

PRIVATE

HIA REF: 339

Witness Name: HIA 339

## THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

## WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 339

I, HIA 339 will say as follows:-

Personal details

1. I was born on [REDACTED] in [REDACTED]. My maiden name is [REDACTED]. My mother was called [REDACTED]. My mother spent some time in the Good Shepherd Convent in Newry and later moved to Dublin. I do not know anything about my father. I have four siblings – HIA 318, HIA 303, HIA 401 and AU 95. HIA 303 is the oldest and she is seventy next year. HIA 318 is two years younger than HIA 303 and AU 95 is the youngest. I only found out that I had a younger brother in 2001.

Nazareth House, Belfast (13/05/1952 – 06/05/1953)

2. I was placed in Nazareth House when I was four years old. I do not know where I spent the first four years of my life but I think we might have lived with my mother and grandfather during those years. From stories I have been told in later life this seems to have been the position and it was when my grandfather died that I was placed in care.
3. I do not recall anything about my time in care in Nazareth House, Belfast other than the fact that there used to be dogs there. I think they must have belonged

PRIVATE

to the nuns. They were Kerry Blues and in later life when my adoptive family got an Irish setter dog I asked them to call it "Kerry".

4. I have no memories of my mother visiting Nazareth House, Belfast.
5. I was sent to Australia when I was four years old. I do not recall being asked about whether or not I wanted to go to Australia. My medical form is dated 24 March 1953.
6. The consent section of my Child Migration Form is signed by [REDACTED] SR 99 the Mother Superior of Nazareth House and dated 28<sup>th</sup> February 1953.
7. I sailed to Australia on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1953 on the SS Otranto. I travelled with my sister [REDACTED] HIA 303 I remember feeling hungry on the ship and stealing biscuits. I do not recall who took care of us on the ship. I arrived in Melbourne on 10<sup>th</sup> June 1953. My sister [REDACTED] HIA 401 came out later on a different ship and my brother [REDACTED] HIA 318 was the last to be sent to Australia and he travelled on a different ship to myself and my sisters.

Nazareth House, Camberwell (10/06/1953 - In/around 1957)

8. I recall on arrival at Melbourne Port the nuns took video footage of our arrival and others were taking photographs. I think we were the first children to arrive at Camberwell as it was a new home.
9. I remember being left alone upstairs when I was sick in the home. I also recall being made to look at an elderly nun who had died in the home when I was between five and seven years old and I found this very upsetting. I remember having nightmares about the corpse afterwards.
10. I remember thinking I was an orphan throughout my childhood. I used to look out the gates of the home at other families and wishing that I could be a normal child with a normal family. Other than this I was treated well at Camberwell. I recall [REDACTED] SAU 24 [REDACTED] SAU 20 and [REDACTED] SAU 19 were the

PRIVATE

nuns that looked after us. They treated us well and I recall when I got married having my photo taken at Camberwell.

11. A Melbourne family, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] took me out for holidays with HIA 303 and her friend and a few other girls. They did not have any children of their own. They were really good to all of us. I was then fostered out to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] after my First Communion when I was about seven or eight years old.
12. HIA 303 used to visit me when I was staying with the [REDACTED] family but [REDACTED] was very protective of me and I think she was afraid that my siblings might drag me down.
13. I was formally adopted by the [REDACTED] family on 27 September 1960 when I was twelve years old. They were very good to me throughout my life. Even though I was fortunate to have such good adoptive parents I recall saying to my mother once when she was cooking in the kitchen "I wish I was a normal child with a normal mother and father".
14. Unfortunately my brother was sent to Bindoon and he had bad experiences there. My sister HIA 303 was not adopted and she had a very difficult life. I do not have any contact with my sister HIA 401

#### Life after care

15. When I was eighteen years old I did my nurse training. I met my husband [REDACTED] at a party and we married when I was twenty four years old and we have been married over forty years. I remember one serious boyfriend I had as a young girl did not want to continue seeing me when he realised I was adopted but [REDACTED] accepted me when I told him about my past. We have five children and three grandchildren. I nursed part time from when I was married until I was fifty nine years old. I then took care of my adopted mother full time for three years before she died.

PRIVATE

16. I never discussed my childhood with my children. It was dropped into conversation unwittingly by a family friend at my father's funeral in 1989 and my children were horrified and had a very negative reaction to the news. A few months later after they had time to deal with the information [REDACTED] and I took them to Nazareth House, Camberwell and we had tea with the nuns. I do not like to discuss the past with my family or even my close friends. Those close to me know that it is a closed book. I denied having siblings for most of my life and it is only recently that I can admit that I have siblings but I always explain that I was brought up as an only child. I always make it clear that I do not want to discuss the topic in any more detail than that. My past is a subject that is not up for discussion.
17. My husband and I visited Ireland in the early 1990's. We paid privately for this trip and I went to [REDACTED] and spoke to the parish priest. I went to England and visited Nazareth House in Beck's Hill as this is where one of the nuns from Camberwell, SAU 24 was staying. She had been the Reverend Mother at Camberwell. She was very good friends with my adoptive parents and that is the reason why I wanted to visit her. She could not speak at that stage as she was elderly and ill but I could see that she recognised me as she cried when I met her. I also went to Hammersmith on that trip but I did not make any enquiries or get very far regarding any search for information into my background.
18. The Child Migrants Trust assisted us with a background search and Margaret Humphries contacted me in the early 1990's and told me about my mother and that she had located my sister HIA 303. My mother had died three years before so I never had an opportunity to meet her. HIA 303 had married when she was eighteen years old and I had gone to her wedding but I lost contact with her after that although I thought she might have lived in Perth. She came to visit me shortly thereafter with her daughter [REDACTED] but I almost felt as if I had to hide her for the two weeks that she stayed with me as I had not told anyone about her. Our meeting went well and I stay in touch with HIA 303 on a monthly basis and I remain close to her daughter [REDACTED]. My brother HIA 318 also visited me on a couple of occasions. He brought his son [REDACTED] on one of the trips. We got on

## PRIVATE

well and we also stay in touch monthly. HIA 318 had initiated contact with the CMT. I have also visited them on a couple of occasions. I stayed with my niece [REDACTED] and met HIA 318 and HIA 303 during these trips.

19. Before I went to Northern Ireland in 2002 HIA 303 and HIA 318 appeared on a BBC Spotlight documentary about Child Migration. I had been asked to take part in this documentary but although I did not want to participate in the documentary I thought it was very brave of HIA 303 and HIA 318 to tell their story on television. I have never watched the programme but it was seen by distant cousins in Belfast called [REDACTED] and they got in contact. We were able to find out more information from them about our birth mother.
20. My second trip to Northern Ireland in 2002 was sponsored by the Child Migrant Trust and I went with my husband. I did not go with my siblings on this trip as I did not feel I could cope with going with them and I needed the support of my husband. HIA 318 and HIA 303 went on their own trip back to Ireland at a different time. I met my Aunt [REDACTED] my mother's sister, on the trip but she did not tell me a great deal about my mother. I also met my cousin [REDACTED] and her daughter [REDACTED]. I had only found out close in time to this trip that I had a brother called AU 95 who lived in [REDACTED]. The Child Migrant Trust made me aware of this. AU 95 was born on [REDACTED] 1952, eleven months after HIA 401 and was placed in Coneywarren Children's Home. He was then placed in foster care and he stayed there until he was about fifteen years old. I met AU 95 on this trip.
21. I visited the Good Shepherd in Newry where my mother had stayed. I got conflicting information about my mother on this trip and I found the entire trip quite distressing. I did not know if I was getting the truth about my mother or simply a gloss on her life and I still do not feel that I have been told the true story about my mother. AU 95 took us to visit my grandfather's grave and showed us the house where he thought I had been brought up but I found the entire trip very upsetting and I have no intention of ever returning to Ireland.

PRIVATE

22. Although I got on well with my brother during this trip when I returned home I tried to keep up a correspondence with him but he seemed to close the door on our relationship after that. I also wrote to my sister **HIA 401** in the past and sent her photos but she has not wanted to initiate any contact with me and I have to accept that. I understand as it is just the impact being in residential care has on a family.
23. The effect of being in residential care has been life long in my opinion. I have always felt different, ashamed, disconnected and inferior to all those other people who had a family and who knew the identity of their mother and father. I rarely discuss my past as it is too painful and after speaking to this Inquiry I will put the lid back on my time in care and I will no longer discuss it.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed

**HIA 339**

Dated

30 July 2014

Ref. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 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 339** .....
  - (In block capitals, surname first)
  2. Full Postal Address ..... **NAZARETH HOUSE, BELFAST** .....
  - (In block capitals)
  3. Age... **4** ..... Date and Year of Birth...  ..... Place of Birth...  .....
  4. Sex... **F** ..... Weight... **3 st** ..... Church Denomination... **R.C.** .....
  5. Furnish name and address of parent, guardian or next of kin... **Reverend Mother** .....
  - (If father is living his name must be given)  
**Nazareth House, 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 **jun. Infants** .....
- Signed **Federal Catholic Immigration Committee of Australia** .....
- For and on behalf of **Orch. Hanson** .....
- (Name of Sponsoring Organisation)
- Date **3.3.53** .....

### SECTION B.

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

I, **SR 99** ( **Superior** ) .....

(Insert full name, occupation and address)

of **Nazareth House, Belfast** .....

the { **father** } of **HIA 339** .....

      { **mother** } .....

      { **guardian** } .....

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

Dated this **28th** ..... day of **February 1953** .....

Signature... **SR 99** .....

\*Witness... **SR 112** ..... Qualification... **Head Teacher** .....

Address **Nazareth House P. School, Belfast** .....

\*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.

SECTION C.

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)..... Federal Catholic Immigration Committee of Australia (name of sponsoring organisation) agree to repay the financial assistance granted in respect of an assisted passage.

Signed: Carol Stinson  
(Representative of Organisation in the United Kingdom.)

Date: 3.3.53

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,

C. of A.  
Department of Immigration  
London.  
Recommended by A.  
Grant for Interviewing Officer.  
20/4/53

C. of A.  
Department of Immigration  
London.  
Approved Assisted Pass Child's passport  
Grant for Chief Selection Officer  
20/4/53.