

PRIVATE

HIA REF: 311

Witness Name

HIA 311

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 311

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will say as follows:-

Personal details

1. I was born on [REDACTED] in Stranorlar in Donegal. My mother was unmarried when I was born. When I met my mother in 1990 she told me that she wanted to look after me but her mother wouldn't let her so my mother placed me in Termonbacca.

St Joseph's Home, Termonbacca (22/11/1945 – 26/1/1953)

2. I was placed in Termonbacca when I was nearly two years old.
3. I remember we had work to do in the home. We had to clean and polish the floors on our hands and knees to the chant of 'river back, river back, I will put the broom across your back' by the older boys who were supervising us with a broom in their hands.
4. I recall two nuns visited me in the home. I think they may have been from Stranorlar where I was from. They were the only visitors I ever had in Termonbacca. My mother never visited me in the home.

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5. I used to wet the bed in Termonbacca. There were several of us boys that used to wet the bed quite a lot. We had to stand up in the dormitory in a line and wait until we had a bath and got washed. It was humiliating.
6. I recall the food was not good in the home. We seemed to eat soup and bread all the time. I hated the soup. We ate in a big dining room. It was cold in Termonbacca and we only wore short trousers all year round.
7. We went to school in Nazareth House in Bishop Street. I recall one day in school being beaten very hard by a nun. She held me with one hand and hit me with her other hand – I think she may have used a cane. I do not recall any of the nuns' names. One day when it was very cold I tried to stay behind large pillars at the building for warmth but the nuns hunted us out to play.
8. I was not very good at school. I think I moved from Nazareth House to a Christian Brothers school which was called St Peter's. I remember it was on a hill and I used to look out the window during class. I was only there for a short time.
9. I don't remember being picked to go to Australia. I received new clothes and a suitcase and I didn't know what they were for. I was never told I was going to Australia. I don't remember having a medical examination before going but I have seen a certificate of a medical examination. It states that I needed glasses. I never got a pair of glasses until I was twenty one. This explains why I struggled at school and have difficulty reading and writing to this day.
10. I left Termonbacca on 26th January 1953. I think about sixteen of us left at the same time. When we left Derry we travelled to England. I had no idea what lay ahead. We stayed overnight in a girls' home which I think was in Hammersmith in London. We left Southampton and sailed to Australia on the SS New Australia. We stayed in cabins which had double bunk beds. The food wasn't bad. A civilian woman accompanied us on the journey and looked after us. I think she went onto Sydney. I was happy on the ship as we could run around and have fun. We arrived in Fremantle on 22nd February 1953.

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St Mary's Agricultural School, Tardun (1953 – 1960)

11. When we arrived at Fremantle all the boys were taken to Clontarf. At Clontarf we all lined up and [BAU 15] and [BAU 18] from Tardun said to us 'you, you and you for Tardun'. I was taken to the Christian Brothers' Agricultural School (CBAS) at Tardun in the back of a truck along with fifteen other boys. When we arrived at Tardun [BAU 19] was standing at the top of the stairs to meet us. We were put into two dormitories. I was in Tardun for seven years. I did a lot of work there on the farm and clearing land for new buildings.
12. When I was twelve or thirteen in Tardun I received a letter from my mother. That was the first I had heard from her since I was a small boy. We then corresponded with each other. She had moved to England.
13. I had a good enough time at Tardun as I had many friends. I left in 1960 when I was seventeen.

Life after care

14. When I left Tardun, the Brothers got me a job with the Palestine Mission which had a school for Aboriginal children. It was run by a German Order. It was eight miles away from Tardun. I was responsible for teaching four boys to do farm work. I stayed for a year. During that time I got a lift with a priest back to Tardun every Sunday and I stayed overnight. I was happy to keep contact with my friends in Tardun when I left.
15. I got another job on a wheat and sheep farm and the farmer was very good to me. He bought me a vehicle and I paid him back from my wages. However, I experienced complete loneliness as I had no friends around and could no longer travel back to Tardun.

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16. I never had any visitors from the Child Welfare Department. However, when I was twenty-one I received some money from a trust fund which they had set up.
17. I felt very lonely and lost when I left Tardun. All my friends had moved from Tardun and I had no family. I found it difficult to socialise and make friends as I was not a drinker. In my twenties three brothers called [REDACTED] whom I was friendly with in Tardun took me to their mother's home in Perth. I drove them in my vehicle and their mother insisted I stay. I got to see what it was like having a family and a proper mother. She was wonderful to me. She treated me like a son. I went to their house every Christmas.
18. I never had a birth certificate as a child. When I was getting married I had to ask my mother to send me my certificate.
19. I married my wife [REDACTED] in 1971 and we have three sons - [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. We also have four grandchildren. Two of my sons have their own business and the other son works for one of them. I am very proud of them. I would do anything for my boys. When my three sons and I are in the workshop together I am happiest. When I married I left the farm and worked for the City of Geraldton. I drove a vehicle for a [REDACTED] company until I retired.
20. I attend Tardun reunions organised by the Tardun Old Boys' Association (TOBA) twice a year at More River. It is great when the boys get together. It is like old times. It is like being back at school again. They are like my brothers. I am still friendly with [REDACTED] HIA 285 and I visit him. He was a groomsman at our wedding.
21. I saw my mother for the first time in 1975 when she came to visit me in Australia. She stayed with me for about three months. I have been back to Ireland three times. In 1990 I saved up and I went to visit my mother in England. She told me that I had a half-sister called [REDACTED]. My mother told me that she gave consent for me to be sent to Australia and signed the migration form. She said my Aunt and Uncle had wanted to adopt me but she said over her dead body. So I was sent

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to Australia to prevent my Aunt and Uncle adopting me. I asked her who my father was and she said no one knows and 'you will never know'.

22. I came to Ireland again in 1995 which was paid for by the Christian Brothers and again about ten years ago which was paid for by the Australian Government. When I was in Ireland I visited my Aunt and Uncle in Donegal and cousins in Bundoran and Sligo. I would love to go back to Ireland to visit my relations. They were very good to me and I had a great time. My mother passed away about ten years ago. To be honest I didn't really have any feelings for her. She never showed me any affection. My Aunt [REDACTED] was more of a mother to me and I was sad when she passed away. I have no contact with my half-sister.

23. In 2010 I received \$15,000 AUD under the Redress Scheme set up by the Australian Government.

24. I missed having someone to talk to about my past. I missed out on having an extended family and someone to share my feelings with. While I have my own family and my wife's family it is not the same. I still feel there is part of my life that is missing. I am emotional when I think about being taken away to Australia. I was deprived of the opportunity to have a family in Ireland. I try and provide for my sons to ensure that they will never miss out as I have done.

Statement of Truth

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

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Signed [REDACTED]

Dated 2-1-2014

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