

Christian Brothers European Province

Response to Government

Pursuant on the Report of the Ryan Commission

INTRODUCTION

The Christian Brothers in Ireland (as part of the European Province) accept the findings of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse. At the time of its publication, we expressed our shock, shame and sorrow for all the abuse that had emerged in the residential institutions. We also committed to a process of reparation to survivors and investment in education and welfare for present and future generations of children in Ireland.

In the meantime, we have met with former residents and some representative groupings from Ireland and the United Kingdom. In formulating a conscientious response to the issues arising from the Ryan Report, we have also listened to the people of Ireland and to Government.

Specifically, we have undertaken a comprehensive and detailed review of all of our resources, commitments and liabilities with a view to making further contributions that would be significant especially to former residents and also to present and future generations of young people within the State. All contributions are offered and made in a spirit of compassion and justice.

Our response reflects the moral obligation we collectively and individually feel. Our clear priority is to support the independent trust mooted by Government as a means of assisting former residents who otherwise would be without assistance or means for their lives and welfare. We recognise the challenges facing the new trust in ensuring that assistance is directed to individual survivors, based on need, whilst minimising costs incurred on administrative, organisational and legal expenses. Our present response is being made in addition to the almost €30 million that we have already contributed to welfare, counselling and redress since 1996.

A second aspect of our response arises from the requirement to begin to repair trust with so many people in Ireland who felt betrayed by the Christian Brothers as evidenced in the Ryan

Report. We recognise that over 37,000 young people are currently educated in schools which have grown out of the Edmund Rice tradition. We still feel a very strong obligation to the young people of this country and their continuing development. We sincerely hope that our proposal to yield influence and control over school assets will add value to the State, to the people of Ireland and to present and future generations of children.

RESPONSE

The details of our response to Government are as follows:

1. We are proposing to make a donation of €34 million comprising:
 - a. A sum of €10 million to be applied to an independent trust that will be established by the Government to respond to the direct educational, welfare and medical needs of former residents. This donation will be offered in amounts of €3 million in each of the next two years, followed by a final payment of €4m in year three.
 - b. An additional sum of €20 million will be donated to the trust established by Government on the disposal of properties currently in the ownership of the Christian Brothers. Whereas timing may be influenced by market conditions, we would ideally anticipate making this contribution within 5 years.
 - c. A sum of €4 million will be contributed over the next five years to support counselling and therapeutic services such as *Faoiseamh*, an independent service which caters for the needs of former residents and others who have experienced abuse in religious run institutions.

2. The Christian Brothers are proposing to transfer all school playing fields to a separate independent trust:

We currently own and license playing fields and associated lands to schools of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust. Given that these sporting amenities are integral to the

lives of 37,000 students and thousands of young people in local communities around Ireland, we are proposing to transfer ownership of these lands from the Christian Brothers to an independent and separate education trust to be jointly held by Government and the Edmund Rice Schools Trust. A professional indicative opinion of value of the playing fields in July 2009 was set at €127 million.

CONCLUDING NOTES

In 2008, the Christian Brothers established the Edmund Rice Schools Trust company for the development and good management of the schools. This is now a trust company independent of the Christian Brothers. The value of the school properties at the point of transfer to the new trust company in 2008 was independently assessed at €430 million.

In addition, the Christian Brothers bore the establishment and development costs of almost €5 million for the new trust company. We will continue to donate the administrative costs of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust over the next five years in the amount of €8 million.

All responses mentioned above will be subject to the approval of the regulatory authorities of church and state to ensure that what the Christian Brothers propose to do with the assets of the Trust for which we are responsible is legally compliant with all obligations. All lines of authorisation will be pursued without delay.

EUROPEAN PROVINCE LEADERSHIP TEAM

23 NOVEMBER 2009