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HIA REF: 392

Witness Name: HIA 392

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 392

I, HIA 392 will say as follows:-

Personal details

1. I was born on [REDACTED] in Belfast.
2. I was placed in St Joseph's Babies Home initially. I do not know if I was placed directly into care but I assume that that is what happened to me following my birth. My mother worked as a servant. She was called [REDACTED]

Nazareth Lodge, Belfast (1 September 1952 – 21 December 1956)

3. I went to Nazareth Lodge when I was four years and four months old.
4. I had a sister, [REDACTED] who was two years younger than me. I recall visits from my mother and my sister on occasion at Nazareth Lodge. I remember seeing them walking up the driveway to the home when they came to visit me. I think my mother took me out of the home on holiday on occasion. A recurring memory I have is sitting in a classroom and watching [REDACTED] [REDACTED] in a school.
5. I remember going for walks with my mother and my sister around the grounds of the home. I remember seeing bluebells and flowers in bloom.

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6. At times the nuns would bring the girls from the school up the road down to Nazareth Lodge for a visit but the boys would keep them off the swings, boys will be boys.
7. I recall having cleaning duties at Nazareth Lodge. We had to dust and clean the floors regularly. Sometimes we would get a clip on the ear for not carrying out our duties properly. I do not recall which nun would hit me. I only recall **SR 34** **SR 34** but I never recall her chastising me.
8. I do not remember being asked if I wanted to go to Australia. I had no idea where Australia was or how far it was from Ireland but I do remember the nuns telling us that we would love it in Australia because we would ride horses to school and pick fruit off the trees.

Sailing Dates (21 December 1956 - 22 January 1957)

9. I do not recall very much about the sailing to Australia. I remember wearing a suit and being below water level as I could see water through the portholes. There were two or three civilian ladies that came out with us to supervise us on the boat and there were fourteen boys from Nazareth Lodge on the boat.
10. We had to attend lessons on the boat but this happened only occasionally. They locked us in our cabins at night. Stewards on the boat gave us fruit.
11. We stopped at various ports during the journey and we sometimes stayed overnight off the boat. I recall all of us sleeping overnight on one occasion in a large concert hall. I also remember local people in certain ports diving for coins that passengers on the boat threw overboard.
12. I sailed to Australia on 21 December 1956 on the SS Strathnaver arriving in Fremantle on 22 January 1957. I was eight years old when I arrived in Australia.

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13. My child migration form was signed by [REDACTED] SR 104 [REDACTED] authorising my migration to Australia. It noted that my mother was still in contact with me but stated "in interest of child to emigrate".
14. There were fourteen boys that travelled together from Ireland and we were taken to a warehouse at Fremantle wharf and were separated into several groups according to age. Each group was taken to a different institution – Castledare was where the younger boys were sent and the older boys went to Bindoon, Tardun or Clontarf. I had grown up with these boys since infancy and it was like taking your brother away from you. I cried all the way to Castledare and for many nights afterwards I was traumatised. To this day I have not seen several of these boys again.

Castledare Boys Home (22 January 1957 - 9 February 1959)

15. For the first eight months I remember receiving the occasional letter and gift from my mother on my birthday. She sent me a pen as a present once. She was helped to write these letters by a man who was later to become my brother in law. He owned a shop and my sister [REDACTED] worked for him and they married in later life. In my last letter to my mother I asked why I had been sent to Australia and after that I never received another letter from her. The letters stopped coming and I asked why and was told that my mother didn't want me and could not afford to keep me so she sent me to Australia. Many years later I found out that this was a lie and I will never forgive the Christian Brothers for saying such a thing.
16. I was about nine years old when I was first sexually assaulted. All the boys slept in a large dormitory and the Christian Brother in charge of that dormitory slept in a room to the rear of the dormitory. One night I was awoken by a Christian Brother who I think was called [REDACTED] BAU 29 [REDACTED]. He told me to follow him to his room. He lay back in his bed and told me to sit next to him. He removed his penis from his pyjamas and started to masturbate himself. I became agitated and started to cry. He took my hand and placed it on his penis and told me to

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rub it up and down. All the time I was doing this he was fondling me. He told me to keep it "our secret" and if I told anyone I would be in big trouble. This went on for several months until he got sick of me crying. I know I was not the only boy he molested because I could hear other boys crying in their bed.

17. The Brothers found out I could not swim and on one occasion they threw me into the water leaving the other boys to pull me out. I was really frightened by this incident. I can clearly recall the brutality of the regime at Castledare.

Bindoon Boy's Town (9 February 1959 – 1965)

18. I saw a lot of nasty and cruel things happen at Bindoon. It was more like a child's hard labour prison camp than a boy's home.
19. I recall seeing boys having their faces pushed into bowls of porridge because they had refused to eat it. The porridge often contained maggots or other insects.
20. There were boys who wet the bed, including myself, and we would be hosed down with cold water even if it was during winter.
21. We were provided with very little clothing at Bindoon. We wore shorts and a short sleeved shirt and often ran around in bare feet or wore sandals most of the time.
22. We were expected to do a lot of hard manual work on the farm both after school and on weekends. We had to clear the land of tree branches and large rocks and we had to lift heavy rocks onto the back of a truck. The work was much too onerous for boys our age. Many of the Bindoon boys suffered with back complaints in later years due to this type of work being expected from them as young boys.

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23. The Brothers had a holiday home at Moore River and some of the boys also had to labour there and look after animals and keep the place running during holiday periods.
24. **BAU 28** did not beat me that often but he did beat other boys across the face or with a leather strap. These straps were specially made, about eighteen inches long, six ply and sewn together and they left you with huge welts or bruises. I often saw boys beaten to the ground by the Christian Brothers with these straps.
25. If one of the boys did something wrong in the classroom and did not admit he was in the wrong then the entire class would be punished either by the Brothers using a strap to beat us or making us stay in class during play time. It was often easier to admit to something, even if you did not do it, rather than the whole class being beaten into submission.
26. **BAU 6** was the Brother in charge at Bindoon. He was my teacher for a couple of years. He was cruel, vindictive and sadistic. He had a habit of grabbing my hand and twisting my little finger on my right hand for any reason as a form of punishment. My finger as a result is now bent at an angle of 20 degrees and it has become increasingly painful as I get older and especially in colder weather. He would beat me and he also used a cane to beat me on occasion.
27. **BAU 6** had boxing gloves and he would pick two boys to fight each other and he would tell us that he was going to teach us to be men and stand up for ourselves. He did not care if one boy was bigger than the other boy he was supposed to fight. He asked me to fight my friend once and when we refused we were both beaten with his strap as a punishment for not fighting each other.
28. **BAU 6** would also punish boys if they were in his bad books by making them miss the movie on Sunday nights or sit facing him with their back to the screen so that they would miss the whole movie.

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29. I was an altar boy and I recall **AU 18** giving us lollies but insisting he put them in our pockets but we had no lining in our pockets and he just used it as an excuse to fondle our private parts.
30. On one occasion I was sleeping out on the veranda and woke up to find **AU 46** **AU 46** one of the older boys, hovering over my bed fondling me. I screamed at him and he disappeared. I never reported any of these incidents of physical or sexual abuse. You never reported anything of that nature in the home because you would only get a beating from a Christian Brother or one of the older boys for telling tales.
31. I left school when I was sixteen. The Christian Brothers helped you to find work and accommodation. I wanted to be a carpenter but they got me a job as a shoe salesman. I stayed there a couple of years. I took the first job that came along as I wanted to get out of that place as soon as possible. I will never forget leaving Bindoon. I was dropped off in Hay Street in the middle of Perth with a suitcase and approximately five pounds in my pocket. I was sixteen years old and had never lived in a city. I never felt so abandoned and alone in my life.

Life after care

32. I never received any training or advice prior to leaving Bindoon on how to cope with life as an independent adult. I started drinking with boys who had a similar background to me as soon as I left school. Unfortunately some of these boys became alcoholics or got involved in criminal activity and ended up in jail as they could not cope with life beyond care. One boy, **AU 40** who came out from Nazareth Lodge with me committed suicide as he could not cope with life.
33. I never had a birth certificate until after I left school. I needed it to get a driver's licence. I had always thought my birthday was on 20th **██████** until I received my birth certificate and realised that my birthday in fact fell on 20th **██████**

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34. I married when I was twenty years old and my wife and I have recently celebrated our forty sixth wedding anniversary. I have a daughter, [REDACTED] and two sons, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and seven grandchildren.
35. I got a job on [REDACTED] in Perth with a company that sold electrical equipment and bikes and then I worked for twenty two years for [REDACTED] I worked up through the ranks until I became a Store Manager. I also worked for Woolworths for ten years. I opened a card and gift shop with my wife and although I am semi retired now I still run a car valet business. I have always stayed in regular employment and have had a successful career. I would say however that I did not apply at times for promotion as I lacked confidence due to my poor standard of education and because throughout my life I have always doubted my own ability. I am nervous of anyone in authority, including anyone in senior management of the companies I have worked for and I think subconsciously I was frightened that I might lose my job or get into trouble for saying or doing the wrong thing. We were always told in care that we should be seen and not heard and that stayed with me. In my view that continuously had a negative effect on my chances for advancement or promotion.
36. There are many things about my background in care that I could not discuss in any detail with my wife, even though she has been incredibly supportive throughout our marriage. I found it difficult to form relationships with women when I left the home and I felt apprehensive of the opposite sex and ill prepared for any intimate relationship. The abuse I received in my childhood had a profound effect on my married life especially in the first ten years. I felt as if I was never good enough and I felt inadequate. I was lucky to find a strong, understanding and loving wife. I was carrying a lot of psychological baggage around with me and that was difficult for us. We had to attend marriage counselling during our marriage which was of some assistance.
37. I started looking for my family when I got married. I sent a letter to [REDACTED] SR 34 [REDACTED] at Nazareth Lodge and she knew someone who could put me in touch with my mother. I wrote to her in the late 1960's but did not receive any response at the time.

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38. My daughter went to work in England when she was in her early twenties and she got in touch at that stage with an agency who helped her to find my relatives. At this stage we got in touch with my sister [REDACTED] who now lives in [REDACTED]. I then discovered that I had an older brother [REDACTED] and another sister who was two years older than me called [REDACTED] who had been adopted at birth. We advertised on the internet and she got in touch with us and we were able to reunite. She lives in [REDACTED] now and we have stayed with her in Ireland.
39. We have returned to Ireland on four occasions and on our first visit they arranged a gathering of all our relatives and there were over one hundred people there, it was quite a surprise. My first trip to Ireland was funded by the Christian Brothers but they did not pay my wife's fare on this trip. I paid for two other trips myself but my final and fourth trip to Ireland was funded under the Family Restoration Fund. I met my brother [REDACTED] on three occasions but he is now deceased. I had to borrow \$5,000 AUD to pay for the flights to attend his funeral. I requested assistance from several organisations here in Australia to help fund this trip but did not receive support from any organisation on this occasion. My mother died from cancer two years before my first trip to Ireland. I never knew the identity of my father.
40. I obtained my records in later years from the Child Welfare Department. My Child Migration form was issued by the Department of Immigration, Australia House, London and at Section 7 of the form it asked if I had any brothers or sisters and there is a line drawn through this section. This form was completed by [REDACTED] SR 104 Mother Superior, Nazareth Lodge, Belfast. It made no mention of my siblings and they should have been noted on the form.
41. I was told in later years by my sister that my mother was told just before my departure that I was being sent to Australia for a few months only on holiday. My mother was poor, illiterate and had no way of challenging the lies she was being told by the nuns. She suffered a mental breakdown due to the guilt she felt when she realised that I was never going to return.

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42. My faith in Christianity disappeared when I left Bindoon due to the hypocrisy, lies and cruelty I experienced there. I could never understand how men of the cloth entrusted with the care of young vulnerable boys could treat innocent children in that way as it went against all Christian teachings. I never had any of my children baptised and I have never returned to church. I would never want any child to go through what I suffered during my time in residential care.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed _____

HIA 392

Dated _____

09-06-2014