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HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE INQUIRY  
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being heard before:

SIR ANTHONY HART (Chairman)

MR DAVID LANE

MS GERALDINE DOHERTY

held at  
Banbridge Court House  
Banbridge

on Tuesday, 15th March 2016

commencing at 10.00 am

(Day 194)

MS CHRISTINE SMITH, QC and MR JOSEPH AIKEN appeared as  
Counsel to the Inquiry.

1 Tuesday, 15th March 2015

2 (10.00 am)

3 (Proceedings delayed)

4 (10.45 am)

5 WITNESS SR294 (called)

6 CHAIRMAN: I am sure it is unnecessary, but can I remind  
7 everyone to ensure that if you have a mobile phone,  
8 please turn it off or put it on "Silent"/"Vibrate", and  
9 I must also remind you that no photography is permitted  
10 either here in the chamber or elsewhere on the premises.

11 Good morning, Mr Aiken.

12 MR AIKEN: Good morning, Chairman, Members of the Panel.

13 The first witness this morning is SR294, who is "SR294".  
14 SR294, Chairman, is aware that you are going to ask her  
15 to take the oath.

16 WITNESS SR294 (sworn)

17 CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Sister. Please sit down.

18 Questions from COUNSEL TO THE INQUIRY

19 MR AIKEN: SR294, coming up on the screen will be the first  
20 page of your first witness statement. You've provided  
21 two to the Inquiry. This one relates to HIA211. Can  
22 you just check that you recognise the first page?

23 A. Okay.

24 Q. If we go through, please, to 334, we'll have the last  
25 page of your first statement, and if you can just

1 confirm you recognise it, that you've signed it?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. And you want to adopt it as part of your evidence to the  
4 Inquiry?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Then your second statement, which is of the same date  
7 and relates to HIA202, if we look at 367, please, and  
8 again if you just check you recognise the first page?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. And if we go to 370, please, again you have signed your  
11 second statement?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. And you want to adopt it as part of your evidence to the  
14 Inquiry?

15 A. Yes, yes.

16 Q. SR294, the statements at the moment don't have the black  
17 marks taking out your personal information, but you want  
18 to keep your anonymity, and the black marks will be  
19 applied then when the statements are published.

20 A. Yes. I would like that. Thank you.

21 Q. Now you are softly spoken. So if you bring that  
22 microphone towards you just a little bit --

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. -- and we will work through some of these issues. It  
25 will not take very long, because you explain in your

1 statement in detail what you want to say. I want to  
2 draw attention just to a few issues --

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. -- that we were discussing yesterday.

5 A. Uh-huh.

6 Q. Before I do that, you were born on

7 A. That's correct, yes.

8 Q. You took your final vows in 1968.

9 A. That's correct.

10 Q. Then after your final vows you did a social science  
11 qualification.

12 A. That's right, yes.

13 Q. You were then working in Derry in the St. Mary's complex  
14 --

15 A. That's right. Uh-huh.

16 Q. -- between October 1970 --

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. -- and September 1977.

19 A. That's correct, yes.

20 Q. So as SR293 was leaving for other service, you were  
21 arriving in effect.

22 A. That's right. That's correct. Uh-huh.

23 Q. You explain in your statement that you worked with SR49  
24 --

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. -- in the teenage unit --

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. -- which you believe operated in Derry within St. Mary's  
4 between 1968 and 1973.

5 A. I think it was '69 --

6 Q. '69?

7 A. -- to 1973.

8 Q. So 1969 --

9 A. Sorry. I beg your pardon. '68 probably, because SR293  
10 was there, yes.

11 Q. Just before you arrive it is operational.

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. You work there with SR49 --

14 A. That's right.

15 Q. -- until it closes in 1973.

16 A. Yes, that's correct, yes.

17 Q. Between 1973 and you leaving Derry in 1977 you work then  
18 in the St. Mary's complex with the ladies in the laundry  
19 as well as doing some other work.

20 A. Yes, that's correct, yes.

21 Q. We talked a bit about that yesterday.

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Work you did in the community.

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. And you -- after you left St. Mary's in 1977 you then

1 did a social work qualification --

2 A. Yes, yes.

3 Q. -- the CQSW --

4 A. That's right. Uh-huh.

5 Q. -- between 1977 and '78. You explain in your statement

6 how you remember the St. Mary's Convent with the older

7 ladies, with the teenagers, with the laundry facility

8 during your period between '70 and '78 --

9 A. That's correct.

10 Q. -- in your statements.

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. What I want to ask you about first is we were discussing

13 yesterday that you were sent to get training --

14 A. That's correct.

15 Q. -- of various types.

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. I was asking you whether you recalled training being

18 an important thing within your particular Order.

19 A. Yes, it was. It was.

20 Q. You were given the opportunity to get social work

21 training, and that was a pattern that you were

22 explaining to me happened across a significant number of

23 your colleagues.

24 A. That's correct, yes.

25 Q. When you come to Derry in 1970, you were explaining to

1 me that you went to work with SR49 in the teenage unit

2 --

3 A. That's correct, yes.

4 Q. -- which she was already operating?

5 A. Yes. Uh-huh.

6 Q. You were explaining to me that it was difficult to break  
7 into that group of six to eight girls working with SR49,  
8 because they loved her.

9 A. Yes, that's correct, yes.

10 Q. I was asking you: "What was it about SR49 that they  
11 found so attractive?" Can you describe what you  
12 remember of her?

13 A. Well, I think one of the things she was was motherly,  
14 motherly and warm, and I suppose they were two  
15 characteristics I'd describe her, you know, yes.

16 Q. You were explaining to me that it took a little time,  
17 but eventually you were accepted by the teenagers --

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. -- that you were looking after.

20 A. It took a while, yes.

21 Q. You were explaining to me generally the teenagers in the  
22 teenage unit were between 12 and 18 years of age.

23 A. Wait now! No, no, there was nobody under school age.

24 No, no. There were two who were going out to school at  
25 St. Breacan's. They would have been the youngest.

1 Q. Yes.

2 A. Yes. That would have been -- they could have been 14,  
3 14 to 15, you know. They were still school-going age.

4 Q. Right. So --

5 A. Yes. They weren't 12.

6 Q. Right. So it was --

7 A. A little older.

8 Q. Of this -- let's start with the numbers. There were  
9 roughly around six or eight teenagers --

10 A. Six or eight, that's right.

11 Q. -- in the group. They would -- the majority of them  
12 would be beyond school leaving age --

13 A. That's right.

14 Q. -- but on occasions you had some who were still at  
15 school --

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. -- that you remember?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. You remember them going out to school?

20 A. I do. Oh, yes, yes.

21 Q. You were explaining to me that you also took some  
22 classes.

23 A. I did, yes. Those who weren't going to school, but who  
24 were over school age, I was asked if I would teach  
25 a group, a few of those. There would be four or five of



1           those. I took them in the mornings for subjects, yes.

2    Q.   If I got this right, there was English, mathematics,  
3           geography and some typing.

4    A.   Yes, yes, yes.

5    Q.   You were explaining to me that that teaching them,  
6           although they were beyond school age --

7    A.   Yes.

8    Q.   -- and could be working in the laundry --

9    A.   Possibly, maybe a little bit in the afternoon. I'm not  
10           -- I couldn't be sure of that, yes, yes.

11   Q.   -- it meant they weren't working in the laundry all day.

12   A.   Oh, no, no, no.

13   Q.   You were explaining to me that they had use of the blue  
14           room, as it was known.

15   A.   Yes, yes.

16   Q.   That was where you would have congregated and spent the  
17           recreation time --

18   A.   Yes.

19   Q.   -- with the teenage girls.

20   A.   Yes. It was their sitting room, you know, like  
21           a sitting room, yes.

22   Q.   Yes. You were explaining to me that the main punishment  
23           that you recalled giving out was banning them from  
24           watching Top of the Pops.

25   A.   Yes, that happened once, yes. I don't know why, but

1 I -- that was what I thought of. I thought -- because  
2 they loved Top of the Pops.

3 Q. And the culture of maintaining discipline by hitting was  
4 not something that you ever recall during your time in  
5 Derry.

6 A. No, I never saw it, no. I never saw hitting. I never  
7 hit.

8 Q. And while you talk about SR 312<sup>1</sup> being firm or strict, you  
9 didn't see her hitting anybody.

10 A. No.

11 Q. It is not something you ever did.

12 A. No.

13 Q. You were explaining to me that it was something  
14 ingrained --

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. -- in the Sisters of the Order from --

17 A. That's right. That's correct.

18 Q. -- the approach that they were to take. You could  
19 remember -- I was asking you, "Do you not remember any  
20 occasion whenever any of the types of things we were  
21 talking about, black book and standing eating meals?"  
22 and you were recounting to me you could remember one  
23 occasion when you were later over that a lady who had  
24 been standing in I think you said to me for SR49 had to  
25 deal with an escapade in the blue room --

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. -- that resulted in a light switch being broken.

3 A. That's right, yes.

4 Q. Do you want to tell the Panel what you recall of that?

5 A. I am not even 100% sure, but I recall that this light  
6 switch was broken, and the Sister who was in charge  
7 of -- well, she must have been in charge of maintenance,  
8 she wasn't very pleased when she -- I mean, we had to  
9 tell her the light switch was broken. So I have a vague  
10 memory that one of the teenagers who broke it had to  
11 stand for breakfast, but I'm not even 100% sure that  
12 happened, you know, but I've a vague memory, a vague  
13 memory of that, but I have no memory of seeing that in  
14 the -- again or in the big dining room.

15 Q. You were explaining to me that in your time the  
16 teenagers -- while the food would have come from the  
17 same St. Mary's kitchen where the beyond teenage age  
18 ladies would be getting their food and eating it in the  
19 dining room, the teenagers you worked with would have  
20 ate their food separately in a room you called I think  
21 the long room?

22 A. The long room, yes, because divided between the  
23 classroom -- you already heard about the classroom with  
24 the desks and the blackboard -- and the other half was  
25 made into a dining room for these younger people.

1 Q. So if I try and summarise what you are explaining to me

2 --

3 A. Uh-huh.

4 Q. -- there was an attempt made in the late '60s/early '70s

5 --

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. -- to create a group type structure for the teenage

8 girls --

9 A. Yes, yes.

10 Q. -- two of whom were going out to school.

11 A. Yes, yes.

12 Q. You also mentioned to me that there was a youth club not

13 on your site --

14 A. No.

15 Q. -- but you were a youth leader in it.

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Did some of the girls go with you to that Youth Club?

18 A. One of the -- I think one of the girls who were going to

19 school must have returned home and the other girl, then

20 I used to bring her up into the youth club. She took

21 part in all the activities there. She also -- we

22 organised holidays every year for the youth -- the girls

23 in the youth club and we'd go for a week to different

24 parts of Ireland. She used to come -- she used to go

25 with the girls there as well, yes.

1 Q. Did the older teenagers in the blue room, if you can  
2 picture the blue room --

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. -- and them being there in the evening, did they go to  
5 the youth club as well?

6 A. No, they didn't, no.

7 Q. No.

8 A. Just her -- just that one girl.

9 Q. So you would have taken this --

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. -- slightly younger girl along with you to the youth  
12 club?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. You were explaining to me as well, SR294, that the girls  
15 in the teenage unit used their own names.

16 A. Oh, yes. They had their own christian names. Whatever  
17 they came in with, that was their name, yes.

18 Q. So whatever the practice had been prior to your time  
19 and/or in St. Mary's with the older ladies, the  
20 teenagers that you were working with kept their own  
21 christian name --

22 A. Yes, yes.

23 Q. -- and were known -- so there was no name changing  
24 policy being applied to them.

25 A. No, no.

1 Q. Can you remember that being discussed or was that SR49  
2 just -- it might be happening.

3 A. No, I think the teenage -- no, I took it for granted  
4 that was the way it always was with the teenage unit,  
5 you know.

6 Q. Yes.

7 A. Starting in '68, you know, that's the only experience  
8 I have. That was the way it was when I came. I never  
9 asked about it, because I took it for granted that's how  
10 it happened, you know, yes.

11 Q. When the teenage unit closed --

12 A. Yes, yes.

13 Q. -- and you were explaining to me that was an enjoyable  
14 part of life, looking after them --

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. -- you then had a combination of roles in the four years  
17 between 1973 and 1977.

18 A. That's correct, yes.

19 Q. You would have worked in the laundry.

20 A. In the mornings.

21 Q. In the mornings. That would have been, if I -- I don't  
22 think it was the packing room. You tell me where it --

23 A. It was the packing room.

24 Q. It was the packing room.

25 A. It was the packing room, a section of the packing room,

1           yes.

2     Q.   But you would only have worked in the mornings, because  
3         in the afternoons -- can you explain to the Panel what  
4         you would have done in the afternoons?

5     A.   Well, in 1974 I got involved through Community Social  
6         Service Centre in Derry in Social -- Social Services'  
7         work in                 area in Derry. I would go there at  
8         1.30 every day and work there until about 5 o'clock, you  
9         know. I started that work by visiting every home in the  
10        area. There was nothing in the area at the time as  
11        regards facilities for people, you know. So my first  
12        job was to visit every home in the area and also to  
13        attend the Social Services Centre to kind of -- one  
14        afternoon a week to make me au fait with benefits and  
15        that type of thing if I were ever asked. So that's how  
16        I started off.

17    Q.   You were explaining to me that after you came back to  
18         Derry --

19    A.   Yes, yes.

20    Q.   -- you were involved then in the                         --

21    A.   That's right. That's correct.

22    Q.   -- in

23    A.   Yes.

24    Q.   If I summarise it this way: it was a difficult area to  
25         be working in with difficult problems at the time.

1 A. It was very -- what's the word -- the Troubles were very  
2 -- were great at the time and ...

3 Q. Yes.

4 A. I suppose I didn't find it difficult to work there  
5 myself, but it was difficult for families, you know --

6 Q. Yes.

7 A. -- and work with them -- yes, it was very difficult for  
8 families and young people.

9 Q. I was drawing to your attention yesterday, SR294, when  
10 we spoke that during the opening I mentioned that the  
11 Bishop of Derry would have made an annual donation to  
12 the congregation in respect of its work. In the  
13 correspondence that had been produced he made sure  
14 a certain proportion of that donation was given to the  
15 work of the .

16 A. That's probably correct.

17 Q. That's the work that you were doing.

18 A. Yes, uh-huh, and Sister **SR 308**, who was another Good  
19 Shepherd Sister working as well, Sister **SR 308**.

20 Q. Working with you.

21 A. Uh-huh.

22 Q. I want to ask you -- we didn't talk about this  
23 yesterday, SR294. So do your best to remember, and if  
24 you can't remember, just say so.

25 A. Uh-huh.



1 Q. From the documentation the Inquiry has seen after the  
2 teenage unit stopped operating in '73 there was  
3 construction work done to create a hostel type  
4 arrangement, which would be known as Bellevue Hostel --

5 A. That's correct, yes.

6 Q. -- that would work between -- I think it was ready by  
7 1975.

8 A. Probably.

9 Q. So you would have still been there.

10 A. Yes, yes.

11 Q. Some of the -- there were sixteen beds and some of them  
12 were rented to Altnagelvin nurses who came in --

13 A. Uh-huh. That's right, yes.

14 Q. -- and then the others were for teenagers. You didn't  
15 play any part in that work.

16 A. Not really, no. Not really, no.

17 Q. But you remember it?

18 A. I remember it being constructed and I remember the  
19 nurses and I remember other -- yes, there were other  
20 young people staying there, you know, yes, yes.

21 Q. But that was -- was that a different type of work from  
22 the teenage unit --

23 A. Oh, it was.

24 Q. -- that you had been doing?

25 A. It was more independent, you know, in the sense of

1 people staying there would be more -- they were  
2 independent. Even if they were young, they were still  
3 going out and maybe getting a job outside and working.

4 Q. So it was more to provide a hostel bed and board type  
5 arrangement than --

6 A. Yes, but with beds retained for if young teenagers were  
7 referred, it was agreed that we would keep so many beds  
8 for them I think. That was my memory.

9 Q. Yes, that's right. A certain number you were going to  
10 always keep, but that was a different type of facility  
11 from the --

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. -- child -- teenager work you were doing.

14 A. Oh, it was, yes. It was purpose built. Yes, it was.

15 Q. You were explaining to me that from your -- you wanted  
16 to say you worked in the laundry for four years. It  
17 wasn't all doom and gloom.

18 A. No.

19 Q. You built good relationships with --

20 A. I would have built up good relationships with some of  
21 the ladies or girls I would have worked with, you know,  
22 and would still -- yes, I would still -- because of  
23 that, I would have kept up relationships with them when  
24 they left Derry even, you know, like going to England or  
25 wherever they -- and it was -- the relationship would

1 maybe have started in the laundry, yes, yes.

2 Q. I was asking you about the likes of the black book and  
3 you said to me that you believed you would have heard  
4 about it at the time --

5 A. Yes. I've a -- sorry.

6 Q. -- but it is not something --

7 A. No.

8 Q. -- that was subject of discussion that sticks in your  
9 mind.

10 A. No, no.

11 Q. It seems at a certain point perhaps during your time  
12 when SR49 takes over it comes to an end as a practice,  
13 but you yourself don't remember seeing it in operation.

14 A. I had no memory of it at all, no, no.

15 Q. SR294, I am not going to ask you any more questions.

16 A. Okay.

17 Q. If you bear with us for a short time, the Panel Members  
18 may want to ask you something.

19 A. Thank you.

20 Questions from THE PANEL

21 CHAIRMAN: SR294, can I just ask you about the youth club,  
22 first of all?

23 A. Yes, sir.

24 Q. It wasn't on the Good Shepherd site. It was somewhere  
25 else. Is that right?

1 A. It was the parish youth club. At that time it was a  
2 girls' youth club and a boys' youth club. They had --

3 Q. Separate?

4 A. Separate, yes, at that time that was.

5 Q. In physical terms where was that in relation to the  
6 convent?

7 A. Well, when we started off, it was very basic. It was  
8 band shed in Fountain Hill in Waterside and it was -- we  
9 made use of it as a youth club. One of the priests was  
10 very involved, **SND 61**, who has died since,  
11 and he actually set it up, you know, but we had other  
12 workers with us.

13 Q. So that was the local parish set it up --

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. -- and you helped in it?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. You described how the practice when you arrived was that  
18 the girls in the teenage unit were just using their own  
19 names, not any given names, so to speak --

20 A. No, no.

21 Q. -- and you just thought that was the normal situation.

22 A. Because of teenagers. I knew in St. Mary's the ladies  
23 had -- would have name change, you know, but I didn't --

24 I just took it for granted that the teenagers had their  
25 own name and I just never questioned that.

1 Q. You have described how you went, once the teenage unit  
2 closed, and you'd worked then in the mornings in the  
3 laundries, but in the afternoon you did Social Service  
4 work in the nearby Isn't that right?

5 A. That's right.

6 Q. You said you went to a Social Services Centre. Was that  
7 an official benefits office or job centre, as we call it  
8 now, or was it a citizen's advice type voluntary thing?

9 A. It was called Centre and  
10 I believe it was set up -- **SND 61** ran it, you  
11 know. I believe he set it up, you know, when the  
12 welfare benefits started maybe in '47 or something like  
13 that.

14 Q. I see. So it was run by the local community as  
15 an advice centre --

16 A. Yes. It was --

17 Q. -- to help people cope with benefits?

18 A. Yes. It was situated in Street in the city centre.

19 Q. On the city side?

20 A. City side, yes, near Street.

21 Q. I see. If I have followed you correctly, you went there  
22 I think once a week --

23 A. Once a week.

24 Q. -- in order to get to understand this benefits system to  
25 give people advice?

1 A. That's right, yes.

2 Q. So if somebody asked you when you were going round the  
3 community, "Oh, I've problem about this" --

4 A. Yes, yes. That's right, yes.

5 Q. -- you would feel able to speak to them about it?

6 A. And from that then they got up the the  
7 need for the

8 Q. Yes. Thank you very much, Sister.

9 A. Thank you.

10 MS DOHERTY: Thanks very much, SR294. Can I just ask: were  
11 you involved in any of the decisions about girls coming  
12 into the Adolescent Unit? Did you and Sister -- were  
13 you and SR49 involved in that?

14 A. Well, each of these girls, I think most of them had  
15 a social worker. So they obviously would -- I am trying  
16 to -- I was involved all right. I used to meet the  
17 social workers when they visited the girls, you know,  
18 and we -- you know, I would --

19 Q. And have a discussion about how they were getting on?

20 A. Yes, yes.

21 Q. Was there kind of a follow-up review of how the girls  
22 were getting on or did the social workers just drop in  
23 to see?

24 A. They'd call -- I mean, they'd call and we'd do it  
25 individually -- like myself and the social worker would,

1 maybe with the girl. You know, there wasn't a formal  
2 review, no.

3 Q. There wasn't a formal review?

4 A. No.

5 Q. Did you have emergency admissions?

6 A. We had emergency admissions when I was there. Now what  
7 do you mean? Do you mean --

8 Q. Do you know like where suddenly like, say, maybe at  
9 7 o'clock in the evening you would get a phone call  
10 saying, "We have got a girl we need to place. Can you  
11 make space for her?"

12 A. We had -- I know we had emergency admissions, but there  
13 were a variety of reasons, you know, and a variety of  
14 people, because I logged that and I remember logging  
15 that in the book, you know.

16 Q. So you would log it down?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. And then you would just make space for the girl --

19 A. Yes, yes, yes.

20 Q. -- and bring her in? Okay. Just finally, Sister, can  
21 you remember any inspectors visiting?

22 A. Later -- oh, no. That was later on. It wasn't in --  
23 Sister **SR 308** -- not -- you  
24 know, we would have known her very well, but I think  
25 that might have been later on. She was -- she would

1 visit. She was -- you know, she was very familiar with  
2 our work and would be -- she wouldn't be a formal  
3 visitation, like.

4 Q. Kind of like a monthly visitor, somebody that --

5 A. No, no, not really, no.

6 Q. No?

7 A. I don't think there was any visitation as such.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. I remember seeing -- when we were looking at the  
10 Inquiry, I remember seeing a report about the hostel at  
11 the time I think it was. Yes, I think somebody visited  
12 that, because they had grant aided it --

13 Q. Grant aided it.

14 A. -- but I don't remember a visit about ...

15 Q. So they were from the Board, were they, or were they  
16 from the Department?

17 A. The Department.

18 Q. The Department?

19 A. Probably. Again I am not sure.

20 Q. Sure. Okay. Thank you very much, Sister.

21 MR LANE: Why did the Adolescent Unit close down?

22 A. It was more or less phased out, because I think what  
23 happened was the need for that accommodation -- the  
24 girls -- like it was in the time when maybe residential  
25 care was becoming less common --



1 Q. Uh-huh.

2 A. -- and people were being helped more out in their own  
3 family environment and out in the community and it was  
4 more or less phased out that way, you know, yes.

5 Q. So did the numbers run down?

6 A. Yes, yes, yes.

7 Q. Okay. Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN: Well, SR294, that's the last question we have for  
9 you. Thank you very much for coming to speak to us  
10 today.

11 A. Thank you. Thank you very much.

12 Q. If you want to rejoin your colleagues at the back of the  
13 chamber.

14 A. Thank you very much indeed.

15 (Witness withdrew)

16 MR AIKEN: Chairman, Members of the Panel, the final witness  
17 today and in this module is Sister Ethna McDermott, who  
18 is going to speak on behalf of the congregation.

19 I wonder if we could take just a short break to allow us  
20 to resolve one or two administrative issues so that that  
21 goes as smoothly as we can.

22 CHAIRMAN: Yes. Very well.

23 (11.15 am)

24 (Short break)

25 (11.25 am)

1                   SISTER ETHNA MCDERMOTT (called)

2   CHAIRMAN:    Yes.

3   MR AIKEN:    Chairman, Members of the Panel, the next witness  
4                today is Sister Ethna McDermott, who is the Province  
5                Leader -- would have been called the Irish Provincial in  
6                times past -- the Province Leader of the congregation  
7                that the Inquiry has been looking at in respect of the  
8                institutions in Derry, Belfast and Newry. Sister Ethna  
9                is aware, Chairman, that you are going to ask her to  
10               take the oath.

11               SISTER ETHNA MCDERMOTT (sworn)

12   CHAIRMAN:    Thank you, Sister. Please sit down.

13               Questions from COUNSEL TO THE INQUIRY

14   MR AIKEN:    Sister Ethna, before we look at the statements  
15                that you have already provided I just want to draw  
16                attention -- you were born in 1960. Can you just give  
17                us your date of birth?

18   A.            .

19   Q.            You were explaining to me that you were a qualified  
20                teacher before you entered the Order.

21   A.            Yes.

22   Q.            You entered the Order and took your final vows in 1993.

23   A.            Yes.

24   Q.            Then you became the Province Leader on                2014.

25   A.            Yes.

1 Q. But going back to the date of 1993, when you take your  
2 final vows, that means that you weren't in any of the  
3 institutions that we have been looking at and certainly  
4 not at any of the particular time frames that we have  
5 been looking at in the context of the applicants'  
6 evidence.

7 A. That's correct.

8 Q. So your knowledge that you are able to bring on behalf  
9 of the congregation is achieved through looking at what  
10 documents are available, and you have explained that  
11 there are limited records at this remove that you have  
12 been able to look at, and speaking to members of the  
13 congregation who were in the various locations at the  
14 various times that have come under scrutiny before the  
15 Inquiry.

16 A. That's right.

17 Q. In total to this point, and I know there may be one more  
18 trying to do something to give context to numbers, but  
19 you have provided on behalf of the congregation nineteen  
20 witness statements.

21 A. That's correct.

22 Q. If we were to go through the process of bringing up each  
23 front and last page and adopting each one of those, it  
24 would take a very long time. So what I am going to do  
25 is bring up the first statement that you provided, if we

1 can please look at 578, and you will see that that's you  
2 speaking on behalf of the congregation. This is the  
3 statement that gives the background to the congregation.  
4 If we can look at 597, please, and if you can confirm  
5 that's your signature.

6 A. It is.

7 Q. What I am going to do, if you bear with me for a moment,  
8 is just summarise that you have provided on behalf of  
9 the congregation five general statements.

10 The first deals with the background and history of  
11 the congregation; the second deals with various internal  
12 documents that the congregations in the various  
13 locations would have maintained, including things like  
14 annals; and then three statements, one for each of the  
15 three locations that the Panel have been examining in  
16 this module.

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. That's the five general statements that you have  
19 provided.

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. There are then at present nine statements commenting on  
22 some specific aspects of what some of the applicants  
23 have had to say. In respect of some applicants there is  
24 one statement and then in respect of another applicant,  
25 for instance, we are up to four statements.

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Then in some you have not provided a statement, because  
3 individual Sisters are able to contribute, and we have  
4 looked at those statements as we have looked through the  
5 evidence.

6 That takes us to fourteen. Then we have a further  
7 four statements from you giving the biographical details  
8 of four members of the congregation who came up in the  
9 applicants' evidence, either facing allegations or  
10 particular reference to them.

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. You have provided statements explaining what you can  
13 about them. That takes us to eighteen.

14 The last statement deals with responding to various  
15 issues that were raised by the Inquiry counsel during  
16 the last number of days of evidence, including the  
17 opening.

18 A. That's right.

19 Q. In respect of each of those nineteen statements you can  
20 confirm for the Panel that you have signed each of them?

21 A. Yes, I can confirm that.

22 Q. And you want to adopt each of them and all of the  
23 exhibits that are appended to them as part of your  
24 evidence on behalf of the congregation to the Inquiry in  
25 this module?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. You have a document that gives all of the references to  
3 those statements and where they can be found in the  
4 evidence bundle and you are satisfied that that's  
5 accurate?

6 A. Yes, I am.

7 Q. The Panel have the same document where each of those  
8 statements can be found.

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Many of them we have looked at during the course of the  
11 last number of days of evidence.

12 What I want to do then, Sister, bearing in mind you  
13 were not in the various institutions at the time we are  
14 looking at, is to turn to some specific systems issues  
15 that have come under scrutiny during the evidence,  
16 either during the opening or have become apparent as we  
17 have taken the evidence over the last number of days.

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. I am going to deal with those in turn. If anything I am  
20 saying, because they are systems issues, is not clear,  
21 you just tell me and we will find a way to make sure  
22 that it is clear.

23 The first of them relates to the concept of the  
24 voluntary visitor. The Inquiry from my discussion with  
25 you you are aware has had to look at this issue in each

1 module, and the administering authority for the purposes  
2 of the legislation that regulated children's homes,  
3 which for a voluntary home like yours the congregation  
4 has said it was the administering authority, had  
5 an obligation to ensure that each home that it ran was  
6 conducted, to use the words of the legislation:

7 "... in such a manner and on such principles as  
8 would further the well-being of the children in the  
9 home."

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. So that was the central legislative mandatory obligation  
12 on anyone running a children's home. As part of that  
13 obligation the second paragraph of regulation 4 where  
14 this was found required the administering authority, so  
15 whoever was running the home, to appoint a voluntary  
16 visitor who would go into each home once a month,  
17 satisfy themselves that it was being operated in the  
18 best interest of children, provide a report to the  
19 administering authority that that was the position or  
20 whatever the position was, and to sign in a book that  
21 was to be maintained in the home that they had done what  
22 they were supposed to have done.

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. The material that was available to the Inquiry that  
25 I opened during the opening appears to suggest that in

1 1984, whenever the Social Work Advisory Group visited  
2 Belfast and had a specific look at Marianville Mother &  
3 Baby Home and they asked for the voluntary visitor  
4 material, the Sister who spoke to them at that stage  
5 explained that there had not been someone formally  
6 appointed to conduct that role by the congregation.

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. In the report that follows in the next year, 1985,  
9 efforts had been made to regularise in a way compliant  
10 with the legislation visits that had been being  
11 conducted by a member of the congregation who visited  
12 the community from Dublin.

13 The result of that context is that there's not  
14 available to the Inquiry any evidence that the  
15 congregation had in any of its locations where it was  
16 operating children's homes appointed someone to formally  
17 conduct what the regulation required until in and around  
18 1984.

19 Having the opportunity to reflect, does the  
20 congregation agree that that appears to be the position?

21 A. Yes, we accept that. We have looked for evidence that  
22 there was and we just can't find it. So we accept  
23 that's the case.

24 Q. I want to turn, Sister Ethna, to some of the -- and I am  
25 going to use language to summarise it down, so don't



1 read anything into the language itself -- but some of  
2 the punishment practices in Derry to help you understand  
3 exactly what I am talking about.

4 The first that I am going to touch on is the  
5 operation of the black book procedure. As you know,  
6 that seems to have involved a record of wrongs, if I put  
7 it that way, being kept and then on a Saturday morning  
8 in a public way those wrongs would be read out. There  
9 would be some kneeling involved and then some potential  
10 loss of privilege of some kind publicly dealt with by it  
11 seems **SR 312**

12 You were explaining to me, just so that this is put  
13 in context, that you had spoken to SR49 about this  
14 practice and her belief that she explained to you was  
15 that **SR 312** did not herself invent this procedure.

16 A. That's correct.

17 Q. It was something that she inherited.

18 A. That's my understanding, yes.

19 Q. So whatever the rights and wrongs of it, it is something  
20 that predated even **SR 312** time in charge as the  
21 Sister-in-Charge in St. Mary's.

22 A. I don't -- I don't know. It seems that -- she certainly  
23 wasn't the only person. There was one other Sister  
24 I know of, I have heard of, in Derry who pushed **SR 312** to  
25 use it. I have never heard of it being used in any

1 other -- in any other programme except in Derry and  
2 beyond that I am vague. I don't know any more after  
3 that.

4 Q. Obviously, as you have heard me repeatedly say during  
5 the opening, it is important that matters are judged not  
6 with hindsight but at the time things occurred, what's  
7 known at the time things occurred, but in SR49's  
8 statements to the Inquiry -- obviously she is too ill to  
9 attend herself -- she seems to suggest that it is at the  
10 time this was occurring, for her between 1961 to it  
11 seems 1975, when she is witnessing it, that she didn't  
12 regard it as an appropriate way to deal with discipline  
13 and she uses the words that it was "wounding" in her  
14 view, which was contrary to the approach of, going back  
15 to the Foundress, how these types of matters should be  
16 dealt with.

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. I think I used the word yesterday that the humiliation  
19 that would be felt going through this. Is that a fair  
20 way of describing it as you on behalf of the  
21 congregation reflect on that practice?

22 A. Yes. I heard of this practice for the first time in the  
23 course of the Inquiry, and I have spoken to many Sisters  
24 about it. Every single Sister that I have spoken to  
25 I think has the same opinion as me, which is we just

1 cannot defend that practice. It was an awful practice  
2 and it was humiliating, and we deeply regret that it  
3 happened.

4 Q. You mentioned when we were speaking yesterday about --  
5 we will touch on this in some other areas as well --  
6 about the overflow of religious life into and affecting  
7 the work of running what in law was a children's home  
8 amongst other things, and the hierarchical structure  
9 that existed, where you had a younger sister, for  
10 instance in this case SR49, not being happy that this  
11 was the process that was engaged in, but not feeling  
12 able to or being in a position to have it overturned or  
13 stopped.

14 Can you give the Panel some idea of the nature of  
15 the hierarchical structure that might have caused that  
16 to be the position?

17 A. I suppose there would have been seniority in age and  
18 seniority in the length of time people were members of  
19 the congregation, and I have spoken to Sisters since  
20 yesterday and one or two said, "I did try to challenge  
21 things when I was a temporary professed Sister, but  
22 I was told to mind my place and nothing -- it wasn't  
23 acted on", and I suppose Sisters would have expected  
24 that response. One or two tried it out and that's the  
25 response they got. There was a -- there was a clear

1 hierarchical structure. Now we talk in terms of  
2 circular models of leadership. At that time it was  
3 hierarchical. I don't know if that answers your  
4 question.

5 Q. I think what I am getting at -- and I think you have  
6 answered it, Sister Ethna -- is that the management  
7 structure that existed at the time did not lend itself  
8 easily to a challenge of a practice that was not  
9 considered by some to be appropriate.

10 A. That's correct.

11 Q. The second practice that seems to have featured in Derry  
12 in particular was the concept of standing to eat meals  
13 as a punishment for something that had been done in  
14 a similar fashion, it being in front of other people,  
15 and I think I did use the word "a humiliating practice".  
16 Is that a fair term to describe this and can you  
17 explain -- you were mentioning to me that there might  
18 have been a carryover from some religious life practice  
19 as far as this was concerned.

20 A. Yes. In terms of a few of the practices we have heard  
21 in the course of the Inquiry that would be the case and  
22 it came up yesterday as well. It was like the Sisters  
23 would have done -- had similar practices, only more  
24 severe. This was a milder form and it was -- it wasn't  
25 appropriate for children to be asked to do this. In the

1 context it was at a time when corporal punishment was  
2 accepted by law as an appropriate form of punishment.  
3 In today's context neither would be considered  
4 appropriate. I don't know what I can add to that.

5 Q. I think what you are explaining about the context, if  
6 I summarise it this way, it was a part of life in the  
7 religious community and then it became it seems in Derry  
8 at least part of the life in the facility that was  
9 provided, and, as I understand it, you are saying it  
10 wouldn't have been appropriate then and you don't  
11 consider it appropriate on behalf of the congregation.

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Is that a fair summary of what you are saying?

14 A. That's fair, and I think it has come up as well that  
15 until the late '60s, even though our apostolic Sisters  
16 would have been working with girls and women, they were  
17 semi-enclosed, almost like the contemplative Sisters,  
18 not quite so enclosed, but now we go out to work among  
19 people. At that time people were placed inside in the  
20 care of the Sisters. The Sisters didn't go out to work.  
21 They welcomed people in. So it was -- as years went on,  
22 it was a very institutional lifestyle, and that -- the  
23 Sisters lived alongside the girls and ladies, and one  
24 was bound to spill over into the other, and it was  
25 inappropriate and that's maybe an explanation for it.

1 Q. Another practice that appears to have certainly come up  
2 in the evidence that has been referred to not just in  
3 relation to Derry, but also including Newry in  
4 a slightly different context, is the issue of silence at  
5 meals. I want to ask you about that in the context of  
6 silence generally, because again you were explaining to  
7 me there was to you a degree of carryover from religious  
8 life then being implemented in the children's -- the  
9 working ladies' facility that also included teenagers,  
10 who were therefore children.

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Your understanding is that that's where this would have  
13 generated from, from a practice in religious life being  
14 carried over.

15 A. That would seem to be the case, yes.

16 Q. You heard SR281, for instance, talk about trying lighten  
17 it by reading some material that would bring some  
18 warmth, but the idea of requiring people to eat their  
19 meals in silence as far as it related to those who were  
20 under 18, is that something the congregation considers  
21 was an appropriate practice or is that something that  
22 was of its time? By that I mean with hindsight, yes, it  
23 would not have been appropriate. It is not something  
24 that would have been -- you would do now, but at the  
25 time that it was happening silence would have been

1 a more normal requirement. I am not saying that's the  
2 case. I am asking you: what is the position as far as  
3 the congregation is concerned?

4 A. I think that would be the congregation's position. With  
5 hindsight it seems strange. It is clear it wasn't  
6 a punishment. It was just the way things were done. In  
7 conversations with Sisters even last night it came up  
8 that in other communities in the Republic of Ireland  
9 they were much larger institutions, and if there were  
10 eighty or a hundred children all in the same dining room  
11 and some of them fighting and arguing, because they were  
12 disturbed -- they had troubled backgrounds, many of  
13 these children -- that it was a way of keeping  
14 discipline and control. I am not condoning that. It is  
15 just by way of trying to understand it. In today's  
16 context it isn't -- it would not be acceptable, but at  
17 the time I think it spilled over from religious life.

18 Q. You were mentioning the context of the time and the fact  
19 that -- this is replete through your statements and  
20 those who have given evidence on behalf of the  
21 congregation -- that it was an era when corporal  
22 punishment was lawful, when the striking of children was  
23 accepted, and we have looked at in some detail the  
24 background of the Order and the approach of the  
25 Foundress and the direction from as early as 1845

1 I think not to strike a child and that being something  
2 that was -- I was going to use the word "hammered in",  
3 but that's not the analogy I want to create -- but  
4 something that was well understood by each member of the  
5 congregation from their formation, that that was the  
6 approach to be taken with children.

7 We looked at the guidance document, for instance, in  
8 1971 that was issued by one of your predecessors --

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. -- which had a focus on looking after the child, on  
11 keeping the family together, on ensuring visits were  
12 occurring, on having reviews and staff meetings and  
13 things of that sort.

14 What that leads me to is the focus -- and you have  
15 heard me ask this question of a number of your  
16 colleagues -- that the Order placed on training their  
17 members to carry out their work properly. It seems from  
18 the evidence that the Inquiry has received that from  
19 an early point of child care training being available  
20 the congregation was engaged in having their members  
21 trained.

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Can you help the Panel to understand was that, as you  
24 understand it, and perhaps still today, the ethos of the  
25 Order in terms of the importance of training?



1 A. It is my understanding that in the 1950s we had  
2 a congregational leader who was very progressive and  
3 really saw it as a priority to promote best practice in  
4 child care throughout the congregation. It took some  
5 years for that to filter through.

6 There was -- the Provincial in Ireland in 1955 went  
7 to the United States to look at child care facilities  
8 there, and she again went in 1961 after a General  
9 Chapter, when this issue would have been raised and  
10 given a lot of -- a lot of attention. She came back  
11 from there, and from that point on, from 1961 throughout  
12 the 1960s, Sisters were sent to visit facilities in  
13 England and the United States, but particularly England,  
14 and to train in England, because there were no courses  
15 in Ireland or Northern Ireland at that time that were  
16 considered to be appropriate.

17 During the '60s there was an emphasis on getting as  
18 many Sisters trained as possible. So some things were  
19 put on hold. We can see the closure of the Sacred Heart  
20 homes in Derry and Belfast at that time, and then they  
21 came to life at the same time in 1969/1970 when Sisters  
22 were returning with qualifications in child care and  
23 social work. So, yes, it was a priority throughout the  
24 whole congregation and Ireland was in line with the rest  
25 of the congregation.

1 Q. You mentioned the facilities and the stopping of  
2 facilities and starting of facilities. I want to turn  
3 to look at some specific issues that have come to light  
4 through the evidence during the module. I want to first  
5 look at the -- I am going to summarise this down to try  
6 and bring all of the issues together.

7 I want to speak to you first, Sister Ethna, about  
8 the three 12-year-old girls who were admitted to  
9 St. Mary's, Derry in 1960. Just to place this in  
10 context, in Derry there had been The Sacred Heart Home  
11 for young teenagers in Derry between 1936 and 1952,  
12 different from Belfast, which was '62. In Derry it  
13 closed in 1952.

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Thereafter from 1952 on until 1968/'69 you have  
16 St. Mary's, Derry, which was, to summarise it,  
17 a residential facility with a working laundry for mainly  
18 working age ladies. The definition of "girls" is  
19 difficult. So from those who had left school right up  
20 until retirement age, with perhaps, looking at the  
21 figures, approximately 10% of the eighty to one hundred  
22 residents being teenagers beyond school age.

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. So that is the general context from 1952 on. We know  
25 from a handwritten document that we looked at before, if

1 we just look at 5327, please -- and I know that these  
2 numbers are slightly different from -- SR293, for  
3 instance, remembered in her mind it was fifty is how it  
4 felt to her. You can see it being recorded the types of  
5 numbers of those beyond 18 and what proportion of them  
6 then were under 18.

7 Then we have, just to complete the context, this  
8 change in 1968/'69 through to 1973 of this specific  
9 teenage approach that's described by SR294 working with  
10 SR49, and then from 1975 after that -- the need for that  
11 is no longer there and it is not happening instead you  
12 have the Bellevue Hostel --

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. -- from 1975, with the Altnagelvin staff making use of  
15 it, amongst other things.

16 Having set that scene, Sister Ethna, you appear to  
17 have this period between 1952 and 1968 when what's being  
18 operated in Derry is in the language of the  
19 congregation's own documents a re-education facility.

20 Now by that implication that means someone has already  
21 had their education and they are now being re-educated

22 --

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. -- which was residential accommodation, a laundry,  
25 re-education through night classes, some day classes

1 taking place, but what you were not running -- and, as  
2 I said to you before, don't agree with me if you don't  
3 agree with me; you say how the congregation sees it --  
4 but what you were not running during that period was  
5 a children's home for school age children. By that  
6 I mean those who were still of compulsory school age.

7 A. That's right.

8 Q. Yet however it comes about -- and perhaps we have not  
9 yet got completely to the bottom of as much information  
10 as we can about how it came about, and the congregation  
11 has done its best you have explained in your statement  
12 about this issue to try and look at what reasons there  
13 may have been for it coming about -- however the reality  
14 of that was, you end up with three 12-year-old children  
15 coming to live in this facility.

16 Now the position at the moment is that at least two  
17 of them, one directly to the Inquiry, and one through  
18 SR293 explaining what the other had to say, two of them  
19 say they didn't go out to school for their last two  
20 years of compulsory school age.

21 The other evidence that's available the Panel may  
22 consider supports that, including SR 312 writing to HIA107  
23 talking about Sister -- that she remembers GSC20  
24 teaching. She didn't, but that's what SR 312 had written  
25 in the letter. The other evidence talks about the two

1 particular girls, HAI107 and GSC16, being pets, one of  
2 **SR 312** one of GSC18, and both being at other ends of the  
3 sewing room learning to sew.

4 Now having set the scene, and appreciating the  
5 congregation's approach that's documented both by the  
6 congregation and in the government papers of turning  
7 no-one away, however difficult their personal  
8 circumstances or the problems they posed, and regardless  
9 of how much care and attention they may have received  
10 while they were in the St. Mary's re-education facility,  
11 the question I end up asking you here is: was that  
12 St. Mary's facility in Derry as it was between 1960 and  
13 1965 a suitable place for 12-year-old children to be?

14 A. I would have to say that it probably wasn't. I think  
15 the Sisters at the time possibly recognised that as  
16 well. There was a court order to place them there and  
17 they had a sense that they felt they couldn't say no,  
18 but that doesn't make the place any more appropriate.  
19 The Sisters had -- the Sisters had the understanding --  
20 we have found that in records -- that it was for a short  
21 time, that it was a short-time arrangement. They don't  
22 seem to have received the court order immediately.

23 There would have been a practice of -- in terms of  
24 school and the placement of them in that facility, it is  
25 maybe two different issues, but the issue of them going

1 to school would have -- there would have been a policy,  
2 if children were placed for a short time, not to  
3 register them in a school for one or two or three weeks.  
4 There would be an understanding they would return to  
5 their own school, and that seems to have been what  
6 happened here, but they were in that facility. It  
7 wasn't child-focused, and we really regret that. We  
8 don't know what the other options could have been or  
9 would have been, if there were any other options.  
10 That's the way it was.

11 Q. I was explaining to you, Sister Ethna, that what I have  
12 described in that way through the three specific girls  
13 in Derry appears to have had a mirror image to a degree  
14 in Belfast. The context is slightly different in that  
15 the Sacred Heart Home for children continues until 1962.  
16 The Adolescent Centre opens in 1970 --

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. -- with you have explained in the recent statement  
19 a precursor development towards The Adolescent Centre in  
20 terms of a teenage group being created from around 1968.

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. We have the evidence that you have been able to provide  
23 about the transitioning out of those in 1962 who were  
24 moving on on the closure of Sacred Heart, but you end up  
25 with, for instance, HIA387, who is 13. Perhaps yet

1 unclear. She believes she came straight across from the  
2 Nazareth home. The records suggest something slightly  
3 different, but she is 13 coming into -- and I am not  
4 going to redescribe it -- but the same type of  
5 St. Mary's re-education facility, more garnered for the  
6 older working age lady/girl, whatever the right term is.

7 She was not alone, because if we look at 5844, this  
8 is a record we have looked at before, Sister Ethna,  
9 which shows that there were four girls in this time  
10 period, which is March 1963, so after the Sacred Heart  
11 has closed, living in the St. Mary's facility, and on a  
12 later page we can see the four of them are going out to  
13 school, and that's perhaps the contrast with the three  
14 in Derry --

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. -- at least according to this record, but again you have  
17 -- HIA387 turns out to be there at the same time and may  
18 be one of these four, doing the best anyone can -- but  
19 you have these under school leaving age children living  
20 in this much bigger re-education facility when you are  
21 not running a children's home.

22 Has the congregation been able to look at and  
23 understand why children were still coming in even though  
24 the facility then available was not the child-centred  
25 one that you had either side, if I can put it that way,

1 if that makes sense?

2 A. I can only -- in the conversations we have had we  
3 can't -- we can't find a reason for that, for why they  
4 were accepted under those circumstances. We can find  
5 an explanation for the period of transition when there  
6 was no child-focused facility there and it reopened  
7 later, but we can't find an explanation for why they  
8 were admitted to St. Mary's at that time.

9 Q. You were explaining to me, Sister Ethna, that just in  
10 the same way as the strength of the instruction about  
11 not hitting a child, the strength of the "We turn no-one  
12 away", and you were giving me an example of a Down's  
13 Syndrome child who was brought along to a facility and  
14 it was you are told explained that the facility couldn't  
15 cater for that person.

16 A. That's correct. In another -- in Derry in St. Mary's  
17 a social worker turned up on the doorstep at one stage  
18 with a teenager who had Down's Syndrome and said, "I  
19 have been asked to deliver this teenager here", and the  
20 Sister said, "But I am sorry. We can't take her,  
21 because we don't have facilities for people with special  
22 needs" and the social worker said, "Well, I was told to  
23 bring her here and I am leaving her here". So she  
24 stayed and she stayed until she died. She was greatly  
25 loved. She was mothered by the Sisters and by all the



1 other women there, but that's what happened. I mean,  
2 I can only surmise if there was a reputation that  
3 Sisters took anybody in who they were asked to take in  
4 and they did so, then it seems to be on record that  
5 Sisters -- the congregation did have that reputation,  
6 but I don't know.

7 Q. Well, if I summarise it this way: it would appear the  
8 congregation were prepared to do it and there was no-one  
9 who stopped you doing it.

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. There is one matter that I wanted to raise just to allow  
12 you to clarify publicly, because I know in speaking to  
13 you you were disappointed that you had said one thing  
14 about the orchard based on what you had been told, and  
15 there was an orchard at Nazareth and you had confirmed  
16 that in the statement based on your belief at the time  
17 that there was not one on the Good Shepherd site, but  
18 you have filed a statement explaining that through  
19 further conversations you have had you are satisfied  
20 there was an orchard more towards the contemplative part  
21 of the facility.

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. You wanted to publicly acknowledge that that was the  
24 position.

25 A. Yes. Thank you. The written statement has been

1 submitted. So I don't think there is anything I have to  
2 add to that written statement.

3 Q. Now from speaking to you, Sister Ethna, you wanted to  
4 recognise on behalf of the congregation, as you said in  
5 the statement, about the Inquiry process and how you  
6 hoped it would bring healing for some of the applicants  
7 who wanted to talk about their time in the Good  
8 Shepherd. In various parts of the statements you talk  
9 about the pastoral approach. I wanted to just allow you  
10 the opportunity. You said to me you wanted to make that  
11 position clear on behalf of the congregation.

12 A. Yes. I have spoken to some of the Sisters and we all  
13 would -- we all would like to communicate to the Panel  
14 and the Inquiry that we welcome this Inquiry. We  
15 appreciate -- we appreciate it is important for all  
16 voices to be heard and we regret that some of our former  
17 residents have painful memories of the time spent in our  
18 care. Our Sisters have maintained contact with some of  
19 the applicants and many other former residents over the  
20 years, and we remain open to engaging with former  
21 resident in a pastoral context, and we hope that through  
22 our cooperation with the Inquiry and through any future  
23 pastoral outreach to former residents, who have painful  
24 memories of time spent in the care of Good Shepherd,  
25 that they may find healing. Thank you.

1 Q. Sister Ethna, you mentioned it in what you have just  
2 said, but you remain open to continuing to assist the  
3 Inquiry. As sometimes is the case, we need to ask some  
4 specific queries that arise beyond the module itself,  
5 and you explained to me you remain committed to doing  
6 that to the best of your ability --

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. -- and that of the congregation.

9 Sister Ethna, you will be pleased to know I am not  
10 going to ask you any more questions. It may well be the  
11 Panel will want to ask you some questions. So if you  
12 just bear with us for a short time while they do that.

13 A. Thank you.

14 Questions from THE PANEL

15 CHAIRMAN: Sister, if I could just take you through a number  
16 of things that you've mentioned in your evidence so far.  
17 Taking, first of all, the emphasis which you say was  
18 placed on training from the time of the progressive  
19 leader in the 1950s you've described, there appears in  
20 years 1963/'64, particularly in Belfast and to a degree  
21 in Derry, to have been a reviewing of priorities and  
22 a change of direction and a different way of doing  
23 things was being actively developed. Isn't that right?

24 A. That's right, yes.

25 Q. To some extent was that also brought about by

1 a different attitude flowing from Vatican II, which we  
2 have heard about?

3 A. That's true.

4 Q. In other words, a more open outreach to the community  
5 and a different way of looking at things?

6 A. That's correct. Vatican II forced religious  
7 congregations to -- who had tended to be -- drifted into  
8 a very strong institutionalised lifestyle to go back to  
9 their sources and look at the vision of their founders  
10 and see, "How can we re-invent that vision for today's  
11 context?" and all that was happening in Vatican II and  
12 in the church at the same time as trends in social work  
13 were starting to emerge as well. It was all part -- all  
14 these different threads were running in parallel.

15 Q. So they were coming together to some extent --

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. -- to bring about a different approach?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. You may not have had the opportunity to think about  
20 this, because it has only just occurred to me again, but  
21 in an earlier module we heard that in 1964 or  
22 thereabouts the Ministry of Home Affairs approached  
23 Cardinal Conway, because there was a rather delicate  
24 situation had arisen in that the Sisters of St. Louis,  
25 who had been running the Training School for Girls at

1 Middletown for a long time, were doing that and the Good  
2 Shepherd Sisters were contemplating providing what may  
3 have appeared at that time to be similar facilities in  
4 Belfast, and the Ministry was concerned that it wasn't  
5 in a position really to decide which was better suited.  
6 That appears not to have come to fruition. Is that  
7 right?

8 A. I have heard --

9 Q. Or perhaps it appeared in the guise of the Adolescent  
10 Centre?

11 A. That's quite possible. It certainly didn't come to  
12 fruition in the terms of a training school.

13 Q. No. In other words, bringing -- providing a place for  
14 girls who came from very disturbed backgrounds and --  
15 that was something you were doing already. Isn't that  
16 right?

17 A. We would have been -- yes, and we would have been doing  
18 it in other places in the Republic of Ireland too.

19 Q. Yes, but not at that time in Northern Ireland  
20 specifically --

21 A. No.

22 Q. -- dealing with that section -- that community who got  
23 into trouble in the courts.

24 A. Not in Northern Ireland, no.

25 Q. No. That perhaps leads me to a broader question and it

1 is this. Was it a characteristic of those who the Good  
2 Shepherd Sisters found themselves helping in all of  
3 their activities -- and before you answer I want to  
4 stress though I refer to the mother and baby homes, the  
5 laundries, it is merely by way of compare and contrast  
6 rather than going into those, because our terms of  
7 reference don't allow us to do that -- but was it  
8 against that background something that the Sisters saw  
9 themselves as doing specifically for teenage girls and  
10 women who either had illegitimate children, children out  
11 of marriage, or in some way or other for whatever reason  
12 had some form of sexual experience, such as the three  
13 girls from who came to Derry are perhaps the  
14 prime example of that?

15 A. Yes. That wouldn't have been the sole reason for people  
16 coming to us or being placed with us, but it would have  
17 been a common enough reason I think. The Sisters  
18 themselves wouldn't have known the girls' stories, but  
19 right back to the time of our Foundress that was the  
20 case.

21 Q. Uh-huh, because one or two of your colleagues have said  
22 in their evidence that one of the reasons for not asking  
23 people about their backgrounds and giving them a  
24 different name was because they were aware in general  
25 perhaps that very often they came from family

1 backgrounds where there had been sexual abuse amongst  
2 other things.

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. No doubt alcoholism and violence played their part as  
5 well, but sexual abuse appears to have been something  
6 that they particularly thought of in this context.

7 Would that be right?

8 A. Yes. We were founded to respond to women who wanted to  
9 exit prostitution away back in the 17th century, and  
10 then when St. Mary Euphrasia joined the congregation The  
11 Order of Our Lady of Charity, it became much broader and  
12 there were broader groups of women who -- women and  
13 girls who were brought into Angers. It is like  
14 a village. It's a huge complex. There were several  
15 categories of children and teenagers and women and  
16 unmarried mothers and people who were placed by the  
17 court like an alternative to prison.

18 Q. Yes.

19 A. They were all -- they were all segregated but within the  
20 same complex. So that goes back to the time of our  
21 foundation.

22 Q. I see. I think in fairness to the Sisters, if we look  
23 at 5327 again, please, you have made the point that the  
24 Sisters really would never turn anyone away. That was  
25 a central tenet of the Sisters' work, as I understand

1 it.

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. You have referred to this example in Derry where a girl  
4 with Down's Syndrome, for whom the Sisters were not  
5 equipped to cope, was nonetheless accepted --

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. -- because they knew she was being, to be brutal about  
8 it, dumped on you.

9 A. Uh-huh.

10 Q. If we look at the bottom of the handwritten document  
11 here, we see:

12 "Stranded young girls who come to their door or who  
13 are brought by police are accommodated",

14 which would indicate whoever correlated this  
15 information was aware that that type of circumstance was  
16 certainly not unknown. We've no way of knowing how  
17 often it happened, but it was frequent enough to be  
18 noted.

19 A. That's correct.

20 Q. I see. Thank you.

21 A. Thank you.

22 MS DOHERTY: Thanks very much, Sister. Can I just ask from  
23 looking at the documentation did you get much evidence  
24 of visits from the Ministry, inspection visits and  
25 contact with the Ministry?



1 A. I only know what's in the existing records. I don't  
2 know if --

3 Q. Other ones --

4 A. I don't know any more. It is possible that once  
5 facilities closed that records were destroyed, but  
6 I really don't know.

7 Q. Can I ask: when the provincial visits happened, would  
8 that have looked at just the religious life of the  
9 community or would there have been a view into the  
10 facilities offered?

11 A. It would have -- it would have covered everything.

12 Q. So there would have been the opportunity for comment on  
13 the type of -- you know, just things like black books or  
14 whatever, there would have been the opportunity?

15 A. There would have been the opportunity. Whether that was  
16 drawn to the Provincial's attention I don't know.

17 Q. Sure. We all do well for inspections. Can I ask did  
18 the laundry support -- the income from the laundry  
19 support the provision of care?

20 A. It did, and somewhere there was a comment that until the  
21 1975s -- until about 1975 the Sisters relied heavily on  
22 the income from the laundry to provide the care for the  
23 ladies. From then onwards there seemed to be more  
24 support from the state and so they weren't so necessary  
25 and then they were -- they came to an end within the

1 next few years.

2 Q. Came to an end. So there was more -- I was just going  
3 to ask that. There was more probably weekly fees coming  
4 in from the Boards for placements at that time?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. During the time even from 1975 on would there have been  
7 private placements? Would there have been a situation  
8 where maybe a local priest would bring a child?

9 A. I really don't know.

10 Q. You don't know. That's fair enough. Just doing it.

11 In relation to province-wide services was there much  
12 kind of oversight of that where they -- you know, you  
13 would look at what you have in Belfast, what you have in  
14 Derry or was each community, you know, freestanding?

15 A. There would have been -- we are a province. So if we  
16 look at other congregations who are diocesan, they  
17 wouldn't have gone beyond their own territory. Our  
18 administration was central in Limerick earlier on and  
19 then Dublin, but each -- they would -- the Provincial  
20 would certainly have overviewed it and been in  
21 communication with the local leaders, but they would  
22 have run -- maybe the Sisters on the ground wouldn't  
23 have had too much contact with Sisters in other cities,  
24 but from the top down there would have been.

25 Q. And you can see that in 1971 guidance where there is

1 really an encouragement of that --

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. -- that the people that are holding the same roles meet  
4 and talk to each other.

5 A. Yes, but there would have been regular chapters. There  
6 is a chapter every six years and decisions and  
7 priorities for the whole province would have been made  
8 and continue to be made at those chapters. There would  
9 be efforts made to evaluate that and see that those  
10 decisions really were implemented at ground level.

11 Q. Ground level. Okay. Thank you. The last thing to say  
12 is just in one of the sentences about the containment of  
13 girls, that Good Shepherd was seen as somewhere -- I  
14 mean, we have heard from girls that were in the Nazareth  
15 House being threatened with the Good Shepherd, and  
16 there's a sense of containment. I was just wondering  
17 when you were talking whether that might be linked to  
18 the almost more enclosed environment of Good Shepherd,  
19 that, you know, the communities themselves were a bit  
20 enclosed. So sending girls there meant they might be  
21 contained more.

22 A. I can't really explain that. It is quite possible. It  
23 is quite possible that there was -- that in view of the  
24 fact that Good Shepherd were known to take unmarried  
25 mothers or people who had been sexually abused that

1           there was a stigma attached to that too. So maybe there  
2           was a stigma attached to Good Shepherd girls.

3    Q.    Okay.

4    A.    I'm surmising. I don't know.

5    Q.    Not at all. Thanks very much, Sister.

6    A.    Okay. Thank you.

7    MR LANE: You worked in a parallel field to that covered by  
8           the Sisters of Nazareth. Did you actually have a lot of  
9           contact with them to discuss what you respectively would  
10          do?

11   A.    I don't know. I am sorry, but I can't answer that.

12   Q.    There obviously were some individuals girls who moved  
13          across. How was that arranged then? Would you know?

14   A.    I have a sense that the Nazareth House in the North  
15          would have worked with smaller children and teenagers --

16   Q.    Yes.

17   A.    -- and the Good Shepherd Sisters worked with teenagers  
18          or older children. So people might have spent their  
19          earlier years in Nazareth House and then come to Good  
20          Shepherd later. There must have been some form of  
21          collaboration or some communication at the very least,  
22          but I don't know to what extent that would have been.

23   Q.    You are not aware of that?

24   A.    Yes.

25   Q.    Okay. Just picking up the thing about laundries

1 bringing in the money, it is a strange area to be in in  
2 the first place. How did -- do you know how that  
3 happened?

4 A. I don't think I have heard. I am drawing a blank on  
5 that one.

6 Q. Not to worry.

7 A. I don't think -- I don't remember hearing that.

8 Q. Just one other question. When there was mass and so on  
9 in the convent, was that a local priest who came along  
10 and provided that?

11 A. I think it would have tended to be a local priest and  
12 there would have been a chaplain appointed generally --

13 Q. Right.

14 A. -- who would have come regularly.

15 Q. And the chaplain would have worked with the two  
16 convents, the contemplative as well as the apostolic?

17 A. At certain times it would have been one chaplain for  
18 both and then at other times there would have been two  
19 separate chaplains.

20 Q. Okay. Thank you very much.

21 A. Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN: Well, Sister Ethna, thank you very much indeed  
23 for not merely coming to speak to us today but providing  
24 so much very detailed and extremely helpful information  
25 on behalf of the Order, because we appreciate that you

1 cannot speak from your experience of any of the three  
2 homes we are looking at here in Northern Ireland, but we  
3 are very grateful for the degree of cooperation which we  
4 have had from you and your colleagues and those  
5 representing you, and I am glad to be able to tell you  
6 that, subject to any loose ends there may be, those are  
7 the last questions that we want to ask you.

8 I should make it clear that, as in other modules,  
9 there may be matters which occur to us when we are  
10 looking at the material we already have that we wish to  
11 have some further information, but in all likelihood we  
12 will deal with that by way of correspondence rather than  
13 by asking you to come back, although we can't completely  
14 exclude that possibility, but I think it is a little  
15 unlikely. Thank you very much.

16 A. Okay. Thank you very much.

17 (Witness withdrew)

18 MR AIKEN: Chairman, Members of the Panel, that brings to  
19 a close the oral evidence in respect of Module 12.

20 CHAIRMAN: Yes. Well, ladies and gentlemen, Easter is  
21 unseasonably early this year. We are now going to rise.  
22 We will resume our public hearings again on 4th April,  
23 when we commence the module which deals with Lissue.

24 I can perhaps give some advance warning that if  
25 there are any loose ends of the type that I have

1 indicated to Sister Ethna a few moments ago in relation  
2 to this module and indeed possibly other modules, our  
3 present intention is to try and deal with those in the  
4 week commencing 25th April, but should that be the case,  
5 we will let you know with definite dates in due course.

6 (12.30 pm)

7 (Inquiry adjourned until 10.00 am  
8 on Monday, 4th April 2016)

9 --ooOoo--

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