

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

MZW
[REDACTED]

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is MZW [REDACTED] and I am known as MZW [REDACTED]. My surname when I was born was family name [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1943 and I am presently seventy-six years old. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born at the Western General Hospital in Edinburgh. My mother was [REDACTED] or [REDACTED], but I don't know who my father was. As an adult I got a copy of my birth certificate, which says that she was the widow of [REDACTED] and that she lived at [REDACTED] Edinburgh.
3. I have three older sisters who are [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and MDK [REDACTED] and an older brother MEF [REDACTED] MDK [REDACTED] and MEF [REDACTED] were all sent out to Australia as child migrants before me. [REDACTED] stayed in the UK and moved to England, but she's dead now. Mother had one more child after me, a girl called [REDACTED] who was born in [REDACTED] 1947. She was adopted out and I've never met her.
4. I only have vague memories of my childhood before I went into care, one being when I was sitting in an armchair with my grandad, but that's all. I've since learned that apparently a bottle of polish or something exploded while I was sitting there and I got a burn on my leg.

5. My mum's brothers all lived in my grandparents' house too and apparently they were cleaning the brass buttons of their army uniforms and they left the cleaner near the fire. It exploded and burned my left leg. Mum later told me that when she looked at my leg, she tried to pull off what she thought was my nylon sock, but it was actually my skin and she ripped it right off.
6. My sister who stayed in the UK, [REDACTED] later told me that we were all evacuated to Inverness near the end of the war. When we came back to Edinburgh, all the children whose parents weren't at the railway station were transported to the orphanages. Mum wasn't there to meet us so that's where all of us except [REDACTED] went. [REDACTED] was fifteen and said she didn't want to go to the orphanage so she went down to England to get a job instead.
7. I have been shown a document that was provided to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry by the Good Shepherd Sisters, which shows me as MZW [REDACTED], born on [REDACTED] 1943 at Aberdeen and that I was admitted to the Good Shepherd Convent at Colinton in Edinburgh on [REDACTED] 1947. That document also records me as going to Australia on [REDACTED] 1949.
8. Apart from the fact that I was born in Edinburgh and not Aberdeen, I don't believe the dates in that document are correct. It was my belief that I went into the Good Shepherd in 1945 when I was about three. I also know that I went to Australia when I was five.

Life in care - Scotland

Woodfield Children's Home (Good Shepherd Convent), Colinton, Edinburgh

9. All I really remember about the Good Shepherd is walking around doing nothing because I had nobody to play with. There was nobody else my age and all the other kids were in school. I never went to school because I was too young. It seemed like I was the only person there sometimes and I don't even remember seeing my sisters MDK [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] while I was there.

10. I remember seeing my mother a couple of times when she came to visit, but I don't know if we did anything when she did. I don't remember much else at all. I can't even remember the Sisters who looked after us or what they were like.

Migration

Selection/information

11. I don't remember who spoke to me about going to Australia or what was said. I was only five years old.

Migration papers

12. I have provided the Inquiry with a copy of my migration form, which has been signed by my mother.
13. There is also a form on the back that records that I am healthy and bright and there is a reference to the injury I got from when I was burnt by the can of polish exploding. I don't remember going to see a doctor for any health checks or getting any vaccinations.

Leaving Scotland

14. I have since learned that MDK, [REDACTED] and MEF all went out to Australia before me. I have no recollection of leaving or if my mother or anyone else was there to see me off.
15. I know I had a case with me when I left because I have since managed to get some photographs, but I don't know what was in it.

Journey on RMS Mooltan

16. I have no memory of getting on the ship, which I've since found out was called the Mooltan. I only have vague memories of walking around the ship during the journey.

I can't remember anything at all about who looked after me or if there were other children being migrated with me.

Arrival in Australia

17. The Mooltan arrived in Fremantle, Western Australia (WA) on [REDACTED] 1949, just before I turned six years of age.
18. I have been shown a copy of the ship's manifest by the Inquiry , but I'm not listed on it. That just shows how inaccurate the records are, because I later obtained other records which confirm I was on the Mooltan. To me this just shows how the authorities didn't care. I have provided a copy of these other records to the Inquiry.
19. I learned later that I was supposed to have been going to Adelaide, however my sister [REDACTED] stopped it. I found out that our mother wrote to [REDACTED] and told her that I was coming out to Australia and [REDACTED] made a big fuss when she was told by the nuns that I was going to Adelaide. Apparently [REDACTED] said that she was going to go to the newspapers if I didn't go to St Joseph's at Subiaco, WA, where she and [REDACTED] MDK were.
20. Although I didn't know it at the time, I have found out that before the Mooltan docked at Fremantle, it stopped at Woodman Point, which is a headland a little to the south of where the Immigration Department was. There had been an outbreak of smallpox on the ship and anybody that was getting off in WA had to stay at Woodman Point until it was clear.
21. I think it was mostly men who got off there as well as the four or five kids who were all going to St Joseph's. One was a little boy called [REDACTED], who was the same age as me and there was [REDACTED] who was about the same age as my sister [REDACTED] MDK. There was also [REDACTED] who was a lot older and who went to Tardun. I don't know about the others, but [REDACTED] was also Scottish. I have a photograph of everyone that was kept at Woodman Point.
22. I have since obtained a copy of a letter that says I had spots on my forehead and arms and that they thought I had smallpox. Another girl called [REDACTED], who was with

her family and going to Sydney, had 'Grade 1' smallpox and they thought I might have had it too. We were all put in a single big room at Woodman Point and I went into quarantine with [REDACTED] and a few others.

23. I have a photograph of me which was taken by one of the newspapers just as I was about to be moved to the quarantine centre at Woodman Point. There is a man in uniform in the photo who is the quarantine master about to take us in. I have provided a copy of this photo to the Inquiry.
24. I was kept at Woodman Point for seventeen days and I was there over my sixth birthday. I have since found out from an article in the Daily News newspaper that I was cleared to leave Woodman Point on [REDACTED] 1949. All I remember of my time there was that a doctor and a nurse used to put stuff on my face that used to sting.
25. I don't remember leaving Woodman Point or who I might have been picked up by. All I do know is that when I left I went to St Joseph's Orphanage at Subiaco, where my sisters [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] MDK were.

Life in care – Australia

St Joseph's Orphanage, Subiaco, WA

General

26. I know that St Joseph's was run by the Sisters of Mercy. The Mother Superior was LYB [REDACTED] who was an old, fat woman and all the other staff were nuns as well. Some of the older girls worked in the kitchen, but they were never in charge of the kids.
27. I think there would have been a couple of hundred children at St Joseph's and the nuns called us all by our first names. All the older ones were girls, but there were some young boys in a foundling home and kindergarten as well. There were also some elderly people who stayed upstairs and had their own balcony.

Routine at St Joseph's Orphanage*First day*

28. I don't remember my first day, but I have since been told that the nuns introduced me to my sisters. I don't remember that or how we were introduced.

Mornings and bedtime

29. The dormitories were upstairs, one for the older children and another for the little ones and beside all the beds was a little locker. Because I had just turned six I went into the dormitory with the older girls. If I had still been five I would have gone to the foundling dormitory.
30. About six o'clock in the morning a bell was rung for us to get up and we'd have to jump out of bed, put our church clothes on and make our beds. We would have to help any little ones and then we'd kneel at the side of our beds and say prayers. After that we'd go and clean our teeth with soap and use the toilet before we headed to church.
31. Once we came back from church we'd have to change into our day clothes and then go in single file down to breakfast. Once we were all in the dining room, we'd say Grace before we sat down and ate. We'd have to keep quiet while we ate and then after we'd finished we had to say Grace again.
32. After breakfast we'd have to go and do jobs until a bell rung for us to go to school. We'd all line up and head off to school where we would say prayers again before we sat down and did our schoolwork.
33. At bedtime we'd all have to go upstairs, kneel down and pray at the side of our beds and then we'd clean our teeth, put our pyjamas on and go to bed.

Bedwetting

34. Any girl who wet her bed was put out on the balcony, which was on the way to the toilets, to sleep. Whichever girl was the worst had to sleep right next to the toilet. There were no curtains on the balcony, just louveres.
35. I don't know what happened to girls who had wet their bed, although other girls used to talk about them. I never wet the bed so I'm not sure what might have happened.

Washing and bathing/Hygiene

36. There was a bathroom downstairs on the ground floor and we all had a bath every night. We would wash our hair with soap and then the nuns would come round all the sinks and put cloudy ammonia in the water to stop nits. I used to pull the plug out slightly so that the water would drain away because I didn't want cloudy ammonia in my hair. It was very strong stuff and the smell of it went right up your nose.
37. If the nuns saw you scratching your head at all they'd send you up to their quarters and put olive oil, which they used to make at the orphanage, on your hair and then cover your head with the top part of their stockings. They'd tie the stocking in a knot and you had to walk around like that for a couple of days to get rid of the nits. They reckoned that the nits wouldn't be able to move around and the mix of olive oil and your sweat would kill the nits.
38. You always knew when somebody had nits because you would see them with a stocking tied on their heads. That happened to me and it was terrible.

Mealtimes

39. Eight girls sat at each table and as the food was being served, we had to hand up our plates and the food would be slopped on. We could always work out what we were going to get, it changed every day, but it was the same each day of the week.

40. On Monday we would get red Saveloy sausages and would take the skins off to give to the dog that belonged to the orphanage. The dog always used to come into the dining room although the nuns would try and boot him out. He liked the skins and he'd eat anything else we didn't like that we were able to slip to him as well.
41. There were slugs in the cabbages and the potatoes were never mashed properly. They all just got thrown in a big pot, with their skins still on, cooked and mashed, but there were always lumps.
42. There was never a sweet or water or coffee. At night time we would get tea that tasted terrible because it had been the nuns' tea from the day before. They would empty their teapots in a big urn, fill it with water from the hot water tap and that's what we used to get. I don't drink tea anymore.
43. I didn't know any better, I had come from one orphanage to another. I remember there was one girl who was very thin and she hated the food. The nuns would make her sit there at the table until she finished her food, while all the other girls had gone back to school.

Clothing

44. We all had to wear horrible uniforms, which weren't very elegant. Most of the time we never wore shoes, only when we went to church, or when somebody important came from the Child Welfare Department.
45. We always had to wear a special dress to church and when we came out of church we had to change into our day clothes when we got back to our dormitories.
46. There was a big laundry at St Joseph's and once a week we had to change our clothes, which all went down to the laundry.

Schooling

47. I wasn't very intelligent at school, but I can remember learning the times tables and writing. All the schooling was done by the nuns and they taught from grade one up to grade seven. Some of the nuns were alright, but some were cruel.
48. By the time I got to seventh grade, manual typewriters were in and I was taught how to type. Everybody got a sheet of poetry to type up and that's how they taught us. I was put in a room on my own because I think I was a little bit older than the others. I just sat there for about a year doing all this shorthand typing and I did that until it was time for me to leave St Joseph's when I reached sixteen or seventeen.
49. We were never taught any life skills or anything to equip us for adult life for when we left the orphanage.

Leisure time

50. There was some leisure time after school when we could play in the park where there were some swings, a roundabout and a seesaw. That was it, we made our own fun. There were no toys or books.

Healthcare

51. I have a burn scar on my leg from the tin of polish exploding when I was a small child at home. While I was at the orphanage it used to break out in sores every year. I was supposed to have had a skin graft when I came out to Australia, but I never did get one.
52. The nuns did try and treat it and they would wash and clean it, but all they did was make the burn bigger and it never healed. I remember one year it wasn't healing and a doctor was called to the orphanage and told me I had to get the sun on it. I was kept off school and put on a bed on the balcony.
53. I went to the Royal Perth Hospital, but they said they couldn't operate on my leg because the skin was so thin. All the sores that I had been getting had been damaging the leg even more. They gave me some treatment, including some sort of black paint

to put on the burn. I was supposed to put it on my leg after I was discharged, but I didn't want to walk around with black paint on my leg, so I didn't use it. I knew I wasn't doing the right thing.

54. The only time I saw a doctor was when a Dr Barker used to come and see me for my leg. I don't remember a dentist ever coming to the orphanage.

Religious instruction

55. Religious instruction was full on. When we got up every morning with the bell we had to say prayers. When we went for a meal we had to say prayers before we sat down and again after we'd eaten. At school, before we sat down for class in the morning, we said more prayers.
56. We went to church for the Rosary every morning and Benediction in the evening and we said the Stations of the Cross every day. We were in church every Sunday and on the first Sunday of every month we had to go into church every hour and pray.
57. We had to learn the catechism, a holy book, back to front and the priest would ask us questions on it at school. He would just pick out anybody in the class and see what they knew. The majority of us would know the answers anyway, because we had spent so long memorising it.

Work

58. Everybody was given chores to do such as sweeping the wooden floors upstairs and then waxing and polishing them on our hands and knees. We also had to clean the bathrooms and the basins and when I got a little bit older I worked in the kitchen helping the cook and in the laundry.
59. Every Monday the older girls, including me when I was about thirteen or fourteen, used to spend the whole day in the laundry. We never went to school on a Monday because the clothing from all the nuns in the surrounding area used to come to the orphanage

and we'd have to launder it. As well as their clothing, we'd have all the sheets and pillowcases to wash and hang out on the line.

60. There were more chores to do after school. We had to go up to the dormitories and take all the quilts off the beds, fold them up and make our beds ready for night.
61. For all the work we did, we never got any payment or pocket money or any treats. I didn't know what money or lollies were.

Christmas and Birthdays

62. Birthdays were never celebrated and Christmas wasn't much either. One year we got clothes for Christmas, but they were gone when we came back from church. If you got a toy for Christmas it was gone by the time you woke up in the morning.
63. Another year we were all given a toothbrush and a little round tin of toothpaste for Christmas. It was a big thing to get toothpaste, but after I put mine in the locker beside my bed it disappeared.

Visitors

64. After I was sent out to Australia, in 1953 my mum emigrated as well and she came to visit me a couple of times. My brother ^{MEF} came to visit a couple of times as well, after he left the orphanage he had been put in. When ^{MEF} came I just used to sit there because I didn't know what to say to him. I didn't know him and I didn't know what to talk about because I had never had any communication with him.
65. If any visitors came from the Child Welfare Department the nuns made us change out of our day clothes and into our special dresses, so that we looked nice and neat and tidy. I'm not sure whether they came once a year or twice a year, but they never spoke to any of us children without the nuns being there anyway. You wouldn't want to say too much with the nuns being there because of the consequences if you did.

Family

66. There is a five year age gap between MDK and I and we were lucky if we saw each other once a week because the nuns kept the different age groups apart.
67. I used to write to Mum after she moved out to Australia. I never did before because I was too young. My brother MEF was a sheep shearer so I never wrote to him, but I wrote to MDK as well once they left the orphanage.

Trips and holidays

68. On one special Sunday a month we were allowed to go and visit our relatives if we had any. I would go and see my mum on those Sundays and the nuns would give me money to catch the train. When I was about twelve, once MDK and MDK left the orphanage, I used to go and see them as well if I was allowed out. I was also allowed to go to MDK wedding one day.

Emotional care/support

69. You relied mostly on other girls for any emotional support, rather than the nuns. We all had our little groups of friends and would turn to each other.
70. I would hear other girls talk about having their periods, but the nuns never told us anything about them. It was a shock when my periods started and I didn't know who I could ask or turn to. I think I told one of the other girls and one of the nuns got me something to use.

Discipline

71. Although the nuns weren't all cruel, they were all cold and uncaring. None of them ever showed any affection towards us and I never saw a nun put her arm around anybody. The cruel ones whose names I remember are LYB who was the Mother Superior, Sister MDS and Sister MEI who was horrible, she was shocking.

72. LYB [REDACTED] had a big cane and would use it to belt us when she wanted to discipline us. The number of times we would get disciplined like that depended whether we had been caught doing something wrong. If you pinched something or swore, even if you said the word 'bloody', you would get whacked. It wasn't just me, I saw other girls getting punished like that too.
73. If you did something wrong in class, the whole class heard about it. They made you feel horrible in front of the whole class, most of whom were your friends. They would think that you were getting told off because you couldn't keep up with something and you would feel like you were going to lose your friends. It was never one-on-one, the whole school always heard about it.
74. I got it one night in the dormitory in front of everybody. I had to put my hand out and one of the nuns whacked me with her cane. My thumbs were really swollen and sore, so much so that I wasn't able to write the next day. I never received any medical attention either that time or any other time I was punished.
75. Another nun had a strap that she used to hit girls' hands with as well. It was always our hands they hit, nowhere else, although they did pull our ears sometimes.

Abuse at St Joseph's Orphanage

76. I participated in the WA Redress Scheme and detailed the abuse I suffered at St Joseph's in my application. I described the beatings I received from the nuns and the beatings that I saw others being given. I also describe the sexual abuse I was subjected to by my mum's partner. She took up with him after she moved to Australia and he abused me when I went to visit on a Sunday while I was still living at St Joseph's.
77. I have provided a copy of my application for redress to the Inquiry and I can confirm that it is a true and accurate account of my experiences.

Reporting of abuse at St Joseph's Orphanage

78. I could never have told the police or anybody else about the either the physical or the sexual abuse I suffered. I was too scared. My mother's partner had told me not to tell anybody or he would leave my mum.

Leaving St Joseph's Orphanage

79. I was sixteen or seventeen when I left St Joseph's. The nuns got me a job working in a bakery and at first I used to have to travel from St Joseph's to the bakery, which was in south Perth. I had to get a bus from St Joseph's into central Perth and then catch another bus to take me to south Perth. I did that for about a year until they found me somewhere to live that was closer to the bakery.
80. While I was working at the bakery and still living at St Joseph's I had to hand over all my wages to the nuns. I wasn't allowed to keep any money so every morning I had to wait for one of the nuns to walk along the verandah and give me money to catch the bus.
81. The job itself was admin work and consisted of writing down what bread and rolls the bakers had dropped at people's homes and making a bill out for each customer at the end of the week.

Life after care

82. I stayed in the lodgings the nuns got me near the bakery for a couple of years and carried on working there until I decided I wanted to do something else. I got another job in an office and I did that until I got married in September 1965, when I had just turned twenty-two. That was my first marriage and we had two girls together.
83. In all that time after I left the orphanage I never heard from the nuns or the Child Welfare department again. There was no help or support from them at all.

84. I didn't see my brother MEF for some time, although we have since been in contact. I think he went into the Bush and then ended up in New South Wales. I still keep in touch with my sisters and MDK and we are all close. I was godmother to MDK first child.

Treatment/support

85. I have never reported or spoken about what happened to me to anyone other than Dr Philippa White of Tuart Place, who helped me fill out my Redress WA application. Other than speaking to her, I have never had any other counselling or support.
86. I find Tuart Place to be very good. MDK and I regularly come down to different things including craftwork on a Thursday. I love it.
87. I think I would find some extra form of support useful. Sometimes you really need to talk and I think some kind of counselling would be good.

Records and family tracing

88. I got a lot of my records from the National Archives office at Victoria Park in Perth, including a copy of a document of identity from 1949, just before I sailed to Australia. I also have copies of a letter from the Catholic Migration Office to the Director of Migration about me going to St Joseph's instead of Adelaide and saying that my name wasn't on the list.
89. Another letter mentions the spots that I had on my arms and forehead when I arrived in Australia and that I was put into quarantine with the girl who had the Grade 1 smallpox. Years later I met up with and I have a copy of a story that was in one of the newspapers, the Daily News, about it.
90. I now have copies of both my birth certificate and an extract that I got from the Child Welfare department. I think the nuns must have had my birth certificate and they gave it to them. Child Welfare also gave me a copy of my baptism certificate and some

health records, which mention my going into the Royal Perth Hospital for treatment to the burn on my leg when I was fourteen.

91. I stayed in contact with my mother in Australia until she died in 1963 when she was fifty-three years old. I never knew I had another sister in the UK until Margaret Humphreys of the Child Migrants Trust (CMT) found [REDACTED] the mid-1980s.
92. We made contact and stayed in touch and in 1997, my husband and I went over to meet [REDACTED] where she lived in England. It was very emotional seeing her, her husband and her two daughters. We stayed in touch, but she died in 2001.
93. My husband and I went back a couple of times after that, when we went to [REDACTED] funeral in England and another time as well. We also went up to Scotland and met some of my extended family there. It was lovely meeting them and we are still in contact.
94. We paid for our first trip over ourselves, but the other two were paid for through the CMT by the Family Restoration Fund.
95. I've tried to find my younger sister [REDACTED] who was adopted out, but I can't. Scottish laws don't allow any information of adopted children to be given out.

Apologies/other matters for relating to migration

96. I have never received an apology from the Sisters of Mercy or any other person regarding my migration to Australia as a child or the abuse that I suffered.
97. As a result of my participating in the Redress WA scheme I received a payment of forty-five thousand Australian Dollars. I have not been involved in any other Inquiries or Commissions. To me my time in care has been one of things that I didn't want to drag up all over again.

Nationality

98. I'm not sure when, sometime in the early 1990s, my sister MDK told me she wanted to become an Australian, so we both applied for citizenship together. We had to pay eighty-five dollars for it, although I didn't see why we should have had to. I hold an Australian passport, but I consider myself a Scot.
99. I now receive an Australian pension and I am able to access different welfare benefits if I was ever to require them.

Impact

100. I detail in my Redress WA application the impact my time in the orphanages and the abuse I have suffered has had on me. I have not had a very happy time.
101. The burn on my left leg was never treated properly while I was in the orphanages and I've continued to have problems with my leg since

Final thoughts

102. I don't know what response there should be to all the child migrants. I'm glad that there is now an Inquiry and that somebody is at last helping us.
103. I hope that giving evidence to the Inquiry helps make sure that children in care today are safer.
104. 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.

MZW

Signed.....

Dated..... 15th August 2019

