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HIA REF: 401

Witness Name: HIA 401

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 401

I, HIA 401 will say as follows:-

Personal details

1. I was born on [REDACTED] [REDACTED] My maiden name is [REDACTED]
My mother's name was [REDACTED] My mother was unmarried and
had five children. AU 93 is the eldest, followed by HIA 318 HIA 339 AU 95 and I.
My mother spent time in the Good Shepherd Laundry [REDACTED] and later moved
to Dublin. I do not know anything about my father.

Nazareth House, Belfast (15/06/1951 – 21/02/1955)

2. I was placed in Nazareth House when I was eight months old. I have no
memories of my time in Nazareth House because of my age.
3. As an older child I had a severe bronchial infection that was caused by being in
dampened conditions and malnutrition. I believe this was due to being exposed
to cold and inhospitable conditions in Nazareth House and the nuns not
providing any medical care.
4. The consent section of my Child Migration form is signed by SR 99
Nazareth House and dated 23rd December 1954. In a section entitled 'case

PRIVATE

history' it states 'to join two sisters already in Nazareth House, Melbourne'. I left for Australia on 21st February 1955 on the SS Orontes.

Nazareth House, Camberwell (27/03/1955 – 19/05/1956)

5. I have no recollection of my time in Nazareth House, Camberwell because I was so young.
6. My first memory is when I was sick with a burst appendix when I was about six or seven years old. I was living with a couple called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] who fostered me. I call them my mother and father. I remember feeling comfortable and safe with them. They had three children of their own. I have two older brothers and a sister. HIA 339 my biological sister was also fostered out from Nazareth House and lived with a family nearby. I visited her but have bad memories of those times but I cannot pinpoint why. My mother said years later that I used to come home distressed and upset after these visits.
7. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] lived in the same parish as Nazareth House and they used to go to the home and take children out for the day. They said when they saw me they couldn't resist me.
8. I took my foster family's surname and I was called [REDACTED]. The only problem I had was when I went to [REDACTED] school in Melbourne. When the [REDACTED] nuns wanted to upset me they would call me [REDACTED] [REDACTED] when they knew my name was [REDACTED]. They constantly told me that I was filth and that my mother was living in the gutter. I feel that the nuns were emotionally abusing me. This caused great upset not just for me but also my foster family as I was a daughter and sister to them. Once we moved to Canberra for my father's job as a public servant when I was thirteen years old it was great as no one knew my history. I changed my name by deed poll as soon as I could around 1966.
9. Over the years the [REDACTED] had attempted to adopt me but to no avail. They were told by the Sisters of Nazareth nuns in Nazareth House in Melbourne that

PRIVATE

my birth mother would not permit adoption. I later found out that my birth mother was never told that her children were sent to Australia. This refusal of adoption made me feel very isolated as foster care was only temporary and I felt I had no security or stability in my life. This marked my growth as a teenager and then adult as I never thought I was as good as anyone else.

Life after care

10. I had a wonderful foster family who I was blessed to have taken me. They nurtured me as a daughter and sister. I have had a great life. My mother and I were best friends. We had a lovely relationship.
11. I left school when I was sixteen years old and worked in public service as a data processor. I was more interested in a creative lifestyle as I loved all kinds of music and learned to play many instruments by ear. I later moved to a small town outside Canberra and worked in a local school. I then decided to qualify as a music teacher and I spent ten years teaching in Catholic schools. I moved into the community sector working with children and young adults before giving up work to care for my mother until she died aged ninety five.
12. When I became engaged to [REDACTED] my feelings of insecurity came out once again. I had to explain to him my background and I was worried he would walk away. When I was getting married I had to go through the process of proving that I was an Australian Citizen and this caused more emotional pain. It was a long drawn out process during which all my insecurities of abandonment and isolation rose to the surface. I had no documents at all to show who I was. My parents and I always assumed I was an Australian citizen. Initially I could not get an Australian passport and I had to apply for a British one. I had to then apply to get a visa to return to Australia after my family and I travelled to Fiji as I wasn't an Australian citizen. I now have an Irish passport.
13. My husband and I divorced in 1983. It was an amicable separation and he has since passed away. I had four children. My daughter [REDACTED] died when she was

PRIVATE

eight weeks old and my son [REDACTED] died suddenly in 2005 when he was twenty six years old. I enjoy a close relationship with my daughter [REDACTED] and my son [REDACTED]. My daughter has two boys called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and my son has a baby daughter called [REDACTED].

14. My mother told me that in 1993 I was contacted by my biological sister [HIA 339] who wanted to reconnect. I do not recall this at all and I feel that when events cause me stress and anxiety I block them out of my memory. I had terrible memories of our visits with one another and in particular some things that were very distressing to me. My sisters [AU 93] and [HIA 339] were sent to Australia from Nazareth House in 1953 and my brother [HIA 318] was sent from Nazareth Lodge in 1956.
15. I met my brother [HIA 318] a few times, once in Canberra and then in Perth where he lives. I have never met [AU 93]. The only contact I have had with [HIA 339] was in 1993. I know that [AU 93] was thrown out of care when she was fourteen and [HIA 318] was sent to Bindoon. My parents helped to pay for [AU 93] wedding because they were kind people. I have blocked out any memories of their contact with her. My biological siblings had a hard life and my life has been a blessing compared to what they have had. I have chosen to abstain from further contact with my biological family in Australia. I have no feelings for them in the way siblings should and I feel as though too much time has passed to try and build relationships with them.
16. In 2002 my biological siblings appeared on a BBC Spotlight programme about Child Migration. Distant cousins called [REDACTED] recognised the name and contacted the BBC. Through them they found out information about our birth mother.
17. I visited Northern Ireland for the first time in August 2002 with my daughter [REDACTED]. This was after my siblings had visited. It was an emotional visit. During this visit I met my cousins and we stayed with them for a short time. The reunion was arranged by the Child Migrant Trust and a social worker from the Trust attended the first reunion. My cousins recalled my mother with fondness and I

PRIVATE

heard them tell stories about how she was a caring Aunt. It was difficult listening to this when she abandoned her own children.

18. I found out that my mother was admitted to the Good Shepherd Convent in Newry on 4th May 1952. She was declared a person in need of special care by Judicial Order on [REDACTED] under the Mental Health Act (Northern Ireland) 1948. She left there and went to St Vincent's Hospital in Dublin on 7th October 1957. She was discharged under the Mental Health Act on [REDACTED] 1958. When I was on the trip I found out that my mother died on 26th December 1999 aged seventy two. I was sad that I was deprived the opportunity of meeting her. She is buried in a cemetery in Dublin.
19. When I was staying with my cousins they mentioned a brother called AU 95 [REDACTED] AU 95 Until then I never knew that my mother had another child after me. AU 95 was born on [REDACTED] eleven months after me and was placed in Coneywarren Children's Home on 12th May 1952. He was placed in foster care with a woman named [REDACTED] on 1st July 1954. He stayed there until he was about fifteen years old. He is married to [REDACTED] and lives in Lisburn. When I told my cousins I wanted to meet him they phoned him but he was in Dublin on business and so it wasn't possible on this trip. AU 95 later told me that he got the impression from the Child Migrant Trust that I didn't want to meet him when at that time I didn't know he existed.
20. On the trip [REDACTED] and I started researching my family and we traced relatives throughout the province. I went back to Nazareth House. It really upset me and I was sick for about three days. My daughter said she never saw me like that before. We visited Nazareth Care Village and we were greeted by a nun and given afternoon tea. We managed to talk our way into seeing what little records they did have of my siblings and I. It was then I became angry and visibly upset. I was shown a photocopy of my name and siblings as numbers and the dates they were accepted and sent away. I saw information about our baptisms and then the dates we departed for Australia.

PRIVATE

21. On this trip we also went to the Good Shepherd Convent in Newry where my mother spent some time. We travelled around to Dungannon, Cookstown and Coalisland looking for information. I was desperate to find out who I was. We met a local historian and for a small fee he was able to provide a decent amount of information about the HIA 401 family. I also met elderly gentlemen who went to school with my mother and her sisters. He said that my father was the protestant landowner called [REDACTED] I found out years later that this was true. We did very well for a couple of misfits from Australia. During our short visit we embraced the North and travelled to many destinations and despite my emotional fears I was able to reconnect with the land and its people. However deep down it was all taking its physical toll on me.
22. My brother AU 95 and I eventually got in touch around 2005 and we got on like a house on fire. We are like two peas in a pod and had an instant connection. We are alike in looks and mannerisms which leads me to believe that we had the same father. In 2009 I visited Ireland because my son and his now wife were living in [REDACTED] We went on holiday to Donegal and then to Lisburn and met up with AU 95 and his family.
23. In June 2012 I returned to Ireland and visited AU 95 and his family as a result of funding from the Family Restoration Fund.
24. I am returning to Ireland again in June. This is being financed by the British Government. On 13th February 2013 I wrote an email to Jeremy Hunt explaining my background and asking the British Government to extend the Restoration Fund beyond 2013 or provide a suitable alternative. He responded with a lovely letter saying that I am free to return to Ireland anytime. My journey to find out about my past continues.
25. I have done a large amount of my own research tracing my family. When I was working as an Executive Assistant for the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] discovered that institutions in Ireland which sent children to Australia received ten dollars from the Australian Government for every child they sent out under the White Australian Policy.

PRIVATE

26. I have a strong faith and have taught in Catholic schools and worked for the Bishops. I had great respect and empathy for the work of the Church but as a result of the difficulties I have encountered in obtaining documents relating to my past from the Catholic Church I have lost respect for it.
27. All my life I have lived with not knowing who I really am. I have no reliable family history particularly in regard to medical history which is extremely important to me because I have children of my own and now grandchildren. Whilst I cannot recall my time in care both in Northern Ireland and Australia, I feel that I have suffered the emotional and psychological abuse of exclusion and denial of my heritage and culture as a result of my migration as a child.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

HIA 401

Dated

25/06/2014.

L.E.M. 3.

Ref. No.....

Group Nomination No.....

Commonwealth of Australia

DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION, AUSTRALIA HOUSE, LONDON.

Child Migration

Sections A and C of this form are to be completed by the approved voluntary organisation in the United Kingdom. Section B to be completed by the parent or guardian of the child.

SECTION A.

1. Name in full **HIA 401**
(In block capitals, surname first)
2. Full Postal Address **NAZARETH HOUSE, ORMEAU ROAD, BELFAST.**
(In block capitals)
3. Age **4 yrs.** Date and Year of Birth **[REDACTED]** Place of Birth **Dungannon.**
4. Sex **Female.** Weight **2st. 12lbs.** Church Denomination **Catholic.**
5. Furnish name and address of parent, guardian or next of kin **SR 99** (Guardian)
(If father is living his name must be given)
..... **Nazareth House, Belfast.**
6. Is there any record of mental disease in the child? **No.**
7. Has he or she at any time been subject to fits? **No.**
8. Educational standard **Not at school.**
- Signed **William Flint.**
- For and on behalf of **the Catholic Child Welfare Council.**
(Name of Sponsoring Organisation)
- Date **31st December, 1954.**

SECTION B.

PARENT'S OR GUARDIAN'S CONSENT (FATHER IF LIVING)

I, **SR 99**
(Insert full name, occupation and address)
of **Nazareth House, Ormeau Road, Belfast.**
the father
mother
guardian of **HIA 401**
hereby consent to my child/ward proceeding to Australia under the Commonwealth Child Migration Scheme.
Dated this **23rd** day of **December, 1954.**
Signature **SR 99**
* Witness **[REDACTED]** Qualification **Teacher.**
Address **335, Ravenhill Road, Belfast.**

*The witness to the parent's or guardian's consent must be one of the following:—

- A Mayor, Magistrate, Provost or Justice of the Peace.
- A Barrister, Advocate, Solicitor or Notary Public.
- A Minister of Religion.
- A Registered Medical Practitioner.
- An Officer on the active or half-pay or pension lists of any of His Majesty's Naval, Military or Air Forces.
- A person on the active or pension list of the permanent Civil Service of the Crown, who is, or was at the date of retirement, in receipt of a salary of not less than £450 a year.
- A Manager, Chief Cashier, or Accountant of a Bank.
- A Teacher at a school recognised by the Ministry of Education or the Scottish Education Department.
- A Police Officer not below the rank of Sergeant.

[PLEASE TURN OVER]

SUMMARY OF AUSTRALIA HOUSE CHILD MIGRATION FORM L.E.M.3.DATE OF ARRIVAL 27-3-55.NAME OF SHIP "Orontes"NAME HIA 401ADDRESS Nazareth House, Ormeau Road, Belfast.DATE AND YEAR OF BIRTH [REDACTED]PLACE OF BIRTH DungannonSEX Female.CHURCH DENOMINATION CatholicNAME AND ADDRESS OF PARENT SR 99 (Guardian)
GUARDIAN OR NEXT OF KIN Nazareth House, Belfast.ANY RECORD OF MENTAL DISEASE Nil
IN THE CHILDHAS HE OR SHE AT ANY TIME Nil
BEEN SUBJECT TO FITSEDUCATIONAL STANDARD Not at school.PARENT'S OR GUARDIAN'S CONSENT (FATHER IF LIVING)NAME SR 99ADDRESS Nazareth House, Belfast.STATUS GuardianDATED 31st Dec. 1954, signed by Mons. W. Flint.
For and on behalf of the Catholic Child Welfare Council.COMMENTS BY IMM. INT. OFFICER HIA 401 was brought along by a
~~senior scholar from Nazareth House.~~ A sturdy intelligent looking
child; a little backward in speech (natural under circumstances) but
apparently no impediment in that regard. This child is only just 4 years
BIRTH CERTIFICATE Short Cert. 846 D.50P.488 HIA 401
~~Female~~ [REDACTED] Place of birth Dungannon. Copy dated 20-12-54.MEDICAL CERT. Apparently normal healthy child.



Message: DH1/13/000049544

From: HIA 401
 To: huntj@parliament.uk
 Cc: HIA 401@hotmail.com, Emma Whitelaw
 Sent: 13/2/2013 at 05:02
 Received: 13/2/2013 at 05:02
 Subject: GM/157/2013 HIA 401 CHILD MIGRANT;

Dear Jeremy

I am a child migrant sent to Australia in 1955 at the age of four years and 6 months, as with all child migrants its a long story one of sadness of not growing up in the land of my birth, Nth Ireland. I have had the opportunity to reunite with a member of my birth family my brother who lives in [REDACTED] Nth Ireland. [REDACTED] his family and I spent a most enjoyable time together last year in June courtesy of the funding from the Family Restoration Fund.

Here lies the crux of my fear/concern if you will, now that the British Government has provided the opportunity to bring families together (it was too long in coming) it is creating another round of emotional turmoil in the lives of child migrants who are now aging rapidly.

There are flaws in the fund:

The fund is only a three year one which creates in itself an abuse of the child migrant again in so far bringing them home and then saying well that is that be grateful and get on with your lives, all perfectly fine for those who are in the position to finance further trips home to Nth Ireland from Australia, but not for those who cant. What happens to those such as I who has bonded so well with my brother in Ireland and wants to visit again as he has made it perfectly clear he will not travel to Australia?

Unification of families has taken an enormous toll on some of us, from botched visits home, insufficient resources, insufficient investigation of those who truly are to be visited etc, the most damning INCORRECT information about family and circumstances surrounding birth mother (who which ever way you put it was place in a church sanctioned laundry).

In my opinion, those who have led the fight for reunification of families, are seen as experts by governments and some of the public, their thesis maybe perfectly correct to some but flawed to others such as I.

There are child migrants such as myself who wish to discover their own truth and I have with the help of my daughter and dedicated friends in Ireland. We now know the circumstances surrounding the removal of myself and siblings from my mother who was unmarried and upon the death of her father my grandfather was shunted off to a home run by the Catholics in Newry . This is where the truth is murky, I will bet my truth against anybody else, as I have extensively investigated and visited all homes and people who made up or covered up what happened to single mothers such as [REDACTED]

Whilst appreciating the necessary framework required to facilitate such a program, FRF, it has never been understood by government and others some child migrants may not like those who are providing the program (Child Migrant Trust) may find them intrusive and not very empathetic, as in my own case which then leads to an impasse.

Although I am entitled to another visit home to Ireland I cannot travel this year for the following reasons:

The father of my adult children collapsed and died and subsequent tests revealed both children suffer from Long QT syndrome a disorder of the heart's electrical activity, my daughter may require surgery this year

I am financially unable due to unemployment and lack of funds, although fund pays for flight/accommodation there are funds required for other aspects of visit: My daughter and I have found out far more about my history than other

organisation ,this has not been appreciated or welcomed by some areas of the CMT or FRF.

There are many options I think to assist Child Migrants as we are becoming low in numbers(cynically I wonder if that was what the government was hoping and as more and more comes out about the scheme there are more and more areas of concern regarding children of my age who were sent out in collusion with the church and state):

Provide ongoing trips home to country of origin (remembering we are aging and more than likely wont be able to travel as frequently)
Provide a British Government Fund to pay for return flights to country of origin, reasonable costs for accommodation for a two week visit. In itself this approach may appear radical but if you study this option it may turn out a far better management of a fund for Child Migrants, I believe.
Of course the cheapest option and least complicated is to continue the Restoration Fund beyond 2013 or at least provide an option for those like me who absolutely want to go back and visit surviving siblings but are unable to due to ill health, financial hardships etc.
Provide upfront funds for trip taking into account yearly cost of living, financial market and travel costs

In conclusion I wish you to consider granting me permission to apply for travel to Nth Ireland next year from the Family Restoration Fund. I am more than happy to book my flights and accommodation before the expiry date of fund (JULY).

I look forward to your response and suggestions in regard to claiming funds for trip home to Ireland

HIA 401
nee [REDACTED] HIA 401 [REDACTED] taken from her mother sent to Australia 4 1/2years old in 1955)