

STATEMENT FOR THE NORTHERN IRELAND HISTORICAL ABUSE INQUIRY

HIA 342

Australia

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1. My name [REDACTED] HIA 342 [REDACTED] I was born on [REDACTED]
[REDACTED], in Derry. I understand that I was admitted to Nazareth House,
Derry in 1941. I was recommended by Father Smith, [REDACTED]. I still
don't really know the circumstances of my admission; I have learnt in
later years that at some stage my father had taken me to the [REDACTED]
family to be looked after. I am not sure how old I was when this
happened. I know that my brother and sister were admitted to Nazareth
House in Belfast for some years but my mother took both her children
back into her care in 1947/1948.
2. I have got no memories of Nazareth House Derry, all I can remember
was that I was given a grey coat and a grey cap whereas all my friends
had colours and I had to have grey. I have spoken with my psychologist
(Mary Darcy, now retired, practised in [REDACTED] whom I first saw in
1997) a lot about my lack of memory and she thinks that I have blocked
all the memories and this could be due to trauma.
3. At age seven I was sent out to Australia and I believed I had no one,
no family, because I was told I was a war orphan [REDACTED] SR 84 [REDACTED]
signed consent for migration and it was witnessed by P.A. Conlon who I
think was a Christian Brother in Ireland. There was about five of us
around my age, but there were older girls sent as well, and on the ship
there were a lot of other kids. I arrived in Fremantle on the 22nd
September 1947 aboard the Asturias. I can remember the boat trip, and
the lady who looked after us, [REDACTED] who looked after a few of us
in the cabin, about four or five of us. I don't remember any preparation

about going to Australia; perhaps I can remember having an injection but not much else. We were like a herd of sheep we were just pushed along, I didn't know anything about where we were headed.

4. I remember arriving in Fremantle, being put in the big shed and lining up. We had our fingerprints taken. We then got a big bus to Geraldton. It was a hot and isolated place. There were no houses around, there were a few Australian kids there and there were also elderly people who lived in the hostel and nursing home there. I was bewildered really, went into dormitories, it ended up about 60 children in two dormitories. I remember hating the heat, and couldn't really cope with it. We had mass every morning, chores including putting coal in the stoves, boiling big vats of water, doing jobs every day. Our work included looking after the old people, and there were babies to look after as well as the farm work like feeding the chooks, collecting the eggs and feeding the pigs. So our days mostly revolved around religion and work. Looking back the educational opportunities were poor. A lot of it was to do with us being frightened. We were brought up on guilt, fear, and anxiety. I was petrified and kept my head down, I was timid and I saw how badly treated the poor girls who wet their beds. A couple of the nuns were cruel, and the rest were just trying to manage. Our classrooms were Nissan army huts that were used by the army during the war. I was not aware of anyone from the UK coming to see how things were for us in Geraldton.

5. When I left Nazareth House, Geraldton at 16 I wasn't given any documents whatsoever. They organised me a job with Nazareth House Aged Care, in Fremantle. I did domestic work, looked after the old people and everything. I worked seven days a week. Apparently we got paid 2 pound a week. I was so lonely there that after 18 months; I went back to Geraldton and worked at St John of God Hospital as a nursing assistant, living in hospital quarters. Later, when I was working for the nuns in the baby's home in [REDACTED] I asked one of the nuns to get my birth certificate as she was going back to Ireland.

6. One day in Melbourne when I was in my late thirties I went to the Derry Association picnic and a photo was taken of me and sent back to the Derry Journal. The [REDACTED] family in Derry recognised me. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], from Derry, wrote and told me that I had lived with [REDACTED] and his family until I was seven. [REDACTED] was ten years older than me and remembers that the sisters of Nazareth came around to his mother and told her and the family that I would have a better life in Australia. He told me that I had a mother and a father, my mother was a nurse during the war and my father was in the army. I wrote back but felt embarrassed and lost and didn't know how to address all these difficult issues from my past. I wasn't even confident or good at spelling or writing in those days and not much better these days. [REDACTED] also told me the nuns used to send photos of me to [REDACTED] in Derry, as I was growing up in Australia, including my graduation – I didn't even know I had graduated. I remember that after I had left Nazareth House in Geraldton [REDACTED] SAU 7 [REDACTED] had said I should write to [REDACTED] and I said to [REDACTED] SAU 7 [REDACTED] I have no idea who she is, she gave me the address and I wrote to her asking what happened to my parents. She wrote back and told me that I had parents that my mother was a nurse and my father had been in the war. It all seemed too painful at the time and I just seemed to lose contact with her.

7. In 1997 my psychologist encouraged me to find out about my family because she believed that would help me to deal with many emotional issues. The Child Migrants Trust helped me to trace my mother [REDACTED] [REDACTED] who sadly had died in 1991 in Belfast before I could find her and my father [REDACTED] who also had died in 1976 in America. My parents had three children, I was the third child. My brother [REDACTED], (DOB 1934 Belfast) had left Ireland and was living in America and my sister [REDACTED] (DOB 1932) nee [REDACTED] was living in Scotland and still is. My father married again in the UK, London and then went to live in America. I have a paternal sister called [REDACTED] who tells me that my father was not in the army. My mother didn't marry again nor have any more children.

8. I only reunited with my family, my brother and sister, in 1999, and met my brother twice in America before he died in 2011 in [REDACTED]. My brother told me that my mother was always crying, and they didn't know about me. They were in a children's home in Belfast after my parents separated after I was born. My mother went back in 1946 and put [REDACTED] into a [REDACTED] college so that she could visit her more often. [REDACTED] told me that our mother could only visit Nazareth House Belfast, for two hours on a Sunday. I don't remember any visits from my mother, but wonder how she could have arranged to get from Belfast to Derry anyway and her children were in separate homes in Belfast – boys and girls. Around 1947/1948 she took both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] back into her care, but I was sent to Australia and she did not sign the consent form, although it should be noted that it was the same order.
9. The impacts of my being deported from Northern Ireland include; loss of identity and culture, separated from family and homeland, lack of education – my brother and sister in Northern Ireland had secondary education and I didn't and that was during the war. My migration has affected many people, including my parents, my siblings, my children and my grandchildren from ever knowing anything about each other. Growing up I was made to feel that I had little self worth and that I was brought up with guilt, fear and anxiety. I lacked encouragement and confidence. This has affected my life chances and my personal relationships and my marriage suffered because of this. I had two bring up two children on my own when my marriage broke down. There are many reasons why children were in care, Second World War, poor parents, poor families, single parents, separated families. Some were placed in care against their parent's will, for reasons to do with religion. In my case, I believe that the fact that my father was non catholic was part of the reason my migration was organised. I think this because that is all the Catholic Church thought of in those days. The system had little accountability and no one came to check as we had no family. We were out of sight, out of mind. There were not enough nuns to look after all of us; they were expected to do the impossible. I'd

like to say that Governments failed us, where we missed out, the nuns also were not supported, it's easy to criticise to criticise just the people who were trying to look after us, but we were sent out to populate Australia, good white British stock, but we all missed out. We were not sent with enough forethought, to the effects of the trauma of separation from our families and homeland.

I would like to thank the Inquiry for your consideration and for permitting me to prepare my statement rather than having to travel to Queensland to meet with the panel. The effect of having to face these painful issues again makes me relive the trauma, and my doctor has given me medication to help manage the stress.

28.10.13

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This is a true account to my knowledge and I have asked the Child Migrants Trust to type up this statement as I have spoken it to them.

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)

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2. Full Postal Address (in block capitals)
NAZARETH HOUSE
BISHOP ST. LONDONDERRY, N. IRELAND

3. Age 7 Date & Year of Birth _____ Place of Birth L'DERRY

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)

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 _____

Signed _____

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For and on behalf of _____

COPY OF THIS RECORD

(Name of sponsoring organisation)

Date: _____

THE AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVES

DOES NOT AUTHORISE

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

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DUPLICATION

I _____
(insert full name, occupation & address)

of Nazareth House Bishop St; L. Derry.
the {father} of _____
{mother} of _____
{guardian} of _____

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

Dated this 15th day of July 1947

Signature _____

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Witness P. A. Conlon Qualification Migration Officer

Address 38 Strawberry Hill Rd Enniskillen.

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
Registered Medical Practitioner, Solicitor or Notary Public.

On completion this form should be forwarded to :

The Chief Migration Officer
Australia House,
LONDON, W.C.2.