

## **Dáil Debate on the Report on Penal Reform**

**Eoghan Murphy TD, 6<sup>th</sup> March 2015**

### *Draft Remarks*

I wish to commend the Justice Committee for its work in relation to this Report on Penal Reform.

I would like to talk about a number of issues on this issue.

The first is rehabilitation. My fear is that it is just paid lip service to in Ireland. We lock people up and let them and don't address fundamental issues. I have interacted with the organisation Care After Prison on a couple of occasions. It's an excellent organisation that helps rehabilitate prisoners back into society. Its programmes are successful and we should look at how to implement their best-practice more broadly.

I also want to speak about retention of information after arrest. I asked a PQ about the timeframe for which An Garda Síochána may retain details of individuals who have been arrested even if no conviction results. It seems that An Garda Síochána can retain the details of individuals who have not been charged as long as they deem appropriate. This could mean indefinitely.

This needs to be looked at closely. Who is regulating it? Is the inspectorate involved? Crucially we want to protect people's rights. The present situation implies a suspicion of guilt and I wonder this approach is appropriate.

Finally, on the Spent Convictions Bill, I want to express my concern about the timeframe that is proposed in the Bill. We should aim to help people rebuild their lives and I believe 7 years is, for many offences, too onerous a waiting period.

I congratulate the Committee for all its work.