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HIA REF: 325

Witness Name HIA 325

## THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

## WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 325

HIA 325 will say as follows:-

Personal details

1. I was born on [REDACTED] in Belfast. My mother was called [REDACTED] and she was unmarried when I was born. She was a domestic servant in the Artillery Barracks in [REDACTED]. She couldn't look after me and I was placed in Nazareth Lodge, Belfast. I don't know anything about my father.

Nazareth Lodge, Belfast (1946 – April 1953)

2. My first memory is of waking up and seeing a nun's face. I must have been very young at the time. I think I may have been about two years old when I was put in the home.
3. There was a nun called [REDACTED] SR 100 in Nazareth Lodge. [REDACTED] SR 100 was in charge of the home. She was pretty rough and strict. If you did something wrong she hit you with a black belt which she carried with her. Even if it was something minor or you didn't know what you were doing she would hit you. She used a plain strap to hit us. She hit us mainly on the hands and usually six times on each hand. Sometimes she would hit you on the backside depending on how serious the misdemeanour was. I was beaten every couple of days.

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4. I slept in a big dormitory in Nazareth Lodge. I think there were approximately one hundred children in it. The building was a couple of storeys high. From what I remember the food in the home was alright. I don't remember going to school whilst in the Lodge. We had to go to Mass every Sunday which I hated. You had to keep quiet all the time which I didn't like. We had to say prayers and the rosary every night and we had to kneel down on the wooden floor.
5. I was never taken on any holidays while I was in the home. Christmas was the only time we had treats. I received some lollies and that was all I got. I didn't get any presents. I didn't even know when my birthday was while I was in the Lodge. I only found out the date of my birthday when I came to Australia.
6. I never had any visitors while I was in Nazareth Lodge. I recall asking the nuns about my mother and the nuns told me she was dead. I later found out that she wasn't dead. She had moved back to live in the Artillery Barracks in [REDACTED]
7. One day in Nazareth Lodge the nuns came along and said 'you, you, you, off to Australia'. I kept quiet and didn't say anything when they told me because if I did speak I would have been hit with the belt. I think there was about four of us that were sent. They described what life would be like in Australia. They said we would be riding donkeys to school. They said that Australia was a good place.
8. My child migration form is signed by my mother on 18<sup>th</sup> April 1952 stating that she gave her consent for me to be sent to Australia. I also have a Certificate of Medical Examination dated 11<sup>th</sup> December 1952 but I don't remember having the examination.
9. We travelled to England to meet the ship. I sailed to Australia on the SS Moloyar. There was a man and woman who travelled with us and they were good to us. I can't recall their names. There were other children on the ship. There was a boy called [REDACTED] from Northern Ireland but he wasn't in Nazareth Lodge. I was quite naughty on the ship. When we arrived at a port which I think was in India I was told not to get off the ship but I did. I wanted to

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go for a walk. When I was caught I was punished for disobeying the rules. I was not beaten but I had to stay in the cabin all day.

10. We arrived in Fremantle on 11<sup>th</sup> April 1953.

**Castledare Boys Home (11/4/1953 – 5/2/1955)**

11. When we arrived in Fremantle I was met by **BAU 7**. He was in charge of Castledare Boys Home. He picked me up from Fremantle wharf passenger terminal and he drove me to Castledare Boys Home in a tip truck. I stayed there for two and a half years. I left Castledare when I was nearly eleven.

12. **BAU 7** was a very big man and about twenty stone. He was horrible in the classroom when he was teaching us. If you got anything wrong in class you were hit with the belt on your hands or your pants were pulled down and you had to bend over the Brother's desk and were given six of the best with a thick leather strap.

13. The food was poor in the home. We got a plate of porridge and a slice of bread and cold tea. Lunch was stews. On Sunday we wore a suit and shoes to church. However we took these off when we came back and our normal clothing was very inadequate. We were given a khaki shirt and shorts and no underwear or footwear. This was our clothing all year round. In winter I suffered from chill blanes, cracked heels and cold feet. If you complained you were beaten by the Brothers with a belt.

14. I was moved to Clontarf Boys Home on 5<sup>th</sup> February 1955.

**Clontarf Boys Home (5/2/1955 – 2/8/1960)**

15. I was moved to Clontarf when I was nearly eleven years old. I remained there until I was sixteen. **BAU 6** was in charge of Clontarf. He was a very brutal person. My teacher was **BAU 8** and when he walked past



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your desk he would either fist you in the temple or whack you on the knuckle with the edge of a steel ruler for no reason. The steel ruler was very painful. For the next few years I was kept in the same class even though I had passed the examinations for grade six. I didn't learn anything in school. I wasn't given the assistance I needed. As I was getting too old for school when I was about fifteen I was put to work in the dairy and then I was transferred to laundry duties with a man called AU 52 AU 52 was a lay person who was in charge of the laundry. AU 52 abused me physically and mentally.

16. Our meals were similar to that in Castledare and I was always looking for something to eat as I was always hungry. The slops truck would go to Perth on Fridays to pick up leftovers from the restaurants. The leftovers were to go to the piggery. Some of us boys would wait by the cattle grid and then we would climb onto the truck and scavenge for food. I also raided the veggie room and the orchard. If I got caught, which sometimes I did, I got a flogging with belts from the Brothers.
17. When we had showers the water was always cold and I ended up getting Rheumatic fever. I spent six weeks in hospital and one month at Lady Lawley's cottage for convalescence. In Clontarf we were expected to play football in winter in our bare feet and if I didn't kick the ball I was belted by the Brothers.
18. We were forced to work on the building of the handball courts and the swimming pool. We mixed the concrete and lime and we did all the manual labour. Along with other boys my job was to dig out the swimming pool and remove the sand in bags. We didn't have any clothing protection and quite a lot of us were burnt from the lime. We were slave labourers for the Brothers.
19. I am [REDACTED] and I had [REDACTED] and lilywhite skin when I was a boy. I was always getting sunburnt and I suffered a great deal from heat exhaustion. I spent many weeks convalescing in the infirmary part of the home. I later developed skin cancer on both my ears as a result of the lack of protection from the sun and lack of care by the Brothers. I had my right ear removed in 1994 due to cancer and I lost hearing in that ear.

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Life after care

20. I left Clontarf on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1960 when I was sixteen. I went to work for the Benedictine Community in [REDACTED] as a farmhand. [REDACTED] is about 150km north of Perth. The job was arranged by the Child Welfare Department. My employer had to sign a Service Agreement with the Department which set out the terms of my employment. The agreement stated that if the employer wished to dispense with my services he was to notify the Guardian Authority Catholic Episcopal Migration and Welfare Association in Victoria Square in Perth. From my wages a sum of 25 shillings was deducted which was placed in a bank account by the Child Welfare Department. I was to receive the money from the account once I reached twenty one years old.
21. Since my arrival in Australia under the Migration Scheme I was under the guardianship of the Assistant Director of the Child Welfare Department. The guardianship ended when I turned twenty one. My trust account which was held by the Department was made available to me on my birthday. When I went to work I was provided with clothing from Clontarf. The money for the clothing was deducted from my Trust account.
22. I stayed at the farm for nine years. They were not very good to me. The only time I was taken anywhere was to church on a Sunday. If I wanted to go anywhere else I had to cycle on a push bike. I used to ride nine miles to [REDACTED] to go to the pictures once a week. I think officials from the Welfare Department visited me once or twice. Eventually I saved up enough money to buy a car and I left. I went to [REDACTED] and worked in a factory and then I got jobs in various piggeries.
23. Eventually I settled at [REDACTED] farm where I have worked for the last twenty nine years. I love it there. I like the people I work for. They are like my family. They made me feel like a person. I never had that feeling before. They built a little house for me on the land when my caravan burned down. They

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looked after me when I had my operation as a result of the cancer. They are the best people I have ever met. I have made many friends there and I am doing well there. I am happy. I work part time now and I receive my pension.

24. As a result of what happened to me as a child I have given up on religion. When I was young religion was pushed on me and I didn't like it.
25. I tried to find out about my family. I went back to Ireland in 1978. I went looking for my mother. I couldn't find out any information other than she was born in Dublin. I don't even know if my mother is still alive. I don't know anything else about my family. I went back again to Ireland in 2000 for a holiday. The Christian Brothers paid for my airfare. I went back to Belfast and I met a nun called Sister Noleen in the Nazareth Care Village and she was very good to me.
26. I had no birth certificate as a child and I only obtained it in recent years. Every year I attend a reunion barbeque in November with all the boys who were child migrants in Christian Brothers' homes.
27. My life in institutions was an ongoing battle for survival. I was molested, physically and mentally abused and degraded by the Christian Brothers. They taunted us with names such as 'scum of the earth' and 'ba\*tards'. I also had to look out for the older boys who were on the prowl for younger boys to molest and abuse. I had a lack of education, decent food or clothing. I have no self esteem. I was not cared for in the way that children should be. I have tried to put my experiences in institutions aside and get on with my life as best I can.
28. I received \$45,000 AUD from the Redress Scheme following the Australian Government's apology to former child migrants in November 2009.

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**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed **HIA 325** \_\_\_\_\_

Dated 24.10.2013



*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 325*  
*2 Full Postal Address.... Nazareth Lodge  
Ravenhill Road  
Belfast*  
*3 Age 8.... Date of Birth....  
Place of Birth.... Belfast.*  
*4 Sex Male.... Weight... 35lb, 4 ounces.*  
*5 Church of Denomination Catholic.*  
*6 Furnish name and address of parent guardian or next of Kin.  
Miss AU 103  
?  
?*  
*7 Is there any record of mental disease in the child?  
Not to my knowledge.*  
*8 Has He or She at any time been subject to fits?  
No.*  
*9 Educational Standard..... Standard 1.*
-



## Section B

*Parent's or Guardian's consent (Father if living)*

1 **AU 103**

*Domestic Sservant*

**[REDACTED]**

**[REDACTED]**.

The mother of **HIA 325** hereby consent to my child/ward proceeding to Australia under the Commonwealth Child Migration dated this 18th April 1952.

Signature **AU 103**

*Witness Kein Donsilly.*

*Address*

*73A, South Prade*

*Belfast.*

-----  
20th August 1960

*The Assistant Director  
Child Welfare Department  
Perth.*

*Dear Sir*

Re: **HIA 325** Clonfarf.

**HIA 325** left Clontarf on 2nd August 1960 for employment with Mr Schwarzbach at **[REDACTED]**.

He will be paid award wage from which 25/- will be sent each week for banking.

Attached is a list of clothing supplied for which a refund is requested.

*Yours faithfully  
Acting Secretary.*

-----  
**[REDACTED]**

*Medical Examination.*

HIA 325 . Nazareth Lodge,  
Ravenhill Road,  
Belfast.

*This child has a small dry perforation on ear, little if any affect on hearing otherwise apparently HIA 325 is a healthy child.*  
*Dated 11/12/1952. Signed Walter E Weak?*

Mr A Schwarzbach

Perth 15/04/1965.

Dear Sir,

Re: HIA 325

As you know, HIA 325 will be 21 years of age on the 20th April and as such, will not come under the jurisdiction of this department.

Under the circumstances will you cease deducting money from HIA 325 wage, and which in the past have been sent to this office for banking in his trust account. As from the 20th April all monies earned by [redacted] are to be paid to him without deduction. It would be appreciated if the final deduction for the period 1st December 1964 to 20th April to be sent as early as possible, as it is our intention to finalize HIA 325 trust account soon after his 21st birthday.

Thanking you for your co-operation.

311 pounds 6/- 6p. Balance Account 29/04/1965.

Yours Faithfully  
Clerk in Charge,  
Welfare Branch.

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Clerk in Charge,  
Welfare Branch.