

Press Release

Forthcoming public hearing and Australian visit

Issued: 22nd August 2013

For immediate use

Please note – the Inquiry would welcome publication and broadcast of the time, date and venue details of the forthcoming hearing, and of the Inquiry's contact details, given at the end of this press release.

The Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry will be holding its third public hearing at **11am** on **Wednesday, 4th September, 2013**.

At the hearing, the Inquiry's Chairman, Sir Anthony Hart, will provide an update on the work of the Inquiry to date. He will also speak about proposed timelines, and will deal with associated procedural issues which will be of interest to institutions and applicants. The hearing will take place at the Ramada Encore, St Anne's Square in Belfast.

To date, 355 individuals have made a formal application to speak to the Inquiry. Most of the applications (224) have come from individuals residing in Northern Ireland. However, there have also been 57 applications from Australia, 47 applications from Great Britain, 17 applications from the Republic of Ireland and 5 from other countries.

The Inquiry's Acknowledgement Forum has now met with 173 applicants, while its legal team has interviewed 60 potential witnesses to help prepare witness statements.

The Forum provides a more informal environment in which applicants can talk privately about their experiences, and is the first stage of their engagement with the Inquiry for most applicants. Applicants are given the option of speaking to the Forum, taking part in the public inquiry, or participating in both processes. To date, most individuals (69%) have opted to take part in both.

To assist potential witnesses from Australia, a team from the Inquiry will be travelling to Australia in mid- September to talk to applicants residing there. An Inquiry spokesperson said:

"The Inquiry welcomes the fact that the number of applications from Northern Ireland and elsewhere has risen significantly over the past months, following extensive promotional and outreach work.

"The Inquiry is very conscious of the need to make the whole process as accessible as possible to potential witnesses, wherever they may reside.

HIA Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry

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"It is for this reason that it has decided to send a team to Australia to meet the large number of applicants there.

"This will reduce the need for applicants to travel to Northern Ireland, and will help to ensure that as many potential witnesses as possible can speak in person to the Inquiry."

In February 2013, the Inquiry launched a promotional and outreach campaign, designed to raise awareness about the Inquiry's existence and to encourage potential witnesses to come forward. The campaign included an advertising poster campaign at bus shelters across Northern Ireland.

In addition, the Inquiry team distributed promotional literature to libraries, GP surgeries and other venues in Northern Ireland, as well as engaging with relevant organisations across Northern Ireland, Great Britain, the Republic of Ireland and overseas. The Inquiry also initiated media publicity in Northern Ireland and elsewhere.

Prior to the launch of the promotional and outreach campaign, 175 formal applications had been received, of which just 1% came from outside Northern Ireland, Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland.

Potential witnesses are still able to submit formal applications to the Inquiry, if they have not already done so.

At the 4th September hearing, the Chairman will be announcing the closing date for applications. This deadline is being set to ensure that the Inquiry can meet the time frame laid out in its Terms of Reference. Under the Inquiry's Terms of Reference, the Inquiry has to complete its hearings and all investigative work by mid-summer 2015, and has to submit its report to the Northern Ireland Executive by 18 January 2016.

Survivors of childhood abuse in Northern Ireland institutions and any other potential witnesses who wish to contact the Inquiry should visit the Inquiry's website at: www.hiainqury.org or contact the Inquiry on the following Freephone number: 0800 068 4935.

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Notes to Editors

1. The third Public Hearing will take place commencing at **11.00 hours on Wednesday, 4th September in the Ramada Hotel, St Anne's Square, Belfast, BT1 2LD**. Refreshments will be served from 10.30am and the media are asked to arrive by **10.50am. No questions will be taken from the floor during the event or media interviews given.**
2. **Filming and photography is permitted at this hearing. However, please bear in mind that individual victims or survivors may attend the presentation, and that their privacy should be respected. The media is asked not to film, photograph or interview any audience members inside the event venue. We would further request that you do not film, photograph or interview any audience members arriving at or leaving the event without their express permission. We would ask the media to exercise sensitivity and discretion in this regard.**
3. With regard to the relatively high number of applications from Australia, journalists may wish to note that documentation examined by the Inquiry has revealed that, between 1947 and 1956,

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some 110 children were sent from institutions in Northern Ireland to institutions in Australia (primarily Western Australia), as part of a UK government policy of child migration.

4. Following an inter-departmental task force report, the Northern Ireland Executive, on 29th September 2011, announced there would be an Investigation and Inquiry into historical institutional abuse.
5. On 31st May 2012, the First Minister and deputy First Minister announced the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry, and advised the Assembly of the Chair of the Inquiry and of the Panel Members for the Acknowledgement Forum.
6. An amended terms of reference to widen the scope of the Inquiry from 1922 - 1995 was announced by the First Minister and deputy First Minister on 18th October 2012. See <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/news-ofmdfm-191012-ministers-widen-historical>
7. The Inquiry has a remit to investigate physical, emotional and sexual childhood abuse, and childhood neglect which occurred in residential institutions in Northern Ireland over a 73-year period up to 1995.
8. For the purposes of this Inquiry “child” means any person under 18 years of age; “institution” means anybody, society or organisation with responsibility for the care, health or welfare of children in Northern Ireland, other than a school (but including a training school or borstal) which, during the relevant period, provided residential accommodation and took decisions about and made provision for the day to day care of children; “relevant period” means the period between 1922 and 1995 (both years inclusive).
9. The Inquiry will be chaired by Sir Anthony Hart, assisted by Panel members Geraldine Doherty and David Lane. Acknowledgement Forum Panel members are: Beverley Clarke, Norah Gibbons, Dave Marshall QPM and Tom Shaw CBE. Biographical details are available on the Inquiry website: www.hiainqury.org
10. The Inquiry is formally established under The Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 which became law on 19th January 2013.
- 11. All media requests for information should be directed to the Inquiry's Press Officer, Liz Fawcett, on 028 9020 0811 or 0771 943 5662, or at liz@lizfawcettconsulting.com**