

LAUNCH OF REPORT ON:

Privilege for Reports of Court Proceedings under the Defamation Act 2009

Opening Remarks

At the outset may I welcome you all to the launch of the Commission's Report on Privilege for Reports of Court Proceedings under the Defamation Act 2009. In particular, may I welcome our guest speaker, the Attorney General, Seamus Woulfe SC, a former president and a former Commissioner my fellow Commissioners and our distinguished guests.

On the last occasion such as this, the launch of the Fifth Programme of Law Reform, I observed that our speaker required no introduction from me because, by then, he was a seasoned "launcher" of Reports of the Commission. Obviously, he is even more seasoned now.

In a more serious vein, it is of particular significance that the Attorney General has so generously taken on the task of launching this report. As no doubt you are all aware, one of the sources of the Commission's work is requests from the Attorney General. The Law Reform Commission Act 1975 specifically provides that one of the functions of the Commission is at the request of the Attorney General to undertake an examination of and conduct research in relation to any particular branch of law and to formulate and submit to the Attorney General proposals for its reform. This report, which relates to one aspect of the law on defamation, is the result of a request by the Attorney General's predecessor, now Ms. Justice Maire R. Whelan of the Court of Appeal, which was issued pursuant to the Act of 1975 in December 2015. Hence, the significance of hearing the views of the Attorney General on the report.

The Closing Remarks:

To start, I would like to express the Commissions gratitude to the Attorney General for launching the report and to his predecessor for issuing the request of which it is the outcome.

The research work of the Commission on this topic has been ongoing for some time. It was the subject on an Issues Paper in 2018, when my predecessor, Mr. Justice John Quirke, was president of the Law Reform Commission. It is appropriate to recognise Mr. Justice Quirke's involvement in the project and to express the gratitude of the current Commission to him.

As always happens, the Commission in the report acknowledged the individuals and bodies from whom it received valuable assistance, through written submissions and discussions, in the course of the project and expressed the Commissions gratitude to them. I reiterate that now. Public consultation involving such interest and assistance is of crucial importance to the proper analysis of any task which the Commission is undertaking in relation to reform of the law.

Of course, the research and other work leading to this report was carried out within the Commission. As noted in the report, the Principal Legal Researcher was Rebecca O'Sullivan, who left us at the end March 2019. The Commission is very grateful for her contribution. It is also appropriate to acknowledge the work of Commissioner Byrne in finalising the report and the work of Commissioner O'Connell as the coordinating Commissioner.

Of course, a lot more people were involved in the work that led to the final production of the Report and to this launch. Lest I omit to name some contributor and get myself into trouble, I will merely say thanks/ go raibh míle maith agaibh to everyone who was involved

On what may be the most newsworthy evening in European politics this year, or maybe this decade, or even this century, and on what is probably the warmest evening this year, I invite you to relax and enjoy our hospitality.