How the controversy leading to Minister's resignation unfolded

JANUARY 13, 2009: Three Brazilian women appear before Limerick District Court, in connection with a series of complaints involving their Clancy Strand apartment. Judge John O'Donnell orders them to leave Limerick within 24 hours.

MARCH 9: Maurice Quinlivan of Limerick Sinn Féin issues a press release criticising Minister O'Dea for using six civil servants in his department to do constituency work and for making unsolicited offers to assist applicants for planning permissions.

MARCH 10: When this is put to Minister O'Dea by Limerick Leader journalist Mike Dwan in the Clarion Hotel, he reports Minister O'Dea as saying: "I suppose I am going to hear too far when I say this, but I'd like to ask Mr. Quinlivan, is the brothel still closed?" The story is published in the Limerick Chronicle, sister paper of the Leader.

APRIL 20: Cllr Quinlivan seeks an injunction to the High Court against Minister O'Dea for repeating his brothel allegations during the forthcoming local election campaign in June. In his affidavit, Minister O'Dea says: "I most categorically and emphatically deny that I said to Mr. Dwan that the plaintiff [Quinlivan] was a part-owner of the said apartment." An injunction is refused by Mr Justice O'Keefe.

JUNE 5: Cllr Quinlivan is elected to Limerick City Council. He continues to pursue an action against Minister O'Dea for defamation.

JULY 24: Limerick Leader editor Alan English meets Willie O'Dea and produces a transcript of the interview with Mike Dwan, which shows that the Minister had in fact claimed Maurice Quinlivan co-owned the apartment. On July 27, Minister O'Dea brings the transcript to the attention of his solicitors and begins the process of formally withdrawing his affidavit.

DECEMBER 21: The legal action between Cllr Quinlivan and Minister O'Dea is settled and the latter agrees to pay the Sinn Féin councillor damages plus his legal costs.

FEBRUARY 2, 2010: Fine Gael Senator Eugene Regan demands to know if Minister O'Dea has been held to account by the Taoiseach for lying under oath in a High Court case.

FEBRUARY 17: A vote of confidence in Minister O'Dea is taken by the Dáil, which is carried by 80 to 69. The opposition had scheduled a motion of no confidence a day earlier to be tabled the following week. Green Party chairman Dan Boyle later posts a statement on Twitter, stating that he has no confidence in Minister O'Dea, despite the Green Party supporting Fianna Fáil in the vote.

FEBRUARY 18: Further calls are made for Minister O'Dea's resignation, including from Cllr Quinlivan. The Limerick Leader releases the audio of the interview between Mr. Dwan and Minister O'Dea.

Reactions of local TDs

Peter Power, Fianna Fáil: I've been a colleague of Willie's for many, many years. We've fought three general elections together. Politics in every constituency is always robust, it's always going to be very, very competitive. In politics when your political position becomes untenable you have to resign if the stability of the Government is undermined. Willie was an extraordinarily hard worker and for that reason this is a huge disappointment for him personally. Losing an election is difficult, but losing cabinet office is a very difficult situation for him, and I recognise that as a colleague.

Jan O'Sullivan, Labour: As an Independent member for Limerick, I and I'm sure my colleagues as well - will be absolutely fighting and ensuring that the Government does not let Limerick down now, simply because we don't have a minister at cabinet anymore. We are as entitled as any other part of the country to get our fair share, and I know we have a lot more problems, maybe, than other parts of the country. It would be totally unfair on Limerick if somehow or other we were to be downgraded in terms of our priority just because we don't have a minister at cabinet.

Kieran O'Donnell, Fine Gael: It was an inevitable outcome with the way the situation unfolded. On a personal level, I felt sorry for him. It has to be a tough time for him and his family. It is unfortunate such a situation has arisen. He is a very hard working and committed public representative of a long standing both at local and national level, and I have no doubt he will continue to serve the people of Limerick.

There are two elements here. The personal issue for Willie O'Dea, and the loss of a minister for Limerick. But the national issue is there is a need for a general election in terms of dealing with the issues of the day both locally and nationally.

With this in mind, I have been committed in terms of working for the needs of Limerick..."
WILLIE O'DEA took his place on the back bench at Dáil Éireann for the first time in almost 13 years this Tuesday — less than a week after his dramatic resignation as Minister for Defence.

The Limerick East TD resigned Thursday after the Government threatened to pull out of the country against the wishes of the Fine Gael leader Mike Dwan, who had been the target of Castle Strand and had been appointed to him by the cabinet of the local government and the outgoing cabinet.

In his resignation letter, the minister for Defence stated: "I have at all times acted in the interests of the Government and the people of Ireland.

I am aware that I have always been honest and fair in response to the public's conduct as a minister."

The letter added: "I believe I have acted honestly and in the interests of the country."

Since his resignation, Deputy O'Dea, who secured more than 70% of the first preference votes in the 2007 general election, has declined to comment publicly on his political future.

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