

**Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

Witness Statement of

**James Albert McGregor**

Support person present: No

1. My name is James Albert McGregor, although I am known as Bert. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1941 and I am presently 76 years of age. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

*A fearful* **General** *unble* [REDACTED] *drove me in*  
*cabin of his truck.*

2. I was about four months old when I was first placed in care at Nazareth House in Aberdeen. I've since found out that my Grandma [REDACTED], my mother's mother, insisted. My mother was a war teenager.
3. When I was five years old I was sent from there to Australia as a child migrant. I remained in congregate care in Australia and was sent to St Joseph's Orphanage at Subiaco first. Eventually, as I got older, I was moved to Castledare Boys Home and then to Clontarf Boys Town. After Clontarf I went to Strathfield College in Sydney, where I studied to eventually become a teacher and a Christian Brother.

### Life before going into care

4. My mother was called [REDACTED] and she was the only daughter of Grandma [REDACTED]. Mum had four brothers and they all lived in Grandma [REDACTED] mansion in Virginia Street, Aberdeen. I was later told that Mum got pregnant with me by a man called [REDACTED]. I don't know where that information came from and I don't know if it's true.
5. I also found out later that I have several younger siblings. The oldest of them is my brother [REDACTED] who's still in Aberdeen. He's retired now and has heart trouble. Then there's another brother [REDACTED] and then my mother got married and had three daughters, who are [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] ruled the roost and protected Mum from me.  
*Why? A family pathology about men??*
6. Mother by this time had settled down in Aberdeen. She worshipped her three daughters and I developed the theory that she didn't like the boys.
7. Grandma [REDACTED] was a pillar of the church in Aberdeen and she told my mother she had to give me to the Sisters of Nazareth in Aberdeen.

### Life in care - Scotland

#### Nazareth House, Aberdeen

8. I have been shown a document which contains information regarding my entry into Nazareth House in Aberdeen on 9 March 1942. I am recorded as James Albert McGregor, born in Aberdeen on [REDACTED] 1941. It details my mother's name and that my father is 'not recorded'. I had thought my dad's name might have been recorded.

9. My mother's occupation is down as "V.A.D. nurse", which I believe stands for "Voluntary Aid Detachment". I didn't know that my mother had worked as a nurse during the war.
10. There is a section entitled "observations", which describes my mother as living and Catholic. She wasn't Catholic, she was what I would call a 'convenient Christian' and went to whichever church was closest. Eventually she ended up going to a Presbyterian church because it was nearest to where she lived.
11. I know now that my Uncle [REDACTED] drove me to Nazareth House in Aberdeen in the cabin of his truck. He told me that when I met him in later years. He said that he was furious and had been crying his eyes out. He told me he could never understand it and hardly visited my mum again.
12. I remember very little about Nazareth House in Aberdeen. I can't even remember the building, any of the nuns, the routine or any of the other children.
13. The only memories I really have are of snow in the driveway and the Boys' Brigade. <sup>from</sup> I think I may have been a member of the Boys' Brigade, although I <sup>don't</sup> know what that was all about. I just remember the Boys' Brigade was something important.
14. It was never an issue to me whether I had family or not, it never entered my mind to ask. I was in that situation and that was it.
15. It surprises me that I have so little memory of my life up to the age of five or six. I think I may have blanked everything out.

## Migration

### *Selection/information*

16. A group of boys went with me to Australia from Nazareth House in Aberdeen. These boys later told me that we were lined up and asked by a Father Stinson "who wants to go to Australia?" If you wanted to go you had to take a step forward. I was probably down the end of the line and saw other boys step forward so I did too. That was my rational consent.
17. I still have rings on my arms from all the inoculations I got before going to Australia. I don't remember getting them, but I think all the boys did. I don't think it was done in Scotland, I think we got them wherever it was that we sailed from.

*Leaving Scotland and journey to Australia*

18. I was five years old when I left Scotland and would have turned six just before we arrived in Fremantle, Western Australia (WA). I don't remember anything about leaving Aberdeen or the journey to the ship. All I do remember is that I was dressed in a kilt.
19. The others boys that went with me included two boys called [REDACTED], who were about twelve or thirteen, [REDACTED] MDL [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] as he was known. [Others I remember are [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. There were also boys from Northern Ireland, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] All in congregate care.
20. There must have been about fifty of us on that boat in total, fifteen from Scotland. I think our chaperones were some nuns and also Father Stinson, it's certainly his name that stays in my mind.
21. All I can really remember of the journey is that I would get lost on the ship all of the time. I've later been told there was a party held for us when we arrived in Fremantle.
22. I had a photo of the fifteen boys from Scotland, but Margaret Humphreys of the Child Migrants Trust (CMT) now has it. It's taken on our ship, the RMS Ormonde, and we are all standing next to a set of stairs. There are also some girls in the photo who ended up going to St Joseph's, Subiaco.



*Passenger List*

23. I have been shown the passenger list for the Ormonde, which is in the Australian National Archives. It has details of everyone on board when it docked at Fremantle on 7 November 1947 after sailing from London. I see that I am listed as 'A. McGregor', which is interesting. They had already changed my name to Albert

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I was known as Albert from that time on and was never again known as James.

24. I have also been shown a copy of a file about this sailing from the National Archives of Australia, which groups the children together. It correctly records that I was sent to St Joseph's in Subiaco when I arrived.

25. This division of all the boys was based on size and age. I had been very close to some of the boys, like the [REDACTED] and I never saw them again. I was very much non-verbal at that time, which is probably why they sent me to St Joseph's, Subiaco.

*The great abuse was this scheme of sending us from family, home and nation under the extra abuse "the lie that we were war orphans."*

**Life in care - Australia**

**St Joseph's Orphanage, Subiaco**

26. I don't remember much about St Joseph's, Subiaco, except that it was a massive building and there was a swimming pool. It was run by two orders of nuns, the Sisters of Nazareth and the Josephites. A few of the other Scottish child migrants were also there, including MDL [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. There were also some of the English boys that had been on the ship with me. Boys and girls were together, although we boys were kept away from the older girls.
27. I was moved to Castledare Boys Home when I was about eight and I think I was there for about three years.

## Castledare Boys Home

### *General*

28. The Christian Brothers ran Castledare. Initially Brother Hugh Crowley, who looked very old, was in charge and then Brother Thomas McGhee took over. The other Brothers included Brother MDI Brother Lambert Wyse, Brother MDF Brother MDG and Brother Hanratty. Some of the Brothers just came for a year. It was a completely male-dominated society.
29. Castledare was out in the country in a beautiful location. There were two driveways, the main drive and another that led to the Matron's house and the staff house for the lay staff, like the cook.
30. There weren't many lay staff, but there are some that I remember in particular. Jim Fox was a wonderful man, a typical silent Australian farmer who looked after the cows, did the mowing and looked after the veggie garden. There was also Mrs Sadler, who was the piano player and who took us for choir practice. Mrs Taylor took over from her later on.
31. The monks called all the boys by their surnames and we did the same with each other. We were all given numbers as well. My number at Castledare was two, then number eleven when I was moved to Clontarf Boys Town and number sixty-two by the time I <sup>left for</sup> graduated from Strathfield College. We knew our numbers better than our names because we had to queue for everything and had to do so depending on what number we were. I hated number two because it meant I had to be on time for everything.
32. No boy would ever forget their numbers. Your number was your survival, although we were never called by our number. If you wanted your laundry or if you wanted to go to the movie on a Saturday night, you had to line up according to your number

and be checked off. That's how the monks knew we were all present and accounted for.

### *Mornings and bedtime*

33. Every day was the same. We'd get up, get dressed and make the bed. All the beds had to be made exactly right. Early on I was co-opted to do altar serving and so would do the sacristy and serve the early Mass. It used to be terribly cold early in the morning, *bare footed dressed in only shirt & shorts,*
34. After we made our beds we had to sweep and polish the floors with real wax and heavy weights with blankets wrapped round them to shine the floors up. We'd slide on them up and down the never-ending rows of beds in the dormitories in which we slept. After that we'd have breakfast and after that there was more work to do, every day. *The jobs were called "charges".*
35. The dormitories were massive rooms with four rows of beds across and ten beds in each row. There were also sunken cubicles with one bed in them. I never scored one of those. A Brother would sleep in a room at the end of the dormitory.
36. At night we were in bed very early, straight after tea. There were speakers in the dormitory and the Brothers would play scary mystery stories over the speakers to us. *& classical music*

^

### *Bedwetting*

37. Some boys had terrible problems with bedwetting, especially when we were younger. It was very common. I was fortunate to never be in that situation. The Brothers dealt with it by segregating those boys into separate dorms, giving them a cold shower and then having them take their sheets down to the laundry.
38. There was a dreadful smell in the morning, but we just sort of accepted it. We never teased, it was just a fact of life and we felt sorry for them. We didn't know it, but a lot of us were traumatised kids. Among ourselves, we were very considerate of each other.

*Mealtimes*

39. All meals were served in the dining hall, which had long tables with twenty or thirty boys around them. I don't remember much about the food.
40. I do remember the lumpy porridge at breakfast. They couldn't stir it properly and it was invariably cold by the time you got served. There was no toast, only bread and jam and cold tea. Lunch was sandwiches.
41. When we finished school we had "piece time", which meant we got a piece of bread and jam or honey that had gone hard. We ate that underneath a tree outside. In summer we sometimes scored fruit for piece time. Later on dinner, which we called tea, was served back in the dining hall.

*Clothing*

42. We always just wore shorts and a shirt and we never wore shoes. The only time we wore shoes was when we were going out for choir competitions. If we were going out we'd be issued with a suit, shoes and socks, which we handed back when we returned. It was all just a façade for our public image.
43. When the communists took over China and expelled the nuns we got a whole load of nuns who couldn't speak English. They came in and did the sewing and the laundry. I think they were Polish, but we never interacted with them.

*Leisure time*

44. After school we were free to go down to the oval. It used to get blisteringly hot in summer and we would all be waiting for the call to go to the river. That was good, the river saved my life. I love water and I loved swimming. Our blistered backs were trophies to be shown off.
45. There was a fenced in area with a diving board at the river for us to swim in, although we used to swim outside it as well. I used to swim to Mundaring Weir,

which was miles away. An old World War II barge had sunk in the river and was full of tar. We used to swim around it and see how long we could stay under the water. After we'd been swimming for a while the whistle would blow and that would be it. We'd head back for showers and then tea.

46. We could also go horse riding, but only if we could catch a horse and get a halter on it. They were ex-police horses and were big bony things. We were also taught how to make model airplanes with balsa wood by fellows that used to come into Castledare. I used to like that.
47. Castledare had a 16 mm projector and every Saturday night we got to watch movies. We were brought up with movies. Movie night would start with 'Tom and Jerry' and we'd roar the house down. That was followed by the newsreel, which was boring and then whatever movie was on. After that we were off to bed.

#### *Schooling*

48. Education was irrelevant and schooling was not considered important. There were no books and I still couldn't read when I was fourteen. Unfortunately I was considered bright and so I was promoted up two grades so I missed out on learning to read. I got no grounding in literacy at all. I don't know how the others survived.
49. We were at school for normal school hours, finishing at half-past three. The teachers were, for the most part, unqualified. Any qualified ones never lasted, I think it was too much of a challenge.
50. Brother MDF took us for choir practice. He was tone deaf and he was hopeless. He'd conduct mathematically and I would be about pulling my hair out with frustration. If it wasn't for Mrs Sadler the pianist we would have fallen off the stand laughing.
51. [REDACTED] and I were chosen to learn the piano by none other than the pianist of the Perth Symphony Orchestra, Mr Swift, who was our teacher. At that stage he was dying and was a dear old man.

52. Mr Swift taught us the scales and when he did eventually die we went to Brother MDF and asked what we could then do. I had to sit down at the piano in front of him and play the scales. His response was, "Is that all you can do?" So that was the end of my musical career.

#### *Trips and holidays*

53. Once a year at Christmas each boy was billeted to a family and I was sent to the [REDACTED]. The old man was called [REDACTED] and his wife was [REDACTED]. They had a son, who was also called [REDACTED] and a daughter called [REDACTED]. They'd come and pick me up in their 'Vanguard' car and I'd be away for four weeks. I missed out on Christmas Day itself because I had to stay and serve the Brothers their Christmas meal, but instead I would go to the [REDACTED] on Boxing Day. I still go there and see their children and grandchildren.
54. We would also go out singing in the choir and playing sports, but there were no other trips or holidays. It was congregate care all the way.

#### *Healthcare*

55. We didn't get sick and health was not a problem. We were probably too healthy because we were outdoor kids.
56. A government dentist would come in a caravan every couple of years and fill or pull our teeth. I refused to have any of my teeth pulled. It was like a factory and we'd all go in, one after another, not having a clue what was going to happen.

#### *Religious instruction*

57. As well as Mass, religious instruction at school was compulsory. The Brothers had to give a thirty minute religious lesson every day. It was part of the curriculum between twelve noon and half-past twelve.



*Work*

58. We boys did everything. We did the cleaning, the washing up and all the never-ending weeding of the gardens. All these occupations were to keep us out of mischief.
59. On Saturday we had "charges", which was extra work for us to do. A charge meant something you were in charge of and you had to make sure it was right. My Saturday charge was to polish the chapel. I was groomed from a very early age to be a monk.
60. I had to make sure everything in the chapel was right, I would put the vestments out and I would make sure everything was gleaming. I knew what needed to be done back to front by the time I was ten.
61. There wasn't much manual work at Castledare, we didn't build anything because it was all already established.

*Christmas and Birthdays*

62. There were never any presents at Christmas. Instead all the Brothers from around Perth would come for their meal and I would serve them. I thought it would never end there were so many of them.
63. Birthdays weren't celebrated at all. They were non-existent. I first celebrated my birthday when I was twenty-one. I didn't even know ~~my~~ when my birthday was until I was sixteen when I started education at Strathfield College in Sydney.

*Visitors*

64. There were never any inspections of Castledare. I have since read that people did come, but I never saw anyone and I certainly never spoke to anyone. Unless people inspecting talk to the children they're wasting their time.

*Review of care/detention*

65. I found out later from my mother that when I was in Castledare Boys Home a boy called [REDACTED] was fostered out to a family somewhere and I was supposed to have joined him. She told me that two policeman in Aberdeen had spoken to her to ask her permission, but when she asked them where I was and they said they couldn't tell her, she refused to allow it. I never knew anything about that at the time.

*Discipline*

66. One of the worst punishments for being naughty was to go to the movie on a Saturday night and be made to sit on the floor with your back to the screen in front of Brother MDI [REDACTED]

*Nature and frequency of abuse*

67. The abuse at Castledare consisted of Brother MDF [REDACTED] putting me under his complete control. He dominated me psychologically. I wasn't allowed to smile or talk to another Brother, I wasn't even allowed to look sideways at another Brother.
68. MDF [REDACTED] was a giant of a man. He was six feet four, with a lean and hungry look. He terrified me and I think he knew it. This personal control became a grooming process, which he would do through sarcasm, running me down and have me brush dandruff off his shoulders. In that way I think he came to the conclusion he could get me to do anything. I've since found out that not only did he do this to me, he did it to a lot of other kids as well. \* Note:- psychological abuse over 2 years. "Grooming" I think is what they term this process.
69. I was eight years old when the abuse from MDF [REDACTED] started and it continued until I broke down at the age of twelve when I was at Clontarf Boys Town.

**Clontarf Boys Town***General*



70. As was the practice, I was moved from Castledare to Clontarf Boys Town when I became old enough. I would have been about ten. I left Castledare with a sense of relief to be away from Brother <sup>MDF</sup> Lo and behold he was posted to Clontarf not long after I arrived.

71. The Christian Brothers were notorious for discipline which, to me, was completely unnecessary and wrong. Brother <sup>MDI</sup> had also moved to Clontarf and he was in charge. Amongst the other Brothers there were Brother <sup>MDH</sup> Brother <sup>MDG</sup> and Brother Gerry O'Shea. There was a clique of about a dozen Brothers who were known as the 'Orphanage Brothers'. They all knew each other and all moved from one place to another.

72. There were lay members of staff at Clontarf as well, including an Italian family who had a flat in the building next to the Infirmary. The man was the cook and he was pretty good.

#### *Mornings and bedtime*

73. The routine at Clontarf was more rigid, it was very regimented. In one sense it was secure, but it was boring. They had a siren like at POW prison camps. We'd hear the siren and just know what it was for, where we should go and line up in our numbers.

74. Days were structured like at a monastery, we were essentially monks in training. First thing in the morning were prayers, followed by charges, then breakfast and then we would get ready for school. After school there was some free time and then dinner. After dinner there was homework and then we'd all go to bed. There were speakers in the dormitory at Clontarf too and, just like at Castledare, the monks would play scary mystery stories to us, *then classical music.*

#### *Mealtimes*

75. We ate differently to the Brothers, they had good meals. They never ran out of butter and jam as we did and their tea was always hot. In the morning they had orange juice followed by cereal or porridge and then bacon and eggs or whatever. They had proper meals, we boys never had any of that.

#### *Bedwetting*

76. Boys who wet the bed at Clontarf were dealt with by being made to sleep outside on the veranda.

#### *Clothing*

77. There were changing rooms in a separate building where we went to get changed for work or into school clothes. Normally we just wore a shirt and shorts. We were barefoot until we were fifteen or sixteen, except for public performances like the choir or other competitions. *The change room was where we kept our games + work clothes, bathers.*

#### *Personal Possessions*

78. We had no personal possessions, other than perhaps marbles. I don't know where we kept them because we never had a locker. There wasn't even a cupboard beside our beds.

#### *Leisure time*

79. Free time was always spent outside, often spent playing sports in the oval. We played in our bare feet, even in the middle of winter. Other teams would come and play us and some of them would have boots and socks on. They'd look a million dollars and we'd run out in our shirts and shorts and we were hopeless. I lasted five seconds in my first football match, *before being concussed.*
80. We used to show off as trophies all the gouges, or "sprig marks" as we called them, that we got on our feet and shins. One time a boy called [REDACTED] picked up a branch of a tree and chased after a player from the other team. He wasn't

going to be stomped on by anyone. Brother <sup>MDI</sup> [REDACTED] who was supervising had to bolt to catch him.

81. At Clontarf there was a massive river that was about a mile wide and had dolphins and sharks in it. We used to catch mudfish, which are also called cobblers and had a dreadful sting. We would walk out on the flats and look for holes, put our arms down and pull out a "muddy". We weren't supposed to eat them, but we did.
82. We were in Clontarf with the Aboriginal 'Stolen Generation' children and they taught us all their survival tricks. They showed us how to make a 'kylie', which was a strip of metal folded like a boomerang. We would wade out into the river, looking for a school of mullet, stand absolutely still until they came within range and then throw it. We were so good, we got in the local papers for it.

#### *Schooling*

83. Most of the Brothers we had weren't teachers, they were lay monks. There is a difference between a teaching Brother and a lay monk. The lay monks were supposed to run the farms, not teach. Just as at Castledare, education was considered irrelevant. Again I was promoted up school grades at Clontarf and missed out on playing in the brass band.
84. Some of the Brothers, especially Gerry O'Shea, would often find an excuse to dismiss the class. He would announce that one of the cows had gone missing and we would be sent to find it.
85. There was no such thing as tests or exams or even books. As a matter of fact, the library was out of bounds, it was only the Brothers that were allowed to go there.
86. We did have half an hour of homework after dinner when we'd go back to the classroom. I don't know what we did. I couldn't read, so I couldn't write, although I could do maths. During homework they would play classical music on the radio and I loved that.

*Healthcare*

87. Clontarf had an Infirmary with a dormitory attached to it, which had two rows of beds. A corridor also led from there to two rooms at the bottom that were for isolation. An infirmary sister looked after anybody that got sick.
88. When I was about thirteen there was a bad bus accident. I wasn't on the bus, I had the job of being on the phone the day it happened. We lost one boy, [REDACTED] and several other boys lost their limbs. Brother MDI [REDACTED] was the driver.

*Visitors*

89. Every year a visiting Brother from the ruling house would come and inspect the community. It was known as the 'visitation'. When that happened they never interviewed the boys. I certainly never spoke to anybody.
90. After the bus accident Douglas Bader, the famous World War II pilot who lost his legs, came to see us. Other than him, there were no visitors.

*Trips and holidays*

91. After the bus accident we entered a more enlightened period and a humanity entered the place. We had so much contact with hospitals and the people of Perth were very involved in fundraising and donating blood. We were swamped by the society around us.
92. We were still going to see the families we were billeted to at Christmas, the 'holiday people' as we called them. After the bus crash we would go out for whole weekends to stay with them as well, which was unheard of previously.

*Family*

93. I was still of the belief while I was at Clontarf that I didn't have any family. That was what all the boys thought. We all believed we were "war orphans", which was very

good for public fundraising. It wasn't true, it was lies. It was the great sin of the whole thing.

94. Had I known I had family, I would have done a runner. I would have protested loudly and I would have run away from the nightmares and the dreams.
95. My brother [REDACTED] came to Clontarf and we were together there for a while, but I didn't know he was my brother. He had also been through the system after being migrated and had already been in Castledare.

*Emotional care/support*

96. We were so isolated from society and so dependent on the institution that to have a life outside was an inconceivable, unimaginable paradise. Brother [REDACTED] MDI would tell us we had no rights but a Christian funeral. There was no emotional support.
97. I had a breakdown when I was twelve years old. I'd surrendered, submitted to the institution. Although it may seem strange with all the boys that were there, I was lonely. Too much had happened to me, particularly with Brother [REDACTED] MDF.
98. I was put in the isolation room at the end of the infirmary and looked after by the infirmary sister. They never got the doctor. One particular nun would bring me meals and the Italian family that stayed there would bring me black coffee and biscuits. I'd wait till they'd disappeared and then throw the coffee out the window. It was disgusting.
- \* 99. I don't know how long I was there, but afterwards I was taken out of congregate care. I became the steward and served all the Brothers their meals. They knew I couldn't take any more. I think I did alright, but I wasn't aware of special treatment. I was still in that environment.

Running away

\* Ask why??

MDF [REDACTED] abuse had advanced to sexual abuse. "So to my door after lights out" was the dreaded command. How many nights? I don't know but this pattern of abuse destroyed me at 12 years old. 2 years + duration.



100. We boys did what we called 'bunks' or running away. You had to do it in the morning before the bread and milk was taken into the houses, because that's what we lived on. We'd end up all over Cannington and its suburbs. We would always be found because we were all together and had no chance of being anonymous.
101. We'd get picked up by Brother Tommy MDH in his van, taken back and get our heads shaved. We would probably get a belting as well, but by that time I'd surrendered. *I never was brave enough to run away, because there was no where to run to, and no one to seek help from.*
102. We boys built the swimming pool and the grass oval at Clontarf. We had to carry heavy sods from a mile away, through the Clontarf property and down to the river flats. We made these magnificent ovals. *I worked the cement mixer,*
103. My Saturday charge at Clontarf was cleaning the staff toilets. After we had done our charges we then had Saturday work to do. We'd assemble in the quadrangle and be told, for example, that we each had to take a dozen sods. <sup>of grass</sup> We were never paid for any of that work.
104. Once I became the steward and served the Brothers' meals, that was my work all the time. I had to serve some cantankerous men, some of them were awfully ungrateful. I got to see how the Brothers lived and it occurred to me that they were just as much in prison as we were.
105. There were lay staff employed to serve as well, Joe Curtis and Joey Jackson. We would eat whatever was leftover by the Brothers in a separate dining room after they had finished.

### *Discipline*

106. The Brothers had what they called "the strap", which was leather and manufactured by another Brother in Melbourne, Brother Robertson. It wasn't every day that the strap was used, but some of the Brothers were tough nuts and it was frequent.

107. An example of what a boy might be given the strap for would be for not knowing a theorem in trigonometry. If the Brother that was teaching, MDI or MDG or whoever, was in a bad mood, he would pick someone who was hopeless at maths to answer a question. If the boy didn't know the answer we'd all get the strap. I used to wonder what the hell for, it was so unjust.
108. Another form of punishment was being made to stand in the corridor outside the Brothers' bedrooms. You could be standing there for hours until a Brother would tell you to go to bed. It was quite normal to see kids standing in the corridor.

*Nature and frequency of abuse*

109. As soon as Brother MDF arrived at Clontarf the abuse started again, except that it became sexual and frequent. It was a nightmare. It was unthinkable and it was unbearable. He was the worst case of a paedophile I have come across and he was completely out of control. MDF ~~for~~ was untouchable and unaccountable.
110. He would tell me to come to his door after lights out and I had to stand at his door and wait for him. If anyone had seen me they would just have thought I was being punished.
111. Eventually Brother MDF would appear and I would be taken inside. It was the worst thing to be in his bed, squashed up against the wall by his body. I would feign I was asleep and at three or four o'clock in the morning he would let me go. I would go back to my bed in the dorm and hope he didn't come back again for more.
112. I find it difficult to go into the abuse any further without the fear of shocking people. It is a shocking story. The abuse from MDF stopped after my breakdown, I think he knew he had gone too far.
113. At the time I wasn't aware of it happening to anybody else, but it was. That was the secrecy of the whole thing. Nobody was aware it was happening to anyone else.

*Reporting of abuse*

114. I couldn't tell anyone. In hindsight, having later carried out research with other kids who had been there, I was correct. If I had told any of the other Brothers I would have been in big trouble. All hell would have broken loose. I think now that the clique known as the Orphanage Brothers made sure that the abuse was kept quiet. At least half of those monks were paedophiles.

**Life after the institutions**

115. I left Clontarf Boys' Town when I was fifteen and went to Strathfield College in New South Wales. Strathfield was an exclusive school for educating and training Christian Brothers and it had the best teachers in the world. They didn't have degrees, but they had a mastery of their subjects.
116. I flew when I was there. I caught up twelve years in five because by that time I wanted education more than anything. At first I was humiliated because I had to get up and read at a pulpit when I'd never been taught to read. It used to amaze me when the others did so. Eventually I mastered reading and I came to love public speaking.
117. I enjoyed Strathfield. We had access to books when previously I'd never even had a book in my hand. I ended up head boy and I had to give the speeches of welcome to every hoi polloi that came to visit. I'd look forward to doing so and that's when I knew I had to be a teacher.
118. I graduated with honours and became a teacher. I was given two things, a beautiful hat and a leather strap. It was the Brothers' mentality that you had to have control. By that time I had abandoned <sup>their</sup> ~~that~~ idea of control, it was not on. All my ideas of discipline were formed as a rebellion against what was considered by the Brothers to be normal.



- forty*
119. I was sent to Ballarat in Victoria where I had ~~sixty~~ <sup>forty</sup> two boys in my class. They were grades two and three and also some boys who had been sent up by the nuns because they were deemed uncontrollable. They came to me and it was a circus and they loved it. I did too, I loved every minute of teaching.
  120. I also took the choir and had the ~~whole~~ <sup>whole</sup> school for mass singing while all the other teachers did a bunk. There were ~~five~~ <sup>two</sup> hundred of them, it was wonderful.
  121. I went to Aberdeen around 1987 when I learned that I did have family after all. After a while, when I returned to Australia, the Brothers exiled me to Fiji for two years. I loved it there, it's a wonderful place.
  122. While I was in Fiji different monks would come to visit. I could see that something was happening back home in Australia. Revelations about child abuse were coming out, but I was cut off from the media and I didn't have a clue of the havoc that was taking place.
  123. After returning from Fiji, in 1994, I broke down again. I walked out and eventually I ended up in Perth where I bought a little house with money the Brothers had given me as a separation. I stayed there for two years and then the archbishop of Perth rang me up and asked me to come for a visit.
  124. I had two interviews with him and then I was given a job in the most remote corner of Australia in the Kimberleys, working with the Aboriginal community there. My job was teaching a class of ten, when previously I had been used to teaching hundreds. I enjoyed it, but I knew I was finished.
  125. I think the Brothers thought they were losing me so in the late 1990's they sent me back to Aberdeen. While I was there I went to Kings College where I signed up to do a Masters in Education. Initially the university wanted to sign me up as a foreign student. When I told them I had been a child migrant the fee went from £15,000 down to £5,000.

126. It was magical. For the first time I didn't have to struggle with silly things like reading. I got into research and was deputed to measure the psychological effects of the change in education in Scotland for five to fourteen year olds. I went from school to school and I loved it.
127. Eventually I returned to Australia and moved to Tasmania, where I now live the life of a hermit. I haven't signed off as a Christian Brother, but I don't know what the Church thinks of me. It's sad to say, but after having given my life to the Christian Brothers, I have no <sup>seemed to</sup> personal relationship with them. Although it was supposed to be a two-way contract, they have no sense of responsibility.

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### Family tracing

128. Around 1987, the Brothers knew that government files about the abuse which had previously been locked up were going to be opened under the forty year rule so I was sent away to Aberdeen. Brother Mickey Stallard told me they thought I had family there and they thought I should go over and find them.
129. I looked up an organisation called British Heritage, asked for £70 and hired a private detective. Within two weeks the private detective had all my family traced except Dad. I went over to Aberdeen later that year and was reunited with the family I didn't even know existed.
130. It was a bittersweet experience meeting them. I might be heartless, I might have just been numb, but I had eradicated the need for people to need me. I was Australian and from a completely different culture.
131. Family reunions only work if it's a two-way process and it wasn't. I worked very hard on the emotional reserves I had, but I couldn't click with any of them except my sister [REDACTED]
132. When I arrived my sisters ran out of the house because they didn't want to face me. I was left with my mother and I felt nothing. I had nothing emotionally left, I'd been

through the mill. Although I was kind to her and available for her, it's sad to say there was no relationship.

133. I wanted to ask about my dad, but I was sensitive to the feelings of Mum and my sisters so I didn't. I would rather not pursue it than hurt their feelings. I think now that was a mistake, I should have insisted. Mum also mentioned that I had another sister, [REDACTED] who she thought lived somewhere up in the north of Scotland. I tried to find her, but couldn't and I later found out she was living down south in Forth.

134. My sisters were really struggling with raising their families. I put it down to the socio-economic environment. [REDACTED] two kids and [REDACTED] son [REDACTED] were teenagers and [REDACTED] kids were wreaking havoc elsewhere. I was concerned that they weren't interested in what I could do to help. It was too late to make any connection with them.

135. While I was working in the Kimberleys, a Scottish TV programme came out and did some filming. My sister [REDACTED] saw it and she got in touch with me. *two years later* She came out to Tasmania with her two daughters, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and we had a wonderful time. It was good, but for me it just felt like having visitors. Now [REDACTED] rings me every month without fail. Apart from my brother [REDACTED] she's the only one who keeps in touch. *My sister [REDACTED] died after her visit to me in Tasmania.*

136. While I was in Aberdeen the second time, around 1999, [REDACTED] came over from Australia and I met him for the first time as my brother. Margaret Humphreys of the CMT brought him to see Mum and he spent the next two months staying in my flat.

137. [REDACTED] now lives in Melbourne with his wife [REDACTED] and they have two daughters. [REDACTED] has a doctorate in criminal psychology and started programmes for reforming street kids with drug addictions. He became famous for his work with them. He used to be a Jesuit Brother and he likes to sit at my side to shield and protect me. We get on well, but sometimes he gets a bit claustrophobic for me.

## Records

138. I know that my records are held at the West Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee offices at Victoria Square in Perth, but I could never get them. I managed to get general information, but not the detailed stuff. I once threatened them with the police. All I got was information about when I arrived at the different institutions and when I left. There was nothing on health, educational progress or exam results.
139. I have never tried to retrieve anything from Scotland. I don't think they'll have anything.

## Campaigning/awareness raising

140. In 1992, after I had been to Aberdeen, I found my last mission. I discovered that sexual abuse within institutions run by the Christian Brothers was common and I decided that come hell or high water it had to be eradicated. That's when my career <sup>as an educator</sup> came to an end.
141. I had learned about research methods and detachment. I went to the [REDACTED] for a holiday, got a hire car and went to see various "old boys" who had been children in Castledare and Clontarf to carry out a mini-survey. I wanted to see what the extent of the problem was.
142. I think I did fifteen case studies from Albany to Geraldton and around Perth. I listened to everyone and recorded what they were saying. All in, it took me about a month. One of those I spoke to was MDL [REDACTED] who had been migrated with me from Scotland. As it happened, Brother MDI [REDACTED] drove me to see MDL [REDACTED]. He sat through the whole thing and never said a word.
143. I kept to the rules of Kings College research, I wanted it to be as professional as possible and I didn't do anything surreptitiously. I found that over fifty percent of the people I had spoken to had been victims of child abuse.

144. Invariably the families of the people I spoke to ended up in tears when they listened to the stories. A lot of them said they could understand their husbands for the first time.
145. I produced a report and sent it to the leaders of the Christian Brothers in Australia. Their only response was to tell me not to worry about it, they had it under control. That was it.
146. I also sent it to the Christian Brothers' headquarters in Rome, to the Bishop Pontifical, the Provincial Council, the WA Council, the Government of WA and to Barry Coldrey, the Christian Brothers' historian. The only response I got was from Carmen Lawrence, the Premier of WA at the time. She thanked me for my work, but nothing happened. I was floored.
147. Around that time I had to go to Rome, where we all would go for a period of training. I knocked on doors there as well, but nobody wanted to know there either. These were the highest authorities within the Christian Brothers and they weren't interested. I came to the conclusion that there was no cure from within the organisation.
148. By that stage I had come to terms with my own abuse and had faced it for the first time, but I was a wreck after finding my family and speaking to all these other kids. I turned my life upside down and, with some purpose, started writing my autobiography. I called it "With God Behind the Eight Ball" and it took me a couple of years to write. I have provided a copy of my autobiography to the Inquiry.
149. I wanted to eradicate child abuse from the Church. Nobody could handle my personal history, even the top men who previously I had based my life on. I hoped that by writing my story things would change.
150. I sent a copy of my autobiography to the Senate Inquiry into Institutional Care in 2003. The Inquiry was held between 2004 and 2005, although I never gave evidence at it.

151. I think my work exposed the abuse and I was pleased, even though it has cost me everything. The world reaction has been phenomenal in the sense that abuse of children has been universally condemned as unacceptable. I think the Christian Brothers got the message and I hope some children have been protected. I don't think the Christian Brothers could have done it without somebody whistleblowing.
152. I think I succeeded in pointing out a problem, but I don't think I succeeded in eradicating it. It's human nature, there's always going to be someone that will go the wrong way.

### **'Towards Healing'**

153. Around 2006, two Christian Brothers and a psychologist sat down with me as part of the 'Towards Healing' programme set up by the Church. It was traumatic. For the first time I told them my story and I found that the hardest thing.
154. I don't think a sit-down session for half a day with two men who are in power today and out of power tomorrow can heal. There was no outcome, nothing followed. My story to them was just another story.

### **Oral History Project**

155. The Australian National Library has conducted an oral history project to record the lives and experiences of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants. I took part in the oral history project in 2010 because I thought it was important that my experiences were retained somewhere permanent and in as many places as possible.
156. I was scared that it would only be the Christian Brothers that had my story. They were impotent in their ability to face up to the problem. They still cannot, face-to-face, say sorry.

### **Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse**

157. I submitted a statement to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, detailing the abuse I suffered while I was at Castledare and Clontarf. It is dated 11 April 2014. The Inquiry has a copy of my statement to the Royal Commission. I confirm that the facts stated in it are true.
158. I ended up giving evidence at the Royal Commission. In carrying out my research and submitting my survey at very senior levels, I believe they may have considered my evidence important for the case study.
159. I have been shown documents that the Royal Commission has on its website under my name. The documents include a letter marked as confidential that is entitled 'Lost Children of the Empire'. The letter is addressed to Brother Barry Coldrey and is signed by me. Although there are a number of names in the letter that have been redacted, I can confirm that this is a copy of my mini-survey from 1992.

### **Redress**

160. I applied to the Redress WA scheme and completed an application form on 20 June 2008, detailing the abuse I suffered while at Castledare and Clontarf. The Inquiry has a copy of my application to Redress WA. I can confirm that the facts stated in it are true. By way of redress, I got forty thousand Australian dollars, even though it was supposed to have been eighty thousand.
161. I could never have taken part in any of the litigation which was raised against the Christian Brothers. It never even entered my mind to do so.
162. Through my brother [REDACTED] I was contacted by Ian Thwaites of the CMT. Only recently he filled out a forty-two page form on my behalf for the National Redress Scheme.

163. All the child migrants are dying of old age and I worry for them. The Australian National Redress Scheme and the U.K. Inquiries better hurry up. I suppose if they delay a few more years the governments might save themselves some money.

#### **Apologies from the Australian and U.K. Governments**

164. With regard to apologies from the Australian and U.K. Governments, there is nothing that any more words can do to heal. I can only wish that the former child migrants can have peace with their families. The only response is to give them a fat cheque so that they can keep their independence, never be put into a retirement home and never be institutionalised again. For a child who has been institutionalised to end up in an old people's home would be just like being a number again.

#### **Response from the Catholic Church**

165. The response from the Church has been nothing except an apology. Apologies have no meaning because an apology doesn't touch our lives. I don't expect the Church to do anything for me. It would be a wonderful surprise if they did, but they won't.
166. I have never received an apology or an acknowledgement of what happened to me from the Christian Brothers. I don't think they know how to.

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

167. I believe the whole concept of taking children from their family, their home and their country and telling them the lie that they were war orphans was immoral. It's taken me fifty years to come to that realisation and I have fought child abuse ever since. It has cost me everything, but it had to be done.



168. To do so, to transport children halfway around the world on a lie was corrupt. Had we children known it was a lie the scheme would have failed. It wasn't only the children that were lied to, they lied to the people of Western Australia as well.
169. I have provided the Inquiry with a copy of a book entitled 'The Scheme', which is written by the Christian Brothers' historian, Barry Coldrey. It is his account of the Christian Brothers' institutions of WA and was considered controversial at the time. He had produced a confidential report to the Brothers about the abuse and was strongly criticised that he left the information contained in his report out of the book, but it gives a good idea of the psychology of the Brothers.
170. The book gives a good insight into some of the Christian Brothers who were running these institutions like MDJ [REDACTED], MDI [REDACTED] and others. They were great men in their own ways, but like all men they were flawed sometimes. A statue of Brother [REDACTED] was erected at Bindoon and was later taken down after there was an outcry. He was famous for his building, but notorious for his treatment of children. The Christian Brothers took it down when they finally admitted that all really wasn't well in the institutions.

### **Nationality and pension**

171. I have dual nationality. When I was sent to Fiji in the 1980's I had to get a passport and I couldn't. I was in my late forties and it was only then that I found out I wasn't an Australian citizen.
172. I went to the British High Commission in Melbourne and they handed me a British passport straight away, there were no problems. It occurred to me though that I wouldn't then be able to get back into Australia so I applied for Australian citizenship and got it.
173. I now get an Australian pension, however if I hadn't twigged when I went to Fiji I would have lost it all.

### **Impact**

174. One of the effects of congregate care is the depersonalisation of relationships. It's one of the things that still horrifies me. I remember getting into trouble at boarding school for telling parents to take their children home and give them some love.
175. I am very wary of personal relationships after the abuse Brother MDF subjected me to. Personal relationships aren't for me and I still have a problem trusting people. In some ways that is a tragedy. I have never had my own family, I have never wanted to get married and I never wanted to have a sexual relationship.
176. I think you must come to terms with the abuse you have suffered personally. It has to be exorcised one way or another and I did. What I couldn't come to terms with was the lie of my being a child migrant.

### **Treatment/support**

177. After 'Towards Healing', the Church paid for me to go to a psychiatrist. We sat there and I talked to him and he just sat there open-mouthed. The sessions were not helpful.
178. I think that type of support is only useful to psychiatrists and to people of compassion. I don't think it's useful to Church members, because their loyalty is with the Church above everything. They would do anything rather than hurt their conscience by standing up against the Church.
179. I have absorbed my experiences, the pain and everything else, myself. It has become part of who I am and I accept who I am, both the good and the bad.

### **Lessons to be Learned**

180. I think sending children out of their culture and away from their family is immoral. Putting them into the care of church authority doesn't work unless the inspectors know all the circumstances of their care and speak to the children themselves. They never get down to that level.
181. I have been recommending for some years that there be a representative for children living in the institutions with them full time. Although that person would be an adult, children should be able to go to them. That person should not be answerable to the authorities or to the institution, they should only be answerable to the children.
182. That is what was missing at Castledare and Clontarf. The scheme, the setting and the environment was brilliant, but the lack of accountability of the staff to any authority was immoral.
183. If there is going to be congregate care, which can be good in some ways, authorities must be accountable. The child cannot speak for themselves therefore there must be someone working for that child, speaking for them and protecting them. We had no protection and all hell broke loose.

#### **Final comments**

184. I believe Brother <sup>MDF</sup> [REDACTED] was kicked out of the order later on when he went to Adelaide and got into trouble there. He'd been abusing children there as well and yet, despite that, the Christian Brothers supported him till his death.
185. In the back of my mind, I think I knew that the highest authorities were aware of the abuse. I was sheltered right through training and they wanted me to be a monk more than anything. I think the reason was that they wanted to keep me quiet.
186. [REDACTED] who arrived in Australia and went with me to Clontarf, actually went back to Aberdeen. I ended up looking after him when I worked in a day care centre for the Cyrenians there. His parents had found out he had gone to Australia

and they wanted him back. He went back, but was apparently rejected by them a second time and ended up an alcoholic, playing the mouth organ on the street.

187. I've worked in Africa and I've worked in Fiji and I have seen children in these places who, in the eyes of the developed western world, had nothing, except they had everything. They had a family, they had a village and they had a country. They were accepted, they were cemented into society.
188. We never had any of that, we were shielded from it and I think that was done in order for the scheme to work. We were brought out here to go on the farm, look after the cattle and, when necessary, join the army. We were to be recruited as the next fighters. Politically, we child migrants were the fodder for a future army.
189. Children who have been separated from their parents are emotionally numb. They have to be taught the emotions that they should feel. There is no cure for the migrants. How do you mend a broken child?
190. 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.....

26/11/2018.