

PRESIDENT MS. JUSTICE MARY LAFFOY SPEECH AT THE LAUNCH OF THE FIFTH PROGRAMME OF LAW REFORM

Opening Remarks

At the outset may I welcome you all to the launch of the Commission's Fifth Programme of Law Reform. In particular, may I welcome our guest speaker, the Attorney General, Seamus Woulfe SC, my fellow Commissioners and former Presidents and Commissioners, and our distinguished guests.

Our guest speaker requires no introduction from me. By now he is a seasoned "launcher" of Reports of the Commission. However, he has a much easier task this evening than he had last October, when he launched the Report on Regulatory Powers and Corporate Offences (LRC 119 – 2018). As most of you will recollect, that Report comprised two volumes with no less than 837 pages, which I have no doubt was considerably heavier than a bottle of champagne. By comparison, tonight's Report has only 29 pages. Nonetheless, even though it may be much lighter than a much used "launching" device, a bottle of champagne, it is of considerable importance because it contains the framework of the Commission's work over the next three years at least. That being the case, we are all anxious to hear the Attorney General's views on the Report.

Closing Remarks

First of all, I would like to express the Commission's gratitude to the Attorney General for launching the Report, even if it did not involve swinging a bottle of champagne! Moreover, I would like to thank the Attorney General for his involvement and that of the Officials of the Attorney General's Office in assisting the Commission in getting the Fifth Report to the point of approval by the Government in March this year.

The process which lead to such approval commenced as long as ago as June 2017 and approximately 15 months later the draft Report in its final form was completed and submitted to the Attorney General to obtain Government approval. All of the work which lead to the final draft was done by my predecessor, Mr. Justice John Quirke, who was then President of the Commission with the collaboration of his Commissioner colleagues: Raymond Byrne; Donncha O'Connell; Ms. Justice Carmel Stewart; and Thomas O'Malley. I would like to express gratitude on my own behalf and on behalf of his Commissioner colleagues, who are now my colleagues, to Mr. Justice Quirk on his important input into the production of the Fifth Report.

The work on the development of the Fifth Report is outlined in Part 2 of the Report, with particular emphasis on the extensive consultative process which took place.

As I have done in the foreword to the Report, I express gratitude to all those who have assisted the Commission in the development of the Fifth Programme and the production of the Report by involvement in the consultative process, in particular:

- Those third level institutions which facilitated the consultative meetings around the country (in Limerick, Galway, Dundalk and Cork), and also the speakers at, and those who participated in, those meetings and also at the Commission's 2017 Annual Conference in Dublin Castle.
- Individuals and bodies from whom the Commission received written submissions and those who attended meetings with the Commission,
- The members of the Attorney General's Office Consultative Committee, whose role is derived from a decision of the Government dating back to 1998, including representatives of the Law Society and the Bar Council.

All of the external consultative assistance which the Commission received in preparing the Fifth Programme for submission to the Government was crucial to the work of the Commission and it was also crucial to the production of a Programme which meets the needs of public administration and of the public at large.

Of course, of considerable importance also was the work on the development of the Programme which was carried out within the Commission.

In the case of the Fifth Programme, the Principal Legal Researcher was Finn Keyes, who had moved on to the other side of St. Stephen's Green when I came here. Finn's contribution is recognised in the Report. I have no doubt that Finn himself would recognise the contribution of other Researchers, of the Director of Research, Ciarán Burke, and of the Deputy Director of Research, Robert Noonan, to the work, as well as the invaluable assistance which is always forthcoming from Órla Gillen, Library and Information Manager.

From a practical perspective we are where we are this evening – having the printed Report and the arrangements for this launch in place – because of the support of our small administration team, namely: Bríd Rogers, Head of Administration and her able and helpful assistants – Ger Mooney, Roslyn Dalton, and Gavin Walsh.

If I have omitted to mention anyone with a particular input into the development of the Programme and the drafting of the Report, please forgive me. The objective this evening is to bring the Report into the public domain and to thank everyone who has contributed to the Fifth Programme.

As to where we go from here, it is up to the Commission now to work on the 15 Projects in the Fifth Programme. Because of the diversity of the projects and the complexity of some of them, it will undoubtedly be hard work. Hopefully it will in due course be for the benefit of the State, the public at large and those here this evening. With that in mind, I invite our guests to stay for a while and enjoy the hospitality.

ENDS.