

## Written answers

Tuesday, 19 January 2010

Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform

Magdalene Laundries



**Ruairi Quinn** (Dublin South East, Labour)

*Question 547:* To ask the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the position regarding a meeting (details supplied); if he will confirm that the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform sent women on remand to the Sean McDermott Street Magdalene following the introduction of the Criminal Justice Act 1960; if a capitation grant was awarded to the Magdalene laundries where these women were held on remand; if the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform holds records of all the women who were held on remand in this Magdalene laundry under the Criminal Justice Act 1960; if a State official ever inspected, regulated or approved the Magdalene laundry which was used for remand purposes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48571/09]



**Dermot Ahern** (Minister, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform; Louth, Fianna Fail)

I can advise the Deputy that following a request for a meeting, officials from my Department met with representatives of Justice for Magdalenes on the 14th of December, 2009. There was an exchange of information and my officials are pursuing some of the issues raised. My officials have also been in touch with the Department of Education and Science following that meeting.

It is the Courts who have power to remand a person charged with a criminal offence in custody pending trial and sentencing. The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform is responsible for ensuring that there are places of detention which can be used for remand purposes but the Department itself has no power to send a person to a particular institution. Following the enactment of the Criminal Justice Act, 1960, the then Minister for Justice approved both St. Mary's Magdalen Asylum, Sean McDermott Street, Dublin 1 and Our Lady's Home, Henrietta Street, Dublin 1 (not a Magdalen Asylum) for use as a remand institution for female persons aged from 16 to 21 years. Prior to 1960 the only option to the courts was to remand such persons to Mountjoy female prison. Payments were made by the Department of Justice for those remanded by the Courts to the two institutions in question. Limited records for one or two years linking payments with the names of individuals remanded to Our Lady's Home, Henrietta Street have been located. The records indicate that periods of remand rarely exceeded seven days and one or two days was the norm. Further research is being carried out to establish if more comprehensive records were kept.

Part of the arrangements with the two institutions was that those remanded were to have same rights and privileges as provided for remand prisoners in the 1947 Prison Rules Part III, and that they would be visited from time to time by a Probation Officer and by the Superintendent of Prisons.

**Does this answer the above question?**

Yes! 0 people think so!

No! 1 person thinks not!