

*Rg 338*

## STATEMENT FOR THE NORTHERN IRELAND HISTORICAL ABUSE INQUIRY

HIA 338

1. My name is **HIA 338** I was born on [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] Ireland. I was migrated to Tardun Boys Farm School in WA, from St Josephs Home in Termonbacca, Derry on the 29<sup>th</sup> of August 1947, when I had just turned 13 years of age.
2. My mother was [REDACTED] born 1910 in the county of Monaghan however she did not consent to my migration. The child migration form was signed by **SR 81** (see attachment). This document has the wrong birth date and the Personal History Index document also lists another date of birth.
3. It has taken years for me to retrieve any information relating to my past and my identity. Apparently I was admitted to the Sisters of Nazareth in Derry in 1936, 1937? However, they have been able to give me next to nothing in way of information or documentation. I retain this memory still, of being pulled from the arms of my mother when I was just a babe.
4. I do not know the exact circumstances of my mother at the time, but believe she had few options but to place us with the Sisters of Nazareth in order to find work as she was a single parent. My sister [REDACTED] was born in 1928 and I think she was admitted into Nazareth House in 1935.
5. I can remember that the orphanage was a loveless place, especially when you lose your mother like that. When you are past the baby stage you are expected to earn your keep. As little children we had to clean the dormitories, polish all the wood and big floors in the hall throughout the place. There were farm jobs too, potatoes had to be cropped and the apples in the orchard picked.
6. Even bath times were harsh and cruel. We'd all be stripped and have to stand by the bath in the freezing cold while one after the other got in and out of the bath, if you were at the end of the queue the water was cold and grey.
7. I remember always feeling hungry and on the lookout for food. By the time I left I weighed only 5.88 stone. The names of other boys there that I remember would be **AU 73** and the [REDACTED] brothers.

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8. We were beaten with canes for any small misdemeanour. Even at school we felt threatened. I remember an incident at school where a little girl was hooked around the neck by a crane and pulled down to the ground and then laid into with the cane. I lost my temper completely and ran at the nun and knocked her down. She got up screaming and calling me all sorts of names like being just a guttersnipe etc. and I copped the cane after that. It could have been a nun called [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I can't really remember. I do remember a teacher called [REDACTED] who was really kind to me, she seemed to show in her eyes that she knew how brutally we were being treated.
9. In an orphanage like that you are vulnerable to sexual predators, namely the priests. They have access to you from very early on, you line up every day for everything, especially for Mass. Then you progress to being an altar boy which is supposed to be an honour, but by this time they have figured out who they want. The priest asks you to come in early one day, he gives you a lolly. He starts to groom you, the first time it is just little touches, then you get rewarded perhaps a biscuit or a glass of milk. You get more cuddles, sit on their knees, and get fondled. It builds up and before you know it, by about 8 or 9 years of age – they lose control and you are being raped in the Vestry. This is what happened to me. It happened over a number of years by as many as four different priests. I cannot tell you their names, I called them all Father. I remember the pat on the head before or after Mass, I knew that was bad, it signalled what was to follow. I think the nuns must have been aware what was happening. The priests didn't come up to the farm, surely little boys crying and fearful would have been noticed. I was institutionalised, I didn't really understand it, was just what happened.
10. Then there were the nights where you would lay awake in terror of the big boys coming in and getting into bed with you and put their penis in your hand and try to stop you from crying or yelling out. Many times they were caught by the nuns who had a little room at the end of the dormitory, but it still went on, making me and the other boys afraid.
11. Worst of all was to come though, because when I was migrated to Australia, I lost all semblance of family and family life. I saw my sister [REDACTED] just before I left, on the stairwell, she hugged me and it would be 63 years before I found her and saw her again. To allow a child to lose all contact with his or her kin, meant that I was sentenced to a life alone. Can you begin to understand how much that loss has hurt me?
12. I started looking for her in 1956, I wrote to the nuns, I asked the Red Cross, the Salvation Army. Then I approached the Child Migrants Trust

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and I finally learnt that my mother had remarried and I had 6 other siblings. No one knew about me. I travelled back to Ireland for the first time, to meet them with the help of the Government Travel fund in 2004. It was very difficult because my younger maternal brother could not come to terms with what had happened and blamed me for coming back to find them. He had been given the same name as me and I think he couldn't accept it. Sadly, our mother wasn't alive and so she wasn't able to be heard.

13. It took a while to be reunited with the rest of my maternal siblings, who I finally met in 2010/2011, and this led to my finally being reunited with [REDACTED] who was living alone in the UK. The Child Migrants Trust supported me to travel back to the UK with funding from the British Govt Family Restoration Fund to meet and spend time with my sister, [REDACTED]. She never knew where I was. She was transferred to Nazareth House Sligo after I left. [REDACTED] like me, remained single and still lives alone in the UK.
14. I couldn't really tell her about what happened to me after I left Termonbacca as I didn't want to upset her. I still feel angry with the Catholic Church and the Governments. They didn't care what happened to us. We were sent off and forgotten.
15. I remember **BAU 41** coming to Termonbacca and talking about Australia, land of sunshine and oranges. Then we forgot about it, it seemed like a year or more later, we were all lined up in the hall, kneeling down, and one by one we were picked out and told "you, you and you are going to Australia". We left fairly swiftly, put on a bus and it was only when we got on the Ferry to Scotland that I realised what was really happening. I remember saying to the nun, "I probably won't be back here again".
16. Our greeting on arrival to Tardun was like a prison muster. We were told to "SHUT UP" because we were only there for one reason, "TO OBEY". Then we were told to GET OUT OF THOSE DAMN CLOTHES". I'll never forget the shock of the unbearable heat, the flies and the grasshoppers. The Brothers ruled Tardun with an air of superiority and power. As children we had nowhere to turn. I was out in the middle of nowhere. I spent my time there in a state of anxiety, looking over my shoulder, never comfortable because anybody bigger could do what they wanted to.
17. **BAU 41** was in charge there and I recognised him from his visit to Termonbacca. **BAU 30** picked me and committed criminal sexual acts against me. I never knew when it would happen. It was random

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but took place over the time I was there. We went to bed early at 8pm and sometimes I'd be tapped on the shoulder by him to come to his room.

18. You had to watch out for unexpected physical abuse. They swung their three solid strap with forceful blows. Not so long after I arrived, I copped it around my head by **BAU 19** during school. I heard an almighty clap and I have struggled to hear properly ever since. I was treated at the Mullewa hospital. I still have problematic hearing and infections and discharge from that ear.
19. Our education was poor, the classroom was ruled by fear of violence. They walked up and down the aisle, striking boys. I was beaten once for being able to write the feast of Cana, which I had learned word by word. They thought I must have copied it. I never got an apology. When exam times came around you never got any credit for religious knowledge but that was mostly what you learnt.
20. We were worked like grown men, doing hard labour but we were just boys doing men's jobs; clearing the scrub, building roads, putting up fencing, making a quota of a 100 bricks a day. On top of that was the farm work. At times after heavy workloads, I walked like a cripple because of the back breaking work. I suffer degenerative spinal injuries to this day.
21. As a rule they tossed you out when you turned 16. You became slave labour for their "good Catholic mates". The farmer I was sent to must have gone to the same school as the Christian Brothers because he treated me the same cruel way. He was a covert and cunning predator married with three kids but sneaking around watching me and wanting a sexual encounter. I had to endure this for the next two years.
22. I submitted an application to the WA Redress scheme in regards to the abuse experienced at Tardun and received the maximum amount.
23. The impact of my migration as a child has meant that I have spent a lifetime looking over my shoulder, and I am still fearful that something bad is going to happen to me. I believe that I was institutionalised in a sense, I am still following routines, obeying orders and remembering the experiences most nights before I fall asleep. I do not have much trust in individuals, systems and institutions, or in society at large. I believe this inability to trust probably cost me my marriage. I just could not explain my state of fear and my shame to my wife. I spent a fair part of my life drinking – to deaden the pain and forget the childhood abuse. I live alone and have no relatives in Australia. At this age, I worry about what

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will happen to me if I get too sick to look after myself. I am scared that I will end up in an institution.

24. I am only recently reunited with family members in Ireland, the UK and America, who all live so far away from me and have their own lives. I used to grieve for what I did not know, and now I grieve for what I have lost. I am so angry that as a child I was led to believe that no one wanted me. How could the State allow my family to be lost to me and me to my family? There was no necessity for this cruel and abusive treatment. These so called religious people will never understand what their actions have done to me, but I now know that they were just hypocrites and cowards.

I would like to thank the Inquiry for the understanding and giving me extended time to submit a written statement. Revisiting the past is very painful. I have needed time and support to find the strength to face it all again. It is a true account and I have asked the Child Migrants Trust to type this statement up as I have spoken it to them.

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COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Department of Immigration  
Australia House, London

FILE COPY

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)

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2. Full Postal Address (in block capitals)  
ST. JOSEPH'S HOME  
TERMONBACCA DERRY

3. Age \_\_\_\_\_ Date & Year of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Birth CASTLEBLANEV

4. Weight 55t. 8 oys. 8 lbs Church Denomination RC

5. Furnish name and address of parent, guardian or next of kin (if father is living his name must be given)

SND 600

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. Eduoational standard Std V

Signed: P. A. Coulter

For and on behalf of: Catholic Council for Child Welfare, Colleshill - Birmingham  
(Name of sponsoring organisation)

Date: 19 Dec '46

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

I SR 81 Superior  
(insert full name, occupation & address)

of St. Joseph's Home Termonbacca Derry  
the ~~mother~~ (father) of St. Joseph's Home Termonbacca Derry  
(guardian) HIA 338

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

Dated this 19th day of December 1946

Signature SR 81

Witness Eamon Tierney Qualification Catholic Priest

Address St. Colm's Valley, Derry

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,