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Mr. Tom Kitt, TD
Dáil Éireann
Dublin 2

PLEASE QUOTE REF NUMBER ON ALL CORRESPONDENCE
Our Ref: 0904695/SR

4th September 2009

Dear Tom

Thank you for your recent letter on behalf of Mr. James Smith, Associate Professor, English Department and Irish Studies Programme, Boston College, USA in relation to the Magdalen Laundries.

I wish to advise you in the first instance that the Magdalen laundries are not listed in the Schedule to the Residential Institutions Redress Act, 2002, as they were not subject to State regulation or supervision. However, Section 1 (3) of the Act 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." The justification for this provision is that the State was still responsible for the welfare and protection of children who were transferred to a Magdalen laundry from a State regulated institution provided they were not officially discharged from the scheduled institution. Consequently, persons who were in a Scheduled institution and were transferred to a laundry during the course of their official period of residency may fall to be considered for an award by the Redress Board in respect of their residency in the laundry.

In terms of establishing a distinct scheme for former employees of the Magdalen Laundries, the situation in relation to children who were taken into the laundries privately or who entered the laundries as adults is quite different to persons who were resident in State run institutions. The Magdalen laundries were privately owned and operated establishments which did not come within the responsibility of the State. The State did not refer individuals to Magdalen Laundries nor was it complicit in referring individuals to them.

I should point out, however, that a person's ineligibility to be considered for an award under the terms of the current Redress Scheme does not affect their statutory right to pursue any other legal avenue which may be open to them.

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I hope this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely



Batt O'Keeffe TD
Minister for Education & Science