



## Statement by An Taoiseach, Mr. Brian Cowen, TD, 26th May 2009.

As I said earlier today, on behalf of the Government, the State and all our citizens, I want to sincerely apologise to the victims of childhood abuse for the failure to intervene, to detect their pain, to come to their rescue.

This evening, the Government discussed all relevant matters arising from Mr Justice Ryan's Report.

The Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse contains 20 formal recommendations along with other issues throughout the body of the report that require consideration.

The Government has this evening decided to accept **all** the recommendations of the Commission and is committed to their full implementation.

In particular, the Government accepts the recommendation that we admit that abuse of children occurred because of failures of systems and policy, of management and administration and of senior personnel who were concerned with industrial and reformatory schools.

In addition, the Government will consult with the representatives of survivors of abuse on the implementation of the recommendation that a memorial to victims, containing the words of the then Taoiseach's apology of May 1999, should be erected.

The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Mr Barry Andrews, TD, will develop a plan for the implementation of the recommendations. In developing this plan the OMCYA will consider the various issues which need to be addressed and what actions are necessary, feasible and effective.

This plan will include:

- a more detailed analysis of the precise actions required
- a timetable for their implementation
- and the costs and other resources associated with these actions.

This implementation plan will be brought by the Minister to Government for its approval by the end of July.

Consideration of actions to implement the Commission's recommendations will centre on:

- further implementation of robust independent inspection processes relating to children receiving personal social services
- ensuring that a child centred approach is taken and the voice of the child is heard in policies and their implementation
- how to best hold service providers to account in the implementation of the recommendations in particular in relation to child welfare and protection guidelines
- associated legislative and regulatory provisions required.

It is clear that the Report has found a much more systemic volume of abuse in Institutions than was previously known or accepted by the Orders. The Government has therefore decided to call on the relevant congregations to provide a substantial additional contribution in view of the moral responsibility they continue to hold in these matters.

I acknowledge that the Christian Brothers have this afternoon indicated their willingness to commit additional resources in reparation for abuses of the past and to consult with the Government and other stakeholders in relation to how this can be achieved. I believe the other individual congregations involved should now also articulate their willingness to make a further substantial voluntary contribution.

The Government intends to meet with representatives of the Congregations to discuss with them

- the making by them of further contributions,
- the mechanism by which this will be done, including the establishment of a Trust which would be available to support

education and welfare purposes,

and,

- the basis on which the public will be able to assess the significance of these contributions by reference to the resources available to these Congregations.

It is deeply shameful for all Irish people that this happened in our country and that for so long it was not confronted. The failure of society in the treatment of children is laid bare in this report and it is horrendous. These children were placed in institutions by the State and the State had a duty of care to them. The victims were betrayed by the State and we must ensure that this can never, ever, happen again. Those Orders whose members committed the abuse must too face their moral responsibilities.

Those accountable for such crimes – no matter how long ago – must also face the full rigours of the law. An Assistant Garda Commissioner has been charged with examining the totality of this report and the Garda Síochána and the DPP will have our fullest co-operation in pursuing any criminal investigation that may arise.

We owe Mr. Justice Ryan and the Commission members a deep debt of gratitude for presenting such a comprehensive report in such clear and measured tones. The graphic accounts of abuse are presented with careful analysis of the structures and policies, alongside the historical and social patterns under which they occurred.

Now that a light has been shone on the unacceptable practices and crimes of the past, we must not and will not be found wanting in our response.