

**Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

Witness Statement of

MIN  
[REDACTED]

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is MIN [REDACTED] My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1944 and I am presently seventy-four years of age. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

**Life before going into care**

2. My mother's name was [REDACTED] her maiden name was [REDACTED] and my father was [REDACTED]. I have a brother who is also called [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and who is four years older than me. I grew up never knowing my father, he had been in the army and I don't recall ever meeting him, although I think my brother had.
3. [REDACTED] and I lived with our mother in [REDACTED] in Arbroath. I understand now that the buildings had been condemned thirty years before I was born. My mother slept in a box bed in the main room and my brother and I shared a bed in the bedroom. Some of my memories of that time are a bit vague, some I was reminded of when I caught up with [REDACTED] years later. Although my memory is sketchy, I don't recall any real negative times.
4. I do remember that [REDACTED] and I were always fighting, as many brothers do. We had big china hot water bottles and one broke in the bed during one of our fights. I realised it had broken but he didn't and he got his leg scalded by the hot water. On another occasion I picked up an arrow from the bow and arrow set he had and threw it at him. It hit him under the eye on the day he was getting confirmed. Mum had to

take him up to the infirmary and when she came back she told me I'd knocked his eye out and that I'd better go and find it. I remember searching the bedroom for his eye. I think that was just her way of getting me out of her sight.

5. My mother was off to work all the time because in those days there was no support for a woman on her own with two children. As a result, from when he was just a young boy, my brother virtually brought me up. He would get me out of bed, feed me, dress me and take me down to a day care centre before he went off to school. After school he'd come back and pick me up, take me home, feed me, undress me and put me to bed before our mother came home from work.
6. When I was old enough I went to [REDACTED] Primary School. During assembly one day they mentioned they were collecting clothes for the poor kids. I went home and grabbed a couple of things and put them in a pile at school. Three days later I was called up and given a parcel of clothes. That was the first time I found out I was a poor kid. The whole neighbourhood was the same, for example we all had to cut cardboard to put in our shoes if there was a hole in them.
7. By the time I got to about seven or eight years old, [REDACTED] was spending more time with his friends and I was looking after myself more. After a time my mother got involved with another guy who moved in and they had two more boys. At some point we moved from [REDACTED] to a house a bit further out in Arbroath.
8. In 1955, when I was eleven years old, I was sent to Australia as a child migrant. [REDACTED] was never sent because he'd had rheumatic fever and was four years older. I think they wanted kids more of my age that they could mould into some sort of upright citizens.

## Migration

### *Migration Papers*

9. I have obtained some records from my childhood from the Prince's Trust. They now hold my Fairbridge Society records. Within them is a copy of my migration papers. I can provide a copy to the Inquiry if it is necessary.
10. The migration form appears to have been signed by my mother on [REDACTED] 1955, giving her permission for me to go to Australia

### *Selection/information*

11. I remember my mother asking me if I wanted to go to Australia. I'd never heard of Australia before and had no idea what it involved. I've since found out from Mum's sisters, my aunts, that they'd offered to look after me instead of me going, but that never happened.
12. I also recollect somebody, I don't know who, taking me to Dundee in a little three-wheeler car. I assume now that it was for me to have interviews or whatever, but I don't recall why. I have since found out that the Royal Scottish Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children (RSSPCC) were involved in some way.
13. I don't recall getting any health checks, but there are references in my records to my getting them both before I left and after I arrived in Australia. One such letter dated [REDACTED] 1955 mentions that I had put on weight and that I had more colour.
14. The records also contain papers relating to an application process for me with the Fairbridge Society which arranged my migration and with the Immigration Department. There is actually quite a lot of documentation with the Fairbridge application.

### *Leaving Scotland*

15. When it was time for me to leave, on the [REDACTED] 1955 I recall my mother taking me to the station and putting me on the train to England. I believe my grandmother was supposed to have gone with me on the train, but for some reason that didn't happen. I ended up being under the charge of the train guard.
16. I remember getting on the train on my own and that's about it. I've subsequently found out from my records that when the train got to Newcastle I joined another party of children going from there. They had a lady guardian with them and she supposedly looked after me as well. I don't recall that.
17. I travelled by train down to Knockholt in Kent but I don't remember much of the journey, or of changing trains.

*Holding Centre at John Mitchell House, Knockholt, Kent*

18. I ended up at a large stately home in Knockholt that was called John Mitchell House. I later found out it had been used during the Second World War for children evacuated out of London. After the war it was used as a meeting place for kids that were being sent to Australia from all over the U.K. I don't know who owned it or whether it belonged to the Fairbridge Society.
19. According to my records I spent four weeks at Knockholt, although I always thought it was longer than that.
20. The house was a very impressive building with a circular driveway and steps going up to the front door. There was a big pine tree in the grounds round the back, which I can remember climbing.
21. I have vague memories of going to school in Orpington, which is nearby, during my time at Knockholt. That was the first time I'd ever experienced changing class for different subjects.

22. My records also say that we were taken to London and outfitted for Australia and that I was given a new suitcase. I recall that the clothing was totally inappropriate. They dressed us in heavyweight clothes more suitable for an English climate.

*Journey to Australia on RMS Otranto*

23. The ship we travelled on was called the Otranto and we sailed from Tilbury Docks in London on [REDACTED] 1955. I had always been under the impression it was supposed to be the Otranto's last cruise before being scrapped, although I'm not sure that it was.
24. There were probably about twelve or fourteen Fairbridge kids, boys and girls, in our party and a couple were employed as our guardians on the ship. I presume they were a married couple that were migrating to Australia. I was the only Scot to my knowledge.
25. We were given tours of some parts of the ship and got taken up to the bridge as well. We kids would play games while we were sailing, hide and seek and whatever. Playing hide and seek on an ocean liner meant nobody would find you until you wanted to be found.
26. I got into a fight with another boy over one of the girls in the party. I got a bleeding nose and actually ended up in hospital on the ship for the last few days because the bleeding wouldn't stop.
27. The ship sailed through the Mediterranean and I understand we were one of the last ships to go down the Suez Canal before the troubles in Egypt. Excursions were organised for us when we arrived at the various ports on the journey.
28. We got off in Naples and I recall seeing Mount Vesuvius smoking in the background. Then we sailed to Port Said, although we didn't get off there because of the troubles starting. After going through Suez we stopped at Aden. I'm still able to close my eyes and see all the beggars outside the harbour. There were deformed kids and I recall someone saying that they had been purposely deformed by their parents to make them better beggars.

29. After Aden we went to Colombo, a port on an island which in those days was called Ceylon. It was on the excursion there that I saw a beach with palm trees on it for the first time. After Colombo we sailed to Fremantle, Western Australia (WA).

*Arrival in Australia*

30. I have been shown a copy the passenger list for the Otranto, which shows that the ship arrived in Fremantle on [REDACTED] 1955. The list records me as 'Master [REDACTED] [REDACTED] MIN [REDACTED]', age eleven and that I was care of Fairbridge Farm School, Pinjarra, WA. That is correct. I actually have a copy of the passenger list as well.
31. Half of the kids I'd travelled with went to Fairbridge at Pinjarra, half went to Molong in the east of Australia. I went to Pinjarra. When we arrived at Fremantle we were picked up off the ship by Tom Brayn who was, I think, the vice-principal of Fairbridge at the time. The journey was about a hundred miles and I recall stopping somewhere for a picnic lunch on the way.

**Life in care – Australia**

**Fairbridge Farm School, Pinjarra, WA**

*General*

32. Fairbridge Farm School, Pinjarra, is in the countryside, about a hundred miles from Perth. I am now aware that the school was set up in 1913 at a small abandoned orchard south of Pinjarra by Kingsley Fairbridge. By the 1920's the Fairbridge Society had been established and they had managed to procure the farm where I was sent, which was north of Pinjarra and was about 3500 acres in size.
33. By the time of my arrival, a village had been built that included a primary school, a church and a number of other buildings, which included the cottages where all the kids stayed. The farm was well established and grew cereal crops and vegetables, kept

livestock and had an orchard. There was one tarmac road running through the village, the rest of the tracks were all gravel.

34. Fairbridge was run by a Principal, who was a chap by the name of [MIQ] when I first arrived. He left and a guy called [MIP] took over and he was still Principal when I left. There was also the Vice-Principal, Tom Brayn, two old ladies that worked in the office, staff in the dining room, teachers, some of whom lived on site, farm staff, the priest and a number of cottage mothers. I've since established that the teachers were actually supplied by the education department of WA, the rest of the staff were employed by Fairbridge.
35. There would have been between two hundred and fifty and three hundred and fifty children at Fairbridge. It varied over the years.
36. There were a number of individual cottages, which had, on average, about twelve kids in each of them. Each cottage had a small garden around it. The kids in each cottage were single sex and ranged in ages from about three years old up to sixteen. Boys were in single storey cottages and girls were in double storey ones. All the cottages were named after somebody significant, which was supposedly to motivate us.
37. There were only women looking after the children in the various cottages, although there were male schoolteachers and male staff elsewhere and on the farm. One of the things I later discovered was that the cottage mothers had absolutely no training or qualifications. In the main they were either widows, spinsters or, in a few cottages, they were unmarried mothers. Looking back I suppose it was just the time and that was the way it was done.
38. The cottage mothers were there almost full time, every day of the week. They would do three months on and have two weeks off when a relieving cottage mother was brought in. It was great if the relieving cottage mum was new because she didn't know the rules and we could get away with murder.
39. The cottage mother of the cottage I was allocated was [REDACTED] and was called [MIO]. She was a battle-axe. I found out in later life that her husband had been killed in the



war and she had gone to Australia as a refugee. She had a son called [REDACTED] who was a couple of years younger than me and who had a very strong accent.

40. Mrs <sup>MIO</sup>[REDACTED] and her son [REDACTED] slept in their own quarters at the end of the cottage, where they had a bedroom, a bathroom and a sitting room. [REDACTED] never mixed with any of us.
41. During the time I was at Fairbridge there were four cottage mothers in charge of the cottage I stayed in. Mrs <sup>MIO</sup>[REDACTED] was there until around 1958 when she moved down south. I don't know why she left. After she left the cottage mothers improved.
42. We were called by our first names unless there was another child with the same name. If there was, the kid who had arrived second had his name changed. I was always called <sup>MIN</sup>[REDACTED]. Amongst ourselves we gave each other nicknames.
43. I would say now that life as a child at Fairbridge was impersonal. There were no hugs or kisses as there would be in a normal family. You had your place in the cottage and, depending on which age group you were, you had certain duties to do.

*First day at institution*

44. I spent the first three or four days in the hospital at Fairbridge because my nose was still bleeding from the fight on the ship. I eventually went to the cottage in which I was to be staying, which was called [REDACTED]. I remained at [REDACTED] for the duration of my time at Fairbridge.
45. I remember a guy called [REDACTED] pulled up in a horse and cart while I was in the hospital. He was one of the older lads from [REDACTED] Cottage. He asked me if I was the new kid and gave me a pile of comics.
46. When I arrived at [REDACTED] the cottage mother, Mrs <sup>MIO</sup>[REDACTED] insisted I called her 'Mum', as the other kids did. Having just recently left my mother in Scotland I refused and so I got off to a bad start. I was punished for it, however eventually it was decided that we should call the cottage mothers 'Auntie'.



*Mornings and bedtime*

47. The cottage mother's quarters were at the end of the cottage. Next to them was the main bedroom where the youngest kids slept and there was a connecting door into the cottage mother's quarters. As you grew older you moved into other bedrooms that were further away. The bedroom at the end had three or four beds in it where the bigger boys slept.
48. We got up early in the morning, I'm not sure what time. No matter what age you were, you had to make your bed as soon as you got up. Everybody then went for a cold shower before getting dressed and, depending on your age, we would have various tasks to do.
49. After that we'd have breakfast and then head off to school. When we came back from school there would be extra duties to do.
50. Bedtimes were staggered throughout the evening with the little kids going to bed first and the oldest last.

*Washing and bathing/Hygiene*

51. There were two shower units in the bathroom, two toilets and a bath. The showers were always cold water. All twelve kids in the cottage would be in together while the cottage mother watched, making sure that everyone had a shower.
52. At the end of the day we all had a bath. We had to bucket hot water in from outside to fill the bath and then everybody had to bathe in the same water. The little kids went first because they went to bed earlier, which meant that the oldest kid would be the last in, after everybody else.
53. I don't recall having a toothbrush or ever cleaning my teeth.

*Mealtimes*

54. There was a main diningroom in a separate building at Fairbridge and all the primary kids ate their lunch and evening meal there during the school week. The older kids ate lunch at the high school in Pinjarra and then they too had their evening meal in the diningroom. All the breakfasts as well as the evening meal on a Saturday and all meals on a Sunday were had in the cottage where all the cooking was done on wood burning stoves.
55. Meals were very strict and regimented. We sat at bench seats with our feet underneath and we weren't allowed to talk at the table. The cottage mother would be sitting at the end and we soon learned that if we leant back and mouthed something she wouldn't be able to see.
56. If you didn't eat your food it would be sitting waiting for you at the next meal. The two things I didn't like were cucumber and celery but, like everyone else, I devised ways of getting rid of anything like that from the table.

*Clothes*

57. All the clothes we'd brought from England disappeared and we never saw them again. I don't know what happened to them. The only thing we did see afterwards was the suitcase, which was kept in a storage room.
58. All year round we never wore shoes. It was [REDACTED] when I first arrived and I'd never walked barefoot outside anywhere. I had to learn to walk on the gravel tracks in my bare feet, when the weather was starting to warm up and the ground was hot. All I could do was hobble from shade to shade. You could always tell the new kids because they would be doing the same and because they would also be covered in mosquito bites.
59. We were given two tee shirts and two pairs of black shorts every Christmas and that had to do us the whole year. We never got underpants until we were older.

60. We also had Sunday clothes, which in winter was a pair of corduroy trousers and a collared shirt, although again no shoes. When we were old enough to go to high school we had a uniform to wear and that was the only time we were given shoes.

### *Schooling*

61. When I first arrived I went to the primary school at Fairbridge. There were five classrooms. At morning playtime we could go outside and play football or marbles. At lunchtime all the kids, as well as the cottage mothers, went down to the main diningroom and ate there. After lunch we were back to school until around half-past three before we returned to our cottages.
62. I found the schooling at Pinjarra strange, although generally I found it easy. I recall learning French as a ten year old in Scotland, but much of what we were taught at Fairbridge was on Australian history. That was nowhere near as exciting as learning about the world wars, as we did in Scotland.
63. For the last three years of my education, between 1958 and 1960, I got the bus to the high school at Pinjarra. The bus usually had to make two trips, there were so many kids. At the time I was there the school was known as Pinjarra Agricultural High School. The idea was that the kids would all be trained to work on the land.
64. The high school then opened up what they called a commercial branch, to train children for other occupations. I went down that line, although I did a certain amount of farm work during the school holidays. The kids that went down the agricultural route would have been given more farm work, in the dairy and that sort of thing.
65. Most of the kids at high school didn't wear a uniform, only the Fairbridge kids did. As a result we stood out and that encouraged an 'us and them' situation.
66. Most of the sporting teams at high school consisted of Fairbridge kids. We held our own. We had the reputation that if someone picked on one Fairbridge kid, they picked on the lot.

67. I don't recall having much homework to do from primary school, but we certainly did from high school. We went to a building that was known as the clubrooms and did our homework in there. There would usually be a member of staff, often the priest, supervising, but we didn't get any help with our homework.
68. Every six months or so a report was sent back to the Fairbridge Society in England by Fairbridge at Pinjarra. I have copies of some of those reports from the records I obtained, should the Inquiry wish them.
69. There were comments on these reports from the Principal, the teachers and also from the cottage mother, Mrs MIO. She would often comment that I was uncooperative and that sort of thing. After Mrs MIO left the comments from the succeeding cottage mothers were to the effect that I was a very nice lad.
70. My teachers in Scotland always knew that I wanted to be a school teacher. The RSSPCC even knew that. When I came to Fairbridge my education finished after the third year of high school, when I was sixteen. The final year exam was called the junior examination and about twenty of us sat it at the same time. To get a pass you had to get through five of the eight subjects and I got seven.
71. In my records is a letter that says that only one child could be sent on to further education for financial reasons. As I didn't feel it necessary to study all the time in order to pass my exams, it probably looked like I wasn't really trying and therefore I was not chosen to go on. To finance only one child to go beyond high school was just wrong.

*Leisure time*

72. Most of our free time was spent outside. After we'd done whatever task we had been set after school, we had a bit of free time, when we tended just to play. There was usually only about half an hour or so before we had to go down to the diningroom for evening meal. After the evening meal we usually had about an hour to play football or marbles, that sort of thing, before we had to go back to the cottage.

73. Each cottage had a small library and there was also a bigger library in the clubrooms where we did our homework. We could take the cottage books there and swap them over. There were also board games, including chess and the one I remember most, Cluedo. During the evening in the cottage, after we'd had our baths, we all tended to sit about reading or playing board games.
74. Weekends were different, after lunch we were virtually free for the rest of the day and there was a lot of sport organised. Oddly enough we never played soccer, but we did play Australian football, cricket and hockey. We often played against some of the other institutions, like Clontarf and Bindoon, and some of the local teams. We were either taken there by bus or they would come to Pinjarra.
75. Despite the fact that most of the hockey field was gravel, very few of us had football or hockey boots. We played in our bare feet.
76. We also went to the pictures on a Saturday night and at certain times of the year we could go swimming. Part of the river had been sectioned off for us to swim in and we were issued with a bathing costume on a certain day of the year. Prior to that we weren't supposed to go swimming, but there was nothing to prevent us going skinny dipping in another part of the river.

*Trips and holidays*

77. In the early years of my being at Fairbridge there weren't very many days out. Later on, besides going to play sports against other teams, they'd take a bus load of kids up to the Royal Show in Perth.
78. On some Saturdays, again I think in the later years, a bus full of kids were taken to the zoo or to one of the big department stores in Perth. There would just be one bus and so different cottages would go at different times. These trips weren't very frequent because of that and I perhaps went on two trips in three years.

79. We used to go down to Mandurah camp for two weeks after Christmas every year. Half the kids would go down for the first fortnight and the rest for the second.
80. Some of the elder kids led me down the path of breaking into cars and stealing money while we were at Mandurah. I suppose I was forced to do so to a degree. If I hadn't done it I knew I would have got a beating. We were eventually caught and it was dealt with by the police.
81. In the school holidays the older boys went to stay with families outside Fairbridge for a week. I once went to stay with the family of one of the primary school teachers. Another time I stayed with a family in Bayswater.

#### *Healthcare*

82. There was a hospital at Fairbridge that had a nursing sister. If there was anything wrong with you, you were sent up to the nursing sister. A common problem that new arrivals suffered from was bruising to their feet from walking barefoot. We would be sent to the hospital and the nursing sister would lance the bruises.
83. All my records show that when I left Scotland, although I might have been pale and a bit underweight, my general health was good. I went up to the nursing sister on a few occasions with a black eye. I never told the nurse how I got the black eye, but I often would have got it after upsetting **MIR** in some way. Very shortly after I got to Fairbridge I ended up with perforated eardrums somehow. Whether that was from getting slapped, I couldn't say.
84. Within six months of my being in Australia I was admitted to the children's hospital in Perth to get an operation on my left ear. I was in there for four or five weeks and I also spent a lot of time in Pinjarra hospital with ear infections.
85. We also had periodic eye checks and were given injections for polio and other diseases.

#### *Religious instruction*

86. There was a church in the grounds of Pinjarra, which had been financed by Thomas Wall, the ice cream maker. The religion was Church of England and, although there were some Catholic children at Fairbridge, we all had to go.
87. The [REDACTED] at Fairbridge was called MIS [REDACTED] and he was very popular with the kids. He often organised our sports and it wasn't unusual for him to be in the training sessions.

*Work*

88. As we got older we were all given what were called 'task' duties. Some boys would have to chop wood while the older boys would be on breakfast duty, cooking the porridge and making the toast. Other duties included cleaning the bath and the showers after everybody had been in. After dinner at night time some kids would have to wash and dry all the dishes.
89. We also had to maintain the garden, which included mowing the lawn and weeding. Some of the gardening was done after school, but the majority was done after we'd had breakfast on a Saturday morning.
90. In the school holidays we all had to muck in on the farm, collecting the hay and that sort of thing. We were paid for some of the work. The boys who were at high school were put on what were called 'semi-task' duties and got a certain amount for some of the duties they did at night time. Boys who were perhaps slower at school left when they were fourteen and did more tasks and so got paid more.

*Personal possessions and pocket money*

91. We got pocket money and the amount depended on how old we were. At the age of sixteen it was something like a shilling. That pocket money was used to pay a penny for the pictures on a Saturday night and a penny for church on Sunday morning. Five pence of the ten that were left had to go in the bank and the rest could be spent in the store on sweets.



*Birthdays and Christmas*

92. My birthday, on the [REDACTED], was in the middle of winter. The custom was that you would be woken up by everybody when it was your birthday and thrown under a cold shower. I don't recall any celebration organised by Fairbridge. We might have got a couple of cards, but I certainly don't remember getting a present. If you were in the cottage mother's favour she might have wished you a happy birthday.
93. At Christmas the Principal and a couple of members of staff used to load the horse and cart up with kit bags full of presents. They would drive around distributing them to all the cottages. The main present consisted of two tee shirts, two shorts, a present from Fairbridge and anything that might have been sent from overseas.
94. Months before Christmas we had been given a choice of gifts from Fairbridge. I can't remember what the choice was, but it quite often consisted of comics or books and that sort of thing, nothing big. I think at the age of sixteen, the boys were given a Gillette safety razor.
95. We also had a Christmas dinner which, most of the time, we kids would cook in the cottage. I wouldn't eat chicken for years because one year I was given the job of killing the chickens. When you had that job you ended up crawling with fleas and so I couldn't touch it.
96. The Scottish kids at Pinjarra all had a godparent allocated to them. These were people who had taken an interest in the children. I don't believe the English children had anyone. The godparents were benefactors of the Fairbridge Society and had donated money. I actually had two and I have a letter in my records relating to a lady that had taken an interest in me as well.
97. One of my benefactors was called Mr Tassie and he used to send me a book at Christmas. I have information in my records that he had sent money out for me as well, but that I hadn't acknowledged receiving it. That makes me think that I didn't know about the money. That money was put into a trust account for me and I got fifty-

six pounds, five shillings and five pence when I was twenty-one. I suppose at that time I was appreciative of getting that money, but when I calculate how much money I was given from my benefactors and how much I saved from my pocket money and wages from when I was working, the sums don't add up. I would think I should have been given a lot more. I have several letters in my records that had been sent to the Principal from my benefactor querying why I hadn't thanked them for their gifts.

98. I never met my godparents, but I had to write to them every so often. Mr Tassie was quite a traveller and he used to write back and send me photos of him in different parts of the world.

*Visits and inspections*

99. There were visitors to Fairbridge, but I never knew who they were. They may have been people who were interested in donating to the Society, but they certainly never came to see me. When they came we were virtually hidden from them and had no interaction with them.
100. I recall one time when we were skinny dipping in the river and a bus pulled up. A group of visitors, I don't know who they were, got out and saw us all swimming in the river there out of season. Later we were punished for this.
101. The Principal or Vice Principal only came round the cottages when there was trouble. I don't think they came round regularly and they certainly never spoke to the kids.
102. I was never aware of any inspections although I have since read some of the history of Fairbridge, which mention that some dignitaries did visit.

*Review of care/detention*

103. I'm not aware of there being any review of my being in care. There are the odd comments regarding my progress in my records, for example in a half yearly report of June 1959, but nothing regarding a review.

*Family*

104. Every Saturday night we all had to sit down and were made to write a letter to our families. Occasionally I got some things from home. In 1956 my gran sent me a book and my mother sent the odd letter and comic books.

*Emotional care/support*

105. There was no emotional care or support whatsoever. We were there with some Aboriginal kids and I recall somebody saying that at least they could run away home. We could never have done that.

*Running away*

106. I did run away once for a couple of nights. I think it was more an attempt to remove myself from a bad situation than a real attempt to get away. I'd had an argument with Mrs <sup>MIO</sup> the cottage mother, and as she was heading towards me to give me a beating with a length of hose pipe, I took off.
107. I slept for two nights in a haystack because I was too scared to go back. When I did eventually return I didn't get hit with the hosepipe and I thought to myself I should have stayed out longer.
108. Others ran away for lengthy periods of time. One lad was away up north for a couple of years. Sometimes the punishment for running away was a public thrashing from the Principal.

*Bedwetting*

109. Bedwetting was a problem with some boys, including me at one stage and that in itself was a pretty horrific experience.
110. We were punished for bedwetting by getting a slap around the head, or something similar. We then had to strip our beds in front of everybody, drag our mattresses out

onto the veranda to dry and then wash our sheets. We had to rinse them through in the cement trough sink in the laundry and hang them out. At night time we'd have to take the sheets in and make our beds.

*Discipline*

111. The older boys controlled the younger ones and one of the biggest problems was deciding who to make happy. I was always torn between whether to please the cottage mother or the eldest boys. Whichever one you upset would give you a hiding.

*Nature and frequency of abuse*

112. I participated in the Redress WA scheme, which was a scheme to provide redress to those who had been abused or neglected in the care of the State of Western Australia. I completed a statement, which contains more detail of the abuse I suffered at Fairbridge and it was submitted in [REDACTED] 2017. I have provided a copy of this statement to the Inquiry. I confirm that the facts stated in it are true.
113. The favourite punishment of Mrs <sup>MIO</sup>[REDACTED], my cottage mother, was to use a length of garden hosepipe. No matter what you did, out would come that hosepipe and she would hit you with it wherever she could reach. I was hit with it on the legs, the backside, the head, it didn't matter where. Quite often she would have a hold of my hair as I was struggling to get away from her hitting me.
114. This punishment wasn't restricted to our cottage. I've since spoken to some lads from other cottages and the hosepipe was a common implement used by their cottage mothers as well. Twice a week somebody would get a belting from Mrs <sup>MIO</sup>[REDACTED] with the hosepipe and that continued for the whole time she was there.
115. With me refusing to call Mrs <sup>MIO</sup>[REDACTED] 'Mother', she made comments such as my mother didn't want me and that was why I was sent there. She told other children that their parents were dead, only for them to find out in later life that they were in fact still alive.

116. When I was caught stealing while we were on the trip to Mandurah, the Principal, **MIP**, gave me a public thrashing in the dining room in front of the whole farm. I was made to bend over a table and hit across the backside with a cane.
117. I think the Principal before **MIP** **MIQ** used to do the same thing if kids had been caught after running away or for other transgressions. There would be an announcement made at the beginning of the evening meal that after dinner there would be public punishment. The offender would be called up and thrashed with the cane in front of everybody. That probably happened to me about three times.
118. In my cottage there was one particular older boy, **MIR** who was an aggressive and violent bully and persistent sexual abuser.
119. **MIR** abused both myself and a couple of the other kids physically and sexually over a period of at least a year. My redress statement contains more detail of that abuse. I was aware at the time that he was abusing the other boys in a similar way.
120. In addition to the sexual abuse, sometimes he would assault me while I was asleep because I had the habit of grinding my teeth. I would be sound asleep and **MIR** would come up and punch me in the face.
121. While I was at Fairbridge, **MIS** was given twenty four hours to leave. I don't know the reason why, although I have since heard stories that he had been sexually abusing both boys and girls. **MIS** was very popular with the children and I never had any problem with him at all. There was almost a riot amongst the kids when it was announced he had left because we weren't aware of the reason why.

*Reporting of abuse*

122. One of the things I wrote to my mother about was Mrs **MIO** hitting me with the hosepipe, but nothing came of that. I certainly had welts and bruises, but I don't recall ever going to the nursing sister because of them.



123. Perhaps around 1959 I ended up going to the nursing sister with some visible signs of having been beaten by <sup>MIR</sup> [REDACTED]. The house master came to see me and asked what had happened and I think that was the only time any of the staff had asked me about anything.
124. The house master was a retired lieutenant commander of the [REDACTED] Navy who was called <sup>MZC</sup> [REDACTED]. I can't remember his first name. Previously I had kept it all to myself, but this time, although I didn't go into detail, I told <sup>MZC</sup> [REDACTED] about both the physical beatings from <sup>MIR</sup> [REDACTED] and also about the sexual assaults.
125. I think as a result, <sup>MIR</sup> [REDACTED] was transferred out of the cottage, but to my knowledge nothing more was ever done about it. I was certainly not offered any help or counselling.
126. The managers of Fairbridge Pinjarra and Mrs <sup>MIO</sup> [REDACTED], my cottage mother, must have known of the influence of the older boys and the violence that they often inflicted. I believe Mrs <sup>MIO</sup> [REDACTED] must have been aware of at least some of the abuse <sup>MIR</sup> [REDACTED] in particular subjected me to. Certainly when I was woken up during the night with him punching me in my sleep, I made a considerable noise. She would have heard the noise, but I don't recall her ever coming into the room.
127. A lot of the abuse from <sup>MIR</sup> [REDACTED] happened either after dark or straight after dinner during bath time. The cottage mother would be tied up in the dining room and it could be a little while before she returned. She may not therefore have been aware of the sexual abuse.
128. Very rarely would I ever talk with any of the other kids about what <sup>MIR</sup> [REDACTED] was doing to me and them. It's not the sort of thing that boys or men discuss easily. I knew anyway that if he found out that I'd said anything to anybody I would be in for it.

#### **Life after the Fairbridge Farm School, Pinjarra, WA**

129. I left Fairbridge on the [REDACTED] 1961, when I was sixteen. I was only told that I wasn't going to go on to further education about a week before I left. Up to that time

I'd always had the dream of being a school teacher. When I was told that they had got me a job with a company in Perth I was just wiped out.

130. Initially I worked in the city at an engineering spare parts company as a clerk. I have paperwork in my records that says they had to send an urgent telegram to a family in Bayswater, in the suburbs of Perth, asking them to put me up. That was done about the day before I was due to leave.
131. I was taken to Bayswater to stay with this family that I didn't know. The train station was pointed out to me and I was told that's where I could get the train into Perth. Then I was taken to work, dumped there and told to find my way home afterwards.
132. I have no recollection of anyone from Fairbridge asking me how I was doing, although I did go back to Pinjarra on the odd occasion. **MIR** was out of the picture by then and I had no idea where he was. I did have friends there still though and sometimes I would go there on my pushbike for the weekend.
133. It was a pretty horrific time and unfortunately I didn't like the city and I couldn't settle down. After about two years I left that job as a clerk and went to work on a farm. While I was at the farm and until I was twenty-one years old, I had to send half of the money I earned back to Fairbridge.
134. Supposedly the money that had been saved over the years was all given to me when I turned twenty-one. When I calculate now how much I had been given by my godparents and how much I'd saved over my years at Fairbridge, the sums don't add up.
135. While I was working on the farm I met a girl and after four or five years I moved back to the city. At first I worked in a department store and then I worked for a wholesale company selling stationery equipment and office supplies.
136. I also got involved in running a karate club with another Fairbridge lad on a Saturday morning. By then I'd managed to effectively tuck all my bad experiences away in a box.



137. I got married when I was about twenty-three and we had two boys. The marriage broke down after about three years and their mother disappeared. At the time she left, one of my boys was nine months old and the other was twenty-two months old. I still had to hold down a full-time sales job because there was no government assistance at that time for a man with two children.
138. Life was quite tough, but a couple of friends from Fairbridge were there for me and they helped me out a lot. One or two people did raise whether I could get my two boys into care, but there was no way in the world I was going to do that after the way I'd grown up.
139. A friend of mine was working for one of the local councils and suggested I try for a job too. I managed to get a job with the Parks Department because of the experience I had in agriculture and my first job was as a greenkeeper. My plan had been that it would only be a stopgap, but I remained doing that for about nine years.
140. In the meantime I did some studying in horticulture and also in management and I eventually moved into the office as a field supervisor. I ended up spending the last thirty years of my working life with the council.
141. In time I met a lovely lass who worked for the Immigration Department in Perth and we married in 1996. We are both now retired.

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

142. I made some great and lifelong friends from Fairbridge and those friendships have certainly helped me over the years. There were some good times, it wasn't all bad. I am a member of an organisation for former residents, which is called the Old Fairbridgians Association. As much as anything we support one another.
143. I joined the Association in the late 1970's, early 80's and I am now on the committee. There were two groups of boys and girls, those who had been at Fairbridge before the

war and those who came after the war. Prior to the war, anybody that left Fairbridge was automatically introduced to the Association and made to join up. That changed after the war and when I left Fairbridge although I knew of the Association, I never knew what it was about or was interested in it.

144. I joined the Association after my marriage broke down and after I'd received support from the friends I had made at Fairbridge. After that, my main objective became to get the boys I had been with to come in as well. I used to organise get-togethers and spent time phoning round trying to trace "old boys". It grew so big that we actually had over a hundred "old boys", plus their partners and children, coming to different events.
145. Every week, we have new people from my era joining the Association. Unfortunately we're also regularly losing some of the older ones. The way we look at it is that we'll be the last members and once we're gone there will be no such organisation.
146. Our relationship with Fairbridge itself is very tenuous. They tolerate us and that is about it. They seem to forget that we are the history of the place and without us Fairbridge at Pinjarra wouldn't exist.

#### **Treatment/support**

147. I've never sought any professional support or counselling. The support, counsel and comfort I get is from other Fairbridge kids. It's always been my feeling that I didn't want to sit down and discuss it with anybody else. I have successfully compartmentalised what happened to me and to do so would just be bringing it all back out again.
148. Probably for the best part of fifty years I have put my past behind me. It's only in recent years that I have revisited what happened to me during the course of my participation in the different inquiries there have been.

149. Some things that happened to me at Fairbridge I've only discussed with my friend [REDACTED], nobody else. Even then I haven't told him everything, although he does know more intimately what the place was like because he was there.
150. I've never discussed anything with my wife or my two sons. If the subject of Fairbridge is ever raised all I respond with is that there were things that happened that shouldn't have. It's probably not the right thing to do, hiding my experiences from my wife, but I haven't felt comfortable discussing it. It's easier talking to strangers than it is talking to someone close. When I wrote my statement for the Child Migrant Trust (CMT) in Australia, it was just one on one with Ian Thwaites.

### **Records**

151. I understand that the records relating to Fairbridge had been held by the Child Welfare Department of WA and that they were all sent to the Battye Library. I recovered mine ten or fifteen years ago and found that they were mainly school and health reports. There is mention of my having an aftercare officer when I left Fairbridge, but very little else. I certainly have no recollection of seeing any aftercare officer.
152. Until recently, I had not tried to recover my records from the Fairbridge Society itself. I did get a file relating to my time in Fairbridge from the Prince's Trust in England about a month ago. I was supported in obtaining those records free of charge from the Prince's Trust, but there was no counselling offered by them.
153. I sat on it for a while and I have mixed feelings on it. The records paint a glossy picture that really wasn't so. If it is considered necessary, I am prepared to give the Inquiry a copy of the records I have.
154. The records I managed to obtain filled in a few gaps, but they also raised a few questions. It seemed to be the case that Fairbridge at Pinjarra would write every six months or so to the Fairbridge Society in London, who in turn would report to the RSSPCC. To me the records are very general and I wonder about the relevance and accuracy of some papers.

155. There is mention in the records of my step-father being rather unstable, having poor intelligence and having no interest in me. I certainly never grew up with that thought or feeling. They also say that my brother was of similar poor intelligence, however [REDACTED] eventually ended up managing a quarry near Aberdeen for some years. I wonder whether some of the comments were invented to suit the occasion.
156. There is also a letter dated [REDACTED] 1955 from the RSSPCC to W. B. Vaughan of the Fairbridge Society in London. The letter makes mention of my father's divorce action against my mother and includes a handwritten note at the bottom. It mentions my father not applying for custody and that he would have to prove to the satisfaction of the court that it was not in my interest to be sent out of Scotland.
157. There is also a report that was sent to the Principal of Fairbridge Pinjarra about my home circumstances and how I came to the attention of the RSSPCC. In Australia we had the Child Welfare Department, which would have been the equivalent of the RSSPCC. Children living with a divorced woman would have automatically come under their attention. Perhaps it had been the same in Scotland.
158. Most of the comments in my records are to the effect that I got on well with other kids, except for one period. This was the black time in my life. The cottage mother's reports and the school reports all indicate that I was going off the rails. Looking back as an adult I wonder how nobody picked this up and delved into it. There were things that happened during that time that would have been obvious to a blind man and yet nobody stopped to question what was going on.
159. The impression I get now from reading some of the papers in my records is that the letters I wrote to my mother were not sent directly home, but were sent through the RSSPCC. They were obviously vetted because I wrote about some of the things that had happened to me in those letters to my mother. There is no reference to that in any of the paperwork I received. It almost seems like Fairbridge was like a prison where all correspondence is vetted when it comes in or before it goes out.

160. I don't think I've got all the records that relate to me. There is absolutely no mention of any of the trauma I suffered and yet there should have been. I recall writing home about my refusal when I arrived to call the cottage mother "Mum". Later on, when the bullying and the abuse happened, I wrote home about that as well.
161. There is nothing in my records about that and there was no correspondence back from my mother about it either. There is also no mention in my records of the time I went to the nursing sister and told the house master about the physical and sexual assaults by MIR [REDACTED]

### **Family tracing**

162. The CMT got sums of money from the Australian and U.K. Governments for child migrants to go back and visit their families in the U.K. and I have been back twice.
163. I had lost touch with my family, more through my own fault after my first marriage broke up and unfortunately I never did meet my mother again. In the early 1980's I got a phone call out of the blue from my big brother [REDACTED]. He was letting me know that our mother had passed away and I made up my mind that I was going to save up and go back for a holiday.
164. I went back in the mid-80's and stayed with my brother. It turned out that we got on like a house on fire. I toured around a bit and met my two half-brothers and had a great time.
165. I also met my step-father and he told me he still had some of my letters that my mother had kept. He made no mention of there being anything in those letters about the abuse. I never asked him either.
166. I went back to the U.K. in 1996 with my second wife after we married. That trip had been funded by the Australian government, through the CMT, although I never claimed anything for my wife. She is from the U.K. and therefore we spent some time meeting her relatives, but we also met more of my own. Until quite recently I never knew

anything about my father, but the CMT had managed to trace some cousins on my father's side in Dundee and we went to visit them.

167. They were all quite a bit older than me and they made us most welcome. One of them remembered my brother and I as kids and they helped fill in some of the gaps. Even they don't know where my father ended up. They said that he would turn up every now and again, drink all the whisky in the house and then disappear. The CMT had been trying to help me find my father but they weren't able to get any lead.
168. My records say that my father abandoned my brother and I and didn't visit us, however contrary to that, my cousins told me that was not so. They told me that when my father returned on leave from the services he came with a great pile of toys, but my mother wouldn't let him in the door. It sounds, from what they said, that my father became a bit of a drifter after that and lost touch with us.
169. I keep in touch with [REDACTED] and I brought him out to Australia when my youngest son got married. He loved it out here. It's fortunate that we got on so well and we still Skype each other fairly regularly.

#### **Redress and Apology from WA State Premier**

170. I took part in the Redress WA Scheme and I was paid forty-five thousand dollars. To me the Redress WA scheme was the biggest insult. The scheme should have been about someone genuinely recognising things happened that shouldn't have, in a time when people should have been aware. I consider the apology offered by the WA State Premier, Colin Barnett, was a purely political gesture.
171. At first it was announced that redress would be up to the sum of eighty thousand dollars, but when it came time to pay out the State announced they couldn't afford that and it was reduced to forty-five thousand dollars. In addition, further conditions were added that had to be satisfied before any redress was granted.

172. Around that time, the State Premier's son was verbally abused and he was awarded twenty-eight thousand dollars. In comparison to that, to offer forty-five thousand dollars as redress was an insult after what happened to some of the kids at Fairbridge and Bindoon.
173. Then the State Premier stood up in Parliament and said that this all happened a long time ago and it was time these people got over it and moved on. After that announcement one of his ministers got drunk at a wedding, drove his car home and crashed into a number of other vehicles. The State Premier's response to that was that this man was under a lot of stress and should be given a break.
174. I feel that the National Redress Scheme lacks genuine intentions and it has left a bad taste. It keeps getting postponed, decisions are not made and in the meantime people who suffered are dying.
175. I have not decided whether I will participate in the Australian National Redress Scheme. I'm unsure whether I want to go through it all again and get the knife turned once more.

#### **Apology by Australian and U.K. Governments**

176. I don't feel an apology from government changes anything. I would be very sceptical that any such apology was genuine.
177. About two weeks ago I received a letter giving me notice that the current Prime Minister of Australia is going to give an apology in Canberra. The letter invited me to apply to go in a ballot to be invited across to hear the apology. This too is just insulting.

#### **Ross Fact-Finding Mission 1956**

178. There has never been an apology from Fairbridge, despite them knowing before I even arrived that things were happening. In 1930 there was a report into what was



happening at Fairbridge and after that there was a fact-finding mission on behalf of the British Government, led by a Mr L. J. Ross.

179. The Ross Report issued a blacklist on which Fairbridge Pinjarra was number nine. My friend [REDACTED] has a copy of that blacklist.
180. I am led to believe that this blacklist was buried, but even if it was, they were aware what was happening and they weren't doing anything to make sure it didn't happen again. They allowed it all to continue.

### **Robert Excell**

181. Robert Excell was an atrocious and notorious paedophile who had been a boy at Fairbridge Pinjarra before me. He was eventually deported back to Britain for his crimes and has passed away now.
182. I made mention of Robert Excell in my redress statement in order to show that there had been other incidents and that it is impossible to believe that no adults at Fairbridge perceived the risk posed by [REDACTED] to other children. Fairbridge knew this sort of abuse had happened in the past and they should have been more vigilant.

### **Nationality and Citizenship**

183. I consider myself Australian because all my formative years were spent here, but I feel great loyalty to Scotland. I do feel however that I don't have a true peg to hang my jacket on.
184. I am a naturalised Australian citizen and had always been under the impression that that right was automatic. What I have since found out is that the rules were changed in 1949, after which you actually had to apply. Someone may be a resident, but that didn't mean they were an Australian citizen.

185. I'm aware that some former Fairbridge kids went back to the U.K. and stayed more than three years and weren't allowed back into Australia because they hadn't become naturalised.
186. I became naturalised in 1996 when I got married. My wife pointed out the facts and the disadvantages of not doing so to me and so I applied and paid the required fee.
187. I now have an Australian passport and receive an Australian pension. Similarly, I can access any social welfare benefits, should I so require.


### **Impact**

188. I don't know whether I blamed the abuse for not achieving my ambition to be a teacher, but I was so angry when I left Fairbridge I wanted revenge. I felt such aggression that while I was still sixteen I developed a plan for doing harm to MIR I know for certain that had the opportunity arisen I would have gone through with it.
189. Not long after I'd left, somebody obtained some guns and by accident I shot another guy. Fortunately enough the guy was not seriously injured and it was all dealt with by the Police. There is reference in my records to the incident. I was put on probation and had to report regularly to the Child Welfare Department. I took up martial arts after that, which helped me deal with the aggression.
190. We were never taught social etiquette at Fairbridge and received virtually no education in social skills. We were never told what was correct. We were always the outsiders from Fairbridge, looked on as second class people. Even today I feel awkward hugging or kissing other people. To me, kissing somebody has sexual connotations.
191. About twenty years ago I had to get my right eardrum replaced. Whether that was as a consequence of the perforated eardrums I had six months after I arrived at Fairbridge, I couldn't say. One of the causes of perforated eardrums is being slapped and I certainly never had a problem when I left Scotland.

- 192. I do believe that my experiences made me rebellious and in some ways made me not go for the goals I perhaps should have. The education we had was such that I grew up without a great deal of confidence in myself. For a time I would stay in the background and be the quieter member of a group.
- 193. I regret not being there when my grandmother died or when my mother died. I had been up at granny's a lot and had spent a lot of time with her.
- 194. We all have to walk our own roads. We're all different and we all handle things differently. I could never tell anybody else what to do or how to cope with their trauma. I've always been one who has kept things bottled up. That's possibly not the right thing to do, but it's what I've done to cope with the memories of the abuse and that's what I've tended to do throughout my life.

**Lessons to be learned**

- 195. I understand that it's possible that if you take a cross-section of society the same percentages of abuse being committed will apply. Being aware and putting safeguards in place to ensure it doesn't happen is what is required.
- 196. World history shows that abuse such as I suffered is going to happen. Trained experts need to work out how to speak to children and how to get information from them. Children will often be reluctant to talk for fear of reprisals from their abusers. It's not easy for children to make the first move and to speak up.
- 197. 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.....22.03.19.....