

Submission from Mr Alan Hyde, Proprietor, Birchwood Asylum Accommodation Centre, Waterford.

#### DIRECT PROVISION.

I have provided a range of Direct Provision facilities under contract for the Department of Justice for a number of years. These accommodation services have evolved and transformed over time and, I have always reacted to this ever changing and demanding environment. However, it should be noted that Direct Provision services have received considerable attention recently and, it is clear from published sources, that such services were never intended to house asylum seekers for such a long time. In addition, it also should be noted, that many of the recent protests focused on the delays experienced by residents in the asylum process, the right to work and the right to housing. All of the issues complained of are factors outside the service providers remit and, can only be dealt with at a political level. Nevertheless, as an operator of these facilities, I believe the views of the service provider should also be put on record. This is important, as many of the grievances expressed by asylum seekers were outside the control of the service provider and, should be addressed in the future body of work which will be presented to the working group, in the near future.

The account of what is provided to asylum seekers in my care, should be a full fair and accurate account of the situation. Therefore, I believe it is essential that you are aware that the level of service provided at this centre meets all the commitments and is in accordance with the contract from RIA.

It is unfortunate, but understandable, that the provision of an accommodation service to residents has become entangled with the wider legal and, political debate. In addition, I believe many of the protests were orchestrated to deliberately undermine and collapse services completely. While protesting peacefully is a recognised constitutional right, the protesters in many cases took the law into their own hands. In my case my employees were stopped from entering their place of employment, and were refused permission to work. The building was barricaded and the owners and employees were denied access without the expressed permission of the protesting residents. The delivery trucks which provide food, were stopped by the protesters. For the duration of the protest I made every effort to restore and maintain services. It should be noted that not all residents agreed with this protest, and the majority of the residents were casualties of the protest. I did everything possible to ensure those who needed supplies received same and, no resident was denied nutrition.

The protest was resolved once the residents had a constructive meeting with RIA and management. I wish to reiterate that I have complied with all the contractual obligations as prescribed by RIA. The general debate regarding Direct Provision will be addressed going forward and I hope this will resolve some of the residents' concerns. I will continue to deliver the best possible service and I will engage positively with residents addressing any matters which will improve their quality of life while in my care.

ALAN HYDE