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HIA REF: 340

Witness Name: HIA 340

**THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995**

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**WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 340**

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I, HIA 340 will say as follows:-

**Personal details**

1. I was born on [REDACTED] [REDACTED] County Home. My mother was called [REDACTED] and she lived in [REDACTED]. She was unmarried and fourteen years old when I was born. I do not know who my father was.
2. My mother's father said she was too young to look after a baby and so I was placed in Nazareth House in Belfast on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1950. I was recommended by Nazareth Lodge. I believe I was put in care as a baby so I may have been in the nursery of Nazareth Lodge from when I was born. The nuns gave a promise to my mother that I would have a good home.

**Nazareth House, Belfast (25/8/1950 – 21/2/1955)**

3. I was placed in Nazareth House when I was two years old. I left on 15<sup>th</sup> March 1953 and I was readmitted on 14<sup>th</sup> February 1954. I do not know where I was placed during this time.
4. I still have flashbacks to incidents when I was dragged out of bed by the nuns for wetting the bed. When I was out of bed the nuns either belted me with a strap or

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hit me around the head. I remember seeing other children who wet the bed getting treated the same way. I do not recall any of the nun's names and I do not recall anything else from my time in Nazareth House, Belfast.

5. I do not recall anyone talking to me about Australia or asking me if I wanted to go. I left Nazareth House on 21<sup>st</sup> February 1955. I do not recall anything about the journey to the ship. I sailed to Australia on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1955 on the Orontes when I was six years old. There were other boys and girls on board the ship. I have a memory of a little boy being hit on the ship for misbehaving and then being thrown overboard. I do not recall anything else about the journey to Australia.
6. My Child Migration form is signed by SR 99 from Nazareth House in Belfast and dated October 1954.

**Nazareth House, Camberwell, Melbourne (27/3/1955 - 1959)**

7. I arrived in Melbourne on 27<sup>th</sup> March 1955. I was taken to Nazareth House in Camberwell. I do not remember anything about my arrival in Melbourne or the journey to Nazareth House. Another girl and I were the youngest children in Nazareth House.
8. I was bitter that I was never shown any love or affection from my time in care. I felt lost as I thought I didn't belong to anyone. I had no self esteem and I never thought I was good enough. I was never made to feel like a person – I was just a number to the nuns. As a result I rebelled as a young girl. I just wanted to be loved.
9. I remember sliding down the banisters in the home and misbehaving. The nuns caught me and punished me. As punishment the nuns locked me up in a wardrobe for hours. This was a regular occurrence. When they let me out of the wardrobe they belted me. I cannot recall any of the nun's names. During mission time in the home if you played up the nuns belted me or hit me around

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the head as punishment for showing them up in front of the priests. Sometimes the priests would also have hit us for misbehaving.

10. A married couple called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] took me out from the home at weekends. They owned a general store in [REDACTED] which is a small country town. They had no children of their own and so they adopted me. I left Nazareth House in Camberwell in 1959 when I was eleven years old. I had a very good life with the [REDACTED]. They were good to me. [REDACTED] died when I was fifteen and [REDACTED] died after I was thirty five years old.

### Life after care

11. When I left school I went to make [REDACTED] then I worked in a [REDACTED] factory which made [REDACTED] components. Later I completed a course as a nurse's assistant. I worked as a nurse's assistant for years and retired a few years ago after I had two shoulder replacement operations and a knee replacement operation. I now work as a crossing supervisor for children.
12. I met my husband [REDACTED] when I was seventeen. He was in the Navy. We married when I was nineteen. We moved to [REDACTED] where we live now. We have two children called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. We have three grandchildren – two girls and a boy. I am very close to my children. I feel we have brought them up well and I learned from the mistakes others made in relation to my childhood. I have always done the best I can for my family.
13. I contacted the Child Migrants Trust in Melbourne in the last ten years after seeing an article in the Herald Sun newspaper. They helped me to obtain my birth certificate which I never had as a child. Eventually they traced my family in Ireland and found my mother.
14. My mother was married to a man called [REDACTED] and they had three sons – [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. She was living in [REDACTED] in England. I met my mother for the first time approximately five years ago. It was arranged by the

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Child Migrants Trust. Our meeting was a beautiful experience. She cuddled me and for the first time in my life I felt that I belonged to someone. I felt immediate affection as soon as I saw her.

15. However whilst part of the longing to know who I belonged to was fulfilled I was also sad as all my life I never felt worthy of love. I still lack self esteem and I question myself every day. That feeling will never go away. I will always have those feelings of doubt. I can love other people and I do - I love my family, but I have never loved myself. I have lost a lot in my life. I never had a mother as a child. Whilst I am happy that I have reconnected, that happiness is tinged with sadness for a past of 'what ifs'.
16. I met my mother again a few years ago and there was no awkwardness. I can be open with her and tell her anything. She has health problems now and is hard of hearing. We stay in contact by way of telephone and writing short notes to one another as neither of us are very literate. I am in good contact with my step brothers and two of them have visited me here in Australia. My husband regularly emails [REDACTED] to find out how my mother is doing. I have also visited Ireland and met my extended family in [REDACTED]. They welcomed me but our contact is sporadic. The Child Migrants Trust paid for both of my trips to England and Ireland.
17. I attended the apology made by a Minister on behalf of the Australian Government in Melbourne a few years ago. I feel aggrieved that I was sent off to Australia without being asked. As child migrants we were not treated as children but as commodities to be traded by one country to another. They don't know how much damage they caused us. I lost my identity and I was deprived of the opportunity of reconnecting with my mother and family sooner because I was in another country.

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**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed **HIA 340** \_\_\_\_\_

Dated 22/10/2013. \_\_\_\_\_

IN THE MATTER OF **HIA 340** AN INFANT.

By **SR 189** (in Religion known as **SR 189**

**SR 189**) of Nazareth House, Ormeau Road, in the City of Belfast.

a Member of the Community known as The Poor Sisters of Nazareth, aged twenty-one years and upwards, make Oath and say as follows:-

1. That on the Nineteenth day of January, One thousand nine hundred and forty-nine **HIA 340** an Infant, who was born on the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] was placed in the care of my Community at the Community's Home known as Nazareth Lodge, Ravenhill Road, Belfast aforesaid by her mother, [REDACTED], who was then unmarried.

The said [REDACTED] informed the Sisters at that time that **HIA 340** was born in the County Home in the County of [REDACTED]. Subsequently on the Twenty-eighth day of May One thousand nine hundred and fifty the said **HIA 340** was transferred to another of the Community's Homes known as Nazareth House, Ormeau Road, Belfast aforesaid.

2. That the said [REDACTED] did not at anytime to the best of my knowledge sign any form of Consent to the adoption of her daughter the said **HIA 340**, but I am informed and believe that at the time the child was placed in Nazareth Lodge aforesaid, the said [REDACTED] requested the Sisters to arrange for the said **HIA 340** adoption.

3. That the said [REDACTED] has not at anytime contributed in any way to the support of the said **HIA 340** nor did she enter into any agreement to do so, nor has anyone at anytime contributed or agreed to contribute to her support.

4. That the said [REDACTED] had not at anytime visited the said **HIA 340** either in Nazareth Lodge or Nazareth House aforesaid, nor has she communicated with the said **HIA 340** **HIA 340** or with the Sisters of my Community, nor has she made any enquiries whatsoever concerning the said **HIA 340** **HIA 340**

5. The Sisters of Nazareth Lodge and Nazareth House have no knowledge of the whereabouts of the said [REDACTED], but I am informed that when the said [REDACTED] placed the said

That no person has at anytime been made liable by any order  
of any Court to contribute to the support of the said **HIA 340**

**HIA 340**. On two occasions the said **HIA 340** was  
placed in the care of a foster mother, with a view to adoption  
but on both occasions the foster mother became ill and the  
child was returned to our Home.

Save where otherwise appears, I make this Affidavit of my  
own knowledge.

**SR 189**

SWORN as Nazareth House, Ormeau  
Road in the City of Belfast this  
23<sup>rd</sup> day of ~~October~~ 1958  
before me, a Commissioner for  
Oaths.

