



An Roinn Leanaí
agus Gnóthaí Óige
Department of
Children and Youth Affairs

Oifig an Aire
Office of the
Minister



5 March 2015

Ms. Kathy McMahon
Irish First Mothers Facebook Group

Dear Ms. McMahon

I refer to your letter of 3 March 2015 regarding the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes and related matters.

I note that you have made serious and entirely unsubstantiated allegations about an officer of my Department, Ms. Elizabeth Canavan, who acted as Secretary General during the time that work on the establishment of the Commission was in progress.

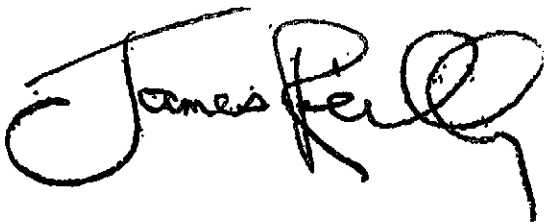
I wish to state for the record that I regard Ms. Canavan as a person of the highest personal integrity, who at all times acted appropriately in dealing with this issue. I reject entirely any claim or implication that Ms. Canavan exerted inappropriate influence over any aspect of the Commission, whether its terms of reference, structure, membership or the scope of its work. As a senior official of the Department, Ms. Canavan offered me advice, drawing upon her extensive experience and understanding of the issues involved. I am satisfied that there was no conflict of interest in what was an entirely proper offering of advice that occurs on a daily basis between officials and Government Ministers.

For the avoidance of doubt, I wish to confirm that the scope of the investigation, including the process for its establishment, and its comprehensive terms of reference, were decided by the Government on my advice as Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. The Order establishing the Commission was signed by the Taoiseach following formal approval by both Houses of the Oireachtas.

The Commission is entirely independent in the exercise of its investigation, and officials will have no role whatever in directing or influencing the scope of or approach to these investigations. I am confident that the Commission, with the significant powers afforded to it under legislation, will provide an effective and transparent mechanism to do its work, while also respecting fair procedures and natural justice.

I note that you published your letter to me on your website, and that you appear to have copied your letter to various office-holders including the Taoiseach, Tanaiste and leaders of opposition parties. In the same context of fair procedure and natural justice, I am copying this letter to these recipients and would hope that you would publish it on your website.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Reilly". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and 'R'.

Dr. James Reilly TD
Minister for Children and Youth Affairs