



**Meeting of AMRI members with Mary O'Toole SC, Chair of the Scoping Inquiry
All Hallows College, 9th January 2024**

Introductory Remarks by Sr. Mary Hanrahan PBVM Vice-President of AMRI

Good morning. On behalf of the AMRI Executive, I extend a warm welcome to all of you and thank you for your presence here. Apologies from our President Fr. Tim Lehane who is unable to be with us today. AMRI is happy to help with the organising of this consultative meeting which will be chaired by Mary O'Toole SC, who is the chairperson of the Scoping Inquiry. The purpose of this meeting is to hear from Ms O Toole and to be able to ask questions for information and clarity as the Inquiry moves into another stage. I want to acknowledge the on-going availability and engagement of Mary O'Toole and her team with AMRI and with individual AMRI members.

The Minister for Education Norma Foley appointed a Senior Counsel, Mary O'Toole SC, to lead the scoping inquiry.

As you are already aware, the purpose of the scoping inquiry is to inform the government's response to revelations of historical sexual abuse in day and boarding schools run by religious orders. Ms O'Toole, as Lead, is overseeing the scoping inquiry and, at the end of the process, will submit a report to the Minister for Education, including recommendations on next steps.

The work of the Lead will be informed by reports and inputs from experts across a range of areas including child protection, restorative justice and survivor engagement. Engagement with survivors is central to the work of the scoping inquiry".

From the outset, AMRI has advocated cooperation with the Scoping Inquiry. I wish to thank you for your response in providing the information requested to the Inquiry to date. For many of you, this has necessitated a considerable effort in terms of time and resources.

It is a source of great pain and regret for all of us that young people have been harmed in the past in some schools under religious management and patronage. The abuse which took place continues to affect survivors and their families at every level of their being.

As Religious we are committed to atonement, accountability and justice for survivors. AMRI members in whose schools abuses occurred; have met with and provide opportunities for survivors to be heard, some have developed restorative justice processes, and provide access to financial restitution. *Towards Healing*, an Organisation which is funded by AMRI and the Irish Episcopal Council offers independent counselling to survivors of sexual abuse.

Many sisters, brothers, priests and laypeople feel a sense of betrayal and shame in the face of such abuse. While today there are stringent safeguarding policies and procedures in place; we need to continue to ask how this abuse of power was allowed to occur? Uncovering the truth of the situation is important for we believe as the Gospel tells us that "the truth will make us free" (John 8:31). In this vein, we look forward to Mary O'Toole's report.

On Behalf of AMRI I would like to take this opportunity to recommend, in the interests of fairness and justice for all, that the remit of any further inquiry in this regard should be broad enough to examine the education system as a whole, including the Department of Education. Just looking at sexual abuse in Religious run schools will not give a comprehensive picture of the whole situation.

While making this recommendation, we do urge continued cooperation with this Inquiry in the hope that it will be another important step towards healing and justice for people who were sexually abused in our schools.

So I will now hand over to Mary. Thank you. |

Commented [PC1]: I pared this down because I think she and everyone else will have heard the point and it does not need to be hammered home, undermining the focal point of survivors first.