

Remarks by President McAleese at the merger of the Crisis Pregnancy Agency into the Health Service Executive, National Gallery of Ireland, 26th November 2009

Dia dhíbh ar maidin a chairde. My thanks to Katharine Bulbulia for the invitation to this event which marks the integration of the Crisis Pregnancy Agency into the Health Service Executive. It is an important transitioning moment for an organisation which eight years ago took on the difficult but necessary task of effective outreach to women and young girls who face pregnancies in circumstances which for a variety of reasons fill them with worry and dread. It is a time of considerable confusion, isolation and uncertainty, a time when a safe, wise, compassionate and caring friend is invaluable. That is what the Agency has been, is and will continue to be. You help women to work through their problems so that they can access the best support and make good decisions about their own and their babies' health and future. You have also helped Ireland as a society to cut through the heavy layers of old stigmas and taboos which turned many a pregnancy into a crisis and added greatly to the vulnerability of the pregnant girl or woman. You have also helped educate us in ways that have reduced the incidence of crisis pregnancies, reduced the number of crisis pregnancies which end in abortion and encouraged women to access good health care and counselling services to help them cope more effectively.

The statistics show a very successful eight years but they do not of themselves unpack for us the very real relief you have brought into the lives of thousands of troubled individuals who made their way to your easily accessed free-of-charge services. The front-line staff, many of whom are here today, can see the progress of the personal journey they help people to go that takes them from quiet desperation to hope. I am delighted to have this chance to say thank you for making this work their vocation and for carrying it out with such professionalism and care. Huge credit goes to the Agency's staff, headed by Caroline Spillane, and to the Board of the Agency, currently chaired by Katharine Bulbulia and to the Consultative Committee, for the work they have all invested in the Agency's success and in facilitating this merger which sets the scene for a strong future. The Agency's work is augmented by help from many organizations and individuals who make it their business to deal with the complex of issues both short and long-term that arise from crisis pregnancies. Their work is important to us as a civic society for in strengthening the coping skills and the range of options and supports open to women with crisis pregnancies, we strengthen not just the individual but the family and the community.

I wish the Agency and the HSE a very smooth integration and a new era of collaboration which will enhance the work of the Agency and make life more optimistic and bearable for those who today and tomorrow begin pregnancies not with the excited joy and happiness that a baby should bring but with the panic and fear that brings them to the Agency's door. Go raibh míle maith agaibh go léir.