

## Opening Statement

Hello Committee Members,

Thank you for inviting me here today. I'm Patrick McDonagh, a PhD student researching medieval history at Trinity College Dublin and I am also an Irish Traveller.

Education is one of the major problems facing the Traveller community and in my opinion one of the most pressing.

A mere 1% of Irish Travellers have a third level qualification, a bleak statistic that needs to be addressed and changed. The existence of this Special Joint Committee is a positive sign and one that I hope can help bring positive change to the community.

As I have mentioned in my written submission there are many issues affecting Traveller participation in education at all levels such as; cost, unfamiliarity, discrimination and fear. I have also suggested some potential solutions to these issues, particularly the creation of Traveller scholarships and a deliberate policy of focusing on Traveller children in late primary and early secondary school.

Some of the problems I have outlined are generational ones that will only change with time, yet for the others there needs to be a concerted push now to make this a reality for many young Travellers and let the change over time come from them rather than just hoping for the best that the problems resolve themselves. Only then will we see a real change in regards to Traveller educational attainment.