**Preparatory steps;**

18. As an individual SRF is in a different position to the other state participants, all of which are organisations. He does not hold relevant documents. His legal representatives have been provided to date with six tranches of Inquiry discovery. Understandably at this stage of the Inquiry he has not been served with a Rule 9 request. He is represented by solicitors and counsel who are working on the documentation provided to date and will assist him to respond to any requests by the Inquiry.

**The evidence chapters**

19. This submission will not address each chapter discretely but will make a number of points relevant to these chapters.

20. SRF followed the commemorative and personal statement hearings and considered it important to attend some in person. The hearings only served to reinforce his understanding of the profound and lifelong hurt inflicted upon the next of kin of the victims and survivors.

21. SRF has heard the evidence during the personal statement hearings that the public dispute between SRF and the then Police Ombudsman was unwelcome and distracted from the focus being on the victims and their loss. This was not his intention. He is sorry for causing upset. All he can say now is that back then, when the Ombudsman's report was released, he felt very strongly about its content and considered it important to ensure the public had accurate information about the police investigation of the Omagh Bombing.

22. Following the release of what he considered to be an inaccurate Police Ombudsman report Sir Ronnie acknowledges making an ill judged emotive statement in response to a journalistic question asking him if he would resign if the report was accurate. Having very quickly recognised that it was a crass response Sir Ronnie immediately issued an apology and considered it

important to contact the main church leaders in Northern Ireland. Whilst this comment was a reflection of how unfair he felt the Ombudsman's approach to the investigation was, he recognises the important role that that Police Ombudsman, as the first holder of the office played, and the role the office of Police Ombudsman continues to play in Northern Ireland; a role he was supportive of in its creation[4].

23. It will be clear that in producing a response to the Ombudsman's Report[5] SRF felt it was necessary to dispel the significant factual inaccuracies within the report, the PSNI having not been provided with an opportunity to review the report in advance. Notwithstanding this, the response expressly acknowledged that he and the PSNI were acutely conscious of the unbearable pain and distress caused to the many bereaved families; to those who were injured; and to the so many Individuals and groups affected by the terrible atrocity inflicted upon them in Omagh. He indicated that he had gone to Omagh that day, to the scene and the hospital. He repeated his commitment to doing all he could to bring to justice those who carried out the murderous attack. The PSNI report expressly stated the PSNI's primary concern in preparing a response to the issues raised in the Ombudsman's Report was to ensure that they did not in any way add to that sense of hurt, or reduce in any respect the opportunities available for any subsequent legal proceedings against the perpetrators. It recognised the public concern generated by the Ombudsman's Report and set out how it would address her recommendations. Insofar as this dispute added to a sense of hurt, or became the issue, rather than a search for the truth, that was not the intention. At the relevant time SRF considered he took the appropriate position in light of the information and advice available to him. But as outlined above he is sorry for causing upset to those impacted by the bombing. He will continue to reflect upon this and other decisions through this Inquiry.

[4] By virtue of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998, S51. Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998
[5] At INQ013555-0001 ReviewInterface - Documents - OBI001_Omagh Bombing Inquiry - Core Participants - Relativity