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Chuaigh an Ceann Comhairle i gceannas ar 10.30 a.m.

Paidir.
Prayer.

Leaders' Questions

Deputy Billy Kelleher: This morning, we should be discussing AIB's mortgage interest rate increase or the Exchequer returns. Instead, we find the sordid, grubby affair of primary care centre selection dominating the headlines again.

Deputy Finian McGrath: Billy is back.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: I have been trying to get clarity on this issue for some time. The Minister for Health, Deputy Reilly, told the House that he consulted his Cabinet colleagues and officials and changed the criteria and selection process to ensure a broader selection of primary care centres, two of which were in his constituency. This morning came the revelation that there were close political ties between one of the owners of the site and the Minister.

Let us be clear. We just want to get to the bottom of this matter. I have a couple of questions for the Minister for Education and Skills, Deputy Quinn, because the Minister for Health is avoiding answering them. We are concerned that health needs are being decided on a Minister's whim that is itself based on political ties rather than need.

Deputy Mattie McGrath: Labour's way or James's way.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: Let us be clear. It is not just I who is saying this. Deputy Shortall,

a former colleague in the party of the Minister, Deputy Quinn, resigned and stated she had to throw in the towel because of stroke politics.

Deputy Dinny McGinley: Fianna Fáil invented stroke politics.

(Interruptions).

Deputy Niall Collins: The Labour mudguard.

Deputy Emmet Stagg: If that is a good thing, we should all be-----

Deputy Billy Kelleher: This clearly indicates there are difficulties in how primary care sites were selected-----

Deputy Timmy Dooley: Bring in JR.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: -----as well as concerns regarding close political ties between the owner and the Minister.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: There are difficulties in the health services as well.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: That the Minister's decision conferred commercial and financial advantage on individuals is a serious issue.

Deputy Mattie McGrath: He does not know them, though.

An Ceann Comhairle: A question, please.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: I have three questions for the Minister for Education and Skills. Was he consulted about the changed criteria in the primary care site selection process, was he aware of the political ties between the Minister, Deputy Reilly, and the landowner of the Balbriggan site, and is he comfortable with the decision process and the fall-out from same?

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As the Fianna Fáil spokesperson on health, Deputy Kelleher is well aware of the background to all of this. He asked numerous questions and I understand he tabled questions to the Minister last week. If the Deputy is unable to table a question and pursue a correct and detailed answer from the Minister directly involved, it is more a reflection on Deputy Kelleher.

Deputy Michael Healy-Rae: The Minister for Health will not answer.

Deputy Finian McGrath: What about today's revelations?

Deputy Michael McGrath: Cop on, Minister. You must be joking.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: Deputy Kelleher is trying to-----

(Interruptions).

An Ceann Comhairle: Would Deputies mind, please? Thank you.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: If I were the Minister for Health, I would stay in Brussels for the weekend.

An Ceann Comhairle: Would Deputy Dooley mind listening to the reply?

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Deputy Paul Kehoe: Deputy Dooley would never get the opportunity to go to Brussels.

(Interruptions).

Deputy Michael Healy-Rae: Is that a good answer?

Deputy Michael McGrath: Let the Chief Whip answer.

An Ceann Comhairle: Would Deputies please allow the Minister to reply without interruption?

Deputy Mattie McGrath: It is Reilly's way or Labour's way.

An Ceann Comhairle: Would you stay quiet, please?

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: Permanently.

Deputy Colm Keaveney: Ernie and Bert.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: I am quite satisfied, on the information I have received from the Minister, that the location of the site in Balbriggan is in accordance with the selection criteria. The story in today's edition of the *Irish Independent* is one that the Minister has dealt with satisfactorily. If Deputy Kelleher has detailed questions, which clearly he has, but to which he has failed so far to get a satisfactory answer from his point of view, I suggest he put them directly to the Minister.

Deputy Michael McGrath: The Deputy asked two questions.

Deputy Finian McGrath: He is not getting an answer now either.

Deputy Michael Healy-Rae: So, the Minister, Deputy Quinn, does not have confidence.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: What investigation will the Labour Party undertake?

Deputy Finian McGrath: It has no standards anymore.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: With all due respect, the House deserves a better reply than that from the Minister, Deputy Quinn.

Deputy Michael McGrath: Hear, hear.

Deputy Finian McGrath: It was a disgraceful answer.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: It was glib and trite. This is a serious issue. A Minister of State in the party of the Minister, Deputy Quinn, resigned and described what occurred as stroke politics. For him to pass it off glibly and to cast aspersions on my ability to ask questions is not good enough. I have tabled questions, but I have not been given answers. As the leader on the Government benches sitting opposite me today, is he comfortable with the fact that his former colleague resigned not only as a Minister of State but also as a member of the Labour Parliamentary Party because she failed to get support from her party colleagues in her attempt to get to the bottom of this issue?

Deputy Finian McGrath: The party's chairman sat on the fence.

Deputy Colm Keaveney: No, Bert. Sorry, I meant Deputy Finian McGrath.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: The Minister for Health has conferred financial and commercial gain on individuals with whom he has political ties. There were posters inside someone's house-----

An Ceann Comhairle: A question, please.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: -----and they pulled Christmas crackers with one another at chamber of commerce dinners-----

Deputy Emmet Stagg: Does Deputy Kelleher realise that he is describing his own party?

Deputy Billy Kelleher: -----yet the Minister, Deputy Quinn, glibly claims that this is not an issue.

(Interruptions).

Deputy Colm Keaveney: Deputy Finian McGrath should cry a few more crocodile tears.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: In the past, the Minister, Deputy Quinn, entered the Chamber looking for heads for lesser issues. He should at least hold the Minister for Health to account instead of blaming me.

An Ceann Comhairle: I would like to give notice to the House that I have received requests for private notice questions on this matter. I have granted them. The matter will be addressed later today.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: I thank the Ceann Comhairle.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: Deputy Kelleher has attempted to use the protection of this House to suggest there was some financial impropriety in-----

Deputy Billy Kelleher: I did not. I said financial gain, not impropriety.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: -----conferring a financial advantage on a political supporter.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: Yes.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: The site in question was selected by Ms Mary Harney when she was the Minister for Health and Children.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: Not on a public private partnership, PPP, basis.

(Interruptions).

Deputy Timmy Dooley: When the Minister, Deputy Quinn's colleague-----

Deputy Dinny McGinley: The ghosts are coming back to haunt Fianna Fáil.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: Where was the site on Labour's list?

Deputy Billy Kelleher: The former Minister of State, Deputy Shortall, is sitting up there.

Deputy Finian McGrath: There were hundreds of sites.

Deputy Niall Collins: Shameful.

An Ceann Comhairle: I call Deputy Adams.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: Labour has climbed to a new low.

(Interruptions).

An Ceann Comhairle: Could we hear Deputy Adams, please?

Deputy Timmy Dooley: The Ceann Comhairle would need a ladder to get down to Labour now.

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy Dooley, please.

Deputy Niall Collins: It is the mudguard on the Honda 50.

An Ceann Comhairle: Will Members allow Deputy Adams to ask his question without interruption, please?

Deputy Gerry Adams: Will the Minister explain precisely what Labour's role is in this Government?

Deputy Niall Collins: Mudguard.

Deputy Gerry Adams: Will he measure his party's record thus far against its election promise that it would stop the worst extremes of Fine Gael? The Labour leadership's silence on the Minister for Health's explanation for siting the two primary health centres in his constituency and its sacrifice of one of its own Ministers of State are in marked contrast to its attitude in opposition.

Deputy Mattie McGrath: Hear, hear.

Deputy Gerry Adams: Then, Labour railed against cronyism, golden circles and the failed social and economic policies of Fianna Fáil. Anois, tá siad ag baint úsáide as polasaithe atá díreach cosúil leis na polasaithe a bhí ag Fianna Fáil. Tá siad á n-úsáid acu sa tslí salach céanna.

This morning we have the revelations - I make no judgment in this - that a supporter of the Minister, Deputy Reilly, owns the site on which the primary care centre in Balbriggan is to be built. Thus far, the Minister for Health has failed to set out in detail the criteria for the selection of locations for primary care centres.

The Sinn Féin spokesperson for health, Deputy Ó Caoláin, formally requested a review by the Ceann Comhairle of the unsatisfactory reply he received from the Minister to a parliamentary question on the matters. Does the Minister for Education and Skills believe these issues need to be clarified and accept the need for transparency? Will he call on the Minister, Deputy Reilly, to make a comprehensive statement to the Dáil later today when he takes the private notice question tabled by Teachta Ó Caoláin? Will he also ensure the Minister for Health will release all documentation on this matter for full public scrutiny? If he fails to do so, will the Labour leadership demand that he resign his position?

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: Which question would the Deputy like me to answer?

Deputy Gerry Adams: All of them.

Deputy Niall Collins: At once.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: He might answer mine as well. I am still waiting for an answer.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: I am guided by the Chair. I have no doubt that the Minister for Health, Deputy Reilly, will deal with all the questions around the issue of primary care centres when he deals with the private notice question. He has already done that on a number of occasions.

Deputy Niall Collins: Go on.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: The fact that Deputies opposite may not be satisfied with the quality or quantity of the reply is for them to pursue. I have been asked whether I am satisfied that the Minister, Deputy Reilly, will deal comprehensively with the issues this afternoon, and my answer is “Yes”.

Deputy Gerry Adams: I also asked the Minister to explain precisely what Labour’s role is in this Government.

Deputy Ciarán Lynch: That is easy.

Deputy Gerry Adams: I will give way if the Minister wishes to answer.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Minister may reply in time.

Deputy Gerry Adams: The Minister for Education and Skills-----

Deputy Simon Harris: What about the role of the IRA?

Deputy Gerry Adams: -----is defending a Minister who has completely failed to tackle the big issues in health. He has actually compounded the problems by bringing his own ideological and other baggage into this Department. He is up to his neck in the private health sector business.

Deputy Patrick O’Donovan: That is a poor choice of words. A few people in here are up to their necks in issues.

Deputy Gerry Adams: He has failed to tackle consultants’ pay and the price of drugs. He has imposed prescription charges on medical card holders and sliced funding from home help services. Where is Labour? Must the Labour Party wait? Is that what it is all about? This is not a question for Deputy Reilly but for the Minister who is present.

Deputy Aodhán Ó Ríordáin: More kneecaps.

Deputy Gerry Adams: Could I have some order, le do thoil?

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy should be allowed ask his question. Could we have some silence for two minutes?

Deputy Dessie Ellis: We need it for more than two minutes.

Deputy Gerry Adams: Will the Minister explain Labour’s role in this Government, particularly with respect to its record in opposition, when it correctly railed against this type of practice? Now the party is silent so will the Minister explain it?

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Deputy Finian McGrath: They are all silent, including Deputy Ó Ríordáin.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: If I were Deputy Adams, I would hesitate to refer to baggage and other Deputies in this House.

Deputies: Hear, hear.

Deputy Gerry Adams: Answer the question.

Deputy Kathleen Lynch: Deputy Adams has plenty of baggage.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: I would hesitate to refer to baggage.

Deputy Peadar Tóibín: Answer the question.

Deputy Dessie Ellis: Get Roisín to answer.

An Ceann Comhairle: Allow the Minister to respond.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: The Labour Party and Fine Gael are attempting to rebuild the sovereign independence of this Republic following the disaster we inherited from the party opposite. That will not be done overnight. The last time we were in government we handed over a vibrant economy with a planned surplus.

Deputies: Hear, hear.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: Within 12 years, this was driven into the ground.

Deputy Mattie McGrath: The parties opposite wanted more.

Deputy Noel Coonan: Deputy Mattie McGrath was one of them.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: We never got any economic help or support from Sinn Féin-----

Deputy Mattie McGrath: I see Deputy Coonan is here.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: -----and we will continue with our mandate to repair the extraordinary damage done to this country. We lost over 250,000 jobs between 2007 and 2009.

Deputy Finian McGrath: Answer the question. The Government conned the people.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: We are moving slowly but surely, and with great difficulty, to undo the damage done in the past. I am quite sure that all the Labour Party elected Members in this House and elsewhere will ensure that we will meet targets when we have to account for our service at the end of our mandate.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: Does the Minister realise how much fear and anger there is in the country at this time? There is fear in the hearts of ordinary people that they will be pushed over the edge into poverty with cuts in child benefit, the imposition of property taxes and water charges, as well as more hikes in mortgage interest this week. There is anger that this should happen at the same time that €1 billion is handed over to unsecured bondholders in Allied Irish Banks, and at the same time the Minister for Health has torn up the criteria for locating primary care centres that prioritised areas of deprivation and instead bumped up locations in his own constituency to the benefit of a Fine Gael supporter, Mr. Murphy, who owns the land on

which the centre is to be located.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy should be careful about using people's names in the Chamber.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: The action would also benefit another Fine Gael supporter who gave a political donation to a Minister of State, Deputy Creighton.

Deputy Tom Hayes: The Deputy has all the facts.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: Is this not reminiscent of the Fianna Fáil sleaze that the Government would have denounced so quickly a few years ago? Does the picture of the Minister, Deputy Reilly, with Mr. Murphy not look reminiscent of the pictures of Mr. Brian Cowen with Mr. FitzPatrick?

An Ceann Comhairle: Pictures are not allowed in the Chamber.

Deputy Simon Harris: They are for the Deputy's bedroom wall.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: Is this not the sleaze that we thought would be left behind? It seems it has returned with a vengeance. Is this not proof that yet again, as with the last Government, we have a Government of the rich, by the rich and for the rich while ordinary people are being slaughtered with cuts and austerity. What is the Labour Party doing propping up a Government like this?

Deputy Finian McGrath: Hear, hear.

Deputy Michael McCarthy: Richie Rich.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: The Deputy has spoken about the fear and worry which people have across this country and I understand what he is saying. We have a right to be fearful because of the state in which this country found itself over 18 months ago.

Deputy Michael McGrath: What about the state it is in now?

Deputy Barry Cowen: Just press "play".

Deputy Mattie McGrath: Fast forward.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: Let me answer. Deputy Boyd Barrett constantly railed against the adjustments, corrections and additional costs being imposed on this country by the troika because we lost our economic sovereignty. So far this year we have borrowed €11 billion, and we will probably have to borrow another €4.5 billion. Nobody else in the world will lend us money at rates we can afford and we are slowly, painfully but surely crawling back. It is hurtful but what is even more hurtful is that people like the Deputy and his colleagues incite resistance, confuse facts with fiction-----

Deputy Timmy Dooley: The Minister was fairly good at that. He told a tale outside the gates of Trinity College.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: -----and attempt to say that there is-----

Deputy Mattie McGrath: He scared the students.

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Deputy Ruairí Quinn: I do not need any help, Mattie.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: He tried to play us.

Deputy Mattie McGrath: What about the student fees?

Deputy Timmy Dooley: Did that not instil fear and confusion?

An Ceann Comhairle: Will the Deputies allow the Minister to respond?

Deputy Kathleen Lynch: There is a seat up the back for Deputy McGrath.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: They attempt to say there is another way and the cuts can be avoided or we do not have to repay the €1 billion. The terms of the deal with the only group in town that will lend us the money is that we cannot burn the bondholders.

Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly: That is untrue. That is absolutely untrue.

(Interruptions).

Deputy Joe Higgins: It would cost nothing to stop cronyism. It is free to do it.

Deputy Brian Stanley: Labour stated it would burn the lot of them.

Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly: It is an outrageous statement to make.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: It is not just us who are inciting protests. This week, in *The Irish Times*, Mr. Paul Krugman, the well known and respected economist-----

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: We know who he is.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: -----stated that the protestors in Greece, Spain and elsewhere in Europe who resisted what he termed “cruel” austerity were absolutely right.

Deputy Finian McGrath: Hear, hear.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: He argued that the troika is wrong and the policies are unfair, cruel and crippling for the European economy and economies like ours.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: That is his view.

Deputy Patrick O’Donovan: Will the Deputy pay his household charge?

An Ceann Comhairle: Could we have a question?

Deputy Regina Doherty: The Deputy just seems to want to shout.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: Does the Minister think people have the right to expect not to have what is displayed in these pictures?

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy should not display pictures. He will not have the chance to finish his question as he will be outside the door if he does that again.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: Do people not have the right at least to expect, when cruel austerity is being imposed, cuts in home help, property charges-----

An Ceann Comhairle: Will the Deputy put his question as he is over his time?

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: -----and mortgage interest hikes, that a golden circle is not being protected and looked after with what a former Minister has called stroke politics? Do the people not at least have the right to expect that stroke politics would be ended and that the golden circle would be broken up so that it will not only be the poor and the working people who will suffer pain in the recession?

Deputies: Hear, hear.

Deputy Patrick O'Donovan: What about the gold circle of tax dodgers?

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: Deputy Boyd Barrett and I share some things in common. We come from the same spectrum of ideological politics of this country.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: They come from the same wealthy class.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: Deputy Boyd Barrett from his knowledge of history will recall that even Leon Trotsky agreed with Lenin when they went into government-----

Deputy Billy Kelleher: When he was in Ireland.

A Deputy: Was he in Ireland?

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: -----that a new economic policy was necessary to overcome the crisis before they get on the path of righteousness.

(Interruptions).

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: That is where we are. That is why we are doing it.

(Interruptions).

Order of Business

Minister for Education and Skills(Deputy Ruairí Quinn): It is proposed to take No. 4, Health and Social Care Professionals (Amendment) Bill 2012 - Second Stage (resumed); and No. 16, statements on philanthropy and the arts. It is proposed, notwithstanding anything in Standing Orders, that the following arrangements shall apply in relation to No. 16: the opening statements of a Minister or Minister of State and of the main spokespersons for Fianna Fáil, Sinn Féin and the Technical Group, who shall be called upon in that order and who may share their time, shall not exceed 15 minutes in each case; the statement of each other Member called upon shall not exceed ten minutes in each case and such Members may share their time; and a Minister or Minister of State shall be called upon to make a statement in reply which shall not exceed ten minutes. Private Members' business shall be No. 61, motion re addiction services (resumed), to conclude at 9 p.m. tonight, if not previously concluded.

An Ceann Comhairle: There is one proposal to be put to the House. Is the proposal for dealing with No. 16 agreed to? Agreed.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: Some 70,000 variable rate customers of AIB face another mortgage hike of 0.5% on top of a previous rate rise of 0.5%. There is a paragraph in the programme for Government directing any mortgage provider in receipt of State support to present Government with a plan of how it intends to cut its costs, over and above the existing plans and in fair manner, by a sufficient amount to forego a 25 basis point increase on the variable rate.

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy, this is the Order of Business, we have finished Leaders' Questions.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: This is in the programme for Government. Is there any impending legislation regarding this commitment in the programme because mortgage holders are in distress and more of them are falling into distress on a continuing basis? Is there legislation in place to bring about this commitment?

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: Yes. The Minister for Justice and Equality, Deputy Shatter has introduced legislation. It has passed Second Stage and is at Committee Stage. It will deal with the personal insolvency service to provide for people who are struggling with their mortgages. I share the Deputy's concern about mortgages. Some 70,000 mortgage holders will be affected by this increase that was announced by AIB today.

Deputy Gerry Adams: Tá ceist agam faoi reachtaíocht atá geallta. On promised legislation, yesterday on the Order of Business an Teachta Pearse Doherty asked the Taoiseach about the legislation that is required for the strategic investment fund which the Minister will recall was announced just one year ago last week. To date his Government's policy on jobs has been an epic failure. Last year 33,400 jobs were lost and 87,000 people have emigrated.

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy, this is the Order of Business.

Deputy Gerry Adams: The figures released yesterday show that there has been an under-spend of 17% in the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. It is astonishing yesterday that the Taoiseach could not give a date for bringing forward legislation on this important issue. Is the Minister in a position to give a firm indication as to when the legislation will be brought forward?

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: All I can say to the Deputy is that work is ongoing within the Department of Finance on this measure but legislation is not expected until next year.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: The national newspapers report again today on the Government's continued commitment to sell off the harvesting rights of 85% of Coillte forestry, a decision some of us-----

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy, will you ask a question about legislation?

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: -----believe is criminal and stupid economically and in every other way. When will we get to debate the forestry Bill and the issues surrounding it? Will the Minister give a commitment that we will have that debate before the Government moves ahead with the sale of harvesting rights on Coillte lands?

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: The forestry Bill is due this session and all the issues the Deputy has raised can be debated during its passage.

Deputy Patrick Nulty: I know the Minister shares with me a strong desire to reform our

housing system. Given the commitment in the programme for Government to introduce an incremental purchase scheme for local authority tenants and to allow those in voluntary housing to purchase their homes, when will the housing Bill be brought forward to address the chronic social housing need in this country?

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: I am told that the housing Bill *per se* will not be ready until next year but if the Deputy has specific questions regarding aspects of it I suggest he puts down a question to the Minister responsible.

Deputy Seamus Healy: The Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government has committed to proposals for local government reform, which is also set out in the programme for Government. These were to be brought forward before the recess and immediately afterwards it was indicated that there was to be an announcement this week, but I understand that is not now the case. Can the Minister advise what is the exact position on local government reform and when the proposal will be announced to the Chamber?

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: I am sorry to hear that the Deputy has parted company with his colleagues.

Deputy Shane Ross: It is fine.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: I gather Deputy Ross is going to stay beside the Deputy and keep him company.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: They will still be voting together against the Government's budget.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: With regard to the reform of local government, discussions are ongoing and I gather progress is being made and the matter will be brought in as soon as possible but we have no precise date yet for it.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: Before the summer break the Taoiseach promised he would provide time for a debate on the report of the pyrite panel. Last Sunday was a deadline the Minister, Deputy Hogan, set for all the stakeholders in this incredible disaster in that if he had not got some action from them he would take unilateral action to try to help people living in pyrite infected homes. Is it the intention of the Government to provide time for a debate on the report of the pyrite panel and for the Minister, Deputy Hogan, to come into the House? He told me last week that Sunday night was the deadline for builders, auctioneers and insurance companies involved in this disaster and that he would come into the House and present us with a programme of action. Will that happen?

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: I am aware the Deputy was one of the first Deputies in the House to advocate this issue and he has been doing it for a long time. I consulted briefly with the Chief Whip. Time will be found, with the agreement of the Whips, to have a discussion on this matter and the Deputy will be able to explore in detail the issues he has been pursuing for a long time.

Deputy Mattie McGrath: The Government's legislative programme also includes, as Deputy Healy mentioned, local government reform but the only reform the Minister, Deputy Hogan, seems to be interested in is the amalgamation of South Tipperary and North Tipperary county councils.

An Ceann Comhairle: Sorry, we are not dealing with-----

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Deputy Mattie McGrath: There are major fears in south Tipperary regarding this reform in terms of the financial position, jobs and amalgamations.

An Ceann Comhairle: What we are dealing with is promised legislation-----

Deputy Mattie McGrath: It is promised legislation in the programme for Government.

An Ceann Comhairle: -----not the content of the legislation.

Deputy Mattie McGrath: This is the only content we seem to get from the Minister. Apart from this and septic tanks, we get nothing else.

An Ceann Comhairle: When will the local government reform Bill be ready?

(Interruptions).

Deputy Mattie McGrath: We had a night in Kilkenny the other night, and it was not a nice night.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: The Deputy must have been there.

(Interruptions).

Deputy Brendan Griffin: Have they taken the Deputy back yet?

An Ceann Comhairle: Would Members desist in order that we can hear the answer?

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: With regard to local government reform, the legislation to give effect to the education and training boards, which will unite Tipperary north and south, will be taken in this House in the next few weeks, unlike what was promised when the Deputy was supporting the party in opposition which intended to divide Tipperary into two.

Deputy Mattie McGrath: I am proud of my past, although the Minister might not be proud of his.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: To indicate the joined up thinking within this Government, local government reform will be undertaken in tandem with vocational education committee reform in order that the same geographical entity will apply for local government and VEC-education and training board purposes.

Deputy Mattie McGrath: The Minister should speak to Senator Denis Landy.

Deputy Tom Fleming: With regard to legislation relating to the environment in conjunction with agriculture, everybody welcomes the announcement by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine last week about the reintroduction of the agri-environment options scheme. However, the exclusion of hedgerows, which was an integral part of the old rural environment protection scheme, from the scheme is a huge issue-----

An Ceann Comhairle: Will the Deputy table a parliamentary question about it?

Deputy Tom Fleming: Hedgerows have always been a feature of our landscape and heritage and agriculture is a huge industry. Will the Minister contact his ministerial colleagues in the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine and ask them to reconsider the scheme be-

cause there will be huge job losses?

An Ceann Comhairle: What exactly is the Deputy looking for?

Deputy Tom Hayes: Hedgerows in Kerry.

An Ceann Comhairle: This is not in order on the Order of Business.

Deputy Tom Fleming: Hedgerows are an integral part of the scheme.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy should table this as a Topical Issue debate and I will consider it.

Deputy Mattie McGrath: Government Members are looking for hedges to hide behind.

Deputy Thomas Pringle: At the recent summit of EU leaders in Greece, it was decided to accelerate payments into the European Stability Mechanism, ESM. On foot of that, Ireland will pay €508 million on 23 October, which is the same day the European Court of Justice, ECJ, will hold hearings on the legality of the mechanism. Will the Dáil be informed when the payment is made? If the ECJ rules against the ESM, will the money be refunded to the State?

An Ceann Comhairle: Perhaps a parliamentary question will sort out the Deputy's problem. It cannot be dealt with on the Order of Business.

Deputy Brian Stanley: Is it the Government's intention to publish the water services (miscellaneous provisions) Bill? There are two issues. The local authority professional officers body estimates the cost of water meters will be €1.2 billion and the installation date has been moved three times.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy cannot discuss the detail of the legislation.

Deputy Brian Stanley: But this is relevant. The Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government gave a date of 2014.

An Ceann Comhairle: We do not deal with that on the Order of Business.

Deputy Brian Stanley: Bord Gáis has said it will be 2015 and the date is constantly moved.

An Ceann Comhairle: Perhaps we will find out when the legislation is coming in.

Deputy Brian Stanley: I want the Minister for Education and Skills to talk to the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government because he is not listening to me when I raise this.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy should table a parliamentary question and he can have a direct conversation with him.

Deputy Brian Stanley: In Britain, ten or 12 years after their introduction, the meters still have not been installed by the private companies. Is it intended to continue with this Bill?

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy should resume his seat.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: The legislation is due early next year and all the complex issues the Deputy has correctly raised can be addressed during the debate on it.

Deputy Brian Stanley: They are more complex than the Minister realises.

Deputy Michael Healy-Rae: I refer to the criminal justice (sexual offences) Bill, particularly in light of the shocking abduction of a little girl in Wales in recent days. The Bill should be brought forward as a matter of urgency to ensure the protection of vulnerable persons against sexual exploitation and abuse.

An Ceann Comhairle: Has the Minister a date for the legislation?

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: All of us have compassion for and understand the anguish that this community is going through. Proposals relating to the legislation referred to by the Deputy were brought to Cabinet in July but the final text of the Bill will not be ready until next year.

Deputy Pearse Doherty: I have asked this question a number of times and I have been promised a note by the Taoiseach. When will the legislation relating to the strategic investment bank be forthcoming? The Strategic Investment Fund is supposed to be a forerunner for legislation but the House has been informed that this legislation relating to the fund will not be coming forward until next year at the earliest, despite it being announced last year. Will the House see legislation relating to the establishment of a strategic investment bank? If so, when will the heads of the Bill be published?

The second question I have on legislation relates to The Gathering. Next year is titled the year of The Gathering. The Minister for the Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht signalled a year and a half ago that he would release the 1926 census to encourage the diaspora to come home and trace their roots. Legislation is required to release the census and it is late in the day. I still have not received a detailed answer as to when legislation will be forthcoming to allow this census to be released. If this does not happen, the promotion and advertisement of The Gathering will not reach its full potential.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: With regard to the second question, I share the Deputy's concern. I imagine it requires short enabling legislation, which basically changes a date in the context of the privacy factor relating to the census. I will look into that because I have a deep interest in it and the Deputy's concerns are legitimate and shared by everybody else in the House.

The legislation relating to the strategic investment bank is taking longer for two reasons. The first relates to the formulation of the structure and design, which is a matter for the Department of Finance and others. The second relates to getting it through the legislative process in the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel. I will make direct inquiries and write to the Deputy in regard to both matters.

Deputy Joe Higgins: There are almost daily leaks from the Government to the media concerning the property tax, which are causing huge anxiety among hard pressed people in regard to the additional burden this austerity tax will mean. With regard to the legislative schedule, is it the Government's intention to publish the finance (local property tax) Bill before the budget when we are told some details about the tax will be announced, after the budget or in the new year?

The Minister for Finance has the Thornhill report, which deals with all these issues. Will the Government publish the report forthwith and have an early debate in the House to tease out these issues in order that those of us who represent hard pressed working people, pensioners, etc., can point out how absolutely intolerable this new burden will be?

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy can do that if a debate is granted.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: The Government is not leaking anything relating to this matter. There is a lot of speculation but it is not as a result of Government leaks. I assure the Deputy that the only decision the Cabinet has made on this matter is that we authorised the Revenue Commissioners last July to be the agent of collection after they sought a decision to give them resources and authority to put in place a collection mechanism. I assure the Deputy and the House that there was no discussion at Cabinet about the shape, form or content of the property tax. Anything that is in the newspapers is simply speculation that in a free country with a free press will inevitably happen from time to time but there has been no leaking about the tax.

My understanding is the decision on the property tax will be announced in the context of the budget and the legislation to give effect to it will follow that announcement.

Deputy Joe Higgins: Will that be before the budget?

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: It is not normal. We will have a debate afterwards but the decision will be announced in the context of the budget.

Deputy Joe Higgins: When will the Thornhill report be published?

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: The Deputy should table a question to the Minister for Finance on that matter.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: In the context of crime prevention and combatting organised crime, have the heads of the proceeds of crime Bill been discussed by the Cabinet? Similarly, have the heads of the legislation relating to the creation of a DNA database been discussed? When are these Bills likely to come before the House? Will they be brought before the House at the earliest possible date?

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: I am assured the second Bill to which the Deputy referred will be taken this session. There are ongoing discussions with the Criminal Assets Bureau, CAB, about the technicalities surrounding the seizure of the proceeds of crime so as not to provoke a constitutional challenge.

Deputy Martin Ferris: Last week, the workers in the veterinary section of the agriculture office in Clonakilty were told they are to move almost immediately to Cork city from a building that had been refurbished by the Department at the taxpayer's expense to a building that is being rented by the State. Can the Minister try to justify-----

An Ceann Comhairle: No, he will not be able to do so on the Order of Business.

Deputy Martin Ferris: -----the irresponsible action in order to transfer people from a coastal community?

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy Ferris will have to find some other way of raising the matter. It is not appropriate to the Order of Business.

Deputy Martin Ferris: I have submitted a topical issue but it has not been accepted.

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy Ferris has been looked after in respect of topical issues.

Deputy Martin Ferris: I have had one issue accepted in the past six weeks.

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An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy Ferris was speaking on a topical issue last week.

Deputy Martin Ferris: That is the one.

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy Ferris should try again.

Deputy Michael McGrath: The Government has decided to introduce a new targeted voluntary redundancy scheme in the public service. When will details of the scheme be made available in respect of the numbers involved, the savings involved and when it will be operational?

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: The matter was brought before Cabinet on Tuesday. The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform has identified a number of sectors where there is a need for a voluntary early requirement scheme. In order to get the benefit from it and to provide certainty for everyone, the details will be accelerated as quickly as possible but I cannot provide a date.

Topical Issue Matters

An Ceann Comhairle: I wish to advise the House of the following matters in respect of which notice has been given under Standing Order 27A and the name of the Member in each case: (1) Deputy Tony McLoughlin - the need to consider a scheme through local partnership and Leader companies to provide emergency personal alarms for people living alone; (2) Deputy Billy Kelleher - the need to explain the recent criteria used to add 15 centres to the primary care list and to clarify the criteria that will be used for future primary care centres; (3) Deputy Martin Ferris - the transfer of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine veterinary office from Clonakilty to Cork city; (4) Deputy Timmy Dooley - the funding cut of € 243,000 in the block grant to Clare County Council; (5) Deputy Michael Conaghan - the threat posed by escalating gang-related violence; (6) Deputy Seán Kyne - the need to ensure advancements in the treatment of diabetics including the use of insulin pumps is extended to children of all ages across all HSE areas; (7) Deputy Thomas Pringle - the need for the inclusion of entitlement to jobseeker's benefit and disability benefit for self-employed PRSI contributors after a defined contribution period; (8) Deputy Jonathan O'Brien - the €7.5 million paid in unauthorised expenses to senior academics working in third level institutions from 2005–11; (9) Deputy Ann Phelan - the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Syria; (10) Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív - the circumstances surrounding the representations made to Kilkenny County Council on the housing allocation for a specific family; (11) Deputy Martin Heydon - the need to include a new primary school at Crookstown, Ballitore, Athy, County Kildare on the Department of Education and Skill's five-year building programme; (12) Deputy Michael McCarthy - the need to award a disability allowance to a person (details supplied); (13) Deputy Mattie McGrath - the new qualifying conditions for the contributory State pension that came into effect in September; (14) Deputy Michelle Mulherin - the need to conduct a regulatory impact assessment before placing the burden for sick pay of employees on business; (15) Deputy Tom Barry - the need to review housing policy with particular reference to anti-social behaviour; (16) Deputy Brian Stanley - the effects of HSE cuts on respite care for young people with mental disabilities in County Laois; (17) Deputy Peadar Tóibín - cutbacks in industry pension schemes; (18) Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin - the criteria which were used to identify the 35 priority primary care centres announced as part of the Government stimulus package on 17 July 2012; (19) Deputy

Derek Keating - the problems in collecting social welfare payments at Lucan village, Dublin; (20) Deputy Dessie Ellis - the closure of Santry post office, Dublin 9; (21) Deputy Mick Wallace - the raid by the Revenue's customs service on two illegal diesel laundries and the effect this illegal activity has on jobs; (22) Deputy Patrick O'Donovan - the need for banks, credit card companies and other credit institutions to provide information to the authorities to combat the illegal importation of prescription drugs; (23) Deputy Sean Fleming - the impact that hospital budget deficits will have on services at a number of hospitals (details supplied); (24) Deputy Ciarán Lynch - the re-instituting of a rent-to-buy scheme for NAMA residential properties for first-time buyers and prospective owner-occupiers; (25) Deputy Niall Collins - the possible equality implications of the circumstances surrounding the representations made to Kilkenny County Council on the housing allocation for a specific family; (26) Deputy Clare Daly - the need to discuss the principle of the universal payment of child benefit; (27) Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett - the position of teachers employed in VECs in view of new Teaching Council regulations; (28) Deputy Joan Collins - the need to discuss the principle of the universal payment of child benefit; (29) Deputy Willie O'Dea - the need to discuss the internal report on the creation of a two-tier child benefit system; (30) Deputy Brendan Smith - the continued imprisonment of Irish trained doctors in Bahrain; and (31) Deputy Robert Troy - the vacant position of director of the HSE's National Office for Suicide Prevention. The matters raised by Deputies Peadar Tóibín, Seán Kyne, Ann Phelan and Tom Barry have been selected for discussion.

Health and Social Care Professionals (Amendment) Bill 2012: Second Stage (Resumed)

Question again proposed: "That the Bill be now read a Second Time."

Deputy Dan Neville: I welcome this technical Bill, which is quite comprehensive in respect of the 2005 legislation. Difficulties were identified early on and it is surprising that it has taken seven years for it to be corrected. The Minister for Health and Children at the time, Mary Harney, informed me about this in 2006 or 2007.

I will address a proposal that psychotherapy and counselling be included as designated professions. At present, there is no regulation in Ireland for the registration of psychotherapists and counsellors and no State control over the qualifications held by those practising in the area. It is dangerous for untrained and unskilled people to probe a person's unconscious. They are dealing with human vulnerability and serious damage can be done to such delicate people. The Act provides for the registration of persons qualifying under the title of a designated profession for the determination of complaints relating to their fitness to practise. Some 12 professions are listed as designated professions under the Act. The professions of psychotherapy and counselling are not included. When I challenged the former Minister of State, Tim O'Malley, who dealt with the Bill in 2004, he stated that the professions included in the legislation had become so regulated by a process of discussion and consensus. However, the psychotherapists and counsellors group failed at that time to agree an approach to such registration. The Minister of State stated that statutory regulation in such circumstances would have serious legal implications. He accepted the principle that all psychotherapists and counsellors should be properly qualified and pointed out that, in consultation with the professional groups involved, he was unable to obtain agreement on the criteria.

In response to the position of the Minister of State, 22 organisations established a psycho-

logical therapies forum for counselling and psychotherapy. The forum accepted that it was imperative that the public is protected by the promotion of high standards of conduct, education, training and competence among the professionals of counselling and psychotherapy. The forum pointed out that all bodies involved in the forum provided a code of ethics by which their members must abide. The forum stated that while this form of self-regulation provides protection to clients of these organisations, if falls short of optimal protection as, under our common law system, it is possible for any person to take the title of councillor or psychotherapist and practise accordingly, without training or competence. Any person can put up a sign to say that he or she is a counsellor or psychotherapist and charge €80 an hour to perform psychotherapy and counselling. It is extremely dangerous for such untrained people do so.

I am also aware of courses being provided. One course ran for eight weekends leading to a diploma in eating disorders. One should be a professional to deal with that but I tested the system a number of years ago. A secretary, who had no qualifications or interest in any clinical, medical or psychological area, applied and was immediately welcomed on to the course and provided with a handwritten note inviting her to commence the course on the following Saturday. A course covering a number of weekends also led to a higher diploma in suicide studies. It is highly dangerous for people to counsel those who have suicidal ideations after such a short course, when they are not fully trained. My objective is to include psychotherapy and counselling in this Bill.

The current position does not lend itself to good clinical governance and the maintenance of high standards of patient care. The Health and Social Care Professionals Act provides a mechanism to drive forward the clinical governance agenda. It creates a framework through which practitioners are accountable for continually improving the quality of their service and safeguarding high standards of care by creating an environment in which excellence will flourish and optimal protection is offered to members of the public who access psychotherapy and counselling. The psychological therapies forum made a proposal for statutory regulation of councillors and psychotherapists. We have been informed that the 12 organisations already designated must have full recognition of designation before counsellors and psychotherapists are included in the Act. This is critical to vulnerable people in crisis, who will be damaged by councillors and psychotherapists who are not properly trained and qualified, some of whom are mavericks. The issue of their designation should be given priority.

I do not have confidence of an early introduction of this point. On 17 November 2009, the former Minister for Health and Children, Mary Harney, informed me:

While the proposed system of statutory registration applies, in the first instance to twelve health and social care professions, the legislation empowers the Minister for Health and Children to include, on the basis of specific criteria, additional health and social care professions in the regulatory system by regulation over time, as appropriate. However, the priority for the Health and Social Care Professionals Council is to establish statutory registration for the 12 designated health and social care professions in the first instance. It is not envisaged that additional structures will be considered for inclusion within the scope of the system until the registration boards for the existing 12 professions are established. The issue of inclusion of other grades, such as Psychotherapists and Counsellors, within the scope of statutory registration will be considered after the initial designated 12 professional grades have been dealt with.

After seven years, only two of the 12 bodies are close to registration. How long must we

wait until the 12 bodies are registered so that they can make additions?

On 24 May 2010, Mary Harney informed me:

The Council has undertaken an enormous amount of preparatory work to date in readiness for the establishment for the first 13 person Registration Board, The Social Work Registration Board, by the end of this month [in May 2010] It has done excellent work on developing governance arrangements, financial management systems, fitness to practise procedures, ICT requirements and other such issues that will be needed to support the establishment and functioning of all registration boards. As you will appreciate, it is essential that the first registration board, later this month, is established with great care as it will serve as a model for all 13 registration boards to follow.

More than two years later, nothing has happened. The Bill will facilitate this.

Yesterday, the Minister confirmed that we will have to wait a considerable time before action is taken on the registration of psychotherapists and counsellors. The Minister said:

Under the Act, I, as the Minister for Health, may designate other social care professions if I consider that it is in the public interest to do so and if the specified criteria have been met. I am conscious that some professions, currently not designated, have made a case to be regulated under the Act. My immediate priority, however, is to proceed with the establishment of the registration boards for the professions designated under the 2005 legislation. Then and only then, can consideration be given to the registration of other professions.

Yesterday, the Minister confirmed that nothing will be done about psychotherapy and counselling until all the other professions have been registered.

The Minister then said:

The Bill has three main purposes. The first is to amend the Act to allow the Minister for Health to continue to appoint professional members to the council until each of the registration boards has been established in respect of the 12 professions designated under the Act, has held elections and is in a position to nominate one of their elected members.

The Minister said nothing about the Act catering for further nominations to the board. For that reason, I ask the Minister to add psychotherapy and counselling to the 12 designated professions, and make it the thirteenth.

I note from the Minister's speech that the professions are not being taken in rotation. In fact, the second last one is being worked on at present. Psychotherapy and counselling could be prioritised under the Act.

I draw the Minister of State's attention to some of the debates that have taken place on this issue. I refer to Report Stage of the 2005 Bill, on 2 November 2005. Former Deputy Liz McManus proposed an amendment to insert the following words: "and in particular shall, within the period of 12 months from the passing of this Act, so designated the profession of counsellor and therapist". Former Deputy McManus stated:

Some people have been in therapy for many years. Many are vulnerable, perhaps going through crises in their lives and need expert and professional support for which they turn to counsellors and therapists. Regrettably, it is easy for a person to set up as a counsellor in

Ireland. There is a wide range of standards in terms of types of counsellors people go to.

She asked what guarantee have we, and I quote:

...that counselling to such a vulnerable group of children is of the proper standard if there is no formal regulation. This question must be answered. People may have degrees in psychology, with at least some level of professional standard, but not every psychologist is a good or appropriate therapist while there are many excellent therapists who are not psychologists. We need regulation in this area.

Former Deputy McManus continued:

We have a duty to protect an abuse victim with a damaged psyche from meddling by people who guide and direct in a way they believe is appropriate simply because they have set themselves up as counsellors and therapists, done courses or may have strange ideas about what a counsellor or therapist is.

I supported former Deputy McManus's amendment. I referred to the 400 different named therapies that are used to tackle many medical and social problems, including marriage and family difficulties, anxiety, depression, addiction, sexual abuse, rape, psycho-sexual difficulties, eating disorders, bereavement, adolescent difficulties, AIDS, HIV and many more. I pointed out that in other medical professions there is a requirement for a basic qualification in medicine and professionals continue to specialise.

I asked the rhetorical question, are there 400 specialist qualifications in psychotherapy or counselling. The absence of clear roles and dedicated skills for those roles fuels confusion, and the absence of regulation allows for a situation where many calling themselves counsellors in community and private practice do not warrant professional recognition. One does not need a recognised qualification or skill base to call oneself a psychotherapist or counsellor. All that is required are premises, a gold plate outside the door and the neck to charge a fee.

The Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children, Deputy Tim O'Malley, replied to the amendment on behalf of the Government. He said:

The concern of Deputies for the inclusion of counsellors and psychotherapists in the system of statutory registration being established has been made clear throughout the passage of the Bill. We are all conscious that the provision of counselling and psychotherapy services has increased in recent years and are agreed on the need for people to be confident that a counsellor or psychotherapist is qualified, competent and fit to practise.

I have already mentioned that section 4 of the Bill provides for the inclusion by regulation of additional professions in the proposed system of statutory registration. The section also sets out the criteria to which the Minister shall have regard in considering the designation of further professions. These criteria include the extent to which the profession has a defined scope of practice and applies a distinct body of knowledge, the extent to which the profession is established, including whether at least one professional body represents a significant proportion of the profession's practice, and the existence of defined rules.

Various professional groups representing psychotherapists and counsellors have been encouraged to prepare for statutory registration by working to explore a common understanding on baseline qualifications and scope of practice. I also hope to see a further

strengthening of voluntary regulations.

When the 2005 Bill was debated in the Seanad, former Senator Brendan Ryan made a strong case for registration. He said:

Many people are concerned that some may claim to be psychotherapists who only have a six month diploma while others claim to be counsellors who have a diploma obtained following a 12 month part-time course. Many of these professionals probe deeply into vulnerable areas of people's emotions and their personal lives. It is a profession that desperately needs to be regulated through the formal recognition of proper professional qualifications.

Former Senator Ryan said 12 designated professions were listed for the resolution, through guidance counselling or otherwise, of personal, social and psychological problems but there were only two of the professions to which that could currently apply. He said much of what one might call the resolution, through guidance counselling or otherwise, of personal, social or psychological problems goes outside the profession of psychology and is practised by people who are not qualified as psychologists. The Minister of State, Deputy O'Malley, said he wanted to do what the Senator suggested but that it would be extremely difficult to do so at that time. He said one could end up with numerous court cases because many of the people involved had qualifications.

The Psychological Therapies Forum was formed by various organisations, which I do not have time to name. The forum includes Accord, the Catholic Marriage Care Service; the Association of Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy in Ireland; the Association of Cognitive Analytic Therapy; the Irish Council for Psychotherapy; the Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy; the Irish Association of Christian Counsellors; the Irish Gestalt Society; the Irish Institute of Counselling and Hypnotherapy; Marriage and Relationship Counselling; and the National Association of Pastoral Counsellors.

In a report entitled Public Protection, the forum made a recommendation to the Minister that psychological therapists be added to the list of registered professions. The forum proposed that there would be two grades: psychotherapist and counsellor. That was the proposal. I believe we should regulate it. I ask the Minister to consider this seriously in light of the debate that took place and the commitment of the previous Government. Commitments which are necessary are honoured in most areas and the commitment given at that time should be honoured now. The statements from former Deputy Mary Harney and from the Minister for Health, Deputy James Reilly, yesterday that nothing will be done about any other profession until the 12 professions are designated will delay this for years. It has taken seven years for two to come near registration so how long will it take for those after the 12?

Deputy Anthony Lawlor: I welcome the Minister. It is fascinating that between 11.15 a.m. and 11.45 a.m. it is very difficult to contact council officials. It is obvious that the same applies in this House with Members of the Opposition. They must all have left for tea. I do not know the rules but we could obviously conclude the Bill if we wished. However, some of my colleagues have important points to raise.

I welcome this Bill as it is very necessary for patient care. It is also very important that the existing council can run efficiently until the board members from the various registration boards are put in place. However, I have a problem with the fact that it has taken so long, as Deputy Neville said, for this process to reach fruition. In 2000 the need for registration boards

for the various medical organisations was first identified. The Act was only passed in 2005, possibly as a result of legislation from the EU. The council was only established in 2007 and it was 2010 when the first registration board, the social carers registration board, was established. That is a very important board, particularly when one considers that we will shortly have a referendum on the rights of children. It was important to have that board in place.

In 2011 the second board, the radiotherapy board, was established. However, there has been no progress on ten more boards. There are probably legal and technical issues associated with those, but does the slow pace in establishing the boards give confidence to the public? It is mystifying that it is taking so long and that we move so slowly on many operations within government. We are talking about 12 boards but I agree with Deputy Neville with regard to psychotherapists and counsellors. Those are important boards that should be established under this legislation.

We must convey to the public that these are not quangos and that we are not re-establishing quangos when it is Government policy to remove them. The role of the registration board is to maintain and establish a register for the designated professions, issue certificates of registration, give guidance on ethical conduct and approve education and training programmes. When one considers the functions of the board one can see how vital it is that all these professions are registered.

It is worrying that Part 6 of the 2005 Act was never commenced. Part 6 is a huge section of the Act, taking up 15 pages, but it has not been commenced to date. Could the Minister of State talk to the Minister about commencing Part 6? It is a vital part of the Act. If it was commenced, it would give more confidence to the public.

In conclusion, I welcome the Bill. The fact that the social workers' board is already established gives more credence to the children's referendum that is due to be held. I strongly support Deputy Neville's comments about psychotherapists and counsellors. They must be registered with some type of registration board. That could be taken on board through an amendment. There are many problems, particularly the incidence of suicide among young men. They need people to talk to and the people they talk to must be competent, well qualified and have proper training to deal with the problems of young people nowadays, who have both mental and physical issues, such as bulimia and so forth. When the Minister tables amendments on Committee Stage, I urge him to consider adding those two boards in view of the crisis situation we are dealing with at present with the number of people taking their own lives and self harming. I would appreciate if that could be dealt with now.

Deputy Seán Kyne: I welcome the Minister and this Health and Social Care Professionals (Amendment) Bill. The 2005 Act was very important legislation for ensuring the highest standards in certain professions and protecting the public by regulating certain health care providers. We have seen in other sectors of society what happens when there is a lack of regulation. This Bill, while technical in nature, augments that important work.

The Act sets out the details on membership, fees, fines and other criteria. It also transposes provisions contained in an EU directive which facilitates the mutual recognition of qualifications across member states. The reference to the EU is significant. Over the last two decades we have seen the consolidation of the Single Market and experience has shown that creating a single market for professions is more difficult than for goods and services due to the different standards of training, educational qualifications and regulations in the member states. As a

result, the regulatory role of member states has increased in significance as each state works to uphold consistent safety and professional standards across the Union.

Our membership of the EU and the dynamics of health care mean that many of the providers and practitioners are from outside the European Union. Section 9, therefore, is of particular importance as it has become imperative that a mechanism for measuring and recognising qualifications outside the EU be implemented. In Ireland, the Health and Social Care Professionals Act ensured that only professionals who have met a minimum standard and who have registered with the council established by the Act could use the relevant titles. The Act has had a number of positive consequences in ensuring fairness by permitting all practitioners to register under the same system and, perhaps more importantly, in facilitating greater confidence among the public.

This Bill will complement the earlier Act by ensuring that only genuine, qualified professionals can use the titles of the 12 professions listed. Given that these professions concern health care, this is most reassuring. The Bill will also help to achieve the objective of providing a single body to regulate. It also demonstrates the work of the Department of Health, so often criticised by some, in technical and administrative areas, which ensures that the HSE can concentrate on health care provision. Critics might say that such legislation introduces barriers and makes it more difficult for practitioners to enter the professions, but I believe that no genuine practitioner who has worked hard to achieve a qualification will object to such legislation. The Bill not only protects the public but also the honest dedicated practitioners who have worked so hard to achieve their qualification.

The Minister for Health is empowered with other functions, however, and I urge him to explore the powers set out in section 4 of the original Act. It is entirely understandable that it takes time to bring 12 significant professions under the regulation of a single council but there are other professions which would benefit from inclusion, as other Deputies have mentioned. One such profession is the creative arts therapist, whose practitioners work in such areas as mental health care, special education and so forth in communities throughout the country. Despite the fact that many of the practitioners in this area graduated from the University of Limerick, NUI Maynooth and Cork Institute of Technology and are accredited to the Irish Association of Creative Arts Therapists, there is no State recognition. In reality, anybody can use the title of creative arts therapist and work with some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

Like many other Members, I have been contacted by the Irish Association of Creative Arts Therapists. It states in its correspondence that what is of most concern is that by failing to recognise and regulate its profession, the Government puts some of the most vulnerable client groups at risk when anybody can use the title of music, dance, art or drama therapist without ever having completed the high standard of professional training that is correctly required to be deemed a qualified practitioner. This is worrying for the majority of the work lies in areas such as mental health, special education, intellectual disability and end of life care. A dangerous situation prevails at present, the letter continues, whereby the state and welfare of some of our most vulnerable client groups is not protected through lack of action by the Government for the past 20 years. Taking those points on board, it is important we explore this profession because it would benefit significantly from a further amendment to the Health and Social Care Professions Act.

There are other professions; Deputy Neville mentioned psychotherapists and I support the calls for their inclusion, and there are other professions that could be added to the list. By do-

ing so, we are not only protecting the public by ensuring high standards of health care, but that there are genuine, qualified practitioners working in health care professions across the country. They would like to see this type of inclusion. It protects them and recognises their work, training and qualifications.

Deputy Paudie Coffey: I also wish to be associated with my colleagues' comments, especially those of Deputy Dan Neville, who has vast experience in the mental health area, particularly suicide. The Minister of State, Deputy Lynch, also has a deep interest in ensuring those who are vulnerable are protected as far as possible.

This legislation is to ensure adequate accreditation of professionals dealing with and treating the public. Health and social care is more important than any other sector due to the nature of the business and the Bill is needed to ensure the effective functioning of the health and social care professionals council. While the Bill is technical in nature, it will play an important part in ensuring those professionals are trained to the appropriate standard in their fields.

The Bill deals with membership and registration criteria of professionals and the recognition of professional competence and qualifications. We should pay attention to Deputy Neville's assertions, and I ask the Minister of State and the Department of Health to do so because some people are vulnerable to those who claim to be counsellors and psychotherapists and they must be protected from such people. If someone operates in the public space and claims professional competence, he or she must be properly accredited by a council such as the medical professional council.

I commend all health and social care professionals on the manner in which they continue to work on the front line and care for patients in the community and in hospitals, despite fairly harsh budget cutbacks and the resources available to them being more scarce. Health professionals in this country are stepping up to the mark and caring for patients in these difficult times.

As a Deputy from the south east, I want to highlight a recent report from the south-east hospital working group. The report was compiled by health professionals in the south-east hospitals of Wexford, Waterford, south Tipperary and Kilkenny. It contains proactive proposals for a reconfigured and more efficient network of hospitals in the south east, delivering services and putting the patient first. I have forwarded the report to the Minister and the CEO of the HSE and I urge them to consider the proposals in it. These hospitals are working in collaboration with the Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland and Waterford Institute of Technology. They have identified operations in the south east that are hard to understand. Cardiac patients in Kilkenny who are treated in St. Luke's hospital are being transferred for further specialist treatment in St. James's Hospital in Dublin, when there is a modern, fully functioning cardiac laboratory in Waterford Regional Hospital, where two consultants, health professionals of the highest standard, operate only half an hour's ambulance drive away. These patients, however, are referred to Dublin for some reason. This does not do patient services or efficiency within the health service any good. I urge the Minister, the HSE and the Department of Health to address these inefficiencies in the best interests of patients.

Deputy Ciara Conway: I also welcome the opportunity to speak on the Bill. Although it is technical in nature, it has generated an interesting discussion on the regulation of health professionals working in the primary care services and acute services.

Only five professions were registered just 12 years ago: doctors, dentists, nurses, opticians

and pharmacists. No one will disagree there is a huge need to regulate the increase in other allied health professionals in the health care services, including social workers, physiotherapists, radiographers and so on. I also concur with a lot of the debate about psychotherapists and counselling services. There is a significant need for the Government to step in and regulate this industry. I have met many people with masters' and PhD qualifications and they are outraged to think someone could do a course on the Internet and then set up a private practice. It does a serious disservice to the profession and it puts very vulnerable people into unprofessional hands. Often when people are vulnerable and seeking help, they might be embarrassed to talk to a GP so they might use a search engine to look for a counsellor and there is no regulation of whom they will encounter as a result. Anecdotally, I have been told of organisations that are writing reports for courts on children who have been sexually abused and the reports are being written by people with no qualifications at all. These are the most vulnerable children in Ireland and I will follow up on this with the Minister and those who are dealing with this in the HSE, particularly Gordon Jeyes, because it is alarming to think someone is masquerading as a qualified therapist and engaging in serious intervention with very vulnerable children.

The other issue I wanted to raise is that of rogue crisis pregnancy agencies and their proliferation in the telephone book and on the Internet. Again, a vulnerable group of women who are looking for help might not always be afforded the information they deserve and might find themselves talking to people in a completely unregulated sector in the social care field. There is a great deal of work to be done but it could all be tackled if psychotherapy and counselling services were to go ahead at a further stage.

It is regrettable there are only two professional councils at the moment but this Bill will give the enforcement powers over someone's fitness to practise, which is hugely important, but it also has a major role in education and ongoing professional development, which is vital when we live in a world where things are changing. We want our health professionals to be guided by the best evidence-based practice that is readily available but we must ensure these professionals engage in the educational process so they do not just decide a basic qualification is enough. We must move with the current trends in research to ensure people get the best services they deserve.

Referring to Deputy Coffey's remarks about the more efficient use of services by the HSE, the south east, particularly Waterford Regional Hospital, is a prime example of how allied health professionals are working together to conquer the difficulties in the health services. There are nurse-led clinics and physiotherapy clinics for orthopaedic patients where there are long waiting lists but we are now using the huge educational and professional resources of allied health professionals to assess those on the waiting list to ensure consultant hours are maximised. These are the kinds of stories one never hears about within the health service. These are the kinds of measures the Croke Park agreement is delivering for people and when such issues are debated, people should remember that.

I will conclude on that note, while reiterating this legislation is welcome, as it moves matters forward. However, a serious conversation is needed on the regulation of psychotherapy and counselling services because some highly vulnerable people access such services, perhaps online or from telephone books. It is very difficult to police them and ensure such people get the service they so badly need and the quality of service they so badly deserve.

An Ceann Comhairle: I now call on Deputy Buttimer, who I understand is sharing his time with Deputies O'Donovan and Donohoe.

Deputy Jerry Buttimer: Yes, if that is agreeable to the House.

An Ceann Comhairle: Is that agreed? Agreed.

Deputy Jerry Buttimer: Despite being technical in nature, this Bill is very important. The thrust of the point I wanted to make in respect of the issue of psychotherapists and counsellors has been made by Deputy Neville. The Government should introduce an amendment to the Bill on Committee Stage because, speaking as someone who has been a director of adult education, who himself has gone through the process of engaging with health care professionals in terms of counselling and who meets people every week in the most vulnerable and critical stages of life, it is imperative that such professions be included as a matter of urgency to protect both the person attending for service and the professional person concerned. This sector, which has been addressed in all the contributions thus far, should come under the regulation of the Act because in the modern era, statistics show there has been an explosion in people's use of psychotherapists and counsellors. This is the reason it is important to regulate the sector. As the Minister of State, Deputy Kathleen Lynch, is aware, and as many speakers have indicated, it is those who are most vulnerable and who are in need of service who are engaging with the professional services. Consequently, those who are practising and holding themselves out as counsellors and psychotherapists must be regulated. They should be properly qualified and trained and, equally, they should be held to account to the very highest of professional standards. This is the reason I believe they should be included. I understand the reason they could not be included in the original provisions of the Bill because, regrettably, agreement had not been reached between the professional organisations. However, I understand agreement has been reached since publication of the Bill and Members must now proceed, as a matter of urgency, with the inclusion of such people in the statutory registration scheme as so doing would allow for continuity of service and would give people a sense that a professional service is being delivered, as is the case.

This legislation is very important. It is about reform and driving home that the Government is taking a different type of approach in respect of health care and health care professions. The Bill includes a list of health and social care professionals and it is important to consider which occupations have been so included. The list includes biochemists, dieticians, podiatrists, psychologists, radiographers, social care workers, social workers, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, medical scientists and clinical biochemists, all of which are professions that bring a standard of professionalism to the delivery of care. These professions provide services in the health model to those who require a service. The reason the Bill is so important is because it is about the people who interact and those who engage with and use the service. Again, one must consider those who work in the health care service and I join Deputy Coffey in congratulating and complimenting those health and social care professionals who work in our service. As Chairman of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Health and Children and someone who has been involved in the HSE's southern regional health forum for many years, I see at first hand the huge volume of work being done each week. Those who criticise people who work in the health sector must pause for a moment to consider what has been done, the continuum of care and the quality of service. Moreover, those who criticise the Croke Park agreement fail to recognise that as a consequence of it, there has been a change in the nature of work and in the work practices to the betterment of those who use and need the service. This is the reason this legislation must be viewed as a protection of both the health and social care professional and of the user, that is, of the person who requires the service. This is the reason the issue of competence and qualification is so important. I have witnessed people setting up practice as pseudo-psychotherapists and pseudo-counsellors. Such people are not regulated and lack the

same degree of competence and qualification as others. This practice must be examined, reviewed and changed because those who come into contact with them do so because they need to be given a sense of hope and a sense of being listened to. Such people need to have their lives changed in terms of what they do and the engagement they have.

If one considers this Bill in the context of its aims, the Minister should indicate the reason it has taken four years to have all this changed. Why have only two boards been established? What was the previous Administration doing since 2000? Why was there no joined-up thinking or progression? As the legislation before Members is about introducing reform, I believe they should be made aware of the reasons reform has been delayed. Was there resistance to reform? Is there resistance to change or has the allocation of resources been sufficient? The other area of importance concerns the issue of fitness to practice and this must be considered in the context of this Bill because there is a need to implement a registration system whereby a fitness to practice regime is in place in which complaints, inquiries and disciplinary proceedings must be commenced. This is linked to reform, accountability and transparency, which, in the professional, modern world now obtain in all aspects of life and which should happen here. As other speakers have noted, health and social care professionals deal directly with people and the errors that are made for whatever reason have a profound and serious impact and profound and serious effects. It is very important to have in place a system to deal with any problems which may arise with regard to such professions and professionals. Moreover, in the interest of those of us who use such professions and professionals, this must be included as part of the Bill. I greatly look forward to amendments to the Bill being introduced on Committee Stage. The Bill is much needed and is long overdue. I welcome its publication and I hope the Minister of State will listen to the contributions made by Members.

Deputy Patrick O'Donovan: It is worth noting there was a great deal of new-found interest in the health services in recent days from supporters of the previous Administration. As per usual in all debates that take place in this Chamber, be they Second Stage, Committee Stage or other Stages, the Opposition benches are completely unmanned. It demonstrates the level of real interest within the Opposition ranks with regard to trying to bring real reform and change to the health services. It states a great deal about the commitment of the Fianna Fáil Party in particular to Oireachtas reform and how the Dáil actually operates, which is regrettable. Since my election, I believe this to be my fourth time speaking in the Chamber to entirely empty Opposition benches. The reality for me and others who speak and spend time examining legislation is that Members come into the Chamber during Leaders' Questions and blow off a great deal of hot air regarding their new-found interest in the health services. However, when they get an opportunity to make a contribution or to listen to some of the contributions being made, which have been constructive in nature, they do not attend. They see no merit in so doing because "Oireachtas Report" may not cover it tonight. Why would it, given this is legislation that is long overdue, makes perfect sense and which everyone supports? However, those who will blow off the most steam and who will run out to the plinth to make statements about the current Minister for Health, the former Minister of State in the Department of Health or the incumbent Minister of State in the Department of Health with responsibility for primary care or whatever, are not present today. This demonstrates the level of real interest those who destroyed the health services have in reforming them.

While it is very welcome that we are debating the Health and Social Care Professionals (Amendment) Bill, I take the opportunity to mention regulation of private home-care providers - an issue I have raised on a number of occasions. While legislation is promised in the area,

it is of great concern to me because the people involved are also professional in nature. There has been considerable media speculation recently and many home-care providers are also looking for this. Many Members of this House would know family members and others who are in direct contact with home-care providers. Under the previous Administration we saw what happened when private nursing homes were allowed to operate unregulated. I implore the Minister of State to deal with the Law Reform Commission report, entitled *Legal Aspects of Professional Home Care*, which was published in 2009 and proposed minimum standards, minimum training requirements, supervision and inspection, a role for HIQA and a clearly defined role for family members in respect of people who are in a key position of trust.

We have rightly debated at length the issue of children and people with intellectual disabilities, but unsupervised and unregulated people are attending to vulnerable old people living on their own. I do not cast aspersion on any person doing that job at the moment. However, as Deputy Buttimer said about psychotherapists, it is just as important for a home-care provider to be working in a statutorily regulated industry as it is for the person in receipt of it. As I said at another meeting yesterday, in light of renegotiation of the contract for consultants' pay, we now have an opportunity to renegotiate some of the home-care packages. Rather than just focusing on the number of hours allocated to people and how they might be reduced, we should investigate how much the person coming in to care for the elderly person gets paid and how much the company employing that person gets paid. There is an enormous differential and considerably more could be done in that area to deliver cost savings without impacting on the needs of the person who is ultimately dependent on the home-care provider. They do very valuable work, but I have difficulty with the area being unregulated with the only role for the HSE to be the paymaster. I will take every opportunity to raise this issue continually in debates on health and social protection. It needs to be done for the people in this industry who have nobody to speak for them.

I believe we need regulation in the area of orthodontics. In 1985 provision was made for the creation of the post of orthodontic therapist. All Deputies will have come across people visiting their clinics whose children are waiting for braces. There is reluctance among some people to regulate the area. When we are discussing reform, shortening waiting lists and doing more work with less money, we need to address orthodontic care. Over a number of years in Pembrokeshire in Wales, orthodontic waiting lists were reduced practically to zero because the Welsh Assembly took an initiative to regulate the area of orthodontic therapists and take it out of the control of people who - for their own reasons - wanted to maintain that element of control. That is the type of reform people now expect. I welcome the suite of professionals to be regulated under this legislation, but there is another cohort of professionals. This legislation will need to be fluid and flexible so that it can be amended on an ongoing basis to allow for further councils and governing authorities.

I welcome the provisions of the Bill, which make perfect sense. I regret that no one from the previous Government bothered to turn up to listen to what we had to say, but that is their problem. There is an opportunity to do more for people about whom we are inclined to forget because they do not make the headlines. I know the Minister of State has a significant interest in this given her responsibility for disability and older people. I urge her to put the regulation of home-care providers on the top of the legislative agenda.

Deputy Paschal Donohoe: I welcome the opportunity to speak on the Bill and offer my support to it. I thank the Minister of State for being present to hear what my colleagues and I have to say. I will make some points on the Bill and then comment on some of the broader is-

sues raised by Deputy O'Donovan.

Deputy Buttimer touched on some of these points earlier. I express puzzlement at the very low number of regulatory councils that have been established in recent years. Having read the background material on the Bill, I understand the overall body that was established to facilitate setting up regulatory councils was known as the Health and Social Care Professional Council, which was appointed in March 2007. Since then it appears that only two regulatory councils have been put in place - those for radiographers and social workers. Given the consensus in the House and elsewhere on the need for statutory regulation for all kinds of professions, I am puzzled that in five years that have elapsed since then more progress has not been made in setting up new panels and councils to regulate so many of the other professions that are important to the people we represent. While I accept the Bill will play a role in accelerating that, in the years since the initial body was put in place we have made virtually no progress in introducing the right kinds of councils and procedures for other professions that should be covered by this approach. I would welcome a prospective and response from the Minister as to why this has happened.

I wish to speak about the two councils that are in place. I understand that one of the reasons for introducing the Bill is the difficulty Minister has faced in putting in place new people and reappointing people to the councils that have already been established. In particular, I understand there has been a delay in appointments to the social workers' council. Why it was that the case? Was it because of a shortage of people willing to perform the roles? Was it because either the previous Government or this Government felt that the people who put themselves forward did not have the right skill sets to do the job? Why have we felt it necessary to make changes regarding how appointments are made to the existing councils? Why has there been difficulty filling those roles in the past? It appears that only two councils have been established since March 2007 and with those councils there have been delays and difficulties in appointing people to them. Given the focus on and support for statutory regulation of all councils, this is disappointing. I would welcome an answer as to what is driving those two developments.

Part 6 of the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 deals with the determination of fitness to practise, the handling of complaints by the relevant council, etc. From my background reading on this Bill, it appears that Part 6 of that Act has not yet been commenced and I wish to understand why that is the case.

Will the new council which this Bill seeks to put in place play a greater role in terms of addressing issues raised in regard to the work and standards of care of health and social care professionals? This is an important point. The explanatory memorandum to the Bill sets out the procedure for the making of a complaint in regard to the work of a social worker. While I agree with Deputy Buttimer's remarks on the professionalism of our health care workers, regrettably things do not always work out as people would want and they find it necessary to make a complaint. A point made on one of the websites through which a person can make a complaint is that the complaints officer dealing with concerns in regard to social workers might also be the principal social worker for an area, which may give rise to concern on the part of the person wishing to make known his or her concerns in terms of whether the complaint will be dealt with in an impartial manner.

A constituent of mine raised with me this morning how he could best have his concern in regard to the handling of an important issue which he had raised addressed, without causing undue worry or difficulties with which he might have to deal in the future. I acknowledge that

all of our social work professionals do the best job they can and that the vast majority meet and attain the standards required. However, as I stated earlier, occasionally those standards are not met. It is very important that there be clear guidelines in place in regard to how issues raised by people are to be responded to and dealt with. I would appreciate a response from the Minister of State, Deputy Lynch, on the reason Part 6 of the 2005 Act has not been implemented and whether this Bill, when enacted, will play a role in its commencement.

I wish to raise with the Minister of State my concerns in regard to one of the professions that will come within the remit of this Bill. I am sure other Members have, like me, received representations in regard to the waiting lists for orthodontic and speech and language therapy assessments. I have with me some correspondence in terms of my dealings on this issue on behalf of constituents. While the professionals are doing their best they are finding it hard to deliver the standard of care they would wish to provide to the people in need of this service. One response from the Health Service Executive in regard to orthodontic treatment states: "I regret I cannot be more positive at this stage and wish to reiterate that all children are offered a treatment place as soon as one becomes available". Another letter from the Health Service Executive in regard to speech and language therapy services acknowledges the frustration caused by waiting times and states that all possible will be done to meet the needs of the constituent.

While I support all that is being done in terms of closing the gap between spending and taxation and what needs to be done to ensure we have in place the correct type of reform measures to ensure where possible front line services are protected, I would like to make two suggestions in that vein. The work of the special delivery unit in terms of its addressing the waiting lists for some form of care within our health service has worked and produced results. Perhaps a similar approach could be taken to addressing problems in this area of our health service. If the children waiting for this type of care do not get assessments now they will in the future face greater difficulties and the taxpayer will face greater costs, both of which we want to avoid.

The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Deputy Howlin, has signalled that at some point in the future he will consider selective recruitment into a small number of areas within the public service. I believe two important areas that need to be prioritised are speech and language therapy and orthodontic services, in particular for young people.

Deputy Jerry Buttimer: Hear, hear.

Deputy Paschal Donohoe: The recruitment of a small number of people spread across the country would make a vast difference to the people we serve, who deserve a better service than that currently available. I would urge that these areas be prioritised in our policy for recruitment into the public service into the future.

Deputy Seamus Healy: I welcome the opportunity to contribute to this Second Stage debate on the Health and Social Care Professionals (Amendment) Bill 2012, which is technical legislation to update and amend the 2005 Act. Like other speakers, I would welcome an explanation from the Minister of State, Deputy Kathleen Lynch, as to the reason only two of the proposed 12 registration boards have been established. The Health and Social Care Professionals Bill was enacted in 2005, a time of plenty. It is difficult to understand the reason it has not been implemented to any great extent. It appears little or no priority was given to implementation of the provisions of the 2005 Act.

This Bill, which is basically technical legislation and has the universal support of this House,

provides that the Minister may nominate persons to fill vacancies on the registration boards and seeks to ensure the mutual recognition of qualifications between member states is updated. I would welcome urgent implementation of this Bill into the future. I support the suggestions regarding the inclusion of additional professions in the Bill and that we take this opportunity to do that. I believe the professions of counselling and psychotherapy should also be regulated under this Bill. I recently looked into the area of counselling and psychotherapy on behalf of a constituent. There is a huge plethora of people using the title “counsellor” or “psychotherapist”, the vast majority of whom I am sure are well qualified to do so. However, this area needs to be regulated in order to ensure protection of the public and persons utilising these services. Including these professions in the Bill’s provisions on registration would also protect the professionals. As it stands, anyone can set up as a counsellor or a psychotherapist. This is an especially sensitive area and we should give priority to such registration because many of those who attend these professionals are in difficult situations and have serious mental health issues. I support the calls made by other Deputies to include these two professions.

We should take this opportunity to commend the various health professionals on the work they do. Exceptionally professional work is done by people throughout the country and a very good one-to-one service is provided by health professionals in very difficult circumstances. We should refer to these difficult circumstances and the Minister should examine the manner in which many of these professional services are funded and resourced at present. I understand and accept that some of these professions are exempt from the moratorium but others are not and swathes of the country do not have certain professional services, such as the lack of a community dietetic service in the Tallaght area. Community occupational therapy and physiotherapy services are seriously depleted. This means additional costs are incurred because more expensive services must be used to deal with patients who could have been cared for at home, which is what they and their families would have preferred, but who are forced to attend general hospitals or private nursing homes. These are very costly compared with the community services which should be provided.

With regard to occupational therapy and the provision of equipment, only those who are fully immobile qualify for motorised wheelchairs or scooter surfaces. This means an individual who is 50% or significantly immobile but not fully immobile becomes housebound, which brings its own difficulties and ensures such a person must use general hospital or private nursing home services at huge additional cost to the health service and the taxpayer.

I am sure the provision of speech and language therapy services is a matter raised regularly with Deputies by parents encountering significant delays in having their young children seen. The earlier that speech and language difficulties are dealt with, the better the outcome. These parents also state the lengthy waiting list for these services undermines various other services and creates other difficulties for young children.

Even in professions not affected by the moratorium, cover is not provided for sick, annual or maternity leave. This creates significant difficulties in the health service, particularly in community care services which, we all agree, should be fully supported because they are very effective and, if at all possible, people want to be looked after in the community. However, many services such as occupational therapy, physiotherapy and dietetic services are not available or have significantly reduced availability. This means those who require the services must use higher cost services in nursing homes or hospitals. I call on the Minister to examine this area and ensure leave, especially maternity leave, is covered. Maternity leave is long and the Minister should ensure replacements are made available. It would be cost effective and good policy.

3 October 2012

I welcome the Bill and the opportunity to speak on it.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: I call Deputy Derek Keating who is sharing time with Deputies Regina Doherty and Dara Murphy.

Deputy Derek Keating: I welcome the opportunity to speak on this very important legislation, the purpose of which is to amend the 2005 Act. Although the Bill seeks to take account of the provisions of the 2005 EU directive relating to the recognition of professional qualifications and the assessment and recognition of qualifications obtained outside of the State, I wish to focus my contribution on what is happening in Ireland at present.

For far too long we have had many problems with standards of service provision in our health service. We need a recognised regulation to ensure a minimum standard of service provision for patients, who are the most important people in our health service. The Bill provides for each profession to have its own structures to deal with standards of service provision, standards in professional practice and complaints about service provision. It also provides for a registration board for each designated profession. Today in Ireland, anyone can put a brass plate over his or her door, proclaim himself or herself a physiotherapist, psychotherapist, care worker, social worker, and so forth, and pluck his or her fees out of the air. That is simply not good enough anymore. Sadly, this week, we saw a medical doctor brought before his peers on the fitness to practice committee to address a charge of poor performance. I use this as an example of what we need to see in other professions.

Over the years and through my involvement in the community as a youth worker and previous to that as a sports and fitness instructor, I have had to refer people for professional help because of depression, self-harm and the threat of suicide. I have often been concerned about the standard of service being provided by the professionals who do not provide a good service and who sometimes hide behind those famous expressions: "I don't discuss individual cases", or "My relationship is a professional matter." Confidentiality is the cornerstone of all professional services provided. However, the reality is that there are many self-appointed professionals who do not have registration and in whose case there is an absence either of qualification or of sufficient qualifications.

I welcome the Department of Health and Children's decision to work closely with the various councils it is establishing. These councils will also contribute to the educational system in respect of the training authorities and postgraduate courses that many professionals are to undertake. Continuous professional development, CPD, is a very important component of professional practice. However, it is not enough to be qualified. The need for continuing upskilling or training is also vital. One of the benefits of having a registration board is that, in my experience and that of many of my colleagues with whom I have discussed this matter, professional accountability is often lacking in some areas of the medical profession. It is probably an aspect of human nature but the reality is that people sometimes become institutionalised. They get into a routine or sometimes rush to make decisions, diagnoses, care plans or therapies without fully validating them with other colleagues or examining new developments or treatment plans and without consulting the person receiving the service. We are all capable of becoming stale in our practice. However, when one is providing services to young people, including those with learning disabilities, or to dependent elderly people, the terminally ill or people with an addiction or physical problem, every profession is required to give the highest standard of service but in a manner and with an attitude that contributes towards respect, the dignity of the person, the right to self-determination and even the right to stay the way he or she is if he or she so chooses.

The 2005 Act provided for the establishment of statutory registration. This Bill improves on the current legislation and empowers the Minister to appoint professionals to the boards of their professions and to establish a standard that is expected from their peers. The new legislation will also allow the Minister to update fines for offences under the Act and I also welcome this part of the legislation.

We hear a lot about corporate governance in the media, even in the case of charitable organisations. Standards of practice and accountability, including regular accounting to boards and committees, are important in modern Ireland. What I hope comes from this new legislation is that each professional will not only be accountable for his or her actions but will also be responsible for his or her professional opinions and interventions. Indeed, we will, once and for all, continue to improve the services that are so necessary to help the vulnerable people who very often have only two choices - to take it or leave it. This legislation gets rid of that attitude and puts in place not only a legal obligation on professionals to be accountable but also an invitation to and obligation on professionals to take responsibility for their members. It also protects professionals from managers who demand shortcuts. The best regulator for any profession is a professional who knows that service.

I revert to the point I made previously when I said it is almost impossible to regulate attitudes but, thankfully, we are very fortunate because we have a culture of care and a commitment to excellence. As has been stated before, the majority of professionals, who I would group under the umbrella title of allied health professionals, are hard-working and conscientious and committed to standards and the needs of their clients, and that is what they expect of them.

My opening remark was that this Bill is necessary to improve the 2005 Act. I wish to place on the record of the House my gratitude for the many thousands of professionals working in the health service who will never be rewarded in monetary terms for their kind and professional commitment, caring and gentleness. I have experienced it myself and I am sure many other people have experienced it as well when family members are in the care of professionals. That gentleness and recognition for each person in his or her own right are so important in addition to the professional treatment. Today, those working in front-line services will benefit from this legislation. I welcome this legislation because of those who cut corners or occasionally act unprofessionally or who are hard task masters. I welcome the Minister's commitment not only to introduce a new, smarter, more efficient health system but his encouragement and support for the majority of kind, gentle workers who go beyond their contract and give of themselves daily. It is for these reasons I support this Bill.

Deputy Regina Doherty: The Bill makes a number of housekeeping amendments to previous legislation, with the general intent of ensuring medical organisations run as well as they ought to. Key to this is the amendment of the 2005 Act by changing the current provisions regarding professional membership of the Health and Social Care Professionals Council and to make other technical amendments. In 2005, the Department of Health introduced a system of statutory registration for health and social care professionals. This system ensures members of the public are protected and informed in order that they can be confident that the professional providing the service is properly qualified, competent and of good standing. It also ensures professional conduct and the promotion of high standards of professional education and training among health and social care professionals. The system of statutory registration currently applies to the 12 health and social care professions, regardless of whether they work in the public or private sector or are self-employed.

This Bill, which introduces amendments to the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005, is necessary to facilitate the effective functioning of the council and the registration boards for those individual professions. The principal amendments relate to the appointment of professional nominees to council; changes in registration criteria, including the power to allow registration boards to put in place a scheme for returners to practice and setting criteria for qualifying as an existing practitioner; and further implementing the EU directive for recognition of professional qualifications. This EU directive is wide ranging, covering workers from architects to nurses, but it has a significant impact on the health service and its revision will need to be monitored closely by all employers in the health service. There is no doubt that it will be beneficial to the HSE, with overseas EU workers comprising a significant number on the medical register. We have seen the mistakes of the past. The well-being of patients and the quality of health services must be a top priority for member states so specific rules need to apply to health care staff covered by the EU directive.

There has been plenty of talk about the movement of foreign health workers in recent years, particularly in the wake of high-profile cases that have raised concerns about the clinical competence and, in many cases, language skills of some migrants and the methods of assessment by regulators and employers. Against this backdrop, the European Commission has, over the past year, been consulting on changes to the directive on the recognition of professional qualifications. Under the current terms of the directive, health care professions who hold certain qualifications awarded in one member state can register to practise in any other EU member state without having to satisfy further tests or formalities under the directive's automatic recognition procedures.

Automatic recognition of qualifications grants access to professional registration, but it does not determine an individual's suitability to do the job. Importantly, professional registration does not remove any responsibility from the employer to ensure the applicant is competent to perform the role for which he or she is applying. This is why a number of tighter rules are needed to ensure all health professionals coming to work in Ireland are fit to practise.

One important amendment to the directive concerns an alert mechanism between professional regulators that would place an obligation on each regulator to warn other member states of professionals who have been struck off. I would be particularly in favour of such a change being introduced to help prevent dangerous or incompetent practitioners shopping around for jobs in Europe. I would also like to be sure that the legislation ensures registrants to be required to demonstrate continuing professional development in order to maintain registration in their home countries. Many European regulators have no such requirements.

Language is an issue that has been a source of much controversy in the public arena, and welcome change is planned in this area. The new proposal makes it clear that regulators will be able to ask applicants for registration for evidence of language competence.

Another proposal from the Commission concerns the introduction of a portable, Europe-wide electronically transmittable professional card certifying a person's qualifications and professional status. Whatever system of exchange is used, its success will depend upon the quality and trustworthiness of the information it contains.

While the Commission's proposals suggest the sending country will create and validate the card, it is the receiving country whose nationals are potentially at risk of harm so responsibility for checking credentials should remain with it. There is no doubt in my mind that the safety of

patients must always come first, and a worker's right to mobility should never be at the expense of safety and quality. Given the mistakes of the past, we have argued for higher standards to be applied to health care professions as the risks are so much higher and patients are vulnerable. Now is the time to act.

Deputy Dara Murphy: I too welcome the opportunity to speak on this Bill. It is described as technical but it goes further than that.

I acknowledge the presence of the new Minister of State in the Department of Health, Deputy Alex White. This is his second time in the hot seat although it is my first time to be in the House in his presence. We were colleagues very briefly; I was a member of the Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform for only two weeks when he became Minister of State. While he will be a great loss to the committee, I am certain he will be a great servant to the Department of Health and the people.

I am sure the Minister of State is aware that the subject matter of this Bill has been the subject of significant public debate recently. An hour or two ago, members of the Fianna Fáil and Sinn Féin parties were happy to raise the issue of primary care facilities in their areas when members of the media were present. However, now that we are actually debating the professional qualifications and regulations of many of the people who will work in primary care units, there is nobody present from those parties. At least their false anger is consistent and we know what they are about.

Primary care teams and primary care units were mentioned in the manifestos of the Fine Gael and Labour parties and now comprise an important part of the programme for Government. The regulation of staff in primary care teams is vital bearing in mind the people they serve and treat.

On a day when the Government has announced it is seeking further reductions that will affect staff in public services, it is necessary to point out the great work being done in the health service, particularly by health care professionals. The reductions will be targeted and there will be no reduction in front line service provision.

Let me focus on the professional qualifications directive. Over the past 18 months, the Government has tried to improve the ability of people in Ireland to move abroad to work within the European Union. While Ireland has high unemployment at present, as everyone will know, there are large parts of Europe suffering from a shortage of professionally qualified staff. Even in Ireland, there are areas in which we still require professionally qualified staff. This is an important aspect of the legislation.

Some 800 professions are identified throughout the European Union. The directive sets out the rules for mutual recognition of qualifications between member states. This is of benefit to our professionals when going abroad and to our citizens, who can be assured that those staff who come from other countries, particularly those within the European Union, are qualified satisfactorily.

Qualification requirements differ from country to country. A person fully qualified to carry out his profession in one country might not be considered fully qualified in another. The directive of 2005 is a key for professionals to overcome problems resulting from these differences. It enables professionals to take advantage fully of the Single Market when finding a job and developing their career or extending their business.

We are now focusing on primary care and putting the patient at the centre in this regard. It may allow for more self-employed staff in the health service. That will certainly allow people to have greater flexibility in their workplaces, but it may also give rise to a more efficient health service, particularly at primary care level, which is the level closest to the people on the ground.

There are 12 areas listed in the legislation and there is provision to allow for the addition of other professionals. However, the legislation does not state whether other professions can be added.

Deputy Dan Neville stated he has for many years focused on health services, particularly the mental health service. He referred to many Ministers and Ministers of State of successive Governments with whom he has dealt. I know of nobody in this House with greater expertise in the area of mental health than the Deputy. I ask the Minister of State, Deputy Alex White, to avail of an opportunity to read the suggestions of Deputy Dan Neville, and that the ministerial summary identify whether some of these suggestions can be taken on board in this Bill or another.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: I welcome the opportunity to contribute on this important legislation. Each of us has commented on the quality of various professional services, but the standard of health and social services is of particular importance. I have listened with interest to a number of Deputies. We should compliment the dedicated people involved in the provision of health and social services who have given their all and made significant commitments above and beyond the call of duty for many years. They have not received rewards or a great deal of recognition. Unfortunately, when something goes wrong, as is the case in certain circumstances, they all get the blame. I hope that the directive being complied with will address these issues.

All Deputies know of situations that have gone wrong in recent years. Something should have been done to protect patients, people with special needs or other vulnerable people. For years, incidents occurred that should not have been allowed to happen. There was no backup or commitment. There was always a good excuse for things not being done in the right order. Various Deputies have referred to the State's liability in this regard. That liability increases with the passage of time.

It is ironic that we are discussing this issue in the aftermath of the Celtic tiger, when everything was possible and there was an abundance of funding. However, the money did not go where it should have. Emphasis was not placed on addressing the issues we are discussing. Glitches appeared in the system.

In the past ten or 15 years, there have been many professional incidents in the health service, some of which were appalling. While those involved might have had all of the necessary qualifications, some of their practices raised serious questions. I do not want to go into particular details, but some women had operations performed upon them that were debilitating, demeaning and ever lasting in so far as their health and well being were concerned. I will never understand how problems of that nature were not addressed at the time or how a particular procedure was allowed to continue regardless of the questions legitimately raised by other professionals. That other professionals were unwilling to address those questions was a terrible blight. The Minister of State and all other Deputies are fully conversant with the issues.

Incidentally, I congratulate the Minister of State and wish him well. He has a difficult portfolio in difficult times. Like everyone, he is being asked to perform more tasks with less money.

Deputy Alex White: I thank the Deputy.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: The operations carried out were appalling and attempting to stand over them professionally only exacerbates the situation.

The individual needs to depend on the professionalism and qualifications of the person providing the service, which were always taken as a given. When one attended a hospital or so on, it was automatically understood that the medical profession was competent and would provide the best advice for the circumstances to put the patient on the right path. Unfortunately, a number of incidents have led us to believe that these criteria were not always met.

Those of us involved in public life have been disadvantaged. As my colleague stated a few moments ago, the response we usually get is to the effect that the issue in question is a professional matter and we are not professionally competent to ask about the procedure or methodology. I have rejected that response all of my political life for a good reason. Public representatives are elected to represent the people, including professionals. Being reluctant or quoting the Data Protection Act and so on to facilitate a refusal is a dangerous route to take. I have always spoken out against it and will continue to do so. It renders the public representative unable to do the job that he or she was elected to do. I am not referring to spurious cases, but to situations in which there is a reason to believe that issues are not being dealt with in an appropriate fashion and the public interest is not being protected. It is the public representative's duty to raise this concern with the relevant individual or agency in the first instance so as to ensure that the information is right. It is not acceptable for any organisation, however professional it might be, to suggest to the representative that an answer cannot be provided because he or she has no professional competence in the area in question. Were that the case, a solicitor could not take a medical court case. A lawyer could only discuss the law and nothing else except in the abstract. If one wanted to pursue an issue, it would be crazy if one needed to be a professional in that field.

I welcome the Bill and its objective and I hope that it brings focus to a series of issues that have come to the public's attention in recent years. It will produce a co-ordinated and integrated approach to addressing issues and ensuring standards of professionalism throughout the health and social services. This is important. Each Deputy has had issues brought to his or her attention. Some agencies respond when we follow up on those issues, but some will always find a reason for not responding. This peculiar situation has developed over the years and endangers public confidence in the State's services.

This is a difficult time. Everyone is expected to take on greater responsibilities and to do more for less. We must do our best. It will not be easy. People's expectations, *1 o'clock* having been dashed for a variety of reasons, will become more sensitive. People will naturally and understandably want reassurance, which can only come from the cross-EU implementation of a proper code of standards and ethics as well as qualification criteria.

A number of Deputies have raised the question of languages. It is important that the patient can communicate his or her problem. If he or she cannot be understood, it creates a problem.

I agree entirely that there is a need for a clear understanding of the work done at all levels by these professionals, who must be competent.

There is another issue that we have come to recognise over the years. There have been

cases in the past where structures have been in place and all the necessary statutory requirements were complied with by various authorities but the system still failed. That should not happen, although I know there will always be individual cases with extenuating circumstances. Notwithstanding that, we must try to aspire to a position where we can be entirely confident in procedures with follow-up so that extraordinary cases do not develop and people will not have to ask why something happened. We must deal with such issues.

I do not want to be critical of individuals. I am sure everybody has had experience, as I do, of reporting a particular incident, which could be life-threatening or threatening in some other way but with nothing happening as a result. We should not have to repeatedly follow up such issues. Having brought a matter to the attention of the powers that be in health, education, security or justice, it should not be necessary to pursue the issue endlessly. It should be possible to rely on the authorities concerned to deal with such issues in a competent fashion and to respond effectively.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Is the Deputy sharing time with Deputy McHugh? The Deputy has eight minutes left in his slot and Deputy McHugh will be next if nobody offers to speak on the other side.

Deputy Joe McHugh: I will take five minutes.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: My colleague will take five minutes of the slot.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: The Deputy has three minutes remaining.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: Psychological services have been referred to by various other speakers and it is very important for us to consider them. I have not had an experience with those people providing psychological services to young adults or children that would suggest any lack of professional competence. Nevertheless, I am sure I and everybody else has experienced the lack of seamless follow-up services in the event of a problem being brought to the attention to the powers that be. There should be an ability or willingness to follow up. There can be a bit of a rejection for the interfering public representative in such matters but when an issue is brought to the attention of relevant individuals, there is usually a satisfactory response. We should not have to go through an altercation in order to resolve such matters.

We hope that as a result of adopting this directive in legislation, there will be an improvement and we will not see questions raised about incidents that should not have happened. Very often, these cases affect vulnerable people, including children, those with special needs and people in the care of professionals, whether they are young, old or middle aged. Such people are vulnerable by virtue of being in that care. The State has a duty of care in such instances and I hope it will recognise that it has a responsibility to protect all citizens - young, old and middle aged - in the course of that duty of care. I hope that as a result it will provide a better society as we proceed.

Deputy Joe McHugh: At the outset I welcome the Minister of State, Deputy White, and congratulate him on his new role. I wish him well and no doubt his good wife will keep him right from a social consciousness perspective. As a former lecturer in sociology in Maynooth, she certainly has an in-depth knowledge of the social needs of the country. Every opportunity for the Minister of State to hear interventions from colleagues will be used. There is no better opportunity than a technical Bill like this for that, as we have the liberty to digress.

With regard to the recognition of qualifications, a parallel could be drawn with the Department of Education and Skills, which oversees the Teaching Council of Ireland. The Department of Health will have a system in place for qualifications outside the jurisdictions to be recognised in this country. I wish the Minister of State well with the process, and it is important for the Department to consult with those involved with the Teaching Council of Ireland to see what they have learned over a number of years. Some 12 months ago in this House I was critical of the teaching council but since then, with a backdrop of fewer resources and considerably fewer human resources in the council, there has been a marked improvement. Its systems took a while to put in place correctly but the council has done remarkably well in the past 12 months. It should be acknowledged when something works well and there should be credit where it is due. I acknowledge the work of the Teaching Council of Ireland.

We should add paramedics to the list of professions to be recognised, and I have spoken to a few of them with American qualifications who would be interested in different roles within the Irish system. Their qualifications are not recognised so it is important we check that out.

The patient mobility directive is due to be transposed into law in October 2013. With that in mind there will be great changes, and I would like the Minister of State to intervene so we can get a good understanding of what is coming down the track. This is not just about a cross-Border process between Northern Ireland and the Republic but rather a European directive that will enable patients to get care in different countries throughout the European Union. That will be a historic feature and landmark change to the way we deliver health services within the Union. I note the existing international work that is ongoing between the United Kingdom and Ireland, including lung transplants in London or the Duchenne muscular dystrophy treatment of young boys in Newcastle in the UK.

There has been an historical movement of patients across the UK, Ireland and Europe so it would be important to learn from the experience, including that of the young boys who suffer from Duchenne muscular dystrophy. Currently they are registered through the HSE and in the past they had travel paid for. That has now changed, which puts pressure and cost on the young boys travelling to Newcastle. However, the more important point is not an economic one. The parents of the boys currently going to Newcastle are of the opinion that the standard of care and service they get in Newcastle would not be provided in this jurisdiction. I ask the Minister of State to familiarise himself with the issue. I realise it is a clinical one and that he is focused on the primary care aspect, but there will be an overlap because there is a degree of primary care at a household level for boys who suffer from Duchenne muscular dystrophy, a disease that shortens considerably the lifespan of these boys. However, on a positive note, the ongoing clinical trials in Newcastle are reassuring to the parents and they have advanced many new treatments. It is important to emphasise the fact that if a service is being provided in the UK or elsewhere in the European Union, people have the choice to access it.

I take this opportunity when the Minister of State is present to raise a primary care issue. There is grave concern about the home help service about which no doubt he will be aware from his Labour Party colleagues. The time of year is a factor as we approach the winter. Many elderly people are used to receiving the assistance of a home help, be it for an hour a day to help them get up in the morning. Any change in respect of this service must be treated delicately and sensitively.

An 87 year old who came to my clinic on Monday told me that she has the assistance of a home help for one hour a day, five days a week, Monday to Friday, and in that way does not

incur the extra cost of a double time payment for a home help on a Saturday and Sunday. She would be agreeable to have assistance for half an hour a day and she also proposed she does not need assistance in the summer time. This 87 year old woman has come up with solutions. She can make savings and realises where savings can be made. Any sort of review of decisions in respect of the home help service must be taken on merit and it is important to listen to the voices of the people who receive this service.

A consultant got in touch with me with respect to cross-Border challenges. While we as legislators and politicians talk about the potential for cross-Border collaboration and synergies to provide services rather than incurring duplication in the provision of services, there is a cultural barrier, with which no doubt the Minister of State will be faced in the not too distant future, in that there is resistance to change at all levels within the health service. It will require strong leadership and hard decisions to ensure there is collaboration and positive co-operation at a cross-Border level.

I want to make a point regarding the new politics of Sinn Féin and Fianna Fáil with respect to representations at a political level, not only within the health service but across the board. As a Deputy representing my constituency, having been involved in politics for 12 years at council level and previously as a Member of the Seanad, I am at a loss to know as to how far representation can go. For example, in the case of rural Garda stations, am I allowed to lobby the Minister to retain Garda stations in Donegal or is that a prerogative of the Commissioner? Is it a civil servant diktat list system to which we as politicians in this House must adhere? Are we allowed to make representations? Where does the politics of Government party Deputies such as myself in terms of my constituency come into play?

I wish to cite another example, that of Malin Head Coast Guard station, and I am digressing from health but this is an important example. Prior to the formation of this Government, Deloitte & Touche was commissioned by the Department of Transport seven years ago to prepare a report examining the centralisation of coastguard facilities in the country. When this Government came into office, that Department commissioned another report, the Fisher report, calling for the centralisation of coastguard services. We have to examine where we are at as a political body and whether interventions can be made by politicians to ensure constituencies such as mine get the services the people demand. I have met the Minister, Deputy Varadkar, and will continue to lobby him to ensure the Coast Guard stations remain in Malin Head and Valentia, even though the new politics of Sinn Féin and Fianna Fáil are more or less insisting there should not be interference from politicians in regard to diktats from civil servants or lists that are drawn up. While acknowledging that the world is not perfect, the issue of what powers politicians have to represent their constituencies is a legitimate one that should be explored in this House. Top civil servants remain in office after a Government falls - there was a car crash in terms of the loss of Fianna Fáil politicians in the last general election - and they retain their same doctrines and philosophies. It is our job as politicians, in the interests of the people in our respective constituencies, to challenge whatever diktats or list systems are presented to us.

Minister of State at the Department of Health(Deputy Alex White): I thank the Deputies for their contributions to this Second Stage debate and note from what I have heard, and I have heard a great deal, that there is broad support for the Bill before the House. The main purpose of this relatively short Bill is to amend the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 to provide for the enhanced and effective functioning of the Health and Social Care Professionals Council and the registration boards established under the Act. It is a relatively short Bill. This type of legislation is often described as technical. Deputy Catherine Murphy suggested

it is easy to describe a measure as technical but often technical provisions in legislation have enormous impact and are of great importance and relevance. That applies in this case, for example, to the professions concerned and, ultimately, to the public in terms of the confidence it has in the various professions, the fact they are registered and regulated to a degree, that there is public knowledge of that, that there is transparency and a broad understanding of the standards that apply in the different professions, and that those standards are maintained and, to the extent appropriate, supervised. That is in the interests of the community, society and the professions. There is a common cause on that - I do not think any Member has questioned the necessity for that kind of system.

Some issues were raised in the course of the debate as to the delay or the belief that there has been an inordinate delay in bringing forward additional proposals such as those in this amending legislation. I return to the point that whereas it can be suggested such enactments are technical, they are also often very complex and require careful consideration and drafting. On the issue of the speed at which these things have been done or are done, the question of which professionals are to be dealt with in this legislation was set out in the 2005 Act. There are 12 designated professions and it is those within the parameters of the 2005 Act we are dealing with in the Bill before the House. I heard a good deal of the debate and the contributions, including that of Deputy Neville, which springs from a very long and close involvement in the areas with which he dealt. I am quite sure that when we come to deal with Committee Stage, the issue of the scope of the legislation is something that can be addressed by colleagues.

I thank colleagues for their kind words to me. I look forward very much to my role in the Department of Health dealing with the issue of primary care but other matters also, as I am discovering by the hour. It is a significant challenge that I intend to embrace from the outset.

I also endorse and emphasise the issue raised by many colleagues about all the professions in the health and social care areas. Some terrific, professional, dedicated and committed people work in these professions and they serve their patients and the broader community well. We are currently debating the constitutional amendment proposal for new provisions in respect of children and the role and contribution of social workers features regularly. The social work profession sometimes comes in for grossly unfair and ill-informed criticism and the commitment of the profession, particularly, although not exclusively, in the area of child welfare must be acknowledged. The same goes for each profession that is required to be registered and regulated under the legislation. I acknowledge that colleagues on all sides agree with this.

I refer to the provisions relating to the mutual recognition of professional qualifications throughout the EU and the recognition of qualifications domestically. They will assist us in this State but will also assist Irish health professionals who travel abroad. This model has been developed at European level and the achievement of the best common set of standards is important because there are different histories and contexts in each member state. However, increasingly, the standards required of professionals in the health and social care fields are converging internationally and it would make sense that standards ought not to differ too much in the context of the qualification needed to practise in these professions. It is correct that we should move towards a better regime for the mutual recognition of qualifications.

We should not imagine that because the legislation is technical that it will fail to have an impact. I look forward to the constructive examination of this important Bill on Committee Stage.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: I would also like to congratulate the Minister of State on his

appointment.

Deputy Seamus Healy: I also join the Leas-Cheann Comhairle in congratulating the Minister of State on his appointment and wishing him well for the future.

Question put and agreed to.

Health and Social Care Professionals (Amendment) Bill 2012: Referral to Select Committee

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): I move:

That the Health and Social Care Professionals (Amendment) Bill 2012 be referred to the Select Sub-Committee on Health pursuant to Standing Orders 82A(3)(a) and (6)(a) and 126(1) of the Standing Orders relative to Public Business.

Question put and agreed to.

Sitting suspended at 1.25 p.m. and resumed at 2.30 p.m.

Ceisteanna - Questions

Priority Questions

Merger of Cultural Institutions

1. **Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the further discussions he has had with affected staff on the amalgamation of the National Library and the National Archives; the costs saved; the progress made to date on the amalgamation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42241/12]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): The Government announced a series of rationalisation measures in the public service reform plan published on 17 November 2011. A number of the measures announced related to certain national cultural institutions, funded from my Department's Vote group, and these are currently being progressed as required under the reform plan. These measures included a decision to merge the National Archives and the Irish Manuscripts Commission into the National Library, while maintaining separate identities. In this regard, my Department has engaged in ongoing consultations with each of the relevant institutions seeking their views on how best to progress this decision by Government. My Department has already engaged with union and staff representatives on

progressing this merger and will continue to do so over the coming period, as implementation of the Government decision is advanced. In addition, I have met the chairs of the various institutions involved. Indeed, meetings have also taken place with a wide range of stakeholders and interested parties. There has also been extensive debate in both Houses of the Oireachtas.

In July last, I forwarded a report to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform setting out the progress made to date and the proposed way forward in respect of the implementation of the Government decisions on the rationalisation of the relevant national cultural institutions, including the decision to merge the National Archives and the Irish Manuscripts Commission into the National Library, while maintaining separate identities. I am advised that the material submitted by me to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform is being assimilated and I anticipate that it will be submitted to Government for its consideration in due course.

Regarding costs, I refer the Deputy to the priorities set out in the programme for Government for the rationalisation of State agencies, which provide that such rationalisation must be cost effective and lead to a more transparent, accountable and efficient public service. It is not possible at this stage to outline projected savings for each body to be rationalised. In progressing implementation of the rationalisation agenda, my Department has been mindful of the critical need to deliver savings, as well as opportunities for efficiencies and more effective service delivery.

Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail: I am glad to be joining the team in this area and replacing my colleague, Deputy Troy. I look forward to a positive engagement with the Minister and his team and parties on all sides of the House. The Fianna Fáil Party set out its stall during Private Members' business some time ago. The Minister is well aware of the opposition of the Fianna Fáil Party to the amalgamation of the cultural institutes and the reasons for the opposition. We understand and accept that, across all Departments, there must be rationalisation and we support the idea of shared services and improved and integrated procurement processes. We deplore the fact that a cost-benefit analysis has not been carried out in this instance. We are all united in support for the initiative next year, The Gathering, and we realise how important cultural institutions are to the success of that initiative. People who come to this country will be anxious to avail of the services of the well-established institutions. The institutions are opposed to the initiative. I accept the Minister's bona fides in this matter but the institutions are opposed to the emasculation of their role and the consumers of the product are opposed. Who is driving this and what motivated the Government to take this approach to the cultural institutions? It is opposed by many luminaries and the Government has decided on this approach without any cost-benefit analysis.

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: I welcome Deputy Ó Fearghail and I look forward to positive engagement with him. On the basis of his record, I am confident we will have that engagement, as I had with his predecessor. I am aware of the Fianna Fáil Party's position on the proposal, as I am aware of the Fianna Fáil proposal in 2008, when it was in government, for exactly the rationalisation we are looking at. This is part of better Government and whereas nothing has been announced, when it is announced people will accept it as part of the Government's programme for better governance, better decision-making and more streamlined Government. I am optimistic about the reaction of the cultural institutions to the proposals when they are eventually published by the Government following the Government decision. The proposal for the cultural institutions and other State agencies will be presented to Government by the Minister in the near future.

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Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail: The Minister appropriately makes reference to what the previous Fianna Fáil Government appeared to be about. In June 2010, the then Taoiseach, Brian Cowen, said that the Government intended to introduce a draft Bill. The initial draft was circulated to the National Archives, the National Library and the chairman of the Irish Manuscripts Commission for observations. No firm commitment was made to do any more than that. Even if it were, to do as the Minister proposes is not in the interests of the institutions. At the eleventh hour, I call on the Minister to desist. He should realise that the experts in the field, apart from the Minister, are not *ad idem* and that a more sophisticated approach, involving procurement, shared services and so on, is the approach that should be adopted.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Peter Mathews): We have used up the time allocated for the question and we must move on to the next question. Jumping faults and time faults are not allowed.

Cultural Policy

2. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the efforts he has made to address the fact that Dublin is suffering loss of competitive position against other major European city competitors due to lack of coordination of marketing efforts; the engagement he has with various stakeholders; his plans to establish a statistical data base to track the number of theatres, galleries, libraries, museums, venues, festivals and cultural spaces in Dublin as per the World Cities Culture Report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42256/12]

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: The World Cities Culture Report 2012, to which the Deputy refers, examines the cultural offering of 12 of the world's greatest cities, selected by the application of a set of objective criteria such as economic wealth and population figures, and all of which differ significantly from Dublin in terms of size, scale and population. However, a number of the key messages emanating from the report resonate strongly with Dublin as our capital city, having regard to the unique role that the cultural and creative industries of any city must play to ensure the endurance, development and evolution of that city.

A crucial part of the current and future repositioning of the economy is the leveraging of Ireland's cultural and creative resources as part of the development of a robust economic base, in part rooted in the cultural and creative industries. Dublin, as our capital city, is a key stakeholder in this process.

Cultural tourism is now a key element of Ireland's tourism industry, with culture cited by the majority of visitors to Ireland as a key motivator in choosing Ireland. Our national cultural institutions are essential building blocks of the cultural identity and creativity of Ireland and the future success of the knowledge economy. In 2011, I am proud to say there were over 3.6 million visitors to the national cultural institutions and other cultural venues supported by my Department. Among the three working groups operated by the Council of National Cultural Institutions, CNCI, its marketing group organises the joint marketing of the institutions. In recent years, this has consisted primarily of advertising via the various media outlets on offer and the redesign and upgrade of the CNCI website. This year the group also organised a specific Internet advertising campaign aimed at attracting overflow visitors from the London Olympics to Ireland and a shared stand for all of the national cultural institutions at the Ploughing Championships in Wexford, which I am happy to report attracted significant interest. The group also

hopes to broaden promotion beyond the typical advertising media in the coming years.

Culture Night is an initiative strongly supported by my Department since its inception. The event has grown from a relatively small-scale cultural event in 2006 to the significant national cultural event it now is, with more than 300,000 people visiting museums, galleries, historic houses, artists' studios and cultural centres throughout the country in 2011. Early indications are that the 2012 figures for this event will match, if not exceed, this.

Additional information not given on the floor of the House.

My Department also funded the development of the Culturefox application for smartphones and it is widely used by arts organisations and tourists alike. There are numerous other events and projects to which my Department provides funding and support, all of which play a key role in promoting Dublin in all its forms. These include the Dublin Theatre Festival, projects celebrating Dublin's selection as the 2012 City of Science and the many projects which recognise and celebrate the 2010 designation of Dublin as an UNESCO City of Literature.

Deputy Sandra McLellan: I thank the Minister for his reply. However, does he not see a contradiction in supporting the development of Dublin as a key tourist destination while his Department conjures up plans to restructure the capital's key cultural institutions and incorporate them in the Department, not to mention slashing funding to the Arts Council and to the arts in general? Does the Minister accept the strategic importance of Dublin as a tourist location, that increased tourism numbers to Dublin could have a beneficial effect on the rest of the country and that to develop tourism in Dublin to its full potential would require an emphasis on event-based marketing for Dublin and other cities? Would the Minister agree with that?

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: Dublin is, certainly, vibrant at present and this is driven by our cultural institutions. I suggest the Deputy walk along Kildare Street and see the large numbers going into the National Museum and the National Library. If she ventures beyond Kildare Street, she will see that our cultural institutions are thriving at present. I am sure some of the young people who are in the Visitors Gallery have been to the National Museum and National Library during the visit to Dublin. Our cultural institutions are thriving. I want to strengthen our cultural institutions, make them more accessible and market them more effectively. That is what I will be doing while I am in my present position. Some 3.6 million of our tourists come to Ireland for the cultural experience.

I agree with the Deputy that it is important we promote culture as our unique selling point. What makes us different from anyone else is our music, song, dance and the various aspects of our culture. I take on board what the Deputy says. We can learn from the World Cities Culture report, although it does not refer to Dublin, as such. There has been a major drive to promote our cultural institutions. Deputy Ó Fearghail referred to The Gathering. Cultural institutions are playing a major role in The Gathering, which will take place next year.

Deputy Sandra McLellan: I remind the Minister that culture extends beyond Kildare Street.

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: I am a Deputy from Kerry, the periphery of the country. We are doing well out of culture and we sell it well in Kerry.

Deputy Sandra McLellan: And in Cork.

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Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: However, more than a million tourists visited the National Museum last year and there will be more visitors this year. Whatever we are doing to support and promote our cultural institutions must be working, to some extent.

Hare Coursing

3. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if, in view of the report from the Ranger on the coursing meeting at Kilflynn, County Kerry, during last season stating that the very wet weather made it difficult for the hares to run and resulted in twelve hares being caught, he will make it a condition of the licence that no coursing should take place in wet weather when ground conditions are heavy and soggy thus making it difficult, if not impossible, for the hares to run from the greyhounds and that the Ranger will have the power to ensure that coursing will not take place in those conditions. [42239/12]

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: The control of live hare coursing, including the operation of individual coursing meetings and managing the use of hares for that activity, is carried out under the Greyhound Industry Act 1958, which is the responsibility of the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine. Hare coursing is administered by the Irish Coursing Club, which is a body set up under the Greyhound Industry Act 1958. The regulation of hare coursing facilitates the control of coursing and reduces the attraction of illegal, unregulated coursing activity.

I have a responsibility under national and EU wildlife law to ensure the conservation of the populations of certain species, including the hare. In this regard, the Wildlife Acts control the hunting of certain mammals by the use of open seasons. Hares may only be hunted during each open season from 26 September to 28 February of the following year, including by coursing at regulated coursing meetings.

Under the terms of the Wildlife Acts, a licence is needed by the Irish Coursing Club, covering its affiliated coursing clubs, to capture or tag hares. I have issued licences to the Irish Coursing Club allowing its affiliated coursing clubs to net and tag hares for the purpose of hare coursing for the 2012-2013 season. These licences currently have a total of 26 conditions attached to them. These are reviewed regularly and are updated where considered necessary. Conditions of the licences cover a range of items, including providing data on hare captures and releases; having a veterinary surgeon in attendance at a coursing meeting; not coursing hares more than once per day; not coursing sick or injured hares; and having adequate escapes for hares during coursing.

In practical terms, weather can obviously have an effect on such events and in very bad weather the Irish Coursing Club may call off a coursing meeting. I am aware that it has done so in the past. While I am satisfied that, in general, the licensing system operates well, I will consider the suggestion of the Deputy for the next hare coursing season in light of the concerns raised by her.

Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan: There is something positive in the Minister’s reply. He promises to consider my proposal. To leave the matter to a coursing club to decide whether a meeting should go ahead is like asking a turkey to vote for Christmas.

The Minister has told me that he once proposed the muzzling of greyhounds. I know he has some concern for animal welfare. I want to see, at the least, a level playing field so that hares

have a reasonable chance of escaping. The Minister knows where I stand on hare coursing. I would like to see it banned altogether. Failing that, I would like to see hares being given some chance to escape. Weather conditions can make that practically impossible. At the coursing meeting to which I referred in the question, weather conditions made it difficult for hares to run, 12 of them were caught and some had to be put down. It is important this condition be attached to the granting of a coursing licence and I am glad the Minister is considering it. If weather conditions are bad, there is also a danger that greyhounds will be injured. It is vital this condition be attached to the licence.

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: I can have a further conversation with Deputy O'Sullivan on this issue. We have had conversations in the past on issues she has raised with me.

Approximately 95% of hares captured at coursing meetings are returned to the wild. We have a thriving hare population in the country. Where there is coursing, there will be a thriving hare population. Without hares there is no coursing, so it is in the interests of coursing clubs to maintain a high standard of hare husbandry.

The report to which the Deputy referred was prepared in my Department which supervises hare husbandry and habitats. We take this issue very seriously. Recently, a wildlife ranger, on his own initiative, gave coursing clubs in north Kerry a talk about hare husbandry. We are putting a major emphasis on hare husbandry and care of the hare. If coursing is to survive the coursing clubs must respect the hare, look after hares as much as possible and protect the hare habitats in order that they continue to breed. A hare count taken in early 2006 showed there were 233,000 hares in the country, while in early 2007 there were 535,000. The hare population is increasing.

Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan: The best thing for the hare's welfare is that it is not subjected to the barbaric practice of coursing. While 95% of them escape, they escape in order to be brought back the next day for the next coursing event, whenever that occurs. There are issues in that regard but we will take them up with the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in the context of the Animal Health and Welfare Bill.

Bille um Choimisiún Thithe an Oireachtais

4. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Michael P. Kitt** den an Aire Ealaíon; Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cén fáth nár fhoilsigh sé an leagan deireanach den Chaighdeán Oifigiúil a d'ullmhaigh coiste a chuir an Rialtas deiridh ar bun; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [42242/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): Mar is eol don Teachta, foilsíodh an Bille um Choimisiún Thithe an Oireachtais (Leasú) 2012 an mhí seo caite. Táthar ag súil go gcuirfear tús leis an mBille sa Seanad Dé Céadaoin seo chugainn, 10 Deireadh Fómhair. Tugtar feidhm reachtúil faoin mBille do Choimisiún Thithe an Oireachtais d'aistriú Ionstraimí Reachtúla chomh maith le hAchtanna Oireachtais, agus d'fhoilsiú agus d'athbhreithniú tréimhsiúil an Chaighdeáin Oifigiúil.

Déantar foráil leis an mBille chun athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar an gCaighdeán Oifigiúil uair amháin gach seacht mbliana ar a laghad. Ceanglaítear leis an mBille ar Choimisiún Thithe an Oireachtais dul i gcomhairle faoi athbhreithniú dá leithéid leis an Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta, leis an Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna, leis an Aire Dlí agus Cirt agus Com-

hionannais, le páirtithe eile a bhfuil spéis acu ann agus leis an bpobal i gcoitinne. Faoin mBille, is féidir le Coimisiún Thithe an Oireachtais saineolaithe seachtracha a cheapadh chun coiste le linn athbhreithniú ar an gCaighdeán Oifigiúil.

I gcomhthéacs an Bhille, tá torthaí an athbhreithnithe ar an gCaighdeán Oifigiúil, a rinne Coiste Stiúrtha faoi choimirce mo Roinne i 2010-2011, seolta chuig Tithe an Oireachtais ag mo Roinn, le breithniú go cuí i gcomhthéacs an chéad athbhreithnithe eile ar an gCaighdeán Oifigiúil. Ba mhaith liom glacadh leis an deis seo chun mo bhuíochas a ghabháil le baill an Choiste Stiúrtha sin as ucht a ndúthrachta.

Deputy Michael P. Kitt: Fáiltím roimh an chaighdeán oifigiúil. Ach, i litir a fuair mé ón Ollamh Dónal P. Ó Baoill, deir sé nach bhfuil trácht nó oiread is tagairt amháin féin do ghramadach na Gaeilge nó do chaighdeán oifigiúil do scríobh na Gaeilge. Chaith an coiste suas le cúig mhí déag, idir 2010 agus 2011, ag obair ar an gcaighdeán. Deir baill an choiste nach bhfuair siad aon tuairisc ón lá a chríochnaigh siad a gcuid oibre go dtí go bhfaca siad an leagan athbhreithnithe de chaighdeán oifigiúil na Gaeilge ag deireadh Mí Iúil.

Cén fáth nár foilsíodh torthaí na hoibre a rinne an coiste stiúrtha, mar a bhí beartaithe? An raibh difríocht idir moltaí an choiste agus an chaighdeán oifigiúil?

Deputy Dinny McGinley: Tuigtear dom go bhfuil leagan nua-shonraithe den chaighdeán oifigiúil foilsithe ag Rannóg an Aistriúcháin i dTithe an Oireachtais. Mar atá ráite agam cheana féin, tá torthaí an athbhreithnithe ar an gcaighdeán oifigiúil a rinne an coiste stiúrtha faoi choimirce mo Roinne-se, ar thagair an Teachta dó, curtha faoi bhráid Thithe an Oireachtais le tógáil san áireamh ag an chéad athbhreithniú eile a bheifear á dhéanamh ar an gcaighdeán oifigiúil. Cé go bhfuil an caighdeán oifigiúil ansin ó 1958, is é seo an chéad athbhreithniú a foilsíodh ar an gcaighdeán oifigiúil ó shin i leith.

Dá bhrí sin, níl obair an choiste stiúrtha cailte. Beidh moltaí an choiste stiúrtha agus an obair a rinne sé i gcaitheamh an tréimhse sin le tógáil san áireamh sa chéad athbhreithniú eile ar an gcaighdeán oifigiúil. Níl sé cailte. Tá sé ansin.

Faoin mBille úr, beidh an reachtaireacht, na hionstraimí, na hAchtanna agus an caighdeán oifigiúil faoi bhráid Rannóg an Aistriúcháin. Beidh sé go léir faoin díon amháin. Go dtí seo, bhíomar ag déileáil le dhá dhream a bhí ag baint le caighdeán. Thoiligh an Rialtas gur chóir go mbeadh sé seo faoi dhream amháin. Ach sin ráite, beidh an obair an-fhiúntach agus tábhachtach atá déanta againn agus an chéad athbhreithniú eile ar an chaighdeán oifigiúil á dhéanamh taobh istigh de sheacht mbliana, de réir an Bhille a bheas ag teacht isteach ins an Seanad an tseachtain seo chugainn.

Deputy Michael P. Kitt: Ní bhfuair mé freagra ar cén fáth nár foilsíodh obair an choiste. Mar a dúirt an tAire Stáit, ní bheidh athbhreithniú á dhéanamh ar an gcaighdeán go ceann seacht mbliana eile.

Tá a lán daoine buartha mar gheall ar an reachtaíocht seo, a bheas á phlé sa Seanad an tseachtain seo chugainn. Níor déanadh aon teagmháil nó comhairle leis an gcoiste ó Mhí Iúil 2011. Cén fáth nach raibh teagmháil ann? Cén fáth nár foilsíodh tuairisc an choiste? An aontaíonn an tAire Stáit gur cheart an t-eolas seo a chur ar fáil don phobal?

Deputy Dinny McGinley: Beidh an t-athbhreithniú á dhéanamh tar éis seacht mbliana, ar a mhéid. Ní féidir leis a bheith níos faide. B'fhéidir go bhféadfaí é a dhéanamh taobh istigh

de sin, i gceann dhá bhliain, trí bliana nó ceithre bliana. Ní féidir leis dul níos faide ná seacht mbliana. Sin an rud atá beartaithe ins an reachtaíocht a bheas ag dul tríd an Seanad agus an Dáil. Beidh athbhreithniú á dhéanamh gach seacht mbliana, ar a laghad.

Ní bheidh an t-eolas cailte. Tá an t-eolas seolta anois ó mo Roinn-se go dtí Rannóg an Aistriúcháin. Tá sé ansin agus beidh deis againn breathnú air agus é a úsáid ins an chéad athbhreithniú eile a bheifear á dhéanamh ar an gcaighdeán oifigiúil.

Ba mhaith liom buíochas, ar mo shon féin, ar son mo Roinne agus ar son phobal na Gaeilge, a ghabháil leis na saineolaithe a chuir a gcuid ama, a gcuid léinn agus a gcuid cáilíochtaí acadúla ar fáil fá choinne an corpus tábhachtach seo a chur ar fáil, nach bhfuil cailte agus a mbeimid ábalta úsáid a bhaint as ins na blianta amach romhainn in aon athbhreithniú a bheifear a dhéanamh.

Turbary Rights

5. Deputy Luke ‘Ming’ Flanagan asked the Minister for Arts; Heritage and the Gaeltacht the reason that he did not propose or seek a phased transition period for the implementation with the EU Commission of the Turf Cutters and Contractors Association report in view of (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42240/12]

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: The motion relating to raised bog special areas of conservation, SAC, agreed unanimously by Dáil Éireann on 7 March this year, called on the Government to “engage actively with the European Commission to seek a resolution within the terms of the Habitats Directive, and to prepare and submit a National Raised Bog Restoration Plan to the Commission as a matter of urgency”. This is exactly what the Government did. In April, I secured agreement from Commissioner Potočnik to the drafting of a national raised bog SAC management plan, which could unlock the flexibility that is available within the terms of the habitats directive where relocation is not possible. A document outlining the approach to this plan is available on my Department’s website at www.npws.ie. The motion agreed by the Dáil did not call for a continuation of turf cutting to be allowed while such a plan was being drafted. The Government’s position was absolutely clear on this point, as set out in my speech on the motion.

Three weeks later, and a week before I met Commissioner Potočnik, Deputy Luke ‘Ming’ Flanagan handed me a submission, which he also forwarded to the Commission, which sought a continuation of cutting on the majority of raised bog SAC sites over a number of years. Such proposals were clearly outside both the terms of the Dáil motion and of the habitats directive. The Turf Cutters and Contractors Association, TCCA, would have been aware from its own discussions here and in Brussels that such a continuation could not have been sanctioned by the Commission or by the Government.

In response to questions posed in the European Parliament in July, Commissioner Potočnik made the following reply: “The Commission can confirm that it received a submission from the Turf Cutters and Contractors Association in early 2012. Continued peat extraction on Ireland’s 53 raised bog sites of community importance, while a national management plan is being prepared, would be contrary to the provisions of the applicable EU legislation.” The Commissioner went on to state: “The Commission did not give TCCA, or any other party, reason to believe that such continued extraction was possible. Moreover, the Commission does not believe that

the Irish authorities have the legal discretion to agree to it either.”

There is no need for people to break the law. The vast majority of turf cutters have refrained from cutting and are now engaging with my Department in pursuing alternative arrangements. The objectives of the Dáil motion are being achieved by the Government and turf cutters working together, within the law. However, the TCCA has suspended engagement with the Government and the Peatlands Council. This is regrettable as it would be easier and quicker to realise the objectives of the Dáil motion, through finding solutions for each site and finalising the national plan, with all parties at the table. The TCCA might find that such an approach would better serve its members’ interests. I appeal to the TCCA to return to the table to continue the discussion.

Deputy Clare Daly: There is a problem with the Minister’s response on a number of counts, not least the fact that most turf cutters have cut their plots over the past year and the Minister is well aware the problem is continuing because of the Government’s inaction. The motion we passed unanimously in the Chamber took on board and incorporated the very detailed work carried out by the TCCA on developing alternative sites. *3 o’clock* Immediately after that motion was passed, members of the Peatlands Council contacted representatives of the TCCA and asked them to identify on a phased basis how those propositions could be developed over a three year period. Those representatives came up with the plan that could make it a reality in that time. The Minister went to Brussels without their knowledge, along with the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, and did not bat for the objective discussed in this Dáil, the plan outlined by them. The turf cutters know from people who were at the meeting that the Minister did not put forward the proposition as discussed in the Dáil over three hours. It is all very well to quote the European Commission statement from July, but when the Minister was there in April he did not put forward the proposal mandated by this Chamber. All of the issues identified in March are still unresolved and will not be sorted out unless the Minister engages with those involved. He had the opportunity to implement the proposal but walked away from it.

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: It is simply not true the majority of turf cutters continue to break the law. We received 2,400 applications for compensation or relocation or for the supply of turf. To date, 1,461 payments have been made, 58 deliveries have been made and there is general compliance across the country. I thank many Deputies in this House for encouraging their neighbours to comply with the law. I recognise that and sincerely thank those who have complied with the law and prevent the levying of huge fines on the country.

I represented this Parliament exactly as was set out in the motion passed here. I do not have time to read out the motion but it was clear from Mr. Justice Quirke’s remarks at the forum that we would go to Europe to look for permission to draw up a national plan for 53 raised bogs, with the possibility of cutting turf in a small number of these bogs where relocation was not possible. That is exactly what I did.

The first I heard of the plan the Deputy referred to was in Rindoon in Roscommon, when Deputy Luke ‘Ming’ Flanagan handed me a proposal that he subsequently e-mailed to the Commission and which the Commission refers to in its reply in the European Parliament. That is the process. I was never aware of that plan until it was handed to me. If anything, in the past 16 months I have been totally up front with the turf cutters, contractors and everyone concerned with the entire challenge for the country. I have met hundreds of people and will continue to meet people. It is not too late. I want to engage with the TCCA, as I did at the beginning, so

my door is still open to the association and I would like it to engage.

Deputy Clare Daly: Do I have a supplementary question in response to that reply?

Acting Chairman (Deputy Peter Mathews): We have used up the time.

Deputy Clare Daly: Everyone else gets a supplementary question.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Peter Mathews): The Deputy had a question in response to the Minister's response.

Deputy Clare Daly: I have the right to come back for a minute and the Minister then comes back for one minute.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Peter Mathews): No, for priority questions, the rules are different. That was not an oral question; it was a priority question. The rules are now changing for the oral questions.

Deputy Clare Daly: So I have fewer rights because it was a priority question?

Acting Chairman (Deputy Peter Mathews): No, there are four minutes in total available for the exchange of questions.

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: There are other questions relating to bogs coming up that will allow the Deputy the opportunity to ask further questions.

Other Questions

Acting Chairman (Deputy Peter Mathews): To clarify the terms of engagement, the rules are that there are two minutes for the Minister's reply and four minutes overall for any Deputy present to have an exchange with the Minister.

National Archives

6. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the progress that has been made regarding the mergers and amalgamations of national cultural institutions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41775/12]

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: I refer the Deputy to my reply to today's Priority Question No. 1.

The Government announced a series of rationalisation measures in the public service reform plan, which was published on 17 November 2011. A number of the measures announced related to certain national cultural institutions, funded from my Department's Vote group, and these are currently being progressed, as required under the reform plan. These include combining the Irish Museum of Modern Art, the Crawford Art Gallery and the National Gallery of Ireland,

while retaining separate identities; merging the National Archives and the Irish Manuscripts Commission into the National Library, while maintaining separate identities; and examining the issue of shared services and the board structure of both the National Library and the National Museum.

As I mentioned in the context of the earlier priority question, the priorities set out in the programme for Government for the rationalisation of State agencies provide that such rationalisation must be cost effective and lead to a more transparent, accountable and efficient public service. The implications arising from the rationalisation process have been considered within my Department with a view to identifying savings, as well as opportunities for efficiencies and more effective service delivery. In this context, my Department has been engaged in ongoing consultations with each of the relevant institutions. In addition, I have met the chairs of the various institutions involved in this process to afford them an opportunity to express their views on the actions in the Government's public sector reform plan. Meetings have also taken place with a wide range of stakeholders and interested parties on these issues. In progressing matters, my Department has taken into consideration the various proposals put forward by the institutions and other interested parties. There has also been extensive debate in both Houses of the Oireachtas.

In July last, I forwarded a report to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform setting out the progress made to date, and the proposed way forward, in respect of the implementation of the Government decisions on the rationalisation of the relevant national cultural institutions. I am advised that the material submitted by me to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform is currently being assimilated and I anticipate that it will be submitted to Government for its consideration in due course.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Peter Mathews): I wish to remind Deputies that we have four minutes now and each supplementary question and reply is limited to a minute each.

Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil: We are returning here to Question No. 1, where I set out our opposition to this issue. How does the Minister respond to someone as eminent as Professor Diarmuid Ferriter describing as offensive the amalgamation of these organisations when he resigned from the board of the National Library and stating that he objected to the Minister treating them as quangos, or to Senator Fiach Mac Conghail, who described it as a tsunami of desecration that could potentially undermine the entire cultural structure of the nation?

The Minister rightly said in his earlier response that 3.6 million people come to this island to participate in cultural tourism and he talked about the success of the National Museum. Many of us stick to the old maxim that if a thing is not broken, do not fix it. If what we have is working, and the Minister has indicated that is the case, why does he want to interfere with it? If he is going to interfere with it, has he looked at the New Zealand and Canadian experience where the indications are amalgamations of this sort have cost millions?

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: I was delighted Professor Ferriter did not resign from the Archives Commission because he has so much to offer and is a well respected historian. I have set up an expert group to look at the decade of commemorations and he has continued to work on that group and his services are very important. Senator Mac Conghail had a motion on this topic in the Seanad but I ask all these people to reserve judgment until they see the final result of the process.

Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail: It will be too late then.

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: The process was undertaken on the advice of Government; it was a Government direction outlined in the programme for Government. The Department set up a reform unit and a reform committee and took the entire process very seriously. A vast amount of consultation was carried out by people who have been dealing with these national cultural institutions for the past 20 years in many cases and who know precisely what is going on within them. Consequently, I believe the result the Department comes up with will be in the best interest of the aforementioned cultural institutions and I have absolute confidence in the people who carried out this review. They have served with many Ministers, most of them from the Deputy's own party, over the past 20 years. I reiterate I have the highest confidence in and esteem for these people.

National Museum

7. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the progress that has been made in the appointment of a new director of the National Museum; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41806/12]

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: I can advise the Deputy that my Department has recently received approval from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to fill the post of director of the National Museum of Ireland and this news has been communicated to the chair of the National Museum of Ireland.

Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail: Fianna Fáil certainly welcomes that announcement. Is there a timescale for that process? Obviously, leadership of such institutions is vital, not least at a time of phenomenal change as advocated by the Minister.

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: It goes through the normal process. Over the past 16 months, I have appointed new directors of the Arts Council and the Irish Museum of Modern Art, as well as directors of the National Concert Hall and National Gallery of Ireland. Overall, I have appointed a large number of directors, all of whom are new, very energetic people who bring a lot of new ideas into the national cultural institutions. This is the reason they are thriving and doing very well at present. A range of new approaches is being adopted that will enhance further the national cultural institutions and I hope the new director of the National Museum will be appointed as soon as possible to work with the other directors in promoting collectively the national cultural institutions, which are a huge asset to the country.

Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail: It would be remiss of Members to mention this particular matter without referring to the work done over an extended period by Dr. Patrick Wallace. I imagine the Minister would wish to join me in paying tribute to him for his distinguished service to the museum and the State.

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: Absolutely. I might add that Dr. Pat Wallace and I have been personal friends for many years, probably for the past 30 years or more. While he has been a major loss to the museum, I am delighted his book on Wood Quay will be published shortly. Obviously, he took the incentive to retire from the job earlier than was necessary but I am delighted it probably has given him more time to finish that important book on Wood Quay. Everyone is looking forward to that, especially-----

Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail: Will the Minister launch it for him?

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: I hope so. However, it will be especially welcome, given that 2014 also will mark the millennium of the Battle of Clontarf.

Deputy Michael P. Kitt: I join in the tributes to Dr. Pat Wallace. In a related question, I note there have been requests from some cultural institutions for funding for upkeep of and improvements to their buildings. Has the Minister had time to respond to those requests?

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: This will depend on what budget the Department will have. I note huge improvements were made over the previous ten years but, unfortunately, as is evident in the Estimates, there has been a dramatic reduction since 2008 in the funding made available to the national cultural institutions. However, I am very much aware of the importance of providing funding for improvements. There may be different ways of approaching this question but I will do my utmost, within the tight budgetary constraints in which the entire Government must operate next year, to ensure the national cultural institutions will not be neglected. In addition, I intend to examine other ways of trying to encourage funding for the institutions. I will refer to this point later during my contribution to the statements on philanthropy.

Deputy Michael P. Kitt: And the Abbey Theatre?

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: We are making progress.

Arts Funding

8. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts; Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which he has been in a position to offer financial incentivisation to various amateur groups and or societies involved in the promotion of the arts in the past year; the extent to which he has engaged with musical, dramatic or historical societies at local level throughout the country with the objective of encouraging participation and interest in this sector with a view to capitalisation on the national heritage as a means of promoting a positive image on the international stage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41981/12]

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: My Department does not operate schemes to make operational funding available to groups involved in the performance of the arts. As the Deputy is aware, primary responsibility for funding for the arts rests with the Arts Council. The council is independent in its decision-making process. Details of the council's successful applicants are available on the council's website, as well as the decision-making panel and statistics on applications. The council's 2012 allocation of €63.241 million will allow it to maximise its continuing support for its clients in the arts.

The Government's policy on the arts is to promote and strengthen the arts in all its forms, to increase access to and participation in the arts and to make the arts an integral and valued part of national life. I continue to work towards this goal with my Department and the agencies within its remit and remain committed to securing the best possible level of funding for the arts sector.

The State appreciates and values the contribution the arts sector makes to the internationally renowned artistic reputation of this country. Within the current economic constraints, such investment in the arts, culture and creative sectors is more important than ever, having regard to the employment intensity of the sector and its potential for assisting with cultural tourism

initiatives.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: I thank the Minister for his comprehensive reply. Might it be possible, in the context of the current economic environment, to put a greater emphasis on the promotion and possible incentivisation of promotional activity in respect of cultural and artistic events nationwide with a view to using such events as a means to promote the national image? I refer in particular to the year before The Gathering event, which is due to take place next year. Furthermore, in the allocation of funds to the responsible statutory bodies, which I accept are entitled to be fully independent, might it be possible for the Minister to extol recognition of the importance of the utilisation of a good national image as a means of contributing to economic recovery?

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: The previous Government funded a programme in America called Imagine Ireland with this point in mind. It took place last year and was highly successful. In places such as Manhattan, San Francisco, right across America and all over the world, it certainly served to repair the damage done to the image of Ireland because of the collapse of our banking system. All Members are aware that our artists punch way above their weight throughout the world. Ireland has achieved in film, music, song and literature to a degree that is far above its level of population. It must continue to do so and the Government must encourage that. Culture Ireland, which is within the aegis of my Department but is independent, continues to fund Irish artists going abroad to spread Irish culture around the world. In addition, it ensures the delivery of Irish culture of a high quality in all parts of the world. Culture Ireland, through its board, ensures that only the best performers of a really high quality are funded through that programme. I completely agree with Deputy Durkan and if I revert to Deputy Ó Feargháil's initial statement on The Gathering event, culture is something that must be promoted aggressively and enthusiastically both during and before The Gathering event to encourage people to come to Ireland.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: I thank the Minister for his reply. Might it be possible to examine in its entirety the prospects of a further beneficial promotion of the national image, both at home and abroad, in an effort to capitalise fully on it both in the current year and next year?

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: At the two diaspora fora organised in Dublin Castle, culture was frequently mentioned as our unique selling point, USP. The Taoiseach and Tánaiste are very much aware of the importance of promoting Irish culture in order to improve brand Ireland across the world. That is being done through the diaspora forum, through our diaspora and through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Culture Ireland and other State agencies obviously including Tourism Ireland as the body that promotes Ireland abroad. I agree with the Deputy that we have an opportunity to promote a unique culture throughout the world and that will need to be done irrespective of who is in Government because it is our major selling point.

Heritage Council Funding

9. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht his plans to extend the school heritage scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42024/12]

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: The heritage in schools scheme is one of a range of heritage programmes supported by the Heritage Council. This year, my Department is providing €4.8

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million of Exchequer funding for the Heritage Council, together with €1.5 million from my Department's share of the Environment Fund, to support the work of the council in its role of improving heritage infrastructure, heritage awareness, and promoting best practice in conservation and sustainable heritage management.

It is a matter for the Heritage Council to allocate funds to the various schemes which it supports. I understand that in 2012 some €250,000 was allocated to the heritage in schools scheme by the Heritage Council and 1,100 schools were visited by heritage specialists, reaching some 120,000 children. I further understand that the 2012 funding has now been fully allocated.

Without prejudice to the outcome of the current review of the Heritage Council, it will be a matter for the council to decide if further funding should be allocated to this scheme in future years, having regard to competing priorities for limited resources.

Deputy Sandra McLellan: I thank the Minister for his reply. The school heritage scheme is very important as it enables children to explore heritage in their own areas. Sometimes it is right under their noses and they are not aware of it. The programme has gone from strength to strength since it was initiated in 1999 reaching 116,392 children in 2011. Does the Minister agree that additional funding should be provided in light of the Heritage Council's plans to expand the programme to 200,000 children in 2016, the 100th anniversary of the 1916 Rising?

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: The Heritage Council operates at arms' length from me. I can issue a policy directive but cannot instruct it as to where to spend its money. Before I came to office, the funding of the Heritage Council was reduced drastically, but that is the scenario facing all Departments at present. However, I believe the council has adequate funding to do an effective job. As a former teacher of history and geography - some time ago - I greatly value the teaching of heritage and the promotion of heritage in our schools as much as possible. It is important for young people to know where they came from, their families, village, parish and county. That is a most important base for people to have. Before understanding the history of Europe and the world we should understand our own history first. This is a very important programme in ensuring that.

Deputy Sandra McLellan: Has the Minister had or does he plan to have any discussions with the Heritage Council regarding policy directive around funding?

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: Coincidentally the Deputy may be aware that representatives of the Heritage Council will be in Listowel tomorrow so I will be speaking to them. I will have the opportunity to discuss a range of subjects with them and I will mention that the Deputy suggested I should raise this subject with them - I will be delighted to do so.

Deputy Sandra McLellan: Will the Minister get back to me subsequently?

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: Of course - I always do.

National Monuments

10. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he has met with representatives of the save Moore Street campaign to hear their concerns regarding the need to preserve the site; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41786/12]

15. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Arts; Heritage and the Gaeltacht when he expects to make a decision on allowing a new development near the Moore Street national monument, Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41781/12]

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: I propose to take Questions Nos. 10 and 15 together.

Nos. 14 to 17 Moore Street are the subject of a preservation order under the National Monuments Acts. The effect of the preservation order is that any works affecting these properties require my consent, as Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, under section 14 of the National Monuments Act 1930 as amended. The landowner's application to my Department for consent to proposals that envisage the retention of the buildings and the provision of a commemorative centre to the 1916 Rising is being examined. In that context, I have visited the site and met various interest groups, including relatives of the 1916 leaders with whom I have toured the area and had a number of discussions.

As part of the consent process, the applicant has recently been asked by my Department to submit an environmental impact statement on the proposed works. This is in accordance with the European Union (Environmental Impact Assessment of Proposed Demolition of National Monuments) Regulations 2012, which I made in July. The regulations introduce new provisions into the National Monuments Acts to provide for the carrying out of an environmental impact assessment on any works to a national monument that involve an element of demolition. Following receipt of the environmental impact statement and having completed the prescribed consultation procedures, I will undertake a formal environmental impact assessment before making a decision on the consent application.

Any wider plans for the development of the Moore Street area would be a matter for the relevant landowners and the local authority, Dublin City Council.

Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail: I welcome the Minister's response and compliment him on the engagement he has had on the matter. I suppose we can all regret that we have waited so long for something definitive to happen with this critical site. Is there a question of a NAMA involvement in this site or part thereof? What timescale does the Minister envisage, notwithstanding that he is awaiting receipt of an environmental impact statement? Does the Department have a plan or vision for what might happen with that site? Would there be merit in creating an informal grouping of Members of the House? There are Members from all political parties who have a deep interest in this project. Would the Minister be amenable to creating some sort of informal group to review the matter with him?

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: It is well known that the entire site is under the remit of NAMA. I am awaiting the environmental impact assessment, which I hope to receive in the near future. As regards a plan and vision, planning permission for this site has been granted by Dublin City Council and confirmed by An Bord Pleanála. I understand there were no objections to the planning application to Dublin City Council. I need to adjudicate on a national monument and determine whether the proposal is adequate and whether it would fulfil the function of properly recognising the people who occupied that building in 1916 where the final war council decision was made to surrender. However, I need to adjudicate on the works that might happen on the site and how they would affect the monument. There is an all-party Oireachtas consultation group on commemorations. We have met people presenting all sides of the argument on the issue. I will meet any Deputies with ideas, but it would be adding another layer. I understand that some members of the Joint Committee on the Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht un-

der Deputy Ciarán Lynch are considering this issue today and I believe they are meeting some experts to consider it.

There have been extensive discussions on the matter, which was also the subject of a motion in this House. The decision I will have to make will not be an easy one. However, I will make it in consultation with everyone. Everyone in this House owns 1916. Most of the parties in this House were formed following what happened at the GPO. It is in all our interests that the right decision is made.

Deputy Patrick O'Donovan: An issue I raised previously in the House during a debate on a Private Members' motion on this issue is the role of Dublin City Council and in particular the formulation of its city development plan. Will the Minister undertake to look into what role his officials or predecessors played in the development of that plan, given the planning permissions granted under it? Also, what observations, commentary or submissions were made by the Department or the Minister's predecessors in regard to the development of the Dublin city development plan? Moore Street is not the only area affected. The entire historical legacy of the northside of Dublin has been destroyed as a result of bad planning permissions granted by Dublin City Council over a number of years.

We are currently in the middle of the decade of commemorations. What did the Minister's Department do previously in terms of commentary or submissions on Dublin City Council's development plan and adoption of the area plan? If the Minister cannot respond to that question now he may revert to me on the matter. Furthermore, what plans are in place in the Department in regard to the making of submissions on the new development plan, which I understand is due in 2016?

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: The Department in its current form did not exist when those decisions were made. The former Deputy, Mr. Roche, who was Minister at the time, made the decision to declare 14-17 Moore Street a national monument. He and the officials involved, many of whom are now staff in my Department, must be given credit for that. They are the people who protected these buildings. It is important that is recognised. The section of the former Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government which transferred to the now Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht cannot stand condemned. The officials involved strove to protect this important site. For example, permission was granted in 1999 for demolition of the entire battlefield site but because of the decision made by the former Minister, Mr. Dick Roche, and his officials, 14-17 Moore Street remains. These are the critical buildings of the battlefield site. The decision which my officials and I will have to make is in regard to the national monument.

Deputy Mick Wallace: The Minister said that any matters relating to the development of the site would be an issue for the developer and local authority. He also said that 1916 belongs to the people. In my view, the site also belongs to the people. Given the developer in question is knee deep in NAMA and NAMA is a State body the site in question belongs to the taxpayer.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Peter Mathews): Perhaps the Deputy would switch off his telephone.

Deputy Mick Wallace: My telephone is switched off.

It is strange that the State has not taken more control over this site given the taxpayer owns it. It would be obvious to most people looking at the over-design project that it was designed

for a different time, that a scaled back version of it would make more economic sense and would facilitate development of the historical quarter, which will be good for this city.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Peter Mathews): Before I call on the Minister to respond, I will allow a brief question from Deputies Ó Fearghaíl and Kitt.

Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl: I echo what has been said by Deputy Wallace. There is a need for a plan B given the history of the site, NAMA's involvement and the question of whether the proposal as it currently stands will ever come to be.

Deputy Michael P. Kitt: In addition to the Private Members' debate on this issue, a number of meetings have been held with the families, relations and friends of the 1916 leaders. Does the Minister understand the point they make in their submissions?

Deputy Sandra McLellan: Time is ticking on. Everyone wants to see something in place by 2016. In the Minister's view, will the building remain as is or will works on it be carried out by 2016?

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: Deputy Wallace as a developer will be aware of how the system works. Planning permission in respect of most of this site was granted through An Bord Pleanála. Dublin City Council and other agencies will have to deal with that matter. I only have control or authority over the national monument. My function is to determine what effect the works carried out will have on it. The remainder of the site is a matter for Dublin City Council. Also, there are conditions attached to the planning permission. I will be looking at works will possibly affect the national monument site.

In response to Deputy Ó Fearghaíl's question regarding a plan B, I am not aware of any plan B. The only proposal thus far is for the carrying out of extensive work on the national monument by the owners of the site. I have asked the developer to carry out an environmental impact assessment to determine how the site is likely to be affected. Following receipt of the EIS and advice from my officials, taking into account the views put forward by the many different groups involved, I will make my decision. That decision will then go before Cabinet. The issue of the need for a plan B was also discussed in committee.

I am not sure I understood Deputy Kitt's question. However, I am very aware of what is happening. This matter, more than any other, has exercised my mind and those of my officials. It is a subject that has been dear to me since I took up my appointment as Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. I have listened to what everyone had to say. Nobody can accuse me of not having listened to them. I have visited the site on two occasions. I am very much aware of what is happening.

In response to Deputy McLellan, if this proposal cannot work we will then have to look at alternative proposals. This is the only proposal before me. There is no other proposal in terms of development of the national monument from anyone else at this time. I am aware that the families of the 1916 leaders have put forward a proposal in respect of the entire set. However, the only proposal in respect of work to the national monument is from the developer, who will do the work free of charge.

Deputy Mick Wallace: The Minister said that planning permission was granted to the developer. However, the developer is involved with NAMA, which now owns the site. As such, NAMA owns the planning permission. The Minister has more control than he realises. My

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understanding is that once a developer is involved with NAMA it is within its remit to control the sites involved, which are owned by the taxpayer. Is that correct?

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: The Deputy will be aware that NAMA operates at arms length from Government as such Ministers cannot direct NAMA to do anything. I have no doubt that Deputy Wallace knows that.

Deputy Mick Wallace: Unfortunately, I do.

Scéim Tacaíochta Teaghlaigh

11. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** den an Aire Ealaíon; Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cé mhéid coip den scéim tacaíochta teaghlaigh atá eisithe ag an Rialtas; cad atá sa phacáiste sin; agus cén saghas tacaíochta atá á tabhairt do na teaghlaigh atá cláraithe. [41972/12]

(Deputy Dinny McGinley): Faoi mar is eol don Teachta, tá sé mar chuspóir ag an Chlár Tacaíochta Teaghlaigh tacú le teaghlaigh atá ag súil le páiste, nó a bhfuil páistí acu, agus a dteastaíonn uathu a bpáistí a thógáil le Gaeilge.

Faoin Chlár seo, tá pacáiste tacaíochta ar fáil ó mo Roinnse ina bhfuil leabhrán, a bhfuil sé mar chuspóir aige comhairle phraiticiúil a chur ar thuismitheoirí maidir le páistí a thógáil le Gaeilge, chomh maith le dlúthdhiosca rannta agus leabhar rannta atá oiriúnach do pháistí. Ón uair gur seoladh an Clár Tacaíochta Teaghlaigh i mí Aibreáin 2012, tá 116 pacáiste dáilte ag mo Roinnse. Tá obair idir lámha ag mo Roinnse faoi láthair i dtreo cur leis an bpacáiste tacaíochta seo.

Chomh maith leis sin, tá socrú déanta ar bhonn áitiúil i gcomhar le Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte (FSS) chun bileog eolais, maidir leis na buntáistí a bhaineann le páistí a thógáil le Gaeilge, a scaipeadh ar mhná nuair a thagann siad i dteagmháil leis na seirbhísí máithreachais a fheidhmíonn faoi scáth an FSS i Leitir Ceanainn, i gCaisleán an Bharraigh, i gcathair na Gailimhe, agus i dTrá Lí.

Deputy Peadar Tóibín: Chuir 3,300 duine iarratas isteach ar scéim labhairt na Gaeilge i 2010 agus fuair timpeall 2,500 deontas as an scéim. Rinne an Rialtas beart mar gheall air sin agus cuireadh críoch leis an scéim os cionn bliain ó shin. Sé mhí ó shin, cuireadh pacáiste nua ar fáil. Is é cuspóir an phacáiste sin ná cabhrú le cuspóirí Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge a bhaint amach. Táimid ag súil go mbeadh 250,000 duine ag labhairt Gaeilge go laethúil. Ag an mbomaite, níl ach 77,000 duine ag caint Gaeilge go laethúil.

Chuir mé féin iarratas isteach ar an bpacáiste seo. Tá treoir leabhar ann, ó Chomhluadar, rud a bhí ann cheana. Chomh maith leis sin tá leabhar rainn agus dlúthd iosca. Bhí an méid sin le fáil sé mhí ó shin agus tá sé le fáil anois.

An bhfuil náire ar an Aire Stáit faoi seo? Ní leor é seo do theaghlaigh atá ag tógáil a bpáistí le Gaeilge, agus tá a fhios ag an Aire Stáit nach leor é.

Dá rachadh an tAire Stáit ar an gclár teilifíse, “The Apprentice”, le Alan Sugar nó le Bill Cullen chloisfeadh sé na focail, “You’re fired”. Níl sa phacáiste ach treoir leabhar a bhí ann cheana, dlúthd iosca amháin agus leabhar rainn. Sin an méid atá le fáil ag daoine atá ag iarraidh a dteaghlaigh a gcruthú.

Ní dhéanann an Roinn aon teagmháil leis na teaghlaigh. Ní chuireann an Roinn leis an bphacáiste de réir a chéile. Cad atá ar bun ag an Roinn agus ag an Aire Stáit?

Deputy Dinny McGinley: Scéim í seo a ghlac áit scéim labhairt na Gaeilge. Is scéim úr í a mbeidh fás agus forbairt ag teacht uirthi lá i ndiaidh lae agus bliain i ndiaidh bliana.

Tá an Teachta tar éis a fhiafraí cad é atá sa phacáiste i láthair na huair. Is féidir liom a rá go bhfuilimid ag forbairt ar an phacáiste agus gur gairid go mbeidh tuilleadh ábhar, tuilleadh leabhar agus tuilleadh dioscanna le fáil ins an phacáiste. Tá mé iontach dóchasach, leis an chomhoibriú atá idir muid féin agus feidhmeannas na seirbhíse poiblí, go rachaimid i bhfeidhm ar an bpobal.

Is scéim úr í agus tá sí ag díriú isteach, ní ar na teaghlaigh a bhí ag fáil an deontas labhairt na Gaeilge go dtí seo. Táimid ag díriú isteach ar theaghlaigh úra atá ag teacht ar an saol. Tá tosú maith déanta ach admhaím go gcaithfidimid cur leis agus coinneáil leis ins an am amach romhainn. Lena chois sin, tá áthas orm a rá maidir le tacaíocht a thabhairt do theaghlaigh Ghaelacha go raibh sé i mo chumas i mbliana €150,000 sa bhreis a chur le scéim na gcuntóirí teanga a dhéanann an-obair sna bunscoileanna ar fud na Gaeltachta le cuidiú agus tacaíocht a thabhairt do dhaltáí a théann go dtí na scoileanna sin agus nach bhfuil an teanga go líofa acu. Tá na campaí samhraidh ann chomh maith. Tá an-chuid rudaí ar siúl agus níl sa scéim tacaíochta teaghlaigh ach gné amháin de mhórán imeachtaí atá ag dul ar aghaidh leis an Ghaeilge a chaomhnú agus a choinneáil beo i measc na ndaoine óga sna Gaeltachtaí ar fad.

Deputy Peadar Tóibín: Cathain a bheidh an tAire Stáit ag cur leis an phacáiste, cé mhéad airgid atá curtha ar leataobh leis agus cathain a bheidh an Roinn ag dul i dteagmháil leis na teaghlaigh a chláraigh leis an phacáiste sin? Cathain a bheidh an tAire Stáit in ann bheith i ndáiríre faoi seo?

Deputy Dinny McGinley: Tá an obair seo ag dul ar aghaidh go rialta ó lá go lá.

Deputy Peadar Tóibín: Cathain?

Deputy Dinny McGinley: Maidir leis an Ghaeltacht féin, tá €60 milliún curtha ar fáil i gcaiteachas na bliana seo do na ceantair Ghaeltachta agus tá €7.35 milliún curtha ar fáil maidir le scéimeanna tacaíochta teaghlaigh sa Ghaeltacht agus tá maoiniú caipitil de €1.7 milliún. Tá maoiniú ann agus táimid ag cur chuige. Deirim leis an Teachta go n-aontaím gur scéim í seo go bhfuil cruthaíocht agus samhlaíocht ag baint léi, atá á trialladh sa Bhreatain Bheag. Níl sí ach ina tús go fóill ach de réir a chéile, tógfar í agus beidh sí ina scéim an-mhaith chun deis a thabhairt do thuismitheoirí sna Gaeltachtaí agus taobh amuigh de na Gaeltachtaí a gclann a thógáil le Gaeilge.

Written Answers follow Adjournment.

Private Notice Questions

3 October 2012

Primary Care Centres Provision

An Ceann Comhairle: We now come to deal with private notice questions to the Minister for Health. Three Deputies have submitted private notice questions and I will call them in the order in which my office received them.

Deputy Joe Higgins asked the Minister for Health to make a full statement on the selection of sites for primary health care centres and deal with related issues which are the subject of public controversy.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin asked the Minister for Health in view of further revelations in this morning's press, the controversy surrounding the resignation of the former Minister of State, Deputy Róisín Shortall, and the importance of the development of primary health care to set out in detail the criteria for the selection of locations for primary care centres; how they relate to each of the 35 locations he has selected; the way in which the criteria have changed since the initial listing; and if he will make a substantive statement on the matter.

Deputy Billy Kelleher asked the Minister for Health as the roll-out of primary care centres is of national concern to explain to the House the recent criteria he used to add 15 centres to the primary care list; to clarify what criteria will be used for future primary care centres; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take all questions together.

The key objective of the primary care strategy is to develop services in the community which will give people direct access to integrated multidisciplinary teams of general practitioners, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and other health care disciplines. This is central to the Government's objective of delivering a high quality integrated and cost-effective health system. A modern well-equipped primary care infrastructure is central to the effective functioning of primary care teams. These teams enable multidisciplinary services to be delivered on a single site, provide a single point of access for users and encourage closer co-operation between health care providers.

The infrastructure development through a combination of public and private investment aims to facilitate the delivery of multidisciplinary primary health care and represents a tangible refocusing of the health service to deliver care in the most appropriate and lowest cost settings. The intention to date has been that where appropriate infrastructure for primary care centres would be provided by the private sector through negotiated lease agreements, the Exchequer would also fund the delivery of some primary care centres, particularly in deprived urban areas, small rural towns and isolated areas. In addition, a list of 35 potential locations for development by way of public private partnership as part of the Government's infrastructure stimulus package was developed. Earlier this year, the HSE put together a list of high priority locations for the development of primary care centres throughout Ireland. Three criteria were deployed for selecting primary care centres: an assessment of deprivation - the deprivation index for the catchment population of the centre; the service priority identified by each integrated service area and local health office; and an accommodation assessment which assessed accommodation available for the primary care team within the catchment area, the quality of the accommodation and whether the accommodation was spread over more than one building. Other factors were considered when selecting centres for the inclusion on the PPP list. New criteria were added. It was evident, for example, that consideration needed to be given to existing health facilities

or the lack thereof; GP to population ratio; pressures on services, particularly acute services; funding options, including Exchequer-funded HSE build or lease; and the implementability of a public private partnership relating to its size, site and scale. By deciding to create a list of 35 rather than 20 locations, I provided positive encouragement for engagement and financial participation by GPs in this significant and important stimulus package. When dealing with public private partnerships, PPPs, it makes sense to maximise the options available.

As I mentioned earlier, PPP is one of the three methods of delivery being considered by the HSE for the purpose of developing primary care centres. Lease and Exchequer-funded HSE builds are also under consideration. The list of 35 potential locations referred to those that may be progressed by way of the public private partnership. It is envisaged that 20 of these locations will be progressed by these means. With regard to the criteria for progressing centres, I am satisfied that the criteria I have outlined are appropriate for the selection of primary care centre locations in the future.

The HSE is engaging with the National Development Finance Agency, NDFA, as required, to progress the primary care centre element of the Government's public private partnership programme. The HSE is analysing the available sites in each location and engaging with GPs in each location to determine their interest in participating in the primary care centre development.

I wish to clarify the record of the House. In the *Irish Independent* today, it is suggested that the site owned by Mr. Murphy was effectively selected by the HSE in 2010 as the site for a primary care centre. The newspaper suggested this information was available by way of a reply to a parliamentary question tabled by me in February 2010 when I was in opposition. The relevant journalist also made that statement on "Morning Ireland". My assistants retrieved the reply to the relevant parliamentary question and the follow-up letter I received from the HSE. That letter from 1 February 2010 states: "The HSE has selected a preferred provider for expressions of interest." It goes on to say: "The proposed site will be accessible by pedestrians off Dublin Street and should be well served by Dublin Bus." The letter appears, therefore, to support the report in the *Irish Independent* and on "Morning Ireland". The Minister for Education and Skills, Deputy Ruairí Quinn, referred to it during Leader's Questions in the House today and I referred to it on RTE radio today as well.

I have had this double-checked with the HSE and am advised that, in fact, the reports are incorrect. In fact, the letter from the HSE in 2010 refers to another site in an area called Stephenstown, some distance from the site owned by Mr. Murphy. It appears that option ran into a number of difficulties and in November 2010, the letter of intent was withdrawn. The HSE returned to the other interested parties and ultimately selected Mr. A.J. Noonan. In September of last year, the HSE signed an agreement for lease with Mr. Noonan to develop a primary care centre. This information has been provided to us by the HSE and if Deputies want further information, it can be furnished by the HSE.

I wish to make a few general points and then allow for the questions. We cannot deliver the quality of care required at a price the country can afford through the hospital-centric model of care and we need a new integrated model of care which treats patients at the lowest level of complexity and that is safe, timely, efficient and as near to home as possible. I want to work with GPs and I want their active and direct involvement in chronic disease management. I want them to work as part of a more responsive hospital service. GPs in primary care are central to our health and well-being and we need the active support of other sectors in our economy to improve health and well-being, which are essential to the sustainable development and the

economic and social interests of the country.

The PPPs will deliver jobs and the first tranche of the €115 million of investment which is vital to our construction industry. The reforms I am delivering will keep people healthy, provide the health care people need, deliver high quality services and get best value from health system resources. The new health care system and primary care system will have a number of tangible changes that patients will experience: improved health and well-being, faster and equitable access to hospital care, free access to GP care, better management of chronic illness, more people treated in their homes, and improved quality and safety.

I want primary care centres to be the campus for best care and first choice for patients. Primary care is the best solution to support an ageing and more dependent population of patients. The population growth projections estimate the population of Ireland will reach 5.7 million by 2021, and significant increases are expected across all age groups. The modern primary care unit will support children, adolescents, adults and seniors. I want every community throughout the country to have a modern and dynamic primary care centre. I want to foster a culture that promotes health and well-being across the community. Above all else, I want the best outcomes for the patients we serve.

Deputy Joe Higgins: I do not know if the Minister is a fan of the late actor Humphrey Bogart but when it comes to the selection of primary health care centres in Balbriggan, Rick's joint in Casablanca definitely comes to my mind. Of all the streets, of all the areas in all of Balbriggan, the primary care centre would land in the lap of a Fine Gael businessman, a contributor to Fine Gael and a supporter of the Minister. Not only that but according to the *Irish Independent*, ACC Bank and Treasury Holdings have judgments on two tranches of that site. Therefore, a lease with the Health Service Executive would increase the value of this site enormously, thus alleviating the financial difficulties of the Fine Gael supporter in question. The gentleman who was given the lease is also a contributor to Fine Gael.

When the Minister assumed office, the Taoiseach told us with great conviction that this kind of political cronyism, stroke pulling and the like was with Fianna Fáil in its political grave and that we were in an era of transparency and honesty. The Labour Party, before it developed this most acute strain of Stockholm syndrome after being taken hostage by Fine Gael, also promised similarly. In respect of any ordinary person outside the political establishment looking at this fiasco over the selection of primary health care centres, what conclusion does the
4 o'clock Minister think would be reasonable for him or her to draw? Would it not be that this was, unfortunately, a return to old practices, political stroke pulling and cronyism in north Dublin, an area in which certain individuals and a particular party excelled in those practices which have now been revived by the Government?

What is the Minister's relationship with the owner of this site? What is his political relationship? Has he any business connections with this person? What was the process of this site being selected? Has the Minister had any discussions with this person?

Have any representatives of the Minister had discussions with this person? Was the Minister kept informed of circumstances as they developed? What role did he play in the selection of the site in question?

An Ceann Comhairle: The Chair has ruled on many occasions that allegations of a serious nature against any Member of this House can be made only by way of a substantive motion. To

suggest that people are acting corruptly or improperly is not in order. I remind Deputies that this has been the tradition in this House for as long as the records show.

Deputy James Reilly: Deputy Joe Higgins should note that the site is under the control of NAMA and that, as a consequence, Mr. Murphy does not gain. NAMA gains if there is any gain. NAMA represents the people in trying to get back the moneys that were lost. The people of Balbriggan, whom I support, also gain. Balbriggan is a town that has seen its population double in ten years and has the second highest unemployment density in the greater Dublin area. The town was chosen by the HSE in 2007 and 2008, and proposals on both it and Swords were brought to the board of the HSE in 2008 and were approved. Therefore, the need is long established, as is the priority. I consider it an insult to the people of Swords and Balbriggan to say to them that the only way they can get what they deserve and need, according to proven, independent individuals, is through political stroke pulling.

I want to answer the Deputy's other questions directly. I have no business connection with Mr. Murphy. I had no discussions with him about the primary care centre and I have absolutely no role in the selection of a site. As I stated on the radio today, the only site over which I have control and which I did not want included because I was becoming Minister for Health is the site I own in Swords. I hope that clarifies the matter.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: Has the Minister established why Mr. Murphy sought at first to distance himself from him and said he had only seen the Minister on television? A photograph, of course, speaks a thousand words, and that is what we saw this morning.

Can the Minister confirm that he added the 15 locations, including Balbriggan and Swords, to the list of 20 drawn up by former Minister of State, Deputy Róisín Shortall, for the development of primary care centres? Can he confirm that it was he who added those locations to the list, and not his predecessor, Ms Mary Harney, as was claimed this morning by the Minister for Education and Skills, Deputy Ruairí Quinn?

The Minister was on the Pat Kenny radio show this morning. What a performance. He tried to excuse his lack of communication with the former Minister of State responsible for primary care by saying to Mr. Pat Kenny that he "spoke to senior Labour Ministers" about his proposed primary care centre locations. That is a matter of considerable interest. To which senior Labour Ministers did the Minister speak about this matter, and when did he do so? Why did he not deem it appropriate to speak to the responsible, designated Minister of State at his Department, a party colleague of the Labour Ministers? I am sure the Ministers from the Labour Party, and all Members in this House, including the Independents, are very interested in hearing the reply of the Minister for Health because the Minister for Social Protection, Deputy Joan Burton, denied only last Thursday in this House, when questioned by my party colleague, Deputy Mary Lou McDonald, that there was any consultation on the part of the Minister for Health with her or any senior Labour Party Minister.

Let me refer to the criteria used. In his written replies to me and other Deputies last week, the Minister referred repeatedly to the criteria for selection as relating to public private partnerships. What are the criteria for selection by the other methods, including lease and Exchequer funding? Do separate criteria exist for these and will the Minister tell us what they are?

It appears the Balbriggan site is to be developed by lease arrangement, yet it was put on the list of those sites on which progress may be made by public private partnership. On what basis

are locations switched between the lists? What is the position on the eight locations chosen for development with Exchequer funding? Is eight the correct number? We are not talking about a total of 35 at all. There are at least another eight, perhaps. Has the Minister signed off on this number and the locations? Is he aware that the former Minister of State, Deputy Shortall, denies that she switched locations on the lists, as the Minister's spokesperson claimed to *The Irish Times*. There is a clear and absolute denial of the practice on the part of the former Minister of State. Why, therefore, were some of the locations redacted from documents obtained under the freedom of information legislation? Why was this practice employed in this instance?

The Minister spoke this morning about a swamp. It is one entirely of his own creation.

Deputy James Reilly: I also mentioned alligators; I will not go beyond that. It was reported this morning that Mr. Murphy said he sees me on television. I made the point this morning on the radio programme, which the Deputy clearly listened to or had someone listen to and transcribe-----

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: I listened to it.

Deputy James Reilly: Good. Then the Deputy knows my answer very clearly. I am sure he finds the same response himself-----

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: Interestingly, we do not know the Minister's answer.

Deputy James Reilly: I did not interrupt Deputy Ó Caoláin and would like him to show me the same courtesy. Many people say to me that, because they do not see that much of me in my constituency since my job is of such considerable importance to the future well-being of the people, the only time they see me is on television. I am sure this is what Mr. Murphy was alluding to. However, I do not know how Mr. Murphy's mind works and will leave him to explain the matter himself if he chooses to do so. If Deputy Ó Caoláin had listened to the radio programme this morning, as he says he did, he will know I was in contact with the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform because the stimulus package had to go to him for final sign-off and Government approval.

There are three separate methods: public private partnership, direct Exchequer funding and leasing. This is where it gets considerably arbitrary because while one can define when a lease is signed, which is straightforward, one must determine the point at which one decides on the term "might be done by lease". When does "might be done by lease" become "might not be done by lease"? Therefore, one can see that, no matter how much of a desktop exercise one does on the selection process, there are always practical or pragmatic considerations on the ground that preclude things being done in the way that might look sensible in an office setting. I mentioned this morning on the radio that if one accounted for all the parameters I put in place, etc. but left out the other facilities in the area, one would end up building a primary care centre in the shadow of a large hospital and yet have nothing in an area of considerable population density ten or 15 miles away.

I would like to cover one last issue raised by the Deputy, namely, the inference in *The Irish Times* that somehow things had been moved around by me at an earlier date. I have confirmed with the HSE that it was it that moved those things around the list, not I. If Deputy Ó Caoláin wishes to ask the HSE directly, it will confirm that.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: What about the redacted locations identified through a

freedom of information request?

Deputy Billy Kelleher: The Minister seems to be confused because we are not casting aspersions on his integrity in respect of whether there was a cosy deal done with Mr. Murphy. The point of the exercise is to get to the bottom of why names of towns, including Ballaghaderreen and Kilkenny and two locations in the Minister's constituency, appeared on a list although they were not on that list before that. We are discussing primary care centres that are to deliver health care in a community setting. There was a list. That the Minister is clutching to the former Minister for Health and Children's approval as a safety net is a bit rich because that list included a further 198 towns throughout the country and was not prioritised. The Minister has claimed that he picked from a 2007 list, but he could have picked a further 198 as well.

The then Minister of State, Deputy Shortall, used a deprivation index to decide on the priority listing of health centres throughout the country. Some 20 were selected. The logical conclusion would be to take the next 15 if one wanted to increase the number, but the Minister decided to use his own criteria. A couple of questions must be asked. The Minister stated that he consulted widely. The Taoiseach told the House that the Minister consulted all Cabinet colleagues. It now transpires that the Minister only consulted a number of Cabinet colleagues. Equally, he was to have discussed the issue with senior officials in the HSE and the Department of Health, yet the Department's Secretary General stated that he could not confirm whether he had seen the final list.

There are differences between what the Minister is telling the House and what actually happened. As to the consultation with many Cabinet colleagues, we have found out that he only consulted one or two. This underlines the fact that he made these decisions off his own bat without any regard to criteria other than those that would suit the development of the centres in Swords and Balbriggan in his constituency.

To clarify regarding the site that Mr. Murphy owns, it was selected during the Minister's tenure and not before, which was previously stated. I am not saying that there was anything untoward or corrupt in terms of transactions, but some communities have materially benefited over others because the Minister was able to decide to locate the centres in his constituency. The people of Dundalk fell off the list, yet they had been No. 21. Are they less deserving than the people of Swords or Balbriggan based on the deprivation index and the criteria used to prioritise sites?

I cannot understand how the Minister can so glibly pass this matter by. A Minister of State resigned because of it. It is unheard of for a Minister of State to resign because of issues with a senior Minister-----

(Interruptions).

Deputy Ciara Conway: It was one Minister per week in the last Government.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: Government Deputies should listen.

Deputy Ciara Conway: We are.

An Ceann Comhairle: Through the Chair, please.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: Those issues had to do with a senior Minister undermining an open and transparent process to confer-----

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Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: The Deputy has a short memory.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: -----potential financial and commercial gain on individuals and entities. This is clearly a matter of concern. Does the Minister not agree that it should be of major concern to everyone in the House?

Deputy Niall Collins: Hear, hear.

Deputy James Reilly: The Deputy across would like to believe that there was but one list. There were several lists. There was a list in 2007 and 2008. Such was the priority given to Balbriggan and Swords that they were approved by the board of the HSE in 2008.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: Along with 198 others.

An Ceann Comhairle: Through the Chair, please.

Deputy James Reilly: Incorrect. For the Deputy's precise information, if I can recall correctly what I was told today, the board passed two lots of six and four. After these first ten, a tranche of 38, including Swords and Balbriggan, was passed by the board. These facts can be checked with the HSE.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: Were they in addition to the 20?

Deputy James Reilly: If they were priorities in 2007 and 2008, surely Balbriggan's situation has become more needy rather than less, given its population explosion and unemployment level. Similarly for Swords.

Deputy Kelleher mentioned consultation. There certainly was consultation with others. While I might have had more consultation with some Cabinet colleagues than others, all Cabinet colleagues were able to sign off on this list. It was a Government decision. People have conveniently lost sight of that fact.

The lease might have been signed during my tenure, but the deal on the site that was first favoured fell out in November 2010 and new negotiations started elsewhere. This was before there was an election and I became the Minister for Health.

I wish to raise another issue. I have become a bit disturbed by a recent trend.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: One the Minister started.

Deputy James Reilly: Deputy Sean Fleming, who is not present, stated on "News at One" last Sunday that I did this so that my site in Swords might be used. That is patently untrue and I will invite him to withdraw the statement. In fairness to the show's presenter, she corrected him. Similarly, Deputy Kelleher told the House this morning that I had "conferred financial and commercial gain on individuals" with whom I had political ties. I have already explained that I had no hand, act or part in this. Furthermore, if there was any gain, which I somehow doubt, it would be to NAMA and the people of Balbriggan, which is only right.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: Does the owner have personal guarantees?

Deputy James Reilly: I invite Deputy Kelleher to withdraw his comments. If he chooses not to, I suppose I shall have to come to him directly with my complaint.

Deputy Willie O’Dea: Pistols at dawn.

Deputy Joe Higgins: On the question of ownership, Mr. Murphy stated that he was engaging with NAMA, but that the sites were in his ownership. Will the Minister clarify this issue? Is it not obvious that, just like the unjustified rezonings of the past, a lease between the HSE and the owner of a building or a site will confer significant financial advantage in the price secured? In any dealing with, for example, ACC Bank and a Treasury company, it would rebound to the benefit of the person in question that such a lease existed. This is very clear.

The people of Balbriggan, Swords, Boyle, Ballaghaderreen and Kilkenny deserve their primary health care centres, but so do the people in many other areas of great health needs around the country. Do not try to put those of us who are seeking clarity and transparency on the back foot as if we were not sympathetic and mindful of the needs. The objection is that locations that are in areas where Fine Gael as a political entity wields considerable influence are favoured without explanation over other areas. This is one of the issues.

An Ceann Comhairle: I am sorry, but I must correct the Deputy. An allegation has been made that decisions were taken for reasons other than genuine business reasons. Deputy Higgins is insinuating that what was effectively corruption was involved.

Deputy Willie O’Dea: He is asking a question.

An Ceann Comhairle: I have already told Deputy Higgins that, if he wishes to make such statements, it can only be done by way of a substantive motion, not by throwing allegations onto the floor of the House. This is the long-standing ruling of various Cinn Comhairlí, not just me.

Deputy Joe Higgins: We are inviting clarification from the Minister regarding these issues.

An Ceann Comhairle: No, the Deputy is making a claim.

Deputy Joe Higgins: The Minister must clarify. He stated that it was an insult to the people of Balbriggan and Swords to suggest that they could only get their primary care centres by favouritism, but what is an insult to them is that the centres have been chosen in a manner that is open to questions of political favouritism. No one is insulting the people of those areas. The Minister is constantly trying to divert.

Regarding the site in Swords, the Minister was in a partnership with general practitioners, GPs, in a deal on a site that he stated fell through. Is that partnership, or any people in it, involved with or receive benefit from the new site that has been chosen?

Will the Minister specify with whom in the Cabinet he had discussions before this final list was agreed? Was the matter discussed with the Tánaiste and the Minister for Social Protection, Deputy Burton, and did the Minister get the agreement of these Cabinet members? Why did the Minister not reach agreement with the then Minister of State, Deputy Shortall, before signing off on the issue?

Deputy Michael Healy-Rae: With Mr. Reilly and Mr. Murphy it is like an episode of “Fawlty Towers”.

Deputy James Reilly: Deputy Higgins may be correct from a technical point of view in that the legal ownership may not have passed but I do not profess to be an expert on NAMA and I am not even sure if that is the way NAMA operates.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: The Minister should get used to it.

Deputy James Reilly: NAMA takes control of the loan and the site but it does not necessarily incur all the legal costs in transferring ownership only to sell it on again. It controlled this *de facto* and any moneys arising from it, as far as I understand it. Perhaps the Deputy could ask NAMA about it. Once something is in NAMA, unless there is a major profit made, which is highly improbable in this case from what I heard, there will be no gain for the individual.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: There may be less of a loss.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: The individual would be kept in business.

Deputy James Reilly: The Deputy mentioned the needs of the rest of the country, of which I am acutely aware. On the list of 338 places and the other list of 220-----

Deputy Mattie McGrath: There is one in Carrick on Suir.

Deputy James Reilly: Exactly.

An Ceann Comhairle: Do not mind the interruptions.

Deputy Finian McGrath: What of Coolock and Darndale?

Deputy James Reilly: The bottom line is there are three methods of developing primary care. If we had all the money we needed we could have tried to build all the facilities ourselves but we do not have it. As a result we have to look for investment from others to do it. What is key is that the people get the service they need as quickly as possible, and if we can do that through public private partnerships, PPPs, lease or other arrangements that may come to pass, I am very happy to engage in such a process. There must be a key involvement from general practitioners, and that is why I extended the list from 20 to 35. One can build a beautiful palace but if a GP does not go into it, there is no value to us. We do not want a position where we are held over a barrel.

The other sites will be built in different ways. As I tried to point out this morning and will do again now, this issue is in flux. Some of the elements in the PPPs will be built in other ways and come out of that process, and other elements will go into the PPP process. The PPP is a valuable fund but it is a lottery. Some 20 of the 35 facilities will be built by PPP, although we will build the others with other methodologies as money becomes available.

I have already told the House that the site in Swords has nothing to do with me. The two doctors who were co-owners with me have nothing to do with the new site either. I hope that clarifies matters for the House.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: The Minister claims no involvement in these decisions. Whatever the truth about individual sites, there is clearly no issue of his role in relation to town locations selection - you were most certainly the person directly involved in determining the additional 15 and the criteria employed to facilitate their selection. Has the Minister had any previous contractual or other arrangement with Mr. Murphy, either for electoral or any other purpose? What is the history of the Minister's association with Mr. Murphy?

There is the issue of communication with the former junior Minister at the Department. Why were there no further communications with the then Minister of State, Deputy Shortall,

after the submission of her original list of 20 selected locations? The Minister should answer these questions in the House. Why did the Minister not engage with the Minister of State who had been given the responsibility to deal with primary care?

Deputy Michael Healy-Rae: They were not talking.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: Let us know exactly the truth of all of that. The Minister made the point on Pat Kenny's radio show this morning that he spoke to senior Labour Ministers. That is very clearly what he said. In response to an earlier question, the Minister named the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Deputy Howlin, but to whom else did he speak among the senior Labour Ministers? What did he advise them and what detail did he share with them? Did he advise the Minister, Deputy Howlin, or any of his Labour Party colleagues that he had not and would not go to further deliberations on these selections with the then Minister of State with responsibility for primary care, Deputy Shortall?

It is hard to be able to follow how the switching can be so easily accommodated. There is a mighty difference between a lease arrangement and some of the other possible methods, including PPP. There are a number of real difficulties in being able to square all that the Minister has indicated. The whole thing suggests it was a cobbled together exercise in order to accommodate a predisposed agenda on the Minister's part.

I asked the Minister about further locations for development by Exchequer funding, and some of these are referred to in this morning's *The Irish Times*. Would the Minister like to give us further detail in relation to those and whether the suggested number of eight would be a further eight already determined by the Minister, and that these would be in addition to the 35 we have been addressing over a number of days? It is time the Minister took the opportunity to put on the record of the House the real position that existed at the helm of the health Department while the former Minister of State, Deputy Shortall, had responsibility for primary care.

Deputy James Reilly: I have no wish to be in any way disrespectful but there has been much repetition in the questions and all of these were answered in my original statement last week and again here today. For the record, Mr. Murphy has been a member of Fine Gael for 40 years and I am deputy leader of the party: of course I know him.

Deputy Michael Healy-Rae: He does know him.

Deputy James Reilly: All sides would know that this man and his family have been held in very high regard in Balbriggan for decades and have done a lot of good work. To suggest there is any impropriety is incorrect, wrong, baseless and without foundation. To further suggest in any way that I would get any personal gain from either this decision or the one pertaining to Swords is equally baseless. Becoming involved in politics and going into an election with a prospect of becoming Minister for Health has clearly cost me money.

The Deputy spoke about criteria again. I have tried to say it in as many ways as I can, and I am sorry but I cannot explain it any further, that there were complex criteria used: there were not just three but several. This is a situation that is in flux. Things that are in the PPP if they get done by lease will go out of it, and other elements may be brought into the PPP. Agreed leases may fall through, as the Balbriggan example nearly did because of a lack of agreement between NAMA and the developer, A.J. Noonan, who tried to buy it. Proposals in respect of which leases might have been agreed might fall through, as Balbriggan nearly did, because of a lack of agreement between NAMA and the developer, A.J. Noonan, trying to buy it. Other ones

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we think might go ahead may have to cease if we do not have GP agreement. There is a whole range of different circumstances that pertain to this issue and there is no simple one-fix solution. I put it on record that if I had it to do again-----

Deputy Billy Kelleher: The Minister would do it his way.

Deputy James Reilly: -----I would not turn my back on the people of Swords and Balbriggan whose needs had been identified back in 2008.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: Answer the question in regard to the Labour Party Ministers with whom the Minister engaged.

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy, will you please resume your seat?

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: A Cheann Comhairle, the Minister did not answer the question.

An Ceann Comhairle: No. Resume your seat.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: Will the Ceann Comhairle ask the Minister to answer the question?

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy, will you resume your seat? I am on my feet.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: A Cheann Comhairle, with respect-----

An Ceann Comhairle: I call Deputy Kelleher.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: -----the Minister has ignored the question.

Deputy Finian McGrath: He has not answered the question.

An Ceann Comhairle: No, with respect, the Deputy abides by the ruling of the Chair.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: In terms of the ruling of the Chair, the Minister must reply.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy has had his say.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: There are no senior Ministers in the Chamber at this time.

Deputy Mattie McGrath: And no Labour Party Deputies.

An Ceann Comhairle: I call Deputy Kelleher. We are have spent nearly three quarters of an hour on this question.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: To whom else among them did the Minister speak?

Deputies: Hear, hear.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: I have a number of questions and then we can move on from this.

A Deputy: Jim will fix it.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: When did the Minister become aware that the Murphy site was be-

ing identified by the HSE? Roughly when was it? Was it prior to or after he became Minister or after he sacked the board of the HSE? When did he become aware of the HSE's new interest in the Murphy site because of the difficulties and contractual problems it had in the previous site it had identified?

I did not cast any personal aspersions on the Minister but I said that decisions he made could confer financial gain on individuals. It is quite right to say that if a town is designated and a site has been identified, potentially it could increase the value of the site and, by extension, it could diminish the previous owner's liability and absolve him or her from personal guarantees. That is the clear situation. That is the point I was making. It was not that the Minister was going to gain financially or in any other way, it was that he was conferring potential financial gain on an individual whose site has been identified by the HSE-----

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy, this is Question Time.

(Interruptions).

Deputy Billy Kelleher: -----and then the Minister subsequently added it to a list without any clear criteria being laid down.

An Ceann Comhairle: Will the Deputy put his question?

Deputy Billy Kelleher: Will the Minister agree that in itself could inflate the value of a site not necessarily in Balbriggan, but in other towns as well, and absolve potential owners from liability or personal guarantees?

An Ceann Comhairle: I call the Minister for a final reply.

Deputy James Reilly: First, I have to point out to the Deputy that, according to Fionnan Sheahan's report this morning - I do not have the "blacks" here but I have no reason to doubt him - the Deputy said this morning in this House "that Minister Reilly has conferred financial ...", and I have asked the Deputy to withdraw that remark. If his idea of a withdrawal is to say "I meant to say could have", fair enough, but I want to say the following-----

Deputy Finian McGrath: Do not forget the part about the former Minister of State, Deputy Shortall.

Deputy James Reilly: -----there is an old saying that "there are none so blind as those who will not see and none so deaf as those who will not hear".

Deputy Timmy Dooley: The Minister could apply that to himself.

Deputy James Reilly: I have laid out the criteria for the Deputy three or four times. The criteria are quite extensive and because all of them act in different ways it is a bit like a multiplier. One and one makes two and two and two makes four but four by four makes 16 and not four and four which makes eight, and so it is with this. It is a logistical logarithmic progression. There is nothing simple about it.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: Can we get that in writing?

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: A logistical logarithmic progression-----

An Ceann Comhairle: Do not be getting giddy, we are nearly finished.

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Deputy Mattie McGrath: The Minister is making us giddy.

An Ceann Comhairle: Will the Deputies allow the Minister to reply to Deputy Kelleher? Will the Deputy have control over some of his Members?

A Deputy: The Minister is not answering the question.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: That includes some of the former Members as well.

An Ceann Comhairle: I call the Minister to proceed.

Deputy James Reilly: I would like to finish by saying that primary care is an essential part of universal health insurance. The programme for Government is something to which I am 100% committed. I was one of its major architects in regard to the health section of it. I adhere to it, I am committed to it, I am determined it will succeed and I am convinced it will succeed. As I said on radio this morning, when I see the new leadership-----

Deputy Mattie McGrath: Answer the question.

Deputy James Reilly: -----in the HSE, the new leadership in the VHI and the new leadership in the Department of Health, and the excellent men and women working on our front lines and what they have done already-----

Deputies: Hear, hear.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: When did the Minister become aware of the site?

Deputy James Reilly: -----I am fully 100% convinced we will succeed.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: When did the Minister become aware of the site?

A Deputy: The Minister will have to come back in here again tomorrow.

An Ceann Comhairle: That completes the private notice question.

(Interruptions).

Topical Issue Debate

Pension Provisions

Deputy Peadar Tóibín: As the Minister of State will hopefully be aware, a massive crisis has been brewing within the pension industry in Ireland. A large part of that crisis has arisen because of the recession and the actions of some employers in regard to providing for pensions. However, those actions have been exacerbated by the Government in two ways, the pension levy and regulations.

The introduction of the pension levy by the Fine Gael and Labour parties and the changes to the minimum funding standard has meant a loss of benefits to pensioners and also the closure and potential closure of schemes. It is the workers who are reliant on those pensions, those who are in their old age, who are paying the cost. Shockingly, the figure involved is approximately 250,000 people. It should be remembered that these people are not individuals in receipt of massive salaries or exorbitant pensions. Some 70% of older citizens who are living alone survive on pensions at the bottom 20% of the income distribution. In many regards, these individuals are the forgotten poor of society.

The Government introduced a 0.6% pension levy which has had a massive effect on pensions. I and my colleague on the other benches, Deputy English, will be aware of the Tara Mines workers. These workers suffered a 10% reduction in the level of their pensions as a result of a 0.6% pension levy. When they asked the Government Deputies why they had voted for the levy, some of them said they did not know that would be an outcome of it. That is a shocking indictment of any Member who is responsible for their constituents.

The average pension of a Tara Mines worker is €10,000 and the levy means a low income has been reduced by €1,000. Many of the pensioners have demonstrated throughout County Meath and outside the gates of Leinster House. They have been led to believe on a number of occasions by Government Members that the decision would be reversed but that has not happened. Last year, they were on their own in many ways but I have spoken to people working in the insurance, banking and construction industries. The cost of the levy was absorbed by the trustees of their pension schemes but this is no longer the case and, therefore, what happened to Tara Mines pensioners last year is now happening to pensioners across every industry. Many of these individuals say that the Government regulations regarding the reserves that must be maintained by pension schemes is having the effect of reducing the pots available to pensioners even though the Government may be seeking to strengthen those pension pots and make sure they exist into the future. Some of the schemes will close in the future. Will the Minister of State address these issues and give the Tara Mines pensioners and all the other pensioners affected some hope that the Government will reverse the pension levy and reform the pension reserve regulations in order that they do not destroy people's pensions in the future?

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I apologise for being late; I expected the previous business to go on a little longer.

I am taking this matter on behalf of the Minister for Social Protection, who is in Brussels today. It is acknowledged that the fundamental problem facing occupational pension schemes is that pensions are significantly more expensive due to increasing life expectancy and lower than expected investment returns, which are reflected in increased annuity rates.

The Pensions Regulator suspended the funding standard four years ago, following the downturn in the financial market, to give trustees-employers an opportunity to assess the impact on pension funds and to give them time to develop responses to the challenge. The reintroduction of the funding standard was delayed on a number of occasions pending changes to legislation which were designed to help trustees respond to the funding challenges facing pension schemes. The Government also introduced the following measures to ease the funding pressures on defined benefit schemes while the funding standard was in abeyance: removal of the priority given to post-retirement increases for pensioners to ensure a more equitable distribution of assets in the event of the wind-up of a defined benefit scheme; the pensions insolvency payments scheme was established to reduce the cost of purchasing pensions for trustees where the employer has

become insolvent; and the introduction of the sovereign annuity initiative.

The purchase of a sovereign annuity is an option which the trustees of a scheme can exercise in order to reduce scheme liabilities. The sovereign annuity market is still in the early stages and demand for sovereign annuities remains to be seen. However, last August, the National Treasury Management Agency announced details of the sale of €1.021 million of Irish amortising bonds of between 15 and 35 years duration. It is anticipated that the NTMA will be in a position to issue further bonds as pension fund trustees complete their funding plans in line with the funding standard.

The funding standard provides a benchmark against which the health of a scheme can be tested. The existence of the funding standard itself is not the central issue in regard to whether a scheme is properly funded. Rather the responsibility rests with the employer and the trustees for ensuring that the scheme is properly funded and managed. However, the funding standard does provide the regulatory mechanism for ensuring that a scheme can live up to the promised level of pension benefits. The requirement for a risk reserve is also being introduced from 2016, to provide a level of protection for scheme members against future volatility in financial markets. It is accepted that the requirement for a risk reserve presents an added challenge for schemes, however, guidance issued by the regulator identifier options which the scheme can consider in meeting this requirement by 2023. This guidance is being kept under review. Overall, the changes made to defined benefit schemes are intended to bring increased stability to pension promises in the future and lessen the exposure to risks of schemes.

I am not certain that this answers the Deputy's question. There are no plans to remove the pension levy at this time. I do not say it is not under review but there are no plans to remove it.

Deputy Peadar Tóibín: I have been informed that profitable businesses are reducing their exposure to workers' pensions and, in one case, a bank, which is currently repatriating profits to its English parent, is reducing the pensions that workers have paid into. While it is necessary to have reserves and proper regulations in this area, it is important that they do not damage the livelihoods and wages of pensioners.

The pension levy is a bizarre wealth tax. It makes no proper discrimination between the pension a person earns and does not earn. Tara Mines workers have lost 10% of their earnings. Given many Government Members did not understand the impact the levy would have and given it affects such a vulnerable section of society so severely, it must be their desire to have a such a tax reversed. It must be considered that the levy was designed to create jobs. Ireland has lost more jobs *per capita* than any other western country since the Great Depression, 87,000 people emigrated last year, which is the highest number since the 1800s and 33,000 left the workforce last year. The pensioners are paying for a Government jobs plan which has resulted in the worst jobs figures imaginable. The burden is on their shoulders while the Government's jobs plan, unfortunately, fails. Will the Minister of State at least bring this issue to the attention of the Cabinet and ask that this unfair levy be reversed in the budget?

Deputy Kathleen Lynch: Every elected representative at community, local or national level understands it is an extraordinarily difficult time for everyone who is not working, including those who are on a pension. I have no problem bringing the Deputy's concerns, which I am sure he has expressed previously to her, to the Minister and I will ensure that happens.

With regard to whether people understood what would happen as a result of the pension

levy, more people on the Government benches understand economics than in the Deputy's party. For that reason, the Labour Party was the only party in the House that voted against the blanket bank guarantee.

Deputy Peadar Tóibín: That is not true.

Deputy Kathleen Lynch: If people in his party had understood that on the night they voted in favour of it, we would not be in the mess we are in today and the Deputy must take that on board as well.

Deputy Peadar Tóibín: The Minister of State should look at the record.

Deputy Kathleen Lynch: Perhaps the Deputy will take that message back to his party while I take his concerns back to the Minister for Social Protection.

Health Services Provision

Deputy Seán Kyne: I am grateful to the Ceann Comhairle for selecting this topical issue. I welcome the Minister of State.

The HSE national service plan for 2012 includes a commitment to roll out a new kind of treatment for diabetes in children, including the use of insulin pumps. Five centres were identified - three in Dublin, one in Cork and a shared service between Limerick and Galway. The target completion date was the end of the third quarter, that is, the end of September. There are two issues - one is the restriction of this new insulin pump treatment to children under five years of age and the other is the discrepancies in the treatment of children in different regions. One often hears complaints of a Dublin-centric attitude. Galway children must travel to Temple Street children's hospital in Dublin to see a consultant six or seven times a year in order to use the insulin pump. As a Galway Deputy, I will speak about regional deficiencies. I warmly welcome the announcement at the start of this year of an additional 1.2 diabetes nurse specialist posts in Limerick and Galway, with a diabetes dietician also shared between the Mid-Western Regional Hospital and University College Hospital Galway. These posts were to be filled and operational by June 2012 but this did not happen. Following representations and a delay of several weeks, I received news this afternoon - by strange coincidence - that the posts will be advertised in the coming weeks and will be in place by the start of 2013. Despite the delay, I can see the benefit in this.

Advocacy groups suggest Galway is the poor relation when it comes to urban areas and diabetic treatment. However, the good news I have mentioned does not solve another issue, namely, the apparent differentiation between age groups. The new insulin pump treatment will only be introduced for children under five years of age. I am concerned about those over that age. A constituent approached me on behalf of his 11 year old daughter. The girl requires four or five injections of insulin a day for type 1 diabetes. This caused an amount of trauma to the body to the extent that the abdomen suffered bruising. The injections were administered subsequently to her arms and currently to the back of her legs. This is of major concern to the girl and her parents who want to know when they will have access to an insulin pump. She is an 11 year old in Galway and I ask whether this treatment will continue to be available only in Dublin. It is a major regional issue.

No one likes to talk about the cost of health care but we must be practical. We must use the funding we allocate to health care to its optimal use. By not extending insulin pump treatment to all children, we will be penny rich and pound foolish.

Deputy Kathleen Lynch: I am responding on behalf of the Minister for Health, Deputy James Reilly. The HSE national clinical programme for diabetes, which includes the care of children and adolescents with diabetes, was established to define the way diabetic clinical services should be delivered, resourced and measured. The programme is lead by a clinician and its central aim is to save lives, eyes and limbs of patients with diabetes. The national clinical leads for diabetes and paediatrics met to discuss the issues involved in the care of children and adolescents with diabetes. A working group was established to discuss services throughout the country, to agree a model of care and to standardise these throughout the country. Their work involves the development of criteria for the use of insulin pump therapy in children and adolescents with type 1 diabetes, as the benefits of this form of therapy are well established, especially in children younger than five years of age. They also work on policy to aid the early detection and prevention of diabetes in young children and adolescents. The group's work is ongoing.

I am delighted to say that this year the HSE paediatric and diabetes clinical programme initiated a project to provide insulin pump therapy to children with type 1 diabetes under five years of age in five centres nationally. This is a wonderful advancement in the treatment of children with diabetes. The centres include the Adelaide and Meath Hospital, incorporating the National Children's Hospital, Crumlin, Temple Street, Cork and Limerick-Galway. All children under five years will be assessed for suitability for insulin pump therapy in one of these centres. If suitable, the children and parents or carers will undergo a structured education process prior to commencing insulin pump therapy. If not found suitable, children will be treated using multiple daily injections. The diabetes team will work with the parents and children to address the deficits if desired.

All insulin pump therapy commenced in children under five years will be maintained in the over five years age group. In order to provide this treatment, additional nursing resources are required and work is progressing on the recruitment of these nursing resources. I am fully aware of the challenges facing young diabetic patients and of the need to support patients and their families. I am committed to providing the best possible health service for our children and their families and will continue to work with the HSE and, specifically, the clinical programmes to ensure the best possible outcomes for these patients. I thank the Deputy for raising the matter.

Deputy Seán Kyne: I welcome the announcement made today regarding the service to be operated jointly between Limerick and Galway, the fact that the posts should be in place by 2013, that the recruitment programme is commencing in Manorhamilton and that all insulin pump therapy commenced in those under five years will be continued after that age. It is good news for those who receive the treatment. Where does the 11 year old child stand? Where can she go? Her body is marked with injection sites. Her family sees the major benefit of an insulin pump in terms of lessening the number of injection sites. I am not sure how many children are in a similar position but I am dealing with a specific case. Where does that child stand? A child of four and half years will receive the benefit but not a child of 11 years of age.

Deputy Kathleen Lynch: One can understand the parents' concern at the delicate age of 11 years. Even without diabetes, that age brings a degree of worry. We must begin somewhere and the treatment of children under five, who will receive insulin pumps, will be maintained into

later years and adolescence. While I have every sympathy, I cannot comment on a particular individual with diabetes. I understand the concerns but we must begin somewhere. As is the case with various vaccination programmes, it is our aim to do a follow-up and a catch-up programme. I will speak to the Minister for Health on this important matter. I know the value of a treatment process, especially in the case of diabetes where treatment is a daily event. I know the benefits of an insulin pump. It relieves the constant worry about the amount of insulin and when it is given. Children do not normally have that kind of routine. I am not certain that we will be to deliver a catch-up programme but we should seriously consider it.

Human Rights Issues

Deputy Ann Phelan: I thank the Ceann Comhairle for allowing me to raise this issue for the third time in the House. While all our energy goes to dealing with the economic situation here and across Europe, we must maintain the view that we are all human beings and we must do something about the humanitarian issue in Syria. Thousands have died in brutal attacks and many more have been severely injured or forced to flee their homes. Schools and health centres have closed down or have become too dangerous for families to contact. Many have been traumatised by the torture and upheaval inflicted upon them, in particular having to leave their family home to seek refuge in neighbouring countries of Jordan, Iraq, and Turkey.

5 o'clock According to the Jordanian Government, more than 200,000 Syrian refugees have entered the country and are living in appalling conditions. We are all acutely aware of the humanitarian aspect to the Syrian conflict. It is our duty to support the countries now receiving a large influx of refugees, such as Turkey and Jordan.

As a Government, we must call for an immediate end to the violence, stress the responsibility of Syria to protect its population and continue to monitor the situation closely.

The United Nations needs to ensure that all measures possible are adopted to stop human rights violations and establish a commission to investigate these violations. Humanitarian corridors needed to be focused on. We, as a nation, must highlight that we are united with our European counterparts in aiding the protection of the people of Syria.

Systematic and gross violations of human rights continue to be committed under the Assad regime on its own people in Syria on a daily basis. When children are being used as pawns and sought out as targets in warfare it is incumbent upon us, as a member state of the United Nations, to try to protect their interests and maintain their safety.

In the devastating massacre in Houla in May, more than 100 people lost their lives, including 49 children. On Monday, yet again we saw this civil war claim the lives of further innocent children. Syrian rights activists claimed Syrian Government warplanes bombed the northern town near the Turkish border, killing 21 people, as heavy fighting spread within the old city of Aleppo. The British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the death toll from Monday's air strike in Salqin included eight children. The observatory said nationwide fighting between Government and rebel forces on Monday killed at least 100 people.

The harsh reality is that the Syrian crisis has reached genocidal proportions and is one of the greatest challenges faced by the United Nations Security Council. However, while I acknowledge that we are limited in our capacity as a member state of the UN, we are not doing enough to abate this disaster which has reached a monumental scale. While we and our EU

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counterparts have been afforded the opportunity to raise this issue in our national parliaments, and this is the third occasion I have raised this issue, we are still merely talking about it and very little action has been instigated. While we continue to discuss Syria, children are being callously slaughtered. Procrastination is opportunity's natural assassin

We need look at the statistics to get an understanding of the extent of inactivity that prevails. Up until July 2012, over 1,300 children had been killed, 49 children were massacred in one incident alone, 635 children were put into detention centres where torture has been repeatedly testified and girls and boys as young as eight have been forcibly involved in hostilities. An estimated 470,000 children and young people have been affected by the crisis. It is estimated that around 50% of all displaced Syrians are children and young people, and girls and boys as young as 12 had been sexually abused

Amnesty International visited 26 towns and villages between 31 August and 11 September and carried out on-the-ground field investigations into indiscriminate attacks which killed 166 civilians, including 48 children and 20 women, and injured hundreds of others. In recent days Amnesty International has continued to receive information from residents of several villages about ongoing air and artillery attacks, some of which have resulted in yet more civilian casualties.

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I am taking this matter on behalf of the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade.

I know Deputy Ann Phelan and others in the House will join me in emphasising our sense of horror and dismay at the relentless onslaught upon the Syrian civilian population. The brutally repressive actions of the Assad regime and the armed resistance from elements of the opposition have resulted in extraordinary levels of human suffering, which has been outlined by Deputy Ann Phelan. Speaking at the UN General Assembly last Friday the Tánaiste described the situation in Syria today as an affront to humanity.

I welcome the opportunity to outline how Ireland has responded. The Minister of State with responsibility for trade and development, Deputy Joe Costello, visited Jordan in August to assess the situation on the ground.

Statistics cannot adequately convey the extent of the humanitarian crisis but they are shocking. Over 20,000 people have been killed in the violence, 2.5 million people in Syria are in desperate need of assistance and over 1.2 million Syrians are displaced within their own country. There has been indiscriminate shelling of densely populated areas, excessive use of force and random targeting of innocent civilians. As the humanitarian situation deteriorates and winter approaches, there is urgent need for additional food, medical care and shelter. There is growing concern for the 500,000 Palestinian refugees in Syria who have been living for generations in camps which are now being affected by the violence.

The number of refugees in neighbouring countries has reached over 300,000, about 75% of them women and children. While visiting the Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan, the Minister of State, Deputy Costello witnessed at first hand how the staff of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR, are struggling with limited resources to provide even the most basic services for a rapidly increasing refugee community. While the UN and agencies have recently been able to scale up the delivery of humanitarian assistance, the operation con-

tinues to be hampered by the Syrian regime and by violence on the part of Syrian Government forces and the armed opposition.

As early as March this year, Ireland provided €500,000 in emergency funding for the International Committee of the Red Cross, the UNHCR and the World Food Programme. At the time of the Minister of State's visit to Jordan, Ireland mobilised an additional €1.6 million of humanitarian assistance to the International Committee of the Red Cross, UNHCR, the World Health Organisation and the International Rescue Committee. This included non-food items such as tents, mattresses, kitchen sets, water tanks and jerry cans from our rapid response stocks in Dubai for Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan. Only last week, Ireland provided funding to the United Nations Relief Works Agency to help Palestinian refugees in Syria. This brings Ireland's support since March to €2.45 million.

Ireland is also working with the international community to end the suffering of the Syrian people and bring about an early political transition. What is needed above all is a strong resolution from the Security Council that will authorise targeted sanctions, including a comprehensive arms embargo, against all who are violating the basic rights of the Syrian people. There also needs to be accountability for what has happened in Syria, and Ireland fully supports referral of the situation to the International Criminal Court.

With no early political solution in sight, the prospect is all too real of continued displacement and humanitarian suffering within Syria and an escalating refugee crisis. The latest predictions are that the number of Syrian refugees could reach 710,000 by the end of the year, some 250,000 in Jordan alone.

The immediate imperative is to respond to the humanitarian needs on the ground while maintaining international efforts to find a sustainable political solution. Ireland and our EU partners are firmly committed on both fronts. Collectively, we have already provided well over €200 million in humanitarian assistance and we will remain fully engaged in solidarity with the people of Syria.

I commend Deputy Ann Phelan for raising this issue. It is important that it be raised in parliaments throughout the world, to ensure that the international response is as strong as can possibly be mobilised.

Deputy Ann Phelan: I thank the Minister of State for her response. We must continue to raise this matter in our parliaments and we must keep it on all our agendas. I am calling for the reinstatement of UN monitors. Observatory missions, such as that based in London, are limited in scope and capacity to act.

Governments will be meeting between 17 and 19 October at the United Nations General Assembly in New York, to discuss children's rights. The issue of children in the war in Syria should be raised at that assembly. The Save the Children campaign is calling for strident monitoring and recording of every crime against the children of Syria and that their perpetrators be held to account.

We can only keep trying. The Minister of State said a political solution is not in sight. In the absence of that, we must keep pushing humanitarian issues and try to alleviate the suffering of the most vulnerable in society, namely children.

Deputy Jan O'Sullivan: Ireland will continue to contribute strongly to the humanitarian

needs of Syria. Deputy Ann Phelan might have heard about the Tánaiste's strong remarks at the United Nations General Assembly last week. Ireland is certainly making its voice heard in this regard. I will convey to the Tánaiste the Deputy's concern that the UN monitors be reinstated, as he is back in the country now, and I am sure the Deputy will do so as well.

Local Authority Housing Provision

Deputy Tom Barry: I welcome the opportunity to speak on this important issue. People have a right to live peacefully and not to live in fear or to be terrorised by other people in their neighbourhood. I am aware of one lovely, relatively new estate where three families are seeking to be rehoused elsewhere because of the unbearable behaviour towards them. Their cars are being damaged, their children are being both verbally attacked and threatened and people are walking on their back walls and looking in their windows. It is absolutely unacceptable behaviour, and no sector of society holds a monopoly on such behaviour.

This is strictly about people who misbehave when they are granted housing after being approved by a local authority. Regardless of one's colour, class or creed, behaving in this fashion is unacceptable. This problem must be recognised and forcefully tackled. If legislative change is required for this to happen, so be it. These anti-social groups have no respect for either themselves or their communities. Local authority housing forms require one to get a peace commissioner to certify one's income. There is also a section dealing with public order offences. This type of self assessment of an individual's public order record is insufficient and Garda certification should be required. Many people, including young people, have been in regular contact with the Garda but do not have an official criminal record. Nevertheless, they are causing huge problems. Any statement from a garda indicating that the people would not make good neighbours should certainly be taken into account.

The spirit of social housing is that people who are allocated a house will fit into a community and not destroy the lives of the people around them. We recently considered a vetting Bill in this House dealing with employers who have vulnerable adults or children working for them. It is very welcome legislation. A local authority has valuable property on its books and the well-being of that property and the estate in general is at stake. Vetting of housing applicants must be an element in assessing their suitability for social housing. In these cases, one is always dealing with vulnerable people and children because these will be one's neighbours. People who always shout about their rights must realise that they also have responsibilities and that the rights of their neighbours are equally important.

I am aware of another case where an extremely difficult family with a strong anti-social behaviour track record was housed in a quiet estate. The residents were completely hampered prior to the allocation and felt their local representatives were powerless to make their voices heard. They were right. The rights were all on the side of one family, above those of all the other families. Local authority executives are quick to cite legislation and the potential for litigation. Technically, they are correct but there appears to be little to support the families who know the trouble that is being foisted upon them. The law-abiding people approach their local elected representatives for help, but the representatives can do nothing about the process.

The process of allocating houses is closed. Perhaps we should consider establishing an assessment board for social housing in each local authority. It could incorporate local gardaí, public representatives and council executives. Garda vetting should be mandatory before allo-

cations are made. We are all conscious of the right of people to a home, but we are over-emphasising their rights and underplaying their responsibilities to their communities and neighbours. We should also consider the imposition of financial penalties where anti-social behaviour occurs. If one does not treat the State's property or one's neighbour's property properly, one should pay for the cost of the damage or it should be deducted from what one receives in benefits from the State.

We must also consider the possibility of imposing rigorous regulations whereby repeated anti-social behaviour means one simply forfeits the right to social housing. At present, the people who are causing the problems are remaining in the estates while their neighbours, who have done nothing wrong, feel they have no other option but to leave. Our obsession with doing the right thing has turned the morality of this situation on its head.

Deputy Jan O'Sullivan: I am very much aware of the problem of anti-social behaviour and it has been brought to my attention by representatives from various parts of the country. While the primary responsibility for dealing with anti-social behaviour rests with An Garda Síochána, housing legislation also contains measures aimed at combatting anti-social behaviour in housing estates and I propose to introduce further measures in this area.

The Deputy is primarily concerned with local authority dwellings but in the case of private rented dwellings, the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 prohibits a tenant from engaging in anti-social behaviour in or near a dwelling to which the Act applies. The Act empowers a landlord to terminate a tenancy in the case of such behaviour, subject to a notice period of only seven days in the most serious cases. A third party directly affected by anti-social behaviour may also, subject to certain conditions, refer a complaint to the Private Residential Tenancies Board against a landlord who has failed to enforce tenant obligations.

Local authorities are responsible under the Housing Acts for the management and maintenance of their housing accommodation, including taking appropriate measures in respect of anti-social behaviour. Among the principal enactments in this is a requirement for each housing authority to adopt an anti-social behaviour strategy for the prevention and reduction of such behaviour in its housing stock. There is also provision for the District Court to make an excluding order requiring a person engaging in anti-social behaviour to leave a specified dwelling, banning him or her from entering that dwelling or the adjoining area or estate and prohibiting him or her from intimidating the local residents. Housing authorities also have power to refuse to allocate a dwelling to, or sell a house to, a person engaged in anti-social behaviour.

I am currently working on a number of measures to strengthen the powers of housing authorities in this area. I will commence section 29 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 in the coming months, under which new local authority tenancy agreements must include a specific ban on anti-social behaviour in, or in the vicinity of, the dwelling concerned. I will also be using my powers under section 29 to fulfil a commitment in the programme for Government to introduce a 12-month probationary tenancy for all new social housing tenants, which will include provision for termination in the event of anti-social behaviour. I am consulting housing authorities about the need for amendments to the excluding order regime to make it more effective in rooting out anti-social behaviour without having to evict entire families. I am also giving particular consideration to the issue of anti-social behaviour in the arrangements to be made for transferring responsibility for rent supplement households with an established long-term housing need from the Department of Social Protection to housing authorities.

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Again, I thank Deputy Barry for raising this issue, which is a matter of concern to communities throughout the country. There are certain actions which can be taken now but I also intend to strengthen the hand of local authorities in this regard.

Deputy Tom Barry: I thank the Minister for her response. People elect local representatives to speak for them, but residents feel that they have no representation in respect of social housing. I presume it is a classic battle between the executive and the reserve functions in local government. The elected representatives feel they have no input and cannot act for those on whose behalf they were elected to act. It is also not the fault of the executive because it must follow the rules and it knows they are ambiguous. I am delighted the Minister said she will examine this. That is what we need. We must ensure the legislation deals with the current situation.

However, the legislation must respect all the residents in these cases, not just the applicants. We must make it crystal clear that local authorities have no obligation to house people who disrupt communities. The assessment boards I have proposed should incorporate local gardaí, public representatives and relevant members of the council executive. I understand there will be some allegations of cronyism in local government, but a well-structured board conducting an open process should negate any such concerns. There is a complete lack of transparency in the area of decision making at present and this must be tackled.

The current system is not working. Too many people are coming to the clinics of public representatives in complete distress. Their children are also upset. Last week, one person arrived at a clinic threatening suicide because they are living day and night with completely unacceptable anti-social behaviour around them. Some of the people indulging in anti-social behaviour are up all night while others are up all day. The people who love their houses and take excellent care of them therefore feel they have no choice but to move. It is an unacceptable situation when one considers State assets and their distribution. It is also a waste of public sector time. Forced eviction of innocent people is not on. I thank the Minister of State and commend her on her approach in this matter.

Deputy Jan O'Sullivan: I thank Deputy Barry. Every week we meet people who are subject to intolerable anti-social behaviour and who often feel like prisoners in their own homes. We must do something effective about this, although I am not sure about the idea of assessment boards. I heard the Deputy's thoughts on the matter and I am consulting on it. We have commenced work on a new housing Bill and I have outlined other measures related to the implementation of current legislation. We are consulting on the contents of the new housing Bill because this is one of the biggest issues that comes to the attention of public representatives and I intend to act on it.

Philanthropy and the Arts: Statements

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): Ireland is one of the great philanthropic countries of the world. It is a core characteristic of ours, and one that we rate highly, that we take an interest in others and that we support their work and efforts

through the donation of our time or our money. Today, it is estimated that total philanthropic income in Ireland is in excess of €500 million annually. This is a sizeable amount for a country of our size but the arts sector in Ireland receives only approximately 0.6% of this amount.

Income from philanthropy for arts organisations in Ireland makes up only 3% of their total income. This is less than half the proportion of philanthropic sponsorship in other countries like the United Kingdom and United States, which have a more highly developed approach to philanthropic support for arts and culture. It is clearly the case, therefore, that while philanthropy in general is reasonably well developed in Ireland, this is not the case in the arts and culture sector. Philanthropy for arts and culture is underdeveloped in Ireland compared with other sectors and other countries, and this is an issue which I have set out to address as Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

The programme for Government agreed between the two parties gives a clear commitment on this point. The programme states, “We will work with stakeholders in the Arts community to develop new proposals aimed at building private support of the Arts in Ireland exploring philanthropic, sponsorship or endowment fund opportunities.” It is unfortunately the case, however, that today’s obvious constraints on the taxpayer mean we have to look for innovative ways to address funding issues.

This year, I have allocated more than €63 million to the Arts Council in direct support. However, it is abundantly clear that the pressure on funding that my Department faces for 2013 will have an impact here and across all funding priorities of my Department. Therefore, at a time when taxpayer funding to arts and culture is under pressure and decreasing, it is more important than ever that organisations seek to tap whatever reserves of private support may be in place for funding.

Our new focus on philanthropy is also one which sees philanthropy as a mainstay of arts and culture funding for the years and decades ahead, even when State funding to arts and culture begins to increase again at some point in the future. Philanthropy has a long-term positive impact, and instilling a new culture of philanthropy in Irish arts and culture will be of manifest benefit for the future vitality of the sector. We need to develop our fund-raising skills and capacity right across the sector. To do this we need to learn from those who do it best.

My vision of philanthropy is also not one where one size fits all. It is not about saying there is a single approach which works for everyone. As Minister, I have supported two specific initiatives to increase philanthropy in our arts and culture sector, schemes which reflect that different organisations can benefit from different supports on this issue.

The first of these is the philanthropy leverage initiative, managed by my Department and designed to reward smaller projects across the arts and cultural spectrum that can leverage funding from private sources. The second is the Arts Council’s RAISE: Building Fund-raising Capacity, designed to build capacity in selected organisations to raise money, not just on a once-off basis but over time, building deeper funding relationships with private sponsors.

In May 2012, I launched the philanthropy leverage initiative. This initiative is designed to encourage philanthropic sponsorship and endowment funding of the arts from private sources. The initiative, established with funding of €230,000 for 2012, is managed by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The philanthropy leverage initiative provides an incentive to arts organisations to proactively seek new and multi-annual relationships with sponsors which

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deliver private sector financial support, thereby increasing overall funding available to the arts. It is available across projects of varying scale, geography and art forms. It is envisaged that this funding will unlock new private sector funding of 2.5 times the State allocation of €230,000, generating total additional funding of €805,000 to the arts in 2012. The pilot initiative will be reviewed at the end of 2012.

Applicants for funding apply to the philanthropy leverage initiative for support in one of four categories, with each category targeting a different multiple of matching funding. An organisation can seek State funding of €5,000 if it can raise €10,000 from new philanthropy, sponsorship or endowment funding, a 2:1 ratio of private to taxpayer funding. However, an organisation can apply for more taxpayer funding - up to €20,000 - if it can raise €100,000 from new philanthropy. More funds are, therefore, available to organisations that can match taxpayer funding with a higher multiple of private support. Funding under this initiative is available to not-for-profit organisations for arts programming projects. To date, organisations that have benefitted from the scheme include Cork Community Art Link, Macnas, the Little Museum of Dublin and the Temple Bar Gallery.

Yesterday I launched a second important development in the areas of the philanthropic support for the arts: the Arts Council's RAISE: Building Fund-raising Capacity pilot initiative. This programme will provide one-to-one professional support to the eight selected organisations for two years through planning and implementing a tailored fund-raising programme. Eight leading Irish arts organisations are aiming to raise €10 million in private funding over the next five years as part of a new Arts Council initiative. The pilot project will place the organisations on a stronger financial footing and mean people throughout the country will be able to experience more high quality performances, exhibitions, film screenings and other arts events. The arts organisations participating in the initial pilot are the Irish Film Institute, the Royal Hibernian Academy, Na Píobairí Uilleann, the Galway Arts Festival, The Model Gallery in Sligo, the National Chamber Choir, Wexford Festival Opera and the Gate Theatre. As part of the selection process, all demonstrated that they have the ambition, potential and commitment to raise more than €250,000 per annum in private investment.

I firmly believe that philanthropy is as beneficial to the donor as to the recipient and should be recognised as such. As someone who has been associated with a range of arts and heritage groups, both giving of my time and helping to raise money, I know the huge personal reward that comes from this commitment. I also know, however, that philanthropy is new territory for many Irish arts organisations. Changing thinking and attitudes is as much a challenge as getting arts organisations confident and willing to take the plunge to go out and seek the support they deserve.

Changing the culture of philanthropy will take time. To help this process of change, I will host an important seminar on the topic "Philanthropy and the Arts" at the Smock Alley Auditorium, Exchange Street Lower, Dublin 8 on 18 October 2012. The conference will feature speakers from key organisations and arts institutions in Ireland. The speakers will outline the positive impact that philanthropy can bring to arts organisations and businesses and the greater associated social benefits it can generate. Speakers will be drawn from Bank of America, the Ireland Funds, the Forum on Philanthropy and Fundraising, the Arts Council, the Revenue Commissioners, the National Archives, Business to Arts, the Little Museum of Dublin, the Royal Hibernian Academy, Smock Alley and those active in the arts and culture sphere. I hope Deputy Ó Feargháil or any other Member of the House might also be able to join me for that event. I hope this conference will be of interest to all participants, both for the philanthropists

and for those groups and individuals who are seeking to raise money and obtain support. I look forward to hearing from all sides in this equation, that is, from the corporate givers, the groups that benefit and the organisations that play a strong role in this field. For example, schemes are in place in the Revenue Commissioners to allow tax relief on donations to charities and approved bodies and I hope that a detailed explanation of the schemes currently in place will be useful for all attending. As mentioned, the Arts Council is embarking on a major new programme to build support for philanthropy in the arts sector and will address the conference on this point. Moreover, the Business to Arts organisation will also make a presentation on the day. This is an organisation that has brought innovation to this issue through the development of Fund it, an Ireland-wide initiative that provides a platform for people with great ideas to attract funding from friends, fans and followers across the world.

It is undeniably the case that philanthropy has assumed a greater importance now, given the financial situation my Department faces. However, it is important to remember that philanthropy is not simply about replacing State funding with private support. Instead, it is about a highly ambitious aim for this country to combine the best of US-style philanthropic support with the best of European-style State support. It is not about importing a US model wholesale to Ireland. Over-dependence on philanthropy or the single-source model has been as dangerous to cultural organisations in the United States as over-dependence on State support has been here. The most sustainable model for financing the arts, one that secures both financial and artistic independence, is one in which cultural organisations can count on a plurality and diversity of funding sources.

In closing, I believe it is important to remember that while income is the immediate goal, the gain from philanthropy is not simply monetary. The extensive outreach involved in building a donor base plays a vital social function in society. Building relationships creates communities. It instils ownership and civic pride and galvanizes the power of art to permeate and connect that community. No matter how small or large a donation, a donor automatically becomes a stakeholder and has an interest in the organisation. On this point, I will conclude by reminding Members of the words of David Rockefeller that “Philanthropy is involved with basic innovations that transform society, not simply maintaining the *status quo* or filling basic social needs that were formerly the province of the public sector”. I look forward to this debate and if any good proposals come from my colleagues in this House, I certainly will take them on board.

Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail: I am delighted to have the opportunity to participate in this debate. I commend the Minister on his availing of the opportunity to have this important debate. While coming into the Chamber, I wondered whether those with a poetic bent might feel inclined to pick up their pens on the basis that it has taken the flight of the Taoiseach and ten Ministers of the Cabinet from the country to allow an opportunity for such a debate to take place. That said, given this is my first opportunity to engage with the Minister on a serious matter since my appointment as party spokesperson, I commend the Minister on his long-standing contribution to debates in the House on the issue down through the years. I acknowledge the role he played over many years in highlighting the arts in Irish society, not least during his tenure as Opposition spokesperson during the last Dáil. It is good to see someone with the Minister’s genuine interest, having had the opportunity to serve as Minister for the past 19 months. I wish him well in this regard.

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: I thank the Deputy.

Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail: I should also acknowledge the role of my predecessor, Deputy

Troy, who adopted a highly proactive and energetic approach to the brief. In addition, I wish to pay tribute at the outset of this debate to the Fianna Fáil Ministers in the arts sphere who have served since 1997. I refer to people like Síle de Valera, John O'Donoghue, the late Seamus Brennan, Martin Cullen and Mary Hanafin. Sadly, none continue to be Members of this House but it is true to observe that as Minister, each became a powerful advocate for the arts. One often hear Ministers being criticised for having gone native in their Departments but in their case and that of the Minister, such a comment should be seen as a compliment.

Prior to the summer recess, my predecessor, Deputy Troy, and my party leader, Deputy Martin, tabled a motion on the arts and I consider it to be appropriate today to restate the commitment of my party to the arts. That motion tabled last June endorsed the positive contribution that a thriving arts and culture sector makes to Irish society as a whole, acknowledged the value of our cultural heritage and recognised the impact on the economy and jobs of the wider arts sector, which contributes €4.7 billion to the economy and directly and indirectly supports a massive 79,000 jobs. The motion also noted that in the period 2005 to 2010 alone, more than €1.1 billion was invested in the sector. It highlighted that these funds facilitated a transformation in the national, regional and community arts and culture infrastructure, in performance venues, as well as in film and television production capacity. In the perception of Fianna Fáil, Ireland's unique culture has long played a key role in defining us as a people and promoting a positive view of Irishness around the world. In particular, my party is of the view that we must be mindful of the capacity of the sector to provide opportunities for self-expression and involvement, which can help to lift people's spirits in a time of economic struggle. Fianna Fáil also realises the economic potential of the arts and creative industries and their role in supporting enterprise and innovation in the wider economy.

It is clear, however, the arts sector has not been immune to the recession and the squeeze on public finances. The Minister has made this clear both in this House and the national media. Funding for the Arts Council has been reduced by a quarter over the past four years. Naturally, many in the sector consequently feel obliged to look elsewhere and private philanthropy is an obvious avenue. Obviously, the Minister and his colleagues hope there is much to be gained from philanthropy and on this side of the House, I am happy to endorse the initiatives he has taken. Moreover, Fianna Fáil will happily render any practical assistance it can. One such measure, the philanthropy leverage initiative, is designed to encourage philanthropic sponsorship and endowment funding of the arts from private sources. While the Minister's proposal is modest in scale and almost is a microleverage scheme with State funding of just €230,000 set aside for arts organisations that raise money from private funds, it is nonetheless a meaningful step in the right direction.

Earlier this year the Forum on Philanthropy and Fundraising published a report and I must state the economic contribution made to national life by the non-profit sector in Ireland is quite remarkable. The employment of more than 100,000 people and an annual turnover of €5.7 billion are outstanding, as are the €3.7 billion in wages and salaries and the €290 million in employers' PRSI contributed each year. The report by the Forum on Philanthropy and Fundraising aspires to a 60% increase in philanthropic giving by 2016. The report's four key recommendations are establishing a national giving campaign, improving the fiscal environment and infrastructure for giving, developing fund-raising capacity among not-for-profit organisations and creating a national social innovation fund. As the Minister observed, philanthropy, certainly on a large scale, is a concept one associates more with the United States than this country or many European countries. While Ireland has a deserved reputation for charitable giving, it tends to be

more in the area of crises and emergencies. Moreover, we can be very proud of what we have done in this regard. I still recall the remarkable scale of generosity exhibited by the Irish people during the Live Aid concert in the 1980s, when Ireland's contribution *per capita* must have been two or three times that of the United Kingdom where the event originated. Furthermore, notwithstanding the recession, charitable donations increased by almost a quarter between 2009 and 2010, a fact that is not widely acknowledged across the country. Ireland's contributions to charitable donations therefore are very high.

According to figures released last year, 89% of Irish adults give to charity, compared with 58% in the UK or 40% in Germany. The latter figure might not surprise Members. According to Philanthropy Ireland, Dubliners are the most generous givers to charitable causes and organisations in Ireland, donating an average of €207 per annum. The rest of Leinster follows next with a typical annual donation of €190. People from Connacht and Ulster spend €99 per year and finally in the Minister's region, Munster, only €48 is given to charity each year. He might have a comment to make on that later. In the United States I understand that approximately 2% of gross domestic product, a remarkable \$300 billion, is donated in the system of gifts or philanthropy. In Ireland the figure is 0.7% - the same as the target for our development aid budget. No doubt a key reason for this is that the state is much smaller in the United States. While I think few if any Deputies believe in minimal government, that is not the case in the US. In that country any form of public endowment for the arts can be subject to hostile criticism from those with a philosophical aversion to public spending.

A recent article in *The Irish Times* by Madeleine Clarke, founding director of the Genio Trust, pointed out that there is not only less philanthropic giving in Ireland than in many other countries, there is also a less developed infrastructure to channel philanthropic funds to where they could achieve the greatest impact. She went on to comment that the majority of this is spontaneous rather than planned. Much more could be achieved if philanthropy was guided by trusted intermediaries who could help achieve more significant and sustainable impact.

As I have said, any private giving we have in Ireland does not lean towards the arts sector. Private donations towards to the arts can often seem something of an elite pursuit, associated with those with deep pockets rattling their jewellery in the best seats in the house. Like many a caricature this may have a degree of truth in it but it is certainly not the whole story.

For example, an event like the triennial Dublin Piano Competition, which over the years has been corporately sponsored by GPA, Guardian Insurance and Axa, has many small private donors. Over the years supporters known as competition friends have contributed more than €1 million, money which has been used to enhance the winners' musical experience and to provide opportunities for young Irish pianists to reach the standards of their international peers. I understand the competition is now supported by a private benefactor which, given the scale of the competition, is a significant act of generosity.

The Friends of the National Collections of Ireland was established in 1924 with the goal "to secure works of art and objects of historic interest or importance for the national or public collections of Ireland by purchase, gift or bequest". It has acquired hundreds of heritage items over the past 88 years. For example, the National Gallery of Ireland has received 47 paintings, 133 print room items, four stained-glass panels and a sculpture through the FNCI. Other institutions to receive donations include the Dublin City Gallery, the Crawford Art Gallery in Cork and the Ulster Museum.

In developing the sector I presume the Minister will consider the report of the forum, especially the concept of a national giving campaign. I ask the Minister to elaborate on how he hopes to develop a culture of giving. Obviously that is not a matter just for him but I would be interested to hear his thoughts. Especially in such straitened times when there are so many other competing causes, how can we persuade people to remember the arts? Would the Minister consider appointing a specific champion for the cause? How about some of our most distinguished authors and artists? The late great Maeve Binchy would have made an outstanding advocate, especially as I understand it, in view of the fact that she did not take advantage of the tax exemption for creative artists. Perhaps it would be better to showcase those who could benefit from a culture of giving instead of celebrity appeals? In order to encourage a culture of giving we need to emphasise that ultimately it is not a subsidy, but an investment in our culture, our society and our economy. There can be a multiplier effect that will be of benefit to all, not just those receiving any immediate benefit.

The forum report suggested a high-profile launch for such a campaign with the Taoiseach and a Minister involved. As Fine Gael's election guru, Mr. Frank Flannery, chaired the report group, this should be easy to achieve. How does the Minister hope to ensure his portfolio can get its moment in the spotlight? The next step for a campaign of giving, according to the forum report, was to commission some motivational research on charitable giving and philanthropy as a matter of priority. Has this happened yet? Will the Minister have any input into the nature of the research?

A flip side of this is how those raising funds should go about their business and utilising to the full the culture of giving. The forum suggested a campaign of education in fund-raising itself, with training and support systems in place. Many want to fund-raise and to increase their activity but they are not always clear as to how to go about it. The forum proposal for diplomas and certificates, an approved and recognised qualification, will also serve to build confidence.

When launching the report of the Forum on Philanthropy and Fundraising, the Taoiseach made the point that "fund-raising will never be - nor should it be - a substitute for Government expenditure". I endorse that but there is a corollary, namely that fund giving should not be a substitute for paying taxes. I know there are caps in place but the principle is one of giving and any attempt to use it to reduce tax liabilities detracts from that principle. Is it really giving if it is reducing the Exchequer's income? I am not rejecting the idea of tax relief out of hand but perhaps we should consider it being available at the standard rate only.

There may be a need to simplify the rules for giving because anything that makes it easier to understand is welcome. The report of the forum proposed the decoupling of tax relief on donations to charities and approved bodies from the restriction that treats business investments, from which the investor benefits, in the same manner as charitable donations where the donor derives no benefit. This proposal acknowledges the key difference between tax relief to private philanthropy to promote the public good and private investment to promote private gain. This clearly is welcome and should be implemented at the earliest opportunity.

Other recommendations deal with the infrastructure and administrative arrangements for philanthropy. Firm regulatory oversight is rightly called for because a clear system of accountability is imperative if greater giving is to be achieved. Reliable information is also required and the suggestion that the Central Statistics Office collect data on charitable donations on a quarterly basis is also one that seems very sensible to me. While the not-for-profit sector is very significant, the level of information possessed about it certainly is not.

There is no doubt that the connection between philanthropy and the arts is relatively undeveloped in Ireland. We all agree that this needs rectifying and we are happy to follow the Minister's leadership on the matter. Fianna Fáil will be happy to support any constructive measures that achieve this goal. We are all agreed that a culture of giving can have widespread social and economic benefits. It is up to all of us with an interest and a brief in the arts to ensure that culture gets its look-in. Notwithstanding the recession, many in Ireland still have great personal wealth and it is to be hoped that with it - to quote Ms Olive Braiden, a former chair of the Arts Council - "comes a responsibility to give, to display the generosity, wisdom and quiet patriotism that fosters those aspects of human endeavour that bestow life with meaning and possibility".

Deputy Sandra McLellan: I welcome the opportunity to speak on this issue today. The arts, through theatre, music, dance, the visual arts, architecture, opera, traditional arts, literature and film, make an enormous contribution to Irish society. They help to define us as a people, shape our sense of place and are key factors in shaping our sense of national identity. The arts are also central to our sense of cultural identity. Irish people have a deeply embedded and distinctive tradition of storytelling, image making and music. That tradition underpins our great achievements in many fields of the arts. The nation's rich artistic heritage is continually being added to and transformed by a new generation of Irish artists.

Cultural and artistic expression is dynamic and fluid. It is in a constant state of interpretation, reinterpretation, and invention. However, cultural and artistic expression and creativity require nurturing and support. In the current economic maelstrom of people losing their jobs, struggling to find work, burdened by debts or living lives of daily uncertainty in terms of their future, the arts have the ability to provide a source of enrichment and escape. At a societal level, the arts have the potential to lift the spirits of the nation. Culture night is a great example in this regard. Last Friday week many towns across the country were buzzing with many people taking part in cultural events.

The arts are, of course, also one of our most lucrative cultural exports. Not only are the arts good for society in general, they have an important role to play in helping Ireland to rebuild its international reputation. Irish artists enhance our global reputation, be it on movie screens, in theatres, on concert stages or through books. This reputation, in turn, drives tourism from abroad. For example, 1.6 million overseas tourists visited our museums and galleries in 2011. A further 433,000 attended festivals and other cultural events. Cultural tourism is worth more than €2 billion to the Irish economy. For example, the total economic impact of the west Cork music festival in 2011 was €1.6 million. The total economic impact of the Galway arts festival in the same year was €17.5 million. Some 80% of foreign tourists cite culture and heritage as a motivating factor in choosing Ireland as their preferred holiday destination. More important, this is the only growth area of the Irish tourism market.

In an increasingly homogenised and globalised world, where cities are competing with each other for tourists and foreign direct investment, the arts have the potential to be an important pull factor. They mark Ireland out as a distinctive and rich place to visit or, more important, as the ideal location to set up a business and live. In a time of great harshness and fiscal cruelty we should be protecting and investing in the arts. This Government is choosing to crudely dismantle important aspects of our artistic infrastructure and national heritage, while paying scant regard to the impact of such actions on tourism, communities, business, Ireland's international reputation and last, but not least, the national well-being.

The arts have a humanising effect on society. They bring softness, imagination and creativ-

ity to communities that in economic and infrastructural terms have all but been forgotten by the State and the political elite. The arts have the potential to soften urban wastelands and to give hope and human solace to people who often legitimately feel betrayed by the political system and those in power. At local level, the Arts Council, in grant aiding local arts groups, individual artists and small art organisations, reaches into the very heart of almost every community in Ireland. This aid is particularly important for disadvantaged neighbourhoods in cities across urban Ireland. It is an accepted fact that the arts, be it in the form of a community orchestra, a local drama group or a three-person band, can make a crucial intervention in a young person's life, giving him or her a sense of self-worth and purpose.

To this end, councils across the country have developed policies that include cross departmental support for arts events and activities that have at their core social inclusion. One such example is the community and enterprise department in Limerick which is involved in supporting the city's life-long learning festival - the environment department in supporting May music in the park and RAPID, the travellers story telling project. Not alone are the arts good for individuals, cities and society and for Ireland's international reputation, they are good for our economy too. The Arts Council annually supports 3,000 jobs. It funds 2,000 cultural events and 500 organisations, generating a turnover of €192 million, sending €54 million directly back to the Exchequer in the form of income, VAT and other taxes.

The Arts sector supports 27,000 jobs and contributes €382 million in taxes. The total of direct, indirect and induced employment supported by the arts and creative industries is 79,000 jobs. One wonders why then that State funding and investment in the arts is down by 25%, from €84.6 million in 2008 to €63.2 million in 2012. Sinn Féin is concerned at the proposal to merge the various key cultural institutions. We are also opposed to any change in the arm's length principal or to any proposals that would interfere with the independence of key artistic and cultural institutions.

The Minister's proposals, if implemented, would have a lasting and detrimental impact on the arts and cultural sector in Ireland. One can only draw the conclusion that such proposals are clearly not thought through. Rather, they are an exercise in optics by a Government that is obsessed with reducing the numbers of quangos and cost cutting, even when it makes no sense. It would seem that the Minister is going to forge ahead irrespective of the damage such cuts will have on cultural tourism, jobs, and society in general and on poor disadvantaged communities in particular. What is even worse is that this Government has not produced any information regarding cost benefit analysis, head-count reductions and so on that would justify the proposed changes. It is intent on embarking on a process of amalgamations, mergers, dissolution of independent boards and non-renewal of vital leadership roles.

The arts, artistic heritage and culture belong to all of the people on the island of Ireland. The Government of the day has a duty to foster, promote and preserve this national creativity. This is particularly important as we begin the decade of commemorations and enter a new era in terms of our national identity. Thus, it is imperative that we have independent, robust and well-funded national artistic and cultural institutions. Only then can the various commemorations be seen as an opportunity to revisit our past, with the expressed aim of building a more inclusive and equal society. If the Minister continues down the path of slashing funding to the arts then this opportunity will sadly have been lost.

Libraries, archives, exhibitions, museums, and community arts projects and so on need investment and should not be seen by short-sighted bureaucrats as an opportunity for cost cut-

ting. With regard to the National Archives and the National Library, no one in these institutions objects to the idea of shared resources or to co-operating in common fields of interest. However, it needs to be acknowledged that the two institutions perform very different functions. The Minister needs to acknowledge this and to recognise that it is this uniqueness which makes these institutions invaluable national assets.

The National Library has custody of our great literary and estate manuscript collections and is an important public resource. The focus of the National Archives is solely on archives, most of them departmental files, which are different kinds of records to manuscript collections. The latter are vital for understanding the political, social and economic evolution of the Irish State. The cuts to the National Library budget have been disproportionate. From 2008 to 2012, its funding has been cut by 40% and its staff by 38%. In spite of this, it has delivered on key aspects of public service reform and innovation. It hosted 1.2 million visitors last year, promoted shared services, curated major exhibitions and made vast amounts of material available on-line. This debate is not about money or approaches to the arts. It is about autonomous governance, public ownership and resisting the bureaucratic centralisation of the arts and culture administration in Ireland.

If this Government was serious about reform it would do the opposite, by allowing genuine, autonomous and transparent governance of the cultural institutions, with unpaid
6 o'clock board members who are independent of party politics and experts in their fields. It would meet without delay with the people who know best, namely, the various artistic and cultural organisations and stakeholders. It would value independent advice and input rather than seek to eliminate it. More important, it would desist from attempts to micro-manage complex institutions with rich histories under the pretence of cost cutting.

I call on the Minister to develop an all-Ireland approach to arts and culture and I urge him to remember that very rare institutions exist, the societal value of which far exceeds any monetary value.

Sinn Féin believes it is imperative that we preserve, safeguard and invest in the arts. If the past is to have a future and if the arts are to fulfil their potential as tools for integration and inclusion, then an all-Ireland approach must be the way forward. In the final analysis, the language of imagination, creativity, social inclusion and arts for all must replace the State-centred language of cost cutting, structural reform and bureaucratic control.

Deputy Catherine Murphy: I am a great believer that when somebody does one a turn then one should feel a sense of obligation to return something, and we must see philanthropy in this context as two-way. I am concerned about the approach being taken to The Gathering, which I know is more with regard to tourism. It has the potential to end up as a one dimensional and quite superficial event and we could do so much better. We cannot see opportunities like The Gathering as one-off superficial events. We must seek to give them a deeper and longer meaning. Wider opportunities for philanthropy exist in the areas of arts, heritage and culture than the narrow definition of paintings and literature, although these are incredibly important and very defining. Heritage, genealogy, our archives and records are part of this and rather than seeking to dip into the pockets or bank accounts of those who number themselves as part of the diaspora, we must offer them a real connection so they can reinforce their sense of belonging.

As has been stated previously, we have a very good record of charitable giving while other places have a culture of philanthropy such as Atlantic Philanthropies, the Joseph Rowntree

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Foundation and the Ford Foundation. Music, the written word and the creativity we have brought to the stage have helped to showcase us and have shown what makes the Irish unique. Our sense of identity is wrapped up in this and millions around the world are proud of this heritage. However, we do not make it easy for them to take it a stage further and feel a sense of belonging by connecting to the actual place of origin. A real opportunity exists in this.

Those who left Ireland in the many waves of immigration predominantly did so between 1845 and today and approximately 70 million people throughout the world claim a level of Irish ancestry. One thing we collectively own is evidence of where we came from and this takes the form of records. It is a commonly held view that all of our 19th century records were destroyed when the Public Records Office was set on fire in 1922. We need to dispel this myth. A huge amount of resources and information remain but we present them in such a fragmented way that we make it difficult for people to search, make a connection and belong. Such a sense of belonging would produce many types of returns. The idea of the mother ship has been mulling around for some time but we must understand why people who have connections to Ireland might want to come here and feel a sense of belonging which is much more profound than just visiting. It is one thing for British, American or Australian people to say they have Irish roots, but it is quite another to make a direct connection which deepens this sense of belonging, and I believe this is what we must aim to achieve. This requires us to give something as well as get something in terms of donations, philanthropy or charity.

I have an interest in family history and have found reconnecting with my ancestors and understanding what made them make the decisions they did a very deep and enriching experience. Dublin families like mine often have a mixed Irish heritage and while I have one Dublin line I also have ancestors from the cities of Limerick and Belfast. Dublin and Belfast were the only two cities to increase their population in the latter part of the 19th century so families from there will have mixed ancestry. They are also important counties as many people left from them.

I have been back and forth on numerous occasions to both cities because I feel a sense of connection to them. Each time I go I buy whatever local histories have been written since my previous visit, so much so I have a small library which I know feeds into the local economies. Recently I was asked to nominate my favourite places in Ireland and Limerick city was one of them. People might raise an eyebrow at this but it is a city which is much maligned even though it has an extraordinary wealth of records which have been carefully gathered and preserved. It has a wonderful heritage of local historians and a wealth of historic buildings which have been carefully restored. My point is that my sense of belonging to the city makes me see it for what it really is. I can bypass the press image of it and see the city for itself. We can make this happen for tens of thousands if not millions of people who have connections to all parts of Ireland and not only to the traditional tourist destinations. If they come to these destinations, we will have an opportunity to showcase local histories, museums, art and culture, and it is important that they come so this dual vibrancy exists. We can do this by helping them with their paper trail, and philanthropy can play a role in this.

I have been to many repositories in my search for my ancestors, which I started in earnest approximately 15 years ago before it was possible to search digitally, and I have had an opportunity to watch other people who were doing the same. People are very helpful to each other in such situations and there is much interaction. I remember an elderly gentleman from United States who had just made a connection and found something on a microfilm, and he sat watching and waiting for the same thing to happen for someone else. One can be certain he kept returning here because of it.

I remember being in the old Civil Registration Office in Lombard Street when two Liverpool girls found their connections to the past. They demonstrated in a very loud way but it did not annoy those who were there because they understood the importance to them of making the connection. Given the connection this country has with Liverpool, it was a great irony that this was going in the other direction.

There are often queues in the new research room in the General Register Office in the Irish Life Centre. Records are rationed and one can see only a certain number a day. How crazy is this? Excellent work has been done in recent years on digitising the 1901 and 1911 census and the same will be done to the 1926 census. However, this work was done in Canada. The State has indexed the civil registration records and taxpayer's money was used to digitise the indexes. What is interesting is that they are not available online on an Irish website. They are free to view on the website of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which has done fantastic work on putting some of the records on microfilm. Ironically, one can buy from *ancestry.co.uk* the records we paid to produce, but none of them is available through an Irish website or online facility. There is something very peculiar about that. We need to foster a culture of co-operation between the various projects. For example, the Irish Family History Foundation, with which Senator Labhrás Ó Murchú and others are involved, has done fantastic work. Something like 19 million records are available online through that website, but it is not complete because there seems to be parallel delivery with another organisation. We need to get to grips with those matters. What I am looking for is an overall project that eventually involves digitising all available data sets in order that we have one brand and go-to place.

This is a huge opportunity. For example, according to an article in the *Sunday Independent* some time ago, 90,000 overseas visitors came to Ireland last year to trace their roots and spent as much as €61 million. They went to all parts of Ireland, not just one. The figure of €61 million is twice the amount taken during the tall ships festival, which was a fantastic event. That puts it in context. One could have a virtual army of people employed digitising these records. We must think much bigger and think in a collective way. This may involve pay to view, while in some cases it may be free. It could employ a very large number of people for several years because there are many very good records.

There is ongoing academic work in understanding the importance of connection to geographical place. For example, research by UCD's institute for British-Irish studies suggests "that in increasingly geographically mobile and globalised societies like Ireland, a sense of place is still a strong marker of identity and central to people's knowledge and understanding of themselves and others". According to the authors of the research, which was part of an international social survey programme, "not only is identity with a place of living still very strong, but that it is deep and complex and enmeshed with a sense of belonging to the place where people grew up, the wider county and the nation". The clusters of Irish people who appear when Irish people go abroad demonstrates that this continues through the generations.

Our national archives, in addition to the census records, also hold records like the tithe applotment books, police recruitment records, some records on criminals and some landed estate records that are clues to tenant farmers. Some are in paper format while others are on microfilm and microfiche. Some can be searched online, including the Australian transportation records. Ledgers from the Probate Court can also be viewed despite the fact that the wills were destroyed. The civil registration digitisation project has been under way for many years. Again, I make the point that these data are not available online. I went into the Civil Registration Office, CRO, and asked why they are not available and why a poster was not put up stating

they could be accessed online through the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints genealogy service. I was told they could not do that because it was not the CRO's website. We are making it more difficult for people to find their connections. The National Library has a genealogy service and, obviously, that is important. The point I am making in respect of records such as those in the Valuation Office, employment records, a huge number of railway records, gravestones and cemeteries is that the situation is so fragmented that it is incredibly difficult to do a complete search. I did it myself and it took me years. We can make it much easier.

I am concerned about how the new privacy bill may exclude people doing genuine searches. One might get a list and not be able to see the names on it except for the name being searched for. We must not make it more difficult for people who have a genuine reason to do searches. It relates to the Data Protection Act. I would like to see something like an ISO 9000 arrangement because there is a lot of rubbish on websites and people can get conned into handing over money. We should think very big on this. Not only are there tourism opportunities, there are also serious job possibilities in the digitisation process. When people return, spend their money and keep going back to the same place, they will engage in things like cultural tourism. This in turn will generate income to reduce people's dependence on State support. There is an opportunity that is being lost here due to the fragmentation of our records.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Deputy Paul Connaughton is sharing time with Deputy Mulherin.

Deputy Paul J. Connaughton: In Ireland, fund-raising by arts organisations is responsible for, on average, just 3% of total income. In Great Britain and Australia, that figure can be multiplied by 11, where fund-raising accounts for one third of total income. Clearly, the culture of philanthropic giving to the arts in Ireland must be promoted and encouraged and I commend the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht on a number of initiatives introduced to drive progress in this area.

Unlocking new funding from the private sector for the arts is a key proposal in the programme for Government and it is only right that the Government supports every effort to increase the level of arts funding secured through fund-raising to mirror the ratio experienced in countries such as Great Britain and Australia. The philanthropy leverage initiative introduced by the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in May of this year is designed to encourage philanthropic sponsorship and funding of the arts from private sources. Significant funding of €230,000 has been set aside for 2012 for this initiative as it aims to support projects of varying scale and art forms. The initiative is the key that can be worked to unlock funding of up to 2.5 times that allocated, generating additional funding of €805,000 for the arts in 2012. The key to the success of this initiative is the spread of projects supported. The Government aims to promote and strengthen the arts in all forms and to increase access to and participation in the arts, so great care must be taken to ensure people throughout Ireland can see the fruits of the labour supported by the philanthropy leverage initiative.

There is a danger that many of the projects will centre on the capital city, given the well-developed infrastructure already in place, but a geographic spread is imperative. I understand that, to date, groups that have benefited included Macnas in Galway, Cork Community Art Link and the Little Museum of Dublin. I also note that the recently launched Arts Council's RAISE: Building Fund-raising Capacity has identified eight key projects to be supported for two years by providing one-to-one professional support, and these are spread throughout the country and include the Galway Arts Festival, the Model Gallery in Sligo, Wexford Festival Opera and the

Gate Theatre. Groups selected had to demonstrate that they had the ambition, potential and commitment to raise more than €250,000 per annum in private investment.

The current recession has hit families and communities particularly hard. With little money and very few work opportunities, the arts is one area where people's energy can be harnessed and their creativity encouraged, but this needs greater support at community level. There is a danger that by selecting larger projects for support, smaller community arts groups will lose out, not having the necessary infrastructure in place to pursue the available funding.

Philanthropy also has the potential to be of huge benefit to local community-led arts groups, but only if their microfinance funding capabilities are matched by philanthropic giving. The culture of philanthropic giving in Ireland also has to be examined, promoted and encouraged. Too few people are aware of philanthropy. Programmes such as "The Secret Millionaire" are awakening people to the possibility of giving money for medium and long-term community projects which will improve the lives of people in their local community or region. In contrast, this is a well-established cultural norm in places such as Great Britain and Australia, where wealthy people often choose to establish a bursary for students from their home area or provide long-term finance to sustain a particular project. A culture of philanthropic giving can be promoted in Ireland and I believe that community is at the heart of this. Just as the Tidy Towns initiative harnessed the energy behind people's love for their home place, wealthy individuals could be encouraged to become part of an initiative to promote projects in their localities, be they community arts projects, sports projects or bursaries, to ease the path of a student from a particular area through college.

The philanthropic leverage initiative is one tool to be used to open avenues of funding to arts groups. The Government's efforts to increase the culture of philanthropy are a move in the right direction as we seek to harness the fund-raising capabilities of arts groups of all sizes and in all areas.

Deputy Michelle Mulherin: The Latin quotation, "*Ars longa; vita brevis*", is often rendered in English as, "Art is long; life is short". It might well mean we have limited time to reflect and make statements about the world about us that will outlast us and form a basis of understanding for future generations. Why is this important and how is it done? The quotation is particularly poignant when we talk about philanthropy. Through the arts, we not only have the language to communicate but a platform to inform and educate generations to come about who we are and what we are becoming. If we do not communicate this, someone who knows little about us and does not speak our language, the language of our times, will tell them. It is important that we speak honestly about ourselves and our experiences of our time. This we can do in an enduring way through the arts, not only for our time but for always. I, therefore, welcome any initiative proposed to fund the arts.

As chair of my local arts centre in Ballina and a witness to the hard work done to raise funds to build that centre and theatre, which we are very fortunate to have, and furnish them with modern equipment, I realise the arts need all the help they can get. Clearly, the Minister has been thinking outside the box. Recognising the economic constraints and in sympathy with the national campaign for the arts conducted by arts organisations and artists, which campaign draws attention to the pressure they are under owing to reduced arts funding, the Minister has come up with two exciting programmes. I commend him on incentivising would-be philanthropists to provide a legacy for future generations. As with the tax incentives that helped make Ireland a haven for film and create some great films on this island, and which promoted

the sector while bringing much-needed jobs and revenue to our shores, these new programmes will doubtless offer similar great possibilities. I congratulate the Minister and look forward to seeing the programmes explored to their fullest.

Deputy Robert Troy: I am pleased to have an opportunity to contribute. It is delightful to be back looking over at the Minister, Deputy Deenihan. We had a very pleasant relationship over the past 12 months.

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: The indications are it will continue with the Deputy's successor.

Deputy Robert Troy: Very good. Let me take up where I left off shortly before the summer recess, that is, on my Private Members' business on the independence of our cultural institutions. I referred at the time to the vicious attack the Minister seems to be making on these institutions. I outlined how successive Governments had maintained the arm's length principle. I had hoped the current Minister, Deputy Deenihan, would follow through on what he said in his election manifesto by maintaining the arm's length principle with regard to various cultural institutions.

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: I reserve judgment.

Deputy Robert Troy: The Minister will reserve judgment. In June 2012, the Minister indicated a decision would be made imminently, but it is now October. It is a pity no decision has been made. At the time, the Minister spoke unconvincingly and did not give this side of the House confidence that the arm's length principle would be maintained or that the individual boards would be maintained such that the various cultural institutions would retain their autonomy.

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: It was a Fianna Fáil policy.

Deputy Robert Troy: I hope I will be allowed ten minutes in which to speak. If the Minister wants to revert to me afterwards, that will be no problem, much as I like to discuss matters across the floor of the House.

Before the summer recess, I stated the National Gallery, the Irish Museum of Modern Art and the Crawford Art Gallery had made a very positive submission on shared services, stipulating, however, that each would retain its autonomy, board and director. The proposal was to share back-office resources, thus making savings. I asked the Minister to use this example when considering the rationalisation of services in the other cultural institutions. I acknowledged at the time in question that savings must be made. It is in light of this that we are here talking about philanthropy and how we can resource the arts sector. Given the financial constraints, no Minister has the resources he would like to have for the Arts Council and the various cultural bodies that do invaluable work in communities throughout the country.

The potential of the arts sector has not been reached. Investment by the Government in the arts is repaid many times over due to the multiplier effect. It is important, therefore, that we consider philanthropy. Ireland is a very generous nation. Figures show that 89% of Irish adults give to charity, compared with 58% in the United Kingdom and 40% in Germany. However, our charitable donations do not seem to go to the arts but to other causes, such as addressing the consequences of natural disasters, and to those who are less well off than ourselves. Therefore, we must consider how best to encourage businesses and wealthy individuals to invest in the arts sector in order that services would be prioritised and maintained.

Earlier this year, the Minister launched the philanthropy leverage initiative. It was established with funding of €230,000. It was envisaged that twice this amount would be unlocked in private sector funding, generating total funding of €805,000 for this year. The initiative was established as a pilot initiative. Will the Minister confirm whether he intends to maintain this scheme in 2013 and thereafter? How many groups have benefited from it or received allocations? Are the allocations still in the melting pot, as with the sports capital grants? What are the qualifying criteria for applicants who have applied for funding under the scheme? If the scheme is continued next year, what funding will be made available?

As a former board member of the Mullingar Arts Centre, I saw at first hand the positive impact of the arts sector on the local economy as well as its role as an educational utility for the young and old. The number of children who visit the centre every week is phenomenal. Local productions in arts centres throughout the country are encouraging.

Perhaps the Minister has clarified the next matter I wish to raise. How will the philanthropy initiative progress, what level of funding will it have and how will businesses and high net worth individuals be encouraged in practical terms to part with their money in support of arts centres? Are there concrete proposals and targets in this regard? One can only measure the success of a scheme or initiative if one has set clear and concrete targets. How much funding does the Government wish to extract from the private sector and how does it propose to do so?

Today, we received a briefing in the audio-visual room on the extensive work carried out in respect of The Gathering. It is a good project. Some of those involved have been visiting two towns in my constituency this week and last to brief local organisations, including the IFA, the GAA, chambers of commerce among others, and encourage them to support the initiative. Although The Gathering falls under the remit of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, the Minister, Deputy Deenihan, will play a leading role. Our cultural institutions will be pivotal, as returning members of the diaspora will want to visit them. I hope the Minister will have managed by then to protect the institutions' autonomy, the services they provide and their invaluable work. We will wait to see what comes out in the wash, but I hope that the Minister will have managed to protect the arm's length principle.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: I call Deputy Donohoe, who is sharing time with Deputy Corcoran Kennedy.

Deputy Paschal Donohoe: I enjoyed the opening of Deputy Troy's contribution, when he referred to the Minister's work before the summer. We have become used to amnesia being a conscious political choice by Fianna Fáil. The party tries to paint a picture of politics in government starting with this Dáil. However, a new tool has been added to its armoury, namely, selective recall. I heard Deputy Troy use the phrase "the vicious attack this Minister seems to be making on cultural institutions" and assert that we were attacking the institutions' independence. It made me believe that the Deputy was quite endowed with the kind of artistic imagination that he praised in the middle of his speech. It is entirely appropriate for any Government, be it this one or the last, at any point in its tenure to sit back and wonder what type of relationship it has with institutions that are funded by the taxpayer, whether they are still fit for purpose and whether they reflect the times. This is exactly what the Minister, Deputy Deenihan, is seeking to do.

Prior to and following the relevant Private Member's motion, I spoke to a number of the organisations involved. They had legitimate concerns and observations about what was trans-

piring, but I did not get the sense, following the debate in the House, that they believed they were under a vicious attack by the Minister or that he was pounding on their doors to remove their autonomy or power.

Deputy Robert Troy: Ask Professor Diarmaid Ferriter.

Deputy Paschal Donohoe: What the Minister is doing is entirely appropriate if we are to understand what type of relationship we want with the bodies and what choices we can make to ensure the people who are interested in the arts and who want to enjoy museums and galleries - the people the bodies seek to serve - are able to do so in future.

I am a regular visitor to one of the bodies Deputy Troy mentioned, the Irish Museum of Modern Art, IMMA, in Kilmainham. I attended Leonard Cohen's wonderful gig there two weeks ago. I had no sense that the IMMA believed that it was under siege by the Minister or that he had threatened to pull down either the institution or the autonomy it protects. I am sure the Minister will respond to this point, but I was amused by the idea that he would viciously attack any cultural body.

I have a number of specific concerns about this matter. Deputy Mulherin mentioned the value of the arts. In this time of considerable economic difficulty, the arts have never been more valuable to or appreciated by the people. I have two examples in mind. First, I agree with Deputy Troy regarding the way in which local communities, towns and villages organise to provide arts and experiences for people in their localities. There is a wonderful example in my community. A group of local Phibsborough residents have organised the Phizzfest community festival for the third year in a row. It is funded by locals and is entirely voluntary. They have gone from trying to bring a spark and vitality to their locality to devising a week-long schedule of events that featured many of the country's best artists performing in new spaces and different areas for the benefit of locals. This is an example of the important role being played by the arts.

Second, an organisation called the Complex used to be based in Smithfield. The Minister is aware of it. The Complex is an example of a body that is trying to respond to the new economic environment. It is no longer in the Smithfield premises. Instead, it finds vacant premises in the Smithfield and wider Dublin 7 area and opens new theatres and performance spaces. This is the type of activity we must support even more. The local level has imagination and dedication. I hope the Government's work on promoting philanthropic contributions will encourage the arts and allow them to flourish.

Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy: I welcome the opportunity to contribute to this debate. Having been involved in the arts in a voluntary capacity for many years, I can see at first hand their value to society, especially at local and community level. Given the enjoyment that people of all ages and abilities can derive from the arts, funding must continue. Given our current constraints, the Minister's proposal is exciting and interesting, and it is being welcomed by the arts community.

In this country we are good at many things and excellent at others, the area of artistic endeavour being one of them. We even take for granted how good we are at it. We also have an excellent capacity for giving and scope in generosity. At a time when we are at a funding crossroads, these two must meet, and the arts sector must look to develop its own place in philanthropic giving.

I looked at some figures today and it is staggering, considering the size of our country,

that €500 million is generated annually in philanthropic income, which is a significant figure. However, just 0.6% goes to the arts. With pressure on budgets for the arts, I see this as a great opportunity for big and small organisations to add fund-raising to their business model and put strategies in place to deliver on those efforts successfully. There is no denying that it will be a challenge to encourage philanthropy, and many groups will have to skill up and think outside the box. The great thing about the arts community is that it is great at that. These bodies will be well able to put themselves in a position to solicit effectively levels of funding both from individual and corporate philanthropists.

These arts bodies will also need to be in a position to articulate a very strong case for support and continue to build a relationship with funders. I am confident they will rise to the challenge and they will not be on their own in doing so. The programme for Government provides for building private support for the arts, and so I welcome the programmes being progressed by the Minister and his Department, the philanthropy leverage initiative and the Arts Council initiative entitled RAISE: Building Fund-raising Capacity. The philanthropy initiative will be terrific for those organisations which successfully obtain private funding as they will be able to obtain matching funding up to €20,000. The advantage in obtaining private funding and being topped up by the Government is marvellous.

I wish the participants of RAISE every success as it has the amazing ambition of raising €10 million in private funding over the next five years. I know much expertise exists to help them, including existing organisations such as Business to Arts, Philanthropy Ireland and the Community Foundation for Ireland, which will no doubt be a help, in addition to the private fund-raisers to be installed as mentors to organisations.

As I noted, the artistic sector is very creative and innovative. Fund It is another marvellous initiative, an online platform where philanthropic support is crowd sourced, meaning people can give as little or as much as they want to fund specific artistic activities. I look forward to attending the seminar organised by the Minister in Smock Alley, and I know many people will come from various parts of the country to it. I will encourage people to come from Birr and Tullamore. Tullamore is developing a new arts centre with the support of the local county and town council, and a significant amount of money has been raised. The Minister has given a commitment on that funding, and I look forward to supporting him in his endeavours to ensure that, contrary to previous comments, this Government is fully supporting the arts community and its work to the benefit of society.

Deputy Michael Colreavy: WB Yeats, the great Sligo poet, wrote:

Come away, O human child!

To the waters and the wild

With a faery, hand in hand,

For the world's more full of weeping than you can understand.

When he wrote "The Stolen Child", it concerned children who were born weak and passed away. He had beautiful imagery of the fairies taking the weak child to a better place from a world of weeping and trouble. Would it not be wonderful if we had W.B. Yeats today to write about the young people emigrating to the four corners of the world? These are the people we should be keeping at home, but the fairies are not taking them away. Ireland is driving them

away through her action and inaction.

Art, at its most basic, should both mirror and shape society. This country and the arts are synonymous, and throughout the world Ireland is renowned for the quality of its artists and the work produced down through the centuries to now. Whether it is in the field of music, theatre, literature or film, the Irish have punched far above their weight on the international scene. This is not just a modern phenomenon, and as far back as the Middle Ages, Irish manuscripts far surpassed anything else that had been produced in Europe at that time. Irish craft and metalwork was envied by contemporaries.

Culture and the arts have been renewed and revived through generations of Irish people, and for this we have received worldwide recognition. The arts should never be solely about money as it has the potential to bring smiles to people in pain and lift the hearts of those who are suffering. Anyone going to a traditional music session or attending a theatre to watch a play or visiting an art gallery can see the transfixed faces of others. Even if it is only for a short time, these people are taken from their daily worries and put in a place of beauty that lifts their hearts.

There are philistines who will argue that in a time of economic stringency, we cannot afford to subsidise the arts. Nevertheless, there is a strong economic argument in favour of financial support for the arts. Some of the figures I found in research surprised me. For example, the total of direct, indirect and induced employment in Arts Council funded organisations and the wider arts sector is 21,328. How much would it cost the IDA to produce 21,328 sustainable jobs in the country? The total of direct, indirect and induced employment supported by the arts and creative industries is 79,000 jobs. In 2011, direct Exchequer revenue from the cultural and creative sectors was in excess of €1 billion, and 80% of foreign tourists cite culture and heritage as a motivating factor in choosing Ireland. Moreover, 1.6 million overseas tourists attend galleries and museums and 433,000 overseas tourists attend festivals and other events.

Cultural tourism is worth more than €2 billion to the economy, so the philistines must understand that there is a very solid economic basis for this State and the Government to support the arts industry. Cultural tourism is the only growth area of the tourism market and it has continued potential for significant growth. However, funding for and investment in the arts is down by 25% from €84.6 million in 2008 to €63.2 million in 2011.

I fear that reduction in investment will have a consequential reduction in the financial benefits we receive as a nation from those who come to study our arts and culture.

To take the example of Irish music, for no reason other than it is a passion of mine, and the influence it has had on the Irish identity and the great potential it holds, there is a strong argument for investment. In my area of Sligo-Leitrim, there are the renowned traditional musicians of the past, including the late great Michael Coleman, Seamus Morrison, Ladda Beirne, Joe O'Dowd, Seamus Kelly and John McKenna, which are household names not only in this country but abroad, down to today's great exponents who are carrying on and making this tradition flourish, including Brian Rooney, the Lennon family, Seamie O'Dowd, Seamus Tansey, Kila, Dervish, Seamus Connolly and hundreds more. I will probably be in serious trouble at home because I have missed more than I have named. There are also the Emerald Revellers, the lovely dancing troupe. There are many musicians of other genres who play a valuable and important role in Irish culture and that fact is recognised throughout the world. Major artists such as Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen, whom a speaker mentioned earlier, who are world known musicians, have acknowledged the influence of Irish culture on their music and poetry.

Those who know the beauty and the value of culture, poetry and music acknowledge it, and they acknowledge the influence we have had on their own development.

To come up to date, an Irish band, U2, is one of the biggest selling bands in the world. How many U2s are waiting to be discovered and play an important role in the promotion of Ireland as a country that develops, promotes, protects and values Irish music and all forms of music?

Music also has a very important role to play in how we perceive ourselves as a people. We are probably unrivalled in the popular knowledge of folk songs that tell the story of Irish history, often from the forgotten perspective of the ordinary man and woman. Music still has a very important part to play in the development of the Irish psyche. What better way is there of giving young people a platform to express what they are going through during the current economic crisis than through the medium of music. Government fostering, rather than government control, of music in Ireland will bear fruit for generations to come.

Similarly, Irish literature is widely regarded on the world stage. The list of influential and renowned authors, poets and playwrights that this small island has produced is astounding. Perhaps most importantly, Irish writers have accurately and fluidly transcribed the feelings, beliefs and perspectives of the Irish people. William Butler Yeats could accurately describe the Irish rural idyll when he penned about a small cabin in his poem, "The Lake Isle of Innisfree". Patrick Kavanagh hit home the problems of rural isolation when he said, "O stony grey soil of Monaghan, The laugh from my love you thieved". These writers have probably done more for Ireland and its people through their writings than all the bankers and developers could ever hope to do. People like them need to be encouraged.

I started with William Butler Yeats so I will finish him. In September 1913, some people who appreciated the importance of the arts in Ireland were trying to get businessmen in Dublin and throughout the country who would help them financially to build the Hugh Lane Gallery, and they were not having much success. William Butler Yeats penned at the time the request that they not add the ha'penny to the penny and the prayer to shivering prayer. I ask the Minister not to add the ha'penny to the penny and the prayer to the shivering prayer.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Charlie McConalogue): The next speaker is Deputy Kevin Humphreys and he is sharing his time with Deputy Nash.

Deputy Kevin Humphreys: I compliment the previous speaker on his contribution. His love of the arts is evident and I say "well done". I very much appreciated his contribution. I will probably talk in the cold hard facts of cash-----

Deputy Michael Colreavy: The fiddle stuff.

Deputy Kevin Humphreys: -----rather than the beautiful arts, and in that way our contributions will balance each other.

Deputy Gerald Nash: That tells us all we need to know about the Deputy.

Deputy Kevin Humphreys: With funding from the State to the arts under extreme pressure, it is important we put in place structures to encourage people - wealthy people - to donate money to the arts. That facility must be open to everyone.

The philanthropy leverage initiative is welcome and I hope it succeeds in encouraging more donations to the arts and cultural sector. Corporate sponsorship has been a great support to the

arts and cultural organisations in Ireland over the past ten years, but the collapse of our banks and development companies has ended a major source of revenue for the arts. Alternative sources need to be found, and we should encourage the many technology and pharmaceutical companies located here to support the arts. Many new ones have opened in recent months and years and they should be encouraged to support the arts, as was previously outlined.

We have put billions of euro into the banks but what have we got in return? Some of the better pieces of art from AIB and Bank of Ireland's extensive corporate collection have been given to the State, but one item that has not been given is the building currently occupied by Bank of Ireland on College Green where our first parliament sat. As a gesture to the Irish people, the bank should gift to the people of Ireland or to the city of Dublin the building which housed Grattan's Parliament. It is a perfect location for a central library or an arts centre for the city or the country. Should we find ourselves in the position where any further State support has to be given to Bank of Ireland, it should be conditional on the College Green building being handed over to the State. We, the people of Ireland, control 15% of the shares in Bank of Ireland and I call on the Minister for Finance, through our representatives on the board, to ask for the old Irish Parliament building to be given to the State. The bank must recognise the support the people have given to keep it alive as a functioning bank.

The next issue I wish to address is the recent report from the Forum on Philanthropy and Fundraising. It set the worthy goal of increasing giving by 60% from €500 million to €800 million by 2016. However, it proposed a series of changes in tax law to encourage giving. I have a fear of tax breaks, whether they be for nursing homes or for the arts. Providing a tax relief to the wealthy in order that they give more money to worthy causes is questionable in the current climate. If someone wants to give €1 million or €20, the State should not be subsidising their personal choice to give money. That subsidy is at the expense of social services. The Government must make a decision in the common good. A private donor has a choice about to whom or to what he or she gives his or her money. The current rules on tax relief discriminate against the ordinary citizen as one must donate more than €250 to a single charity, if one is a PAYE worker, before one can claim the relief which goes to the charity. I would question any change to the current tax regime.

The report made six proposals on the fiscal and tax infrastructure but there are two about which I would have strong reservations. On the first proposal, I believe relief should be reduced to the standard rate of 20%, as I believe any tax breaks should be, and not 33% as proposed in the report. I agree that the threshold should be lowered from €250. On the second proposal to decouple relief from the high earners restriction, I believe the cap of €80,000 should be lowered, not removed or increased to €1 million. Donations should not require a public subsidy that reduces the amount of State revenue available for democratic decisions of this Parliament. The common good must always win out. Tax breaks will reduce the money we have available for hospitals, school and child care provision.

The notion of allowing companies and wealthy people to decide where their tax euro go is contrary to the democratic good. Many tax exiles decide where they will donate rather than pay taxes in the State.

I have issues with other proposals but I do not have time to go into them. At a time of austerity and reductions in spending across social services, it would be questionable to provide tax relief to millionaires to give to worthy causes of their own selection. If people want to donate their wealth, they should not need a subsidy from the taxpayer.

Deputy Gerald Nash: I am grateful for the opportunity to share my observations with the House concerning the issue of philanthropy and the arts. I know only too well from my work as a director and manager of a range of different theatre companies, arts organisations and so on that funding is an issue that never goes away and it becomes even more critical in times of national financial crisis. Arts organisations have relied on various forms of philanthropy for their existence, whether it is support from individuals, local businesses or community fund-raising initiatives. I do not, though, include, sponsorship deals with large companies for festivals or showpiece events as acts of philanthropy. That is not the way they should be viewed. As welcome as such sponsorship is, companies do well out of these contributions and we often undervalue the positive exposure our arts events can bring to them.

A number of wealthy individuals have contributed to the arts. Some have done so publicly while others have chosen to do so privately. Such donations tend to be *ad hoc* and they are often for short-term or once-off high profile events. According to the Arts Council, fund-raising comprises only 3% of the income for arts organisations. While I suspect this figure does not take account of the many smaller local organisations across the country, it still compares poorly to other countries such as the UK or Australia, where they secure up to one third of their income through fund-raising. The *ad hoc* approach to Irish donations is a weakness correctly identified in the recent forum on philanthropy report, which aims to improve the rate of overall philanthropic support to approximately 60% over four years. This will be achieved by encouraging a more structured scheme of regular planned donations over a period similar to the scheme operated in the UK. Such schemes can be of huge benefit to the arts where in recent years uncertainty has crept in over budgets leading to a difficulty in formulating long-term production plans, which can be a constant drag on the development and creativity of production companies.

The recently launched Arts Council's RAISE: Building Fundraising Capacity pilot scheme, together with the philanthropy leverage initiative, will be of immense value. I hope the smaller grassroots organisations will also be catered for through this initiative. All participants and all artistic and cultural pursuits tend to be generated from the grassroots up. No actor gets his first role on the stage of the Abbey Theatre and no musician performs his or her first concert in the National Concert Hall. Small organisations will have the opportunity to draw down €5,000 from the State if they can raise €10,000 in private funds. Both these initiatives are welcome and I hope and believe they will be successful.

However, I sound a note of warning to the Minister and to the House. Increased funding from private sources should never serve as a fig leaf for a phased withdrawal of State support, which is critical. Such a return to the Victorian notion of private charity and patronage to the arts would be disastrous for cultural initiatives and the development of cultural pursuits in the State. I am sure none of us would want such a scenario. The State plays an important role in the provision of arts services at local authority and Arts Council level and through funding by the Minister's Department. It is important that the State continues to articulate our identity and our unique sense of ourselves through support for the arts.

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: I made that clear in my contribution.

Deputy Gerald Nash: I am glad the Minister has taken the opportunity to reiterate his support and the support of the Government for centrally funded supports for the arts going forward.

Deputy Mattie McGrath: I am also pleased to contribute to this discussion. I welcome the Minister and compliment him on his interest in this area. He has for a long time demonstrated

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great interest and support for the arts. One Government backbencher said some people thought the Government would attack the arts. We are living in difficult times and there is always time for assessment, with value for money never being more important than it is now. It is only right and proper that we would review the position. The Minister has launched a number of initiatives and he has given more than €63 million to the Arts Council this year. He also launched a two-year pilot project recently, the Arts Council's RAISE: Building Fundraising Capacity, which is a second important development in philanthropic support for the arts.

The arts is a broad term and gives expression to many different forms of culture and preservation of our culture. I compliment the various groups, individuals and promoters of arts festivals throughout the country who have given a great bang for their buck over the years. I also compliment the arts officers, including Sally O'Leary and Melanie Scott, in my own county for the work they have done over the years, as they ploughed a lone furrow.

I refer to Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, CCE, and Fleadh Ceol na hÉireann, which gives great expression to music, song and dance. I visited the event in Cavan earlier this year and I was very impressed. I am delighted some of my own family achieved an all-Ireland win in set dancing. I saw a report on RTE's "Nationwide" programme presented by Mary Kennedy about the arts events taking place in tandem with the fleadh before I attended. I visited the various artistic events and it was amazing. I acknowledge it is the third year the fleadh has been held in Cavan and the county manager is supportive of the event but this is a new concept. We had the fleadh in Clonmel three years in a row more than a decade ago. The fleadh generates €30 million for the economy and it is right to embrace the wider arts. There is a vibrant arts officer in Cavan and she brought in more people involved in different forms of the arts such as live art and modern art, which was viewable in churches and other grounds and outdoor exhibitions. It was wonderful and these events will continue when the fleadh takes place in Derry next year. I wish those involved great success as it will the first year the fleadh will be held across the Border in the 60 years of its existence.

Senator Labhrás Ó Murchú is director general of CCE and I must compliment his wife, Úna Bean Uí Mhurchú, for the work she has done in the Brú Ború cultural centre in Caiseal Muman, Contae Thiobraid Árann. Gach samhradh, tá rince, ceol agus craic agus baineann a lán daoine an taitneamh as an chomhluadar sin. Many foreign groups visit the centre and the Brú Ború group has travelled the world and done tremendous work abroad on behalf of Irish culture, heritage and tourism. We were at a presentation about The Gathering in the Leinster House audiovisual room. I encourage co-operation with Ceoltas and other groups throughout the country that have done so much. They should be facilitated by the Government and others in assisting with The Gathering. They have the contacts and the appeal of shows such as Riverdance.

The Brú Ború Cultural Centre has a wonderful archive operating on a shoestring budget, with assistance from FÁS. It is the vision of Úna Bean Uí Mhurchú and has done tremendous work in preserving the archive and much of our folklore, history, family names and traditions in Tipperary and beyond. I hope it will be embraced in the National Archives. Painstaking work has been done over the course of two decades by students who seek careers as archivists. They have not received the recognition they deserve.

Business to Arts and Philanthropy Ireland must work together to get value for money. I have no hangups about people of wealth or business people engaging in philanthropy. As a small-time organiser involved in boards and initiatives in my community, I have often approached business people - without discussion about philanthropy - and asked upfront for donations.

This may have been to help a naíonra, a gaelcholáiste, an arts festival or a community festival. They always gave the money up front and willingly. Many of them did not want their names to be known or did not want to benefit from sponsorship.

The Minister has another problem with the sponsorship by drink companies in the area that the former Minister of State, Deputy Shortall, worked. The companies get bang for their buck but we cannot close the door on it. Sporting organisations and other groups cannot be left to swing and told that we have changed and moved on. This must be dealt with delicately and we must also deal with the multiples in the way they sell and market drink. The drinks companies have given good value for money to community groups and national sporting organisations.

Compared to our nearest neighbours, Irish people are very generous. We have become more generous since the recession. We have a proud record of being missionary people all over the world. With the proper education and encouragement, we will give more to the arts. People recognise this as a valuable part of our heritage, ár dúchas. I compliment South Tipperary County Council on its involvement in projects before and during the Celtic tiger. The per cent for arts scheme was very good but I am disappointed with the reaction of the Minister for Justice and Equality to the fact that so many artistic features have been attacked, stripped down and melted for scrap. Many Members on the Government benches supported my Bill to deal with this but there is no sign of a Government Bill to address the point. Our arts, our artistic features, our heritage and our protected buildings are under attack. These are all part of the artistic scene. Not only is it a savage blow to the artists who created features, in many cases plebiscites had been held to decide on the artistic feature. There is great interest from artists, who make submissions on what artistic feature should be chosen. After they are commissioned, completed and unveiled, for them to be violently taken down in the matter of minutes with machinery, then taken away, melted and sold with no traceability is an appalling attack and a shame. It undoes the good work of the per cent for art scheme and has a devastating affect on the artist. In County Laois, a memorial for young people who had been killed in the community was attacked by cowardly gangsters, who have respect for neither man nor beast. They destroyed this feature and melted it down for sheer naked greed.

It is timely to have statements today but we would not have had the debate but for the flight of the earls on the Government jet to Brussels. The Government jet could not take them all so they had to fly on Aer Lingus. I wish them a speedy trip and a safe journey back but it is an ill wind that blows no good.

Deputy David Stanton: I am pleased to contribute to this topic and I congratulate the Minister on his work in the area. I consulted the Philanthropy Ireland website and came across a nice definition:

Philanthropy is a particular kind of charitable giving. It is focused on the root causes of problems and making a sustainable improvement, as distinct from contributing to immediate relief. Philanthropy is not the exclusive preserve of very wealthy people [which is important]. Money is given with a degree of reflection and a clear purpose.

That is a useful definition. What do we mean when we talk about the arts and putting philanthropy and the arts together? When we think about the arts we think about visual art, such as photography, paintings and sculpture, and the literary arts, such as poetry, novels and short stories, and the performing arts, such as music, dance, mime, theatre, opera and film. It is creative. One definition described it as being food for the soul, which is a nice way of describing

the arts. The previous speaker referred to bronze sculptures being stolen. Such sculptures are put there for a purpose and are very often beautiful. Art entertains us and challenges us and we enjoy it. It is food for the soul in many ways.

Artistic people are creative and they give of their time and talent to put in place the arts. Trying to marry philanthropy, the practice of charitable giving and getting people to donate, and art is very important. The Minister said that Ireland is one of the great philanthropic countries but I do not agree. The Ireland Funds says that, although philanthropy has grown rapidly in the past decade, it is still in its infancy here. We can compare giving in Ireland to giving in other countries, such as the United States, where there are over 1 million public charities and where three out of four people donate, 16 million people sit on non-profit boards and 65 million people volunteer regularly. Some \$300 billion was given to charity last year. There is a tradition and culture of charitable foundations in the United States. It has some 101,000 foundations, compared to 9,000 in the UK and 26 in Ireland. The scale of population is different but the Minister may agree we have a long way to go.

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: We must also consider that the St. Vincent de Paul and other organisations are included in philanthropy.

Deputy David Stanton: Of course, but we have a long way to go in this matter. The Forum on Philanthropy and Fundraising brought up interesting suggestions, which other colleagues mentioned. I am particularly interested in its fiscal and infrastructure recommendation in its report, which referred to charities regulation: “The Charities Act of 2009 should be speedily implemented, with the establishment of the Regulator on an administrative basis, supported by an implementation forum drawn from the sector and relevant professions.” That should be done speedily. People in the sector are concerned about the lack of regulation. The Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality, which I chair, has called for submissions from interested groups, organisations and individuals on how this might be done. The committee intends to do a piece of work on the regulation of charities. We do not want to see bogus charities collecting money, with no accountability or governance.

Philanthropy Ireland, which has a section on arts and culture, says, “arts and culture form part of the fabric of Irish society”. It goes on to say how many organisations, as well as individual artists and cultural practitioners, make up the arts and culture sector. Most cultural organisations can be classified as small and medium-sized enterprises and have fewer than ten full-time employees. Philanthropy Ireland maintains that the area is fragmented by nature. It gives an example of an organisation called Business to Arts, which can be consulted independently without cost by people who want to make a philanthropic gift.

A previous speaker said he had a passion for Irish music. If we feel passionate about something, we are inclined to give to it. Philanthropy Ireland maintains that the majority of arts and culture donors invest in their passions. They engage with and invest in cultural organisations that have had an impact on their lives. These cultural organisations are clear about their purpose, mission, vision and values and have been successful in connecting with their audiences and investors. Philanthropy Ireland goes on to talk about the importance of sound governance, accountability and transparency in these organisations.

That is why the regulation of charities is important and is something we should move on quickly, if we can. The Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality is seeking submissions on this area. We are interested in all charities, and not only those that donate to the

arts. There are numerous charities in the country.

There is a need to increase awareness of the arts in schools, youth organisations and society. Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann has a vibrant group in Youghal. I know Deputy McLellan will agree with me in this. I attended an event by the group during the summer and was impressed by the delight, joy and pride in the eyes of the young people as they performed. One could not but be swept up by their enthusiasm and by the pleasure of the audience. Those young people have a gift for life. When our young people become involved in any form of art, we are passing on a gift to them. That is why it is important to encourage the arts, and awareness of the arts, in schools and youth organisations. Art is food for the soul.

Young people can spend much of their time on the Internet and playing computer games. Involvement in the arts gives them a richness and value that is far better than that. Of course, artistic talent is valued and sought in the area of computers and gaming. Creativity is important there too.

I congratulate the Minister on the work he is doing. I hope his initiatives in this area go well. Perhaps, in 12 months time he will report to the House on how his initiatives have worked out.

Deputy Seamus Kirk: I am glad to have an opportunity to make a short contribution to these statements on philanthropy and the arts. Philanthropy has had a positive effect on arts and culture in Ireland.

George Bernard Shaw said, "I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the community and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can". This is what philanthropy is all about. It is an opportunity to help people and organisations and to develop community and charity work.

In recent weeks, Mr. Chuck Feeney was awarded honorary degrees by the universities of Ireland in recognition of his philanthropic nature and his generous donations to Irish institutions. Since 1982, Mr. Feeney's organisation, Atlantic Philanthropies, has donated almost €800 million to Irish universities, funding a wide range of facilities, from college buildings to research projects in science, engineering, medicine, technology, business and law. The 81 year old New Jersey born Irish American is one of the world's greatest philanthropists. Since its foundation in 1982, Atlantic Philanthropies has given grants of about €5 billion.

Last June, a Fianna Fáil motion before the House endorsed the positive contribution a thriving arts and culture sector makes to Irish society. The motion acknowledged the value of our cultural heritage and recognised the impact on the economy and jobs of our wider arts sector, contributing €4.7 billion to the economy and directly and indirectly supporting 79,000 jobs. It noted that between 2005 and 2010 alone, more than €1.1 billion was invested in the sector and highlighted that these funds facilitated a transformation in our national, regional and community arts and cultural infrastructure, performance venues and film and television production capacity.

Philanthropy Ireland describes philanthropy as a particular kind of charitable giving. It is focused on the root causes of problems and on making a sustainable improvement, as distinct from contributing to immediate relief. Philanthropy for arts and culture is underdeveloped in Ireland compared with other sectors and with other countries, especially the United States. While we have a deserved reputation for charitable giving, it tends to be in the area of crises and emergencies. Notwithstanding the recession, charitable donations increased by almost a

quarter between 2009 and 2010.

Ireland's contribution to charitable donations is high. According to figures released last year, 89% of Irish adults give to charity, compared with 58% in the UK and 40% in Germany. However, Irish business lags well behind businesses in other states in targeted philanthropy. Just 0.1% of the profits of Ireland's top 500 companies makes it way to the philanthropic territory.

Recently, there have been stronger links between social entrepreneurship and philanthropy. There is a need for these ideas to work together. The aim is to promote social enterprise. I hope the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation will develop this model further which will create a demand for jobs in Ireland.

Social entrepreneurs are unreasonable people. They are the mavericks who refuse to accept the *status quo*. They look at the world, are dissatisfied with what they see, and resolve to change it. They are both dreamers and doers; imagining a brighter future and setting about turning that dream into a reality. They are true entrepreneurs; innovators who are passionate and resourceful, who are prepared to take risks and who apply their energy, drive and ambition to effecting social change in Ireland.

That statement was made by Social Entrepreneurs Ireland and it highlights the need to promote and encourage social enterprise as well as promoting philanthropy in Ireland. How can we push social entrepreneurship further? We need further communication with all stakeholders. The position of social entrepreneurship needs to be at the forefront of Government policy. Procurement issues may be analysed to get the best practice and costing for social entrepreneurs in Ireland. There needs to be further support from the Government for social enterprise and there needs to be an alignment of social entrepreneurship moving towards the stewardship of the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, with an increase in linkages and support and a sense that the social entrepreneurship sector has the potential to grow and prosper.

With the right perception and growth in support networks from Government and stakeholders alike, social entrepreneurship can act as a barometer for employment, improve aspects of the community and reinforce social entrepreneurship aims of working towards achieving a social goal. Ireland's positioning is vital to enhance and embrace social entrepreneurship and with the right supports for agencies such as Social Entrepreneurs Ireland and Clann Credo from Government Departments there might be a chance to grow the sector, so Ireland can be seen as at the forefront of social enterprise and, potentially, could provide a learning curve for other countries to follow.

Message from Seanad

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Seanad Éireann has passed the Thirty-First Amendment of the Constitution (Children) Bill 2012 without amendment.

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I move:

That notwithstanding anything in Standing Orders or the Order of the Dáil of 27 September 2012, No. *a*13 on the Supplementary Order Paper shall be taken now and shall be taken and decided without debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Address by President of the Euoprean Parliament: Motion

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I move:

“That, notwithstanding anything in Standing Orders, or the Order of the Dáil of 27th September 2012, the speaking arrangements for the sitting of Dáil Éireann in Committee tomorrow, at which H.E. Mr. Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament, shall be invited to address the Committee of the whole Dáil, shall be as follows:

- (a) the Ceann Comhairle shall make a statement welcoming the President;
- (b) the Taoiseach shall be called upon to make a statement which shall not exceed 15 minutes;
- (c) President Schulz shall be called upon to deliver an address which shall not exceed 15 minutes;
- (d) the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade shall be called upon to make a statement which shall not exceed 15 minutes;
- (e) the leaders of Fianna Fáil, Sinn Féin and the Technical Group, or a person nominated in their stead, who shall be called upon in that order, shall make a statement which shall not exceed ten minutes in each case, and such Members may share their time;
- (f) the Minister of State with responsibility for European Affairs, Deputy Lucinda Creighton, shall be called upon to make a statement in reply which shall not exceed ten minutes; and the sitting shall be suspended at 12 noon, or on the conclusion of the statement by the Minister of State, whichever is the earlier, for 30 minutes, whereupon the ordinary routine of business shall recommence with Leaders’ Questions.”

Question put and agreed.

Addiction Services: Motion (Resumed) [Private Members]

The following motion was moved by Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan on Tuesday, 2 October 2012:

That Dáil Éireann:

recognises:

- the scale of the problem of addiction throughout Ireland and the increasing demands on services;

- that poly-drug use has increased significantly due to the increase in the accessibility and range of dangerous substances, both illegal and unregulated;

- the increased risk to individuals using substances and lethal combinations of substances with respect to overdose, fatality and long-term ill health;

- the numbers of drug and alcohol related deaths each year are more than twice that of the numbers of deaths on our roads;

- the strong association between drug-alcohol abuse and suicide, and also accidental death;

- the increased use of technology in accessing harmful substances;

- the continuous on-street dealing in disadvantaged communities, the levels of intimidation and fear because of violence by drug gangs and the increased availability of firearms;

- that alcohol has been identified as a contributory factor in 90% of public order offences as recorded under the police using leading systems effectively, PULSE, system and alcohol related crime costs the Irish State almost €1.2 billion a year;

- that alcohol and drug related illness costs the health system a further €1.2 billion yearly;

- the link between economic and social disadvantage, including early school leaving, unemployment, housing conditions and problem drug-alcohol addiction and crime;

- the increase in the number of children with need for child protection because of families' problems with drug and alcohol addiction;

- the links between mental health, homelessness and addiction; and

- the unacceptable levels of drug abuse in our prisons and the increasing emergence of 'process' addictions in gambling, food, sex, Internet usage and other compulsive behaviours;

acknowledges:

- the work of the drugs task forces, the partnership model, the pillars of treatment and rehabilitation, supply control, prevention and research and family support;

- the work and commitment of the young people's facilities and services fund in targeting those most at risk of drug abuse in funding services and facilities in many areas, particularly to those most vulnerable;

- the work of the Dublin north inner city community policing forum as an example of best practice in collaborative work between the communities, local author-

ity and Garda to resolve local drug related and anti-social behaviour issues;

— the work of the various groups, Departments and agencies, the community and voluntary sectors and others in producing the national substance misuse strategy report;

— the work of the community and voluntary sectors and the projects in engaging those in addiction and in recovery from addiction in services;

— the work of fellowships and 12 step programmes for those in addiction and those affected by the addiction of a loved one; and

— the improvement in best practice and the range of treatment, rehabilitation and recovery for those in addiction; and

calls on the Government to:

— prioritise addiction as a health issue and not primarily as a criminal issue and ensure the necessary allocation of resources;

— continue to support and enhance the local, regional and national structures of the drugs strategy and drugs task forces involving community, voluntary and statutory services in the co-ordinated delivery of responses at individual, family and community level to the benefit of those most affected by problems of addiction;

— improve supports for those high risk lower socioeconomic populations experiencing underlying social disadvantage leading to addiction problems, and in particular to improve supports in areas of health care, education, housing and employment opportunities;

— improve care planning and case management for individuals in addiction treatment, rehabilitation and recovery, as envisaged by successive national drugs strategies;

— increase the availability and affordability of residential rehabilitation, including non-abstinence based options and respite for highly vulnerable individuals in addiction, particularly young people under 18 years of age, mothers of young children, individuals affected by mental health issues and homeless individuals;

— introduce legislation to deal with Internet sourcing and accessing of drugs, to apply the harmonised EU definitions of a medicinal product to a new psychoactive substance so that national medicines agencies can prohibit its unauthorised importation, marketing or distribution;

— provide clear oversight and leadership so as to ensure the implementation of the national substance misuse report, including minimum alcohol pricing, reduction in alcohol advertising and sponsorship, greater health promotion programmes to the entire population on the dangers of alcohol misuse and abuse and to indicate a time-frame for implementing the recommendations of the report;

— ensure that, while acknowledging the stabilising effect of methadone, it is seen as part of the treatment process and not a stand-alone treatment;

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— implement the review of the methadone treatment protocol, ensuring timely availability of access to treatment through primary health care;

— fully implement the hepatitis C strategy in the areas of surveillance, prevention, screening and laboratory testing and treatment, particularly affecting injecting drug users;

— open the debate on decriminalisation of illegal drugs and safer consumption;

— make available the assets of drug related crime through the Criminal Assets Bureau to counter the negative impacts of drug related crime and to be used in support of communities in tackling drug-alcohol abuse and misuse;

— refrain from further cuts to the services provided by the community and voluntary sectors for those in addiction and continue to support the special community employment, CE, schemes for those in drug rehabilitation;

— ensure that the ring-fenced betting taxes, proposed to be re-invested in the racing industry, includes a contribution to resourcing programmes addressing gambling addiction;

— integrate mental health services with addiction services in responding to dual diagnosis of individuals, affected by substance misuse, experiencing mental health difficulties in recognition of previous recommendations of the national advisory committee on drugs;

— demand that prison programmes provide, at a minimum, parity of esteem with community programmes with respect to addiction services to minimise harm to individuals in prison and that integration of prisoner release dates with community-based programmes is improved to lessen the harm done to individuals with addiction histories resulting in unco-ordinated release; and

— promote innovative programmes that will support mental health and addiction issues such as mindfulness and applied suicide intervention support training, ASIST.

Debate resumed on amendment No. 1:

To delete all words after “Dáil Éireann” and substitute the following:

“recognises:

— the scale of the problem of addiction throughout Ireland and the increasing demands on services;

— that poly-drug use has increased significantly due to the increase in the accessibility and range of dangerous substances, both illegal and unregulated;

— the increased risk to individuals using substances and lethal combinations of substances with respect to overdose, fatality and long-term ill health;

— the numbers of drug and alcohol related deaths each year are more than twice that of the numbers of deaths on our roads;

— the strong association between drug/alcohol abuse and suicide, and also accidental death;

— the increased use of technology in accessing harmful substances;

— the continuous on-street dealing in disadvantaged communities, the levels of intimidation and fear because of violence by drug gangs and the availability of firearms;

— that alcohol has been identified as a contributory factor in 90% of public order offences as recorded under the Police Using Leading Systems Effectively (PULSE) system and alcohol related crime costs the State almost €1.2 billion a year;

— that alcohol and drug related illness costs the health system a further €1.2 billion yearly;

— the link between economic and social disadvantage, including early school leaving, unemployment, housing conditions and problem drug/alcohol addiction and crime;

— the number of children with need for child protection because of families' problems with drug and alcohol addiction;

— the links between mental health, homelessness and addiction; and

— the unacceptable levels of drug abuse in our prisons;

acknowledges:

— the work of the statutory, voluntary and community sectors, the partnership model, the pillars of treatment and rehabilitation, supply control, prevention and research and family support;

— the role of the Young People's Facilities and Services Fund in targeting those most at risk of drug abuse in funding services and facilities in many areas, particularly to those most vulnerable;

— the work of the Community Policing Forums in promoting collaborative work between the communities, local authorities and Gardaí to resolve local drug related and antisocial behaviour issues;

— the work of the various groups, government departments and agencies, the community and voluntary sectors and others in producing the National Substance Misuse Strategy Report;

— the work of the community and voluntary sectors in engaging those in addiction and in recovery from addiction in services; and

— the improvement in best practice and the range of treatment, rehabilitation and recovery for those in addiction; and supports the Government in its determination to tackle the issue of substance misuse and addiction through:

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- continuing to support local, regional and national structures of the National Drugs Strategy involving community, voluntary and statutory services in the coordinated delivery of responses at individual, family and community level to the benefit of those most affected by problems of addiction;
- taking measures to strengthen the effectiveness of Drugs Task Forces;
- taking progressive measures, such as expanding the provision of needle exchange services around the country;
- continuing to implement the Irish Prison Service's Drugs Policy and Strategy, 'Keeping Drugs out of Prison', to develop drug treatment services and enhance supply reduction measures across the State's prisons;
- supporting the continued efforts of An Garda Síochána in tackling organised crime and those involved in drug dealing at local level in our communities; and
- its intention to bring forward a co-ordinated National Substance Misuse Strategy."

-(Minister of State at the Department of Health, Deputy Alex White).

Deputy Brian Stanley: First, I compliment the Technical Group for bringing forward this motion. It is timely, as a new Minister of State has been appointed. I offer him comhghairdeas and wish him well in his new position. He has responsibility for the implementation of the national drugs strategy. I hope he gives it more attention than some of his predecessors, who did not give it sufficient attention.

Drug use is, first and foremost, a problem for the individual user. Most drug use is dealt with privately. Some people go on to lead long, healthy and productive lives but, sadly, for many others this is not the case. Unfortunately, we have a drugs problem in many communities again. It becomes a problem or the problem is compounded as a result of high unemployment, poor housing conditions, low level of secondary education completion, the availability of a wide range of drugs in the community, drug related intimidation and criminal activity. We accept there are no easy answers for tackling the drugs crisis, but experience shows that the responses we develop to tackle communities' drugs problems must be holistic, integrated and partnership based. The approach must be community based and involve the people most affected by the problem in finding solutions that work for their communities. They must be adequately resourced.

If we understand that communities' drugs problems developed from an array of problems and other socioeconomic issues, the responses to the drugs crisis must also work to strengthen communities in tackling these related problems. It is imperative that the problems in local areas are responded to through the involvement of those most affected, that is, the drug users, their families and their communities. The core of previous successes was the partnership approach. This has been eroded by the budget cuts last year and the disengagement on the part of Government Departments and some of the statutory agencies.

The State was to the fore in its approach to tackling the drugs crisis in the 1990s. I give credit to the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, Deputy Pat Rab-

bitte who, as Minister of State in 1996, published his report which led to the first national drugs strategy. He put structures in place that were rooted in the communities most affected and which had links through to the Department of the Taoiseach. The approach was globally unique - a Minister of State with responsibility for the national drugs strategy and local drugs task forces developing strategies and accessing funding from the national drugs strategy team. Unfortunately for local communities, in recent years the drugs crisis has slipped down the Government's agenda and has become an afterthought in the programme for Government, with services and resources cut back to the bone in many cases. Whole communities have been abandoned, like in the 1980s and 1990s. It is vital that the Minister re-prioritises the drugs crisis and I appeal to him to do so.

The evidence is clear. There is an increased level in gangland crime. So far this year the number of people shot dead exceeds by two the figure for all of 2011. Within the last couple of weeks the violence has reached my constituency of County Laois with the shooting of Gerard Eglington in Portarlinton on 25 September. He was shot dead in front of two young children. A measured and mature response is required, not the hysterical response one sees from some people and to which we have grown accustomed in the past. The Garda, drugs services and communities need resources urgently, but all the Minister and the Government have offered is reviews and cuts. We do not want excuses; this must be resourced now.

The cut in public spending between 2008 and 2012 is 2.82%, but the budget for drugs initiatives was slashed by 29%. This has put enormous strains on drugs services. More people are presenting with poly-drug use, yet there are fewer services and resources to respond to this. My constituency of Laois-Offaly is part of the midland regional drugs task force. Its funding has been cut from €1.07 million in 2010 to €870,000 this year. More cuts are expected next year. The cuts should be reversed with immediate effect. They do not even make economic sense because everybody knows this problem has a huge economic cost. For maximum benefit, this funding must not be spread across whole regions because there are pockets that are more affected than others. It must be directed to the communities where there is the greatest need.

The Minister of State's predecessor, Deputy Róisín Shortall, reviewed the structures of the local and regional drugs task forces. The review appears to be hidden somewhere in the Department. The time for reviews is long past. We must see the report. Sinn Féin will continue to work with communities and continue to highlight in fora such as this House the drugs crisis and the problems it is causing. Communities are demanding a response from the Minister of State, Deputy White, and the Government.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: I commend Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan and the other Deputies who brought forward this comprehensive motion on the serious but neglected issue of drug addiction in this country. I recall and pay tribute to the courageous efforts of our deceased colleague, former Deputy Tony Gregory, to address this scourge in his community. They were, and are, rightly acclaimed. I agree with the call in the motion to prioritise addiction as a health issue, not primarily as a criminal issue, and to ensure the necessary allocation of resources.

Experience shows that economic recessions are usually followed by a drugs crisis. It is therefore essential that the Government makes a significant investment in the fight against drugs. It is economically prudent to do so. In fact, it cannot afford to not do so. Failure to properly invest in and fully implement a comprehensive drugs strategy gives rise to mammoth costs for the Exchequer. The drugs crisis incurs huge costs, including for prison places, crime fighting and accident and emergency departments, not to mention the human cost to individuals,

families, communities and society.

In 2009, Sinn Féin launched its priorities for the national drugs strategy for 2009 to 2016. We believe they are still very relevant today. Cuts in funding to local and regional drugs task forces which have taken place in recent years are nothing short of a disgrace and an abandonment of the State's duties to its citizens. These task forces are the front line in the battle against drugs. They have been abandoned by the State in the face of increased intimidation from drug peddlers peddling new and ever more addictive drugs.

The main priority in any approach to tackling drugs must focus on early intervention and prevention. The communities and families at risk from drugs are easily identifiable, and this is where resources must be targeted. Approximately €14 million were seized under the proceeds of crime legislation between 2006 and 2010. We have asked the Government on numerous occasions to retain this money for community development purposes. This is the money taken from drug dealers and criminals who are profiting from the communities they are decimating. It is Sinn Féin's view that this money should be set aside for the communities that have been worst affected by the drugs trade, for example, for use as a funding mechanism for the local drugs task force to undertake short to medium-term projects. The Government has cut community funding in general but the current legislation allows for all money collected by the Criminal Assets Bureau to be returned to the Exchequer in accordance with the provisions of the Proceeds of Crime Acts 1996 and 2005. The funds are then paid into the Government Central Fund, from which the Government draws its expenditure. I appeal to the Minister of State at the Department of Health, whom I wish well in his new responsibilities, for the Government to show the political will to fund these much-needed community organisations. It could be done very easily by amending the Proceeds of Crime Acts. It is a step we in Sinn Féin would not only welcome but enthusiastically support.

I reaffirm Sinn Féin's call on the Government to introduce this mechanism to fund local drugs task forces and community groups which are at the coalface of dealing with the scourge presented by the drugs epidemic in these communities.

Deputy Derek Keating: I also congratulate the new Minister of State. This is his second day in the job but he has already taken business in the House three times. He has hit the ground running.

I support many of the ideas outlined in the motion but I am concerned and shocked that a message would go out from the Dáil that there are Members who wish to discuss the decriminalisation of illegal drugs. I am concerned that people for whom I have huge regard, including Deputies Maureen O'Sullivan, Finian McGrath, Mattie McGrath, Shane Ross, Stephen Donnelly, John Halligan and Seamus Healy, would subscribe to a message that would be sent out from Dáil Éireann telling the people that we wish to discuss the decriminalisation of drugs. It is a bad message to open the debate on the decriminalisation of illegal drugs and safe consumption. We must think about the message we are sending out. The Criminal Justice Act 1994 is clear. It carries a sentence of up to seven years if a person uses such substances and, more importantly, drug trafficking carries an even heavier sentence, up to life imprisonment, and rightly so.

I recognise the scale of the problem, as referred to in the Government amendment, including polydrug use and the strong association between drug and alcohol abuse and self-harm and suicide. I support the drugs strategy involving community and voluntary groups to provide a more co-ordinated response to individuals, families and the community. The reality is that soci-

ety is being devastated and steered in a particular way by drug lords and international gangs, as well as local thugs, for profit on the backs of young, vulnerable people and communities at risk. If we look at the root cause of addiction to illegal drugs, the State faces a greater threat from drug lords, locally and internationally, than from terrorists. In 2012, there have been significant seizures of illegal drugs, including cocaine, heroin and ecstasy, with a street value of millions of euro. These have been confiscated by the Garda to prevent Ireland becoming a gateway to Europe, including a seizure valued at €800,000 which the Garda is satisfied was destined for the Irish market. What do the Garda, communities and those working in a voluntary capacity think about the message we are sending out by wishing to discuss the decriminalisation of illegal drugs and their safe consumption?

We in this House from all parties and across the political divide must unite and send the clearest possible message that there will be no legalising in any of our communities of illegal drugs as proscribed by the Minister for Justice and Law Reform. The devastation they have caused in families and to personal health, in many cases leading to murder, has had a generational effect in many parts of the country. There was a time when the use of illegal drugs was restricted to particular areas, mostly in Dublin. Now, however, this problem is being experienced in every parish, village, town and city in Ireland.

I would like to spend more time on this but I will conclude by saying I spent the past 35 years of my life working in the voluntary sector with youth groups, sporting organisations and youth clubs. What message are we sending to the soccer, Gaelic and boxing clubs, youth groups, and those who mark pitches and put up nets, raise funds and even hold cake sales to help provide services and facilities for young people? We need to send out a clear message that Dáil Éireann is resolved not to legalise illegal drugs. That message must go out tonight and that is why I am calling, even at this late stage, with an hour left in this debate, for all Members to consider the message that will go out from that one element of this Private Members' motion.

Deputy Paul J. Connaughton: I also wish the new Minister of State the best of luck in his new job. I welcome the motion on the basis that it will open up a much wider debate and allow more people to express their opinions. Tackling Ireland's drugs problem requires a multifaceted approach. While some aspects of the current system simply do not work, much good work is being done at community level in programmes that discourage young people from taking drugs and point to the dangers of excessive alcohol use. Recent months have seen substantial hauls of illegal drugs, especially of cannabis. The large supply chain reflects a significant demand, and it is only through tackling demand, targeting resources and imposing stricter penalties for supplying that Ireland will get to grips with this issue.

I am open to any debate on drugs, but before we talk about the problems, we should try to come up with solutions. I do not believe, however, in legalising drugs. I come from a youth work background and I know we cannot continue to pretend the current strategy is working, because it is not. Drugs exist and continue to get into this country and to be abused in a way that is unacceptable.

The motion calls on the Government to prioritise addiction as a health issue, to continue to support local and regional drugs strategies, improve support for socially disadvantaged people at greatest risk of addiction, introduce legislation to deal with the Internet sourcing of and access to drugs, and promote innovative programmes such as ASIST and Mindfulness that deal with mental health and addiction issues. All those are worthy ideals.

The scale of addiction in Ireland is great and the main drug causing devastation in Irish families is alcohol. The number of drug and alcohol related deaths each year is more than twice the number of deaths on the roads. Hundreds of children are in care because of their families' problems with drug and alcohol addiction. Alcohol is a significant factor in a number of suicides, and self-harm is responsible for huge numbers of assaults and public order incidents. The figures go on and on. Alcohol increases the risks of more than 60 medical conditions such as cancer and is associated with large numbers of acute hospital beds being occupied every night. A quarter of injuries presenting to emergency departments are related to drug and alcohol abuse.

In recent years, Ireland has seen a huge reduction in the carnage on the roads. Road deaths decreased from 411 in 2001 to 186 last year. The success of the strategy employed in tackling road deaths must be examined and used in the fight against drugs. While enforcement of legislation played a key role in the fight to create safer roads, a sea-change in the driving culture was a key element in that success. Effecting a cultural change is particularly difficult and, for road deaths, it was tackled on a number of fronts, including high visibility enforcement of the law, education programmes in schools and increased awareness of the statistics county by county and month by month. Advertising, especially graphic television advertising, effected a cultural change in this area. At present, I believe that through the DrinkAware campaign, the drinks industry has the perfect vehicle for effecting little or no change. Advertising cheap wine in an off-licence with a tag underneath encouraging people to drink responsibly is a waste of time. Members should consider the television advertisement currently running on our screens that encourages people to drink at their own pace. While I agree with the message, it simply shows young people in a trendy setting drinking and having a good time. The only downside to so doing was that drinking a little too fast was the point from which the real harm was coming and perhaps they should slow down a little and enjoy their beautiful surroundings. Members should contrast that message with the image of the young man drinking and having fun with his mates after a match who then gets into a car, only to plough into a garden in which a young boy playing football is mowed down. The advertising by the Road Safety Authority, which is not a vested interest, is much more graphic and appears to be much more effective. Perhaps the time has come to create a drugs awareness authority with a remit and budget similar to the Road Safety Authority in the knowledge that some of the cultural change may be effected and the State would save billions in terms of health costs, policing costs and the creation of a safer and more pleasant community.

Deputy Joanna Tuffy: I wish to raise a couple of matters that are part of the remit of the national drugs strategy. One pertains to a conversation I had with an acquaintance who works in the area of counselling people with a drug addiction. My acquaintance, who works on the ground, raised three issues with me that this person considered to be very important. First, my acquaintance thought it important that the work on the alcohol policy initiated by the former Minister of State, Deputy Shortall, should continue. Much work has gone into that particular policy and while this motion pertains to the national drugs strategy, it is important to have joined-up thinking and co-operation in respect of both alcohol and drug addiction. Essentially, it is important to combine the expertise because there is overlap in this regard, as the basic issue is addiction. The second point was that more must be done in respect of homelessness, which again must be linked to measures to address alcohol and drug addiction. Third, I understand there is a gap in services with regard to pre-detoxification support. For a start, there are not enough beds for detoxification purposes. Moreover, while people who have decided to undergo detoxification treatment await a bed, there is not enough support for them beforehand. There is neither enough pre-detoxification support nor sufficient aftercare support on completion of

treatment for addiction. These points are derived from a person with experience on the ground.

Another point I wish to raise, which is covered by the national drugs strategy and the drugs task forces, pertains to dealing with crime and antisocial behaviour that may be connected with drug addiction, but which also may give rise to events within a community that might lead people to stay in addiction. In this context, I congratulate the Minister of State, Deputy White, on his new position and wish him well. However, one issue to which I wish to draw his attention is a matter that had been drawn to the attention of his predecessor but which has not been resolved. I refer to four community safety forums, namely, North Clondalkin Community Safety Forum, South West Clondalkin Community Safety Forum, Fettercairn Estate Management and Killinarden Estate Management. Heretofore, they have been largely funded out of county council funds channelled through the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. However, that money has been withdrawn because it is more appropriate that it be funded as part of the national drugs strategy. However, the issue about funding came up in South Dublin County Council earlier this year and while I acknowledge it has been resolved until the end of this year, the matter will come up again and I bring it to the Minister of State's attention for that reason. The council stated that the workers, that is, the people who are funded under this project, have been an asset to the local communities, the council and all other relevant State agencies in terms of providing information from within the local community, organising clean-ups, summer projects, events and local policing fora, working on joint projects generally funded in the main by councils, as well as providing a representational role on a number of fora in the area. I am particularly familiar with North Clondalkin Community Safety Forum, which is highly proactive. There are meetings to which residents come along and raise their concerns, after which there are follow-ups by the project worker. My understanding is the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government considers that such fora should be under the purview of the drugs strategy. When continuation of funding was announced earlier this year by the aforementioned Department, it stated it should be looked at under the review of the national drugs strategy structures. I hope the Minister of State will consider this and will find sustainable funding for the future because otherwise, the projects will collapse, which would be a terrible loss to those communities.

Deputy Michael Conaghan: This is a timely motion, given the appointment of my colleague, Deputy White, as the new Minister of State with responsibility for drug and alcohol policy. The media discussion in recent weeks has been all about the politics of health and I thank Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan for giving Members this opportunity to return to the policy and vision they have for the health service and, in particular, to focus on addiction services. I wish to take this opportunity to commend the former Minister of State, Deputy Shortall, on her work in this area during her brief tenure. In particular, I thank her for the support she offered to me in respect of drug projects in Ballyfermot, which I represent. Deputy Shortall was not the first Labour Party Minister to address this issue and nor will she be the last. In 1997, the then Minister of State, Deputy Rabbitte, set up 13 local drugs task forces, including one in Ballyfermot. These task forces form the central plank of intervention in many communities. The Government has made €31 million available to support the activities of drugs task forces this year, which is very welcome. The job of reviewing these task forces now falls to the new Minister of State, Deputy White. This review will seek to strengthen the effectiveness of the drugs task forces and improve accountability and I wish the Minister of State every success in that role.

The problem of addiction cannot be tackled by the Department of Health alone. The national addiction strategy and the programme for Government recognise this and with this in mind,

the previous Government mainstreamed funding for community drug projects across a variety of Departments. However, since 2008 when Ministers were faced with reduced budgets, it was such mainstream funding, which was not considered to be a core activity of those Departments, which was the first to go. The Minister of State, Deputy White, alluded to the streamlining of funding arrangements for community drug projects as part of his review and this would bring welcome clarity and security to projects. The Ballyfermot Star project, which provides much-needed counselling and support services to substance abusers and their families is one such project that lost its mainstream funding from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government last year. Consequently, it was necessary to campaign last year to secure the project a one-year reprieve by sourcing the necessary funding through the Minister, Deputy Hogan, and Dublin City Council, thereby securing the position of three key members of staff for the Ballyfermot Star project in 2012. As a new year approaches, the future of such projects again is in doubt. I hope the new Minister of State will prioritise and protect this most valuable service, recognise its value as a template for interventions in other communities and ensure the necessary funding will be made available in the budget for 2013.

I wish the Minister of State, Deputy White, every success in tackling the scourge of drug and alcohol misuse in society.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Thank you, Deputy, but I am afraid I must call your colleague-----

Deputy Michael Conaghan: It is an important issue and I look forward to working with the Minister of State, Deputy White, in the coming year to tackle the problem of addiction that faces Dublin and so many communities nationwide.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Deputy Dowds has three minutes. I am sorry it is only three minutes.

Deputy Robert Dowds: First, I support the remarks of Deputy Tuffy in respect of the community policing fora, both in the constituency we share of Dublin Mid-West and in Dublin South-West. I hope it will be possible to address these matters. I welcome strongly the appointment of Deputy White as Minister of State in the Department of Health. It is good to have a colleague and friend there and I wish him every success in his onerous task-----

Deputy Alex White: I thank the Deputy.

Deputy Robert Dowds: -----which includes the subject of tonight's motion although it goes far beyond that.

In the few moments available to me, I will confine my remarks to the subject of alcohol abuse.

We have a longstanding unhealthy relationship with alcohol in this country and it is therefore more difficult to address than many of the problems with which we are confronted.
8 o'clock A few facts should make it clear to everyone in this House that we must wake up to this problem. For example, in our country one person dies from alcohol-related causes every seven hours. By this time tomorrow another three people will have died. One in four deaths among young men is due to alcohol and alcohol is the cause of twice as many deaths in Ireland as all other drugs combined. Alcohol-related deaths doubled between 1995 and 2004. The cost of alcohol to our health system is €1.2 billion per annum. At this stage I believe most

people know that 2,000 hospital beds are occupied at any given time to treat alcohol-related injuries and illnesses. According to the Garda PULSE system, alcohol is a contributory factor in 97% of public order offences. The total cost of alcohol-related crime is €1.2 billion. Any one of these statistics on its own should be enough to provoke action. Taken together they show that our society is crying out for a comprehensive Bill to tackle alcohol abuse. There are many more damning statistics which show that we have a major problem with alcohol. I welcome that the new Minister of State has already committed to introduce an alcohol Bill as soon as possible.

It is vital to tackle the abuse of alcohol on an all-island basis. Conversations are taking place between Department of Health officials and their counterparts in Northern Ireland. If we are to tackle issues such as below-cost selling, there needs to be uniformity on both sides of the Border in order to deliver more effective resolutions. The time for talk is over; it is time for action.

Deputy David Stanton: I congratulate the Minister of State, Deputy White, on his appointment. I also congratulate Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan and the Technical Group on introducing this very important motion, probably one of the most important Private Members' motions we have had for a long time. I found last night's speech by the Minister of State quite devastating. He outlined that there are 14,500 opiate users in the country and gave figures for the number of people drinking alcohol in a harmful manner. Other Members spoke about what we all know, the violence, the anti-social behaviour, the suicides, the road deaths and injuries, domestic violence, the cost to our health system, the productivity losses in the workplace and so on. This is pervasive, invasive and destructive.

As Deputy Dowds said, we need to take action. This week we speak on this topic. Next week we will speak about something else. Tonight I am calling for the establishment of a committee similar to the children's committee, a standing committee to focus on drugs and alcohol alone. The committee needs to be given a remit and a time limit in which to do some work to support the Minister of State and the various task forces which are doing great work. That would allow this House to remain continually focused on this awful issue. The committee on children's rights was very successful - it worked and it delivered. This issue is as important, if not more important.

Many contributors to this debate have rightly referred to the disadvantaged young person who is using drugs and whose life is ruined. We empathise with that and know how awful it is. The Minister of State might know the answer to this question. What is the extent of drug use among the middle class, the well off, the people with money, the people who have the pinstriped suits? A few years ago a controversial book was published entitled *High Society* by Justine Delaney Wilson. It indicated that large amounts of money were being turned over by well-heeled, wealthy, middle-class people. If that is the case, they are feeding this industry and this culture, which is something we need to investigate and know about. It is not just people who are disadvantaged but it applies across the board, as the anecdotal evidence will confirm. It does not respect social class, wealth or anything else.

There has been talk about legalisation and decriminalisation. We should look to the experiments that have taken place in other countries in Europe where the results are mixed. Clearly the current strategy is not working. The agencies are doing the best they can and large amounts of illegal drugs are being confiscated. However, we do not know how much is getting through. Anecdotal evidence would suggest it is very large. The report of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Health and Children should be implemented in full. We need to consider a ban on the

sale of spirits to anyone under the age of 21. We need to look at the culture and our approach to alcohol. We often hear someone say: "He's a great man - he drank ten pints last night." That kind of thinking must change. This debate should not be the end of this issue for this House but the start.

Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor: Ed McMahon stated that God invented whiskey to keep the Irish from ruling the world. However, today we have many vices other than the demon drink, including prescription drugs, illegal drugs, gambling and smoking. Nearly every family in Ireland is affected by some form of addiction. It causes serious problems within families which can be devastating. It can lead to ill health, secrecy and betrayal. It can lead to serious financial strain, depression, mental health issues, violence, prison, marriage break-up and even homelessness.

I note that the emphasis of the motion is not on smoking. However, for me smoking addiction is the most serious health issue we are facing. One in two smokers dies from smoking. It is the biggest cause of preventative death, bigger than the next six combined. Fifteen people die from smoking every day. It is the equivalent of two jumbo jets full of promising Irish people crashing every year.

The Office of Tobacco Control states that 24% of Irish people smoke. However, the Irish Heart Foundation states that in the lower socioeconomic group the figure is approximately 50%. It breaks my heart to see young people smoking - young people who will become addicted to tobacco. Irish Heart Foundation studies indicate that 12% of school-aged children are current smokers. Smoking is a phenomenon when children start under the age of 18. Also alarming is 2001 research indicating that 21% of women in Ireland smoke during pregnancy. Smoking during pregnancy is often done - believe it or not - to prevent weight gain. This is a scary phenomenon: mothers are putting their babies in jeopardy. Our striving for image perfection has serious consequences.

I commend the Minister, Deputy Reilly, and Senator Crown who introduced recommendations to penalise smoking in cars with children on board. Secondary smoke has harmful effects. It is reported that in children, second-hand smoke causes the following: ear infections; frequent and severe asthma attacks; respiratory problems, for example coughing, sneezing and shortness of breath; and respiratory infections such as bronchitis and pneumonia, not to mention the long-term effects. County councils are also introducing smoke-free regulations for parents minding children in playgrounds, which is a welcome development. Children should not associate play time with smoking. Step by step, we must denormalise smoking. I was particularly disappointed to hear of a well known Irish band singing at a tobacco industry-sponsored event in Malaysia. These people are role models for young people. They have the power to dictate what is cool and are seriously influential. As such, they have a responsibility to their fans to lead the way.

I commend the Minister for Health, Deputy Reilly, on the introduction in 2013 of graphic warnings on cigarette packages. The Minister, Deputy Reilly, has often stated that were cigarettes invented today they would be illegal. We need to take a departmental approach to tackling this issue. Only through the Departments of Health, Finance and Justice and Equality working together will we fully tackle this issue.

Deputy Seamus Healy: I wish to share time with Deputies Tom Fleming, Catherine Murphy, Finian McGrath, Mick Wallace and Mattie McGrath.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Is that agreed? Agreed. The Deputies have five minutes each.

Deputy Seamus Healy: I welcome the opportunity to support this Private Members' motion. I compliment Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan, who has an intimate knowledge of this issue, on her preparation of this comprehensive motion. I am disappointed to note the Government has tabled an amendment to the motion. I do not believe this is the type of issue on which the House should divide. It should have been possible to achieve unanimous agreement on this motion. I call on the Minister of State, Deputy White, even at this late stage, to consider withdrawing the Government's amendment.

The motion states: "That Dáil Éireann recognises the scale of the problem of addiction throughout Ireland and the increasing demands on services." Drugs are now available not alone in our cities and towns, but in our villages, parishes and at every crossroads throughout the country. Obviously, the demand on services arising in this regard, is phenomenal. While I agree with Deputy Stanton that drug addiction is a cross-community affliction and problem, there is no doubt that there is a clear and established link between drug addiction and economic and social disadvantage, early school-leaving, unemployment and so on.

I compliment and congratulate the various agencies involved in this area, in particular the community and voluntary sector, in terms of their assisting young people through what are very difficult circumstances for them. I commend the various community drug initiatives in my own constituency, including the Waterford regional youth service and Tipperary youth service, on their ongoing work in this area. It is important facilities such as playgrounds, sporting areas and so on are made available to communities and particularly to young people. As stated in the motion, it is possible to provide some of the funding required in this area from moneys collected by the Criminal Assets Bureau. It is vital that community services are made available for young people. This would be beneficial and would play an important role in reducing the drug culture in particular areas.

I agree that this issue should be viewed not alone as a criminal issue, but as a health issue. The current significant reduction in Garda numbers and no new gardaí being trained in the Garda training college, the closure of rural Garda stations and the unavailability of equipment such as Garda cars is unacceptable. This matter also needs to be tackled. We must ensure that there are no further cuts in this area, that community gardaí are replaced and that the connection between young people on the ground and gardaí is maintained and improved. This connection is vital if this issue is to be addressed.

Deputy Tom Fleming: Drug addiction is a scourge in every townland and hamlet in this country. The national drugs strategy task force established approximately ten years ago has made a significant impact on addressing the drugs problem throughout Ireland. The national drugs misuse report needs to be revisited, reviewed, tidied up administratively, followed up and implemented. In addition, all new funding should be spent on front line services rather than on administration and bureaucracy.

It is imperative that direct support is given to existing projects and services and that the drug task forces which provide critical front line services to those directly affected by drug and alcohol misuse are financially supported. This funding should be protected. If cuts are necessary, they should be made to administrative budgets. Most of these vital services, which are provided by the community sector, are well established in their areas and should not be withdrawn at this

time.

Residential addiction treatment centres throughout the country are, in the main, operated by voluntary organisations, who are doing an excellent job with minimal financial support from the State. For example, Talbot Grove Treatment Centre in Castleisland, County Kerry, has been providing crucial and effective treatment programmes for more than 20 years. It is doing what the State is failing to do. A modest amount of financial support from the State would enable this centre to upgrade its services and better meet the needs of the south western corner of the country. A new Talbot Grove Treatment Centre is currently under construction to ensure continued provision of current services and to meet future needs. Capital supports need to be made available for projects like this, which save the State a fortune. Sister Consilio and her staff who, without any State funding, provide outstanding services at all their centres around the country are also saving the State millions of euro.

Prevention programmes such as Kerry Life Education, which operates from a mobile unit, visits all primary schools in Kerry on an annual basis. It provides students with an insight into the pitfalls and downside of the use of illegal drugs and misuse of alcohol. This project has never received any support from Government. It is of paramount importance that any resources provided go directly into these types of services rather than on administration. We do not want to return to the perception of the past that the drugs problem, in particular the heroin problem, was more or less confined to Dublin, because it now affects practically every parish in the country. The services advanced by the national drugs strategy and the drugs task forces need to be sustained as essential front-line services and the national drugs misuse report needs to be implemented.

We are now paying the price for not grasping the nettle at an earlier stage. The abuse of alcohol continues to be the greatest problem by far, especially with regard to the number of people presenting at addiction treatment centres. In the Talbot Grove centre, which I mentioned, almost all the drug users have serious problems with alcohol, which is often the substance which brings them to treatment centres initially. The Government needs to revive the post of a Minister of State with responsibility for drugs because the implementation of the national drugs and alcohol programme has a lack of focus and direction.

Deputy Catherine Murphy: I also wish to begin by thanking Deputy O'Sullivan for her hard work in putting together this comprehensive motion.

Deputy Finian McGrath: Hear, hear.

Deputy Catherine Murphy: Unfortunately, it is a legacy of Tony Gregory which Deputy O'Sullivan did not want to keep. He brought the problem to the attention of the Dáil originally.

Deputy Finian McGrath: Hear, hear.

Deputy Catherine Murphy: However, all these years later, none of us can be happy with the situation. I speak in broad support of the aims of the motion which are about acknowledging the problem, examining comprehensive ways to address it and being open-minded about it. I regret that Deputy Keating introduced a tone which was playing politics with the issue. I acknowledge what was stated by Deputy Stanton about examining jurisdictions in other parts of Europe where drugs have been decriminalised and how it has played out. I understand it is patchy in some cases but we should examine it and be open-minded. The suggestion of a committee is good because there is interest in the issue, and if people have a strong and continuing

interest, we could have an opportunity to capture it and do something more positive.

We have enormous problems with addiction in our society and these problems have become substantially worse with the economic crisis. Even before the crisis hit we had 4,000 drug related deaths in the ten years prior to 2008. By 2008 we were averaging 5,000 deaths a year. These are astonishing figures and, of these, three quarters were young men. Figures from 2006 also show an estimated 17.6 opiate users per 1,000 people in the Dublin region, which is quite a shocking statistic.

We know addiction does not just stop at that and leads to other problems such as serious health complications - we often find cohorts of people homeless or with mental health issues - and issues of domestic violence. These also require State responses. We must get to the origin of the problem. Very reputable organisations such as Pieta House and Alcohol Action Ireland have highlighted the contributory role drug and alcohol abuse plays in many cases of suicide and mental health problems. This will not come as a surprise to most of us. Barnardos, another reputable organisation, speaks about the impact of parents' addiction on their children, and the same is true *vice versa*. We must examine smarter ways to deal with addiction and its causes.

We must examine how funding can be better targeted to achieve a better outcome. We all know money is limited, but some of the community responses have been shown to be the best type of response. We are poorly resourced in north Kildare but Abbey Regional Addiction Services, ARAS, is a community addiction service in south Kildare. I invited representatives from the group to speak to Deputies a number of months ago. They are people in recovery who volunteer to assist others in getting to where they are themselves. They mapped the services and showed us the map, and there was practically nothing in north Kildare. People on methadone programmes travel from Athy every day. We must recognise this as an impediment to dealing with the problem, and services must be much more community-based if we are to get to grips with it.

Deputy Mick Wallace: I commend Deputy O'Sullivan on tabling the motion, and the aspiration, to prioritise addiction as a health issue, not primarily as a criminal one, and ensure the necessary allocation of resources, is a noble one. I would like to speak about alcohol because for too long we have not recognised it as a drug. We think of it almost as part of our diet. At this stage it is so interwoven into who we are that it is problematic. When one visits other European countries, one sees how different the attitude is in comparison with here.

The notion that alcohol costs the State €3.7 billion in overall terms is frightening. It is amazing. Given that money is so scarce, apart from the destruction of so many lives which alcohol causes, dealing with it could also save the State a huge amount of money. A 30% reduction in alcohol harm would save the State €1 billion. A huge effort is required in this area and it would be money very well spent. It be good not only socially but also economically.

Most people have mentioned the various elements on which alcohol touches, such as 60 medical conditions, suicide, crime, absenteeism and workplace accidents. The list is endless. Like most people in the House, I like a pint of Guinness and a glass of red wine, but it is not the drinking of alcohol which causes all the harm, it is its abuse. I coach under 16s, 17s, 18s and 19s in the Wexford Youths. When I get a group of new players, my first challenge is to deal with the alcohol issue. Honestly, this is my first challenge. I must get them to think differently about how they drink. Cigarettes are another issue, but alcohol is the biggest one. I must completely change their mindset. We have won six under 18 all-Ireland titles in the past 15 years. The only

reason we have done so is because we develop a discipline which involves responsible drinking. I am not saying they give it up, but they stop abusing it. If I am watching a match, after ten minutes I can tell whether a guy was drinking the night before. One can tell by how he moves and his pace over the first two yards.

Deputy Finian McGrath: One can spot them here as well.

Deputy Mick Wallace: One cannot play sport at this level and abuse alcohol, which emphasises the value of sport. It is in the State's interest to invest as much money as it possibly can in sport. Every sport is beneficial.

Deputy Mattie McGrath: Even blood sports.

Deputy Mick Wallace: It is amazing how much sport can help with the problems we encounter in these areas.

I am a great believer in education, and we need to target alcohol. We must teach people more and be more specific about the harm of alcohol. Improvements have been made over the years with regard to cigarettes. I can remember in my last year in secondary school that 40 out of the 60 pupils in the two classes smoked.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: The Deputy has one minute left.

Deputy Mick Wallace: I have an 18 year old son and I checked the matter with him recently. In his class of 30, only four students smoked so things have improved and there has been much work done to counteract the harm of smoking, including advertising.

Advertising is an area that we certainly need to look at due to the volume of advertising thrown at people and the content. With regard to content, we see far too much humour and joviality associated with alcohol. We must stop that as it is giving young people the wrong idea. We need strict regulation in that area and I think it will be very effective.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: I must ask the Deputy to conclude to allow his colleagues to speak.

Deputy Finian McGrath: How many minutes do I have?

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: The Deputy has five minutes.

Deputy Finian McGrath: I thank the Leas-Cheann Comhairle for the opportunity to speak on this Private Members' motion and debate on addiction throughout Ireland and the increasing demands on services. I thank and commend my colleagues in the Technical Group for moving this motion as it is a priority issue in this State. In recent days, we have all seen the horrific deaths, shootings and slaughter on our streets that are all related to the contents of this motion. The Dáil needs to stand up and defend the interests of our young people but we also need to put forward constructive proposals to end this nightmare for many of our citizens. Staying silent or sitting on the fence cannot be an option. I urge the Government, the Minister and all Deputies to support us in our efforts. It is a matter of life and death and it is essential that there is a whole community response to the problems of drug and alcohol abuse. Thousands of lives are affected each day and families and homes are devastated by alcohol and drugs. This is not exaggeration. It is a public health, justice and national issue. We have reached a crisis point.

I remember well the heroin epidemic in the 1980s and the great work done on the drugs issue and the devastation it caused to local communities by the late Tony Gregory. Tony stood up to the drug dealers but, more importantly, he also stood with his local community, many times against the odds. I pay tribute to him in this debate and I urge the Minister and Government to listen and take heed of the issues raised in this motion. Again, I urge debate and reflection. Since a number of my colleagues mentioned the late Tony Gregory, it would also be appropriate to mention that there are a number of campaigns to call a bridge after a famous Irish person. I urge that the new bridge over the river Liffey be called the Tony Gregory Bridge. To those who oppose it, I say why not. Tony was of the inner city - born and bred in the inner city - and it would be a great honour and tribute to him if that bridge was called after him.

I was a bit worried to hear some of my colleagues' comments on the alcohol issue because I am one who enjoys a pint and, although I know it is not politically correct to say so, a cigarette. I believe in everything in moderation. Alcohol Action Ireland commissioned a report which asked people about alcohol-related harm in their communities. The statistics were mind-blowing. One in 11 people said that he or she or a family member had been assaulted by someone under the influence of alcohol, 45% said they had gone out of their way to avoid drunk people or places where drinkers were known to hang out, 21% said they were kept awake at night or disturbed and 18% said they felt unsafe while waiting for or using public transport. That is also a huge issue in the city of Dublin. The results also showed that 12% said they were involved in a serious argument related to alcohol and 8% said they had been threatened. Most Deputies regularly deal with the issue of antisocial behaviour in clinics. There is widespread intimidation in communities.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: The Deputy has one minute left.

Deputy Finian McGrath: This intimidation would be described as low-level by the Garda Síochána but for the communities that must put up with this kind of abuse, it is an absolute nightmare.

The cost of alcohol-related crime is estimated at €1.2 billion, which is almost one third of the estimated annual cost of alcohol-related harm of €3.7 billion. As well as the direct cost to the criminal justice system in terms of policing, prisons and the courts, there are additional indirect costs such as those to businesses in lost productivity and those specific to the victim. These costs can include injury and trauma-related costs as well as costs related to property. There are some excellent and very commendable ideas in the proposals in tonight's debate and I urge the Government and Minister to take them up. I urge all Deputies to support this motion and the concrete proposals to deal with the huge drug and alcohol abuse issue as a matter of urgency.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Deputy Mattie McGrath has five minutes.

Deputy Mattie McGrath: I am also delighted to be able to speak on this motion and I complement Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan from the bottom of my heart, particularly for the hard work she has done in bringing forward this motion and her ongoing work in living out the legacy she inherited from the late Tony Gregory and attacking this scourge of our nation. Much has been said and I am very annoyed that some members of Fine Gael, particularly Deputy Keating, should try to be mischievous or undermine this motion. Every politician in this and the other House knows that this is a real problem and it is not something to be joked about or to have it said that we are soft on it. We are not soft on drugs. It is a very serious motion asking us to deal with this scourge and plague in our land.

Many figures have been thrown about, but we all know the issues. Anybody living or working in a community - employers, parents and guardians - knows the issues with the drink and drug culture. I also like a drink as much as anyone and I know the problems created by it. It is costing our economy and country, in addition to the damage done to the mental and physical well-being of all those who abuse alcohol. Deputy Wallace has spoken about how when he trains soccer teams, he knows when people have been out drinking. I have seen it in teams. Unfortunately, the culture persists that it is great to go out and celebrate this, that and the other. It is wonderful to have a celebration and to use alcohol properly.

We must grasp the nettle of the drug culture. We see the slaughter on our streets where parents are being gunned down in front of their children coming home from school. This is shocking. The Troubles in Northern Ireland were not as bad as this. These gangs, some of which have come from Northern Ireland and are obviously subversive organisations, are causing mayhem but we have not tackled this. We have tackled alcohol and dangerous driving on our roads. In my constituency, we have around 40 gardaí in the Garda Traffic Corps and rightly so but only a meagre seven or eight in the whole country in the drugs division. We need a seismic change. More people are dying of alcohol or drug-related causes than are dying on the roads. Any death on the roads is one too many but we need to change emphasis completely and see the damage that is being done because we have been too slow in reacting. We have a Road Safety Authority but we now need to set up a human safety authority to deal with this problem.

I pay tribute to the Aislinn Adolescent Addiction Centre, which I was involved in setting up in Kilkenny, Sister Consilio and many other groups, including a new project of which I am a board member which we are trying to set up in Carrick-on-Suir. The need is great. Younger and younger people are being affected. One should hear the harrowing tales of people who enter the Aislinn Adolescent Addiction Centre. They are getting worse by the year and by the month and we have our heads in the sand. I sat on the other side of the House for four years. Why does every motion from this side of the House have to be countermanded by an amendment? Why can we not get together when we have a problem as serious as this, one that strikes at the very heart of our society and affects our economy to an enormous degree?

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: The Deputy has one minute left.

Deputy Mattie McGrath: Mention has been made of the different issues relating to the many and varied people who are frightened. I wish to mention the restorative justice project in Nenagh, which is a fabulous project. Community service should be applied more. The Judiciary needs to be educated in how to deal with these issues. I am not lecturing judges but once a judge is appointed, he or she is appointed for life. How is such a person supposed to be up to date and up to speed with regard to demographic change, different cultures, the Internet, cyber-bullying, the availability of drugs, the cartels and big business setting out drink that can be bought in supermarkets and everywhere else? We need to become serious, accept motions like this one, set up an all-party working committee to deal with it and go forward in a responsible manner before it is too late.

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): It is almost a ritual to stand up and thank the Members who have tabled a motion. I believe quite sincerely, however, that Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan and her colleagues in the Technical Group have given us a considerable amount to think about. I never thought I would hear myself saying this, but I agree with Deputy Mattie McGrath on how to deal with motions, particularly motions such as this.

One may have seen me compare both motions. We are not that far apart in our views. The Government's amendment to the motion and the original motion, while not making the same points, share the same intent. The outcome we desire is most definitely the same. While there will always be occasions on which the Government will have to table an amendment to a motion, as when there are constraints upon it, there is a need to consider seriously how we address motions when we desire the same outcome. I spoke to the proposers of the amendment to the motion before yesterday's debate and noted a deliberate attempt to make it as similar to the original motion as possible and not to dilute the latter entirely. We need to take on board what Deputy Stanton stated. If nothing emerges from this debate except one development, it should be the establishment of an all-party committee to take a serious look at addiction.

I am not certain we can take everything on board. I never wanted and do not intend to be a social housekeeper. However, I believe there are steps we can take as parliamentarians on which we need not divide. It would be good to have an all-party committee because it is a matter of attitudes more than anything else.

There has been seismic attitudinal change down through the years on certain matters and we need to start a debate on substance abuse and what we do when we have substances on board. Issues arise regarding domestic violence, children, behaviour on the public thoroughfare, anti-social behaviour and how we interact with one another in certain aspects of our lives. It is important to address these.

The drugs strategy needs to be reinforced, reinvigorated and rolled out. The alcohol strategy, on which former Minister of State Deputy Róisín Shortall was working and which is virtually complete, needs to be considered. It is only on foot of intensive scrutiny by an Oireachtas committee that we can combine our considerable resources to bring about the attitudinal change we require.

When I see the effect of substance abuse on mental health in my area, or the effect of poor mental health on substance abuse patterns, I realise there is not a one-way street but a two-way street. Sometimes people become mentally unwell because they are homeless, and sometimes one becomes homeless because one is mentally unwell. Sometimes people drink because they are mentally ill and sometimes people are mentally ill because they drink too much. It is these issues that we need to start considering seriously.

It is not all bad news. I very much take on board what Deputy Wallace stated about young men's involvement in sport and the fact that they regard their bodies as temples and will not do anything to jeopardise their place on the team. However, we need to change our national attitude. We can do so and have done so in other areas.

As Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan will know well, we are combating the stigma associated with mental illness and talking about it far more openly and positively. It is possible to change attitudes and we can do so if there is a combined effort. We do not always need adversarial debate across the floor of the House on certain issues. While I must commend the Government's amendment to the motion to the House, I believe the Members present understand the spirit in which it was tabled.

Deputy John Halligan: An increasing number of people are presenting to the drugs services with a variety of problems associated with addiction. These include mental illness, homelessness and literacy problems. Addiction is just the tip of the iceberg. People's issues are becoming

ing ever more complex and heroin is becoming increasingly prominent. This, in turn, increases the complexity of the service user's problems. We must not respond to this problem with but one solution. Each person's issues are different and one service will not fit all. Cuts to the rolling out of education and awareness campaigns at local level are certainly not the answer, nor is cutting the funding of front-line services. Harm reduction, education and needle exchange are all aspects of the community services that are having their funding hacked away, bit by bit.

The national drugs strategy, developed through the voluntary, community and statutory agencies and drafted by the regional task forces, is wholly inadequate in dealing with the constant and evolving nature of drug addiction. The current strategy spans the period 2009 to 2016, as the Minister of State knows, yet drug workers on the ground, with whom I am familiar in my constituency, will tell me the emergence of new substances, prescription medication misuse and the purchasing of drugs on the Internet make the nature of the drug availability problem change monthly, never mind yearly. Workers on the ground have to respond to a strategy that is completely out of date and out of touch.

I recommend to the Government that it review the drugs strategy at least every two years, and certainly not in six, as envisaged, if we are to have any hope of keeping up with the changing problem of addiction. The national strategy promotes a partnership approach between the community, voluntary and statutory services. However, from what I hear, community service has evolved very much into a top-down model. The partnership approach is eroding and community services are receiving directions increasingly from their funders on how to approach their work, without any consultation with the service users.

The Government should put in place a service users' forum, which has been called for by many community groups. The forum would listen to service users and inform policy on their needs. We cannot continue with our current approach of telling users what they require. Clearly, this method failed bitterly down through the years.

The most notable increase pertains to heroin addiction. We must tackle the issue of people spending many years on methadone. Theoretically, a heroin user is put on methadone and then receives counselling and support as the dosage is reduced over a period. Many of us are aware of numerous cases in which a user has been on the same dose year after year simply because other services are not in place for him. This is ridiculous and does nothing to solve the heroin abuse problem.

Can the Minister of State shed any light on the reluctance of general practitioners, including some in my constituency, to engage in a partnership approach with the community drugs services in respect of prescribing methadone and offering community-based detoxification? Surely this is a denial of basic human rights. From having spoken to people in my constituency this morning, I noted there are 40 to 50 people on the waiting list for methadone treatment in Waterford. Irrespective of what the official figures imply, we know there are doctors from Dublin travelling to Waterford to prescribe methadone although a joined-up approach with local general practitioners would reduce the waiting list considerably.

Given the intense intimidation of drug users' families, the Government must put in place a national response. I constantly encounter cases of dealers knocking on the doors of drug users' families, burning their homes and threatening them. Many families are told to pay or face further intimidation. Paying is easier in the long run, as the families have no supports. The State needs to get its act together and put a strategy in place for them. For example, it should help

overcome the difficulties involved in relocating.

According to the UN, illegal drugs comprise 8% of the world's trade. There are more than 250 million drug users. Drugs will always be with us. We have tried prohibition, but that approach has not worked. The demand for services has never been greater, crime is increasing, customs hauls are on the rise and the intimidation of drug users' families is reaching epidemic proportions. We need to re-evaluate our response to addiction and examine the problem rationally on a moral value basis instead of deciding what is right and wrong. It is time for a logical debate on the reclassification, decriminalisation and regulation of certain illegal substances. We must consider some European models, for example, those found in Portugal and the Netherlands. Portugal decriminalised drug use for personal consumption in 2001, after which drug use among 13-18 year olds declined significantly.

I am not advocating that we legalise drugs, but we need a non-sensational, pragmatic and reasonable debate on the issue. It is not mentally or physically possible for the majority of heroin users to work. Many are impervious to treatment because they have suffered neurological damage. Jailing them and throwing away the key will not work. The figure of 10,000 is increasing.

Prevention and law enforcement are not working and the public perception is that the drug barons are winning. People do not want to discuss the prescription of heroin or the treatment of drug addiction as a chronic health issue. There are many examples of the methadone treatment programme not working.

I would like to continue speaking, but I do not want to take up Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan's time. I apologise to her for taking a minute of her time.

Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan: Legal drugs, alcohol and tobacco are undoubtedly causing people significant damage. Equally, illegal drugs such as heroin, cocaine, skunk, crystal meth and so on are causing damage. We have not spent much time discussing other addictions, for example, gambling, food, sex and the Internet, that are harmful to those affected by them.

I will cite three of today's newspaper stories - a woman is in jail for stealing from her employer to fund a gambling addiction that has already cost her her marriage; according to a Limerick newspaper, more women than ever are using heroin; and €100,000 is necessary to keep the country's only mother and child detox centre open.

The level of Internet gambling is increasing. Just as there is a call for a social responsibility levy on the drinks industry, there should be a levy on the racing industry. It is proposed that betting taxes be reinvested in the industry, but surely some of that money should go towards treatment and services for those with gambling addictions. According to counselling services, more people are presenting with gambling addictions plus addictions to other substances.

This motion is wide-ranging and covers mental, physical and emotional health, suicide, homelessness, the range of addictions, polydrug use, fatalities, premature mortality, prisons, the links with lower socio-economic groups, crime, rape, sexual violence, the Garda, the Naval Service, the Customs and Excise, the range of treatment and rehabilitation services, research and prevention. Just as there was a Minister of State with responsibility for this area in the previous Government, we should consider whether there should be another in this Government. I support Deputy Stanton's comments.

We know the horrific statistics relating to the harm caused by the misuse and abuse of alcohol. The majority of people can use alcohol sensibly, but there is no doubt that there has been a change in Irish drinking patterns. People used to have occasional nights out, but they are now bombarded by special offers and load up on cheap alcohol to drink at home. Sales of cheap alcohol are fuelling anti-social behaviour, domestic and street violence and the neglect of children. Young people have a different mindset, in that they deliberately go out to get drunk.

Since alcohol has had a continuous presence in our history and is embedded in our culture, there is a tendency to see its misuse and abuse rather than alcohol itself as the problem. Perhaps we do see it and do not want to take the necessary steps to tackle the problem.

Under the national substance misuse strategy, the three aspects that need tackling are advertising - I must pay tribute to the fantastic advertisements that are devised for alcohol - and marketing, increased availability and low pricing. The price of food will increase, but the price of alcohol will decrease. All three aspects fuel greater consumption. The report recommends increasing the price of alcohol, creating a legislative basis for minimum pricing and applying a social responsibility levy. Other recommendations relate to advertising, early intervention guidelines, brief intervention protocols, etc.

The voluntary member of the steering committee stated: "This report is not about stopping drinking, or the nanny state. This is about reducing the amount of alcohol we consume, which is outrageously high." The Minister of State, Deputy White, outlined the statistics last night and stated that we needed to rethink our relationship with alcohol. We must stop accepting drunkenness as part of the Irish psyche.

Let us open the debate on decriminalisation. That is all. It would be a call to start discussing decriminalisation, to examine the research and to hear from the projects, task forces and users. The Union for Improved Services Communication and Education, UISCE, in inner city Dublin, is the service users forum.

I will refer to an article written by Fr. Peter McVerry last year for the magazine of the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice. He wrote: "a debate on drug policy should start with the following three questions, which I would address to both politicians and the wider public:

1. *Do you believe that Ireland will ever again become free of illegal drugs?* If your answer is 'yes', where is the evidence for your optimism? Our experience in Ireland, over the past thirty years, suggests that drug availability is likely to continue to be a major problem, despite the successes of the Gardaí.... Almost every country in the world – including those that execute drug dealers! – has a drug problem.

2. *If illegal drugs are here to stay, who should control the supply of drugs?* At present, the supply of illegal drugs is obviously controlled by criminal gangs ...

3. *If drugs are here to stay, and if we do not want the criminal drug gangs to control their supply then who should do so?*

It is his opinion that the State should take control of the supply, although he is not in favour of legalising drugs. Who wants to see heroin as readily available as alcohol?

The Global Commission on Drug Policy set out similar recommendations, namely, end the criminalisation, marginalisation and stigmatisation. Three of the countries involved in the com-

mission, Mexico, Brazil and Colombia, have significant drug problems. Despite the billions of American dollars invested in tackling those problems, matters are the same.

We must open the debate. Prevention is central. I acknowledge the work of the Young People's Facilities and Services Fund. I chaired the north inner city group since its inception. It has been good.

The Minister of State, Deputy White, referred to the strengthening families programme, which is excellent and practical, but the funding to implement it in some areas is lacking.

Most drug users and alcoholics will want to quit at some point. The difficulty lies in accessing treatment when they are ready, as opposed to months down the line. The Minister of State mentioned the number of detox and residential rehab beds, of which there are not enough. Keltoi is an excellent facility in the Phoenix Park, but not all of its beds are being used. There have been improvements in Dublin, but the rest of the country is not quite keeping up.

We do not acknowledge the value of the 12-step programmes enough. They do amazing work for addicts and their loved ones.

Some homeless people who are in recovery are being forced to share transitional housing with people who are still in addiction. This is appalling and should not occur.

Deputy Clare Daly addressed the issue of prisons. It is appalling that someone who enters prison drug free will leave with an addiction. Instead of unco-ordinated releases, people should leave prison in conjunction with community-based programmes.

The problems with alcohol and drugs are deep-rooted, serious and complex and there is no easy or quick-fix solution to them, as the motion reveals. Since no Government
9 o'clock has delivered to date, it is up to the current Government. The first step is to accept and implement the recommendations of the national misuse steering group and to support the multi-agency, statutory, voluntary and community task forces. I hope that the Government will not fail.

Approximately one year ago, I launched a leaflet in a multicultural school and provided information on drugs in various languages. I told the kids that they would believe I had lost the plot had I asked them to raise their hands if they wanted to become addicts. However, that is the reality.

Many of those young people will turn to alcohol and drugs. We must get them at the point before it becomes a problem we must tackle. They all set out thinking they will not be caught and will remain in control, but that does not happen.

Amendment put:

The Dáil divided: Tá, 72; Níl, 39.	
Tá	Níl
Bannon, James.	Boyd Barrett, Richard.
Barry, Tom.	Calleary, Dara.
Breen, Pat.	Collins, Joan.
Broughan, Thomas P.	Collins, Niall.

Butler, Ray.	Colreavy, Michael.
Buttimer, Jerry.	Cowen, Barry.
Byrne, Catherine.	Crowe, Seán.
Byrne, Eric.	Daly, Clare.
Carey, Joe.	Doherty, Pearse.
Coffey, Paudie.	Ellis, Dessie.
Conaghan, Michael.	Ferris, Martin.
Conlan, Seán.	Fleming, Tom.
Connaughton, Paul J.	Halligan, John.
Conway, Ciara.	Healy, Seamus.
Coonan, Noel.	Higgins, Joe.
Corcoran Kennedy, Marcella.	Kelleher, Billy.
Creed, Michael.	Kirk, Seamus.
Daly, Jim.	Mac Lochlainn, Pádraig.
Deasy, John.	McConalogue, Charlie.
Deering, Pat.	McDonald, Mary Lou.
Dowds, Robert.	McGrath, Finian.
Doyle, Andrew.	McGrath, Mattie.
English, Damien.	McGrath, Michael.
Farrell, Alan.	McGuinness, John.
Feighan, Frank.	McLellan, Sandra.
Fitzgerald, Frances.	Murphy, Catherine.
Fitzpatrick, Peter.	Ó Caoláin, Caoimhghín.
Griffin, Brendan.	Ó Cuív, Éamon.
Harrington, Noel.	Ó Fearghaíl, Seán.
Harris, Simon.	Ó Snodaigh, Aengus.
Healy-Rae, Michael.	O'Brien, Jonathan.
Heydon, Martin.	O'Sullivan, Maureen.
Humphreys, Heather.	Pringle, Thomas.
Humphreys, Kevin.	Ross, Shane.
Keating, Derek.	Smith, Brendan.
Kehoe, Paul.	Stanley, Brian.
Kelly, Alan.	Tóibín, Peadar.
Kenny, Seán.	Troy, Robert.
Lawlor, Anthony.	Wallace, Mick.
Lynch, Ciarán.	
Lynch, Kathleen.	
McCarthy, Michael.	
McEntee, Shane.	
McFadden, Nicky.	
McHugh, Joe.	
McLoughlin, Tony.	

Dáil Éireann

Maloney, Eamonn.	
Mathews, Peter.	
Mitchell O'Connor, Mary.	
Mulherin, Michelle.	
Murphy, Dara.	
Nash, Gerald.	
Neville, Dan.	
Nolan, Derek.	
Noonan, Michael.	
Ó Ríordáin, Aodhán.	
O'Donnell, Kieran.	
O'Donovan, Patrick.	
O'Mahony, John.	
O'Sullivan, Jan.	
Perry, John.	
Phelan, Ann.	
Ring, Michael.	
Ryan, Brendan.	
Spring, Arthur.	
Stagg, Emmet.	
Stanton, David.	
Timmins, Billy.	
Tuffy, Joanna.	
Wall, Jack.	
Walsh, Brian.	
White, Alex.	

Tellers: Tá, Deputies Emmet Stagg and Paul Kehoe; Níl, Deputies Catherine Murphy and Maureen O'Sullivan.

Amendment declared carried.

Motion, as amended, put and declared carried.

The Dáil adjourned at 9.15 p.m. until 10.30 a.m. on Thursday, 4 October 2012.