

Statement of the Sisters of Mercy

Contribution of Sisters of Mercy to Former Residents, the State and to the People of Ireland

The Sisters of Mercy confirmed today that, last April, they had sought a meeting with Minister Ruairi Quinn to discuss how they would progress their offer of December 2009 to the Statutory Fund for former residents and to the State. In a letter to the Minister earlier this week, the request for this meeting was renewed. The Minister's invitation to a meeting as part of a group of eighteen was declined.

Sister Coirle McCarthy, the Congregational Leader, stressed that, *"in making the offer in December 2009, our first priority was the well-being of all the former residents of our industrial schools."*

Sister Coirle continued *"it is for the benefit of all former residents that we offer €20m to an independent fund together with a number of properties valued at €11.5m"*.

In addition, the 2009 offer of the Sisters of Mercy includes:

- ❖ Properties offered to the State valued at December 2009 at €80,856,800
- ❖ Properties offered to the voluntary sector valued at December 2009 at €15,060,000

The Sisters regret that the Government has determined that the Statutory Fund for former residents will not benefit from the properties offered to it or even from their proceeds of sale. In her letter, Sister Coirle renewed the offer of properties to the Statutory Fund for former residents.

With regard to the properties offered to the State, but not accepted by it, the offer was renewed. If the State does not accept these properties, five of them will be offered to local county councils and two significant properties will be sold and the proceeds will go to the new National Children's Hospital.

Sister Coirle noted in the letter that, with the exception of the property transfer to one voluntary group, the Government does not deem the transfers of thirteen other properties to the voluntary sector as being of benefit to the State. However, because it is the Sisters' view that the work of these voluntary bodies is of significant public benefit, they remain committed to transferring the properties as outlined in their offer of 2009.

In the letter, the Sisters of Mercy also drew the Minister's attention to the many ways in which they, since their founding in 1831, have responded to local need and in collaboration with local communities, provided education, health care and social services.

In the last ten years, alone, they have donated cash and property in excess of €1 billion to ensure that these voluntary services continue for present and future generations of this country. In making these donations they sought no public recognition.

In 2007 the Congregation committed to transferring 66 secondary schools valued in 2007 at €412,491,000 to an independent Catholic Trust.

In addition, the Congregation has committed to contribute nearly €9m to support this Trust in the coming years.

The Sisters have put in place arrangements for the transfer of the ownership of 79 primary schools, valued in 2009 at €245,968,346, to the diocesan patron. This was done in the context of the current discussion regarding rationalisation and the provision of diversity in education.

No monetary value has accrued or will accrue to the Congregation through any of these transfers.

In relation to the healthcare services the following significant contributions have been made for the benefit of the people of Ireland:

In 2005 the Congregation transferred its ownership of the Mater Misericordiae University Hospital to a trust company, Mater Misericordiae Children's University Hospital (MMCUEH).

A site on Eccles Street, valued at €95 million, upon which it is proposed that the new National Children's Hospital will be built was transferred by MMCUEH without cost to the HSE.

The Sisters are also relinquishing the control and ownership of the National Rehabilitation Hospital.

No monetary value has accrued or will accrue to the the Sisters of Mercy from any of these transfers.

The Sisters of Mercy believe that they have made a significant contribution to Irish Society for over 170 years. Sister Coirle went on to say *"the resources of our Congregation are the result of the voluntary commitment and work of our Sisters who served their local communities over the past 170 years. Throughout our history, our Sisters numbering more than 12,780 have given all of their resources, including salaries, towards the mission of our Congregation and it is this voluntary giving that has enabled all of this to happen"*.

However, the Sisters believe that they have been misrepresented and demonised in recent years and that their Congregation has been portrayed in a way that seeks to undermine their voluntary service to this country and beyond. They believe this is a very inaccurate reflection of their Congregation.

The Sisters are placing on record the following facts:

- ❖ The Commission did not make a recommendation that the State's expenditure upon the Commission and the Redress Scheme would be borne 50:50 between the State and 18 religious congregations. The Commission had no such function.

- ❖ There has never been an agreement between the State and 18 religious congregations that the costs of the Redress Scheme would be borne on a 50:50 basis. It has been wrongly suggested that the Congregation has disadvantaged the State in that it has failed to honour a debt. The Congregation has met and will continue to meet all of its commitments to former residents and to the State.

It is the hope of the Sisters that what they have offered to the State will be of benefit to all the people of this country now and into the future.

Sister Coirle concluded by emphasising that *“our Congregation will continue to care for those who were with us as children”* and added *“we take this opportunity to, again, offer our heartfelt apology to all those who were hurt and damaged in our institutions.”*