

Oifig An Aire Oideachais agus Eolaíochta.
Sráid Maoilbhríde,
Baile Átha Cliath 1.



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Dr James M. Smith,
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27 April, 2010

Dear Dr Smith,

I refer to your letter of 29th March, 2009 and wish to thank you for your good wishes in my new portfolio. I also wish to refer to your subsequent emails of 16th April to the Taoiseach, myself and other Ministers and of 19th April, enclosing your letter to the Irish Times of the same date.

I am conscious of the efforts you and your colleagues have made to highlight the position of women committed to Magdalene laundries. Their stories comprise a range of diverse and difficult circumstances from times very much different to those experienced today and I appreciate the difficulties encountered by these women.

The position in relation to my Department has been outlined in earlier correspondence from my predecessor and in the meeting with my officials. As you are aware, section 1(3) of the Residential Institutions Redress Act, 2002 provides that an applicant who was resident in an institution and was transferred from that institution to another place of residence which carried on the business of a laundry and who suffered abuse while resident in that laundry shall be deemed, at the time of the abuse to have been resident in that institution. This provision was included on the basis that the State was still responsible for the welfare and protection of children who were transferred to a laundry from a State regulated institution. My Department does not hold information on the number of applications made to the Residential Institutions Redress Board where applicants were transferred from scheduled institutions to laundries.

Having set out the position in relation to the Redress Scheme I am anxious that my Department would provide as much assistance as possible particularly in making information available subject to resource and privacy constraints. In this context the

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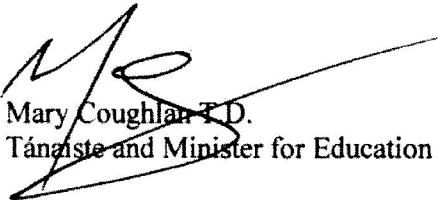
records held by my Department relate to children who were admitted to Industrial and Reformatory Schools via the Courts. My Department does not generally hold any records in relation to children who may have been otherwise placed in the Industrial and Reformatory schools, e.g. voluntary placements, Health Authority referrals, etc. nor indeed would my Department hold any records in respect of former residents of the remaining scheduled institutions. Consequently, any records which my Department holds could not be relied upon to accurately quantify the numbers involved.

My Department has reviewed the records available in an attempt to identify the incidence of residents being referred to laundries from industrial and reformatory schools. This review identified 261 references of referrals. Of these 3 referrals were to Magdalen laundries (one each to Galway, Limerick and Donnybrook); 95 were to convent laundries, 102 to school laundries and 61 to other laundries. The number of laundries involved is unclear as some locations are listed as school, convent and other laundries.

I hope you find this helpful.

Kind Regards,

Yours sincerely



Mary Coughlan T.D.
Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Science