourcing and counselling supports cost money. We will hopefully get into some of that when we deal with the Minister's amendments. We address the need for research and redress to find out what the consequences are. Ours is not the only country in the world that has gone down the road of trying to address this hateful persecution. This Bill establishes a process for applying to the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission for a disregard of one's conviction as well as an appeals process and a review of the process within three years, along with annual reporting of the performances of that function.

A disregard will provide clarity that there are no grounds for dismissing or prejudicing a person from office, profession, occupation, employment or any other right or privilege which citizens are entitled to on the basis of such conviction.

Acceptance, recognition, justice: no less is deserved by the generation of men who did nothing but take part in the love that dare not speak its name. In this, the land of Oscar Wilde, it is time that love spoke freely and those men were heard.



**Jim O'Callaghan, T.D.,
Minister for Justice,
Home Affairs and
Migration**

Ar dtús, ba mhaith liom mo bhuíochas a ghabháil leis an Teachta Ó Snodaigh as an mBille seo. Is Bille fiorthábhachtach é.

An bhliain seo caite, bhí díospóireacht idir an Teachta Ó Snodaigh agus mé féin sa Dáil ar an gceist seo. Tar éis sin, chuaigh mé ar ais chuig an Roinn agus dúirt mé leis na hoifigigh gur mhaith liom Bille nua a fheiceáil go tapa. I thank Deputy Ó Snodaigh and the other Deputies who have co-signed this Bill for their consistent work on this issue. Last year, Deputy Ó Snodaigh raised this in, I think, an oral parliamentary question to me and I said I would go back to the Department and try to see whether I could expedite the process of introducing legislation. I was aware at the time that there were plans within the Department to bring in legislation, but, as a result of Deputy Ó Snodaigh raising it, it catalysed that further engagement. After our engagement on the floor of the Dáil, I wanted to see what could be done to speed up the process. I am very conscious that the men who are alive who are affected by this - the numbers may be small, but the point is still very significant - will be of a considerable age, and I think a legislative measure should be introduced as quickly as possible to ensure that a disregard scheme can apply for them.

After our engagement in the Dáil, I went back to the Department. I was thinking at the time whether some simple type of scheme could be introduced, in a similar way to a scheme that had been introduced in the UK in respect of the Post Office dispute and scandal that arose over there. There were issues in respect of how that type of scheme could not operate, but one of the benefits of my raising it was that I was able to instruct officials that I wanted to get the legislation enacted as promptly as possible. The effect of that was that I instructed that I wanted it to go as a Committee Stage amendment into the miscellaneous provisions Bill. A lot of work had been done on the Bill already, but my saying I wanted to have it in on Committee Stage in the miscellaneous provisions Bill

expedited it, and I acknowledge Deputy Ó Snodaigh's role in contributing to that expediting of the Bill.

The Government will not oppose this legislation. There are some issues with it that I will discuss presently. As to where we are, I got approval from the Government a number of months ago - I think two or so months ago - to introduce Committee Stage amendments to the miscellaneous provisions Bill, which has already gone through Second Stage here, that would establish a disregard scheme. It was very good news that approval from the Government had been put in place and that a general scheme for the Committee Stage amendment had been drafted. The drafting is ongoing in the Attorney General's office and the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel.

I am not opposing this legislation. In fairness to Deputy Ó Snodaigh, I know that neither he nor I cares which legislative instrument gives effect to the disregard scheme, provided it works. The scheme being drafted in the Department at present is more robust. Once that is ready to be introduced on Committee Stage in the Dáil we can move promptly after that to get it enacted and to get the scheme up and running. I did indicate to Deputy Ó Snodaigh yesterday that I hoped Committee Stage would take place next month. I am putting pressure on my officials to do so and the fact that I have now said it in the Dáil will put even further pressure on them. This is something I will seek to actively work upon.

We are here to discuss Deputy Ó Snodaigh's Bill. It sets out an application-based statutory process for the disregard of historic convictions relating to consensual sexual activity between men. It assigns to the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, IHREC, the

responsibility for reviewing applications and for issuing disregards. In the scheme for which I have approval from Government to introduce, it is not IHREC doing it. It will be another person appointed by me who will be solely focused on the disregard scheme. The objective of Deputy Ó Snodaigh's Bill corresponds with Government policy and specifically the programme for Government commitment to implement legislation to disregard specific historical offences related to the criminalisation of homosexuality. As such, this Bill is consistent with the Government's policy and that is why I will not be opposing it.

However, while the intention of the Bill has obvious merit, there are legal, policy and operational issues with this Bill as drafted, which I will outline shortly. As I said, I am working on the scheme to be introduced on Committee Stage. It is also important as Minister for justice that I again acknowledge that the laws which criminalised consensual sexual activity between adult males in Ireland, as in innumerable other jurisdictions, are now widely recognised as a historical injustice, motivated by ignorant and prejudicial societal attitudes.

Those laws were introduced under British rule but persisted for some 70 years after the establishment of the Irish State, before finally being repealed in 1993. However, while over 30 years have passed since the applicable offences were abolished, their malign effects continue for all those who were unjustly rendered criminals in the eyes of the State. To this day, consenting adults who were convicted under these laws still bear the unmerited stain of criminal record. It is true that history cannot be rewritten and we cannot change the fact that although convictions occurred, nor undo the hardship, humiliation and lasting pain they caused. What we as

legislators can do, however, is find a means by which a conviction of this kind can, in effect, be nullified, such that the person who incurred it is, to all intents and purposes, treated in law as if it never happened.

A legislative scheme to enable the disregard of these convictions is long overdue and, as I have said, the Government is committed to its introduction. Unfortunately, this cannot be achieved by way of a simple blanket disregard of all such convictions. That is because the applicable common law and statutory offences did not distinguish in any way between consensual and non-consensual activity, nor between adults and minors. In the eyes of the law, two adult men engaging in sexual activity in the context of a loving relationship were not only committing a crime, but committing precisely the same offence as that of a predatory male who committed the same act with a boy.

This further illustrates how deeply inequitable these laws were, but it also has the unfortunate legacy that an across-the-board expungement of convictions under these laws is clearly not viable. Any given case must therefore be assessed on its own merits by reference to whatever records are available. It was in this context that in 2021 the working group was established to examine and make recommendations on an application-based scheme for the disregard of eligible convictions. The working group met on 11 occasions with follow-up research, legal analysis and stakeholder outreach occurring between each meeting.

In late 2022, my Department held a full public consultation on key issues relating to the development of a scheme to disregard relevant convictions. This consultation yielded about 150

submissions from individuals, LGBT and other non-governmental organisations, trade unions and political parties and representatives. These submissions were of great value to the working group in its deliberations and helped to inform its final recommendations. The working group's final report, published in summer 2023, contained 95 recommendations on how to establish, operate and promulgate such a scheme, and on key matters such as the range of offences that should be included, the proposed eligibility criteria for a disregard, the legal effects of a disregard, and procedures for applications, record retrieval, decisions and reviews.

The report was subsequently referred to officials in my Department to inform the development of legislative proposals that would align as closely as possible with the report's recommendations, while ensuring that the scheme would be legally sound and as accessible as possible. The number of recommendations in the report and the many procedurally and legally novel aspects of the proposed scheme have necessitated a lot of care being taken in the process of legislative analysis, consultation and drafting. However, as I said earlier, the legislation is now in an advanced stage of development and I intend to very shortly bring it before the Houses by amendment to the Criminal Law and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2026.

Turning to the Bill under consideration today, its Short Title specifically states that it is for the purpose to provide for a disregard scheme. However, the qualifying offences set out in the Bill include the relevant offences that were repealed in 1993, but also any other offences pursuant to statute or common law where the behaviour constituting the offence consisted of consensual same-sex sexual activity. As worded, this would encompass

offences which are still in force and hence are not legally appropriate for inclusion in a disregard scheme. More broadly, it would encompass a wide range of public order, morality and indecency laws under which heterosexuals were also liable to prosecution for inappropriate conduct.

Even if the scope were restricted to repealed offences, it would be extremely difficult to determine whether a given conviction occurred purely because the conduct at issue happened to be of a homosexual nature. A further issue with the Bill is that it does not clearly or explicitly set out the criteria that are to guide the decision on whether to grant a disregard or an appeal of a refused disregard. While the definition of consensual same-sex sexual

“I thank Deputy Ó Snodaigh and the other Deputies who have co-signed this Bill for their consistent work on this issue.”

**- Jim O’Callaghan, T.D.,
Minister for Justice**

activity in section 2 of the Bill appears to be an attempt to set out such criteria, this term is not subsequently used in relation to the consideration of applications.

The definition also fails to take due account of various circumstances that might still render a conviction unsuitable for disregard, such as evidence of payment for the sexual activity or evidence that the activity involved a vulnerable person or took place in the presence of a child. Furthermore, the Bill does not make any provision for case records to be obtained from relevant public bodies to inform assessments and decisions on applications. The Bill does contain some well-considered provisions, including

measures to support awareness of and access to the scheme.

These include the requirement for a public information campaign and an explicit provision that applicants will not incur a fee when making an application. That said, and while there is much merit in the objectives of the Bill and I commend the drafters for the fact that it has catalysed and expedited Government action, I am advised by the Office of the Attorney General that it is not currently of a standard to have it enacted as it is and it would clearly need significant work.

Notwithstanding the policy and legal issues with the Bill that I have outlined, I want to reiterate my appreciation to Deputy Ó Snodaigh and others for their work in bringing it forward and for helping to further raise awareness of this important matter. I too want to commend Kieran Rose, Karl Hayden and Brian Sheehan for their consistent campaigning in respect of this issue. They, along with us, will want to ensure that we get legislation on the Statute Book as quickly as possible that can be of benefit to those men who are still alive. Obviously the scheme I am drafting will also apply in a posthumous way and people will be able to apply for disregards in respect of deceased relatives.

I am very conscious that those who were unfairly criminalised by these anti-homosexual laws and their loved ones have waited a long time for a scheme by which their convictions can be disregarded. It is clearly a goal that is widely shared in this House. I believe that the legislative scheme I will shortly be bringing forward offers the speediest route to achieving this in a way that is workable, equitable and accessible. It will clearly set out the offences in scope and will be comprehensive in setting out the disregard criteria and legal effects, along with the procedures for making,



LGBT group and allies outside Leinster House to mark Dáil and Seanad Apology for criminalisation in 2018
Photo: Karl Hayden



March 1983 Fairview March to protest the freeing of the killers of Declan Flynn showing Cork Gay Collective group and banner in Fairview Park
Photo: Kieran Rose



GLEN launch of its 'Dáil Debates on Civil Partnership' June 2010. In photo then Deputies Michael D Higgins, Mary O'Rourke, Trevor Seargant and Aengus Ó'Snodaigh along with Brian Sheehan and Kieran Rose
Photo: Tommy Clancy



GLEN and allies outside Leinster House after Seanad had passed the Civil Partnership Act, July 2010
Photo: Karl Hayden

considering and determining applications, and for independent reviews of refused applications, among other essential matters. As mentioned, I will be bringing forward the scheme as an amendment on Committee Stage to the Criminal Law and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2026. I know I will get the support of Deputies when these amendments come through and obviously Deputies may want to put forward their own further amendments in respect of it on Report Stage or even on Committee Stage when they see the amendments coming through.

The establishment of the scheme will serve as recognition of the moral wrong that these laws visited upon so many gay men. For those who unfairly incurred criminal records as a result it will provide a basis to finally remove this wholly undeserved stain on their good name.

I again thank those who moved the legislation. Deputy Ó Snodaigh's question last year prompted a motivation on my part to ensure the legislation could be enacted as quickly as possible. The best vehicle to do that is the miscellaneous provisions Bill. As I have said before, miscellaneous provisions Bills have huge advantages. You can get a lot of provisions into them. Once this provision comes in, it will provide the remedy that is so needed in this area.



Louise O'Reilly, T.D.

I thank my colleague, an Teachta Ó Snodaigh, and the LGBT+ Restorative Justice

Campaign for all of the work they have done on this. I will read a newspaper article. It is very brief.

A 24-year-old Blackrock man was

remanded on his own bail today on a charge of gross indecency.

He was arrested by Garda John McCormack in Fairview Park on January 6 and charged with "committing an act of gross indecency" with an Englishman in the park.

Solicitor Maurice Walsh told Judge Thomas Fitzpatrick that there was no injured party as such, but that his client was "most abused" in the incident.

The defendant was remanded to February 10 for reports and the DPP's direction. That was on 27 January 1992. It is quite hard to imagine this was so recent in our past. That was my first year in college. I was 18 years of age. That young man was 24. For most of his adult life he has had to carry and endure that stain. I hesitate to use that word because it should not be a stain or a stigma but that is effectively what was done to him. That was in 1992.

Although it is historical, we are not talking about something that is ancient history. It is in our very recent past. It is very shocking to contemplate the fact that homosexuality was only decriminalised in 1993 and yet we have taken so many strides. However, when we take a step forward, we do not always look back to ensure we have tidied up and dealt with all of the consequences. In this instance, we clearly have not.

I welcome the fact that the Minister has responded to the pressure put on by an Teachta Ó Snodaigh, by the campaign groups and by other parties here. It is very good that he is bringing forward his own legislation. However, if it is the case that his legislation is delayed or that there are blockages, there is legislation that can be worked on because that legislation was introduced this evening by an Teachta Ó Snodaigh.

We will all remember the campaign for same-sex marriage in 2015. I know I do. I walked the legs off myself. We knocked on doors and we talked to people. In the main, I found that people's attitudes were good and positive. It surprised me that there were still some conservative elements and some people who had a lot of hate in their heart and who were not able to make that change. However, love is love, or however you want to put it, and there was a majority decision on that day. I was in the city centre and the celebrations were absolutely fantastic. Everybody hugged each other and we all said "We did it." However, it was not done and it was not finished. We need to ensure that we bring everybody along and that we do not leave people like that young man behind or leave them with that stain, stigma or whatever word we might want to use. As we often say, there is still unfinished business.

The discussion we are having this evening, prompted by an Teachta Ó Snodaigh and the campaign group, is very timely given that there has been a noticeable rise in homophobic attacks and abuse. That can be heard in the coarsening of language and seen online, including in that awful place, the manosphere. You also see high-profile people like Brendan Courtney talking about their own experiences. Mr. Courtney was attacked last year and he has talked about the rise of an anti-gay rhetoric. He said that there is anti-gay rhetoric building. We should do everything and anything we can, collectively as a Parliament and as a people, to call a halt to that. Passing this legislation sends a very clear signal not just to those people who are impacted and members of the LGBTQI+ community, but also to those people who seek to participate in the rise of homophobic rhetoric, anti-gay activity and all of that hate and awfulness.

A pardon is not good enough. There must be a disregard. There was never any offence committed so there is nothing to be pardoned. There must be a disregard. We have to be absolutely unequivocal about that. There is cross-party support for this legislation. That can be seen. Other parties have signed it, which is really welcome. The Government has also indicated support for the legislation. If the Minister is going to introduce his own Bill, that is grand. Let him do it quickly and we will work with him to ensure it is passed quickly. If he is not going to introduce his own legislation, I ask that he work with us on our legislation.

"It is rare to stand in the Dáil Chamber and find everyone is agreeing with each other."

- Louise O'Reilly, T.D.

It is rare to stand in the Dáil Chamber and find that everyone is agreeing with each other. However, we might look around afterwards and ask, even though we all stood here agreeing with each other, what was the end result? The end result has to be the quick passage of meaningful legislation so that what we all agree was a grave injustice can be righted for those people who were wrongly convicted. An apology is fine but the disregard is what people want. There was never an offence committed so there is no need for any pardon. A disregard is what is needed. I commend an Teachta Ó Snodaigh, the members of all of the campaign groups and the other parties that have signed this legislation. I really do hope that this time next year, or even in a couple of months' time, we will have this legislation passed and that the work will be done. We are all in agreement so there is literally nothing stopping us from doing this.



Máire Devine, T.D.

It is time Bill was dealt with. It is good to see that the Minister has acted on the prompting

of my colleague Deputy Ó Snodaigh. It is good to have this debate in the Chamber. I thank everybody who has got it to this stage, including the guys up in the Gallery who have pushed for it. The Minister promised this would happen in February but he has acknowledged that he is a few weeks behind. I hope he is going to rectify that and get it to Committee, Report and Final Stages.

This about putting wrongs to right and lifting State-imposed burdens that destroyed lives. As a member of the rainbow caucus within the Oireachtas, I will state we seek a speedy resolution to this and urge that the Bill be passed. It is but one of the 95 recommendations set out in a report published in 2023. Today, we are focusing on the establishment of a legislative scheme to enable the disregard of relevant criminal records.

There was violent persecution and entrapment of those suspected of male same-sex intimacy. They were deliberately hunted by the State authorities. They were hunted to humiliate them and their families, to put their jobs in jeopardy, and to cause their landlords, local churches, clubs and so on to learn about them. Every aspect of life was threatened by the State authorities. They were interrogated and fired from their jobs. Moral panic was enthusiastically encouraged, aided and abetted by State agencies. This fuelled further moral panic.

The decriminalisation of sexual acts between men was officially achieved in 1993. As was said earlier, this removed the colonial-era laws of the Brits that had

previously been in force here. Among the activists involved was a man with whom I served a term, the bold former Senator, David Norris. He took the legal challenge. He worked on it for 16 years and took the challenge in 1987.

His tenacity and his boldness have to be acknowledged, as do the guys in the Chamber from the LGBT+ Restorative Justice Campaign. They did not let go and did not back down.

We need to acknowledge what happened prior to 1993 and the suffering that the secrecy brought. It is known too well in many sectors in Ireland. We are good at secrets, we are good at hiding, we are good at locking away, we are good at humiliating and we are good at isolating and hunting others who may be perceived as different.

“There was violent persecution and entrapment of those suspected of male same-sex intimacy.”

- Máire Devine, T.D.

There were 900 odd convictions. Those included young 15- to 17-year-olds who were convicted for intimate behaviour. It was under the British occupation and their rules at the time, but it was also carried on with our own rules within this State. We did not seem to be bothered about having a look at them and trying to change them to make things better from a human rights perspective. It seemed like a throwback to Victorian era, but it is recent and, as Deputy O'Reilly said, it is within easy living memory. We also had members of the Defence Forces who were convicted in military courts for having same-sex sexual relationships. To be discharged

dishonourably and shamed must have been horrific for them.

Like many working class inner-city girls in the 1980s, I did not feel that I had a future in this country. I left and started nursing in Brighton. I did not know about this stuff, but Brighton was like a Mecca for gay and bisexual people to gather and feel safe. It was a safe enough haven. There was a lot of different hatred towards them, but it was a safe enough haven. I was a young student nurse, a Dub from Dublin 8. I told my friend Ciarán about me being present in an admissions ward and the British police came along. They were not arresting me at that time but they came along with a young man who was from the country in Ireland. He was from Tipperary. He was bound by his hands and feet. They literally threw him in the door of the hospital. He had fled from Ireland, as so many others that I met in the small Irish community in Brighton had, because there was nothing there for them. They could not live their lives as they wanted to. They were a shame on their families. As Deputy O'Reilly said, a stigma existed. They fled and were disregarded. They were sent away and exported.

It was also the time of the very beginnings of the HIV epidemic, and it was that double whammy. Some of the poor young men who were struggling with being far from home and being disregarded by home also contracted HIV. The fear that was around at the time was just enormous among all the population. They did not have anybody to turn to. They did not have the comforting warm embrace of a mam, dad, brother or a sister. They survived very much alone and that was an absolute tragedy when I think back on it. I was very upset by it at the time but I did not know what to do because none of us were sure what this epidemic would bring. It brought a lot of sadness to already isolated and

emotionally impoverished people.

I have a couple of asks of the Minister of State. The first is that we progress the Bill whatever way we can. The Minister said he would. Whatever way we can, let us progress it urgently. Second, can we please find funding for research into historical cases and the social history - the wrong history - of what occurred in this country prior to 1993?

We need to be very proud when this Bill passes because it will have repercussions internationally. It will reverberate around those countries that still have this criminalisation and show us in a positive light as did the marriage equality referendum. It will send a message to a very disturbed world, a world that has recently risen up with much hate and a lot of chaos. I urge the Minister of State to act with urgency. Let us get this across the line. Tá sé in am.



Paul Donnelly, T.D.

I really just wanted to be here to show my support for this Bill and to thank Deputy Ó Snodaigh

and everybody who participated in this Bill, as well as the people up in the Gallery. It is incredibly important in this day and age. I am really saddened that we are in a situation that there has been a kick back against such a positive move over the past number of years towards understanding and accepting difference. That is really sad. I find it really difficult when I hear some of the horrific language being used by people on protests against immigration, the LGBTQ community and educating children. We are really going down a very dark road and it is something that everyone of us needs to stand up against. This Bill is part of that.

I find it really difficult to understand. I grew up in the north inner city as a teenager in the late 1970s and 1980s. I remember Fairview Park. I was a teenager when a man was beaten to death by people I knew and went to school with. We did not understand because we had been programmed and given information all our lives that this was a horrible thing that these men were doing. A lot of people of my generation and the generations before that believed it. It led to the situation we are in now.

“We lived in an extremely oppressive and regressive State for many decades ... young working class people, boys and girls, were sent to institutions for the most minor of things .”

- Paul Donnelly, T.D.

We lived in an extremely oppressive and regressive State for many decades from the reds under the bed with Jimmy Galton, the only Irishman ever to be excluded from his own country because he a communist, and young working class people, boys and girls, were sent to institutions for the most minor of things. They were sent away from their families for years into the likes of St. Joseph’s industrial school in Clonmel and Letterfrack. There were many places. We had the Magdalen laundries as well where some young girls were locked up for the rest of their lives, and for what? That is the regressive and the oppressive State. We should never forget that because the minute we try to gloss over that, that is when we start to have these regressive people coming back and we need to stand up against that.

I listened to and read the Minister’s statement. I welcome the fact that there

has been movement on it, but why do these things take so long? Why did it take a parliamentary question from Deputy Ó Snodaigh for the Department and Minister to say that we need to deal with this? This should have been dealt with.

I read the working group’s report. It was one of the main recommendations in the working group. As the Minister said, the number one recommendation was “...a legislative scheme be established to enable the disregard of relevant criminal records and this Bill seeks to deliver on that recommendation”. Why did it take so long for us to get something like this done? It is really important that we get it done as quickly as we can. It is the least that we can do as a Legislature. It is the least that we can do in this country to send the message out to those people who are left and to those who have passed away who did nothing wrong.

It was the State that was wrong, and the State needs to apologise. I hate to use the word “convictions”. They need justice. They did absolutely nothing wrong and that is why the State needs to make their voices heard. I appreciate everybody who has taken part in this debate and those who have been part and parcel of bringing the Bill to where we are now. We really need to move on. Some people do not have the time to hear the words that they have been vindicated.



Eoin Hayes, T.D.

I start by thanking Deputies Ó Snodaigh, Nash, Rice, Murphy and O’Gorman

and former Deputy and now Uachtarán Catherine Connolly for sponsoring this important Bill. I thank the LGBT Restorative Justice Campaign, in particular my dear

friend, Brian Sheehan, for its incredible campaigning on this over many years. I also want to acknowledge the Minister and Department's commitment and urgency to pass legislation that will realise the aims of the Bill. For that I thank them sincerely.

“...it was the State that acted criminally and immorally...”

- Eoin Hayes, T.D.

The Bill is named as a disregard for historic offences for consensual sexual activity between men and aims to clear the names and records of men who historically engaged in sexual activity and were convicted of a crime for doing so. It should be noted by all good-minded people that nothing these men did then in Ireland or now anywhere was immoral or criminal. It hurt no one. Sexual relationships between consenting adults are a normal, natural and healthy part of the human experience, regardless of gender or sexual orientation. By contrast, it was the State that acted criminally and immorally, passing laws to persecute those who loved and celebrated each other and did the normal and natural things that all humans do and have done since the dawn of time.

It should go without saying that the criminalisation of sexual relationships between men has an awful history and, just as awfully, still has support in other parts of the world. Thankfully, Ireland, on the whole, has moved past those times. Thankfully, we recognise that love between adults in all its incarnations is something we should not just tolerate or legalise but embrace and celebrate. Thankfully, we play a major role on the world stage for gay rights. I pay particular tribute to the courageous campaigners who did so

much to help Ireland realise that, including people like former Senator David Norris, former Uachtarán Mary Robinson, Tony Walsh, and all of the campaigners for marriage equality in Ireland in 2015. In 2015, a group of friends and I got together to raise funds for marriage equality between Irish citizens in New York city. We thought it would be a small quiet affair, a humble table quiz, but crowds of people showed up. Companies sponsored prizes and we raised thousands of euro for marriage equality, doing our small bit from 3,000 miles away. I want to pay tribute to my friends Tara Copplestone, Simon McDonnell, Quentin Fottrell and Orla Tinsley for doing this work, among other campaigning, to make marriage equality a reality.

I remember weeks later watching a TV screen in a pub in Manhattan in the early hours as the results rolled in from Dublin Castle, watching the cheering crowds as Ireland proudly declared to the world that love is love and all you need is grá. It pains me immensely, as it does many others, to think of the generations of people who went before us and did not hear those roars of acceptance, those cheers of jubilation and victory over a law and system that had too long denied them. I think of the men, young and old, who had to hide a part of themselves from society, family or friends and found solace only in private places. The light they shared in those private places kept a light burning for so many that came later, even when it seemed like there was no light at all. It was their courage, fortitude and unapologetic actualisation that led the way for so many. We, as a State, are indebted to them and to the lives they led under a State that treated them so badly.

As the Bill shockingly lays bare in its Schedules, Ireland has had a law against these acts on the books as far back

as 1634, by edict of the Parliament at Westminster in England. At many times since then it was a capital offence, punishable by death. Most in this House know it was only decriminalised in 1993. Shockingly, military law still refers to the old 19th century criminal laws which state it is an offence in the Defence Forces under the Defence Act 2007, although in 1993 the then defence Minister, David Andrews, affirmed in the House that it would not be considered in breach of the regulations of the Defence Forces.

Let me be very clear. I unequivocally condemn every administration - British, Free State and Republican - that enacted, defended, enforced and supported these heinous laws over a 359-year time period. To date, no apology for those in the Defence Forces who were stripped of medals, discharged, court-martialed or otherwise isolated or persecuted by their superiors has been forthcoming. No meaningful disregard has occurred. No restoration of good name, military status or military decoration has occurred. That must change with the Bill or other legislation and it must change as soon as possible. For those men whom these historical laws affected I want, for my part, to extend my sincere apologies that the State has not granted you and your families restitution for the normal act of being gay. It was beyond any human decency to have persecuted you in any way, not to mind in the profession of serving your country. A 2023 report from the Department of Justice specifically pointed out that should a person have been discharged with ignominy from the Defence Forces as a result of any of the above offences, subject to the eligibility criteria, the Department of Defence and Defence Forces consider whether any medals awarded that were withdrawn as a result of this discharge with ignominy may be returned to the affected person or their family if deceased.

I strongly support that view as not just a symbol of restitution, but a recompense on behalf of the State for the individuals and their families who served the State so well yet were treated so poorly. As former defence Minister David Andrews said at the time of decriminalisation, the Defence Forces would modify regulations in light of the repeal of anti-gay laws. It stands to reason that any disregards under the Bill or other legislation would also apply to relevant offences under military legislation and rules of conduct. This Bill does that and it is critical that it does. It is of the utmost importance that these crimes of the State against those who served it are remedied. I would be grateful if the Minister and Department would confirm in the remarks at the end of the debate whether, through support of the Bill on Committee Stage or by other means, he and others in his Government will commit to such actions of restitution.

I am conscious that behind each of these laws and convictions there are stories of real human beings living in the world, just being who they were born to be, being human and part of the natural order of things, yet they were forced to undergo horrendous treatment by the State in terms of criminalisation and punishment that no human should have to endure just for being human. It is in sombre recognition of those people and all of that painful history that I support the Bill and commend it to the House for urgent enactment by the Oireachtas.



Pádraig Rice, T.D.

I begin by thanking Sinn Féin and Deputy Ó Snodaigh for all of their work on this. I was delighted to cosign the Bill on behalf of the Social Democrats. It is now 33 years since

homosexuality was decriminalised, but some men are still living with the negative impacts of criminalisation. Let us be clear. The prosecution and conviction of gay and bi men for consensual sex was a gross violation of their human rights and did immeasurable damage. These arrests and convictions destroyed lives. These laws also had a negative impact on those who were not convicted because the mere threat of prosecution was used to harass people in the community.

The archaic laws also had a major impact on the provision of public services, including HIV and AIDS prevention. The State must right the wrongs of the past and we are running out of time for some of these men. The Government must act urgently to disregard these historical convictions and deliver true equality for LGBT people in Ireland. I welcome the remarks of the Minister that the Government will make progress on this because we have delayed far too long. As others have mentioned, there is a very long history when it comes to these laws in Ireland - almost 400 years of history.

The Act of the Punishment of the Vice of Buggery Ireland 1634 was the first Act of an Irish parliament to punish the sexual act between adult men. Under that Act, sex between men was a capital offence punishable by death. This act was repealed by the Offences against the Person (Ireland) Act 1829, which retained the death penalty on conviction of buggery. This 1829 Act was subsequently repealed by the Offences Against the Person Act 1861, which removed the punishment of death upon conviction and instead classified buggery as an offence by penal servitude for life. It also introduced the offence of attempted buggery, which was punishable by a sentence of penal servitude of up to ten years. The Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885 criminalised

gross indecency between adult men with a maximum penalty of two years imprisonment with or without hard labour. The 1885 Act subsequently extended criminalisation to all sexual acts between men. The 1861 and 1885 offences dealing with buggery and gross indecency applied to both consensual and non-consensual acts.

“The prosecutions and convictions of gay and bi men for consensual sex was a gross violation of their human rights and did immeasurable damage.”

- Pádraig Rice, T.D.

These laws remained in place following the foundation of this State and, in many ways, the new Irish Government doubled down on them. They remained in place until they were repealed by the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 1993. That is within most of our lifetimes. These leave a long legacy of structural and systemic homophobia. I shudder to think about the number of people who suffered under these laws over 400 years.

In 2018, on the 25th anniversary of decriminalisation, the Taoiseach at the time, Leo Varadkar, issued an apology to the LGBT community on behalf of the State. Subsequently, a process was commenced to right the wrongs of the past. It is great to see we are moving forward in that regard with both this Bill and the Minister's commitments. This disregard scheme should be open to anyone who believes the law was used unfairly to police, arrest, charge or convict them because of their sexual orientation.

There are various accounts of how people were targeted by these laws. People were

targeted by public order, vagrancy and lodging laws and other police operations. There may be the need for future work as to how the laws impacted on women and trans people, particularly in the context of their treatment through the family courts. We must not forget them. It is important we make this scheme as inclusive as possible for the wide breadth of the LGBTQI+ community.

It is important that any effort made by the Government must ensure people are encouraged to participate in this scheme. There are a number of ways in which participation in the scheme can be encouraged. First, it must be acknowledged that many people will be hard to reach. It is important, therefore, that the scheme is promoted widely, is open and accessible and ensures confidentiality. A large number of LGBTQI+ people left Ireland to find safer places to live. Efforts should be made to promote the disregard scheme abroad, including in countries such as the UK, US, Canada, New Zealand and Australia. Irish embassies and consulates must promote the scheme once established. In addition, the Irish LGBTQI+ community abroad should be funded to promote the scheme within their own communities. At home, community groups across the island should be supported and funded to participate in the scheme and encourage local communities to take part. Any scheme set up by the Government will not be worth it unless we ensure participation and make it possible for people who suffered under these laws to meaningfully participate. It is important that this process is as accessible as possible and that the person appointed by the Minister undertakes a trauma-informed approach in line with international best practice.

It is important that if there is any onus to provide information or documents, it rests

with the State rather than the individual. If information or documents are not available, the person's testimony should be accepted. Care must be taken not to retraumatise people during the disregard process. The disregard working group set out an extensive list of human rights and equality principles. In its next step, it should set out how the principles will be put into practice. For example, all staff working in the scheme should be trained in the areas of trauma and human rights. In addition, we should look abroad to see how this is best carried out in other countries. Most importantly, for the disregard to be effective, it must be placed within a broader context. We must consider the full impact that criminalisation has had on LGBTQI+ people, communities and wider societies.

Many of our current LGBTQI+ community organisations across the country are under-funded. They struggle to support people and communities who were hurt by these anti-LGBT laws, policies and practices. Additional State funding must be provided to create and sustain services, particularly for older people. That level of funding and support is currently not in place. Parts of the country have no existing services. The State has failed to provide these services, and I have no doubt that criminalisation is one of the key reasons the State has never stepped in to support the community during those 70 years under criminalisation. These community organisations have fallen behind. They do not receive the same level of support that other community organisations receive. That wrong must be righted. We must provide additional supports. There are whole counties across the country that have no dedicated community services and supports. I ask TDs from those counties to start advocating for those services for the communities they represent.

If truly restorative justice is to be adopted, it must address a wider set of policy issues. These include but are not limited to access to timely trans healthcare; banning conversion practices; robust hate crime prevention; improved sexual and mental health services; and commencement of the Health (Assisted Human Reproduction) Act. It has sat on the books for far too long. The Minister for Health, Deputy Carroll MacNeill, needs to get her finger out and commence and introduce a second Act because people are waiting. LGBT families exist today who are waiting for their rights. We are waiting far too long and I am getting very frustrated with the delays. We also need to have a discussion about intersex rights, and the list goes on.

We have raised these issues repeatedly and I frankly feel ignored by the Government when we raise them. I do so time and again. On the last occasion I spoke about this, it was with the Tánaiste. I reminded him that Ireland is ranked 15th in Europe in terms of LGBTQI+ human rights and policy protections by ILGA-Europe, an international body that ranks all the countries across Europe. We have been stuck in the mid leagues on LGBT rights for far too long. We are not making progress. I ask the Government to come out and set an ambitious goal in this regard. The Social Democrats have called on the Government to set a policy goal of being the best place in Europe to be LGBTQI+. It should set that as a goal and take the steps over the remaining years of this Government to achieve that. If the Government truly means what it has said around the disregard scheme and supporting the community, it will set that as a policy aim. It will put a policy in place and try to achieve that goal and move up through those rankings. I ask the Minister of State, in his concluding remarks, to make that commitment to the community tonight.

The only way we are going to achieve true restorative justice is by tackling the issues faced by the community. Today, there are people who are left on waiting lists for trans healthcare and experience hate crimes out in the community. We have issues today. This is not just about the past; it is about the present and the future. I urge the Government to take action on it. Finally, I thank the campaigners on this - Karl Hayden, Kieran Rose, Brian Sheehan and Ciarán Brady - as well as the Gay Project in Cork which partnered with the legal firm, Clifford Chance. I also thanks its barristers, Ms Céile Varley and Mr. Ciaran Bracken, and the whole team of people involved in this campaign over a very long period of time. They put in a lot of work, effort, research and campaigning. They reached out to people and went through historical records. The amount of work that has gone into this has been phenomenal, and I commend them on doing all of that work. I know some of the same individuals are involved in many of the other campaigns I mentioned, and they continue to advocate for those as well. I thank everyone who paved the way for the Ireland we have today. I commend the campaigners and activists who continue to call on the State to do better because the State can do better.



**Roderic O'Gorman,
T.D.**

To begin, I express my deep appreciation to Deputy Ó Snodaigh for bringing this Bill forward and continuing to put his experience and passion behind this particular issue. I also thank those Deputies who are cosignatories of the Bill as well as the Deputies who have spoken and joined this debate tonight. I appreciate the openness of both the Minister, Deputy O'Callaghan, and the Minister of State,



Deputies Patrick Costello and Ged Nash along with Karl Hayden and Kieran Rose after their briefing on the Report of the Working Group on Disregard Legislation, October 2023
Photo: Patrick Costello



Taoiseach Bertie Ahern TD, Eoin Collins and Cathryn Mannion, April 2006 in GLEN offices. Taoiseach gave ground-breaking speech on LGBT issues promising continuing legal progress
Photo: Tommy Clancy



December 2023 Houses of Oireachtas hosted a special event Bród 93/23 to commemorate and celebrate 30th anniversary of gay law reform

From left Kieran Rose former co-chair GLEN, Máire Geoghegan-Quinn former Minister for Justice, Jerry Buttimer Cathaoirlach Seanad, Senator David Norris and Suzy Byrne former co-chair GLEN

Deputy Troy, to engage with the core principles of this particular Bill and their commitment to bring forward amendments to it. As a cosignatory of the Bill, there is real openness to have a constructive debate on this Bill and look at amendments to see how we can strengthen elements of it. It is important this is done quickly. While recognising the real achievement of being here and debating this Bill today on the floor of the House, this has taken a long time. It has taken too long. I hope, in the spirit the Minister and Minister of State have come into this House and made commitments to move this swiftly, we see that brought forward.

“...we have to recognise that Irish law made being gay a crime in this country.”

- Roderic O’Gorman, T.D.

The reason we are here today with the Bill finally arriving at the floor of Dáil Éireann, despite the elapse of time, is because of the tireless efforts of a number of campaigners over many years. Some of them are here in the Gallery and many are watching online.

I wish to recognise that tireless work on this, and indeed, many issues. The rest of us across the LGBTI+ community and I owe them many, if not all, of the rights that we enjoy today as citizens - rights that had to be fought for. I am deeply grateful to their work over many years.

The consequences of a legal conviction are very real. There is the direct impact on the person who has been convicted in terms of a fine or maybe a prison sentence. There is a social stigma. We know that stigma is one that will continue very often for a long time after a person

has served their time and has been released. There is the impact on families. There are very practical issues around the loss of income. There is the practical necessity of separation when somebody is incarcerated. Again, the stigma that attaches to somebody who has been convicted can often attach to their wider family. They can see exclusion within their local community. That power of the State to officially sanction its own citizens has real meaning and real strength. It is one of the true defining factors of a state that it has that power to punish its citizens.

In my time as equality Minister, I had the opportunity to travel to Poland and meet with leaders of Polish LGBTI+ groups. This was at the time when the Law and Justice party was in government there. They were telling me how that party was co-opting and marshalling apparatuses of the state. I was struck by what they said about how the government there had used the ombudsman for children in Poland, as an organisation, and had used the sanction of the state to target LGBTI+ groups that were working with young people. It was casting that work as some sort of act of child abuse or grooming. I know the role that the Office of the Ombudsman for Children plays in this country. Yes, it can be a real thorn of the side of a government, but always in a good sense. It is always trying to make things better for all children, particularly the most vulnerable children. What I learned on my trip to Poland illustrated to me what happens when the weight of power of a state is aimed against someone for something that is so basic and intrinsic for them. The power of the State is very real. That is why a process for lifting or removing State sanction, when that sanction was implemented for the wrong reasons, is so important.

I think we all accept that a person’s sexuality is an innate part of their humanity

and that the expression of that sexuality is part of a body of rights protected by human rights and constitutional rights. In that context, we have to recognise that Irish law made being gay a crime in this country. It made being in love with another man and acting on that love a crime. It made taking a fancy for a guy and acting on that fancy - something as basic as that - a crime. It criminalised those very basic elements of humanity. The Bill we are debating seeks to make some reparation for that treatment. What we are doing today is entirely consistent with a set of actions that Ireland has taken over the past 15 or 20 years to recognise, and try to make some recompense for, how our State treated other minorities and other vulnerable groups after we gained our independence. We can think of our treatment of women who became pregnant outside of marriage. We can think of our treatment of the children of those women. We can think of our treatment of members of the Traveller community. For each of those groups, certain steps have been taken. There are other groups that the State probably needs to do more to recognise, particularly those who were institutionalised for a disability or for having a mental health illness.

Deputy Donnelly rightly drew our attention to the increasing levels of homophobia and transphobia in our society. Deputy Rice spoke to that issue as well. While it is positive to be here today looking to advance important legislation, it is sad to say that Dublin and Ireland today are less safe for members of the LGBTI+ community than ten years ago. I have seen that retreat in safety in my own lifetime. One naively assumes that progress and enhancement of rights is always going to be one way, but that it is not the case. I saw that in Poland. Hundreds of thousands of Hungarians saw that in their own country, but hopefully the pendulum of progress can begin to

swing back now after Sunday's election results. We have seen a retreat in safety for members of the LGBTI+ community in our country. That is a source of real concern to me and many people in this House.

Bearing that in mind today, with the law that is before us we have an opportunity to clearly restate our values as an Oireachtas and as a country. We have an opportunity to recognise and right the wrong that was done to hundreds of our citizens over many decades.



**Jim O'Callaghan T.D.,
Minister for Justice,
Home Affairs and
Migration**

I thank the
Deputies who

have contributed to this important topic. It is important again to state that there is agreement across the House that we should introduce a disregard scheme to ensure that the unfairness of these convictions that were imposed upon Irish men in the 20th century can be removed and disregarded. As has been indicated, the disregard scheme is different from a pardon. In effect, it means that there should never have been convictions at all. While I accept what Deputy O'Gorman has said, I am very disappointed and disturbed to hear that Ireland is a more threatening place now in terms of potential attacks on gay people. That is a matter of extreme concern to me. I have heard it from others before. We need to emphasise repeatedly that attacking people or targeting people because of inherent characteristics within their personality, sexuality or make-up is completely unacceptable. In a republic, that type of behaviour is abominable. We must completely re-emphasise that.

I thank Deputy Ó Snodaigh for introducing the Bill. The next time we will be discussing

this issue in the Dáil will be when I am down in the committee room for Committee Stage of the miscellaneous provisions Bill. I want to try to get that legislation enacted as quickly as possible. I want to see the disregard scheme up and running, so that people are aware of it, can be informed about it and can avail of it. We will then be able to respond to the unfairness of those convictions.

“I want to try to get [Disregard] legislation enacted as quickly as possible.”

- Minister for Justice Jim O’Callaghan

I want to make one other point. Maybe I am trespassing on territory that is not my responsibility as a legislator or a member of the Government. The Supreme Court decision in the case of *Norris v. Ireland* is a decision of the Supreme Court that remains standing. The narrow interpretation of the constitutional right to privacy that was set out in the *Norris* judgment is an issue of concern to individuals. Obviously, that is not a matter for me to look upon. It is a matter for another arm of government if the circumstances should ever arise.

I thank Deputy Ó Snodaigh and the other Deputies who have put forward this Bill. Responsibility is now on me to ensure I can bring the Committee Stage amendments promptly before the Dáil to ensure we can get the scheme up and running as soon as possible.



**Aengus Ó Snodaigh,
T.D.**

I wish it was this good all the time. I thank the Minister

for his positive comments throughout - from the get-go when I asked the parliamentary question to the First Stage, when I talked to him afterwards and the debate today. I thank all of those who took part, including na Teachtaí Louise O’Reilly, Máire Devine, Paul Donnelly, Eoin Hayes, Pádraig Rice and Roderic O’Gorman agus, dar ndóigh, an tAire féin.

Gabhaim buíochas leo mar, go minic, bíonn sé deacair daoine a fháil chun páirt a ghlacadh i ndíospóireachtaí tráthnóna Déardaoin. Gabhaim buíochas leo siúd a sheas an fód agus a bhí anseo. Is léir ón oiread daoine a bhí anseo don díospóireacht cé chomh tábhachtach is atá sé mar ábhar. Nuair atá seans againn ceart a dhéanamh nuair atá ciapadh tar éis a bheith déanta ar dhaoine, ba chóir go dtapaímid an deis chun ceart a dhéanamh agus an rud sin a chur i gceart.

It has been a good debate. I thank those who contributed today and those who have been raising our awareness over the years, in particular the LGBT+ Restorative Justice Campaign. I mentioned Brian, Kieran and Karl earlier. Some of them are with us today. There are also the drafters, Céile and Ciaran.

I draw people’s attention to the booklet they produced, *Disregard and Redress*. It is a useful introduction if there are people listening or looking in who are interested in the topic. In its few short pages, it outlines the effects much better than I can on the people affected by the criminalisation of homosexuality in this State and, when people went before the courts, what they were faced with. Mention was made of Declan Flynn. There are a number of them in Rathmines and so on in the seventies. I was a very young child at that stage but I remember the eighties, similar to Deputy Donnelly. The one I remember is when Charles Self was stabbed to death

in 1982. It was not the fact of the horrific death. That was bad enough but it was the glee - I do not know whether I am using the wrong word - with which the gardaí took it upon themselves to seek out nearly every gay person in this city, interrogate them, visit their workplaces and hound them day in and day out until they gave their fingerprints or accounted for their movements, just by virtue of the fact they had got it into their heads that a person who was gay had committed the killing and stabbing of Charles Self. I do not think that murder has ever been brought to a conclusion but its effects are explained in this booklet.

The booklet was put together to encourage us as parliamentarians to address this issue. That is when, in many ways, I came to this issue. A redress or disregard process is not something that happens all the time. We have a relatively new State. It is 100 years old and still grappling with the legacy of colonial laws. Every couple of years in this Parliament, we have legislation repealing hundreds or thousands of old colonial laws. We do that but the legacy here is still live. My colleague, Deputy O'Reilly, quoted from a case in 1992. There are probably more. I have taken a cursory glance through files and shared some of the documentation with others. If people want them, I am happy to share. It is just what is available in this new modern age in the archive of newspapers online. You put in a search and, all of a sudden, get results. I was only searching for two words: "gross indecency". I did not search for the other charges that might have been brought. I have not finished. I have about 80 pages - one page per newspaper article. I have 30 more years to do since the founding of the State. That is me, an amateur historian, throwing in a word.

We need to find out the full effects and we

will when the disregard scheme is up and running. We will hear people's stories or, maybe more so, become aware of them, especially those who, as my colleague, Deputy Devine, said, emigrated. There are so many people. I and probably everybody in this Chamber know people who feared prosecution and the persecution that came afterwards, and sometimes before. Even my cursory glance showed people not turning up in court. It is obvious they got the hell out of Dodge before their whole world collapsed. In many cases, it did collapse. They had to leave their jobs and had their full details published in local newspapers and endured the scandal

"I wish it was this good all the time."

- Aengus Ó'Snodaigh, T.D.

that drew upon them. They then became open to being targeted by conservative elements in small communities. The Valley of the Squinting Windows springs to mind. There was definitely that kind of view in small-world Ireland, not rural Ireland but Ireland as a whole. You had it in urban communities as well. That persecution, prosecution, marginalisation, isolation and ostracisation went with it. We are trying to right that in a small way.

This is not the end of this. There were 95 recommendations. Many have been addressed. There are still some we need to address. By us having this debate today, I hope it sends the message we will not stand by and allow the comments that Deputies O'Gorman and Donnelly referred to. There is now an increase in homophobia again. As a Parliament, we are united on that and will not stand for that. It is not just coarseness in debate or discourse.

It goes beyond that to physical attacks

now. It seems to be becoming acceptable to attack people who stand up for gay rights or LGBTQ rights or even speak about it. I know that on my Facebook tonight I will be targeted just for having the gall, in their eyes, to stand up and raise an issue. It is easy for me; I just delete, hide, block. I am not the one who has to move around the city and make a display of affection with another man or another woman. That can draw physical attacks from some of these idiots. We have to stand against that type of attitude. We have seen it in other countries in the EU and we will not tolerate it here. We have come a long way and need to stay well away from that which gave us the title of a conservative society. We are not. We are a welcoming society and always have been but there have always been elements which have wished to make us a close-minded, conservative and retrograde society.

Gabhaim buíochas arís le gach duine as a bheith liom sa díospóireacht, go háirithe iad siúd a thug tacaíocht dom leis an mBille ar an gCéad Chéim. Tá a fhios agam nár chóir dom labhairt faoin Uachtarán ach bhí sí anseo nuair a bhog muid an Bille seo ar an gCéad Chéim. Tá súil agam go mbeidh sí i láthair nuair a théann an Bille o s comhair an Uachtaráin. Beidh sí an-sásta go raibh sí mar chuid den phróiseas, idir thús agus dheireadh an phróisis.

Question put and agreed to.

Cuireadh an Dáil ar athló ar 6.10 p.m. go dtí 2 p.m., Dé Máirt, an 21 Aibreán 2026.

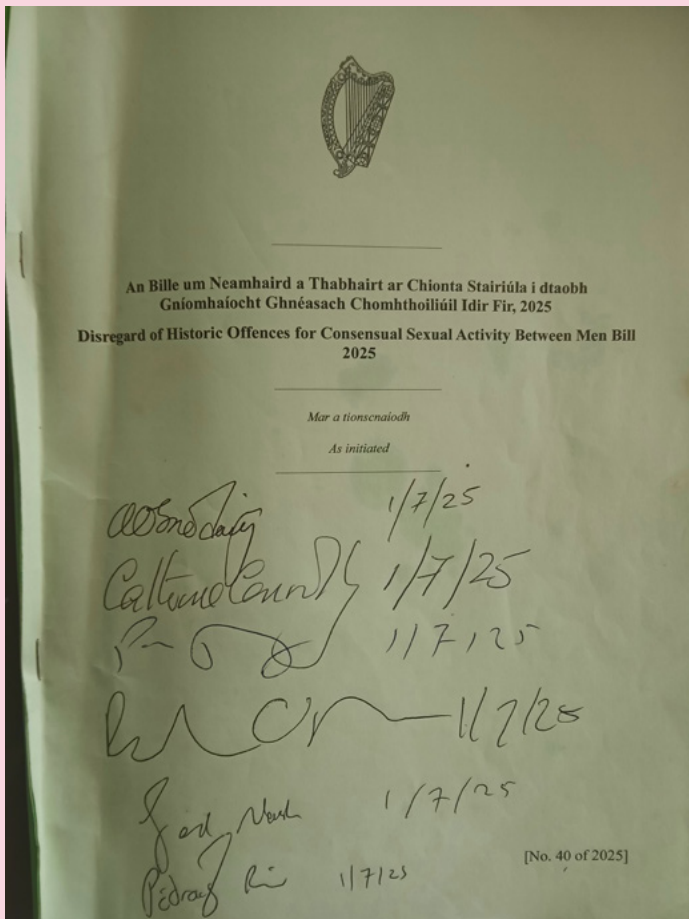
The Dáil adjourned at 6.10 p.m. until 2 p.m. on Tuesday, 21 April 2026.

The debate texts have been reproduced from the Official record on the Oireachtas website: www.oireachtas.ie



Briefing on Disregard Bill in AV Room of Leinster House 14th April 2026

Deputies Aengus Ó Snodaigh and Máire Devine, Senators Laura Harmon and Malcolm Noonan, Brian Sheehan Karl Hayden and Kieran Rose from LGBT Restorative Justice Campaign



Signed by all the sponsors of the Bill. Deputies Aengus Ó Snodaigh, Catherine Connolly, Ged Nash, Pádraig Rice, Roderic O'Gorman, Paul Murphy

Signed copies of Bill courtesy of Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh

4

Timeline

1861

The Offences Against the Person Act replaces the death penalty under previous legislation with life imprisonment for sexual relationships between men

1885

Criminal Law Amendment Act criminalises all intimacy between males or even attempts to engage in intimacy

1898

Vagrancy Act Section 1(1)(b) was used in a discriminatory way to target gay men in public places (Chapter 3.1 Final Report of Working Group on Disregard Legislation)

1922

Constitution of the Irish Free State (Saorstát Eireann) Act Section 73 transfers all British legislation including anti-gay laws onto Ireland's statute books

1923

Defence Forces Act offence of 'disgraceful conduct' was copied from British military legislation which was used in a discriminatory way to target gay men

1954

Defence Forces Act provides for offence of conduct to the prejudice of good order and discipline replacing the 1923 offence of disgraceful conduct

1983

Supreme Court in a majority verdict finds that anti-gay laws are not contrary to the Constitution in an Appeal from the High Court taken by David Norris

1988

The European Court of Human Rights finds that Ireland's anti-gay laws are contrary to the European Convention on Human Rights in an Appeal by David Norris

Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act includes protection on the grounds of sexual orientation

1993

Gay law reform enacted abolishing all the anti-gay laws including the Common Law offence and providing for equality with heterosexuals

Unfair Dismissals Act includes protection on grounds of sexual orientation

1998

Employment Equality Act includes sexual orientation and Equality Authority established

2000

Equal Status Act includes protection on grounds of sexual orientation

2006

Taoiseach Bertie Ahern gives a ground-breaking speech at the launch of the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN) strategic plan including promising continuing legal progress

2010

Civil Partnership Act provides for marriage-like rights and responsibilities for same-sex couples

2014

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act passed and first Commissioners appointed by President Michael D Higgins

2015

Children and Family Relationships Act recognises children in same-sex headed families for first time

Constitutional Amendment to provide for right to marry for same-sex couples passed overwhelmingly in Referendum

Gender Recognition Act passed

2016

Labour Party Private Members Disregard Bill introduced by then Senator Ged Nash and others

2018

Dáil and Seanad Apology for criminalisation on 25th anniversary of gay law reform

2020

Programme for Government includes commitment to Disregard Legislation

2021

Minister for Justice Helen McEntee in March establishes Working Group on Disregard Legislation

2022

Assessments of Disregard Legislation in Spain, Germany, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and UK by Clifford Chance an international legal firm published pro bono in association with Gay Project Cork and the LGBT Restorative Justice Campaign

Working Group on Disregard Legislation publishes Progress Report in May

Public Consultation carried out by the Working Group on Disregard Legislation in November and December

2023

Seanad Motion by Senator Fintan Warfield and Debate on Disregard Legislation in May

Final Report of the Working Group on Disregard Legislation published in June and includes 95 recommendations

Draft Disregard Bill by Barristers Céile Varley and Cillian Bracken in association with Clifford Chance, A&L Goodbody, Gay Project Cork and LGBT Restorative Justice Campaign published in July

Bród 93/23 special event in Leinster House in December hosted by Houses of Oireachtas and Seanad Cathaoirlach Jerry Buttimer to commemorate and celebrate 30th anniversary of gay law reform.

2024

Criminal Justice (Hate Offences) Act includes protection on grounds of sexual orientation

2025

Programme for Government includes Disregard Legislation

Disregard Legislation is an objective of 2025-2026 Action Plan to deliver Second National LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy

Disregard Private Members Bill introduced into Dáil in July by Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh Sinn Féin with support of other Opposition political parties and then Independent TD Catherine Connolly

2026

LGBT Restorative Justice Campaign makes presentation on the need for Disregard Legislation to the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance Working Group (Council of Europe) in March

Second Stage Debate on Disregard Private Members Bill in April



People dancing on the steps of the Central Bank at the end of Dublin Pride 1993, celebrating the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Ireland

Photo: Christopher Robson



**AN BILLE UM NEAMHAIRD A THABHAIRT AR CHIONTA STAIRIÚLA I DTAOBH
GNÍOMHAÍOCHT GHNÉASACH CHOMHTHOILIÚIL IDIR FIR, 2025
DISREGARD OF HISTORIC OFFENCES FOR CONSENSUAL SEXUAL ACTIVITY
BETWEEN MEN BILL 2025**

Bill

5

entitled

An Act to make provision for a process for the disregard of certain historic criminal convictions arising from consensual sexual activity between men; to amend the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014; and to provide for related matters.

WHEREAS in light of the damage that the discriminatory criminalisation of consensual same sex activity between men had on the lives of those convicted of such offences, as well as on the lives of their partners, families, friends and communities; 10

AND WHEREAS the continuing impact of this historic criminalisation and the existence of extant historic convictions for such offences is an ongoing affront to the dignity, privacy, autonomy and equality of those convicted; 15

AND WHEREAS as a consequence it is necessary to put in place a process that such convictions be disregarded in a manner that respects and vindicates the memory and dignity of those affected;

AND WHEREAS the process by which such convictions are disregarded shall be non-adversarial, trauma informed and situated within a framework of human rights, equality and restorative justice; it is declared and recognised that all those, whether applicants or otherwise, who were prosecuted or convicted of offences arising from consensual same-sex sexual activity between persons of full capacity are entitled to and hereby receive an apology and an acknowledgement that maintaining such offences was, on the part of the State, improperly discriminatory and contrary to human dignity and that it infringed human rights including in particular the right to personal privacy and autonomy. 20 25

Be it enacted by the Oireachtas as follows:

5

The Bill / Explanatory Memorandum

Disregard of Historic Offences for Consensual Sexual Activity Between Men Bill 2025

Full Bill is available at [Bill as initiated \(No. 40 of 2025\)](#) on Oireachtas.ie



**An Bille um Neamhaird a Thabhairt ar Chionta Stairiúla i dtaobh
Gníomhaíocht Ghnéasach Chomhthoiliúil Idir Fir, 2025**
**Disregard of Historic Offences for Consensual Sexual Activity Between Men Bill
2025**

Mar a tionscnaíodh

As initiated

[No. 40 of 2025]

Explanatory Memo

An bille um neamhaird a thabhairt ar chionta stairiúla i dtaobh gníomhaíocht ghnéasach chomthoilíúil idir fir, 2025

Disregard of Historic Offences for Consensual Sexual Activity Between Men Bill 2025

Purpose of the Bill

The principal purpose of the Disregard of Historic Offences for Consensual Sexual Activity between Men Bill 2025 is to provide for a process for the disregard of certain historic criminal convictions or cautions arising from consensual sexual activity between men.

An apology was issued in Seanad Éireann on 19 June 2018 by Minister for Justice and Equality, Charlie Flanagan TD, to all those affected by the criminalisation of consensual sexual activity between men, marking 25 years from the repeal of the relevant laws.

A Working Group was established to Examine the Disregard of Convictions for Certain Qualifying Offences Related to Consensual Sexual Activity between Men, whose final report published by Minister for Justice Helen McEntee TD on 21 June 2023.

Of the 95 recommendations set out in this report, the number one recommendation was “That a legislative scheme is established to enable the disregard of relevant criminal records”, and this Bill seeks to deliver upon that recommendation.

Those convicted for consensual sexual activity continue to suffer as a result of this historic criminalisation, and a disregard could provide clarity that there are no grounds for dismissing or prejudicing

a person from an office, profession, occupation, employment or any other rights and privileges to which citizens are entitled on the basis of such a conviction.

This Bill builds on legislation previously introduced to the Seanad, the Convictions for Certain Sexual Offences (Apology and Exoneration) Bill 2016, and the provisions attempt to address issues raised by Minister of State David Stanton TD on behalf of the Government during the Second Stage debate on that legislation.

Main Provisions of the Bill

The Long Title includes important context for the Bill and a general apology and acknowledgement on the part of the State for persecution and conviction under laws which criminalized consensual sexual activity between men.

Section 1 provides for the short title and commencement of the Bill.

Section 2 provides for the definitions of terms used in the Bill and contains standard interpretive clauses.

Section 3 allows the Minister for Justice to make regulations prescribing an offence for the purpose of sections 4 or 7. Subsection (2) gives power to the Minister regarding the content of any regulations to be issued under the aegis of the Bill. Subsection (3) specifies that any regulations made under the terms of the Bill must be brought before the Houses of the Oireachtas for approval.

Section 4 lists the qualifying offences to be included within the legislation and allows the Minister to add additional offences by way of regulation.

Section 5 provides for the determination by the Irish Human Rights and Equality

Commission of applications for the disregard of certain qualifying offences. The Commission shall consider the application and decide to issue a certificate of disregard of a conviction or caution or refuse to disregard a conviction or caution.

Section 6 provides for the effect of a decision by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission or Appeals Officer on appeal to disregard a conviction or caution.

Section 7 provides for the notification by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission of a disregard of a conviction or caution to the Commissioner of the Garda Síochána or other prescribed body to amend details of relevant records in respect of disregarded offences. *Section 7(5)* provides that such amendment means recording the fact and effect of a disregarded conviction or caution.

Section 8 provides for the application process for disregard of a conviction or caution to the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.

Section 9 provides for appeals in relation to where the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission has refused to disregard a conviction or caution. *Section 10(7)-(10)* provide for the appointment, qualification, number and term of appeals officers.

Section 10 provides for the review of the Bill by the Minister not later than 3 years after the commencement of the Act.

Section 11 provides for the annual reporting by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission to the Minister of the performance of its functions in relation to the Bill or making of other reports or recommendations as considered appropriate.

Section 12 provides for the Minister to take such measures necessary to inform the public of the process.

Section 13 provides that the application process shall be free of charge for Applicants and allows for support and assistance to be provided to Applicants by the Commission in the course of the process.

Section 14 provides for the amendment of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 by the insertion of *section 10(2)(r)* in relation to its functions.

Schedule 1

Schedule 1 provides for the Table of Offences Criminalising Consensual Same-Sex Sexual Activity in Ireland as provided for in *sections 5(1), (4) and 11*.

Schedule 2

Schedule 2 provides for the Table of Military Offences Criminalising Consensual Same-Sex Sexual Activity in Ireland as provided for in *sections 5(1), (4) and 11*.

Aengus Ó Snodaigh TD, Ged Nash TD, Pádraig Rice TD, Paul Murphy TD, Roderic O’Gorman TD, Catherine Connolly TD

July, 2025

6

**“Ireland’s anti-gay
laws have left a long
and dark legacy”
- March 2026**

Transcript of an opinion article by Brian Sheehan, published in The Irish Times on 2 March 2026, outlining the impact of anti-gay laws and the urgent need for redress.

A garda sergeant spied on two adult men having sex. But he wasn't prosecuted. They were.

In Tullow, Co Carlow, in the late 1960s there was a cluster of court cases involving up to 20 men, including three juveniles aged 15, 16 and 17 years, who were charged under the anti-gay laws then in force. Almost all of the men pleaded guilty to the charges the State brought against them. Some were sentenced to two years in prison, although the sentence was suspended. The cases were well covered in local newspapers along with their names, ages and addresses.

The enforcement of the anti-gay laws continued well into the 1970s. The renowned civil rights solicitor and later judge Garrett Sheehan recounted how he defended two gay men who were charged with gross indecency based on the evidence of a sergeant from Rathmines going into the front garden of a house that was divided into apartments, peering through the window and maintaining that he had seen sexual activity between two adult men. The two men were prosecuted, convicted and sent to prison.

They, and at least 1,690 other men, were prosecuted under the anti-gay laws from 1950 to 1993, with 941 men convicted, according to a recent Oireachtas Library research report.

For centuries, ordinary loving relationships between men were criminalised. English common law treated gay men as criminals.

The Buggery Act of 1533 provided for the penalty of death by hanging. That brutal legal position remained in place until the Offences Against the Person Act 1861, which replaced execution with imprisonment. A later Act in 1885 criminalised ordinary affection and intimacy between men under "gross indecency" provisions. These colonial laws were adopted unquestioningly by the Irish State in 1922 and implemented far more harshly.

Averill Earls, one of the few historians who has researched criminalisation in the earlier period, found there was a massive increase in prosecutions in Dublin after Independence. An estimated 18 men were prosecuted in Dublin under British rule between 1900 and 1920. This rose to 390 between 1924 and 1962.

Class, status and credibility could determine your fate under these laws. Earls has written about a relationship between Ronald Brown, the State Solicitor for Kildare, and his boyfriend Leslie Price from London, a deserter from the British army. Both were tried in Dublin in 1941 for "gross indecency" but acquitted. Leslie was also tried for a sexual relationship with a different man, was convicted and sentenced to six months in Mountjoy. Working class men with little power were the most vulnerable to criminalisation.

Criminalisation led to a bigotry that placed less value on the lives of gay men. There are a number of cases where "homosexual panic" was successfully used as a defence in murder or manslaughter trials, where the gay man was blamed for being killed because of his sexuality.

The influence of those criminal laws carried across the courts, including into the family courts, where lesbian and bisexual women

could be and were denied custody of their children or access to their children.

Beyond the justice system, the impact of the laws affected the response to the Aids epidemic in the 1980s, where the State felt it could not be seen to fund information on how to reduce risk of HIV infection during an act the laws described as grossly indecent. Vital information that would help protect gay and bisexual men had to be produced by the community without support from the State.

The anti-gay laws were actively used as instruments of surveillance, punishment and social control. Men prosecuted and convicted under them faced imprisonment, public disgrace, loss of employment, exclusion from family and community life, and lifelong stigma. Many lived in fear of exposure or blackmail. Criminalisation shaped societal attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people more broadly, embedding stigma, legitimising discrimination, and enforcing silence and shame.

The legacy of these convictions did not disappear with decriminalisation. Criminal records lingered. Men carried the burden of past convictions into later life, affecting travel, employment and personal relationships. Some never recovered from the trauma of State sanctioned punishment. Others died before the State acknowledged that what was done to them was wrong.

The formal repeal of these laws in 1993, following a successful case taken by Senator David Norris to the European Court of Justice, marked a hugely important turning point.

Twenty five years later, a formal apology by the then Taoiseach on behalf of the

State was delivered in the Dáil in 2018. The apology, supported by all members of the Dáil, acknowledged the “deep and lasting harm” done to those prosecuted under the laws and recognised that the laws had a “significant chilling effect on progress towards equality for the LGBTI community”.

Now, 33 years after decriminalisation, justice is finally in sight for men convicted under the anti-gay laws, convictions that are now recognised as violations of their human rights and dignity by the State.

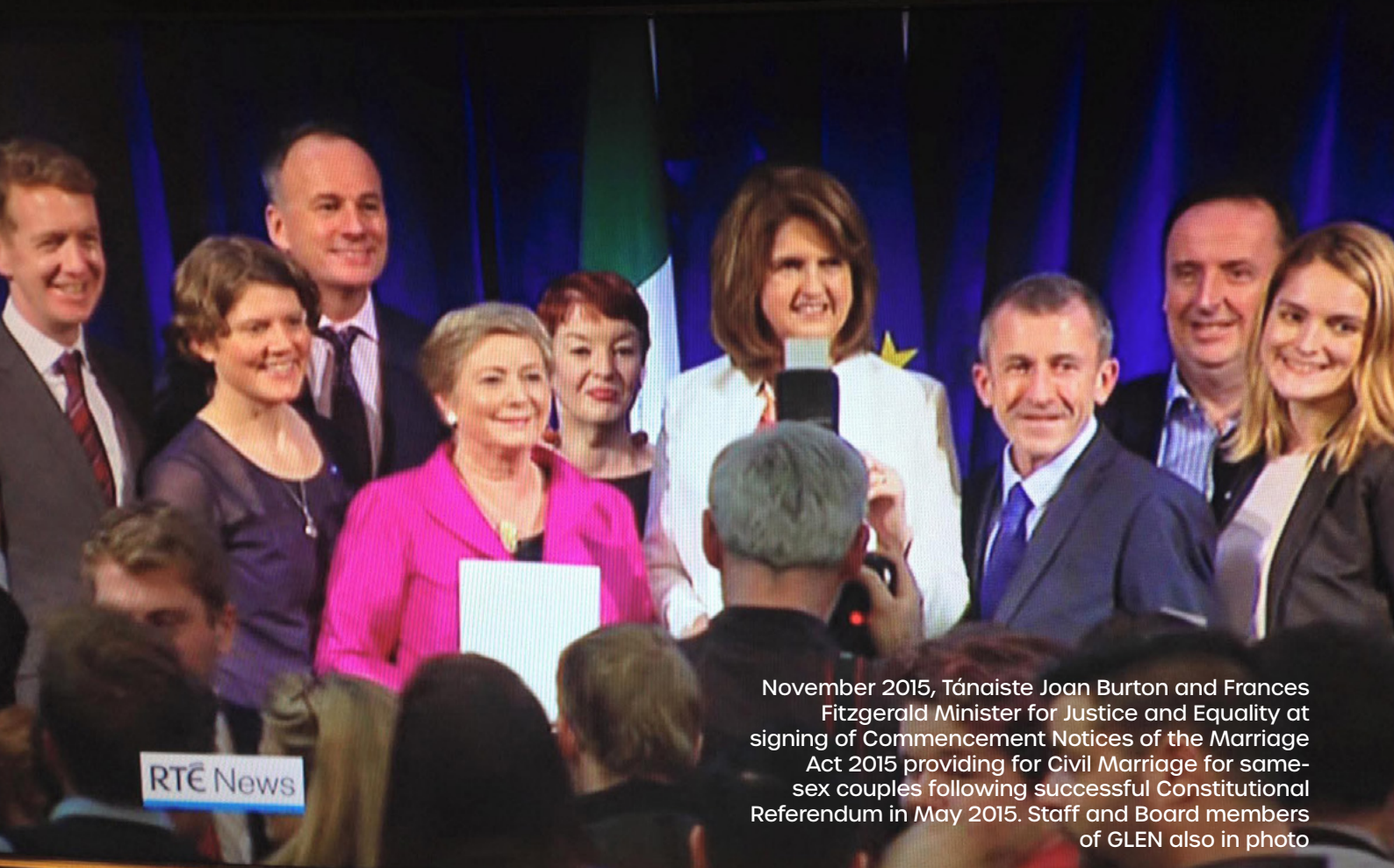
The Minister for Justice has confirmed that legislation will be brought forward to provide for “disregards” for those convicted for consensual activity under the anti-gay laws. The proposals are expected to reflect the recommendations of a working group established by the Department of Justice, which developed a wide range of recommendations to provide redress, including disregards for those convicted under parallel military laws.

By legally disregarding convictions for consensual same sex activity, the State will recognise that these laws were unjust in principle and harmful in practice. Such a scheme will remove the ongoing legal consequences of discrimination.

We cannot undo history. But the consequences of that injustice can be addressed. In removing the lasting legal scars of criminalising the expression of intimacy between consenting adults, Ireland can ensure that justice goes further than words spoken in apology and is realised through meaningful redress.



Two men kissing on 1997 Dublin Pride Parade
Men kissing was criminalised under Section 11 of the 1885 Act as it was considered 'gross indecency' between males
Photo: Christopher Robson courtesy of National Library of Ireland



November 2015, Tánaiste Joan Burton and Frances Fitzgerald Minister for Justice and Equality at signing of Commencement Notices of the Marriage Act 2015 providing for Civil Marriage for same-sex couples following successful Constitutional Referendum in May 2015. Staff and Board members of GLEN also in photo

7

**“Justice is in sight for
men convicted under
anti-gay laws”
- April 2026**

Transcript of an article by Karl Hayden, published in GCN, examining the legacy of anti-gay laws and the case for a disregard scheme.

Intimate and loving consensual relationships between men in Ireland have been criminalised for hundreds of years. First common law, then English law, then Irish law treated gay men not as citizens but as criminals. The 1533 Buggery Act carried the death penalty. The Offences Against the Person Act of 1861 replaced this vicious penalty with ‘penal servitude for life’. An 1885 Act added new offences that criminalised intimacy between men – the law under which Oscar Wilde was convicted and sent to Reading Gaol for two years.

These laws were a violation of the human rights of gay and bisexual men and an affront to their dignity. They remained in force until they were repealed in 1993 after long campaigns and a successful European Court of Justice case by David Norris. Now, 33 years after repeal, there is some justice in sight for those men convicted under those unjust laws.

The laws inflicted enormous damage. Prosecutions became a powerful tool of social control. They were vague, allowing for broad interpretation, and its enforcement was deeply unequal, especially for working class men. Gay men were spied on, entrapped, arrested and prosecuted. Convictions carried devastating consequences: imprisonment, the loss of employment, public exposure and humiliation, family rejection, forced emigration and lifelong stigma. For many, the impact was not a moment in court, but a lifetime shaped by fear, silence and exclusion. Fear of discovery, of blackmail, of

the state itself.

The harm extended far beyond those directly persecuted. Criminalisation shaped attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people and communities. It enforced silence, shame and stigma. It enabled discrimination and created a climate in which LGBTQ+ lives were treated as less worthy of dignity, protection, and respect. It spilled over into the family courts where lesbian and bisexual women could be denied custody of their children. The awful legacy of criminalisation has been felt across generations and continues to impact on lived experience today, despite repeal and other very significant legal and policy progress.

Community campaigns against criminalisation go back decades and were successful in repealing those laws in 1993, with an equal age of consent. The campaign for disregard has been underway since. The Labour Party’s Ged Nash brought a Private Members’ Bill to parliament in 2016 which was a critical turning point, initiating the process that led to the state apology in 2018. That apology, delivered in the Dáil by the then Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, on the 25th anniversary of decriminalisation, acknowledged that the laws had caused “deep and lasting harm” and that the men affected had been “treated with profound injustice”. He reflected on how the state had not merely failed LGBTQ+ people, but had actively persecuted them, a powerful admission from a country once defined by silence on these issues.

The LGBT Restorative Justice Campaign has continued to campaign for redress, supported by key politicians, academics, historians, community organisations and civil and human rights activists and

organisations here and abroad. After a public consultation process to which many LGBTQ+ organisations made submissions, a Department of Justice Working Group made 95 recommendations, including the establishment of a 'Disregard' scheme for past convictions between consenting adults. A 'Disregard' means that the person convicted of an offence is to be treated for all purposes as not having committed the offence.

The Minister for Justice recently announced that he will bring forward legislation, expected in March, to give effect to a Disregard Scheme. While we await details, we hope that it will implement the recommendations of the Working Group, including extending Disregards to convictions under similar military laws and provide for posthumous disregards.

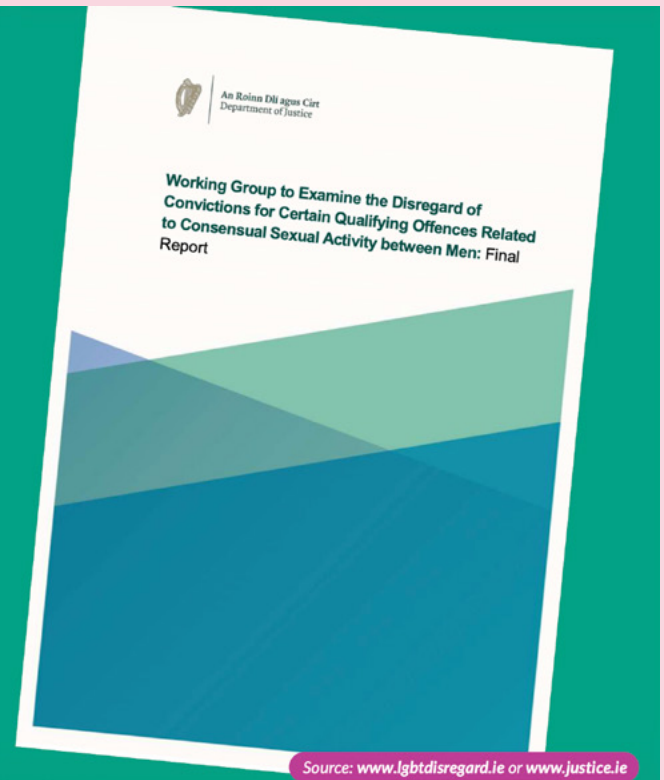
A disregard scheme is not about rewriting history; it is about confronting it honestly. By formally disregarding convictions for consensual same-sex activity, the state recognises that these laws were wrong when enacted, wrong when enforced, and wrong in their consequences. It is a practical act of restorative justice, allowing people to live free from the legal scars of discrimination.

We hope it will bring some level of redress to those men who felt the full, brutal force of those unjust laws on their lives.

Presentation to the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance Working Group

March 2026

LGBT Restorative Justice Campaign
www.lgbtdisregard.ie



LGBT Restorative Justice Campaign made a presentation to the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (Council of Europe) in March 2026 on the need for Disregard Legislation in Member States of the Council of Europe.

ECRI are now considering developing policies on Disregard Legislation.

8

Resources

www.lgbtdisregard.ie

www.eoin-collins.ie

www.kieranrose.ie

www.corklgbtarchive.com

Christopher Robson Photographic Archive,
National Library of Ireland: www.nli.ie

Final Report: Working Group to Examine
the Disregard of Convictions for Certain
Qualifying Offences Related to Consensual
Sexual Activity between Men, (2023)
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Disregard and Redress: Restorative Justice
for people impacted by Ireland's anti-
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Gay and Lesbian Activism in the Republic of
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Love in the Lav: A Social Biography of Same-
Sex Desire in Ireland 1922 - 1972, (2025) Averill
Earls

Convictions for Homosexual Acts in the Irish
Courts 1922 - 1993, (2022) Niamh Howlin,
Department of Justice

Country Overviews of Disregard Legislation
in Spain, Germany, Australia, Canada, UK and
New Zealand, (2022) Clifford Chance, Gay
Project Cork and LGBT Restorative Justice
Campaign

Draft Disregard of Historic Sexual Offences
Bill 2023, Céile Varley and Cillian Bracken
in association with Clifford Chance, A&L
Goodbody, Gay Project Cork and LGBT
Restorative Justice Campaign

Belfastmen: An Intimate History of Life Before

Gay Liberation, (2026) Tom Hulme

Pardons for persons convicted of
homosexual acts, (2022) Oireachtas Library
and Research Service

Diverse Communities: The Evolution of
Lesbian and Gay Politics in Ireland, (1994)
Kieran Rose

Anatomy of a Campaign by Christopher
Robson in Lesbian and Gay Visions of Ireland:
Towards the Twenty-first Century, (1995)
edited by Eoin Collins and Íde O'Carroll

Remarkable Journey: A Resource List on
Criminalisation and the Campaign for Gay
Law Reform and Equality, (2023) LGBT
Restorative Justice Campaign

Equality Now for Lesbians and Gay Men,
(1990) Irish Council for Civil Liberties

Dáil and Seanad Debates on Gay Law
Reform 1993, GLEN

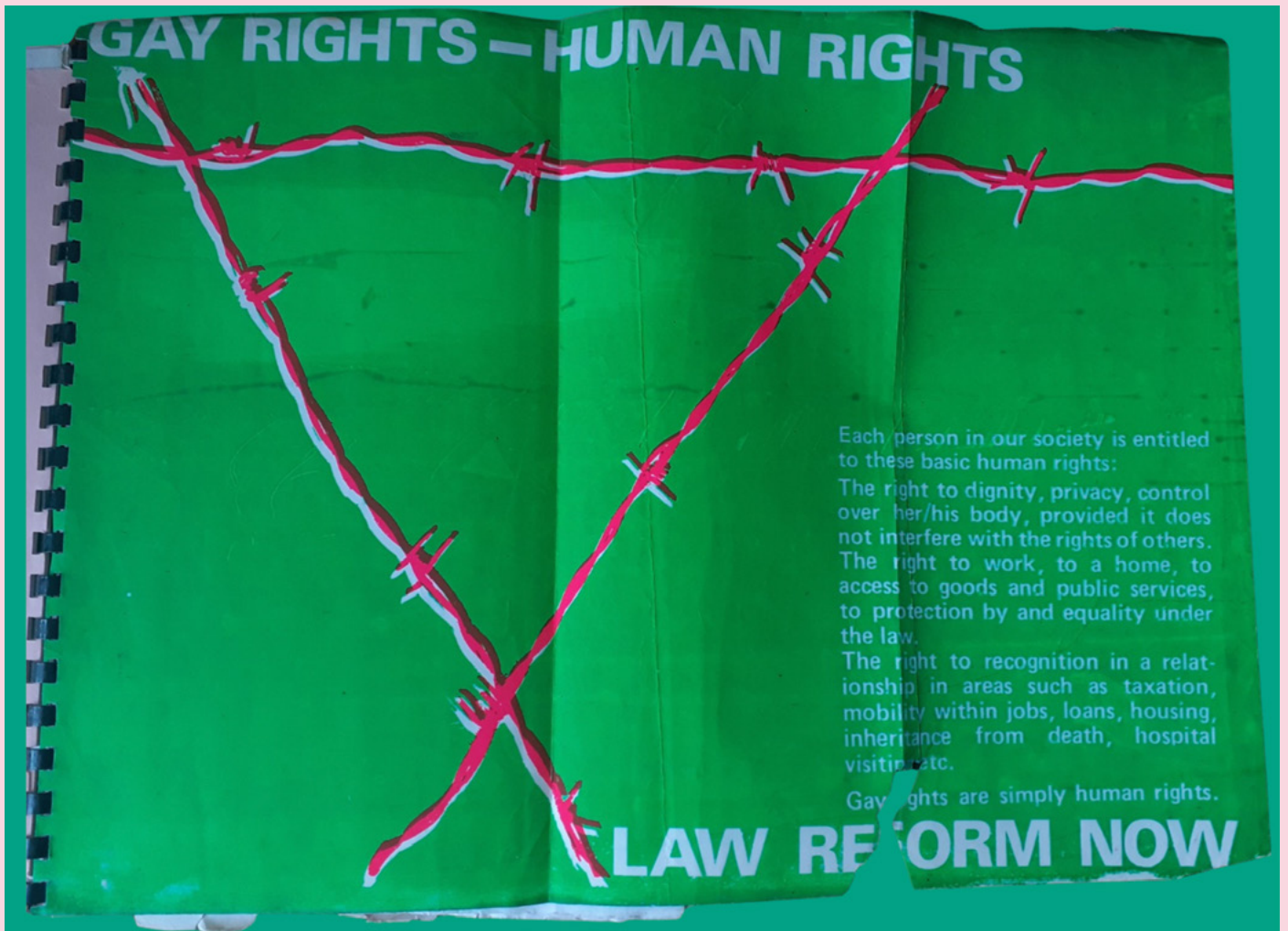
Trade Unions and Progress for LGBT People,
(2024) Kieran Rose

Homosexuality and Prosecutions in an Irish
Town in the 1960s: The Tullow Case, (2024)
Kieran Rose

Redress: Ireland's Institutions and Transitional
Justice (2022) edited by Katherine O'Donnell,
Maeve O'Rourke and James Smith

Road to Repeal: 50 Years of Struggle in
Ireland for Contraception and Abortion,
(2022), edited by Therese Caherty, Pauline
Conroy and Derek Speirs

After the Train: Irishwomen United and a
Network of Change, (2025) edited by Evelyn
Conlon and Rebecca Phelan



Gay Pride poster 1981
National Gay Federation Ireland
Design by Declan Buckley

Dublin Lesbian and Gay Pride Parade 1984
From left Joe Lynch Arthur Leahy and Laurie
Steele of Cork Gay Collective



Donal Sheehan holding Cork Gay Collective banner with
Pat McCarthy to right waiting for Dublin Lesbian and
Gay Pride Parade to start outside Stephen's Green, 1984
Photo: Kieran Rose

