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## KELLY - VICTIMS COMMISSION MUST NOT BE CONTROLLED BY OFMDFM

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SDLP OFMDFM Spokesperson Dolores Kelly MLA has said that the Commission for Victims and Survivors must be given enough latitude and resources to allow the voices of victims and survivors to be heard at all levels of Government here. Speaking before the Commission attends the OFMDFM Committee today Mrs Kelly has warned against any attempts by OFMDFM to control or steer the work of the Commissioners. Mrs Kelly stated:

“It is clear that OFMDFM have much work to do to gain any kind of confidence amongst victims and survivors after the tortured and farcical process in which they went about appointing a victims commission. Tomorrow is a welcome opportunity to hear from the Commission on its views around the Victims and Survivors Strategy. At their last appearance before the committee the commission shared many of the concerns raised by the committee in relation to the draft victims’ strategy. The committee will be seeking further clarification from OFMDFM on a number of issues around the strategy.

In particular the SDLP and the commission were unclear as to the exact remit and terms of reference for the Victims and Survivors’ Service set up and controlled by OFMDFM.

It seems that this service’s planned work overlaps with many of the main functions of the Commission for Victims and Survivors. Indeed, much of the draft victims’ strategy left many questions unanswered, not least around budgetary control and costs. We need to ensure that the maximum amount of money possible goes from the budget straight to those who need it most.

As an exercise in joined up government this entire initiative does not inspire confidence. It has further confused the very people that it promises to help. Despite this I hope that much has been done in the last few months to develop a truly coordinated victims centred strategy. The SDLP will ensure that there is both an opportunity for scrutiny and for detailed inquiry at tomorrows meeting.”

ENDS

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