

## **A Message from Minister Roderic O'Gorman Wednesday 13/07/2022 17:43**

To survivors, former residents, their families and advocates,

I am pleased to announce that the President has today signed the Institutional Burials Bill into law. This Act provides a legal basis for a full-scale forensic excavation, recovery and analysis of the children's remains at the site of the former Mother and Baby Institution in Tuam and will allow us to afford the children interred there the dignified and respectful reburial that they deserve. The Act is not site specific and can also facilitate the excavation and recovery of remains in other former institutional sites if evidence of manifestly inappropriate burials emerges elsewhere.

My intention is to now commence the legislation and to bring a proposal to the next Cabinet meeting seeking approval for the establishment of an Office of Director of Authorised Intervention for Tuam. A draft Government Order must then be laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas for a resolution approving the Order. Once approved by the Houses on their return in the Autumn, I can proceed to appoint a Director for the Tuam site, with a view to starting the excavation as soon as possible.

As you may be aware, in response to Pre-Legislative Scrutiny recommendations and views expressed by family representatives in relation to the General Scheme, I made a number of very significant changes prior to publication of the Bill in February. This included removing a restriction on the jurisdiction of the coroner; providing for a strengthened the role for the Director and the establishment of an Advisory Board.

Some further changes were made as the Bill passed through the Houses of the Oireachtas including:

- on the advice of Forensic Science Ireland, the categories of family members who can participate in an Identification Programme was expanded to include half-nieces, half-nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews
- the distance from a dwelling property where works can take place was reduced from 20 metres to 10 metres, where the land in question is considered to be within the curtilage of a property;
- the term 'ordinarily' was removed from the phrase 'ordinarily resident';
- the definition of information sources was amended to make explicit reference to religious bodies;
- provision was made for an Oversight Committee to perform an assurance role in respect of historic databases established under the Bill; and
- provision was made for a Director can be called before the Oireachtas following the publication of the Office's final report and before dissolution of the Office.

The Act, as passed by both Houses of the Oireachtas and signed by the President, can be accessed at this link: [www.gov.ie/en/publication/8fdcb-legislation/](http://www.gov.ie/en/publication/8fdcb-legislation/)

This legislation has been a priority for me. I would like to thank the many family members and survivors who engaged with me to help progress and strengthen the legislation. I hope that the intervention that will be undertaken in Tuam will finally bring some form of solace and closure to families and survivors who have been so deeply affected by the abhorrent situation that was uncovered there.

My officials have commenced preparations for the appointment of a Director for the intervention at Tuam and are liaising with the Public Appointments Service in this regard. A key function of the Director will be to provide regular updates on his or her work to families, other stakeholders and the general public, which will help to ensure that everyone is kept aware of how work on the site is progressing. I also remain committed to continued engagement with family members and survivors on this matter.

With kind regards and best wishes,

Roderic O’Gorman, T.D.,

Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.