

PRIVATE

HIA REF: 331

Witness Name: HIA 331

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 331

I, HIA 331 will say as follows:-

Personal details

1. I was born on [REDACTED] in Belfast. My maiden name is [REDACTED]. My father's name was [REDACTED] and my mother's name was [REDACTED]. We have one sister called HIA 298 who is eighteen months older than me. We lived at home with our mother. I believed that my mother was unmarried however I have since seen a letter dated 15th February 1988 stating that my parents married in St Anne's Cathedral in 1932. However I am not sure whether [REDACTED] was in fact my father. When I was reunited with my mother in 1990 she told me that she used to leave us with a lady while she went to find work. I don't think we were well looked after as I have permanent scars on my body and we were never changed out of dirty clothes even though our mother left clean clothes for us. I believed that my sister and I were placed in care because our mother could not look after us and that someone told her to take us to Nazareth House, even though she wasn't a Catholic. She was told they would take us if she was in desperate need of help.

Nazareth House, Belfast (11/05/1949 – 09/03/1953)

2. I was placed with my sister HIA 298 in Nazareth House when I was four years old. The only nun's name I recall is SR 101 who I called [REDACTED].

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called her this because she had a long grey thick stick which she used to hit children. I never got hit but I used to cower from her out of fear of a beating.

3. One day we went for a picnic and I soiled myself by accident. The nuns called HIA 298 over and she had to clean me up. Then the nuns left me sitting on a bus with no clothes on and just a towel around me. I was freezing cold. When I was young I remember that I wasn't able to put my mittens on. The nuns found HIA 298 and brought her to help me. I don't have many memories of HIA 298 and I playing together in Nazareth House even though we were so close in age. I think the nuns must have kept us apart.
4. When I was about five years old I recall being left in a dark room which was like a dungeon because I wouldn't eat my bread and butter pudding as it was too lumpy. I was left there in the room for a long time. Eventually one of the older girls came and said it was okay and I didn't have to eat it and she took me out of the room.
5. I recall a lady called NHB 32 taking HIA 298 and I out of the home on day trips. NHB 32 lived in Nazareth House and I think she was our Godmother. Sometimes she had to go to the doctor and we went with her. We used to press our noses up against the window on the bus.
6. Years later HIA 298 told me how we ended up in Australia. She said that the nuns asked us who wanted to go to Australia. I think HIA 298 put her hand up and we were chosen to go. I think we were the only two that went from Nazareth House. I do recall that when they came to take us I was screaming. They said 'come on you, you are coming with us' and they grabbed me by the hand. I was pulling and screaming 'I don't want to go, I don't want to go'. But they just took me and HIA 298 I think they may have told us they were taking us for a holiday.
7. I remember being taken to a large wharf with lots of people around. There was a woman called [REDACTED] on the ship who was supposed to be looking after us but she didn't look after us very well. I have a scar on my stomach because I

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burnt myself with an iron because I wanted to iron a handkerchief and I had to stand on my tip toes.

8. My Child Migration form is dated 25th November 1952 and signed by **SR 99** **SR 99** Mother Superior of Nazareth House and witnessed by Father Cyril Stinson. It states that I was nominated by the Catholic Child Group. My medical examination form is dated 15th December 1952. It notes that my lungs may have been abnormal.
9. I have a copy of a letter dated 5th March 1953 from **SR 112** Nazareth House to Father Stinson enclosing a copy of our baptismal certificates. The letter states that my sister and I were only received into the Church before departure to Australia. I think my religion was Church of Ireland as I have a copy of a letter dated 15th February 1988 from the Catholic Migrant Centre to the Parish Priest of St Anne's Cathedral. The letter states that my mother married in St Anne's Cathedral in Belfast in 1932.
10. We left Nazareth House on 9th March 1953 and sailed to Australia on 10th March 1953 on the SS Maloja. We arrived in Fremantle on 10th April 1953.

Nazareth House, Geraldton (11/04/1953 – 1959)

11. When we arrived in Fremantle we were taken to St Joseph's Orphanage in Subiaco. We only stayed there one night and then we travelled to Geraldton by car. I think a priest took us to Nazareth House in his car as there was only a few of us in my group. **HIA 298** was with me along with other girls from Scotland and England. They were on the ship with us.
12. My childhood in Nazareth House was desolate, empty and bleak. The nuns were nasty and often sadistic in their treatment of the girls. Far from being feminine, motherly types the nuns were more like drill sergeants in the army, bashing us into submission and mocking us when we showed vulnerability. I learned not to cry or show my feelings and as an adult that has caused me a lot of problems in my relationships.

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13. When I arrived I had an accent and the nuns didn't like it. It was sort of pushed out of you. I think I spent my time with girls my age but my sister **HIA 298** was around. She came to my aid or I would go to her if I needed anything.
14. There was an awful lot of praying in Nazareth House. We had to go down on our knees to pray. Every time we had a meal, before and after, we had to pray. We got up at 6.30am every morning and went to church.
15. I went to school at Nazareth House. My teachers were **SAU 5** and **SAU 9**. Both had violent tempers and used brutal methods. I learned very little in class. The nuns would grab you by the ear and twist it causing excruciating pain and humiliation. They would belt my fingers with the straight edge of a ruler and hit the children with wooden canes and leather belts. The most damage was caused by them telling me I was a 'stupid girl' and making me wear a sign around my neck that said 'I am a dunce'. The sign was made of wood and was heavy. It had a back and a front so everyone could see it. Sometimes I had to wear it all day walking around with 'I am a disobedient child' written on it.
16. There was violence everywhere. A visiting nun called **SAU 16** used to bash our heads against the wall. The nuns were vicious bullies. One day when I was nine years old I remembered I left my towel on the bathroom floor. **SAU 16** saw me retrieving it and bashed me over the head with an enamel bowl. A lump appeared on my head and I was told to go to the kitchen and rub the lump with butter.
17. **SAU 8** was another bully. She was in charge of the nursery and used to terrorise the babies. When the children cried she used to handle them very roughly. She used to call me names and say derogatory things leaving me very upset. She would push and shove me and slap me for no reason leaving me trembling and afraid.
18. When I was about eight or nine years old I burned my feet very badly on hot coals near the laundry as we were rarely allowed to wear shoes. I received no medical treatment. I was left in a room for days unable to walk and in great pain.

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Nobody came to see me. They just brought in food and left me alone. I still have scars on my foot from this incident.

19. We were made to work like slaves in Nazareth House. The girls did the cooking and cleaning. I had to wash dishes from the age of seven. At nine years old I was made to work in the laundry. It was heavy work as I had to lift heavy wet sheets. I was always kneeling on cold floors, scrubbing and polishing. I have always had trouble with my knees and the doctor told me it was probably made worse by the endless labour I endured as a child when my body was still developing.
20. When I was twelve my sister and I were sent to stay with Mr and [REDACTED] AU 51 [REDACTED] during the holidays. They were awful people. [REDACTED] AU 50 [REDACTED] used to fondle and touch both my sister and I in a sexual way. I told [REDACTED] SAU 5 [REDACTED] but she didn't believe me.
21. I recall having to go to hospital and have x rays but I didn't know what for. I have a copy of a letter dated 11th September 1953 from the Catholic Episcopal Migration and Welfare Association to the Child Welfare Department which states that I was x-rayed in Geraldton and the x-ray showed I had a slightly enlarged heart. I also have a copy of a letter dated 23rd September 1953 from the Clerk in Charge of Welfare in the Welfare Department to the Secretary of the Catholic Episcopal and Welfare Association. It states that when I was seen by the Medical Officer in England on 15th December 1952 he noted my lungs may have been abnormal. The letter requests that in light of the comment about my lungs that arrangements should be made to have me medically examined and 'an assurance given to the Department that there is no need for concern about the child's health'. On 12th October 1953 the Welfare Department wrote to Father Stinson, the Director of the Catholic Episcopal Migration and Welfare Association thanking Father Stinson for a medical report on me and stating that it would be advisable to watch my progress carefully. On 2nd November 1954 the Welfare Department wrote to Miss Sanderson in the Catholic Episcopal Migration and Welfare Association stating that it would be advisable if I had a further medical

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examination to ensure that everything is all right. The letter asks that the Department be advised of the result of the examination.

22. I was taken out of school by the nuns when I was thirteen and made to work in the elderly men's hostel at Nazareth House. The work was degrading. I had to change soiled sheets and scrub floors in the dormitory. Some of the men were in advanced stages of dementia and they tried to grope me and exposed themselves. I also had to help wash and lay out bodies when residents passed away. It was a terrible experience and went on for two years. I even witnessed a man committing suicide. We were going to church and he jumped over the balcony at the home and killed himself. Children should not be witnessing anything like that.

23. When I was older in the home I asked the nuns where my mother was and they just said to me 'what do you want to know that for, go away, your mother is dead'.

Life after care

24. I left Nazareth House when I was sixteen and I went to [REDACTED] hospital to do nursing. I kept in contact with HIA 298 who had already left and we used to write to each other. We were never told about the birds and the bees and I had to find out things the hard way. I left the hospital after two years when I became pregnant with my first child. My husband [REDACTED] and I married when I was nineteen years old. We have been married for fifty years and we have three children and five grandchildren. I have a supportive and understanding husband and I enjoy a close relationship with my children. I try and give them all the love I can as I was never shown any love myself.

25. My sister HIA 298 was keen on finding out if our mother was still alive. She wrote a letter to a Parish Priest before 1988. She also contacted the Child Migrants Trust for assistance. In 1990 Margaret Humphries found our mother. We first spoke to her over the phone. HIA 298 and I then visited Ireland in 1991 and met her. She was seventy five years old and she was living in [REDACTED] h

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Belfast. In 1993 she came over for Christmas and stayed with HIA 298 and I. My mother had two daughters before HIA 298 and I were born. [REDACTED] was born in 1934 and [REDACTED] was born in 1936. They did not know about HIA 298 and I can only guess that they may have also been put in a children's home. My mother then had four more children – a boy who died when he was thirty five, [REDACTED] who was born in 1950, [REDACTED] who was born in 1954 and [REDACTED] who was born in 1956.

26. When I first met my mother it was as if we had known each other for a long time. We just connected. My mother didn't tell me anything about my father. She hadn't told her family anything about us. When we got in touch she told them and we met them all. It was a lovely meeting. However I don't hear from them now which I find strange and I don't know why.
27. My mother died in 2003/04 from a stroke. My step-sisters didn't tell us she had died. We found out some time later. They said they didn't want to upset us but I was hurt as she was our mother too. When I met my mother she told me that she came back to Nazareth House to take us home with her as she thought she could look after us. The nuns told her 'we have nobody here by that name'. They didn't tell her we had been sent to Australia. I don't know how the nuns could send me and my sister away without telling our mother where we were.
28. I returned to Ireland for the second and last time in 2004. My husband [REDACTED] came with me. I visited my mother's grave. It still pains me that my step-sisters never told in time about my mother so I could have attended her funeral.
29. I left Nazareth House at sixteen with very low self esteem, anxiety and fear. I felt like a second class citizen, poorly educated and ill equipped for the outside world. I knew nothing of money and people laughed at me. Inside I still feel inadequate and embarrassed. I feel scarred by all the emotional trauma and humiliation I suffered as a child. As I get older, it gets harder to bear.
30. When I left Nazareth House I didn't understand money and I felt stupid. It made me feel like the nuns were correct and all the nasty things they did to me must

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have been my own fault. Those feelings have been with me all my life. I get terribly hurt when I think people are putting me down. Even now I am not good at sticking up for myself. Although I left care able to read to a basic level, I felt so unconfident that I would always assume I had things wrong and I never put myself forward. I used to rock in my seat, especially in the classroom and it took me years to realise that I was doing it to soothe myself in the distress of that toxic environment. I had nightmares for years about the dead bodies from the men's hostel which I had to undress, wash and pray for.

31. I am a Catholic but I do not practice. I only go to church for funerals and weddings as we had so much religion drilled into us when we were growing up. I still keep in touch with girls from the home and we have gatherings and talk about our time in Nazareth House.
32. The worst part of my life is that they took my heritage away when they put me on that ship. It is the same for all child migrants. I have no Irish heritage. No matter how much counselling you have it doesn't take the pain away of losing my heritage.
33. I try and forget what I have experienced but I can't. It doesn't matter how much people try and counsel you about your past. The memories won't go away. I try and be jovial and make light of things in life but the memories are still there.
34. This Inquiry is long overdue. My time in institutional care has been a harrowing experience. I have tried not to discuss it with my family. For a long time I felt ashamed. Now I realise that I have nothing to be ashamed of. There was never a time when any adult, either the nuns or Child Welfare sat me down and explained to me who I was, what was happening to me or what my choices were in life after I left care. For years I felt inadequate and ashamed of my past. I think the nuns and the welfare should be the ones who are ashamed.

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Statement of Truth

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

Signed

HIA 331

Dated

11-6-2014

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 331**
(In block capitals, surname first)
2. Full Postal Address **NAZARETH HOUSE**
(In block capitals) **BELFAST**
3. Age 7 Date and Year of Birth 1951 Place of Birth Belfast
4. Sex F Weight Church Denomination R. C.
5. Furnish name and address of parent, guardian or next of kin
(If father is living his name must be given)
Guardian: The Mother Superior Nazareth House
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 Std. I
- Signed **SR 99**
For and on behalf of Nazareth House Ballynaphigh
(Name of Sponsoring Organisation)
Date 25.11.52 Belfast

SECTION B.

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

- I, **SR 99**
(insert full name, occupation and address)
of Nazareth House Ballynaphigh Belfast
the { father } of **HIA 331**
 { mother }
 { guardian }
- hereby consent to my child/ward proceeding to Australia under the Commonwealth Child Migration Scheme.
- Dated this 25.11.52 day of

Signature **SR 99**

*Witness Cyril Stinson Qualification Catholic Priest

Address 146A St. Stephen's House, Westminster, W.1.

*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.

In the event of the child named in this application leaving Australia before the completion of 2 years residence (unless he/she is repatriated for medical reasons within twelve months of arrival) Rust. Catholic Migration Committee (name of sponsoring organisation) agree to repay the financial assistance granted in respect of an assisted passage.

Signed Eynh. Hansen
(Representative of Organisation in the United Kingdom.)

Date 25.11.52

On completion, this form (in duplicate) should be forwarded with a certified copy of the child's birth certificate to:—

THE CHIEF MIGRATION OFFICER,
AUSTRALIA HOUSE,
STRAND,
LONDON, W.C.2.

Female, aged 7.

C. of A. Department of Immigration 25/11/52. London Recommended <u>A.</u> <u>W.R. Harvey</u> Interviewing Officer.
--

*Recommended by Catholic
Child Group.*

Medical arranged.

C. of A. Department of Immigration London. Approved Assisted Passage <i>Child dependent</i> <i>Attends for</i> <i>2/1/53</i> Director, C. Officer
--

*appears to be an average
type of little girl.*

clean and neat.

(a) Speech: average for age.

(b) Eyesight: appears normal.

(c) Education: appears average for age

*This child is the sister:
of **HIA 298**, recommended A
on file, S.4/25/93.*

* 11. Jackes

Report forwarded for your
information pl.

Mr. Ross - Brou page 4 H. *[Signature]*

Noted Office
20.9.53

906/53

Jackes

11.9.53

23rd September, 53.

The Secretary,
Catholic Episcopal Migration
A Welfare Association,
62, St. George's Terrace,
PERTH.

Dear Madam,

HIA 331

- born

I refer to your letter dated 11.9.53.
concerning this migrant girl who is at Nazareth House,
Geraldton.

When **HIA 331** was seen by the Medical
Officer in England on 15.12.52, he noted that the child's
lungs may be abnormal, indicated that she had not been
X-rayed and in his remarks said "This child is rather
under-weight, is coughing; there is slight dullness to
base with numerous crepitations. Condition possibly
transient. No history available". I note, too, that
the doctor's report indicates the child's heart to be
normal.

This matter was taken up with your office on
17.8.53, and I note from your letter that Margaret
apparently has a slightly enlarged heart, this being
revealed at a recent X-ray taken at Geraldton.

In view of the doctor's report concerning
the child's lungs, I would appreciate you making arrange-
ments for her to be medically examined and an assurance
given to this Department that there is no need for concern
about the child's health. An extra copy of this letter
is enclosed in case you would care to forward it to Rev.
Mother at Nazareth House. She no doubt would wish to show
it to the doctor who examines the child.

Yours faithfully,

[Signature]
21/10/53

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Department of Immigration, Australia House, London, W.C.2.

MEDICAL EXAMINATION.

Declaration by Applicant.

NAME.

HIA 331

ADDRESS.

Margaret House, Belfast.

1. Have you ever had any serious accident/illness or surgical operation? If so, furnish details. *No*
2. Have you or has any member of your family ever suffered from or been suspected of Tuberculosis? *No*
3. Have you ever had Enuresis or any sign of disease of the Genito Urinary Organs? *No*
4. Have you or has any member of your family ever suffered from mental disease or epilepsy or been treated in an institution of any kind for these Diseases? *No*
5. What medical attention have you required during last 12 months? *None*

I hereby certify that the information supplied by me to the Medical Examiner is correct in every particular:-

Signature of applicant which must be made in presence of Medical Referee.)

HIA 331

RESULTS OF MEDICAL EXAMINATION.

Age *8 yrs.* Height *3ft. 8 3/4"* Weight *42 lb.*A. Heart. *Normal*F. Genito Urinary Organs *Normal*
Urine *No albumin etc. sugar.*

Blood Pressure

(without glasses BE *6/6* RE *6/6*)X B. Lungs *Abnormal ?*
(Particularly Tuberculous)
X-Ray Report *Not X Rayed*G. Sight (with glasses
(if worn) -Cause of defect in sight *Refractive error*C. a. Nervous System *Normal*H. Hearing *Normal*b. Mental Condition. *Normal*I. Physique *Below average*D. Intelligence. *Normal*J. Skin. *Normal*E. Digestive Organs *Normal*

K. If pregnant, period of pregnancy

L. Teeth. *11 upper 12 lower*

Remarks: (include particulars of any departure from normal conditions not fully set out in above) *This child is rather under weight is coughing there is slight dullness to base with numerous crepitations. Condition possibly transient. No history available.*
In cases where Medical Examiner is unable to describe applicant as being in perfect health he should state under REMARKS exact nature of the defect he finds and whether of temporary or permanent nature. The presence of Pediculi should be noted.

Any disablement received on Active Service or otherwise should also be noted and commented on and if a Pension is received the amount of it should be stated.

I Certify that I have this day examined the above-named and am of opinion that the applicant is/is not in good health and of sound constitution and is/is not suffering from any mental or bodily defect which would cause inability to earn a living *is. Due course*Date *15.12.52* Signature & Qualifications *Walter E. Noel*Address *446 Lisburn Road, Belfast*

For all persons, sixteen years of age and over, and those under sixteen not accompanied by parents.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION, AUSTRALIA HOUSE
LONDON, W.C.2.

MEDICAL EXAMINATION.

Declaration by Applicant.

NAME

HIA 331

Full Name in Block Capitals

ADDRESS

Rogers House, Ormeau Road, Belfast

1. Have you ever had any serious accident/illness or surgical operation? If so, please furnish details
no
2. Have you or has any member of your family ever suffered from or been suspected of Tuberculosis?
no
3. Have you ever had Enuresis or any sign of disease of the Genito Urinary Organs? *no*
4. Have you or has any member of your family ever suffered from mental disease or epilepsy or been treated in an institution of any kind for these Diseases? *no*
5. What medical attention have you required during the last twelve months? *none*

I hereby certify that the information supplied by me to the Medical Examiner is correct in every particular:—

Signature of applicant which must be made in the presence of the Medical Referee

HIA 331

Results of Medical Examination.

AGE *8 yrs* HEIGHT *5' 8 1/2"* WEIGHT *42 lb*

A. Heart *NORMAL* F. Genito Urinary Organs *NORMAL*

Blood Pressure *110/80* Sight *without glasses* *DR 1/2 RE 1/2 LE 1/2*

B. Lungs (Particularly Tuberculosis) *ABNORMAL* C. Sight (Snellen's Type) *Defective vision*

X-Ray report *Not X-rayed* D. Hearing *Normal*

C. a. Nervous System *NORMAL* E. Physique *Below average*

b. Mental Condition *NORMAL* F. Skin *NORMAL*

D. Intelligence *NORMAL* G. If pregnant, period of pregnancy

E. Digestive Organs *NORMAL* H. Teeth *11 upper 12 lower*

REMARKS (include particulars of any departure from normal conditions not fully set out in above)

This child is rather under weight is coughing there is slight dullness & loss with numerous cystitis. Condition possibly transient. No history available.

In cases where the Medical Examiner is unable to describe the applicant as being in perfect health, he should state under "REMARKS" the exact nature of the defect which he finds and whether it is of