

HIA REF: 307

Witness Name: HIA 307

## THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

## WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 307

I, HIA 307 will say as follows:-

Personal details

1. I was born on [REDACTED] in Dublin. The register entry in Nazareth Lodge states that my mother's name was [REDACTED]. Two weeks ago I was contacted by a man called [REDACTED] from Belfast. He said that my mother was in fact called [REDACTED] - [REDACTED] was her mother's maiden name. [REDACTED] mother and my mother were sisters. The Child Migrants Trust were able to find out that she boarded a ship to America in early 1949. My mother was twenty seven and single when I was born. I believe she was sent to Dublin to give birth to me. [REDACTED]. A man called [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. He said he was with the same foster family as me up until I was three years old. He told me that I was fostered by a [REDACTED] until the age of three after which I was placed in Nazareth Lodge in Belfast. [REDACTED] was four years older than me and said he came home from school one day and I had gone to an orphanage. I believe that my mother may have paid [REDACTED] privately to foster me and when the payments ceased in 1948 as she was going to America [REDACTED] had no choice but to put me in care.



PRIVATE

Nazareth Lodge, Belfast (24/2/1948 – 21/12/1956)

2. I was admitted to Nazareth Lodge on 24<sup>th</sup> February 1948 when I was almost three years old. My life in Nazareth Lodge was bleak, harsh and cruel. The nuns were at best indifferent but more often were sadistic bullies who spoke with harsh loud voices in scornful, dismissive tones. They were quick to strike out and provided no reassurance or comfort to a small frightened child.
3. We slept in a large dormitory which had beds down the sides of the room and a row in the middle. There was a cubicle in the corner where the nun who was in charge of that dormitory slept.
4. I endured countless acts of physical violence and equally as traumatic, witnessed daily assaults as children were literally picked up by their ears and thrown to the ground, belted and kicked around. As a very small boy the terror of their shouting and name calling was terrifying. We were all called 'sons of whores', a term I never understood except that it was obviously bad and meant we were all very bad children. The verbal abuse from the nuns has stayed with me and I have never been able to forget how it made me feel as a young child.
5. I cried myself to sleep so often, in beds that were never warm enough with inadequate blankets, leaving me with freezing feet and never any sense of comfort or security.
6. As an adult I suffer from profound hearing loss. I am totally deaf in one ear and have only slight hearing in the other only assisted by a hearing aid that costs me approximately \$5000 AUD to replace every five years. My audiologist is clear this is the result of trauma from constant beatings to my head and ears as a child. Particularly when the nuns would 'box my ears' – slapping me hard with open palms across both ears, that forced air and pressure into my ears leading to permanent damage. The pain was excruciating and I would be nauseous and lose balance when they did that. They did it often. They crept up behind me if I was talking or something and they would say 'take that **HIA 307**'. By the time I left Nazareth Lodge in 1956 my hearing was severely impaired and it



## PRIVATE

has caused me enormous grief as well as communication and employment problems resulting in financial hardship my entire life.

7. A particularly bleak and miserable experience in Nazareth Lodge occurred when I was about seven or eight years old. I think I had measles, mumps or chicken pox and I was left alone in isolation for days. I never saw a doctor and apart from food being brought in and left for me, nobody spoke to me or gave me any care or comfort. I felt profound despair, fear and loneliness. I still feel haunted by that period. One day I was playing on the merry-go-round at Nazareth Lodge when one of the wood swings which was broken swung into my face and cut me just below my right eye. I still have a scar to this day. I never saw a doctor or nurse whilst in the Lodge.
8. One of the most painful punishments dished out by the nuns was the beating of my fingertips with a wooden ruler. The nuns would grab my hand and squeeze the fingers all bunched up together until they went red and then strike them across the fingertips with a ruler. The pain was terrible and it was done with viciousness especially in winter when our hands were so cold, so they could inflict the greatest pain and generate fear.
9. **SR 34** was the most terrifying nun at Nazareth Lodge. She was an aggressive bully and she was the biggest nun. She was always yelling at the children and punching us with closed fists. She also boxed our ears. She had a nasty, angry face and seeing her coming up the corridor made you shrink back against the wall to try and not be noticed. **SR 152** seemed kinder but she was upstairs with the big boys and I didn't see her very much. She was more of a friend to us and taught us how to play rounders. She appeared to be more modern than the other nuns and maybe she knew that the way we were being treated was not right.
10. During one particular incident **SR 71** belted me with her fists and for weeks afterwards slapped me about and shouted at me every time she saw me. In the Lodge we all watched a Paul Robeson film about slavery. One day some visitors came in to Nazareth Lodge while two others and I were on our hands



PRIVATE

and knees waxing the endless wooden floors. One of the visitors asked me how I liked living there. I told her we were treated like slaves. That resulted in me getting the wrath of the nuns especially [REDACTED] SR 71 [REDACTED] She said to me 'so we're not good enough for you is it [REDACTED] HIA 307 [REDACTED] The nuns were always worried about putting up a good front when any officials were around, for example, dressing us nicely for church but then back into rags to do the endless polishing and dirty work.

11. The bathroom in Nazareth Lodge was a massive room with claw foot baths. The nuns were keen on cleanliness and they poured Jeyes Fluid into the bath of water which was used to wash many boys. I recall the stinging on the water with the Jeyes Fluid on my body. It stung like hell.
12. The baths were dangerous places because that is where the older boys would sexually molest the younger ones. I was abused many times in the bathroom by older boys. Disgusting things were done to me that I don't want to talk about. The abuse was more fondling in nature and there was no penetration. This abuse left me anxious and was the beginning of more terrible abuse in Bindoon after I was deported to Australia. This went on for years. The sexual abuse in the Lodge set me up to be victimised in the future and groomed me for what would follow.
13. I was intimidated, belted and bullied by the older boys. I was made to do sexual things to them and the nuns never protected any of us. They couldn't have been blind to what was going on as they were always spying on us. I believe that the nuns were frightened of the older boys as some of them were bigger than them. I do not recall telling the nuns about the abuse. However other boys told the nuns about what the older boys were doing to them but the nuns just said something like 'that didn't happen and if you say that again I will box your ears'. One of the worst parts of life was the feeling of helplessness. We had no one to turn to. I couldn't tell anyone how I felt because there was no one there to listen so I took each day as it came.



PRIVATE

14. One of the cruellest things done to me at Nazareth Lodge was to deprive me of visits from [REDACTED] my foster mother who had looked after me until I was three. She used to visit me once a month. I remember her coming one day and being so angry because I looked scrawny and underfed. I think I also had impetigo. She complained to the Reverend Mother that I wasn't being kept clean and properly looked after. After that [REDACTED] disappeared and I never saw her again. Fifty years later I learned from [REDACTED] another boy who had also been cared for by [REDACTED] that she was told I had gone to a good family and I wasn't in the home anymore. That lady was the one person in my life that ever gave me any affection and I still feel her loss today. I have no doubt that the nuns lied to her because she was critical of their neglect and low standards of care. The nuns took from me the one important emotional attachment I ever had in order to protect themselves from criticism. If that relationship had been allowed to continue I think my life would be quite different.
15. The selfish and cruel act of taking [REDACTED] away from me has been made worse by the Sisters of Nazareth's poor record keeping. This has deprived me of vital information which I needed to trace my family. At sixty eight years of age I have never seen my mother's photo and I have no idea whether I have any living family anywhere in the world. I have been searching for my mother for more than thirty years and all the Sisters of Nazareth can give me is sacramental information about my first Holy Communion and Confirmation. They have given me no information about who I really am and what happened to my mother. I have little confidence in those lying women. To this day I don't know whether they are simply refusing to give me my records or whether they actually exist.
16. I had a good voice for singing and the nuns in Nazareth Lodge encouraged my talent. I was always the lead in plays and I remember reciting poetry in City Hall. They nurtured my ability and I enjoyed it. Singing in a group gave me a sense of belonging and was one of the few good things about the Lodge. I know now that the nuns had many fundraising events and that I was being used for their own ends.



## PRIVATE

17. I recall a man coming into the home one day and asking who wanted to go to Australia. He said it was a place of sunshine and we would go to school riding donkeys and pick fruit from the trees. He made it sound like a real adventure. Needless to say we all put our hands up. We didn't even know where Australia was. I don't know who the man was but I believe it could have been Father Cyril Stinson. When I left Bindoon I lived in his parish. At the time I did not know of his involvement in child migration.
18. I left Nazareth Lodge on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1956 when I was eleven years old. Thirteen of us were being sent to Australia. One boy whose brothers were in the Lodge came from Rubane so there were fourteen in total. I remember the day we left. We got taxis to the docks and we were crying our hearts out. We didn't want to leave. I sailed to Australia on 24<sup>th</sup> December 1956 on the SS Strathnaver. We were the only child migrants on the ship and we ran riot. It was the first time we were free. We ran all over the ship and got to eat what we wanted. It was a fantastic four weeks. I learned to swim on the ship. We were looked after by two young civilian women. I am sure they regretted volunteering for the job as we were quite a handful.
19. I arrived in Fremantle on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1957. The Sisters of Nazareth 'selected' me for deportation to Bindoon in Western Australia. It is probably the most notorious institution for child slavery and paedophile abuse in Australia. This deportation robbed me of any chance to search for my family when I was younger. I was told I was an orphan without any family and I know that other children were told the same yet many of us are reunited with families that supposedly didn't exist.

**Bindoon Boys Town (1957 – 1961)**

20. I was taken to Bindoon when I was eleven years old without family knowledge or consent. Upon arrival my suitcase brought all the way from Belfast was taken from me. My stamp album which I had treasured for years was also taken. My clothes were stripped off me. Barefoot, naked and sunburnt I was issued with a pair of khaki shorts and a shirt and put to work. No underwear or shoes. In Bindoon I suffered appalling abuse and neglect.



PRIVATE

21. I suffered repeated sexual assaults by paedophile Christian Brothers and older boys in their care. There were predators like **BAU 24** who would grab you, shove their hand down your shorts or pull them down and molest you. Brother **BAU 24** would prowl the dormitory at night. One night he stopped at the end of my bed. He used to pretend he was there to ensure the boys 'weren't fiddling with each other'. Others were more cunning by pretending that they were educating us on the ways of the world. **BAU 27** did this by using his storytelling abilities, he would sit on your bed, cuddle touch and fondle you and on it went. It was done without violence or overt menace and was therefore confusing for emotionally starved little children.
22. Other Brothers were more sadistic like **BAU 6** who used the mask of authority to investigate allegations which escalated into attacks when he laid into you. It was perverted that he had an erection whilst he was giving these beatings.
23. The older boys would prey on the younger ones. An ex resident who was about sixteen or seventeen and working on the farm cornered me one day and made me do disgusting things to him. He would catch me alone whenever he could.
24. I suffered severe and continuous physical assaults causing injuries and intense suffering. There was excessive cruel punishments. Children who wet the bed were left out on a balcony summer or winter. The next morning they were hosed down by the Christian Brothers. It was humiliating.
25. It was my task to clean the Brothers toilet block. **BAU 20** belted me round the head one day for not cleaning it properly. When I protested he took me into a cubicle and showed me how he had spat on the floor the day before to check if I would clean it up. He beat me across the ears and threatened more violence if I didn't clean to his standard.
26. The Principal, **BAU 5** beat me across the legs with a tree branch a few days after I arrived but I stood up to him and that was the first and last time he hit me. I was less able to assert myself with the more brutal Brothers.



PRIVATE

27. I was always being put down and told I was worthless. I frequently heard that I had been dumped in an orphanage because I was stupid and no one would want me.
28. Many times I was bruised and covered with welts as a result of floggings. I had injuries from farm labouring and building particularly because we had no shoes.
29. **BAU 6** was volatile and frequently shouted at boys and flogged them. He would ask us questions about sexual activity and call us sexual degenerates. The constant threat of severe physical assault haunted me and meant I never felt safe or slept easily in the home as I was permanently on alert.
30. I sustained permanent hearing loss due to further damage building on the damage done to me by the nuns in Belfast.
31. I was bullied because of my Irish accent. I was deprived of an education that left me functionally illiterate and unable to seek reasonable employment until I managed to educate myself later in life.
32. I suffered emotional and psychological trauma due to constant verbal assaults as did my fellow residents.
33. The regime was harsh and cruel and we were used as slave labour in an environment where we were constantly beaten and starved. We had to lift heavy rocks and do back breaking building work. We also had to lift heavy bags on our shoulders around harvest time. I have suffered all my life from neck and back pain. Even at school and before we were properly physically developed we would have to labour for two to three hours after school.
34. In my view there was a failure on the part of the Brothers to provide even minimal standards of care. There was nobody to turn to. The Child Welfare Department did not consult us. The Welfare visits were all arranged and everything was made to look right and the Department did not follow up any complaints by residents. We were deprived of proper childhood experiences.



PRIVATE

Friendships were viewed with suspicion and were discouraged or obstructed. It was not enough that we were not allowed an identity we were prevented from trusting which is one of the most important things in a child's development.

35. As I was born in Dublin I believe my deportation under the Commonwealth Child Migration Scheme was illegal.

### Life after care

36. After I left Bindoon I stayed with a family called the [REDACTED] who had a boy a year younger than me. They were very good to me. It was [REDACTED] that suggested I go and see about my hearing which did. I first went to an audiologist aged sixteen in 1961. I eventually got a hearing aid in my twenties. Never while in the care of the church in Northern Ireland or Australia was I given proper medical attention.
37. When I left school I became an apprentice carpenter. I attended night classes and completed courses in English as I wanted to improve my education. I started a Builders Registration Course but I didn't complete it as I felt my poor education held me back. In Bindoon the motto was 'if you can work with your hands you don't need brains'. I would say I am semi-literate now. I can read but don't really comprehend the meaning.
38. I had no birth certificate until I applied to Dublin for it in my twenties. I first made enquiries about my mother back in 1961/62 when I went to the Catholic Welfare Ecumenical Society in Perth. I dealt with a Mrs Sanderson who is still alive. They were of no assistance in helping me trace my family. There was no proper system in place to ensure that former child migrants receive important documents such as birth certificates at the appropriate time. We left institutional life and were left to our own devices. We had no knowledge of normal everyday life and the Child Welfare Department did not ensure that we were informed of our rights. We were offered no help or advice to reunite us with our families until the Child Migrants Trust began working for child migrants. I was a ward of State, not a ward of the Catholic Church. Former child migrants and their families



## PRIVATE

continue to contribute to Australian economic and social development. But many of them have been disadvantaged because of lack of identity, lack of education and other deprivation resulting from the effects of unsupervised institutional life.

39. In 2010 I received \$45,000 under WA Redress Scheme.
40. I have spent thirty two years in the building trade. The last fifteen years before I retired when I was sixty seven I worked with people with disabilities. I had empathy for them as they too were institutionalised in their own way.
41. In February 2010 I went to London to hear former Prime Minister Gordon Brown deliver his apology to former child migrants and their families. I welcomed the establishment of the UK Government Family Restoration Fund but I felt Government action fell short of real reconciliation and justice. No one has been prosecuted for abusing child migrants in the United Kingdom.
42. All the abuse and trauma that happened to me in both jurisdictions goes back to the actions of the Sisters of Nazareth and their cruel brutal regime. I was groomed for further assaults in Australia, made vulnerable and terrorised into compliance. The decision to recruit and deport me to a paedophile ring in Australia made everything so much worse and deprived me of any opportunity to find my family or my identity. Their failure to keep even basic records has condemned me to a lonely life without any sense of belonging or a home. I feel cut off from my country and like an alien in Australia, even after more than fifty years.
43. I married in 1978 and I have three children and seven grandchildren. We are a close family. My wife knows that I was abused in care but I haven't burdened her with the details. I have tried to protect them. I had a difficult time at the beginning of my married life. I had an emotional barrier and it took a long time for this to break down and my wife has been very understanding. I started drinking heavily after five years of marriage. I became an alcoholic for many years. I was stigmatised as one of those no good orphans from Bindoon. I was constantly involved in fights and brawls and lost many years in a drunken stupor.



## PRIVATE

I felt inadequate because I had no role models for family life. Being institutionalised made it difficult to relate. I was in no man's land for years. I then decided to go to AA. After AA I realised that I was somebody – I was capable of loving my family. Before that I had no confidence in myself. It has only really been in the last fifteen years that I feel that I can handle life.

44. Although I have achieved a strong enduring marriage and have raised my own children, the emptiness of my own inner life never leaves me and therefore my whole family has suffered. It took a long time before I could express myself emotionally particularly within my marriage and later with my children. I feel my entire family has paid the price for the cruelty and neglect I suffered in institutional care.
45. In 1998 my wife and I visited my daughter in England. We went across and toured Ireland however I couldn't bring myself to visit Nazareth Lodge. For many years I have watched friends be reunited with their family in Ireland with the help of the Child Migrants Trust. I have celebrated with them but it has been difficult at times wondering if it will ever be me. Now recently finding that I do have family has resulted in my identity becoming clearer.
46. My recommendations for an outcome of this Inquiry are that perpetrators be held to account regardless of their age, that thorough steps be taken by Government to ensure the release of all relevant records and that compensation be made available for all the harm that was caused. I believe that the Government should be reimbursed by the Catholic Church for compensation paid out to victims. I will never negotiate with the Church directly as a victim of their crime but they must be held accountable and made to pay for their actions.



PRIVATE

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

**HIA 307**

Dated

5.6.2014.



Group nomination No. \_\_\_\_\_

## Commonwealth of Australia

DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION, AUSTRALIA HOUSE, LONDON.

## Child Migration.

## SECTION A.

To be completed by Voluntary Organisation in consultation with parents or guardian.

HIA 307

1. Name in full \_\_\_\_\_  
(in block capitals) \_\_\_\_\_
2. Full postal address Nazareth Lodge, Ravenhill Rd  
Belfast  
Telephone No. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Birth Dublin Nationality Irish  
(Birth Certificate to) \_\_\_\_\_
4. Religion R.C.

5. Father { Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Nationality \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation \_\_\_\_\_
6. Mother { Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ Belfast  
Nationality Irish Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Name	Age	Address
------	-----	---------

Brothers \_\_\_\_\_

7. and \_\_\_\_\_

Sisters \_\_\_\_\_

8. Name and address of guardian (if applicable) Mother Superior  
Nazareth Lodge, Ravenhill Rd, Belfast

9. Names and addresses of any relatives in Australia \_\_\_\_\_

10. Educational Standard Sta IV  
(Attach school reports)

11. Intelligence Quotient to be stated 80

12. Details of any recent Intelligence or Vocational Tests with dates \_\_\_\_\_

13. If child is in institutional care, state name of institution and date of child leaving parents' care Nazareth Lodge, Ravenhill Rd, Belfast  
Admitted 24th Feb. 1948



To be completed by Parent or Guardian (Father, if living)  
SR 104

I, (Name in full) \_\_\_\_\_

of (address) \_\_\_\_\_

the { Father  
Mother  
Guardian } of \_\_\_\_\_

hereby consent to my child/ward proceeding to Australia under the Commonwealth Child Migration Scheme and understand that the Minister of Immigration will become his/her legal guardian upon arrival in Australia.

Date 6th Dec. 1955 Signature \_\_\_\_\_

SR 104

\* Witness Gabriel J. Cairns

Qualification Solicitor

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\* 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 Her 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.

A Teacher at a school recognised by the Ministry of Education or the Scottish Education Department, or the Ministry of Education for Northern Ireland.

A Police Officer not below the rank of Sergeant.

### SECTION C.

To be completed by Voluntary Organisation.

In the event of the child named in this application leaving Australia before the completion of two years residence (unless he/she is repatriated for medical reasons within twelve months of arrival), The Federal Catholic Immigration Bde

(name of sponsoring organisation) agree to repay, before the child leaves Australia, the full amount of the financial assistance granted towards the cost of the child's passage to Australia as an assisted migrant.

Signed Charles B. Flood,

(Representative of Organisation in United Kingdom)

Date 14th Dec - 1955

On completion, this form (in duplicate) should be forwarded together with a certified copy of the child's birth certificate and recent school report to :—

THE CHIEF MIGRATION OFFICER,  
AUSTRALIA HOUSE,  
STRAND,



15. (a) Has the child been committed to the care of any person or body as a "fit person," or is the child in the care of a local authority or the Managers of an Approved School?  
no.

- (b) If so, has the required consent of the Secretary of State to the child's emigration been obtained? no.

### Medical History

16. Sex M. Height 4' 6" Weight 4 St. 12 lb.
17. What illnesses has the child had (including infectious complaints)?  
measles.
18. Has the child been vaccinated? yes. Date 26/11/55.
19. Has the child been immunized against diphtheria? yes. Date Dec. 1955.
20. Has the child ever been in hospital? no.
21. If so, state complaint, date and hospital.
22. Name and address of usual medical attendant Dr. McMorley  
[REDACTED]
23. Is it necessary or has it been necessary for the child to wear glasses? If so, supply details  
Short-sightedness
24. Does the child wet the bed? If so, how frequently no.
25. Has the child or any of the family or near relatives suffered from:
- |   |           |                           |
|---|-----------|---------------------------|
| (a) mental deficiency, insanity or mental disease | <u>no</u> | <u>History of Parents</u> |
| (b) epilepsy or fits                              | <u>no</u> |                           |
| (c) tuberculosis                                  | <u>no</u> |                           |

I certify that to the best of my knowledge and belief the foregoing particulars are correct and that I conscientiously believe [REDACTED] is a suitable child who will benefit by migration to Australia.

HIA 307

SR 104

Signed [REDACTED]

for and on behalf of [REDACTED]

(Name of sponsoring organisation)