



HM Government of Gibraltar

Ministry of Tourism, Equality,
Social Services and Housing

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FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE CIVIL PARTNERSHIP ACT 2014

A year since the coming into force of the Civil Partnership Act, Minister for Equality, the Hon Samantha Sacramento MP, explains what it means to have passed this landmark piece of legislation.

'The Civil Partnership Act is the fulfilment of one of our manifesto commitments; we committed that we would legislate for the recognition of civil partnerships between two people, regardless of gender or sexual orientation, ratified by a binding contract through the signing of the official register and this would entitle couples to benefits related to tax, pension and property rights.

Having been appointed as Gibraltar's first Minister for Equality I was immensely proud that the first Bill I moved in Parliament was the Civil Partnership Bill 2014; legislation that enabled the formal recognition of relationships between couples of the same sex. It was a historic and truly momentous occasion in the history of our Parliament and our community as a whole.

The Bill represented a historic step on what had been a long journey for same sex couples, for respect and dignity, and above all, recognition in Gibraltar of their right to enter into a relationship and for it to be recognised in the eyes of the law - something which did not exist prior to the passing of the legislation. It was a natural progression towards an inclusive society and recognition of modern Gibraltar making a major step in same-sex couples gaining recognition and social acceptance.

We are a Government that believes that the respect of a person's sexual orientation is a fundamental human right. This is a far cry from the denial of expression of gay rights demonstrated by the previous administration, to the extent that resisting the application by a same-sex couple to share a housing tenancy was resisted all the way to Privy Council, Gibraltar's highest court of appeal, at a cost to the tax payer in excess of a quarter of a million pounds.

The Civil Partnership Bill was moved and passed in Parliament on the 21st March 2014. It was commenced on the 28th March 2014 and it is on the 28th March that we celebrate its first anniversary.

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The 27th May 2014 saw the first civil partnership ceremony being celebrated. To commemorate the occasion the Government flew the 'rainbow flag' from No. 6 Convent Place. The couple who entered into the partnership were the ladies who so bravely challenged the previous administration to assert their entitlement to recognition of their relations to enable them to enjoy a joint housing tenancy.

To date there have been 24 civil partnerships entered into since the introduction of the Civil Partnership Bill, 23 of which were entered into by same-sex couples. We were right to also allow opposite sex couples to enter into Civil Partnerships, as had previously been agreed with Unite the Union.

The legislation we passed last year sent a clear message that same-sex couples deserve recognition and respect. It demonstrates that the Government's commitment to equality is strong and unequivocal, and it provides a further step on the road to a fair and inclusive society and the right to be treated equally in the eyes of the law. I am proud to be part of a Government that was bold enough to send this unequivocal message and mark a milestone in the legislative process.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Equality Rights Group, and in particular Felix Alvarez and Charlie Trico, who formed a crucial part of the consultation process for the Civil Partnership Bill.'