



# The Tharrie Times

Issue 20, Winter 2015

## Welcome

### Welcome to issue 20 of 'The Tharrie Times'.

The National Traveller MABS campaign 'Three Small Changes' aimed at improving Travellers' access to financial services was launched on September 28th 2015. As part of the campaign, National Traveller MABS has developed 2 short films which we hope Money Advisors may find helpful when undertaking community education in their community. You can read more about this campaign in this edition of our newsletter.

Additionally, this issue includes articles on a recent certificate presentation day in Tipperary, information on our recent review of our caravan loan guarantee schemes, a new 'app' on funeral cost comparisons and a whole lot more.

We hope you enjoy reading the stories that we bring you in our Winter edition and, as always, welcome your feedback!

Please visit our Facebook page or follow us on Twitter at @ntmabs.



Nancy Power  
Joint Co-ordinator



Nuala Ní Ghabhann  
Joint Co-ordinator

## Three Small Changes

The National Traveller MABS campaign 'Three Small Changes' aimed at improving Travellers' access to financial services was launched on September 28th 2015.

As part of the campaign, National Traveller MABS has developed 2 short films which we hope money advisors may find helpful when facilitating Community Education workshops.

The short films reflect real-life stories which highlight positive steps people and service-providers can take to promote better money management.

The first film tells the story of 2 young Travellers who are regular savers. Nineteen-year-old Marie Joyce and 22 year old Martin McDonagh detail their saving journey and identify three small changes that they would encourage others to make to help them begin to save. Speaking on the film Marie states "The three small changes that I would suggest to people are, firstly, go into your local credit union and check what documents you need. Secondly, get them together. And, thirdly, get into a routine and save regularly, even if it's only a small amount," she said.



Martin McDonagh



Nuala Ni Ghabhann, Nancy Power and Marie Joyce



Marie Joyce and Bernard Cawley



*continued from page 1*

## Three Small Changes

The second short film highlights what is happening in many localities throughout Ireland. It tells the story of the positive working relationship that exists between Hugh Barriscale from Cork MABS and the Primary Health Care Workers employed by Cork Traveller Visibility Group. The Primary Health Care workers identify the major benefits of MABS while Hugh identifies the 3 small changes that he would encourage MABS colleagues to make to improve links with their local Traveller groups. Contact Liz Daly at 0761 07 2235 or [liz\\_daly@mabs.ie](mailto:liz_daly@mabs.ie) for more information on developing local links.

The films can be used in conjunction with existing resources, such as "A Way of Life money management Manual" or the "Overcoming Illegal Debt" Pack. Alternatively they can be used at once off information sessions. We encourage you to use them in whatever way you feel is most beneficial and welcome any feedback you may have. They are available on our Youtube channel which can be accessed through our website – [www.ntmabs.org](http://www.ntmabs.org).

Dermot Sreenan, National Education Worker is available to discuss the films further and is available to work with any MABS service on any Traveller related Community Education initiative. He can be contacted by email on [dermot\\_sreenan@mabs.ie](mailto:dermot_sreenan@mabs.ie) or on 0761 07 2236.



*Nora Cash, Jean O'Donoghue & Liz McGrath, Cork Traveller Visibility Group Primary Health Care Workers*



*Hugh Barriscale, Cork MABS, Nora Cash, Jean O'Donoghue & Liz McGrath, Cork Traveller Visibility Group Primary Health Care Workers*



*Colin Thomson, Chairperson of NTMABS addressing the attendees at our launch*

## Community Education



Community Education [CE] provides the opportunity to build strong working relationships between a local MABS and the local Traveller Community.

For the money advisor, facilitating Community Education can be as simple as developing awareness and understanding for what

MABS can do for a client, or it can be as complex as providing empowerment and a means to move from financial exclusion to inclusion.

National Traveller MABS are available to support any MABS service that wishes to undertake facilitate Community Education locally. We have tailor-made resources developed with input from the Traveller community. These include short films and money management training packs to promote and encourage discussion on a range of money management issues.

National Traveller MABS are here to support any money advisor who wishes to work with their local Traveller group. We provide support prior to and during the delivery of Community Education.

We are also very interested in developing a network of money advisors who have previously engaged in Community Education. We hope such a network would play an active part in the development of new resources and in supporting colleagues who are interested in this work. If you are interested in undertaking Community Education in your area or becoming involved in the network, please contact Dermot Sreenan on 0761 07 2230.

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## Minister Paudie Coffey attends Irish Traveller Movement AGM

The Irish Traveller Movement (ITM) is a national network of organisations and individuals working within the Traveller community. The achievements of the Irish Traveller Movement were evident at their recent AGM when Minister of state at the Department of the Environment, Paudie Coffey T.D. launched the new Traveller specific accommodation association CENA (see article on CENA in this issue).

There is great work happening at both a local and national level and we were given an overview of some of this work. Ballyfermot Traveller Action Group gave a presentation on the work that they are undertaking with John Mulligan in building stronger communities. Effectively a process has been developed which enables the community to come together to address issues jointly to avoid possible future conflict.

The Travellers in Prisons initiative [TIPI] funded by the St. Stephen's Green Trust has recently been established. TIPI will support existing programmes, to provide a more coordinated approach for Travellers in prison. It will also establish new projects aimed at assisting Travellers in prison and at reducing

the number of Travellers in Irish prisons. National Traveller MABS will engage with TIPI, sharing our experience in the establishment of the North Circular Road Savings club, a Credit Union savings club which was established in Mountjoy Prison.

An anti-racism workshop looked at how the issue of combatting racism can be broadened out. It explored how anti-racism can be linked into a wider social movement which does not request change but empowers people to seek it. How do we make racism intolerable in society? How can the fight against racism be incorporated into a wider social movement and taken out of the hands of ineffectual authority figures? This workshop was very illuminating and maps a potential path for creating change.

A panel discussion reflected on where the movement finds itself today and was used as a space to address many of the issues which directly impact on Travellers.

The discussion was broad ranging and brought up more questions than answers, but it was a positive reflective space on the day for the participants.



## ‘Aftering’ – figuring out funerals.

aftering

A new online App aims to make the process of planning a funeral in Ireland easier for those bereaved.

The main aim of Aftering is to provide you with independent guides, information and support when arranging a loved ones funeral.

In 2014, National Traveller MABS was contacted by Valerie Vetter, a web- developer, who was looking for some insight into a new application (app) she was developing. The app, ‘Aftering’ is accessible through PC (personal computer) or as an app on your smart phone.

Valerie, through her own experiences, felt that not enough support or information was available for people when faced with organising a funeral. It can often be a very upsetting and confusing time for people with lots of running around to various service providers. It is anticipated, however, that this app will allow people to organise a funeral from start to finish in one place by doing price comparisons of local undertakers and giving advice to people in picking what is right for them.

We decided to bring the idea to two of our consultative groups – Wicklow Primary Health Care and Fingal Primary Health Care (based in Balbriggan). Both groups felt that, if promoted correctly, the tool could be used as an educational tool for Traveller groups. It was also suggested that, once live, primary health care workers could be ‘trained up’ on the use of the app in order to support people in times of bereavement. It was highlighted, however, that many Travellers in specific areas will continue to use the same funeral director. This is often due to one family having a good experience, which is often the case in the both the Traveller and settled community.

More details about “Aftering” can be found on their website – [www.aftering.com](http://www.aftering.com) – or you can download the app at Google play store – search for Aftering.

If any group would like a demonstration of this app, please don’t hesitate to contact Liz Daly at 0761 07 2230.

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## The CIB commits to ensuring inclusion and accessibility for all ethnicities.

Ethnic monitoring is the proactive gathering and use of data by service providers to ensure that a service offered can reasonably accommodate the specific needs of users from different ethnic groups.

National Traveller MABS is delighted that the CIB is leading the way in introducing a system of gathering data on ethnicity among all delivery partners.

Ireland has in the recent past become a culturally diverse society. We need to ensure our services meet the needs of people from all ethnic backgrounds. Gathering information on ethnicity will help us -

- Identify the ethnic groups that are using our service and those that are not
- Identify and provide the necessary resources and supports that we need to ensure that the service offered meets the needs of all ethnic groups
- Plan future strategies and identify policy matters which we can advance through our social policy networks.

**Everyone belongs to an ethnic group or groups.** Belonging to an ethnic group or groups is part of your personal identity. It is something that you choose and should not be decided on by others. Ethnicity is considered to be a sharing of characteristics such as culture, language, religion, and traditions, which contribute to a person or group’s identity. **Some people in Ireland belong to the majority group, that is settled Irish while others may identify differently.** Examples of other ethnic groups that people might choose to belong to are, Scottish, French, Traveller, Basque, Berber, Yoruba. If your ancestry consists of more than one culture, for example, if your parent or grandparents are from more than one ethnic group such as Polish and Irish, you might identify your ethnic group as Polish Irish.

National Traveller MABS would like to commend the CIB for leading the way in introducing an effective ethnic monitoring process among service delivery partners. We believe that the CIB will become a model of good practice in ensuring that all services are equality focussed, accessible to all ethnicities and meet the needs of all ethnic groups.

## Travellers lead the way in developing Culturally Appropriate Homes - CENA



A Traveller led voluntary accommodation association is leading the way in developing culturally appropriate for Travellers. Cena 'Culturally Appropriate Homes Ltd' is a non-profit innovative organisation. Cena uses a community development approach which facilitates the active participation and inclusion of Travellers within its work. It is committed to bringing about change in the accommodation situation of Travellers in a way that is shaped and led by the Traveller Community.

Cena was established in 2010. The name Cena is the translation of the word "home" in Cant (Traveller Language).

Accommodation for Traveller families is something which needs to be planned, designed, built, managed and maintained in consultation with the families concerned.

When referring to Traveller specific accommodation, it is generally accepted that this means:

- Permanent Halting Sites
- Temporary Halting Sites
- Group Housing Schemes and
- Transient sites

Cena intends that Traveller specific accommodation should reflect the culture and lifestyle of the Travelling community.

This would include:

- Provision for the extended family
- Facilities for Trailers
- Provision for economic activities engaged in by Travellers (for example, Horses & Scrap)

More information about Cena can be found at [www.cena.ie](http://www.cena.ie) or by contacting Bridgie Casey at 01 679 6577.



*Bridgie Casey - Cena, Paudie Coffey - Minister for State, Bridget Quilligan - ITM, Catherine Joyce - Blanchardstown Traveller with participants at the launch of Cena*



*Bridgie Casey - Cena and Paudie Coffey - Minister for State)*



# National Traveller MABS. A Year in review. Refocusing for the Future - Annual Review 2014



National Traveller MABS were delighted to launch our 2014 Annual report at our 10 year birthday celebration on September 28th in the Irish Film Institute in Dublin.

The report detailed work done in 2014 and our goals for the future.

Additionally, in 2014, we looked at how we could improve our media footprint. Social media is the way forward for organisations to promote not only their own services but to ensure the issue of Traveller's rights are brought to a wider audience. By redeveloping our website and social media profile, we have become even more global.

Copies of our annual report are available online at [www.ntmabs.org](http://www.ntmabs.org). Please contact Margaret Collins at 0761 07 2230 for a hard copy or for further information.

The role of National Traveller MABS is to:

- Highlight financial exclusion
- Empower the Traveller Community
- Promote Money Management and
- Support the Traveller Community and MABS



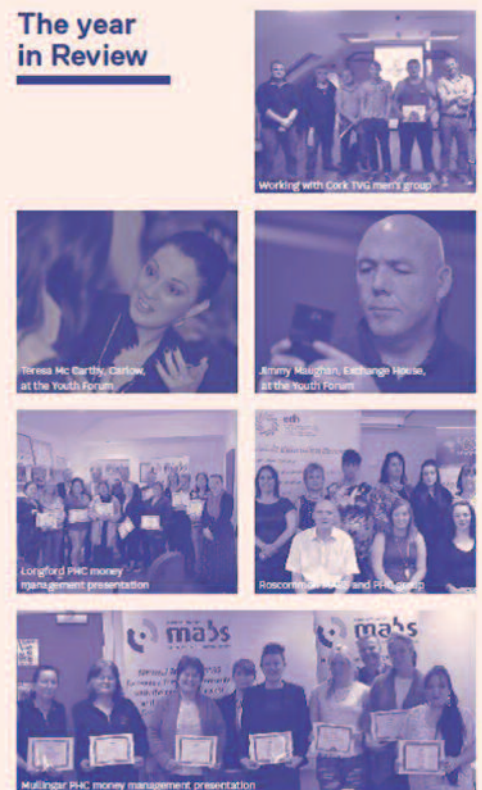
As the leading advocate for the financial inclusion of Travellers in Ireland, we aim to achieve the above goals through community development and policy work. In 2014, we reflected strongly on our future strategy following the findings of the review of our organisation undertaken in 2013 by Brian Harvey and Kathy Walsh.

The review recommended that we continue to build on our

strengths, such as our community education programmes and highlighted where we, as a national Traveller organisation could make changes to benefit both the organisation and the Traveller Community. One suggestion was to increase Traveller participation on our board of management. 2014 saw the introduction of new board members Bridget Quilligan of the Irish Traveller Movement and Catherine Joyce of the Blanchardstown Traveller Group.



## The year in Review



## National Coverage of Travellers challenging the barriers to financial inclusion!!

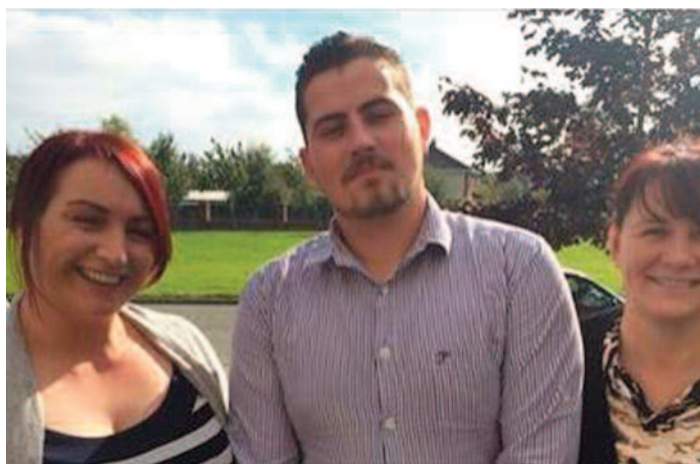


Staff of NTMABS : Temitope Animashaun, Liz Daly, Nuala Ni Ghabhann, NTMABS Joint Co-ordinator, Angela Black – CEO of CIB, Nancy Power, NTMABS Joint Co-ordinator, Dermot Sreenan and Margaret Collins

National Traveller MABS were delighted with the media coverage following our ten year celebration on September 28th at the Irish Film Institute in Dublin's Temple Bar.

At the celebration, we highlighted the challenges faced by Travellers in accessing mainstream financial services and showcased what Travellers are doing to overcome this. We called on government to implement a number of measures to tackle financial exclusion amongst low-income groups.

As part of our celebration, we launched our 'Three Small Changes' campaign –developed with leading design agency Red Dog. The media interest surrounding our birthday celebration was great. We conducted a number of radio interviews.



Margaret Collins, NTMABS, Bernard Cawley, Traveller TV/Fingal Travellers, Fingal Travellers & Nancy Power, NTMABS – pictured on the Sean O'Rourke show page

Journalist, Evelyn O'Rourke met with Nancy Power, Margaret Collins and Bernard Cawley for the Sean O'Rourke show on RTÉ Radio 1. The interview highlighted the issue of financial exclusion for Travellers.

Margaret Collins – in a live broadcast with CRY FM (a community radio station based in Youghal) – discussed the work of National Traveller MABS, highlighting particularly our recent report which shows that people on low income are credit worthy. The report examined a number of loan guarantee schemes supported by National Traveller MABS and showed a less than 5% default rate in the repayment of credit union loans.

The work of National Traveller MABS was also well covered in the print media.

Nicola Anderson examined the findings of the review of the loan guarantee scheme in a great piece in the Irish Independent on September 29th.

The Journal.ie featured our 10-year celebration in a piece on September 28th.

The Irish Examiner showcased the 3 small changes campaign with a photo of Marie Joyce, Nancy Power, NTMABS Joint Co-ordinators and Nuala Ni Ghabhann, NTMABS Joint Co-ordinators.

All articles and interviews can be accessed on the National Traveller MABS website- [www.ntmabs.org](http://www.ntmabs.org).



Marie Joyce pictured on the Journal.ie

## A Review of National Traveller MABS Supported Caravan Loan Guarantee Schemes



A Review of National Traveller MABS Supported Caravan Loan Guarantee Schemes



A recent report by National Traveller MABS shows that people on low incomes are credit worthy. The report – A Review of National Traveller MABS Supported Caravan Loan Guarantee Schemes - was launched on 28th September 2015.

The scheme was designed to enable Travellers to access loans at reasonable rates from their local credit union for the upgrade, repair or replacement of a caravan that

served as a family home. It was prepared by Dr. Stuart Stamp with the assistance of Liz Daly of National Traveller MABS. The report found that:

- 23% of loans were cleared in full
- 57% of loans were paid regularly and on schedule; this concluded a sense of achievement for the respondents
- Most respondents saw it as a pathway to future credit thus making the scheme a stepping stone to social and financial inclusion
- The positive experience with the credit union led to borrowers encouraging others to save making it a more sustainable solution for the future
- Importantly there is evidence of people being enabled through this scheme to become independent in accessing loans through the credit union in their own right

Many Travellers have had, and continue to experience, difficulty in accessing affordable credit to purchase caravans. Local authorities in Ireland are inconsistent in their provision of caravan loans. According to a recent survey done by National Traveller MABS, only 11 local authorities provide caravan loans, with an additional two providing loans on a case by case basis. 17 local authorities stated that they do not provide loans any more.

Because of this, National Traveller MABS established and managed three loan guarantee funds. The loans were provided by the client's local credit union and each client saved for a specified amount of time prior to the loan being granted. The chart below (1) shows the amounts borrowed for caravans repair or purchase.

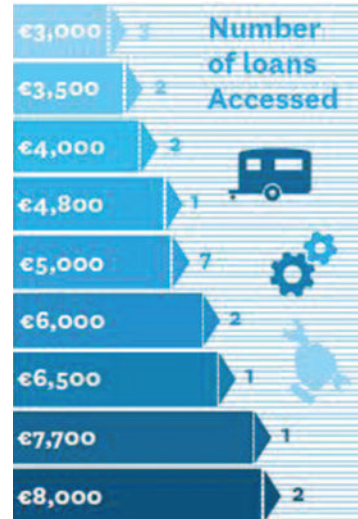


Figure 1.

As can be seen from the table (2) below, the review found that 4 people had paid their loans in full, 1 had paid early and an additional 12 were paying regularly. Of the remaining 4, 3 were in arrears but were making good progress and 1 defaulted. In the case of this default, the loan guarantee was called in.

One of the main components of the three funds was the client's ability to both save and repay loans using the Household Budget Scheme

(HHB) via the Lough Payment Scheme. Unfortunately, as of March 2014, the Department of Social Protection ended the Lough Payment Scheme. This has resulted in the suspension of the National Traveller MABS supported Loan Guarantee Schemes. However, National Traveller MABS is still supporting individuals in saving and accessing loans independently with their local credit union.

The full report can be accessed on our website [www.ntmabs.org](http://www.ntmabs.org). If you would like a hard copy of the report, please contact Margaret Collins at 0761 07 2230.





## Loan guarantee success story

National Traveller MABS has long advocated for the availability of affordable and sustainable credit for those on low incomes. For many years now, National Traveller MABS has used loan guarantees as a way to support for people who would normally not be able to get a loan. We recently published a report – A Review of National Traveller MABS' supported caravan loan guarantee schemes - which highlights the importance and success of the loan guarantee model we use.

What makes a loan guarantee model work? The elements that are important for a successful model are an appropriate repayment mechanism alongside budgeting advice and financial education which empowers the person to take ownership of their own financial situation. Loan guarantees should work on a 'business model' as opposed to a 'charitable' one; which will ensure that credit is provided responsibly and should fit with people's ability to pay.

Recently we were happy to inform a young couple who took out a €4,000 loan to purchase a caravan that they had successfully fully repaid the loan. This story represents all that is positive about affordable credit and is proof that the guarantees work and are delivering results for people. This couple had used the An Post Household Budget Scheme to save and repay their loan. Money was deducted at source from their social welfare (an important tool for people) and lodged directly into their credit union account using the MABS Lough Payment Scheme. Additionally, funeral costs for people on low incomes can often exceed €2,000.

Now that their loan is cleared, this young couple have access to their shares of over €1,200. They can now confidentially engage with their credit union without the support of National Traveller MABS. The model has helped to move this young couple from a position of being outside the system to one where they are members of a credit union with access to affordable credit.

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## Social Welfare Bill

An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí  
Department of Social Protection



National Traveller MABS welcomes the attention that Seanad Éireann gave to The Social Welfare Bill on Wednesday 25th November 2015.

As an organisation we have campaigned against the ending of the Lough Payment Scheme and have called for the Household Budget Bill to be extended beyond utility Providers and Local Authorities.

We are delighted that the current amendment to the Bill would extend the Household Budget payment scheme to credit unions.

**However we are deeply concerned that this is subject to a number of conditions, most importantly that the loan must be under €2,000.**

This will allow people on low income to avail of the new pilot personal micro lending scheme currently being offered by over 30 credit unions nationwide.

However, while National Traveller MABS welcomes and supports the new pilot personal micro lending scheme, such a scheme will not allow Travellers to access affordable loans from credit unions for the purchase of caravans. A decent affordable caravan cannot be obtained for less than €5,000.

We have actively campaigned all senators and we await the response from those contacted.

## Tipperary Travellers Primary Health Care workers join the growing list of Traveller groups availing of local MABS Money Management training

Tipperary money advisors have joined the growing number of local MABS services which have facilitated money management sessions with their respective local Traveller Primary Health Care teams.

On the 20th of October a certificate presentation took place in Tipperary for all the participants on the course.

This training was a joint initiative undertaken by the combined Primary Health care teams of Clonmel and Tipperary Rural Traveller Group, National Traveller MABS, and Tipperary MABS. Mary Teresa Tuohy, and Mairead Ryan, from South Tipperary MABS facilitated the training.

Community education has always been part of the MABS service, and with resources readily available, it provides a very good avenue to develop a sound working relationship between the MABS Service and the local Traveller community.

Mary Teresa, Money Advisor from Tipperary said "It was a very positive experience to facilitate the community education to the health care workers. The fact that the group was small meant much of the learning flowed through informal group discussions."

There was a lot of positive feedback from the Traveller women about the community education programme particularly in terms of knowing about how to access affordable credit through the credit unions. "We all know about the Credit Union now and a lot of Travellers use it." Another health care worker praised the trainers, Mary Teresa and Mairead, and said that they learned about the MABS service and what it can do to help people.

Overall, 8 women received the certificates for completing A Way of Life training programme and the Overcoming Illegal Debt module. They now are in a position to use the skills and knowledge in their work with the local Traveller community, and this helps to make real our principle of being an equality focussed and accessible service. Coverage of the day was included in the local newspaper – South Tipp Today – and the article can be accessed through our website [www.ntmabs.org](http://www.ntmabs.org).

If you are part of a group or know of a Traveller group who would be interested in undertaking community education around money management, please contact our education worker, Dermot Sreenan – [dermot\\_sreenan@mabs.ie](mailto:dermot_sreenan@mabs.ie)



Marie Therese Tuohy (MABS), Brian Dillon, Philomena Ryan, Ellen O'Reilly, Bridget Monaghan, Bridget O'Reilly, Breda Harty, Kate Reilly, Julie Fleming, Mary O'Reilly and Mairead Ryan (MABS)

## Carrickmines.... 2 months on

On the 10th October 2015, 10 lives were taken when a fire swept through a temporary halting site on the Glenamuck Road, Carrickmines, Co Dublin.

**Willie Lynch, Tara Gilbert and their two children, Kelsey and Jodie; Thomas & Sylvia Connors and their three children, Jim, Christy and Mary and Jimmy Lynch - 10 lives taken in a blink of an eye.**

Since this tragedy, both the Traveller and settled community have rallied around the families who have lost so many. Their lives now altered forever.

The families who became homeless on the night of the 10th have now been accommodated in new caravans in a disused car park owned by Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council. While this site may not be adequate, it does offer some sort of privacy and comfort for the families. Southside Traveller Action Group and the Bray Travellers Community Development Group have been tirelessly working with the families and services to ensure that all the proper supports are put in place to help these families cope with their loss.

It has been publicly promised by the local authority that these families will have a permanent halting site to move into within six months of the fire.

Additionally, a health and safety audit of every halting site will now be undertaken over the coming months.

However, the Traveller movement in Ireland feels that local authorities have failed Travellers. This is compounded by many local authorities failure to build adequate Traveller accommodation. A national conference was held on the 3rd November which brought together local and national Traveller organisations, as well as local authority representatives and the Department of Environment. Three main requests were put forward:

- An independent investigation into the Carrickmines Tragedy
- An independent health & safety audit of all Traveller-specific accommodation
- An independent Traveller Accommodation Agency to oversee the delivery of Traveller accommodation

It is hoped that, from this tragedy, some good may come for many Travellers who continue to live in sub-standard accommodation across the country.

The families may, over the coming months, need the support of MABS. As always, National Travellers MABS are available to offer any support to MABS staff who may work with the families.

National Traveller MABS through, The Tharie Times, our website, Facebook and Twitter will keep you updated on progress in this area.

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## Travellers stand together

Following on from the Carrickmines tragedy, a protest was organised for the 28th of October by Minceirs Whiden (cant for Travellers Talking) outside Dáil Éireann calling for an end to discrimination and seeking the provision of decent and appropriate housing for all.

A crowd of over 300 people gathered in Molesworth Street to hear Martin Collins of Pavee Point address the crowd. He questioned how the state intervenes constantly and quickly when it comes to Travellers yet the Gardaí stand aside and let the Rockville Drive residents object to the temporary site for the survivors. He asked if the site which has been found for the family, which by the councils own admission, is not suitable, will be a temporary site, or will they find themselves stranded there for years.

Brigid Quilligan of the Irish Traveller Movement delivered a powerful emotive speech in which she said that now Travellers find themselves in a fight for survival. It is clear, she stated, that the fight for Traveller rights will only be won by Travellers organising and radicalising for themselves. She eloquently quotes Malcolm X – *'In the ghettos that the white men have built for us, we do not aspire to greater things but to view everyday living as survival.'*

Maria Joyce of the National Traveller Women's Forum addressed the crowd and spoke of the need for safe and decent housing. Patrick Nevin of Minceirs Whiden spoke of the need for the state to recognise Travellers as an ethnic group. He considers himself Traveller first and Irish second. In Belfast, his ethnicity is recognised, in Dublin it is not. The move towards recognition is important because it is the starting point for the State to recognise Travellers as different, but to respect that difference and value it. That needs to happen and it will only happen by the Traveller movement working with their allies in the majority population to make this a reality.





## Traveller Ethnicity

On November 3rd, Sinn Fein tabled a Private Members Bill to have Traveller Ethnicity recognised. This followed years of campaigning by Travellers nationally.

The motion allowed the issue of Traveller ethnicity to be debated for the first time in Dáil Éireann. Despite the motion not being successful due to lack of Government support, it highlighted the vast number of politicians from a cross section of groups who support the call for Travellers to be recognised as a distinct ethnic minority.

Gerry Adams, Sinn Fein spoke passionately in favour of Traveller ethnicity as did Pádraig Mac Lochlainn of Sinn Fein who proposed the Private Members Motion.

Equality Minister Aodhán O' Ríordáin called on his colleagues to move away from 'focus group equality' to stand by the truth. "The truth is that the Travelling community in this State, in this Republic are a distinct ethnic group," he said.

Mr Ó Ríordáin said he had long been an advocate for Traveller ethnicity but his efforts have been somewhat frustrated because he is told to take account of public opinion. He added: "The very fact that advocating for the rights of a minority is unpopular is the very reason we should drive forward to ensure that equality is realised." Many Traveller representatives and supporters attended the debate and were present for the vote.

"The defeat of the Sinn Fein motion was not unexpected but it was important and symbolic that the Dáil would have a debate on Traveller issues," said Pavee Point Co Director Martin Collins. "Debates like this will make the Dáil much more meaningful and relevant to the Travelling community."

**Yes!**

**YES  
EQUALITY.**

National Traveller MABS were part of the Traveller Community campaign for a Yes Vote for the Equality Referendum. For the estimated 4,000 LGBT Travellers in Ireland, the positive outcome of the referendum, will now allow, not only LGBT Travellers, but the whole LGBT community in Ireland to live more free and open lives.

