



Adoption Rights Alliance

REGAINING IDENTITIES, HISTORIES AND RIGHTS FOR ADOPTED PEOPLE

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PRESS RELEASE

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Adoption Rights Alliance gives cautious welcome to Inquiry but cites grave concerns

Adoption Rights Alliance (ARA), which advocates for equal human and civil rights for those affected by Ireland's closed secret forced adoption system has cautiously welcomed certain elements of the Terms of Reference for the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes and certain related Matters. However, the group has grave concerns that the inquiry has, from the outset, been limited to only investigating the practices and procedures of those institutions, agencies and individuals with a direct connection to a Mother and Baby Home.

This approach completely excludes the tens of thousands of unmarried mothers who gave birth in state and private maternity homes but who, along with their children, suffered the same fate of forced and illegal adoptions as those born in Mother and Baby Homes. It also ignores the abuses endured by infants in other institutions where mothers were not incarcerated, for example, the various Nazareth Houses. Additionally, the focus solely on "single" women neglects to acknowledge the married and widowed women who were also subject to this wide range of institutions.

Minister James Reilly and his advisers admitted that the activity of this large body of other institutions would only be covered if a connection was made between them and any Mother and Baby Home. ARA notes however, that the motion agreed by Dáil Éireann on 11th June 2014 explicitly and only refers to Mother and Baby Homes and it therefore, calls on the government to immediately amend Clause 1 of the Terms of Reference to include other institutions affecting unmarried mothers and their children born outside of wedlock.

ARA is concerned that despite the Minister's best intentions to broaden the scope of the investigation into the large group of private institutions, the Commission could leave itself open to legal challenge from those institutions not defined in the Schedule to the Terms of Reference.

ARA welcomes the inclusion of admissions procedures, living conditions and care arrangements, vaccine trials and anatomical experiments, mortality rates, post-mortem practices and discharge procedures for residents of Mother and Baby Homes. However, the group is disappointed there is no specific reference to the investigation of adoption practices per se, which affected not just those mothers who lost their children to forced adoption also those adopted people whose adoptions were not in their best interests.

While ARA welcomes that the Commission will investigate the issue of full and informed consent of natural mothers, as well as the placement of children in Ireland and abroad, the voice of all adopted people who endured unsuitable adoptive placements must be heard".

Finally, ARA is pleased to note that the Commission will have 'discretion in relation to the scope and intensity of the investigation' and the organisation will engage fully with the inquiry.

[ENDS]

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Notes to editors:

Joint JFMR/ARA submission on the Terms of Reference of the Commission of Investigation:

http://magdalenelaundries.com/ARAJFMR_ToR_Briefing_300614.pdf