

PRIVATE

HIA REF: 332

Witness Name HIA 332

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT HIA 332

HIA 332 will say as follows:-

Personal details

1. I was born o [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] My mother was called [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and she placed me in care in St Joseph's Children's Home, Termonbacca on 9 February 1942. I do not recall anything about being placed in care.
2. My mother married a Protestant postman [REDACTED] on 9 October 1940. They had a son [REDACTED] who is four years younger than me and a daughter called [REDACTED] who died when she was six months old.

St Joseph's Children's Home, Termonbacca (9 February 1942 - 29 August 1947)

3. I was placed in care in Termonbacca when I was three years old so I have no memory of being admitted to care. I stayed in the home until I was eight years old but I have very few memories of my time in this institution. I do not recall any visits from my mother. All I remember is that the nuns tried to drum religion into us day and night. I do not recall the name of any of the nuns or the Mother Superior.

PRIVATE

4. I recall American soldiers coming to the home on one occasion.
5. The nuns asked who wanted to go to Australia and they presented it as "the land of milk and honey" so as a small boy I would imagine that it was appealing. I don't recall discussing it with any of the other boys but I must have agreed to go.
6. I recall a woman arriving on the day I was leaving the home and shaking my hand as I got on the bus. I did not know who she was or what organisation she came from. There were about twenty eight boys aged between three and thirteen taken from the home that day and sent on the same sailing to Australia. I have kept in contact with one boy from that time called [REDACTED] HIA 333
7. I do not recall having the opportunity to say goodbye to anyone in the home.
8. I do not think the home sought my mother's consent to my migration. My child migration form was signed by a P Conlon for and on behalf of the Catholic Council for Child Welfare, Coleshill, Birmingham and [REDACTED] SR 81 who was a Mother Superior. I do not recall either of these people.
9. I recall receiving a medical examination prior to departure. My medical certificate is dated 16 July 1947. I never received any medical treatment during my time at Termonbacca.
10. I travelled to Australia on the SS Asturias and I enjoyed the journey. We were well fed and treated well on the ship. It was an old ship that had been used during the war. We were looked after on board by one Christian Brother and some civilian women. I do not recall any of their names. They tried to get us to go to mass and school every day but to be honest my attendance was sporadic. We ran about all over the ship and school and mass attendance could not therefore be strictly enforced.
11. I arrived at Fremantle on 22 September 1947. The stench on arrival was unbelievable. It was the smell of tanneries and wheat bins. We were rounded up and placed in a shed and the Australian authorities took our fingerprints. We

PRIVATE

were then lined up and they split us up to be taken to various different homes. If you had a sibling they would make sure that you were separated and placed in different homes.

Clontarf Boys Home (August 1947 – November 1954)

12. I was sent to Clontarf Boys Home. Out of the twenty eight children who came from Termonbacca not many were sent to Clontarf. The home was owned by Christian Brothers, Hungarian nuns also worked there but the Brothers kept them out of the way. The Brothers were sadistic and brutal and I was often subjected to physical violence and many beatings. I was never subjected to any form of sexual abuse.
13. The Child Welfare Department came to Clontarf periodically to inspect the premises but they always gave two to three weeks notice of their visit which gave adequate time to clean the place up and when they left everything went back to normal. There was never any contact from the British Government or authorities in Northern Ireland.
14. My education at Clontarf was poor. A year before I was due to leave I was sent to work in the bakery which I enjoyed and then on the dairy farm which was extremely hard work. I stayed there until November 1954.
15. When I left Clontarf I went to work on a dairy farm and the Australian Child Welfare Department checked on me until I was eighteen years old. They took money out of my wages weekly and put it in a bank account for me. I had difficulties obtaining this money when I became twenty one but I did eventually obtain it.

Life after care

16. I worked on dairy and wheat farms for twelve years after leaving care and then I worked in Perth as a truck driver. I married my wife [REDACTED] in January 1972

PRIVATE

and then worked in construction until I medically retired about fifteen or sixteen years ago.

17. We have an adopted son called [REDACTED] who is now thirty five and a daughter called [REDACTED] who is now twenty six and expecting our first grandchild.
18. I tried to find out about my past by writing to the parish priest in [REDACTED] called Father Walsh in the 1960's. He wrote back advising that my mother had married a Protestant and he would not provide me with any further assistance. I think my mother was disregarded by the Catholic church because she had married someone outside her own religion.
19. I then contacted my aunt in [REDACTED] in an attempt to obtain further information but I found out in later years from my aunt's daughter that her mail was censored by her mother-in-law and she never received it.
20. I made contact with the Child Migrant Trust in 1996 and gave them my aunt's address and they pursued the request for further information on my behalf. The CMT located my half brothers wife and children in England and my cousins in Ireland. I found out at that stage that my mother had died in 1982.
21. I met my nephew [REDACTED] in Nottingham in August 1997 in the Child Migrant Trust offices. I spent a week in Rugby in England in a hotel and met my nephew every day. I also met my sister-in-law [REDACTED] on this visit and she told me that my mother had lived with her in England before she died and had told her that she always wondered what had happened to me. She also told [REDACTED] that she had gone back to Termonbacca to take me out and was told by the nuns that I had been adopted by a "good Catholic family in Ireland".
22. I then went to Ireland and visited Termonbacca on my own and met a priest there who said "the Church has a lot to answer for with you crowd". I was shown around by a guide. I told him I was not interested in religion yet he still took me to see the chapel and I found this insensitive. I then spoke to a cook in the home

PRIVATE

who said he had been there all his life. My wife joined me later in Ireland and we both went back to Termonbacca to see it together. The same guide was there but he left us to our own devices.

23. I have received some assistance in obtaining relevant paperwork from my cousin

[REDACTED]

24. After Gordon Brown publicly apologised to the Australian Child Migrants in 1997 they set up a travel fund to allow the migrants their expenses for two trips back home and I took this opportunity to visit my relatives in England and Ireland in 2012 and 2013. I now maintain good contact with my relatives at home.

25. It is my view that the care system failed me in general. I was failed by the Australian system by being put in a home where I was subjected to tough physical violence and left unprepared for the outside world at sixteen. I was failed by the Northern Irish system by their failure to seek my mother's permission prior to sending me to Australia.

Statement of Truth

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

Signature

HIA 332

Dated 23/10/2013

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 332

2. Full Postal Address (in block
capitals)

ST. JOSEPH'S HOME, DERRY, IRELAND

3. Age _____ Date & Year of Birth _____

Place of Birth ENNISKILLEN

4. Weight 4 Stone

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)

Mother married - present address unknown

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 I.

Signed : _____

P. A. Conlon

For and on behalf of :

Catholic Council for Child Welfare - Colerhill -
(Name of sponsoring organisation) Birmingham

Date : Dec 19th 1946

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

I _____

SR 81

Superior

(insert full name, occupation & address)

of St. Joseph's Home Derry

the { father
mother
guardian }

of

St. Joseph's Home Derry

HIA 332

HIA 332

hereby consent to my child/ward proceeding to Australia under the
Commonwealth Child Migration Scheme.

Dated this 19th day of Dec. 1946.

Signature _____

SR 81

Witness M. J. RooneyQualification Catholic PriestAddress St. Columba's College, Derry.

The Witness must be one of the following, viz., a Member or Official