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HIA REF: 7

Witness Name: HIA7

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA7

I, HIA7 will say as follows:-

Personal details

1. I was born on [REDACTED] My maiden name is [REDACTED] I was placed in care from [REDACTED] There are [REDACTED] children in my family. Only the five youngest were put in care - two boys and three girls – [REDACTED] and me. I am the youngest. We were put in care by Rose Black, social worker from [REDACTED]

St Joseph's Children's Home, Termonbacca

2. I was in St Joseph's from [REDACTED] I was [REDACTED] years old. I remember being taken from school in a car by members of our family to Termonbacca. Before we went we were taken to the hairdressers. I had very long red hair and it was chopped up short. When we arrived the boys and the girls were split up.
3. In Termonbacca there was a main building which was the convent where the nuns lived. The baby end was in a building to the left of the convent. In the baby end there was a dining area, a living room and a small kitchen. The dining area was just tables then there was a large table at the top where we

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sat, and then next to that would have been the playroom. I remember there were some toys in the playroom. Someone had made an ice cream van from wood and you could open it, and go into it. On the right hand side of the corridor there were the toilets and I remember pictures of animals on the walls with zebra's and other animals.

4. There was a large dormitory. On the right hand side there was a bedroom and it had a glass window and a door and that's where I slept with my eldest sister [REDACTED]. My other sister [REDACTED] who is a year older than me slept out in a dorm on her own. Next door to that was a bath and next door to that were the toilets. In the first dorm there were a lot of cots, in the second dorm it was only my sister and she slept in the very end bed near the window. There were a lot of empty beds in the dorm and sometimes families would come and go from the home.
5. In a normal morning we were woken up, then we had to make our bed, get dressed and then we went to Mass between 6 and 7am. The chapel was in the convent building. When we came back my sisters and I had to go up to the dormitory and get all the children washed, dressed, put on potties and then bring them down to the dining area and get them seated. We then had to give them their breakfast and when they had eaten theirs we were allowed to go and eat. I was only a [REDACTED] year old girl. It was always lumpy porridge and I was actually forced to eat it. I would gag because you weren't allowed to be sick. If you were you would have got hit. The children were taken into the play area and we had to go to school. There were about twenty babies and toddlers living in the baby end.
6. I still went to [REDACTED] School. In school there was a nun called [REDACTED] and she was very violent and I used to get hit every day with a bamboo stick across the back of my legs. We were picked on in school because we were in care.
7. After school we would come in and nobody ever asked had we homework to do or did we need help. They didn't help us to read or write. I couldn't read or spell

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because I was going from the home to the school and it was just going from one institution to another as it was run by nuns as well. You came in from school and did the same thing again and again – get the children's tea. It wasn't much of a tea. They made sausages or something like that. I was always hungry.

8. After the evening meal we had to take the children up the stairs, pottied them, put nappies on, put them in their cots and put them to bed. The children were babies and toddlers. There was one lady called [REDACTED] and she was an angel. She worked in Termonbacca and I am still in contact with her. [REDACTED] had many arguments with the nuns over us. She was trying to do her best for us. [REDACTED] used to let us stay up and watch 'On the Buses' on a Sunday night behind SR3 [REDACTED] s back. SR3 [REDACTED] was in charge of the baby end. [REDACTED] is now in her seventies and does not want to be involved with the Inquiry.
9. At the weekend we would have been in the play area with the children. We went to Mass and benedictions. Early on a Saturday morning I collected little mats, about twenty or more and I went down the yard to where the boiler house used to be and I had to beat the mats and bring them back upstairs and lay them all beside each cot or each bed.
10. I had a visit from the man I thought was my father. Shortly after that my mother came but then the visits stopped. When I was 16 I found out that I had a different father to my siblings. After a long time we were allowed to go to our sister [REDACTED] s house on a Sunday to visit.
11. During the school holidays I was fostered out a few times. I was first fostered out to [REDACTED] He passed away a few years ago. [REDACTED] told me he and [REDACTED] wanted to adopt me but there was an issue as my mother wouldn't give permission and they never saw me again. I was also fostered out to a couple called [REDACTED] [REDACTED] was a [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] was a teacher in the school I ended up going to - [REDACTED] They took me at Christmas and I remember getting a doll. The next time they took both me and my sister [REDACTED] This went on through the Easter and

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summer holidays but all of a sudden the fostering stopped. I was not given any explanation as to why I was not returned to foster care. [REDACTED] and the [REDACTED] would have bought or made me clothes. I remember being brought back to the home by [REDACTED] and he gave me 50p. Every time I came back to the home **SR3** [REDACTED] took me into a room and took all the clothes and money off me.

12. **SR3** [REDACTED] wasn't very nice. When I went in my hair was short and they let my hair grow long. When I couldn't remember what I had done with the elastics for my hair I got hit over the head with the glass hair brush almost everyday. I did not receive any injuries or receive medical treatment as a result of this.
13. I remember one time I was doing a play in school and **SR3** [REDACTED] came to the school and said I had to leave because Termonbacca had organised a day out. I wouldn't go because I wanted to be in the play on the stage. [REDACTED] **SR3** [REDACTED] gave me the biggest beating of my life. She hit me with the back of her hand and she always went for my hair. She hit me on my arms, shoulders and back.
14. I remember wetting the bed. When this happened I got beaten. I had to strip the bed. Unfortunately one of my sisters had a kidney problem. If we wet the bed sometimes our older sister used to change our bed and get rid of the sheets so we wouldn't get hit. She was caught doing this and she took a beating for us. I remember **SR3** [REDACTED] giving my sister [REDACTED] a black eye.
15. Two sisters from Omagh came to the home. I do not remember their names. The nuns took my sister [REDACTED] out of the room we shared and put one of the girls in the room with me. My sister was put in the dorm with my other sister [REDACTED]. The girl came over to my bed and touched my private parts. She also made me touch her. I didn't want to do it but I was too scared to refuse. This continued every night for a couple of months. My big sister wasn't there to protect me or to stop it.

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16. There was a worker in Termonbacca called **SND58** She made us do her job for her and she ordered us about. She pretended to be this great person but didn't tell the truth - that the children were doing her job and were getting frequent beatings by the nuns. **SND58** was a bully when wasn't about. You would not be addressed by your first name - you were addressed as We felt there was no point in complaining as **SND58** was very close to **SR3** and our complaints would not be acted upon. **SND58** still lives in Derry.
17. I never tried to run away as I was frightened. If you ran away you would have been killed.
18. Rose Black was the social worker who came to the home. When outsiders were coming, for example for fostering, everything was polished and cleaned and everyone was looking spick and span. When we were getting picked for fostering, we were put in the play area and I used to be picked because I had long red hair and two big pink dimples.
19. We only saw our brothers when we were at Mass or on Sunday nights, not every week, they used to show a film up in the boys' end and they would've taken the three of us up to watch the film. I remember it was the first time I ever saw Tom Thumb.
20. On one occasion after I had a bath I was sitting on one of the beds biting my toenails because my toenails weren't cut. I had no clothes on. I remember a man and woman standing watching, looking down at me and I had worms and these worms were crawling out of me. I do not know who they were or why they were there. I did not receive any medical treatment for my condition.
21. Christmas was just a show. People from outside the home were invited to fancy parties in Termonbacca and they had a feast while we were upstairs starving. I was always hungry. I used to love getting dinner in school because I knew I was going to get a potato or something.

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22. I was afraid to mix with people or to do games. I was always afraid because if I knew if I did something the wrong way I was going to get hit with the back end of SR3's hand or I was going to get roared at.
23. I don't remember seeing the doctor or the dentist. I was never shown how to brush my teeth and I never received a tube of toothpaste to clean my teeth.
24. My older sister got hit more than me and my other sister because she was taking beatings for us. But when SR3 could get her hands on us we got it. Every morning I got hit going out the door. I was always getting hit on the back of my head.
25. The only thing we didn't do in Termonbacca was cook, but we cleaned up and looked after the other children even though we were only children. We were getting beaten for nothing. You knew you couldn't tell anybody because nobody was going to believe you.

Good Shepherd Convent and Magdalene Laundry, Derry

26. In 1976 I was sent to Good Shepherd when I was ■ years old. It was a Magdalene Laundry. My mother wanted me put in there because I was talking to a British soldier. She was worried I was going to turn out like her. I was put in by a welfare officer. I was taken to the doctor and I was stripped to see if I had lost my virginity. Every time you went in and out you were checked by the doctor. The doctor was called GSC14 This was requested by my mother.
27. Good Shepherd was just like being in jail. You needed a key to open each door. SR49 was very nice and still resides at Good Shepherd. She got me working in the kitchen as I didn't like the laundry because all the girls were older than me and some of them were bullies. Some of the girls told me that SR49 made positive changes to Good Shepherd.

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28. The accommodation was made up of small cubicles. Each cubicle had two beds and a door. I shared a cubicle with a lady called GSC6 when I first went in. She was terrible. She woke everybody up at 6 o'clock in the morning with a bell. We got dressed, washed, made our bed and went to Mass. Then we went for breakfast which wouldn't have been very much. Afterwards I went to school. I kept it secret that I was in Good Shepherd.
29. At the weekend the laundry was closed down. All the women stayed in a big room which had a TV. We just sat around and passed the day.
30. My mother would have kept me in Good Shepherd for say three months, took me out for a couple of weeks and then put me back in again. This was ongoing. This went on for two years. I didn't like Good Shepherd as it was very institutionalised. I was only a child and I should never have been there as I was too young to be in this institution.

Coneywarren Children's Home, Omagh

31. I went to Coneywarren on 3rd November 1978 when I turned [REDACTED] years old. I loved it there. It was heaven. [REDACTED] was in charge and Gerry McKenna was my Social Worker. It was Gerry's and SR49 [REDACTED]'s decision to put me in Coneywarren to try to keep me away from my mother because every time I was settling my mother would take me out. Coneywarren was a holiday camp, it was lovely. I had my own room and it was mixed, Catholics and Protestants. There were boys and girls of all ages. The minibus took me to school in Omagh and the girls in school treated me as an equal. On a Sunday [REDACTED] [REDACTED] always took us away on a minibus to a picnic or swimming.
32. I was able to work in the baby end and in the kitchen. I would work with the little ones at night, putting them to bed which I enjoyed, and I really enjoyed working in the kitchen for the chef. It was the first time I ever got an allowance to buy clothes and my friend [REDACTED] and I were allowed to walk into Omagh. I had a lot of freedom and it was the happiest time of my life.

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33. I remember one night in Coneywarren there was a bus driver who was in his forties or fifties. He was no longer employed by the home as he lost his licence because he was caught drinking and driving. He came into my room and he tried to kiss me but I put my hand up and nothing happened. He tried but I wouldn't let him. I don't know why he was in the home that night or how he had access to my room. But I loved it in Coneywarren.

Life after care

34. Termonbacca was a nightmare. It's a nightmare that I have tried to put away. I try not to think about it but then a smell like soap or disinfectant or something you see in a newspaper just triggers it off again. To me Termonbacca took my childhood away. They took that 6 year old child and I had to become an adult. The physical, mental and sexual abuse and degrading treatment that I suffered in Termonbacca and how I felt in Good Shepherd that is my issue.

35. Being in care was like a judge sentencing me to jail for 10 years. You weren't fed right, you weren't clothed right, you weren't loved. As a result of this abuse I can't get close to my daughter and I have relationships with my sons of sorts. I walked out of my marriage because of it. I don't let people in emotionally. I take anti-depressants and I have had three years of counselling.

36. As far as I know SR3 [REDACTED] is alive. I haven't reported any of what happened to me to the police.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed **HIA7** [REDACTED]

Dated 23/4/13

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