

NEWS

# Child abuse inquiry could cost up to €200m

LIAM REID

A MAJOR review of the Laffoy Commission is underway after it emerged that the cost of the child abuse inquiry could reach €200m, dwarfing the combined costs of the other current tribunals of inquiry.

The Department of Education has confirmed that in December, the government launched a review of the inquiry which was established by the state in 1992 to investigate allegations of institutional child abuse in hundreds of residential institutions and schools around the country during the last century.

In a statement, the department warned that if the inquiry went on in its current format, the final cost could be between €150m and €200m.

The review has also led to speculation that the Laffoy Commission could get new statutory investigative powers, along the lines of those proposed by Justice Minister Michael McDowell for the new form of state inquiry.

In November, Judge Mary Laffoy announced a mandate for reorganisation of the inquiry, which

had become bogged down in legal tussles with a number of religious orders.

In an official finding, the religious orders, all of which have been indemnified by the state against civil actions, were accused by Laffoy of failing to cooperate fully with the investigation, which is primarily concerned with allegations of abuse at residential institutions such as industrial schools, orphanages and children's homes run by religious orders.

"The experience has been that, in the main and with a few exceptions, the respondents (religious orders and religious accused of abuse) have adopted an adversarial, defensive and legalistic approach in the process," the commission said last October.

"Insofar as they are cooperating with the investigation, in practice they are doing no more than complying with their statutory obligations and doing so miserably. In the case of some respondents, and under protest, in the case of others."

It is understood that the adversarial approach adopted by the

orders has seen the size of legal teams increase dramatically. As a result, the costs and the time taken to hear each claim has also increased significantly.

In an attempt to speed up the inquiry, the commission sought extra funding from the Department of Education to carry this out.

However, although it was granted extra funding in the interim, the department also launched a major review.

"The object of the review is to seek to identify statutory mechanisms that will assist the commission in inquiring into abuse in institutions... with a view to facilitating a speedier and less costly discharge of its mandate from the Oireachtas," according to a statement from the department.

"An estimate of the extent of the legal costs that may result from the operations of the commission... is of the magnitude of €150-€200m."

Both plaintiffs and defendants are effectively entitled to unlimited legal representation, paid for by the state, under the terms of the inquiry.

CATWALK CAPERS



At the 'Off the Rails' fashion and beauty show at Simonscourt yesterday; the show continues today at the RDS. MARK CONDON

# John Harbison hangs up his white boots

CATHERINE CLEARY

THE familiar sight of the white-headed state pathologist arriving at a murder scene is officially a thing of the past as John Harbison has hung up his white wellingtons after almost 30 years and hundreds of dead bodies.

The 67-year-old Dublin-born pathologist quietly came to the end of his two-year retirement extension last month. According to the Department of Justice, he will continue to give evidence in court but has carried out his last post-mortem.

His retirement will put further pressure on the deputy state pathologist Dr Marie Cassidy, who will be required to carry out all post-mortems until the appointment of a new state pathologist. Cassidy is widely expected to step into the shoes of her former boss. The position will be advertised and an open competition held, a Justice spokesman said.

Last week, the body of Ron Young, a seven-year-old child who died in Letterkenny, had to be taken to Dublin for a post-mortem because of demands on the reduced state pathology service.

Harbison had attended over 200 post-mortems in a three-year period between 1987 and 2000, the Dail was told three years ago. Dr Cassidy was appointed in January 1998 after warnings that the pathology service was dangerously overstretched.

A colourful character whose lectures to medical students, trainee gaird and investigators were legendary, Harbison was appointed the first state pathologist in 1974. He famously described his decision to go into pathology as a result of his antipathy towards live patients.

"I'd describe myself as something of a medical misfit lacking the necessary sympathy for patients," he once said. "I was not interested in sick people. So I escaped to the lab." Harbison graduated from TCD in 1960 and has lectured in medical jurisprudence at the university for over 20 years.

# Controversial lifestyle guru moves into UK

RICHARD OAKLEY

THE self-styled Irish lifestyle guru Tony Quinn is gaining widespread popularity in the UK despite ongoing doubts about his controversial organisation.

The multi-millionaire lost some of his support in Ireland when questions were raised about his teachings and qualifications. However, he has recently set up a base in London, where new recruits are paying €12,000 (over €18,000) each to go on Quinn's seminars, usually held in foreign destinations.

The Sunday Tribune understands that at least 50 people recently attended a seminar in Santa Monica, USA.

Quinn's group is recruiting people already involved in lifestyle organisations. One organisation, set up to promote the teaching of a US lifestyle guru, has said that a large number of its members have become involved in Quinn's organisation.

A hypnotist who describes himself as a doctor of clinical hypnotherapy, Quinn has been a controversial figure in Ireland since appearing on *The Late Late Show* a number of years ago to talk about his life system, but he is not as well-known in the UK. His organisation has operated

for years in Ireland, running seminars and other profit-making, lifestyle-based business ventures which have allowed Quinn, who lives in the Bahamas, to amass millions. At one stage, he is understood to have been earning over €1m a month.

In 2001, following a number of concerns raised by members of the public, whose family members had come in contact with his organisation, *The Sunday Tribune* investigated Quinn's activities. The investigation showed that a significant amount of time at Quinn's seminars was taken up by him telling those attending that his life system

would work best for them if they would allow to sell it to others. Attendees were given tapes with a recording of this part of the seminar to take home and were told to listen to it every day. A copy of the tape was obtained by this newspaper and an independent hypnotist said that the people, who could be heard crying out and applauding as Quinn spoke, were in a relaxed state and under Quinn's influence.

A number of leading academics then examined Quinn's lifestyle philosophy, called Educ, and other aspects of his teachings. Professor Ciaran Benson, head of the psychology department at University College Dublin, said the system was "simplistic in the extreme and without any acceptable research". He said Quinn's teachings were based on a "banal and superficial understanding of psychology of other human beings".

Quinn says that people use only 10% of their minds and that he can teach them how to tap into the unconscious. He claims that if people want something, all they need to do is believe that they have it without any inner doubt and it will "come about".

Quinn's postal request system was also examined, and dismissed, by Professor Ian Robert-

son, director of Trinity College's Institute of Neuroscience. Quinn claims that if a person sends him a written request for what they want, along with a cheque, he will apply his mind to it and it will happen. However, Robertson said there was no way the human mind could work in such a way.

It was also shown that Quinn's hypnotherapy qualification could be obtained in two years through correspondence with a US college, while another college, at which Quinn claims to have carried out groundbreaking research, said that this was his, and not his, interpretation of the significance of his work.



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