

CHAIR'S STATEMENT
ISSUED ON 10 MARCH 2025

These remarks are made on behalf of the Panel as a whole.

1. Our first day of evidence was on 28th June 2022. Two years and nine months ago.
2. We started appropriately with evidence from the sister of a much loved brother who had been a patient in Muckamore for around 25 years .
3. As Mr Doran has related, since then we have heard a very considerable amount of evidence and received 100s of thousands of pages of documents.
4. We want to thank all the relatives and patients who have helped this inquiry by providing evidence, many of whom have, I know, been following these proceedings closely. By giving evidence, the relatives of patients in Muckamore gave their loved ones a voice they would not otherwise have had.
5. The evidence they gave was crucial to the understanding of the panel and we recognise that for many, probably all, the experience of giving evidence was itself very difficult. Further for others just listening to the accounts of the patient experience the evidence which they heard must have been very harrowing for many of them.
6. A total of 90 witnesses gave evidence in the patient experience phase either orally or by way of statement. More witnesses whose accounts did not fall directly within the Inquiry's Terms of Reference were nevertheless summarised for us.

7. We want to thank all of them for assisting the panel.
8. I understand that some of the Core Participants in the patient groups did not agree with every decision I made about the manner in which statements were taken, the scope of the evidence or the documentation to be received by the Inquiry. I can only say that I gave careful consideration to every decision I made and used my best judgment to do what I believed to be right, to secure the evidence we needed upon which a proper foundation for our conclusions could be founded and I have tried to act fairly in relation to every decision I have made.
9. These were highly unusual circumstances, to run a Public Inquiry while there is a very large police investigation and criminal trial ongoing, and successfully rebutting repeated attempts to stop this Inquiry in light of that fact, is testament to the careful approach the Inquiry has taken in its collation of evidence and presentation of it.
10. Some thought we would not get to this point. We have, and I hope that the families will see this as vindication of their persistence in advocating for this Inquiry. It's also a success in that it has allowed everyone concerned who wanted to and who could provide relevant evidence to us, to do so, and because having completed the evidence that now allows us to turn to the serious work of drafting the report and its recommendations.
11. In addition, we also want to thank the members of hospital staff who came forward to speak of their experiences of the hospital. That included several members of staff who were critical of the management of the hospital. Some were frightened to speak but conquered their fear so that they could come and help us. We are very grateful for that and we know that for some of them they showed considerable courage.
12. We have also heard from many organisations that either had supervisory, commissioning or regulatory roles in relation to the Hospital. We heard from those responsible for the direct management of the hospital and for the running of the Trust.

13. I want therefore to thank each and every witness who provided evidence to us. It is now for us to sort through this evidence and deliver a report setting out our conclusions and making recommendations.
14. As you know we intend to hold information sessions in relation to resettlement later this year, as requested to do so, to bring us up to date in relation to recent experiences of resettlement. That evidence will strictly fall outside the terms of reference as it will postdate 2021, and it is sought purely for the purpose of informing any recommendations we make around resettlement. We are working on how those will be conducted and those plans have not yet been finalised but I can say that they will not involve formal evidence sessions nor will they involve the full legal process of taking statements. There are different ways of providing information and we will try to find ways to assist anyone who wants to come and speak to us, but I am not persuaded that making that a formal legal process is the best way. Support will however be offered by the Inquiry to those who wish to provide information to the panel about recent experiences.
15. Further, it is important to underline that the sessions will be entirely voluntary. If people don't want to assist us in the way we are asking for assistance they do not have to.
16. We are going to cast our net beyond those who have already engaged with the Inquiry, and we are interested in hearing from a wide range of people provided their experiences are recent and connected to MAH. We have already heard a lot of evidence about the experiences of resettlement which occurred within the time frame of the terms of reference, and we are not seeking more of the same.
17. We will publish our plans before the end of the month. The sessions are likely to take place during the first two weeks of June. I can say that we will consider whether to allow representations to be made about the information we receive once we've received it.
18. I know that everyone will now be waiting for the report. I can only say that I have written to the Minister for Health and indicated that I hope to have the

report with him this year. I can only promise our best efforts, there is a lot of information to take account of.

19. I would like on behalf of the panel to echo the thanks of Ms. Anyadike Daynes and Mr. Maguire and others for the great assistance given by Geraldine O'Hagan who is no longer with us but who did an immense amount to help families help this inquiry and who in her dying days came herself to give evidence.
20. Can I finish by echoing the thanks of Mr. Doran to the staff supporting the Inquiry. I will not go through that long list again, the administrative team has done an incredible job as have the solicitors, they all have the Panel's gratitude. I do however want particularly to thank the counsel team and Mr. Doran himself who has exercised great judgment to help keep the Inquiry correct in matters of law.
21. Finally, we want to thank Jaclyn Richardson the Secretary to this Inquiry. Every single person who is in the room and every single witness from whom we have heard will have received assistance in one form or another from Jaclyn. She has worked tirelessly on behalf of the Inquiry very often with little thanks and so the time to thank her properly is here and now.
22. That concludes this hearing session.

Tom Kark KC
Chair MAHI