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HIA REF: 312

Witness Name: HIA 312

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 312

I, HIA 312 will say as follows:-

Personal details

1. I was born on [REDACTED] the Jubilee Maternity Hospital, Belfast.
2. I was named [REDACTED] at birth taking the same surname as my mother, [REDACTED]. My mother was unmarried when I was born. I was never made aware of the identity of my father. His name is not recorded on my birth certificate.
3. Some time after my birth my mother placed me in the care of Nazareth Lodge, Belfast as she was unable to care for and support me.

Nazareth Lodge, Belfast (1938 – 28 August 1947)

4. I remember a lady used to visit me sometimes at Nazareth Lodge. I think it might have been my mother. She came a few times whilst I was in care in Belfast. She would have visited once or twice a year at most.
5. I recall being taken to a drapery store to buy clothes and other items for our trip to Australia. I just recall little things about our preparation for the trip. I do not

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recall ever being asked if I wanted to go to Australia. We were told, not asked and we thought going to Australia was like going from Ireland to England.

6. The Child Welfare Department files indicate that my birth mother agreed whilst I was at Nazareth Lodge Belfast to my travelling to Australia. She agreed to this when I was about eight years old. On 17 July 1947 she also signed a consent document in Ireland agreeing to my possible adoption.
7. My child migration form is also signed by [REDACTED] SR 102 [REDACTED] the Mother Superior at Nazareth Lodge authorising my consent to travel to Australia.

Sailing Dates (29 August 1947 – 22 September 1947)

8. About twelve of us travelled to England from the home. I recall a train journey and then we were placed aboard the Asturius. We travelled via the Red Sea. I remember that we refuelled at the Suez Canal. I recall seeing a black person, a native for the first time in my life and everything was new to me.
9. We were supervised by three nuns on the trip. They showed us no affection. They were just hired servants to get us from here to there. They had a heart of stone. They would not allow us to move around freely on the ship.
10. I recall myself and a few of the other boys being seasick on the ship.
11. I travelled to Australia on the Asturius. PHIND records note my age at emigration as twelve but I was actually only eight years old when I arrived in Australia. PHIND records also record the date of arrival in Fremantle as 22 September 1947.

Castledare Boy's Home (22 September 1947 – January 1949)

12. I was taken in a car to Castledare and I was there until January 1949.

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13. I recall being belted by [BAU 10] during my time at Castledare. The boys were beaten frequently in the home.
14. I remember feeling picked on because for some unknown reason on certain occasions I was not allowed to watch the Sunday night movie. Some of the other boys and I would be left outside in the cold whilst the supervising Brother was comfortably wrapped up in an air force coat.
15. I recall when I was about nine years old I played the "Last Post" on my cornet in the quadrangle at Castledare. For some reason this angered one of the Brothers and I was belted three or four times on my bare buttocks with a leather strap with a frayed end. I cannot recall the name of the Brother who did this but I recall the humiliation, the pain and the injury.
16. There were trips on occasion to climb local mountains and if one of the boys were unable to complete the climb they were ridiculed and physically punished. I was beaten by various Brothers for this reason on several occasions but I was only ten at the time and therefore did not have the necessary endurance to complete the challenge. I cannot recall the identity of the Brothers who punished me.
17. I had to carry water in canvas bags to water the roses in the driveway up to the home all summer. I also had to help kill livestock and package meat. It was onerous work more suited to adults than children under ten and we all did this whilst wearing inappropriate clothing and often barefoot.
18. I was beaten with a cane in class by a civilian teacher, [AU 53] if I answered a question incorrectly or upset him in any way. This negatively affected my ability to learn. [AU 53] was sarcastic and belittling and this gave me a mental block against formal learning. I disengaged from lessons and underperformed at school.

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19. I was frequently physically beaten by various Brothers for minor misdemeanours. You only had to look sideways and you would be beaten. I lived in a constant atmosphere of fear and guilt.
20. The boys often swam at Castledare in the Canning River. I could not swim and was afraid of the water but Brother [BAU 10] pushed me in to the water. I somehow managed to get to the shore and then I ran away. I was then found and beaten by [BAU 10] ran away every time a swimming lesson was coming up and I was beaten every time. I was only eight or nine at the time.
21. I recall one boy in the home, [AU 54] was a frequent runaway. He ran away about twelve times a year. When he was caught and returned to the orphanage he would be laid out naked on a table and belted by one of the Brothers. Myself and the other boys were forced to watch this punishment probably to deter the rest of us from running away.
22. I was referred to by my surname, never by my first name. This was a tactic used to strip boys of their identity. The boys were not respected as individuals.

Clontarf Boy's Town (29 May 1948 – August 1950)

23. My PHIND documents note that I was transferred to Clontarf on 29 May 1948.
24. I was fortunate as I was not chosen as a pet of any of the Brothers at either institution and was not therefore a target for sexual abuse by any of the Brothers.
25. My time at Castledare and Clontarf was characterised by an absence of love, warmth or compassion. I was not allowed to form real friendships with other boys as this was viewed by some Brothers as forming troublesome attachments. We even had to conceal personal friendships or corporal punishment would result. I remember boys would often be removed from Castledare or Clontarf without their friends being warned or told that they were leaving. This was in my view an emotionally abusive practice counter to the ideal of helping children to

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develop healthy emotional attachments with others. I recall many sudden separations from friends and the sense of cumulative emotional isolation that resulted. It has resulted in me continuing to experience difficulty forming emotional attachments in later life.

26. The Brothers would frequently threaten us by saying we would be sent to Tardun or Bindoon if we did not comply with their instructions. This incited fear in us and made us compliant.
27. The Brothers often forced the boys into competitive boxing matches. It was like a human cock fight for their enjoyment. The fighters were often mismatched by the Brothers for extra entertainment value. I hated boxing and I was not a good boxer so I was frequently hurt and humiliated. I sustained a broken collar bone and a back injury from forced boxing matches at Clontarf. No medical attention was ever provided for the cuts, bruises and bloody noses that I sustained in the fights. In fact I cannot recall medical care being provided for any injuries sustained by the boys at Castledare or Clontarf.
28. My memories of both institutions are of constant ridicule from the teachers and Brothers with few exceptions. I was constantly humiliated in class. I seem to recall **AU 53** being transferred to Clontarf. He made me feel stupid and incompetent. I still lack confidence with basic writing and spelling. There were also verbal put-downs and taunting by many of the Brothers if any sign of emotion or weakness was shown. Some older boys who were special pets of the Brothers would also be encouraged by the Brothers to jeer at younger boys.
29. The food was alright in the home but I often had to eat food I did not like and there was never enough food to eat. If I refused to eat certain foods some of the Brothers would force the food into my mouth. I recall one occasion when a boy vomited after he was force fed and the Brother made him eat his own vomit.
30. I never received any information regarding my family throughout my time in any institution and I was never made aware of anything to do with my Irish family or cultural heritage.

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31. I never complained about the Brothers or reported the abuse I had suffered to any authority or outside body. The Christian Brothers were held in high regard by the authorities and the public at the time so any reports I might have made in my view would not have been believed.

Foster Care/Adoption (1950 – 1955)

32. In March 1949 I was fostered out to **AU 55** and **AU 56** **AU 56** on their farm at **██████████**. They also fostered another boy from the home, **HIA 304** **██████████** at the same time. We were formally adopted then by the **AU 55, AU 56** **██████████** on 25 August 1950 when I was eleven years old. The adoption was arranged by the Child Welfare Department. Applications for adoption had to be considered by the Child Welfare Department, The Catholic Episcopal Migration and Welfare Association and the Under Secretary for Lands and Immigration, the legal guardian of all British Migrant Children who arrived in Western Australia.
33. The **AU 55, AU 56** **██████████** were dairy farmers and graziers with two properties totalling 430 acres. They did not treat me well. **AU 55** **██████████** beat me occasionally for disobeying him or for making mistakes. I recall being chased and whipped with the "leg rope" which was used for restraining cattle. **AU 55** **██████████** and **AU 56** **██████████** were polite in public but critical and nasty to me in private. **AU 56** **██████████** was cold and never showed me any affection. **HIA 304** **██████████** and I were not treated equally with the other family members. We were not allowed to sit in their lounge and were often excluded from family events. We were used to serve food when they had guests and we had to sit outside rather than with the rest of the family for Christmas lunch. One Christmas my adopted brother and I received a long handled shovel each so that we could carry hot embers from stump to stump for land clearing. We were also often taunted by cousins saying "you're only adopted, you're not one of us".
34. **██████████** and I were expected to work on the farm before and after school every day and every weekend to the point of social isolation. We rose at 5.30am and carried a hurricane lamp with us to milk the cows. I recall waiting for the cows to

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urinate so I could stand in it as it was the only way I could get my bare feet to warm up. We did the work of grown men from the age of eleven and got to go nowhere other than to Church every Sunday. I injured my back when I was twelve due to excessive hard manual labour working on this farm. My adoptive parents never sought medical attention for my condition. I spent thousands of dollars in later life trying to repair my back problems. I have been in receipt of disability pension for over twenty years since 1988 and I was forced to give up work since I was forty seven years old due to my back complaint.

35. I was often held back from school to work on the farm. I asked **AU 55** and **AU 56** **AU 56** if I could enrol in a correspondence course but they refused my request. I wanted to drive machinery (eg. bulldozers, graders etc) and had been offered employment elsewhere doing this type of work but my adoptive parents would not allow me to do this as they wanted me to do the work on their farm and never put my needs before their own.
36. As a teenager I had ongoing pain in my shoulder but **AU 56** refused to take me to my GP for treatment. I then discovered I had a fractured collar bone and it knit back together badly due to this failure to receive appropriate medical treatment.
37. **AU 55** gave a lot of money to the church and I challenged him asking why he gave so much to the church and paid **HIA 304** and I so little and he replied "the Church is more important than you". **AU 55** was fanatical about his faith and would **[REDACTED]** without charge but **HIA 304** and I were left to do all his own farmwork. I felt as if we were slaving on the farm so that **AU 55** could present a false image to the Catholic community.
38. The Child Welfare Department failed to adequately monitor the quality of care I received at both institutions and both in foster care and after adoption. There was a total lack of post adoption follow up.
39. I left school at fifteen years old to work full time on the farm. I worked for free until I was fifteen years old. From the age of 15 until 17 I was paid 25 shillings per week. I did work for a neighbour once who paid me seven pounds a week

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and AU 55 was so angry when I asked about being paid so much more elsewhere that he ripped up my pay cheque from the neighbour.

40. HIA 304 stayed on at the farm at [REDACTED] until his mid thirties. I left the farm when I was only seventeen. I wanted to escape such a negative family environment. I was left \$5,000 AUD when my adoptive parents died. I no longer have any contact with HIA 304 and I am isolated from all biological and adoptive family.

Life after care

41. After I left the AU 55, AU 56 farm I worked on a farm in Bridgetown and I then worked in a garage in Northam as a mechanic for a year. I stayed with my aunt and uncle that year in their caravan but eventually they did not want me to stay with them any more even though I kept myself to myself and did not cause them too much inconvenience.
42. I worked for Dunlops until 1971. I then worked for Wesfarmers driving trucks for almost fifteen years until they fired me when I was forty seven years old. I lived frugally thereafter off certain investments I had made until I was in receipt of my state pension in 1988. In my view I developed misplaced loyalty to each of my employers post care. I worked hard to please them in the hope that one day I would be rewarded. I put up with low wages and poor conditions in the hope of eventual recognition which never came my way. This parallels with my childhood experience of working on the farm for the AU 55, AU 56
43. I married my wife in 1971 when I was thirty three years old. Before we met I was socially and emotionally isolated. As a young man I was quick to anger and I had a very low opinion of myself. My wife is the only person I have been able to establish a close and loving relationship with and we were very happily married for sixteen years. She died from cancer in 1988 and I suffered fifteen years of depression following her death. I live alone and am only now slowly recovering from her loss. We had two sons, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] who are now in their late

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thirties and early forties. My oldest son is civil and keeps in touch but the younger boy has a fiery temper. I have two grandchildren who are now twenty one and nineteen years old but I do not see them very often, the love and affection is just not there.

44. My time in care has affected my attitude to religion and I have not visited a Catholic church since I left the **AU 55/56** family. I married my wife in the Church of England. Religion was forced down our throats day and night so now I do not let religion enter my life any more.
45. I started to do my own research regarding my family circumstances when I was preparing my papers for the Western Australian Redress Scheme. My adoptive mother had passed away at that stage. I have never visited Ireland. I regret never having the opportunity to meet my birth mother and having no knowledge of my Irish ancestry. I never made any further enquiries about my family. If you've written me off, you've written me off for life.
46. I received \$28,000 AUD under the Western Australian Redress Scheme.
47. I have no contact with my biological family and I no longer have any contact with my adoptive family. I do not know who my father is, I have never met my mother and I do not know if I have any biological siblings. If the nuns in Belfast, the Christian Brothers in Australia or the Child Welfare Department had encouraged such contact when I was younger then I might have had the support of a family now in contrast to the current position where there is a stark family disconnection. I also feel that the relevant authorities should have carried out a much more thorough assessment of the suitability of the **AU 55, AU 56**'s foster and adoptive parents and monitoring of their performance as parents. They were an emotionally abusive adoptive family. I was used as child labour to their advantage but never properly accepted as an equal family member. They had little interest in my educational, social and emotional development.

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Statement of Truth

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

Signed

HIA 312

Dated

16/6/2014

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Department of Immigration
Australia House, London.

CHILD MIGRATION

Group Nomination No: _____
(This form is to be completed by the Overseas Representative of the
Sponsoring Organisation)

1. Name in full (in block capitals surname first) **HIA 312**
2. Full Postal Address (in block capitals) NAZARETH LODGE
RAVENHILL ROAD, BELFAST
3. Age Date & Year of Birth Place of Birth BELFAST
4. Sex MALE Weight Church Denomination CATHOLIC
5. Furnish name and address of parent, guardian or next of kin
(if father is living his name must be given)
Mother Superior Ravenhill Rd. 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 STANDARD I

Signed P. A. CoultonFor and on behalf of: Catholic Council for Child Welfare Coleshill
(Name of sponsoring organisation) BirminghamDate: 11.3.47

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

I Mother Superior
(insert full name, occupation & address)
of Nazareth Lodge Ravenhill Road Belfast
the {father
mother } of **HIA 312**
guardianhereby consent to my child/ward proceeding to Australia under the
Commonwealth Child Migration Scheme.Dated this 11th day of March 1947Signature SuperiorWitness P. A. Coulton qualification migration organiserAddress 38 Strawberry Hill Rd. Twickenham.The Witness must be one of the following, viz., a Member or Official
of any Banking Firm established in the United Kingdom, any Mayor,
Magistrate, Justice of the Peace, Minister of Religion, Barrister-at-law
Registered Medical Practitioner, Solicitor or Notary Public.

On completion this form should be forwarded to :

The Chief Migration Officer
Australia House,



Department for Community Development
Government of Western Australia

ATTACHMENT 1:

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Your Ref:
Our Ref: Past Adoption Services
Enquiries: Ms Debbie Cooley
Freecall WA only 1 [REDACTED]

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Dear **HIA 312**

I am writing with regard to your request for information about your birth and adoption. I apologise for the delay in providing this information to you.

I have enclosed copies of your information from this Department's file together with a copy of the Immigration Lands and Surveys file. Unfortunately the quality of some of the copies is not very good as the original file was destroyed some years ago and these copies have been reconstituted from microfilm.

I have also enclosed a copy of your "Migrant Child" card together with the "Phind" brochure and a printout of your information from the Phind Index. The Phind brochure may help you to locate other agencies who may also have information about you.

You will notice that there are gaps in some of the copies of the Department file. This is because I can only include information that directly relates to you. Information about other children cannot be included.

I have also written to the WA Family Court and requested that a copy of the adoption court documents be sent to you. There is no cost involved in obtaining copies of these documents.

The Department records have been searched and the following information was found.

Your adoption was arranged by this Department then known as the Child Welfare Department.

A copy of your birth certificate from the Department file shows that you were actually born on [REDACTED] (not [REDACTED] as stated on your application form).

You were born at the Jubilee Maternity Hospital, Belfast, Northern Ireland. You were named **HIA 312** at birth taking the same surname as your birth mother. At the time you were born your birth mother was single. The name of your birth father has not been recorded on your original birth record.

(This is usual for Western Australian births where the father's name is not recorded on a child's birth record if the parents of the child were not married to each other at the time of their child's birth. A similar situation most likely applied in Northern Ireland).

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Some time after your birth your birth mother placed you in the care of the Nazareth Lodge in Belfast, Northern Ireland as she was unable to care for and support you.

I do not know how long you remained at Nazareth Lodge. The Department file indicates that your birth mother later agreed to you travelling to Australia. On 17 July 1947 she also signed a consent document in Ireland agreeing to your possible adoption.

On 22 September 1947 you arrived in Western Australia at the Fremantle port as a "Migrant" child on the ship named the Asturias. That same day you were placed at the Castledare Boy's Orphanage then located in Queens Park.

You stayed at Castledare until January 1949 when you were moved to Clontarf Boys Town which was located in Victoria Park. You remained at Clontarf until you were placed in the care of Mr and **AU 56** who were living on a farming property in country WA at **[REDACTED]**

In October 1948 **AU 56** had written to the Child Welfare Department about the possibility of caring for you and another little migrant boy. She said she had previously contacted the Catholic Migration Association about the possibility of adopting you but the Association had decided not to permit the adoption (at that time). It is not clear why they refused.

AU 56 had written as she wanted to foster you and another little boy who was named **HIA 304**. **AU 56** said she believed **HIA 304** was with you at the same Home in England, you were both Irish and firm friends. **AU 56** went on to say that her husband **AU 55** was also Irish born and that as they were both of the same faith they felt they would have more in common with you and **HIA 304**.

AU 56 was advised that the Under Secretary for Lands and Immigration (then Mr H E Smith) was the legal guardian of all British Migrant Children who arrived in Western Australia. Any application had to be considered by him and the Catholic Episcopal Migration and Welfare Association.

In December 1948 Reverend Cyril Stinson of the Catholic Episcopal Migration and Welfare Association wrote to the Under Secretary for Lands and Immigration advising that they were in favour of you and **HIA 304** being placed in the care of Mr and **AU 56**. However he strongly recommended any transfer not occur until the consent of your respective mother's be obtained or words to the effect that the mothers could not be traced.

In February 1949 Reverend Cyril Stinson wrote advising that he had not heard anything from London and he had not objections to you and **HIA 304** being placed with **AU 56**. In March 1949 Mr and **AU 56** were officially appointed as your foster parents.

Your migrant child card shows that you were placed in the care of Mr and **AU 56** in August 1949 but the Department file and other documents show that you were not placed with Mr and **AU 56** until 18 March 1949.

Around April 1949 it appears an article was published in the **[REDACTED]** newspaper about Mr and **AU 56** appointment as foster parents of British Migrant Children.