

**INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE
IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

BANBRIDGE COURTHOUSE

MONDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2014

CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

**MODULE 3 – FORMER DE LA SALLE BOYS' HOME –
RUBANE HOUSE, KIRCUBBIN, CO DOWN**

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

Welcome to the opening of the third module of the Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse in Northern Ireland which will be concerned with the home at Rubane, near Kirkubbin in Co Down run by the De La Salle Brothers.

In a few minutes I will invite Mr Joseph Aiken, junior counsel to the Inquiry, to outline the evidence that the Inquiry will consider during this module. Before he does so I want to take this opportunity to remind everyone of the importance the Inquiry attaches to the evidence of witnesses who have told us of their experiences during the public sittings of the Inquiry, and who will do so during this module and the remaining modules of the Inquiry.

As we have emphasised on many occasions, all of us in the Inquiry are acutely aware of the strain that giving evidence can involve for many of those who have to recall deeply upsetting experiences. We do everything we can to minimize those stresses, as I hope has been apparent to everyone during the first two modules of the public sittings.

As part of that process, we go over all the relevant material that we have with them when they make their written statements to our legal team. But our investigations continue every day, and so new material is discovered by the Inquiry, or is given to us by those whose organisations from which we have requested information and documents. Inevitably, some of this material reaches us after a witness has made his

or her statement. Regrettably some material reaches us a few days, or sometimes only hours, before the witness is scheduled to give evidence.

Not only does this cause difficulties for our counsel and legal team in dealing with the new material at such short notice, but it can mean that the witness may be asked for the first time about important matters on the day when they come to Banbridge to give evidence. Sometimes this new information may be difficult for them.

It might seem to some that these stresses would be avoided if we did not ask applicants to the Inquiry to come to us to give their evidence publicly. However, I cannot over emphasise the importance we place on hearing the oral evidence from as many as possible of those witnesses about their experiences in the institutions we are investigating.

We want to explore these matters in public as far as we can, and the public hearings serve two very important purposes. First of all, the witnesses have the opportunity to have their voices heard in public, and not just by the Inquiry in private. This is an opportunity that many witnesses who have already given evidence have confirmed to the Inquiry, either in their public evidence or privately, that they greatly appreciate.

Secondly, the public hearings also enable us to explore these new matters with the witnesses, and because of their responses, we achieve a deeper understanding of the human dimension of their experiences, and an enhanced insight into the many and complex questions we have to examine.

ENDS