

**Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

Witness Statement of

LTI  
[REDACTED]

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is LTI [REDACTED] My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1944. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

**Life before going into care**

2. As a child I lived in the [REDACTED] area on the West Coast of Scotland. My family name at that time was [REDACTED]
3. My earliest memories of my childhood are of refusing to wear my callipers. I had these because I contracted [REDACTED] when I was two and a half years old. At first my parents were told it was meningitis but this turned out not to be the case. I was in hospital for three and a half years. One of these years was in an iron lung. I don't have any memory of being in hospital during this time.
4. The callipers that I had were from my hips to my foot and I hated them. I had to wear another instrument when I was in bed. My legs were strapped together. This piece of equipment was lined with horse hair and made my legs very itchy. To me it was an instrument of torture.
5. My mother had to take me to hospital in Glasgow for appointments. This must have been very difficult for her. It was [REDACTED] miles on the bus from [REDACTED] to Glasgow. My mother also had my one year old brother with her. She had to carry me upstairs. It would have been very tiring.

6. My mum had been married before but her husband had died from tuberculosis. She had three children from this marriage, [REDACTED]
7. [REDACTED] was twelve years older than me. [REDACTED] was six years older and [REDACTED] four years older. My younger brother [REDACTED] was born in 1948, making him four years younger than me.
8. [REDACTED] and me used to fight a lot. I thought of her as the bossy older sister. In reality she was really like a second mother to us. This continued throughout my life and I love her for it. I remember one time [REDACTED] took us for a walk in the woods. We picked a beautiful bunch of bluebells for our mother. When we got back to the house my father wouldn't let us in with them. He said it was bad luck.
9. Mum was always respectful of the Catholic Church. We all went to a Catholic school and mass every Sunday.
10. In 1953 there was great excitement due to the coronation on the new Queen. There was going to be a big street party. As the day got nearer the excitement grew. It was not the case for us though as our mother was very ill. On the evening of [REDACTED] the doctor and priest were called to the house. [REDACTED] and my father had a major fight. The priest was very angry. Us younger children were put in our rooms and told to stay there.
11. In the morning we were told that mum was with the angels in heaven. We were allowed to see mum in her coffin. I was lifted up to kiss her goodbye. She looked like Snow White sleeping. She had my rosary beads wrapped around her hand. This memory has stayed with me all my life.
12. In those days children weren't allowed to go to the funeral. Myself [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] sat on the stairs crying our eyes out because our mother had died. Everyone in the street knew that someone had died in our house. We were taunted by the other children. [REDACTED] had a lazy eye and he would be called names. I would also be taunted about my callipers. Children can sometimes be so cruel.

13. [REDACTED] did her best to mother us but she was only fourteen. At this time my father was working as a garbage man.
14. About two months after mother died we were playing outside at the front of the house. A big black car pulled up. In those days there weren't many cars in the street. We stopped playing when a man and a woman got out of the car. They asked our names and they then grabbed [REDACTED] and me. [REDACTED] ran off. We didn't know who these people were. All they said was that we were going for a ride. We were all crying, screaming and very scared.
15. I would find out later in life that our local church, the St Vincent de Paul Society, decided dad wasn't looking after us properly. As a result us kids would have to go into Catholic care. They had threatened dad that he would be reported to the Child Welfare if he refused. Dad liked to have a drink but he wasn't a drunk. If he had a drink he would sing songs. He wasn't bad.
16. The next thing that I remember was arriving outside a big grey building. This was my new home, Nazareth House at Kilmarnock.

### **Life in care - Scotland**

#### **Nazareth House, Kilmarnock**

##### *General*

17. The lady in the car took me into the building. We went into a big hallway with black and white tiles on the floor. A nun came to greet us but didn't acknowledge me. She just took a hold of my hand and spoke with the woman. I was screaming and trying to get back to my brothers, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. The woman then just left. I never saw my siblings again until 1982.
18. After the woman left I needed to go to the toilet. The nun took me. It was the biggest toilet that I had ever seen. I was then taken to a dormitory. I must have been really

tired from screaming and crying as I fell asleep on top of the bed. The next thing I woke up and it was morning. I was a very frightened little girl. No one had come to see me to make sure that I was okay.

*First day at institution*

19. The dormitory that I was in was had about 25 other girls in it. The girls were all different ages. An older girl told me to get out of bed. She gave me some different clothes. I then joined a line with the other girls waiting to go to the washroom. The older girl didn't know how to put my callipers on so just left them off.
20. Later on the same girl must have got me some shoes. I was taken to the refectory for breakfast. It's funny because I remember a little Polish girl called [REDACTED] taking my hand. She couldn't speak any English.

*Mealtimes*

21. The food was really bad. You were given a sausage for breakfast, a plateful of dripping and a crust. You were never given sliced bread. It was always a crust. We were also given stew. There was hardly any meat in it. There was only a tiny bit on the bottom of the pot.

*Washing and bathing/Hygiene*

22. Once a week we had to walk to the bath house in Kilmarnock. There wasn't a bath area at the home. Two of us would share the same bath.

*Schooling*

23. I remember going to Sailor Street School. I had my callipers on when I went there.

*Religious instruction*

24. We would go to mass every day. If it was Lent you might have to go to mass two or three times a day. My knees were really sore from polishing the floors but you couldn't get up. If you moved or lifted your head you would get a jab in the small of your back from the nuns.

*Christmas and Birthdays*

25. I remember my dad and Auntie [REDACTED] coming to visit me at Christmas. They gave me a doll but I never saw it again after they had left.

*Visitors*

26. My father used to come and visit me at other times but the nuns didn't know this. He would come and see me at the gates. He would always tell me to be quiet in case the nuns heard him.

*Running away*

27. I did used to think about running away. I never did though as I didn't have any money for the bus.

**Migration***Selection*

28. I remember that I had a gum boil once and I had to come home from school. I was taken to the dentist to have this lanced. When I was back at Nazareth House Sister LFL [REDACTED] came and got me from the playroom. She took me to her office. I was shown a picture of a ship on a calendar and asked if I would like to go for a ride on it. I said I would. What eight year old girl wouldn't want to do this?

*Medical*

29. An older girl took me to the doctor for a medical the week before I left for Australia. I was examined by the doctor. I didn't have my callipers with me when I was given my medical.
30. My medical was over very quickly. I wasn't asked any questions. I just sat playing in the room. The older girl then took me back to the home. In later life when I accessed my records there was a copy of the medical letter. It said I was a fit and healthy little girl despite this not being true.

*Leaving Nazareth House*

31. The next thing I knew, me and three other girls are going on a holiday. The night before we left, my father came to see me at the orphanage. This was different from how he would normally visit. It was very traumatic. He also said that I was going on a holiday and he would see me when I got back. My father had asked where my callipers were. I told him that they were on a chair next to my bed. I never saw the callipers again once I had left Nazareth House.
32. When he left I remember my father kissing me and holding me tight. I had a terrible habit of wiping his kiss off my face. I think back to this now and how it was the last affection I had from my father. I just stood there watching him with the tears running down my cheeks. Sister <sup>LQM</sup> [REDACTED] took me back to the playroom. I never saw my father or my callipers again.
33. We were allowed a special tea before we left. [REDACTED] was the oldest one of us that were going. Her brother, who was in the army, came to see her. He had tea with us as well.
34. When I left Nazareth House at Kilmarnock I had only been there around five months.

*Leaving Scotland*

35. The next morning we went to the station escorted by two nuns. We met another four girls from Nazareth House, Aberdeen. They were also escorted by two nuns. We then all went on the same train to London.
36. We spent one night at Nazareth House, Hammersmith in London. The next day we were taken to our ship at Southampton. The ship was called the Orantes.

*Transportation*

37. There was 24 children altogether on the ship. There was a few young boys who were accompanied by a priest, Father Tye. The girls had three chaperones for the journey to Australia. Three of us shared a cabin and the chaperones had separate rooms.
38. We ran free on the ship like normal kids. We didn't have many clothes and didn't have any swimwear. I think that they got us swimwear from somewhere on the ship.
39. The ship stopped at a few places including Aden. We saw Arabs selling trinkets and visited a zoo in Ceylon. On board it was fun watching the boys diving for pennies thrown in the water by the other passengers. I think the journey on the ship lasted about four or five weeks.
40. When we reached Australia the boys and Father Tye left the ship at Perth. Around this time I had a bad fall on the ship. I had to go to the ship's hospital and needed seven stitches on my chin.
41. We eventually arrived at Victoria Dock in Melbourne where we were met by the press. [REDACTED] We were lined up on the deck and had our photograph taken.
42. Two nuns from Nazareth House at Camberwell were waiting to greet us when we left the ship. We were then taken by bus to our new home in Australia. Our chaperones never came with us to Camberwell.

43. I still thought that this was some sort of extended holiday I was on.

### **Life in care – Australia**

#### **Nazareth House, Camberwell**

##### *General*

44. When the bus arrived at Camberwell we all had our faces pressed against the windows to see what it was like. There was a long drive up to the main building. It was the biggest building that I had ever seen. It wasn't grey and old like Kilmarnock. It was all red brick and verandas.
45. There were three floors and five separate wings. These consisted of the convent, the noviciate, the old men and ladies wing and the children's wings. The fifth wing was where the kitchen, chapel and stores were.
46. There was tennis courts at one end of the grounds. There was also well tended lawns with palm trees and a little grotto that had a statue of the Virgin in it. At the back of the grounds there was a farm, laundry, a huge dressing shed and a vacant allotment. The allotment was where, later, the swimming pool would be.

##### *First day at institution*

47. A lot of the nuns came out to meet us when we arrived. They were like a gaggle of penguins. As you entered the building through the wooden door at the front porch there was a veranda going away to each side. Once inside I could see red and black floor tiles going off in different directions. In the main hall there were a few statues on pedestals.



48. We were marched across the hall and through a glass door. This led to a highly polished passage. There were several doors on each side and another glass door at the end of the passage.
49. A nun stopped at the first door and pulled a large bunch of keys from her belt and opened the door. The nun said, "Leave your cases, coats and hats here. Line up and we will go upstairs to the washrooms and dormitories". If you had any personal belongings in your case too bad. You never saw them again. Life at Nazareth House in Camberwell had started.
50. The first order was that we were all to have our hair cut. We were told that there was no need for long hair at the orphanage. Our hair was cut very short by an older girl who I had never seen before.

#### *Clothing*

51. We were all issued with the same clothing. This comprised of a green apron, a dress, knickers that were made of denim and looked like shorts, a vest, a flannel night dress, socks and a pair of lace up shoes. Your surname was taped to all your clothes.
52. Once a week we were given clean clothes. If you had an accident before then you still had to use the same clothes. It wasn't until you were a bit older that you could sneakly wash your clothes if you had to. When you were given your clothes back one of the nuns would shout your surname out. That was how you would get your clothes handed to you. there was no empathy. The bottom sheet and pillow case were changed once a fortnight. Our towels were washed once a fortnight.

#### *Staff*

53. There were three nuns who looked after us. Sister <sup>LSV</sup> who we called <sup>LSV</sup>. She was Irish. Sister <sup>LSW</sup> who we knew as <sup>LSW</sup>. She was also Irish. Sister <sup>MEJ</sup> known as <sup>MEJ</sup> who was Australian.

54. Sister <sup>MEJ</sup> was our favourite. You knew where you stood with her. If you needed a punishment she would find a chore or some other form of correction. Most of the nuns at the convent were Irish.
55. The sisters worked three hour rosters with the children.

#### *Dormitories*

56. When I first arrived, I was shown to the dormitories along with the other girls. There were five dormitories. I was issued with a bed, locker and chair. The dormitory was spotless with polished floors.
57. The nun who was in charge had their own room called a cell. This was at the end of each dormitory. The nuns also had their own washroom.

#### *Mornings*

58. The day always started at six. When the nun banged on the dormitory door you had to be on your knees by your bed for the morning prayer. I would then get dressed, make my bed and do my ablutions. After this I would get in line to go for mass at seven.

#### *Mealtimes*

59. Breakfast was at eight. You were given a slice of bread, a sausage, some dripping and a cup of tea. On a Friday there was porridge and a boiled egg.
60. After school you were given a cup of cold milk. The milk was straight from the cows. It had been left out all day until it was given to you. The milk was sour like yoghurt. You had to drink it. I would hold my nose to help me swallow it. You were given the milk in horrible plastic cups that hadn't been washed properly. Sister <sup>LSW</sup> would make sure I had two mugs of milk as she knew I couldn't drink it in any shape or form. I still can't even stand the smell of it.
61. Tea was usually a cup of tea, bread and jam and maybe a piece of fruit.

*Chores*

62. After breakfast there were chores to do. Every girl was given a separate chore. The younger girls would tie rags to their feet to polish the floors. One of the older girls would then use the polishing machine on the floor. The older girls, twelve to fourteen, were normally given the heavier chores. This could be helping in the laundry or parlour. They would also have to help out with the old people.
63. There was a number of empty dormitories along with the classrooms. We also had to make sure that these were clean. There was no cleaning staff. We had to do it all. Some of it was very dangerous like when we had to clean the outside of the windows upstairs.
64. Myself along with two other girls had the rooms on the second floor to clean. There were five classrooms, the classroom toilets, two set of stairs, stairwells and the passageways. We polished the passageways on our hands and knees with rags tied to our feet.
65. I was rostered every Tuesday to help out in the kitchen. It was my job to peel the potatoes for the convents meal that day. It was a big sack full. They went into a machine to be washed and were then peeled. I had to stand on a box to reach the huge sink.
66. On one occasion when I finished peeling the potatoes early <sup>LTC</sup> [REDACTED], the Irish [REDACTED], gave me another sack and said, "Do these too". I was furious so I said no. <sup>LTC</sup> [REDACTED] went to grab me so I threw a spud at him. After this all hell broke loose. He said that he would box my ears. When <sup>LTC</sup> [REDACTED] eventually caught me he locked me in a room.
67. Sister <sup>MEK</sup> [REDACTED] came in and said she was going to cane me. She tried to hit me with a cricket stump. I grabbed it and threw it out of the window. I was then marched to Sister <sup>LSW</sup> [REDACTED] who then caned me.

68. You couldn't get away with anything. Any misdemeanour that the children did would be heard about all around the convent. My kitchen escapade was soon known about. This meant that as well as the nun involved everyone else would have their say on the matter and frown at me. You would also be punished by the other nuns when they saw you. The other children were all patting me on the back for doing it.
69. Saturday's were our big cleaning day. The floors were waxed and polished. We scrubbed the bathrooms and toilets. The whole place was dusted high and low.

#### *Bedtime*

70. Bedtime was around six every night. We had to kneel and do our prayers. After this you had a wash and do your teeth.

#### *Washing and bathing/Hygiene*

71. The washroom had a speckled stone floor. There was about twelve basins with a shelf that run round the top of them. This was where we put our mug with our toothbrush in it. The washroom also had three baths and one shower. There was also towel racks in the middle of the room.
72. The toilets were separate and next door to the washroom.
73. You were allowed one bath a week. The shower room was used as a changing room by the older girls. Every night you had a strip down wash. You had to keep your towel wrapped around you tightly. If the towel slipped, you would be clipped around the ear or whacked with the cane, which again was actually a cricket stump.
74. If you had your period you weren't allowed to use the drier after washing your underwear. As you only had one pair of pants you did your best to wash and dry them. If you couldn't dry them then you had to put them on wet.

*Bed wetting*

75. If you wet the bed or had an accident then you were made to stand with the sheet over your head during breakfast. You had to wash and dry the sheet to be put back on your bed that night. This had to be done come rain, hail or shine even if the sheet wasn't dry.

*Leisure time*

76. We were allowed to play for half an hour between four and five. After tea there was another hour of play before bedtime prayers.

*Schooling*

77. School was from nine until three thirty every day. Lunch was at twelve and we would have to do our Angelus as well. The Angelus was a prayer you did when the bell rang at twelve. If you weren't there to do the prayer then you didn't get any lunch.
78. If you weren't on kitchen duties it was back to school at one. At school I passed my Commonwealth public service exam. This meant that I would be able to work for the government. I didn't find out I had passed the exam until Mother <sup>MEJ</sup> found it in a rubbish bin within Sister <sup>LSV</sup> room. I wouldn't have known otherwise.
79. A lot of the time your studies suffered. There was so much to do you never had time to do your homework. This meant that when you went to school you would get into trouble.

*Healthcare*

80. There were no regular health checks by a doctor or a dentist. If you had something wrong with you the doctor would come in or you would be taken to the dentist.
81. I never wore my callipers in the first five months I was at Camberwell. I would tell the nuns that I had [REDACTED] All they would say was that I was lying. It was

obvious that I had a problem. One leg was an inch and a half shorter than the other. One of the nuns noted that I fell over a lot and had scabby knees. I was taken to see old Doctor Crotty. He seen that I had a problem and said I should go to the Royal Children's Hospital to see a specialist.

82. I remember the day I went to hospital so clearly. I went in the convent van with Sister MEO Sister MEK and LTC When my name was called I went into the examination room. In the room was the doctor and about six students doctors. They made me strip, which was very embarrassing for me. I had to bend over, lift my legs, turn my head then walk back and forward. I couldn't wait to get out of there. It was bad enough having all those men there but the nuns were also present.
83. On the way home I was sitting there wondering what was wrong with the nuns. When we arrived back Sister MEO called me over. She then struck me so hard across the face that I fell over and my nose started to bleed. Sister MEO said, "That's for parading so immodestly in front of those men". For a nine year old this was very difficult to fathom what she meant. I only know that she had it in for me from that day on.
84. The specialist, Doctor Barr, from the hospital wrote to the nuns. He confirmed that I did indeed have [REDACTED] known now as [REDACTED]. The specialist said that he was at a loss as to how nobody knew anything about this. In addition I had passed through immigration and passed my medical, I don't know how.
85. A report was also sent to the Child Welfare and the immigration department.
86. When I had first arrived at the home they had sent my dad a letter. What they didn't realise was that my father could hardly read or write. He had passed the letter to my brother [REDACTED]. He wrote to the home with my full medical history. This detailed how I had nearly died and all the operations that I had. [REDACTED] also told them I had been in hospital for three and a half years and had used an iron lung for twelve months. Nazareth House at Kilmarnock denied any knowledge of my callipers. Now the blame games would begin.

87. There were a lot of letters back and forwards between Australia House, British immigration, Nazareth House in Kilmarnock, Nazareth House at Camberwell and Doctor Barr, the specialist.
88. Meanwhile I went into the Children's Hospital for my first operation. This was on my foot. I was in hospital for a month. I was sent home in crutches and remained in plaster for the next three months. Despite this I wasn't allowed to use the lifts. I had to use the stairs. I also had to keep up with the other children for meals and prayers. If I didn't I would face the consequences for being late.
89. I had a red sock over my plaster. One night I went for my bath and forgot about the sock and my plaster. The result was a pink soggy plaster. Sister <sup>LSV</sup> made me sit with her all night in front of a heater until it dried.
90. When the plaster came off I was given a new calliper. This was only on the one leg and went up to my knee. I was provided with lace up shoes. These were an improvement on the boy boots.
91. Two years later I had another operation at Frankton Mount Eliza Children's Hospital. It was the worst of all the operations. They cut and stretched the tendons in my bad leg. Two nights after the operation I was in dreadful pain. I had an abscess on my leg and had to go back in the treatment room to have the wound cleaned.
92. I was in hospital for three months with no visitors. The girl in the bed next to me was from the Salvation Army. People from the Salvation Army came to visit her every Sunday. They were lovely and ended up being my visitors as well. I never forgot their kindness. The nurse that I had was also very nice to me. She would bring me comics and lollies. I had some schooling and craft work when I was in hospital.
93. When I was back at Nazareth House I had to wear a harness that kept my leg up at the back rather than hanging down. I was back on my crutches. This time Sister <sup>MEJ</sup> and <sup>LSV</sup> let me use the lifts. Sister <sup>LSW</sup> still insisted that I use the stairs. Because of my disability I couldn't use the crutches properly. I ended up with

terrible pain in my armpits. I told the nuns about this but they never listened. They didn't care if you were in pain or unwell.

94. After this I spent a lot of my time in the playroom but mostly in the small library. There weren't many books but I ended up reading the entire Charles Dickens collection.
95. The last operation I had was to straighten my hammer toe. I didn't have a plaster this time. It was just thick bandages. I was still wearing my calliper although it was getting old. One of the irons had come detached and was rubbing against my leg. They wouldn't get it fixed for me. This led to me having a running sore on my leg. If I didn't wear my calliper I would get into trouble.
96. There was another time that I was having trouble walking and it was my good leg that was giving me the problem. I was hanging onto anything and couldn't stand up. We were lined up to do the Rosary when I collapsed. Sister <sup>LSW</sup> [REDACTED] shouted at me to get up. When I said I couldn't she became really angry. She told me to get up or I would be in worse pain. I tried to but it was too painful. I shouted at her, "I bloody can't stand up". Sister <sup>LSW</sup> [REDACTED] asked if I got that language from my father. I just saw red and said I hated the place and they could all go to hell.
97. The next thing that I remember was being picked up off the floor by two of the other girls. I was taken to the dormitory and the doctor was called. I had a deep seated infection in my good leg. Sister Mary had to give me penicillin injections twice a day for three weeks.
98. I think that Sister <sup>LSW</sup> [REDACTED] really did hate me. The feeling was mutual after this latest incident.

#### *Religious instruction*

99. The majority of Sunday's were spent at church services. We would also go to church every afternoon at four for the Rosary.



100. I was in the choir, which practised twice a week. Sister MEJ [REDACTED] was our choir mistress. We had to learn all the mass and benediction hymns. We also had to know the hymns for the special services when the nuns were being professed. Some of these services lasted two or three hours.
101. There was a music classroom that was one of my favourite places. I remember being there once when I was really unhappy. I cried buckets of tears and told god that I hated him. There was no other place or person that I could go to for comfort.
102. All the saints days were celebrated by the nuns.

*Christmas and Birthdays*

103. Every Christmas members of the Catholic parishes in Victoria were urged to open their homes and take one of us poor orphans for the holidays.
104. My first holiday was with a family from Kew. The mother was a physiologist and the father was a major in the army. The home was run in a very strict manner. The family had two children, a boy and a girl. The girl was a couple of years older than me. The family were kind to me but I was very shy and scared. I probably wasn't very sociable. One of their friends was a teacher. She sent magazines to me for quite a few years.
105. The next family that I went to were the [REDACTED]. They were very kind and the salt of the earth. The family lived up at the Dandenongs in Victoria. I have loved the bush ever since. They became my surrogate family. They took me on holidays whenever they could. I was treated like a member of their family. They would buy new clothes and toys for me. Whenever I went back to Nazareth House the clothes and toys would be taken off me. This made [REDACTED], the mother, very angry.
106. [REDACTED] gave me a lovely doll as a present for my eleventh birthday. When I went back to the orphanage it was taken off me. When I left the orphanage I saw the doll. It was on display. No one was allowed to play with it.

107. I wouldn't find out until years later why they were stopped from taking me on holidays with them. This was because they didn't go to mass on a Sunday.
108. After this I went to a family in Burwood. The woman, Mrs [REDACTED] was very religious. She would go to mass every day and benediction twice a week. The nuns at Nazareth House loved her. The father was an accountant. Their daughter, [REDACTED], was a chronic asthmatic. [REDACTED] and I eventually became very close. Her mother was instrumental in getting me accepted for Saint Benedict's College.
109. The nuns chose a friend of mine, [REDACTED] to go to college with me. We had to walk the five or six kilometres to the college. It finished at three thirty and we had to be back at the home for four. I still had bother with my leg and couldn't do it in that time. [REDACTED] was a great friend and always stayed with me. All the walking left me with a sore on my leg from the calliper. Thinking back now the nuns never offered me bus fares despite knowing about my leg. I left school halfway through year ten when I required another operation on my toe.
110. [REDACTED] mother wanted to adopt me. When Sister<sup>LSV</sup> [REDACTED] asked me about this I said no as I had a family back in Scotland. Sister<sup>LSV</sup> [REDACTED] was furious and said that I was an ungrateful hussy.
111. Christmas Day, Easter and Birthdays were never celebrated. These were just another day at the home. There were no presents or Easter eggs.

*Visitors*

112. I have a memory of the Mother Superior coming down to see us. We were told that there were two woman coming from child welfare. We were to be on our best behaviour when they came. When Mother Superior told you something you always listened and did as you were asked.
113. When the visit took place they never came near us. I think the nuns made sure of this in case we said something to them about what was going on.

114. There was a playroom that was absolutely wonderful to look at for a visitor. It had a dolls house and lots of toys. It was more like a show room.

*Personal Possessions*

115. I had no personal possessions. These had all been taken from me when I arrived at Camberwell.

*Discipline*

116. The normal form of punishment was the cane. Sister <sup>LSV</sup> would cane us. In saying that it was an effort. She would sooner give us a punishment like polish the floors at two in the morning than use the cane.

*Family contact*

117. We had been told on our arrival that we could write home to our family. About a month after I had arrived I wrote to my father. I told him that I hated it at the orphanage and I wanted to come home. Sister <sup>MEJ</sup> seen the letter and ripped it up in front of me. She said I wasn't allowed to write things like that.

118. If you were lucky enough to have letters sent to you these would be vetted by the nuns. I was sent a birthday card by my Auntie <sup>MEJ</sup> but I only found out about it when discover part of it in a bin when I was cleaning a classroom.

*Other information*

119. One of the worst experiences for me was about four months after I arrived at Nazareth House. One of the older ladies I had died. Sister <sup>LSW</sup> decided that because she looked so beautiful she would be laid out in the habit of St Francis.

120. Sister <sup>LSW</sup> lined us up and took us up to the ward where the lady was. We had to walk past and say a prayer. When it was my turn I just screamed. I hadn't seen a dead body since my mother died. I must have passed out because when I came to I was in

the dormitory with Sister LSW and Mary next to me. I explained that all I had seen was my mother. The nuns had no empathy. I was told that I had been disrespectful to the dead. I was to stay in bed without any dinner or tea as a punishment. Even Sister MEJ said to me I must have dreamt it that I was seeing my mother when she was dead.

121. Sex education was virtually non-existent at the home. One morning when the girl in the bed next to me got up her night gown and bed sheet were covered in blood. The poor girl was shaking. I went over and asked her what had happened. The next thing I know I was pushed over and given a whack across the ears. The girl was then dragged by her hair to the bathroom. Later when I asked the girl what had happened she said that she couldn't talk about it.
122. About a year or so later when I started to grow pubic hair I took nail scissors to the toilet and tried to cut it. When I first had my periods I was terrified and thought that I was going to die. I didn't know what to do so I told a friend. She took me to Sister MEJ. She said not to worry and it was normal for this to happen to girls. I was then taken to the store room. I was given a belt and a pad. Sister MEJ told me that when it happened again I was to go to the nun on duty who had the keys for the store room.
123. You were only allowed one pad at a time. We still only had one pair of pants and were not allowed to wash these. Some of us washed them anyway and hung them over our locker at night to dry, which of course they didn't.
124. When I was fourteen a nurse came in and gave us a lecture on sex. It was so informative that I thought for years after this that if I kissed a boy I could get pregnant.
125. Any family that we had was never really spoken about between the girls. Despite this I still thought of my family back in Scotland.
126. We were always told that we should be grateful despite how the nuns treated us.

## Abuse at Nazareth House, Camberwell

### *Nature and frequency of abuse*

Sister <sup>LSV</sup> [REDACTED]

127. When I was about fourteen Sister <sup>LSV</sup> [REDACTED] woke up one of the girls and asked her to help laying out an old woman who had died. Myself and the girl spoke about this at night when we couldn't sleep. The girl said how scared she was. Sister <sup>LSV</sup> [REDACTED] caught us. She said if we had that much energy it was better it was put to good use. We were made to scrub all the floors. We had to go on our hands and knees. It was all tiled floors and we were frozen. It was the middle of winter and I could hardly walk after doing this.
128. On one occasion Sister <sup>LSV</sup> [REDACTED] broke a bone in my hand after she gave me the cane. She had to leave the class and put me in charge whilst she was away. When she came back I was punished because the girls were talking. It was a joke. How was I supposed to stop the older girls from talking?
129. I couldn't move three fingers and had to go and see Sister Mary. She asked me what had happened. When I told her she contradicted me. She said that I had fell over. When I said I hadn't she said, "Yes you did". So a lesson was learnt. My hand was strapped up. I still can't straighten it to this day.

Sister <sup>LSW</sup> [REDACTED]

130. Sister <sup>LSW</sup> [REDACTED] was a different kettle of fish. It was almost as if she delighted in using the cane. Sister <sup>LSW</sup> [REDACTED] would cane you with all the effort she could. Her face would be red and there was spittle coming out of her mouth.
131. My last run in with Sister <sup>LSW</sup> [REDACTED] came when some of us girls decided to let our hair grow. Sister <sup>MEJ</sup> [REDACTED] had said if we kept it tidy we could have it long. Sister <sup>LSW</sup> [REDACTED] came on duty when the hairdresser was cutting my hair. I told her what Sister <sup>MEJ</sup> [REDACTED] had said. Sister <sup>LSW</sup> [REDACTED] hit my on the shoulder with a cricket stump. She

just ignored what I had said and told the hairdresser to cut it extra short. I told her she couldn't do that. Sister <sup>LSW</sup> held me down on the chair and my hair was cut like a boys.

132. Later that night after tea I was sobbing when I was doing my prayers. Sister <sup>LSW</sup> told me to be quiet and gave me a whack with her stick. I started to scream. The harder she hit me the louder that I screamed. In the end she grabbed me by the hair and the arm. I was dragged down two flights of stairs to the clothes store room on the second floor. I had my callipers on and I was frightened that I was going to fall down the stairs. Sister <sup>LSW</sup> then continued to whack me wherever it landed. She didn't care. I must have passed out. When I came to I was on the floor locked in the room. It was pitch dark and I was terrified. Sister <sup>LSW</sup> came back later and told me to get to bed.
133. You learned to keep your mouth shut and take you punishment. It was almost like you had lost your personality.

#### *Reporting of abuse*

134. After Sister <sup>LSW</sup> had my hair cut short and hit my with her stick Sister <sup>MEJ</sup> asked me what had happened. When I told her she was furious. Some of the girls heard her and Sister <sup>LSW</sup> having a heated argument.

#### **Life after Nazareth House**

135. When I was getting close to fifteen years old the nuns probably thought that I needed assessed to see if I could go out in the work force. They considered me to be handicapped although I never considered myself to be.

#### *Leaving*

136. I eventually left Nazareth House when I was fifteen. I wasn't allowed to finish year ten. When I was leaving I was given my clothes, a coat and my baptismal certificate. I went back to stay with the . It had been arranged by the orphanage.

137. Mrs [REDACTED] got me a job at the clearing department with the bank. I remember my first day at work I was wearing my calliper, bobby socks and a little dress. A couple of weeks later the people next door to the [REDACTED] gave me a present of three pairs of bras.
138. Mrs [REDACTED] made me leave my pay envelope on the table every week. I would be given my bus fares to go to work but nothing else. One of the ladies at work said that I needed new clothes. I said that I had no extra money. I then told her what I did with my wages. After this she took me to buy new shoes and a coat. Mrs [REDACTED] found my coat and shoes in the wardrobe. I hadn't even worn them I was too frightened. I got in big trouble. I went to the local phone box and phoned [REDACTED]. She came and picked me up. Mrs [REDACTED] threw all my clothes outside when I left.
139. The [REDACTED] were very kind to me when I stayed with them. I was with them until I met my husband [REDACTED].
140. I went back to the convent with my husband, [REDACTED] to see Sister <sup>MEJ</sup>[REDACTED]. I had kept in touch with her after I left the orphanage. Sister <sup>MEO</sup>[REDACTED], who was now in charge, was horrible to us. After this I never went back again.

#### **Other action taken**

141. I have never taken any civil action against the Catholic church in relation to my time in care.

#### **Campaigning/awareness raising/other organisations**

142. In 1962 I tried to raise awareness about what had happened to me and the other girls at Nazareth House. Most of the girls were too scared of the Catholic church to try and do anything. It was a very powerful organisation at that time.

143. The Child Migrant Trust has helped me. They have also helped a lot of the people who were children at the homes in Australia.

### **Records and family tracing**

144. I have managed to obtain very little of my records. There is a letter that acknowledges the doctor who gave me my medical in Scotland made a mistake. This was after the Australian authorities had questioned it when I needed my operations at Camberwell. I don't know how they managed to send me to Australia when I was infirm.
145. I learnt that in 1958 my father had tried to get me back but was told that I was a ward of the state of Victoria. My uncle [REDACTED] who was in the navy had visited Melbourne in 1959. He had wanted to see me but was told that I was no longer a member of their family.
146. I spoke to Uncle [REDACTED] myself and he said that the nuns had been quite rude to him. The nuns made it clear that under no circumstances would he be allowed to see me.
147. When I met my aunt, who was my dad's sister, she asked why I hadn't wrote to thank her for the gifts she sent me. The problem was that I had never received them. It was the same with the birthday cards that had been sent by my other aunt.
148. In 1982 I went back to visit my family in Scotland. I remember when I was leaving to come back home I was at my sisters. The rest of the family were there as well. As I left my brother [REDACTED] came running down the garden path. He gave me another cuddle. It was almost like he knew he wouldn't see me again. [REDACTED] died a year later.

### **Other matters relating to migration**

*Nationality/passport*



149. The first time that I tried to apply for an Australian passport I was told that they had no record of me arriving in Australia. I contacted Nazareth House at Kilmarnock and Hammersmith in London. They didn't even respond to my letters.
150. My husband was working at the immigration department. This helped me with my application. The whole process took about ten months.

### **Impact**

151. I have suffered from depression since I was 22. I told the doctor my history. He said that because of this I would be on medication for years. I was on prescribed tablets until about eight years ago. Its only since then I have managed to come off the medication.
152. I think a lot of the problems were as a result of my childhood. I missed my brothers and sister. I will probably never see any of them again.
153. I had a low esteem of myself although it is better now. I suffered from a lack of self-confidence and self- belief after being in care. I became more confident when I started working as a librarian at a library in Canberra.
154. We weren't brought up at the convent. We were like garbage being pushed up. I felt like we were the rubbish sent out like the convicts. The Catholic church has a lot to answer for. I think that they thought no one would find out what they did to the children.

### **Final thoughts**

155. I still look on myself as one of the lucky ones. I would hope that by recounting what happened to me it will ensure it doesn't happen to other children.
156. I am interested to know if there will be a redress process put in place for child migrants that were sent from Scotland.

157. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed...  .....  
Dated... *13.12.18* .....