

Press Release

Chairman announces plans for next stage of Inquiry

Issued: Monday 19 May 2014

The Chairman of the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry, Sir Anthony Hart, has today announced that a team of Inquiry lawyers, support staff and Acknowledgement Forum Panel members will pay a second visit to Australia next month. The visit will form part of the preparations for the Inquiry's second module of hearings, which will examine the operation of a child migrant scheme involving the transfer of children from institutions in Northern Ireland to institutions in Australia.

The Chairman said that the module – Module 2 – will commence hearings at the beginning of September.

The Inquiry hopes to commence hearings for Module 3 later in the same month. That module will focus on the former De La Salle Boys' Home, Rubane House, in Kircubbin, Co. Down.

The Chairman made his statement in Banbridge Courthouse, Co. Down at the beginning of week 10 of the Inquiry's oral hearings.

In announcing the next stage of the Inquiry, the Chairman said:

"As you will be aware, today is the 35th day of public hearings devoted to St Joseph's Home, Termonbacca and Nazareth House Children's Home, both in Derry/Londonderry, and we expect that the public hearings in relation to these institutions should be completed by the end of this month, or at the latest by early June.

"As anyone who has been following the public hearings since they started in January this year will realise, the Inquiry has so far heard from 70 witnesses, and the statements from many of those witnesses have been given to the Inquiry as the public hearings have been taking place. In addition, so far over 18,000 documents have been placed before the Inquiry in this module alone. However, the Inquiry staff had to consider a great many more documents than that to decide which were relevant.

"I mention these matters to demonstrate that, as the public hearings take place, there is a great deal of preparatory work that continues to be done in order to take statements from witnesses and gather documents. All of this material has to be considered, collated and processed by the Inquiry before the public session in which a witness gives evidence.

"This involves an enormous amount of work behind the scenes by the Inquiry staff to prepare the necessary material for each day of public hearings in the current module. At the same time they are also pursuing investigations into other institutions, and preparing the necessary material for the Inquiry panel to consider in future modules. This work will continue over the summer months after the present module finishes.

"After the present module, the Inquiry will examine the operation of the child migrant scheme in the context of children from Northern Ireland institutions who were sent to Australia. Before that

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module can start, we have to complete our preparatory work for it, and a major part of that involves a second team from the Inquiry going from Northern Ireland to Australia to speak to those applicants who were not seen during last year's trip.

"Some of them will only speak to the Acknowledgment Forum, but a significant number have to be seen by the Inquiry team. Altogether this will tie up a significant number of Inquiry staff for all of June. That module will then start on Monday 1 September and, whilst the detailed timetable will not be finalised until nearer that time, we are setting aside three weeks for public sessions for that module.

"It will then be followed by the third module which will consider the experiences of children who were placed in the home run by the De La Salle Order at Rubane near Kircubbin, Co. Down. We anticipate that the public hearings relating to that module will start on Monday 29 September.

"The actual dates of these modules may be varied slightly as circumstances dictate and, as we do at present, a more detailed programme showing actual sitting days will be posted on our website from time to time. Nevertheless, I hope that this advance notice of the next part of our programme will help all of those involved with the work of the Inquiry in any capacity to make whatever arrangements are necessary to engage with the Inquiry."

ENDS

Notes to Editors

1. Following an inter-departmental task force report, the Northern Ireland Executive, on 29 September 2011, announced there would be an Investigation and Inquiry into historical institutional abuse.
2. On 31 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.
3. 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 18 October 2012. See <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/news-ofmdfm-191012-ministers-widen-historical>
4. 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.
5. For the purposes of this Inquiry "child" means any person under 18 years of age; "institution" means any body, 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).
6. The Inquiry is 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.hiainquiry.org
7. The Inquiry is formally established under The Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 which became law on 19 January 2013.

CHAIRMAN: SIR ANTHONY HART SECRETARY: ANDREW BROWNE

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8. Public hearings commenced on 13 January 2014, and are currently being conducted in the former Banbridge Courthouse. Details regarding sitting weeks can be found at www.hiainquiry.org
9. A total of 65 applicants resident in Australia applied to either the Statutory Inquiry or the Acknowledgement Forum or both. A team from the Inquiry visited Australia in September 2013 to take statements and met with 30 applicants. A further visit has now been arranged, beginning on 29 May, to see the remainder of those applicants still wishing to engage with the Inquiry. The team will conduct interviews in both Perth and Melbourne. Documentation examined by the Inquiry has revealed that, between 1946 and 1956, at least 120 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.
10. Module 1 has been focusing on St Joseph's Home, Termonbacca, and Nazareth House Children's Home, Bishops St., both in Derry/Londonderry. They were Roman Catholic voluntary children's homes which were run by the Sisters of Nazareth.
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**