

**Statement from Kevin Bakhurst, Director General, RTÉ
Joint Oireachtas Committee.**

14 February 2024

Cathaoirleach, Deputies, Senators - I would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to speak with you today, and for your patience in the delivery of the Grant Thornton report into Toy Show The Musical, and the McCann Fitzgerald report into the Voluntary Exit Schemes of 2017 and 2021.

These reports are the final two RTÉ-commissioned reports into the revelations of last summer. To ensure these failings can never be repeated, we must first identify the facts. These investigations have created the clarity we need to put in place the root-and-branch governance reforms necessary to ensure these mistakes cannot happen again.

I would like to pay tribute to the work of the two Oireachtas Committees in probing important issues of expenditure, governance and professional standards. The matters at the heart of the McCann Fitzgerald report, for example, may not have come to light without you.

This has been a difficult and dispiriting time for RTÉ. I and my leadership team are determined to address every issue that has emerged. I know that a very different and better organisation will emerge from this crisis.

The process of earning back trust is already underway. There is a new leadership team in place. We are adhering to better standards of information exchange, assessment and decision making. We work collaboratively with the RTÉ Board on major operational and strategic decisions, and this Board has been very supportive in delivering the change we need. And importantly there is a much-improved internal communications programme in place with staff, as we set about working toward a new future together and resolving some significant legacy issues.

During one of these Committee sessions the question was posed ‘Who are we loyal to?’ We offer our unwavering commitment to serving the audience, the people of Ireland. We are conscious that the principle of public service needs to be central to all that we do, and I would like to commend our hard-working staff and partners in the independent sector who have continued to deliver engaging, informative and entertaining public service programmes and content across television, radio and online, day in and day out over these past few months.

Public service is at the heart of a new vision for RTÉ. As the Committee is aware, we have already published a strategic framework for the future, which focuses on enabling RTÉ to play a stronger role within the creative economy, to deliver value for money, and to be more reflective of the lives of people in Ireland.

We continue to develop a new governance framework to ensure that there is due process not only around what we do, but how we do it, and we will strive to run the organisation to the highest governance standards, driving transparency and accountability.

RTÉ will once again become an organisation the country can be proud of.

Stability in our finances will be a key element of delivering that vision, and we are heartened by the level of public and political engagement on this issue. We welcome the government’s stated commitment to resolve the reform of the licence fee, and we continue to work closely with Minister Martin and New Era in helping to inform those decisions. As the Committee is aware, it is not only RTÉ that has a dependency on the licence fee, but the independent sector also.

We remain committed to correcting the errors of the past, so that we can create a sustainable future for RTÉ and public service media in Ireland.

