

Extract from Taoiseach's address to the Dáil – 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2013

Magdalen Laundries

*"In a society guided by the principles of compassion and social justice there never would have been any need for institutions such as the Magdalen laundries. The report shows that the perception that the Magdalen laundries were reserved for those who were offensively and judgmentally called "fallen women" is not based upon fact at all but upon prejudice. The women are and always were wholly blameless. Therefore, I, as Taoiseach, on behalf of the State, the Government and our citizens, deeply regret and apologise unreservedly to all those women for the hurt that was done to them and for any stigma they suffered as a result of the time they spent in a Magdalen laundry. I hope that the publication of the McAleese report and this apology makes some contribution to the healing process.*

*In reflecting on this report, I have come to the view that these women deserve more than this formal apology, important though it is. I also want to put in place a process by which we can determine how best to help and support the women in their remaining years. One of the many things I have learned during my recent meetings with the Magdalen women is that their circumstances and current needs vary greatly from person to person. That is why the Government has today asked the President of the Law Reform Commission, Mr. Justice John Quirke, to undertake a three month review and to make recommendations as to the criteria that should be applied in assessing the help that the Government can provide in the areas of payments and other supports, including medical cards, psychological and counselling services and other welfare needs. The terms of reference for Mr. Justice Quirke will be published later today and I will also arrange for the representatives of the women to be fully briefed on this process. When Mr. Justice Quirke has reported, the Government will establish a fund to assist the women, based on his recommendations. I am confident that this process will enable us to provide speedy, fair and meaningful help to the women in a compassionate and non-adversarial way. I am determined that the fund will be primarily used to help the women, as is their stated and strong desire, and not for legal or administrative costs."*