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HIA REF: 95

Witness Name: HIA 95

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**THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995**

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**WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 95**

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I, HIA 95 will say as follows:-

**Personal details**

1. I was born on [REDACTED]
2. I am one of nine children. I lived in [REDACTED] with my parents and my siblings. I have one older sister NHB 6 and six younger siblings – NHB 5 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and NHB 7 [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] weren't born when we were taken into care and [REDACTED] never went into care. NHB 7 was brought into Nazareth House later and adopted but we never knew this at the time. A nun told us there was a girl coming into the nursery called NHB 7 [REDACTED] but she was not our sister. It turned she was our sister but we only found this out years later. My mother never signed adoption papers for us.
3. My parents had a legal separation and my mother was living with a man who used to beat us. His name was [REDACTED] and she would leave us with him and he'd batter the living daylights out of us. My father got custody of us in 1953 before we went into the home and I remember going to see a doctor for a medical examination. The doctor examined me down below and he said "yes she has been". I remember [REDACTED] interfering with me as a child.
4. I remember a social worker called NHB 110 [REDACTED] coming to take us away. I remember people looking in cupboards and saying "nothing here" – there was

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no food in the house. My mother wasn't even there at the time. We were crying – we didn't want to be taken away. Even though it might have been a good thing for us at the time because we weren't being well looked after at home, no matter what's happening to you, you don't want to be taken away from what you know.

5. I was taken to Nazareth House [REDACTED] and I stayed there for nine years. My brothers were taken somewhere else – I now know it was St. Joseph's Babies Home.

**Nazareth House, Belfast (13<sup>th</sup> November 1953 – 19<sup>th</sup> February 1962)**

6. I went in to Nazareth House with my sisters NHB 6 and NHB 5 when I was almost eight years old.
7. The first thing that happened when you went in to the home was you were stripped off, put into a bath and changed into different clothes. Then the older girls went through your hair checking for nits. They spent a whole day delousing us.
8. My younger sister NHB 5 went into the nursery section of Nazareth House because she was only four at the time. NHB 6 and I were put into SR 134 group – Sacred Heart. I remember NHB 6 couldn't stop crying and she would get thumped by SR 134. We used to call SR 134 [REDACTED]. You got thumped by her for anything – there didn't have to be a reason. She would grab you by the ears and pull you over to a door and bang your head off the door. She used to bang our heads off the wall outside as well.
9. SR 189 used to bash your head off the wall as well. You didn't have to do anything – you might have pushed somebody over by accident. She was a rough, wicked woman and she would belt you. She had a habit of grabbing you and squeezing you tightly so you would end up with bruises. Even though SR 134 gave me more beatings, SR 189 was the worst. NHB 6 was her favourite and she used to say to me "there's more in her little finger than

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there is in the whole of your body". I think she took a dislike to me because I was feisty. SR 189 ended up becoming [REDACTED] She's dead now.

10. I had a [REDACTED] as a child - [REDACTED] and SR 134 SR 134 hit me so hard in Mass one day for it that I saw stars. She used to stick pins in you as well and crunch you in the back. I always hated her doing that to the little ones but she didn't care how young you were. SR 134 used to take a blackening brush that was used for polishing shoes and fire it at you - you learned to duck out of the way. I hated porridge and SR 134 made me sit at the table all day, right through to lunchtime and then dinner to try to make me eat it. I wouldn't eat it, I wouldn't give in to her and I knew I would just vomit it back up. In the end she just pushed my face into the porridge. I still have a mark with a lump from where she pushed me so hard.

11. I lived in constant fear in the home. If you weren't getting hurt yourself, you were watching somebody else being beaten. I remember one girl called NHB 42 who was paralysed down one side and the nuns brought her up to the stage in the big hall, bent her over and beat her on her bare backside in front of one hundred girls. She couldn't even fight back. I was out playing with a girl called HIA 85 one day when SR 134 got us by the ears and gave us such a hiding. SR 134 would grab you by the hand and batter you with your own hand. Then she would say "I'm not hitting you, you're hitting yourself".

12. The older girls were put in charge of a younger girl and the nuns made you feel like you had to bully the younger girl. Even though I have always tried not to bully anybody, when the girl you were meant to look after didn't do something right, you had to slap them or you'd get in trouble. Looking back now, I know that's wrong. I used to think to myself "you're doing to her what the nuns are doing to you". A lot of the older girls were bullies. There was an older girl called [REDACTED] who worked in the laundry and we were terrified of her. You hated going down to the laundry especially if your pants were soiled.

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Once a week you got your underwear changed. We had to show each side and if you had a mark on your knickers you got a hiding from [REDACTED] SR 134

13. There was another nun called [REDACTED] SR 116 who was a wicked woman. I never had much contact with her but I saw her abuse and beat children - she used to take them away upstairs sometimes and they'd come back upset. We were all terrified of a nun called [REDACTED] SR 145 who worked in the sewing room where we got our uniforms. She never did anything; she just put the fear of God into you. Not all the nuns were nasty. There was a nun called [REDACTED] SR 190 [REDACTED] SR 190 who worked in the kitchen who was lovely and then [REDACTED] SR 191 [REDACTED] SR 191 who worked in the old people's home was nice too.

14. Some girls in the home used to wet the bed and they were made to walk round with their damp sheets around them. I used to be one of the girls who got up in the middle of the night to get the 'wet the beds' up because my bed was next to [REDACTED] SR 134 cell under her window. After a while I had to stop this though because I became violently sick when I woke up out of my sleep suddenly. I suffer from [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I've had this since I was a child but it was never diagnosed. I was very ill as a child and the nuns just left me in bed. They didn't have much choice because [REDACTED] We had to sleep with our hands crossed over our chest. I now know this was to stop us touching ourselves. I still sleep like that to this day. We also used to have to sit on our hands to stop us fidgeting and I find myself doing that even now.

15. I hated bath time in the home. We got baths about twice a week. There were two bathrooms with four baths. We were bathed in Jeyes fluid and our skin used to be red raw from it. We had our hair washed in it as well. We lined up and you would try to be first in the queue because the water was warm at first but it certainly wasn't warm at the end. One girl would sit on the edge of the bath scrubbing her knees while another girl was in the bath. Then you got in the bath when she got out. When you got out the older girls held a sheet up and you had to stand in the corner with the wet sheet around you.

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16. We were forced to do chores in the home. We would be down on our knees in rows of two scrubbing a long marble corridor. We did this about twice a week. We also had to polish the parquet floors with a big heavy polisher we called a 'ronuk'. Every one of us home girls has 'housemaid's knees' – we all have the same problem with our knees. If you didn't do the cleaning properly **SR 134** **SR 134** would dump you in the cubby hole. This was a cupboard where all the cleaning materials were kept. [REDACTED] when I was between nine and eleven years old because the nuns told me I had had [REDACTED] as a child. We used to get pocket money in the home if you were good but I never got any because I was a bit of a minx – the girls used to call me [REDACTED] I was a spirited child. There was a little tuck shop onsite where you could buy sweets but I never got any.
17. We used to run away to escape what was happening to us in Nazareth House. I ran away numerous times. Every time, the police would bring us back and not once did they ask us why we had run away.
18. My mother never once came back for us once we were put into care; it was my father who came. He used to come up to visit us in the home. At one stage he was coming every week but I think the nuns told him then he couldn't come up so often so he came about once a month. All the other girls from the home remember my father coming up visiting because a lot of them had nobody. My father used to bring us sweets and things but the nuns would always take them from us. The nuns were always hovering nearby during these visits so you couldn't say anything. My father used to bring us girls out to an aunt in [REDACTED] during holidays but she made us do loads of chores. One day we decided to get our own back by sweeping the stairs with the black brush you used to clean the range. She sent us back to the home then and never asked us out again.
19. During holidays, we were sent out to different families. The nuns basically farmed us out when we were only kids. I was sent to this family with a newborn baby. I was supposed to help look after the baby but the father of the family tried it on with me during the night while his wife was in the next room. I

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wouldn't give in so he drove me back to the home. He said I wasn't doing the job I was sent there to do just because he wasn't getting his own way. I was only twelve or thirteen at the time and NHB 6 and NHB 5 weren't there – it was just me. There was nobody I could tell. He said the nuns wouldn't believe me because it was them who sent me out to him.

20. We used to go on holidays to Glenariff during the summer. I loved that; it was an escape for us. We used to sneak out to the village late at night and one night SR 134 was waiting on us when we got back. She shouted at us "you'll know the consequences in nine months time" and gave us a good hiding but we probably deserved it for sneaking out so late. At Christmas time we went to parties at Mackies which I have fond memories of.

21. My brothers were in Nazareth Lodge while we were in Nazareth House and I remember going down once but we only saw one brother - I never saw or any of the younger ones. The nuns used to take down girls who had brothers in the Lodge. I remember seeing a boy called NL 28 who they called the boy because he went round clucking like a hen. went to Kircubbin then and I remember going to visit him after I left when I found out he was there.

22. I never remember any social workers or inspectors visiting the home. The only people I recall are benefactors who would come in and the nuns would put on a big show for them. There was a doctor called Dr Hunter who used to come down to the home. He would examine us all in a line in a room off the classroom and I remember him giving us injections but we were never told what they were for. had a practice on the Ormeau Road and I brought a girl I was in charge of down there once because she was tongue tied and he nipped it.

23. I went to school onsite in Nazareth House. SR 134 taught there and she would beat you on the knuckles with a ruler if you got something wrong. Your hand would be so sore for days afterwards you were sure you had broken a bone. SR 134 used to cane us as well – she would keep at you until you

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cried. Then I went to St. Monica's Secondary School on the Ravenhill Road. [REDACTED] SR 192 was the head teacher there and I got expelled because I wouldn't let her slap me. The other girls used to make fun of us because we came from Nazareth House and were dressed differently. We used to wear these wellie boots and I hid mine because I didn't want to stand out. Somebody must have taken them and I was forced to go out in the snow with no shoes on.

24. After I got expelled from school, I was sent to work in the nursery. My sister [REDACTED] later worked in the old people's home. You were sent to help out wherever you were needed. I loved working in the nursery; the little ones were lovely. I felt like their protector. There was a woman from outside called [REDACTED] who worked there too. I never saw any violence towards the little ones in the nursery.

25. I left Nazareth House on 19<sup>th</sup> February 1962 when I was sixteen.

#### Life after care

26. I ended up in a [REDACTED] hostel near [REDACTED] Church for a while. It was run by a nun called [REDACTED]. Then one day I walked out and got on a ship to Birmingham. I came back to Belfast after a while and went to work for a man called [REDACTED]. I got this job through the nuns – they were the only people you knew. [REDACTED] lived in a big, old rambling house somewhere in Belfast; it wasn't that far from [REDACTED]. He was married and he had children. I got pregnant with his baby. He was a pharmacist and he was twice my age; I was only seventeen. Someone gave me love so I took it but it was the wrong kind of love because it was someone else's love. When I got pregnant he threw me out.

27. I had my son [REDACTED] then and I went to live with my father because I had nowhere else to go. He threw me out because the baby cried a lot so I had to put [REDACTED] into St. Joseph's Baby Home when he was about seven months old. A priest called [REDACTED] NHB 111 arranged it for me. I went up to visit [REDACTED]

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every Saturday. I had to sign papers saying I consented to them giving him medical treatment but it turned out that's not what I was signing; I was signing adoption papers. When I got the second set of adoption papers I queried them. I rang up NHB 111 and he said they could take [REDACTED] back from who he was with now but I would never see him again. I didn't want my child going through the system like me so I signed the second set. I was only young; I didn't know the ways of the world. I was brought up to accept what a priest said as the law.

28. After I was told I'd never get [REDACTED] back I got the boat to Birmingham again. I tried to look for work but I didn't know anything about getting a job. I met up with a family and stayed in their house but it really wasn't safe; the father tried it on with me. Once I got my small bit of wages, I came back to Belfast. I didn't know anything else. I worked in the [REDACTED] Hotel and lived in [REDACTED]. I didn't have the education to do anything else. When I was working in the [REDACTED] Hotel I met a man and had a son called [REDACTED]. This was about five years after [REDACTED] was born and there was no way I would have given [REDACTED] away. I wasn't so afraid of the system anymore.
29. A girl I was living with in [REDACTED] was going over to England then so I went over with her. I met an abusive man and had three children with him – [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. I stayed with him for about twelve years. Then I met my current husband [REDACTED] who is a great man. We have been married thirty years and we have one child together - [REDACTED]. I told him about [REDACTED] from the start and he took on all my children and raised them as his own. [REDACTED] was a [REDACTED] when we met and he had to resign to marry me. We've done a good job raising our children. They've all done well for themselves – one of my sons [REDACTED] is in the [REDACTED]. I look after his children twice a week and at weekends and I love it. I have thirteen grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Meeting [REDACTED] was the best thing that ever happened to me because he is a wonderful man.
30. I never met my mother again. My sister [REDACTED] met her and she said she wanted nothing to do with us. I've had a strained relationship with my father



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as an adult. He adored us when we were children but once we got a voice of our own, he changed. I have contact with all my siblings. We managed to trace [REDACTED] who had been adopted. My mother had another son [REDACTED] with a different man but I only met him once when he was very young and I heard he died aged 36 in [REDACTED]. My parents are both dead now. I have a good relationship with my sister NHB 5 but NHB 6 and I are not close. We never have been.

31. I got in touch with [REDACTED] three years ago. He is called [REDACTED] now. We have a good relationship and he sends me cards with 'Mum' and flowers on my birthday. He's been to see me and is coming to visit me for a few days soon. His adoptive parents are still alive and he had a good upbringing with them. All I wanted to find out was that he didn't end up in the care system. He had good parents and they looked after him. He runs his own business and is married with two children.

32. I am still friendly with a couple of girls from the home – [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] HIA 85. I went to a Nazareth House reunion organised on Friends Reunited in Glenariff a few years ago.

33. I have never reported the abuse I suffered to the police. I always felt there was no use as nobody would listen to you back then.

### Statement of Truth

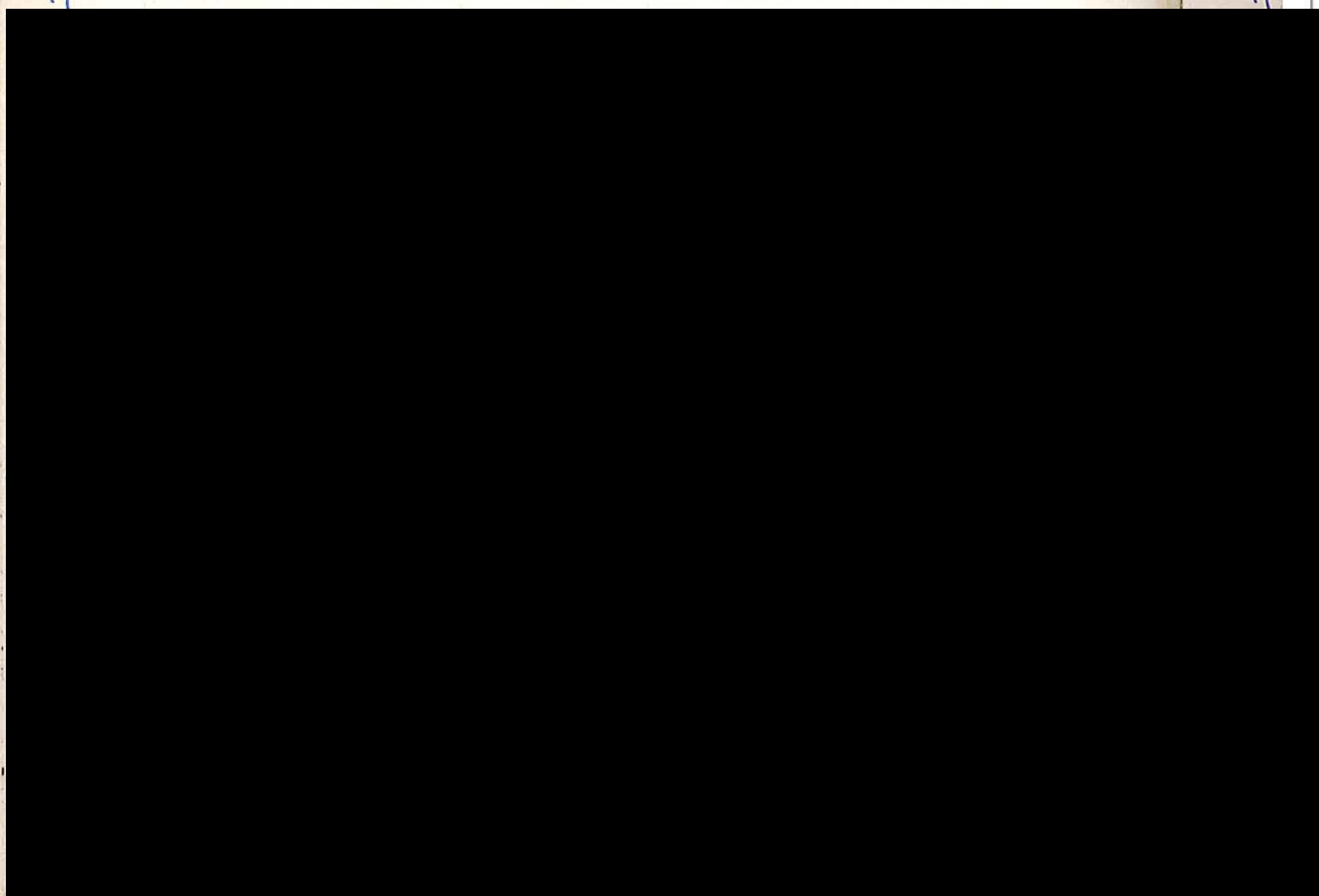
I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed **HIA 95** \_\_\_\_\_

Dated 1-9-2014

1953-54

195



#4408-09-10

NHB 6

HIA 95

NHB 5

Admitted 13th November  
Probation Officer.

1953. Recommended by

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