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Cardinal Brady's opposition to proposed Civil Partnership Bill

"The Government's proposed Civil Partnership Bill would give de facto marriage rights to cohabiting or same sex couples and should be blocked" says Cardinal Sean Brady.

Cohabiting couples are now the fastest growing family unit in the State. CSO figures show the numbers have jumped from 77,600 in 2002 to 121,800 in 2006, a rise of more than 60%. They account for 12% of all family units, compared to 8 % in 2002. The number of children living with cohabiting parents also increased from 51,700 in 2002 to 74,500 in 2006.

Unmarried cohabitation is a reality and this trend is reflected throughout Europe. Brenda Forde, Senior Information Officer of Treoir said *"The Civil Partnership Bill in its present state will give heterosexual cohabitants only very limited protection. It allows for access to a redress scheme (through the courts) when a relationship ends through death or separation. The limited rights proposed in this Bill do not in any way undermine marriage as suggested by Cardinal Brady. They give some limited protection to vulnerable adults and children where a cohabitation ends"*.

Cardinal Sean Brady does state that "anyone in a caring dependent relationship.....should be given certain protections such as hospital visitation rights and a stability of residence in the event of that relationship ending". The Civil Partnership Bill does go some way towards providing cohabitants with these rights but Treoir would call on Revenue to treat cohabitant families fairly for tax purposes. Currently for inheritance purposes a cohabitant partner is treated as a stranger and could be forced to sell the family home in order to pay the exorbitant inheritance tax in the event of the death of a partner. This would certainly not ensure 'stability of residence'. The Bill does not deal with this issue.

For further information

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