

## Minister reiterates commitment to university



Minister Jan O'Sullivan pictured at Newtown Junior School last week. Photo: Mick Wall.

Minister for Education Jan O'Sullivan visited Waterford last week where she faced many questions on the controversy surrounding Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT).

Minister O'Sullivan visited a number of schools in the city and county last Thursday, however the hot topic of conversation was the ongoing saga involving the proposed merger of WIT and IT Carlow.

"I can understand that people want to get a university for the south east. Waterford has been fighting for a university for a very long time," said Minister Sullivan when speaking with The Munster Express at Newtown Junior School.

"Going right back to the Hunt Report in 2009, the recommended way to achieve that has been through mergers of institutes of technology. That is the path by which the goal of a university is going to be achieved and there isn't any other path."

Minister O'Sullivan said it was unfair to suggest that IT Carlow was holding Waterford back, as has been suggested in some quarters.

"I strongly believe a university for the south east can be achieved and I strongly believe the way to achieve it is together," she said.

"In terms of the postgraduate element, yes Waterford is ahead of Carlow. But both institutes have strengths," she added.

Commenting on the retirement of Dr Donie Ormonde, Minister O'Sullivan said he had made the decision himself.

"I very much commend him on his work and dedication for a long number of years. He felt it was time for somebody new to come in and take up the reins," she said.

Minister O'Sullivan explained that she had asked his successor Michael Kelly for a report within ten weeks on how to bring the process further.

When asked about the roles played by Commissioner Phil Hogan and Minister Brendan Howlin in the controversy, she said they were "representing the interests of their communities as they should do as public representatives".

"The department wants to achieve the commitment in the Programme for Government of delivering a university for the south east," she said.

"There has been a focus all the time on the concept of merger. The focus should have been on the bigger prize, the achievement of a university. We need to look at how we can achieve this, not the problems. I firmly believe it can be achieved."