

## Opening Statement of Christine Buckley Centre ( Carmel McDonnell Byrne)

I am one of the co-founders of the Christine Buckley Centre for Education and Support, formerly known as the Aislinn Centre. Over the past 27 years, my life's work has been dedicated to advocating for and providing support to fellow survivors of institutional abuse.

Today, I am here to shed light on the ongoing challenges that survivors face, even years after receiving Redress. Despite progress, there are still critical areas where survivors continue to struggle on a daily basis. These areas include housing, health, education, counselling and access to trauma-informed services.

At the Christine Buckley Centre, we witness these challenges first-hand every single day. For instance, we often find ourselves writing letters of support for our clients who are seeking adaptation grants for their homes. In doing so, we are compelled to delve into the painful details of the trauma they endured. This, in itself, should not be necessary. It should be self-evident that survivors of institutional abuse require additional support, without the need to regurgitate their painful experiences.

Additionally, there's a big problem when it comes to health expenses. Survivors with a regular medical card often have to pay for things like important blood tests and extra medical treatments that aren't covered by their regular GP. Survivors, who often deal with poor health, end up being further disadvantaged. Sometimes, they can't even afford all the medical costs they need. A simple fix could be creating a Health Amendment Act Card designed just for Survivors of Institutional Abuse along with Magdalene Laundries and Mother and Baby Homes. These survivors have already been through immense hardship, and it's our duty to ensure that they receive the care, assistance and respect they deserve without having to continually rehash their past trauma.

This was one of the areas discussed at a conference Facing The Future Irelands Responsibility to Survivors of Institutional Abuse held in Trinity College on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2019. It was a collaboration of seven organisations. The recommendations discussed are evidence-based, derived from qualitative research from respected academics, input from survivors and knowledge sharing from service providers with years of experience. It is of paramount importance we can continue to deal with the trauma and help survivors progress on their journey of healing. I would like to reiterate that we should all do our best to ensure they are

finally nurtured, supported and respected. Today I beg you to consider the pressing needs of survivors in these vital areas and work towards a more compassionate and empathetic support system for all.