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HIA REF: 335

Witness Name: **HIA 335****THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995**

WITNESS STATEMENT OF **HIA 335**

I, **HIA 335** will say as follows:-

Personal details

1. I was born on [REDACTED] in [REDACTED]. My mother was twenty four years old when she had me. My mother was unmarried when I was born. I had a half brother called [REDACTED]. He was five years older than me. He was taken to live with his Uncle [REDACTED] who was my mother's brother. I was placed in Nazareth House in Belfast when I was nearly three years old. I do not know why I was placed in care. I was told by my brother that my Aunt [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] looked after me for six months and that she wanted to keep me but my mother took me and brought me to Nazareth House. I don't know anything about my father.

Nazareth House, Belfast (26/11/1937 – 21/8/47)

2. I was placed in Nazareth House the day before I turned three years old. One of my earliest memories was of being in the nursery and sitting beside a girl with a glass eye. She kept taking it out and polishing it and I tried to do the same with my own eye but it wouldn't come out. When I was about three years old I remember being on a swing and a woman, who could have been my mother, was with me. I jumped down off the swing to follow her and I fell and split my left

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eye open and I was left with a scar. I think this was the person that took me to Nazareth House.

3. After the nursery, I went to the older girls section. I think I might have been about seven years old. I remember the first meal I had with the older girls. I sat at a big long table and the older girls brought in the food and put it in the middle of the table. I remember we were given black potatoes and bread. If you sat at the end of the table, there would be no food left and you missed out. The food was never divided fairly. It was just left in the middle and it was a free for all. After dinner we would go down to where the food was dumped and eat rhubarb and turnips out of bins, in the tip at the back of the convent. I was always hungry in Nazareth House. The nuns stood and watched meal times and knew that some children were completely missing out on food. I used to think that the nuns came from God because they never ate, never went to the toilet and never had a bath. I thought they were almost immortal.

4. In all my years in Nazareth House I was never allowed out. Other children used to go out with family but I never went out. I found out years later from **SR 178** **SR 178** that my mother had left instructions that I wasn't to go out with anyone. If we went for a walk with the nuns around the convent I would have to stay right beside the nun. My **SR 178** told me that she came up to Nazareth House to visit me but she wasn't allowed to see me. The nuns shut the door and wouldn't let her in.

5. The nuns who worked in Nazareth House were **SR 178** **SR 112** **SR 115** and **SR 179** **SR 115** was an older nun and she was lovely. She used to do our nails and cuticles. **SR 178** was also very good. I was with her all the time. I think she was told to look after me. On the other hand **SR 177** was horrible to me. Every night she used to make me kneel on the steps outside the dormitory and wait for a jug of boiling water, and then bring the jug to her cell. Everyone else had gone to bed. Her cell used to be at the end of the dormitory where I stayed. She had a little basin to wash in and that is why she needed the water. When I was carrying the jug I was terrified I would burn myself. I think I was about ten or eleven at the time. **SR 177**

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SR 177 used to terrify us by saying things like "If you don't go to sleep the banshees will come and get you". I was petrified.

6. I used to walk in my sleep. I was told by one of the nuns that I nearly walked out a window three storeys up. **SR 177** used to keep me awake until she was going to bed, and then she used to strap me in the bed to stop me from getting up in the middle of the night. I do not recall waking up with straps on but I assume she had taken them off before I wakened. She did say to me "I have to stay up all night and tie you up". She used to yell at me because she had to do this. I only found out I was a sleepwalker years later.
7. We were allowed to have a bath every night but we had to share the water. We had to wear a modesty sheet in the bath. The sheet was a rag. We didn't have any personal soap. We had to wear bloomers for one week without washing them. The older girls inspected our underwear every morning. We used to wash our underwear when we got a chance, and put them below the mattress and sleep on them so they could dry out.
8. I was beaten with a belt by **SR 177** and **SR 112**. **SR 112** was a teacher. She was very strict. School was in the home and if you were caught misbehaving all of a sudden you got a whack across the knuckles with a thick leather strap or a ruler by **SR 112**. The strap hung from her belt. Sometimes she used her hand to hit me.
9. I was quite good at schoolwork. I didn't mind school and I was very good at mental arithmetic. I think I tried harder than other girls. I always wanted the nuns to like me because I thought they didn't, as I was never allowed out. I used to sit in the corner and think to myself about what I could possibly do to get liked. I decided I would be good at school.
10. My mother never came back to visit me in the home. When I asked the nuns about her they said "Oh you don't want to know, she is gone now, you haven't got her anymore". It was hard because other children had families that used to come and visit and bring them sweets, and I used to think to myself "why do I

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never get anything like that?". This is when I started thinking to myself that I was bound to have some family. When I was about ten or eleven I asked **SR 178** "haven't I got anyone at all?" and she told me that I had a brother. I never thought any more about it at the time. We all received sweets from the Orangemen who marched past Nazareth House. We used to get up on a Sunday and climb on the wall and watch them play and clap and they used to give us lollies.

11. We had a good priest while I was in the home. His name was **NHB 84**. He used to take us for sport. He gave us all nicknames and called me **██████████** after the famous dog. He was just lovely. I named my first son after him – **██████████**
12. The days on which we made our First Holy Communion and our Confirmation were special days as we were allowed to go on the trams outside the home. We wore white and people used to see us and give us sweets and pennies.
13. When I was about ten years old I was made to help out in the morgue in the old people's home at Nazareth House. I used to have to go in and dress the bodies and put pennies in their eyes. I was absolutely petrified working there. We took it in turns.
14. We went to Mass every day in the home. We had to learn the catechism off by heart. If we didn't know it, we would be whacked over the ear or hit across the hands with an implement. We also had to learn hymns in Latin as part of the Latin Mass.
15. I never had shoes to fit me in Nazareth House. I had big feet and I was always given shoes that were too small for me and I had to squeeze my feet in them.
16. I made good friends in the home and it was hard leaving them. They were very upset too. I didn't know where I was going. I wasn't told I was going to Australia. One day in school, a **██████████** came and talked about Australia. He said we would be able to ride horses and pick oranges off trees. He also told

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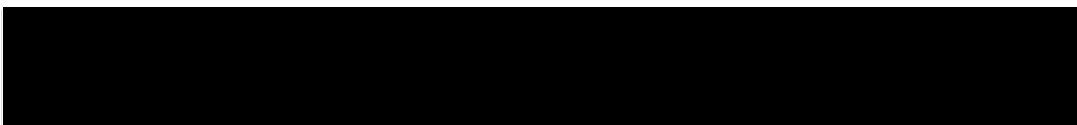
us that we would be adopted by families in Australia. Then the nuns asked "who wants to go to Australia?". I sat there and never said a thing. The next minute they said "you're going to Australia". This was about one week before I left. I remember overhearing one of the nuns saying that I hadn't got my inoculation. I did see the other children with marks on their arms from injections. I didn't have a medical before leaving. I may have been a late addition. A priest called **NHB 18** and the Mother Superior **SR 174** signed my migration form. I remember I got a suitcase for the journey, as well as new clothes. I loved that suitcase.

17. We left Nazareth House at night time on 21st August 1947. There were about seven of us and the other children with me were much younger, aged between three and eight. Boys also went from Nazareth Lodge. We got a boat to England and then we got a train. I recall we went through a tunnel on the train. My friends in the home told me later that they didn't even know I was gone. We didn't get a chance to say goodbye.
18. We arrived at a Port and boarded the SS Asturias. There were two nuns that accompanied us on the ship. They were called **SR 132** and **SR 133** **SR 133** There were other girls on the ship from England and Wales, as well as Derry. We left on 29th August 1947. The first night we were on the ship, a little boy grabbed **SR 133** case and threw it overboard because she wouldn't do something he wanted. All the girls on the ship were mixed together. I think the nun took lessons on the ship. It was an adventure for me as I was not out of the home very much. We got to walk around the decks and the food was wonderful. I loved the sausages.

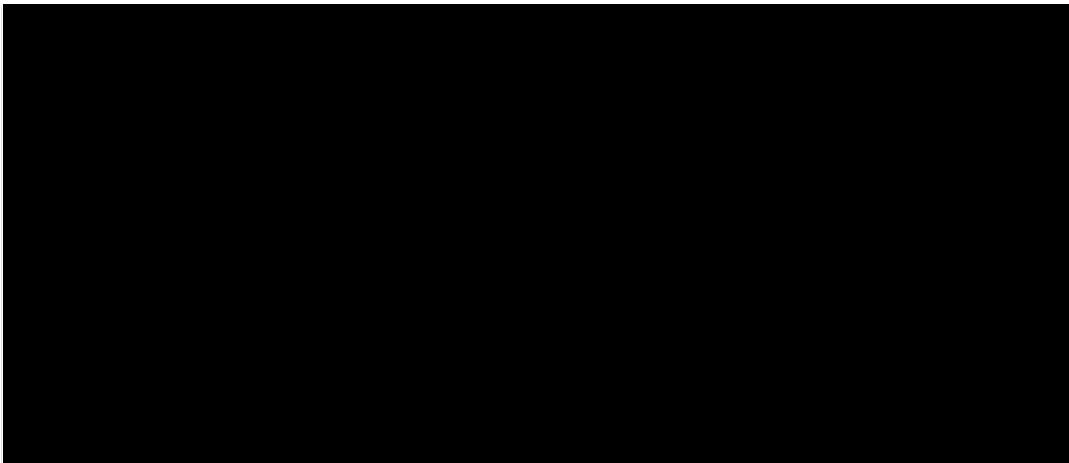
St Joseph's Orphanage, Subiaco (23/9/1947 – 1964)

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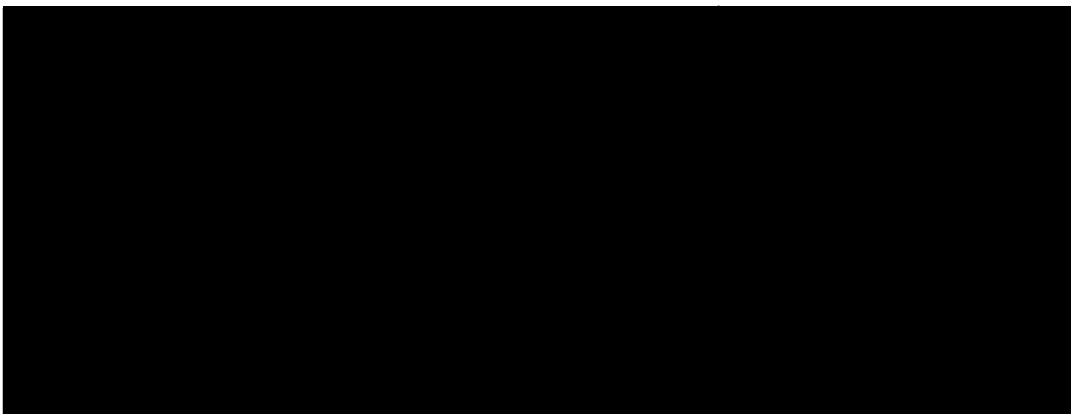
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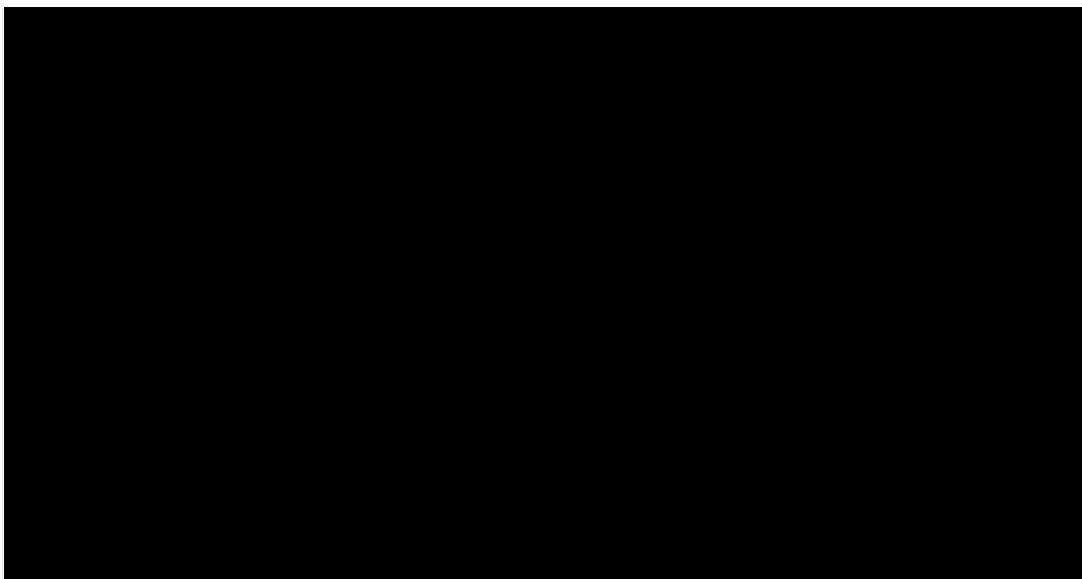
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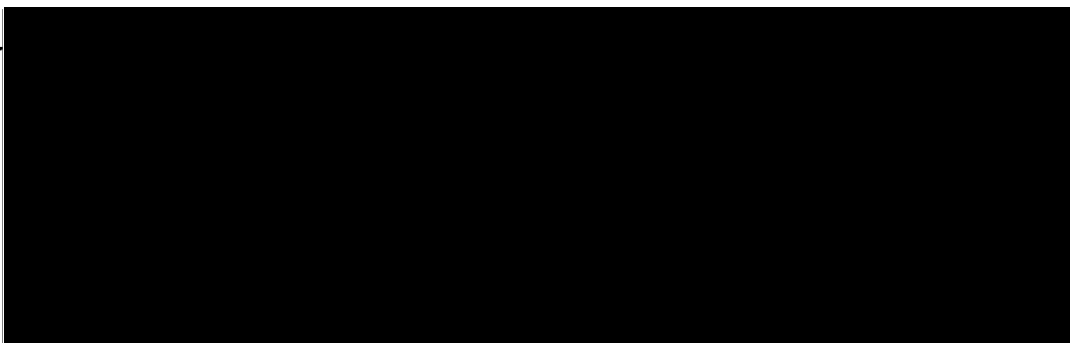
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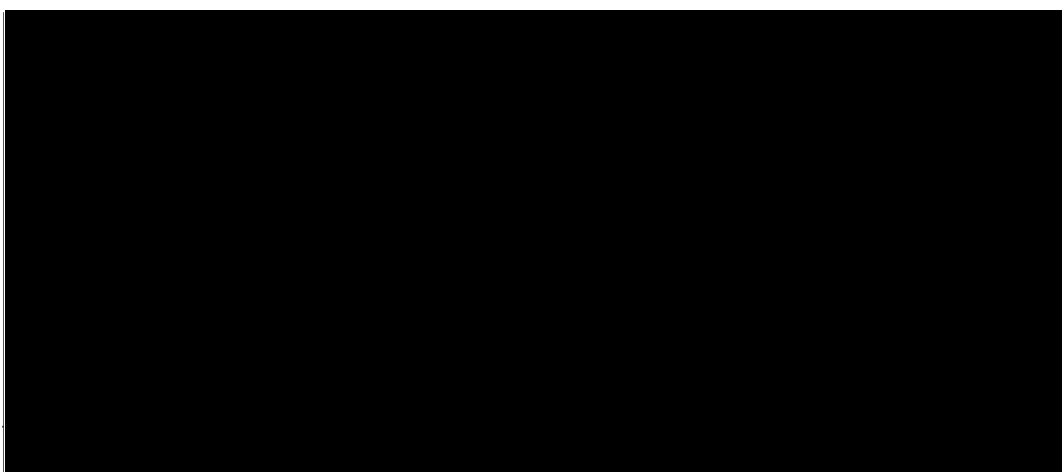
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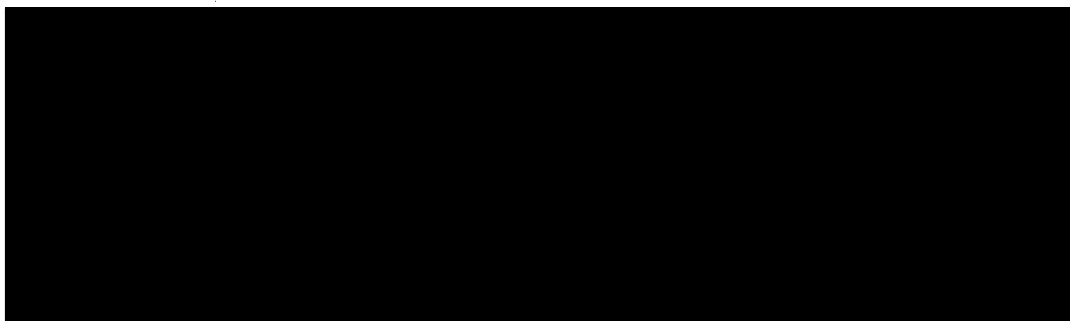
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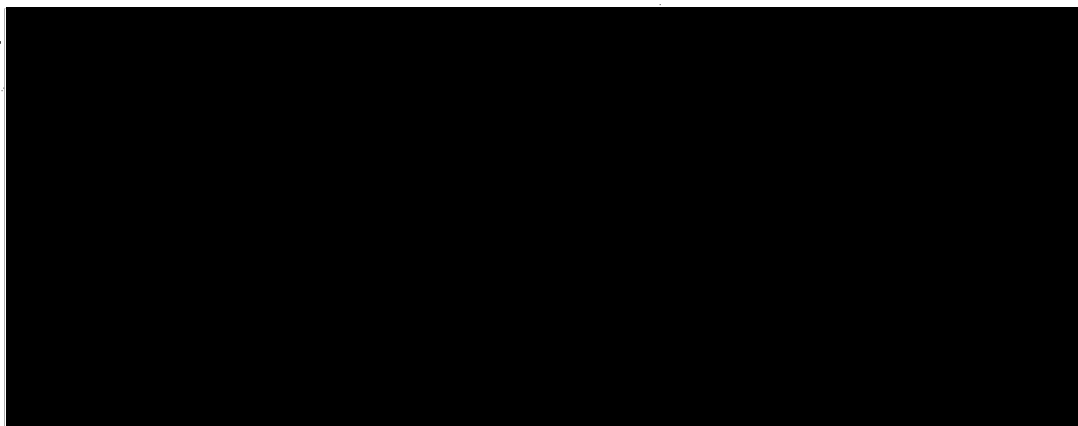
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Life after care

29. I left St Joseph's when I was seventeen. I got a good job at the [REDACTED] which was a government job. I still lived in the home, and the nuns took my wages of three pounds ten. I wore the same clothes every day. I worked at the [REDACTED] for twelve months. I then moved out to a boarding house but I couldn't settle. Eventually I found a house I could stay in. When I turned twenty one I got a letter from the Welfare Department stating I was no longer under their care, but I did not receive any money from a Trust Fund. I believe some girls did receive money.
30. When I was in the [REDACTED] the Mother Superior of St Joseph's, SAU 4 SAU 4 asked me to go back. I did and she said "I have a big apology to make to you. I realise how I punished you over the years and you never did anything". I said to her "well it is too late, no good worrying about it now".
31. I never had a birth certificate as a child and only obtained it when I was getting married. In Nazareth House I was always called HIA 335. When I received my birth certificate I discovered that my name is in fact HIA 335.
32. I met my husband [REDACTED] at the [REDACTED]. I had no experience of boys but I loved dancing. I still do. I used to go dancing six days a week and to the movies on a Sunday. I was free. I could do what I wanted. We got married when I was twenty. We have been married for fifty seven years and we have five children, three boys and two girls. We now have eighteen grandchildren. It was unbelievable being a mother. Once I had children I thought to myself, how could anyone give a baby away. I found it easy to show affection to my children, even though I was never shown any as a child. I find it difficult however bonding with people and I cannot give people a hug apart from my children. I even found it difficult to make friends with the parents of my children's friends at school. I have tried for the sake of my children to get over my past and try not to hold a

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grudge against those who were supposed to be caring for me as a child. I feel that my own children are very protective of me because of my past.

33. I am very close to the girls that I was in St Joseph's with. They are like my sisters.

34. I have been back to Ireland five times. I always remembered that **SR 178** told me once that I had a brother. When I got married I decided to find out if it was true. I wrote to her and I asked her for more information. **SR 178** replied and said that I did have a brother called **██████████** and that she would find him for me. The next thing I got was a letter from my **██████████**. He told me that my brother was living in **██████████** England. I went and visited him for the first time in 1987. **██████████** was married with a daughter. Then he came over for a surprise visit for my 60th birthday and stayed for three months. It was wonderful and we got on so well. Sadly **██████████** has since passed away. Through the Child Migrants Trust I found out that my mother died when she was sixty eight in England. She moved to England and cut all ties with her own family. I returned to Ireland in 1997 as part of the "Sentimental Journey" that was organised by the British Government which was wonderful. I am in good contact with my extended family in Ireland and I have visited relatives in America.

35. I was sent away to Australia as a child, without knowing I had a family in Ireland. I think it was cruel of the nuns in Nazareth House to keep this information from me, and to deprive me of the opportunity of building a relationship with them. Instead I had to wait over forty years to meet them. I could have had more time with them, especially my brother.

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Statement of Truth

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

Signed **HIA 335**

Dated 23.5.14