

Witness Name **SR 293**

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922-1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF **SR 293**Respondent Witness Statement to the Statement of **HIA 211** – HIA Ref 211)**SR 293** will say as follows:-

1. I make this Statement in response to the above named Applicant's Statement to the Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse 1922-1995 ("the Inquiry").
2. The Applicant refers to having been resident in "The Good Shepherd". The formal name of the institution was St. Mary's, Derry and, to avoid confusion, I refer to the institution as St. Mary's in this Statement.

Personal Details

3. I was born in 1934. I joined the Good Shepherd Sisters and made my final vows in 1962.
4. My name in religion was **SR 293** but in later years I reverted back to my Christian name which is **SR 293** I am now known as **SR 293**
5. After I left secondary school, I completed a Secretarial Course and worked in a clerical capacity. As a hobby, I studied Speech and Drama, and completed an Associate Diploma with the London School of Music in 1957.
6. I undertook a Residential Childcare Training State recognised Childcare course in London from 1963 to October 1964 and to my knowledge it was the only State recognised course of its kind at the time. It was certified by the Central Training Council in Child Care. As part of the course I engaged in a number of placements where I worked in residential child-care settings outside the Good Shepherd Sisters institutions. For example, one of these was in a residential school for girls aged 16 to 18 years, and another was a reception centre for children in the foster care process

prior to them being placed with foster parents. I completed these placements in August 1964.

7. I engaged in a two year full time Social Work Course with the University of Ulster (Magee College) which I completed in 1978 and received a Social Work Certificate issued by CCETSW and a University Certificate in Applied Youth and Community Studies from the University of Ulster. In 1987, through part-time study, I obtained an M.A. (Hons) Degree (Regis College, Denver, USA) in Family and Community Development, and a M.Sc in Guidance and Counselling through University of Ulster (Jordanstown) by part-time evening study in 1994.

St. Mary's Derry – Ambience and routine

8. I would like to record a number of general points in relation to the daily schedule and routine in St Mary's Derry. When I came to Derry in November 1964, SR 49 SR 49 was there, she had been there since 1961. SR 49 had a lovely way with the Ladies. They appeared to have a friendly relationship with her.
9. I noticed that the general atmosphere in St Mary's was homely, warm and relaxed. There was always a great modernising spirit in St Mary's Derry – they were always very progressive. There was an easy relationship between the Sisters and the Ladies, and we formed real bonds.
10. From the time I arrived in St Mary's in 1964, we all began work at 9am, and there was a tea break at 11 o'clock. Lunch was at 12.30p.m. We worked again from 2pm until afternoon tea at 3:30pm – 4pm, and then finished work at around 5:30pm.
11. When I came to Derry plans were in place for a new laundry building. It was completed in 1967/1968. It was a wide, open place which replaced the previous buildings. The Superior SR 337 oversaw the refurbishment. The Sisters always worked with the Ladies. GSC 19 was responsible for the ironing room which was all mechanised – there were machines to press the clothes. There was a great enthusiasm to embrace the modern, and move forward. GSC 19 was very kind. She had a great love and concern for the Ladies. Some of them would have spoken about her with affection. GSC 20 also worked in the laundry - she was working in the dispatch area. GSC 20 was very laid back and easy-going. There was a Lady who helped in the sewing room area of St Mary's, where she looked after the Ladies' clothes, and would do sewing and repair jobs on the clothes when necessary. The Ladies all had their own clothes – I never remember seeing a uniform. Sisters and Ladies working in the wash house would have worn an apron to protect their clothes from splashes.

12. I took classes in typing and English four (4) mornings a week for some of the ladies who worked in the Laundry in St Mary's. They would generally be aged from 17 or 18 years and upwards. The classes would have started at 11:00am until 12:30pm. They were open to those who wished to come, but not all availed of the opportunity offered. In St Mary's, the classes were held in a room which was previously used as a school room. There were school desks and a blackboard, and a large number of typewriters. The objective was to motivate the Ladies and teach them life skills, such as showing them how to draft a letter. By helping them to learn clerical skills they would be better equipped to apply for a job, and to develop skills to express themselves. We hoped these skills would make them feel more confident about themselves. We were trying to encourage them to acquire skills which would be useful to them when they would leave St Mary's. In later years, some of the Ladies with whom I have stayed in touch have told me that they did not really appreciate the value of these classes until they began work. As far as I am aware, the classes continued on after I left Derry.
13. Around 1968, we decided to invite the St Mary's Ladies who were interested to enrol in formal Evening Classes in the local Technical College in Derry. As we had bought a minibus, another Sister (who was a driver) and myself accompanied them to and from the College as it would have been difficult to avail of public transport. I remember that a couple of the Ladies attended English classes and one of them did Art classes. While I was in Derry, there were usually 4 or 5 Ladies doing Evening Classes. The fees for those classes were paid for by the Good Shepherd Sisters. At that time, I do not recall State finance being available for such classes.
14. Given the fact that we were a Catholic institution in in the middle of a mixed area of Derry, and adjacent to Irish Street, which was predominantly loyalist, we did not like the Ladies to be wandering around the streets outside St Mary's at night. This was in the 1960s and 1970s, and the Troubles were a great concern to us, but we tried to ensure that the Ladies got out of St Mary's regularly. As stated above, a minibus was purchased for St Mary's, and two of the Sisters were taught how to drive it. We took the ladies out in groups of 8 to 10 at a time, and on Saturday afternoons we would go to some of the nearby Donegal beaches. I remember that we went to Clonmany as well as other places. I also remember clearly the excitement when the first holiday house was rented in County Donegal. The Ladies had been out on a day-trip and spotted what seemed a suitable house, and they all hoped that it would be available for renting the following year. In fact this happened. From then on a suitable house was rented each summer.

15. During my time in St Mary's, I recall that there was a girl who came in on a Sunday afternoon to do a few hours' volunteering with the Ladies. She was about 17 years of age and a student in Thornhill College, Derry. There was a large Netball court and Tennis court at the side of the house, and this girl would set up games. It was usually the Ladies aged from 17 or 18 years and upwards who would play. This girl would explain the rule of the game, generally Netball as a larger number could be involved. She would set up two teams and would act as referee. I think she was intending to apply to the University for Youth and Community Leadership training, and she did this volunteering in preparation. I also think she did it because she was interested in sharing her own skills. I recall Sunday afternoons being spent this way, with sport and general relaxation.
16. I note from our records (already furnished to the Inquiry) that the Applicant was resident in Derry from 1963 onwards, so my time in St Mary's overlapped with hers.
17. When I was in Derry between November 1964 and October 1970 the atmosphere in St Mary's was relaxed. **SR 49** brought great warmth to the place, and the Ladies had great affection for her. It is therefore with great sadness that I read at paragraph 12 (GSC-048) that the Applicant remembers St Mary's as being "like a prison", as every effort was made to assist the ladies to feel valued.
18. I have found it difficult to reconcile my recollection of St Mary's Derry with the account given by the Applicant. Many of those who were in St Mary's are still in contact with me personally, 40 years on. I receive cards at Christmas, and I have seen photos of their families. I know I am not the only Sister who is in contact with Ladies who had been with us in St Mary's, and a number of them have told me that they recall their time in St. Mary's Derry with gratitude as they felt accepted and respected. For many of the Ladies, St. Mary's constituted a safe environment. It was a place of refuge. They were in need of accommodation, security, safety, and they came to us and were given care, compassion and good food. I recall distinctly one incident in the mid-1960s which greatly distressed me at the time. A mother of one of the Ladies took her daughter out of St Mary's against the daughter's wishes, and returned her to an abusive home situation. When she contacted me a number of years later, she explained what had happened. The Lady told me she had not wanted to leave St Mary's as she had been very happy there. She told me that she was grateful for all that has been done for her in St Mary's Derry, as it helped her cope when she left. This lady continues to keep in touch with me and at Christmas the first Christmas card I receive every year comes from her. From time to time she gives me details of how her life is going. I give this as an example because I feel it is

important for the Inquiry to understand that ladies were brought to us for all sorts of complex reasons. Sometimes they were the victims of sexual abuse within their family. At times they were suffering terrible neglect or physical abuse. Others had special needs or learning difficulties and their families could not manage. On other occasions, there were Ladies who had been abandoned by their families. We took them in to care for them and show them compassion. I fully understand that in some cases, the families had their own difficulties, arising from poverty: unemployment, poor housing conditions often leading to abuse of alcohol and strained family relationships, sometimes leading to abuse. It is very sad that in those days some families found themselves in situations where it was impossible to care for their children, and the range of State supports now in place did not exist at that time.

19. I note that the Applicant states at paragraph 2 (GSC-045) that her name was changed. I confirm that in most cases, Ladies' names were changed when they came in to St. Mary's. I realise that many of the Ladies may have resented that, but the reason for it was to protect their privacy. One would never ask a Lady what her surname was, or the circumstances of her being brought to St Mary's. It was part of the belief at the time that you could protect the Lady's identity by giving her a new name and a new start. The ethos at the time was very strong on confidentiality. Many Ladies were brought to us because there was simply nowhere else for them to go. In some circumstances they had been sexually abused in the family setting, or had suffered neglect, or had special needs, and there were no statutory services provided by the State to meet their needs. Some were placed with us by social services or the Courts. In some cases, the family brought them to us, or they were brought by a priest. The Good Shepherd Sisters were seen as a refuge.
20. When I worked in St Mary's we did not pry into a Lady's past. There was no judgment as to what had gone before, or why she had ended up with us. She was in our care, and we accepted her; it was our charism to deal with the person as we found them, and not to ask questions. If a Lady came to a Sister in confidence, and confided in her because she trusted that Sister and felt comfortable in doing so, that would have been the Lady's own decision. It was our ethos to be compassionate and responsive, not to probe, and to respect the confidentiality of each Lady and to respect their right to privacy. At the time, only the Sister in charge who was responsible for admitting the Lady would have been aware of the reason why someone had been brought to us.
21. One of things which struck me in reading the Applicant's Statement is the extent to which St. Mary's Derry has been portrayed as being stark and devoid of

entertainment. Before I came to St Mary's, I know there had been a tradition of putting on Musicals. While Musicals did not occur while I was there, the interest remained in putting on concerts for the Ladies and friends. A choir was formed by Sr **SR 48** who was a very talented musician. Many of the ladies were very good singers and instrumentalists. I recall that in the late 1960s, Phil Coulter was invited to come to St Mary's. He played the piano and encouraged the ladies to sing, as they had a large repertoire of songs. They sang "Puppet on a String" which had been his winning Eurovision song in 1967. I remember that when they had finished singing, he declared them to be excellent. I also remember, as the Applicant does herself no doubt, that she was a very good singer and was active in the Choir.

22. Although it is a small point in the overall scheme of things, I have to state that it pains me greatly to see that the Applicant describes the food as being "tasteless" (paragraph 5 GSC-046). While I did not work in St Mary's kitchen, **SR 49** (who was a trained cook) was responsible for the catering in St Mary's. I often had occasion to pass through the kitchen and saw the food being prepared. **SR 49** had completed a cookery training programme at the Dublin College of Catering (the College at Cathal Brugha Street, which is now part of the Dublin Institute of Technology). Food in the 1960s and 1970s would not have been as varied as it is today, but it was made with good quality products and it was always healthy and nutritious. I do know that it would have been emphasised to us that efforts should be made to ensure that the Ladies would be given wholesome food, and an appropriate alternative provided if for some reason a Lady was unable to take the normal diet.
23. There are a number of references in the Applicant's Statement to her being slapped across the face at various times (e.g. at paragraph 5 GSC-047). I was appalled to read this allegation. I never witnessed anyone being slapped or hit. Nor do I recall having been told by any of the Ladies that they had been treated in this way. When I arrived in Derry, **SR 312** who would have been responsible for the Ladies in St Mary's would have been firm in her ways, and was strict, but I never saw her hit anyone. To do so would have been contrary to our practice in caring for the ladies.
24. At paragraph 11 (GSC-048) the Applicant refers to the ladies not being allowed out to dances at night. The Applicant's comment needs to be considered in view of the political and social context of the time. I note that the Applicant was in St. Mary's Derry from the 10th April 1963, went to live in a flat to transition to independent living in or around 1972/1973, and remained with us in a more limited form until 1981. St. Mary's was in the Waterside, in Derry. The civil rights movement in Derry had started in the mid-1960s, and October 1968 was a landmark moment in

the beginning of the period of "the Troubles". Some University students formed a group called "The People's Democracy" and in January 1969 led a march from Belfast to Derry. St Mary's was situated on the Dungiven Road, in the Waterside area of the city. I recall that, as the marchers came in to the city, there was a line of Police land-rovers all along the Dungiven Road clearly visible from St Mary's. In August 1969, the civil unrest which had been simmering for some time erupted into widespread violence all across the North. From then on we were in a heightened state of alert. Irish Street housing estate looked down over the site of St. Mary's, and for some weeks there were what appeared to be searchlights trained down over the grounds of St Mary's at night. Later we discovered these had been the lights of cars which were focused on the grounds. St Mary's received threats that we would be attacked and burned down. There was real sectarian hostility at the time, and because we were a conspicuously Catholic group, we feared that we might become a focal point for sectarian violence. It made us all very nervous. A local vigilante group offered the Convent protection, and it was arranged that we would stop ringing the large bell we normally rang at certain times of the day, and in the event of an attack we would ring the Convent Bell and phone the police. News broadcasts became an essential part of life to keep in touch with what was happening, and the news was full of reports of riots and violence. It would not have been safe to allow the Ladies to be out late at night. As I left St Mary's Derry in 1970 I cannot speak of what happened after my departure.

24. In conclusion I have been deeply saddened by the Applicant's statement that she felt the years she spent in St. Mary's Derry were unhappy and painful for her. I trust that in being given the opportunity to recount her story she may be able to free herself from some of her painful memories.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this Witness Statement are true:

Signed:

SR 293

Dated:

3rd day of February 2016

Witness Name: **SR 293**

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922-1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF **SR 293**Respondent Witness Statement to Statement of **HIA 107** (HIA Ref 107)I **SR 293** will say as follows:-

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4. My name in religion was **SR 293** but in later years I reverted back to my Christian name which is **SR 293**. I am now known as **SR 293**.
5. After I left secondary school, I completed a Secretarial Course and worked in a clerical capacity. As a hobby, I studied Speech and Drama, and completed an Associate Diploma with the London School of Music in 1957.
6. I undertook a Residential Childcare Training State recognised Childcare course in London from 1963 to October 1964. To my knowledge it was the only State recognised course of its kind at the time. It was certified by the Central Training Council in Child Care. As part of the course I engaged in a number of placements where I worked in residential child-care settings outside the Good Shepherd Sisters institutions. For example, one of these was in a residential school for girls aged 16 to 18 years, and another was a reception centre for children in the foster care process.

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prior to them being placed with foster parents. I completed these placements in August 1964.

7. I engaged in a two year full time Social Work Course with the University of Ulster (Magee College) which I completed in 1978 and received a Social Work Certificate issued by CCE?SW and a University Certificate in Applied Youth and Community Studies from the University of Ulster. In 1987, through part-time study, I obtained an M.A. (Hons) Degree (Regis College, Denver, USA) in Family and Community Development, and a M.Sc in Guidance and Counselling through University of Ulster (Jordanstown) by part-time evening study in 1994.

St. Mary's Derry – Ambience and routine

8. I would like to record a number of general points in relation to the daily schedule and routine in St Mary's Derry. I came to Derry in November 1964. **SR 49** who had a lovely way with the Ladies, was there, as she had come to St Mary's Derry in 1961. I noticed that there was a general atmosphere of warmth. It was homely and relaxed. I observed that there was a modernising spirit in St Mary's Derry - a willingness to move forward. There was a friendly relationship between the Sisters and the Ladies.
9. When I arrived in St Mary's in 1964, we began work at 9am. There was a tea break at about 11 o'clock. Lunch was at 12.30p.m. We worked again from 1:30pm until afternoon tea at 3:30pm – 4pm, and then finished work at around 5:30pm.
10. When I came to Derry plans were in place to replace the existing Laundry with a new building which was completed in 1967/1968. It was a wide, open place which replaced the previous building and **SR 337** oversaw the refurbishment. The Sisters always worked with the Ladies, **GSC 19** supervised the work in the ironing room which was all mechanised – there were machines to press the clothes. There was always a forward-looking thrust and a focus on how to bring about development in St Mary's.
11. I took classes in Typing and English four (4) mornings a week for some of the Ladies who worked in the Laundry in St Mary's. They would generally be aged from 17 or 18 years and upwards. The classes would have started at 11:00am until 12:30pm. They were open to those who wished to come, but not all availed of the opportunity offered. In St Mary's, the classes were held in a room which was previously used as a school room. There were school desks and a blackboard, and a large number of typewriters. The objective was to motivate the Ladies and teach them life skills, such

as showing them how to draft a letter. By helping them learn clerical skills, they could apply for a job, and develop skills to express themselves. We hoped these skills would make them feel more confident about themselves. We were trying to encourage them to acquire skills which would be useful when they would leave St Mary's. In later years, some of the Ladies with whom I have stayed in touch have told me that they did not really appreciate the value of these classes until they began work. As far as I am aware, the classes continued on after I left Derry.

12. Around 1968, we decided to invite the St Mary's Ladies who were interested to enrol in formal Evening Classes in the local Technical College in Derry. As we had bought a minibus, another Sister (who was a driver) and myself accompanied them to and from the College as it would have been difficult to avail of public transport. I remember that a couple of the Ladies attended English classes and one of them attended Art classes. While I was in Derry, there were usually 4 or 5 Ladies doing evening classes. The fees for those classes were paid for by the Good Shepherd Sisters. At that time, I do not recall State finance being available for such classes.
13. Given the fact that we were a Catholic institution in in the middle of a Protestant area of Derry, we did not like the Ladies to be wandering around the streets outside St Mary's at night. This was in the 1960s and 1970s, and the Troubles were a great concern to us, but we tried to ensure that the Ladies got out of St Mary's regularly. As stated above, a minibus was purchased for St Mary's, and two of the Sisters were taught how to drive it. We took the Ladies out in groups of 8 to 10 at a time, and on Saturday afternoons we would go to some of the nearby Donegal beaches. I remember that we went to Clonmany as well as other places. I also remember clearly the excitement when the first holiday house was rented in County Donegal. The Ladies had been out on a day-trip and spotted what seemed a suitable house, and they all hoped that we would get it for the next year, and in fact we did rent it the next year. From then on a suitable house was rented each summer.
14. During my time in St Mary's, I recall that there was a girl who came in on a Sunday afternoon to do a few hours' volunteering with the Ladies. She was about 17 years of age and a student in Thornhill College, Derry. There was a large Netball court and Tennis court at the side of the house, and this girl would set up games. It was usually the Ladies aged from 17 or 18 years and upwards who would play. This girl would explain the rules of the game, generally Netball as a larger number could be involved. She would set up two teams and would act as referee. I think she was intending to apply to the University for Youth and Community Leadership training,

and she did this volunteering in preparation. I also think she did it because she was interested in sharing her own skills. I recall Sunday afternoons being spent this way, with sport and general relaxation.

Applicant's Statement

15. I do not recall the Applicant.
16. I note that the Applicant was in St Mary's Derry November 1960 until February 1965. I arrived in November 1964, so our time in St Mary's Derry overlapped only for a very brief period. However, I wish to state that I do not remember ever having met the Applicant. Some years later, I heard the Applicant's name mentioned by other Ladies, but I have no memory of meeting with her while she was in St Mary's.
17. I note that the Applicant remembers a number of the Sisters who worked in the Laundry: paragraph 11 (GSC-040 she refers to **GSC 19** who she states "supervised the ironing room". I can confirm this is correct – **GSC 19** worked in the ironing room with the Ladies. She was quite particular about how she liked the ironing to be done. **GSC 19** was very kind. She had great love and concern for the Ladies. Many of them would have spoken about her with affection.
18. Also, in paragraph (9) (GSC-039) the Applicant refers to not being allowed to talk while working. I do not remember anyone working in silence. I am not sure if the Radio was on in the Laundry, but it would have been the general practice in other houses to play the Radio during work.
19. In paragraph (11) (GSC-040) the Applicant refers to **GSC 20** I assume that she is speaking of **GSC 20** having worked in the packing room. During the time I was in Derry, **GSC 20** worked in the dispatch area which included a small area where some Laundry was packed. If this is what is meant, I can confirm that **GSC 20** worked in this area, but in general it was referred to as the dispatch area. The Applicant refers to **SR 312** as being in charge. That is correct. Mother **SR 312** had responsibility for the Ladies in St Mary's at that time.
20. One of the Ladies in St Mary's helped in the work room and in the sewing area. She looked after the Ladies' clothes, and would carry out alterations or repair jobs on the clothes when necessary. The Ladies all had their own clothes – I never remember seeing a uniform. The Sisters and Ladies working in the wash house would have worn an apron to protect their clothes from splashes. Everything was mechanised. Machines were used to wash everything with the exception of delicate articles of clothing.

21. At paragraph 7 (GSC-039) the Applicant refers to having sore hands and not receiving any cream. **SR 301** who was a qualified Nurse, worked in the Convent but would have been called on in the event of any of those in St Mary's requiring medical attention. Also, there was a local GP practice in the Waterside that provided medical services to the Ladies in St Mary's and to the Sisters.
22. At the time I was in Derry between November 1964 and October 1970 the atmosphere in St Mary's was free and relaxed. **SR 49** brought great warmth to the place. The Ladies had great affection for her and had friendly relationships with many of the Sisters. It is therefore with great sadness that I read at paragraph 12 (GSC-040) that the Applicant remembers St Mary's as being "worse than a prison", as every effort was made to assist the Ladies to feel valued.
23. Many Ladies who were in St Mary's are still in contact with me personally, more than 40 years later. I receive cards at Christmas, and they often tell me about their families. I know I am not the only Sister who is in contact with Ladies who had been with us in St Mary's, and a number of them have told me that they recall their time in St. Mary's Derry with gratitude as they felt accepted and respected.
24. For many of the ladies, St. Mary's constituted a safe environment. It was a place of refuge. They were in need of accommodation, security, safety, and they came to us and were given care, compassion and good food. I recall distinctly one incident in the mid-1960s which greatly distressed me at the time. A mother of one of the Ladies took her daughter out of St Mary's against the daughter's wishes, and returned her to an abusive home situation. When she contacted me a number of years later, she explained what had happened. The Lady told me she had not wanted to leave St Mary's as she had been very happy there. She told me that she was grateful for all that has been done for her in St Mary's Derry, as it helped her cope when she left. This Lady continues to keep in touch with me and at Christmas the first Christmas card I receive every year comes from her. From time to time she gives me details of how her life is going. I give this as an example because I feel it is important for the Inquiry to understand that Ladies were brought to us for all sorts of complex reasons. Sometimes they were the victims of sexual abuse within their family. At times they were suffering terrible neglect or physical abuse. Others had special needs or learning difficulties and their families could not manage. On other occasions, there were Ladies who had been abandoned by their families. We took them in to care for them and show them compassion.

25. I read with sadness the Applicant's account of the circumstances which brought her to St Mary's, of the child sexual abuse which she had suffered, and the Court Order which stated that she was found by the Magistrate to be *'in need of care or protection, namely as being a child who having a parent not exercising proper care and guardianship is exposed to moral danger'*. I fully understand that in some cases, the families had their own difficulties, arising from unemployment, poor housing conditions etc. sometimes leading to abuse of alcohol and strained family relationships. It is very sad that in those days some families found themselves in situations where it was impossible to care for their children, and did not receive more support, the Statutory Services available at that time were very limited by today's standards.
26. The Applicant alleges that she was thumped on the back by **SR 312** after she ran away. I was appalled to read this allegation. I never witnessed anyone being slapped or hit. I certainly never saw a Lady being struck by a Sister as it would have been contrary to our practice in caring for the Ladies.
27. One of the things that struck me in reading the Applicant's Statement is the extent to which St Mary's Derry is portrayed as joyless. I cannot reconcile this with my own recollections of St. Mary's Derry. It was a house filled with music and a relaxed atmosphere. During my time there, **SR 48** had a core role in music for the Ladies. **SR 48** was a very talented musician. She organised a choir, and the Ladies put on concerts for the Ladies and friends of the Ladies. They had a wide repertoire of songs. Before I came to Derry, I had heard of the Musicals which had been put on but while those did not take place during my time in Derry, the love of music was maintained in various ways. Some of the Ladies were very good singers, and instrumentalists, and this was always encouraged and opportunities taken to enjoy it. I note that the Applicant states at paragraph 12 (GSC-040) that she was brought to a Singing Competition when she was 14 years old. I hope that she has fond memories of that experience.
28. Although it is a small point in the scheme of things, it pains me greatly to see that the Applicant described the food as being *"like slop"* (paragraph 14 GSC-041). While I did not work in St Mary's kitchen, I know that **SR 291** (who is now deceased) was the Cook in St Mary's kitchen at the time the Applicant was there. **SR 291** was a kind lady, and my memory of passing through the kitchen and seeing the food being prepared was that it was made with good quality products and it was always healthy and nutritious. I do know that it would have been the recognised practice to seek to

provide a suitable alternative, as far as possible, for those who needed a particular diet.

29. In conclusion I have been deeply saddened by the Applicant's statement that she felt the years she spent in St. Mary's Derry were unhappy. I trust that in being given the opportunity to recount her story she may be able to free herself from some of her painful memories.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this Witness Statement are true:

Signed:

SR 293

Dated:

4th day of February 2016

- (xi) In paragraph 7 (GSC-039) the Applicant refers to having hands that were "cracked and sore from the washing detergent" and that she never received any cream for her hands. I have no recollection of the Applicant working in any department other than the sewing room.
- (xii) As referred to above, the laundry work was mechanised by that time, so the vast majority of the laundry would have been put in a washing machine. I am sad to hear that the child's hands were sore at any time. It is unusual that she was not brought for treatment if she had sore hands or a rash on her skin. There was a GP practice – the Waterside Practice - that provided medical services to the ladies and Sisters in St. Mary's, where medical attention was required. It is my recollection that **SR 312** (who would have been in charge of the Convent at that time) would have been very good at taking children to the Doctor promptly if they needed treatment.
- (xiii) In paragraph 7 (GSC-039) the Applicant refers to "a sick room" as among one of the rooms in St Mary's. She is correct, there was a sick room. I recall her tending to the sick and I recall in particular her kindness and gentleness in doing so. She brought the sick up their dinner, and sat with them to keep them company. My recollection is that she would have undertaken non-nursing tasks such as bringing up meals and drinks to the sick. My very clear recollection is that she was very kind in how she undertook this work. She was very gentle with the sick ladies, and we acknowledged that kindness.
- (xiv) In paragraph 9 (GSC-039) the Applicant refers to the ladies working together no matter what their age. I confirm that the ladies and the Sisters all worked together, regardless of their age. However, if anyone was infirm or unable to engage in any task, they were not made to work. In paragraph 9 (GSC-039) the Applicant refers to there being "about a hundred women in the convent". I do recall for a short period there were large numbers, but the average number would have been 50-70 at any one time.
- (xv) In paragraph 9 (GSC-039) the Applicant also refers to not being allowed to talk to her co-workers when she was working. The applicant worked in the sewing room where silence was not the norm.
- (xvi) In paragraph 8 (GSC-039) the Applicant refers to a former resident named **GSC 29** She says **GSC 29** **GSC 29** was an elderly lady. She developed breast cancer and died some months later in Derry.

prior to them being placed with foster parents. I completed these placements in August 1964.

7. I engaged in a two year full time Social Work Course with the University of Ulster (Magee College) which I completed in 1978 and received a Social Work Certificate issued by CCETSW and a University Certificate in Applied Youth and Community Studies from the University of Ulster. In 1987, through part-time study, I obtained an M.A. (Hons) Degree (Regis College, Denver, USA) in Family and Community Development, and a M.Sc in Guidance and Counselling through University of Ulster (Jordanstown) by part-time evening study in 1994.

St. Mary's Derry – Ambience and routine

8. I would like to record a number of general points in relation to the daily schedule and routine in St Mary's Derry. I came to Derry in November 1964. [REDACTED] SR 49 who had a lovely way with the Ladies, was there, as she had come to St Mary's Derry in 1961. I noticed that there was a general atmosphere of warmth. It was homely and relaxed. I observed that there was a modernising spirit in St Mary's Derry - a willingness to move forward. There was a friendly relationship between the Sisters and the Ladies.
9. When I arrived in St Mary's in 1964, we began work at 9am. There was a tea break at about 11 o'clock. Lunch was at 12.30p.m. We worked again from 1:30pm until afternoon tea at 3:30pm – 4pm, and then finished work at around 5:30pm.
10. When I came to Derry plans were in place to replace the existing Laundry with a new building which was completed in 1967/1968. It was a wide, open place which replaced the previous building and [REDACTED] SR 337 oversaw the refurbishment. The Sisters always worked with the Ladies [REDACTED] GSC 19 supervised the work in the ironing room which was all mechanised – there were machines to press the clothes. There was always a forward-looking thrust and a focus on how to bring about development in St Mary's.
11. I took classes in Typing and English four (4) mornings a week for some of the Ladies who worked in the Laundry in St Mary's. They would generally be aged from 17 or 18 years and upwards. The classes would have started at 11:00am until 12:30pm. They were open to those who wished to come, but not all availed of the opportunity offered. In St Mary's, the classes were held in a room which was previously used as a school room. There were school desks and a blackboard, and a large number of typewriters. The objective was to motivate the Ladies and teach them life skills, such