

PRIVATE

HIA REF: 345

Witness Name HIA 345

## THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

## WITNESS STATEMENT HIA 345

HIA 345

will say as follows:-

Personal Details

1. I was born [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] County Tyrone. I am not sure who cared for me during the first two years of my life. It is possible that I was cared for during this period by my mother or I may have been placed in the baby home at Nazareth House, Derry. My mother was a twenty one year old single mother when I was born.
2. The register from the Sisters of Nazareth shows that I was placed in Nazareth House, Belfast on 9 October 1946 when I was two years old and I stayed there until 6 May 1953. The Observation Book of the home notes that my admission was recommended by the Sisters of Nazareth, Nazareth House, Derry and by my mother [REDACTED]. I made my First Confession on 18 May 1951, my First Communion on 19 May 1951 and I had left the home before it was time for my Confirmation. The admissions register also notes my date of birth as [REDACTED] but my correct date of birth is noted above.

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Nazareth House, Belfast (9 October 1946 - 6 May 1953)

3. I remember a few things about my time in Nazareth House. I recall having nightmares and I used to sleepwalk. I was scared by pictures of the Sacred Heart that had flickering lights below. The nuns told me that I was possessed by the devil.

ALSO HOLY PICTURES  
~ WATER

4. Some of the girls in the home were punished by the nuns for wetting the bed. This did not happen to me but I often saw the other girls being punished by having to put their wet bedsheets over their heads.
5. I recall having my hair washed in water and Jeyes Fluid. I think it was used to prevent nits but it was really strong and burned your neck red. I also recall having to show my underwear to the nuns which I always found a humiliating thing for them to ask me to do.
6. I remember feeling hungry during my time at Nazareth House and stealing apples from the kitchen. I also recall feeling cold a lot of the time in the home.
7. We were told that we were going to a land full of oranges and sunshine so we wanted to go at the time although we really had no idea where we were going. I recall the wind whistling through the orphanage and there was no form of heating so the thought of a warm country was appealing at the time. Sister SR 112 signed my form authorising my migration to Australia.
8. I was one of five girls in the home who were transported on the SS Otranto to Australia. I shared a cabin with these five girls. We did not travel with nuns, we travelled with two Catholic lay women who were in charge of us on board the ship. I recall they showed us a hairbrush and told us that one side was for your hair and the other side was for beating you if you did not behave.

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9. There were boys on the ship also but we did not mix together. I recall our route went via the Suez Canal.
10. I really enjoyed the journey on the ship. We left England on 8 May 1953 and arrived in Fremantle on 4 June 1953. We dropped off some passengers at Fremantle and then proceeded on to Melbourne. I think all the boys got off at Fremantle. We were given baskets as gifts. We had toys and dolls and they took photographs of us on arrival at Nazareth House as we were the first migrant children to be housed by the Sisters of Nazareth in their new wing at East Camberwell. The others were called [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] HIA 339 [REDACTED] HIA 303 [REDACTED] and we all had to show our toys and dolls to the photographer but these items and our baskets were taken from us by the nuns. The Advocate which is a Catholic paper was doing an article regarding our arrival so these toys were just for show.

**Nazareth House, Melbourne (June 1953 – In/around 1960)**

11. The Sisters of Nazareth had opened the home specifically for child migrants. Prior to that it had been a home for the elderly but was used then by the nuns for child migrants only. There were about fifty children in the home and we were the first group of children to arrive in the home. I recall English children came after our arrival but I am not sure if any other Northern Irish children were admitted to the home after the arrival of our group. We were a novelty at first and the old men and women that the nuns looked after wanted to hear our accents.
12. The intention under the "White Australia" policy was to bring more children out but I think when the numbers at the school reached about fifty or so then England stopped sending anyone else out and put an end to further migration.
13. If someone misbehaved in the home and no-one owned up to it then we would all be punished by the nuns. They would beat us with anything including a cricket set which was a Christmas gift but we never played cricket.



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I was hit a lot around my ears by the nuns in Melbourne and I attribute my current hearing problems to those early punishments by the nuns.

14. One of the nuns based in Nazareth House in Belfast SR 145 came out to work in Melbourne after I had been transferred there. She took over from SAU 1 and everyone dreaded her as she was extremely strict. SAU 1 had also been very cruel. I recall she would beat you in the dormitory. Once she beat me with her leather belt which had a chain on it. She would go around the beds, lift up your nightdress and whack you repeatedly. One day she burnt her hand on a presser in the laundry which I felt was justice for how cruel she was to us. SR 145 replaced her but she was also a bully, a lot of the nuns were in their own way. Sister SAU 2 was very cruel and beat me with a stick with soap on the end. When I could not stand anymore and was on my knees she kept beating me. She died a few years ago when she was in her eighties. All the nuns at the home in Melbourne were quite young nuns.

15. I recall taking my period when I was eleven and some of the nuns spoke to me at the time but did not tell me what was happening to my body at that age. They implied initially that I had been with a boy but I was only eleven at the time. Then they accused us of being with girls trying to get us to write down the name of girls we had been with or we would get beaten. They were accusing us of being lesbians when in reality we were totally naive and innocent.

16. I went to a secondary school at [REDACTED] which was also run by a different Order of nuns. I travelled to school by train.

17. We went out to stay with families during holiday periods but we were mostly used to help them with work around the house. Mostly they used us as slave labour. The nuns expected us to become cleaners or domestic assistants. I wanted to achieve more than that so I insisted on doing an exam to get into the [REDACTED]. I passed my typing exams and went to work for three years in an army barracks in Melbourne. I was under

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the guardianship of the nuns or the Child Welfare Department until I reached twenty one years of age. I heard nothing from anyone in authority over me from the day I left the home. I ended up in a hostel and then found rooms myself where I could live but no-one ever checked on me or my progress. I recall dancing down the street when I turned twenty one and being delighted as I was no longer a ward of the state.

### Life after care

18. I became a single mother myself at twenty years old. I called my daughter [REDACTED] and gave her up for adoption. She went to a good home and her adoptive parents named her [REDACTED]. We have subsequently reunited. She traced me in the 1990's and we talked on the phone a lot and then we met in Melbourne and we got on really well. After I gave her up for adoption I went to live in [REDACTED] for two years when I was twenty two years old and I did various jobs. It was a good two years. I worked as a teleprinter for [REDACTED]. I went off the rails a bit. I had a son called [REDACTED] and a daughter name [REDACTED]. I was married to their father [REDACTED] for ten years but we divorced. He is now deceased [REDACTED] was nine years old at the time and he stayed with his father and I took [REDACTED] to live with me.

19. I sought the assistance of the Child Migrants Trust in the 1990's to trace my mother but I have not been successful to date. I only found out recently that she moved to [REDACTED] in England but I have not been able to locate her and she would be about ninety years old now and may well be deceased.

20. I was very promiscuous in my life as I was looking for love and didn't know what love was at the time. I used to hit my children which I now regret. [REDACTED] always said I was selfish and cold but in reality I was protecting myself as I was afraid to get close to anyone. I found it hard to trust people or to believe that they had my best interests at heart.

21. I would admit that I struggle to trust people and I become angry quickly and may be defensive but I now have contact with all three of my children and my

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grandchildren so I have managed to maintain these family ties over the years despite my upbringing.

**Statement of Truth**

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

HIA 345

Sign

Dated 15 - 12 - 13



L. M. 3.

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.

- Name in full **HIA 345**  
(In block capitals, surname first)
  - Full Postal Address **NAZARETH HOUSE**  
(In block capitals) **BELFAST**
  - Age **9** Date and Year of Birth **1953** Place of Birth **IRELAND**
  - Sex **F** Weight **4 st 8 lbs** Church Denomination **R. C.**
  - 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**
  - Is there any record of mental disease in the child? **No**
  - Has he or she at any time been subject to fits? **No**
  - Educational standard **Std. III**
- Signed **Agnes Hansen**  
For and on behalf of **Federal Catholic Immigration Committee of Australia**  
(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 **mother** of **HIA 345**  
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**

\*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.

## 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 Byrle Stanson  
(Representative of Organisation in the United Kingdom.)

Date 3.2.53.

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.

Department of Immigration A. Agent for Interviewing Officer
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20/4/53.

Department of Immigration Approved Assisted Passage <u>Child's passport</u>
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**HIA 345**

For all persons, sixteen years of age and over, and those under sixteen not accompanied by parents.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA  
DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION, AUSTRALIA HOUSE,  
LONDON, W.C.2.

2 APR 1964 0.11M

**MEDICAL EXAMINATION.****Declaration by Applicant.**

NAME

**HIA 345**

Full Name in Block Capitals

ADDRESS

NAZARETH HOUSE, BELFAST N. IRE.

1. Have you ever had any serious accident/illness or surgical operation? If so, please furnish details  
*No*
2. Have you or has any member of your family ever suffered from or been suspected of Tuberculosis?
3. Have you ever had Emuresis or any sign of disease of the Genito Urinary Organs?
4. Have you or has any member of your family ever suffered from mental disease or epilepsy or been treated in an institution of any kind for these Diseases?  
*Not Known*
5. What medical attention have you required during the last twelve months?

I hereby certify that the information supplied by me to the Medical Examiner is correct in every particular ---

Signature of applicant which must be made in the presence of the Medical Referee

**HIA 345****Results of Medical Examination.**

AGE *8 yrs* HEIGHT *4' 4" 2* WEIGHT *60 1/2 lbs*

A. Heart *NORMAL*

Blood Pressure *---*

B. Lungs *NORMAL*  
(Particularly Tuberculosis)

X-Ray report *---*

C. a. Nervous System *NORMAL*  
b. Mental Condition *NORMAL*

D. Intelligence *NORMAL*

E. Digestive Organs *---*

F. Genito Urinary Organs *---*  
Urine *No albumen No Sugar*

G. Sight *---*  
without glasses *6/6* with glasses (if worn) *6/6*  
(Snellen's Type)

Cause of defect in sight *---*

H. Hearing *NORMAL*

I. Physique *Below average*

J. Skin *---*

K. If pregnant, period of pregnancy *---*

L. Teeth *16 upper 12 lower*

REMARKS (include particulars of any departure from normal conditions not fully set out in above)

*Apparently normal healthy child*

In cases where the Medical Examiner is unable to describe the applicant as being in perfect health, he should state under "REMARKS" the exact nature of the defect which he finds and whether it is of temporary or permanent nature. The presence of Pediculi should be noted.

Any disablement received on Active Service or otherwise should also be noted and commented on, and if a Pension is received the amount of it should be stated.

I certify that I have this day examined the above-named and am of opinion that the applicant is/is not in good health and of sound constitution, and is/is not suffering from any mental or bodily defect which would cause inability to earn a living as a *his close Grandson*

State Occupation