

2<sup>nd</sup> August 2017

Ms. Margaret Falsey,  
Committee Secretariat  
Committee of Public Accounts  
Leinster House  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2.

Dear Ms. Falsey,

Thank you for your email as received on the 26<sup>th</sup> July 2017.

I am concerned to learn that the members of the Committee have raised concerns about the information being provided to the Committee from Caranua.

I refer to our correspondence sent to the Committee dated 9<sup>th</sup> May 2017 where we included a note on the Towards Healing organisation and to discussions that took place in respect of the MOU (a copy of which was attached with our original correspondence) with Towards Healing and Caranua during Board meetings in 2014:

“Towards Healing then approached Caranua to enter into an arrangement whereby a person who had reached this cap and required further treatment, could apply to Caranua for support. This matter was considered by the Board over a number of meetings during 2014 and a number of meetings were also held between the Chair and CEO of both Towards Healing and Caranua (19<sup>th</sup> March, 5<sup>th</sup> June and 15<sup>th</sup> July). The concern that the cap had been introduced in order to avail of funding through Caranua and that this payment from Caranua for services to Towards Healing would, in effect, be a subsidy from one fund supported by Catholic bodies to another, was raised and considered by the Board.”

As stated above a discussion took place about Caranua entering into an MOU with Towards Healing at the Board meeting. Following these discussions:

“A decision, in principle, to enter into an agreement with Towards Healing was made by the Board at its meeting on 19th June. The Board was not in favour of a “block grant” to Towards Healing, but the payment for services provided by Towards Healing in respect of individuals. In taking this decision, the Board was of the view that this arrangement would help to ensure the continuation of services to those who had been clinically assessed as needing those services, with a therapist they had a relationship with, while at the same time removing the necessity for individual applicants to provide Caranua with quotes and receipts, thereby reducing a burden on them and reducing administration for Caranua.”

I refer to the Dáil transcript of our appearance before the Committee on the 13<sup>th</sup> April 2017 and no representative of Caranua referred to the Towards Healing organisation as “a Catholic run organisation”. I have reviewed the transcript and attach a number of extracts from the transcript, where I have highlighted references to Towards Healing by Caranua.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require additional information with regard to any of these or other issues of interest to the Committee.

Yours sincerely



MARY HIGGINS  
Chief Executive Officer

**Enc. Extracts from the Dáil transcript of the PAC, Thursday, 13 April 2017**

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**Deputy Josepha Madigan:** It is important that we see that there is not a correlation there and that there is no favouritism, for want of a better word.

I wish to ask about counselling. Some €10 million was offered up for counselling and support. Who was to provide this counselling support? I presume it is not being provided by the congregations under whose care these people have suffered. I presume external groups were used.

**Mr. Seán Ó Foghlú:** Just give me one second.

**Deputy Josepha Madigan:** Sure.

**Mr. Seán Ó Foghlú:** As part of the indemnity agreement, there was €10 million for counselling services provided by the congregations themselves. We went through a process to sign off on that to ensure that at least that amount of counselling was provided. As far as I understand, that is now complete.

**Deputy Josepha Madigan:** Who provided the service?

**Mr. Seán Ó Foghlú:** Towards Healing is the name of the organisation. It is a Catholic Church-run organisation called Towards Healing.

**Deputy Josepha Madigan:** It is a Catholic organisation. One can see-----

**Mr. Seán Ó Foghlú:** It was part of their contribution under the indemnity which then--  
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**Deputy Josepha Madigan:** One can see the irony of that. That is the very point I was trying to make, though I did not know what the answer would be. I think it would have been better in terms of reassuring the claimants had they received counselling from an external group. Would the witness accept that?

**Mr. Seán Ó Foghlú:** Perhaps Ms Hynes will come in on the other counselling that was available.

**Ms Catherine Hynes:** There is a counselling service provided by the HSE. People who have suffered abuse in any institution can avail of that-----

**Deputy Josepha Madigan:** I was just told it was a Catholic-run organisation called Towards Healing.

**Ms Catherine Hynes:** There is a funded Catholic one called Towards Healing, but in addition-----

**Deputy Josepha Madigan:** That has provided counselling to claimants who have suffered abuse in Catholic organisations.

**Ms Catherine Hynes:** It provides counselling, but it is not mandatory for a person to avail of counselling from Towards Healing.

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**Deputy Bobby Aylward:** Is it true that the CEO of Caranua gave money back to the Catholic Church for counselling services for which it had already paid? Can Ms Higgins explain that?

**Ms Mary Higgins:** I can. I think it is-----

**Deputy Bobby Aylward:** What kind of money is involved?

**Ms Mary Higgins:** The position is not that we have been giving money back to the Catholic Church but that we will pay for counselling if that is what people are looking for. There are a number of counselling services in place. Towards Healing is one of the counselling services funded by the Catholic Church. It has a limit on the number of counselling sessions survivors are able to have and we will pay if there is a need for additional sessions. We also pay for other counselling services.

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**Deputy David Cullinane:** I accept that.

I have two more questions. The first concerns the counselling services that were provided. Were some of those provided by organisations funded exclusively by the religious orders, or organisations which are an extension of religious orders?

**Ms Mary Higgins:** There is the National Counselling Service, which is funded by the HSE and the Connect counselling service, which is an offshoot of that, and it is simply a telephone service. There is the Immigrant Counselling and Psychotherapy service, ICAP which is based in the UK, although it deals with people here and there is Towards Healing, which is the organisation that is funded by the religious orders.

**Deputy David Cullinane:** Would survivors have been made aware that Towards Healing was funded by and was an extension of the religious orders?

**Ms Mary Higgins:** It has been established for a very long time and there was never a secret about it being-----

**Deputy David Cullinane:** I am not saying there was a secret. I am asking if, when the service was provided, people were made aware, given the sensitivities involved. Does Ms Higgins understand what I am asking? Were they made aware?

**Ms Mary Higgins:** I do not know. It was established before my time.

**Deputy David Cullinane:** Does Ms Higgins think they should have been made aware?

**Ms Mary Higgins:** I am sure they were. That is what I am saying. I also-----

**Deputy David Cullinane:** Will Ms Higgins find out if they were made aware?

**Ms Mary Higgins:** I cannot answer because I was not there when-----

**Deputy David Cullinane:** Will Ms Higgins find out for the committee if they were made aware?

**Ms Mary Higgins:** I certainly can. It is interesting; survivors I know are aware that Towards Healing is a Catholic service and do not have a difficulty with it. Obviously, some people do, but it is not something with which all survivors have a difficulty.

**Deputy David Cullinane:** Then it comes down to choice.

**Ms Mary Higgins:** Absolutely.

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**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** What is the name of the counselling group Ms Higgins mentioned? Is it a survivors group?

**Mr. David O'Callaghan:** Towards Healing.

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** My next question is for Mr. Ó Foghlú. According to the Comptroller and Auditor General's report the counselling is provided utterly free - wrong word - it is provided by the congregations. They pay for the counselling. The previous organisation was Faoiseamh and this one took over. I have a difficulty with it for some reason. What is the name of it?

**Mr. David O'Callaghan:** Towards Healing.

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** All of Towards Healing's activities are funded by the congregations, is that right?

**Mr. Seán Ó Foghlú:** As I am not involved in the funding of Towards Healing, I cannot comment. Under the indemnity agreement, €10 million worth of services was provided by Towards Healing. As the Department does not fund Towards Healing, I cannot comment in any detail on it.

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** The Comptroller and Auditor General might comment because I think it is mentioned in his report. Will he clarify the position for me?

**Mr. Seamus McCarthy:** It is mentioned on page 36 of the report. The Department received an assurance from the congregations that they had provided funding towards the cost of providing the service.

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** I am reading page 36: "In 2011, a new service provider – Towards Healing – replaced Faoiseamh and is funded exclusively by the religious congregations and the Irish Conference of Bishops". Is that Mr. McCarthy's understanding?

**Mr. Seamus McCarthy:** That is my understanding.

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** I understand the permission of the Minister is needed when Mr. O'Callaghan and the Department of Education and Skills seek contracts. Is that right?

**Mr. David O'Callaghan:** That is correct.

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** What contract, if any, did Caranua sign with Towards Healing?

**Mr. David O'Callaghan:** We did not sign any. We have a service level agreement, a memorandum of agreement, with Towards Healing, but we did not seek the sanction of the Department of Education and Skills.

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** Why not?

**Mr. David O'Callaghan:** We did not see it as a contract as such in terms of a contract to purchase goods or services, no more than we seek sanction to go to the HSE or a local authority in respect of building works or anything like that. This was a service provider we were using to which some of our survivors opted-----

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** Did Caranua discuss the matter at board level?

**Mr. David O'Callaghan:** Yes.

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** When did it discuss it at board level?

**Mr. David O'Callaghan:** I think as early as 2015.

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** There was a memorandum of understanding, is that right?

**Mr. David O'Callaghan:** Yes.

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** Will Mr. O'Callaghan tell me a little about it? There is no date on the one I have.

**Mr. David O'Callaghan:** What?

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** I beg Mr. O'Callaghan's pardon. There is a date, 8 October 2014. Will Mr. O'Callaghan tell me a little-----

**Mr. David O'Callaghan:** I do not have a copy of it in front of me.

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** Will Mr. O'Callaghan give me the gist of what he understood in the memorandum of understanding?

**Mr. David O'Callaghan:** My understanding is that some of our survivors opt to go to Towards Healing for counselling. This counselling service provides 80 sessions free, after which Towards Healing requires payment. Some of our survivors wish to have more than 80 sessions. In these circumstances Caranua has agreed with Towards Healing that it will pay.

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** How much has Caranua paid to this organisation?

**Mr. David Yeomans:** I do not have that figure with me. Several transactions are still to be made. I can, however, confirm that it was on 1 October 2014 that the board approved the memorandum of understanding to be signed.

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** The minutes are all available to us.

**Mr. David Yeomans:** Of course, they are on the website. I just have a list of-----

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** That was in 2014. How much money has been paid over to the organisation?

**Mr. David Yeomans:** I will have to check because it is grants to individuals. It is per individual as opposed to an organisation.

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** I do not know why Caranua would need a memorandum of understanding. Does the Department know anything about this?

**Mr. Seán Ó Foghlú:** The Department was informed about it and given a copy of the memorandum of understanding, but it is a matter for Caranua to engage the services.

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** Does Caranua hand over money to this organisation?

**Ms Mary Higgins:** The arrangement-----

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** No, the financial controller, please.

**Mr. David Yeomans:** Yes.

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** What is handed over? How and when is it handed over?

**Mr. David Yeomans:** Six monthly sets of invoices are presented to Caranua. The first part is to establish if the applicant has provided permission to share forms in order that we can deal with Towards Healing.

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** I am sorry; I missed that.

**Mr. David Yeomans:** There is permission to share forms in order that we can engage with Towards Healing for the particular individual.

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** The applicant gives permission to share.

**Mr. David Yeomans:** Correct. The second stage is that Towards Healing and its independent clinical psychologist recommend that the person should continue to receive counselling beyond the 80 sessions. The third stage is ensuring there is approval for the eligible applicant. We can then settle the matter.

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** Every applicant has a choice which is made known to them.

**Ms Mary Higgins:** Absolutely. Mr. Yeomans was not there at the time and part of the reason-

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**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** I apologise to Ms Higgins, but I am going to stay with the financial officer for the moment. There are six monthly invoices.

**Mr. David Yeomans:** Correct.

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** That has been happening in the past few years. By whom are the invoices issued?

**Mr. David Yeomans:** Towards Healing.

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** Caranua has no up-to-date figures for the amount that has been paid over.

**Mr. David Yeomans:** No, not at this point.

**Ms Mary Higgins:** We can give-----

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** Please, Ms Higgins. These are practical questions.

**Mr. David Yeomans:** Yes, I can get the figures for the Deputy.

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** Has Mr. Yeomans any idea or an estimate? Can he remember, as financial officer?

**Mr. David Yeomans:** The only figure that comes to mind is approximately €96,000 that was paid at one point.

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** At one point €96,000 was paid.

**Mr. David Yeomans:** I think that was in respect of 2015. I do not have the up-to-date figures.

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** Mr. Yeomans will give us a list and have the figures very quickly for us.

**Mr. David Yeomans:** Yes, I can.

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** I understand from the Comptroller and Auditor General's report that this organisation is providing free services. Was he aware that it was receiving payments?

**Mr. Seamus McCarthy:** In the period to 2015 the commitment was to provide a minimum of €10 million for these kinds of service. That is what it committed to provide under the indemnity agreement.

**Deputy Catherine Connolly:** We do not know if it has provided services to a value of €10 million. We do not know if the figure is less or more.

**Mr. Seamus McCarthy:** That is confirmed.

**Mr. Seán Ó Foghlú:** It is confirmed that it has completed its commitment under the indemnity agreement. Therefore, my understanding is that any arrangement Caranua has with it involves paying for services on top of services it is providing, of its own volition, for survivors.