

STATEMENT BY MICHAEL MC DOWELL SC

27 August 2013

**SEANAD ABOLITION REFERENDUM FLIES IN THE FACE OF THE REPORT OF
THE CONSTITUTION CONVENTION**

The report published today by the Constitutional Convention flies in the face of the government's attempt to abolish Seanad Éireann.

One of the less known and central features of the government's Abolition Bill is that nobody who is not a TD will, in future, be capable of being a government minister. The provision in the existing Constitution which allows for non-TD members of the government is to be abolished along with the Seanad if the people vote Yes on the 4th of October.

But today we learn that a majority of the Constitutional Convention has asked the government to reform the Constitution to allow non-TDs to be appointed as government ministers.

The government's abolition referendum will make Ireland one of the few countries in the European Union which excludes the possibility of appointing a person from outside parliament to become a minister.

This means that the people are being asked to make a grotesque decision. The government has undertaken to consider any recommendations from the Constitutional Convention, including the recommendation that non-TDs should be eligible to be made ministers. At the same time, the government is asking the people to vote to make this impossible.

The complete inconsistency between what the government is asking the people to do on the 4th of October and the recommendations in the report published by the Constitutional Convention today shows how absolutely ridiculous and absurd it was for the government to prohibit the Constitutional Convention, by its terms of reference, from examining the government's proposal to abolish the Seanad.

Ministers should be red-faced with embarrassment about this debacle.

The people of Ireland, in the meantime, should be under no illusion.

If they vote to abolish the Seanad on the 4th of October, they vote to end the possibility of non-TDs becoming ministers. It's as simple as that.

ENDS