

Statement from Dr Declan Bedford to Joint Oireachtas Committee

I am a Specialist in Public Health Medicine with particular interest in alcohol and road safety. I graduated from University College Dublin in 1976, and worked as a Specialist in Public Health Medicine with the Health Service Executive and as Director of Public Health in the North East for seven years until my retirement from the HSE in August 2012. I am a Fellow of the Faculty of Public Health Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland.

For 3 years from 2015-2017, I was employed part-time by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland as Health Systems Research and Development Advisor to the RCSI Hospitals Group.

In March 2020 I came out of retirement to work as a Specialist in Public Health during the first wave of Covid for three months and again from January to June in 2021. My main responsibilities were working with nursing homes and meat factories.

I am currently Chairman of the Quality Safety and Risk Committee of the National Screening Service and will complete my term of office at the end of this month.

I have been involved in research for many years and my published research covers a wide range of public health topics, including suicide and mental health, alcohol, men's health, injury prevention, infectious diseases, health services and use of hospital services.

Board Experience

I have been a board member of the Medical Bureau of Road Safety since 2015 and Chairman since 2017.

I have been a former member of the North Eastern Health Board, of the Drug Treatment Centre Board and of the Board of the Faculty of Public Health Medicine. I was also one of the founding members of Alcohol Action Ireland and was a board member for many years until the end of 2021.

I was Chairman of the Health Research Board (HRB) for five years from 2012 to 2017. The HRB is a statutory agency under the aegis of the Department of Health and the lead agency in Ireland responsible for supporting and funding health research.

I was Chairman of the Working Party on Traffic Medicine in the Royal College of Physicians (RCPI) as part of the National Office for Traffic Medicine for 7 years until January of this year. This office was jointly established by RCPI and the Road Safety Authority of Ireland in 2011, bringing the specialty of Traffic Medicine to Ireland for the first time. The goal is to help doctors and licensing authorities promote safe mobility in Ireland. The best-known element of traffic medicine is the need for medical certification showing fitness to drive and we published guidelines on fitness to drive called *Sláinte agus Tiomáint* which are updated annually.

As Chairman of the Medical Bureau of Road Safety I will continue to work to ensure that the Bureau continues to achieve its mission to provide a high quality national forensic service in alcohol/drug (intoxicant) detection in support of the effective operation of the road traffic legislation.

I will work with the Director and other board members to ensure that we continue to review how we operate on an ongoing basis to ensure that we comply with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

I will work with the Director and other board members to ensure that we continue to implement our five-year strategic plan and objectives which include:

- To continue to provide a high quality national forensic service in alcohol and drug analysis , the provision of Bureau certificates and court assistance
- To maintain the ISO accreditation status achieved for analytical programmes within the Bureau and to extend the accreditation to additional areas
- To adapt and incorporate into Bureau activities any new legislation requirements
- To build up a forensic toxicology knowledge base within the Bureau scientific staff

- To ensure that all the work in the Bureau is maintained and improved where possible to a high standard of quality that is required of a national forensic laboratory in an efficient and cost effective way
- To maintain effective management systems and operate within best accounting practices and frameworks