

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

LST

Support person present: No

1. My name is LST My date of birth is 1943. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in my mother's house in Dumfries. Her name was but everybody called her My surname then was
3. There was only LSU and myself that left, but we had another sister, We're not sure how old she is or whether she's the eldest or if I'm the eldest, and then LSU comes next. LSU is going to be 74 in There's only fifteen months between us. After we left, my mother had another four boys and a girl, as well as
4. When I went back over to Scotland the first time I went myself, LSU didn't come. My auntie lived across the road from where my mother was and she said she remembers me running down the street screaming, "I don't want to go". They were taking us away from our mother.
5. There's a big orphanage in Dumfries and I think that's where they took us, but I don't remember it at all. They took LSU and I there. It's a white elephant now. It's still standing but there's no-one in it. I don't think I would have been more than three. I think I was there a couple of years then went to Nazareth House, Kilmarnock, along with LSU

Life in care - Scotland

Nazareth House, Kilmarnock

General

6. I remember going to Nazareth House on the train. It was a long trip. I remember the big dormitory. It had big posts. We were all just children. We played outside and we went in for school.
7. I didn't see much of **LSU** in Nazareth House, Kilmarnock. She was in the younger dormitory. I had no contact with my mum, the social work or even doctors while I was there. I should have been home with my mother. I was there about seven years.
8. There were elderly ladies in the same floor as the girls with a big door dividing them and us. The men were downstairs. There were no boys in Kilmarnock. The food was average. I think it was like Camberwell, the food was like slop.

Schooling

9. We went to school in the convent. We didn't get much schooling. The nuns were the teachers there. We didn't learn anything but religion.

Religious instruction

10. We went to church every day. We had to kneel beside our bed and pray every night. The nuns had a stick or a strap or they slapped the girls if they didn't have one of these things. It didn't happen to me. I was a bit of a goody two shoes. I know others got whacked and I know **LSU** did too.

Work

11. We had to sweep and polish in Kilmarnock. We didn't work in the kitchen or anything like that. I can't remember at what age that started. We did most of the cleaning, it was light cleaning, not like we did at the Nazareth House in Camberwell, Melbourne.

Abuse

12. I remember waking up one night and one of the nun's came over and was pulling my blanket down and I said "Get off me". She said, "We all do it here". I screamed and she walked away. I don't know if she went to someone else. It was dark as it was the middle of the night. She was touching me, she was sexually abusing me. I was about six then. I was five when I went there. She was probably about middle aged. She wasn't really old, but she wasn't young. I don't remember any of the nuns in Kilmarnock. We were so young.
13. After that night I started wetting the bed. I never stopped until I was fourteen. That was so embarrassing. If you wet the bed you had to wash the sheets yourself in a bath and hang them on the line. Whichever nun was in charge would tell you to when we woke up. We didn't know which one we would get. They would do this in front of anyone. They did like to embarrass you.
14. Overall, apart from that incident, which makes me cry, Kilmarnock wasn't too bad compared to what came next. I don't ever remember getting smacked in Kilmarnock. I don't know if that's because of the age.

Migration*Selection/information*

15. After a couple of years of being in Kilmarnock, **LSU** and I were called into the Mother Superior who was in charge. I can't remember her name. We didn't have dealings with a lot of the nuns, other than the ones looking after us. There were a lot there, some looking after the men and the ladies, the front door and the church. We were

asked if we wanted to go on a holiday with plenty of fruit and sunshine, on a big ship called the SS Orontes. What child would say no to something like that? I think [LSU] was eight and I was ten.

16. We had no idea where Australia was. We just thought we were going on a big ship and that it would be good. We were deported from Scotland and that was the last we saw of it for many years.

Leaving Scotland

17. We left Scotland about six months after we were told we were leaving. I don't know if they spoke to my mother. Our brothers and sisters don't talk about it because they idolise her. They couldn't understand why the nuns had taken [LSU] and myself to go such a long way away.
18. We had a medical examination before we left and everything was fine. I remember a girl called [LTI] had [] she should never have went but they hushed it up. She didn't have callipers on the ship, so she fell. That's why she was in Bundaberg. The weather is better up there. But for everyone else, we were all ok.
19. We stayed in Nazareth House, Hammersmith, for the night. We slept on mattresses on the floor. I think there were four to six of us from Kilmarnock who went. I didn't know them well. We did all play as a group and went to school. It was no life really. It was something you want to forget. There were a lot of girls in Hammersmith who were going to Australia. They were English so I didn't know them.
20. The journey to Australia took about six weeks on the Orontes. We had a coat on, shorts, shirt and a little case with pyjamas in it. That's all we took from Scotland. A priest called Father Tye accompanied us along with three nuns. I don't know their names. They were very lenient. We had the run of the ship. It was very good. I enjoyed the journey. It was the calm before the storm.
21. The food was good. Every night before we went to bed we got beef tea. I loved it. We got biscuits from the crew. It was really nice. We slept in bunks down below. My

sister **LSU** was there. She probably won't remember and I've never asked her about the ship. Little did we know when we got off the ship that our lives would be of abuse and slavery when we got to Nazareth House at Camberwell.

Life in care – Australia

Nazareth House, Camberwell, Melbourne

General

22. We arrived in Fremantle but that was just a stopover. I think some of the kids got off there. Then we travelled to the docks in Melbourne. There were two handymen in Camberwell and they came down on the bus. When we got off the ship they met us. We were then put into groups of English, Irish, Maltese and Scottish. We were told what buses we had to go into and we went into the one for Camberwell.
23. The handymen were **LSZ** and **LTC**. They did the gardening and they had a farm there. **LSZ** did the farm and the laundry as well. So us children had to clean out the pig sty's. It was right next to the laundry, so **LSZ** would keep an eye on us. It was horrible. **LTC** did work in the kitchen and did odd jobs. We had a van and he went into market for fruit and veggies and stuff. **LTC** was quite old. And **LSZ** if he was still alive, would be in his eighties. He died a couple of years ago. **LTC** died a long time ago.
24. Camberwell was huge. There were about five floors to it. The postulance, those training to be nuns, were on the top floor. On the next floor down was the elderly ladies and children's bedrooms. Next were the classrooms and at the bottom was the kitchen, dining room and play area and we could go outside and play. There were no boys there.

First day

25. I thought it was about fifty girls that went from the ship to Camberwell but my friend **CGM** said it was a hundred and twenty. There were only three nuns looking after us

and it was meant to hold a hundred and fifty girls. I can't see that. I think the journey from the boat took an hour to an hour and a half. I remember feeling that the way **LTC** and **LSZ** looked at us was creepy. It made us feel uncomfortable.

26. I remember the nuns showing us the classrooms. There were a group there before us, they were from Ireland. They were mucking about and when we got there they all ran and sat down.
27. We went up to the dormitory when it was time for bed and shown which bed we were to have. That's all I remember about the first day.
28. There were about a dozen to eighteen to a room. It was roughly girls of the same age in the same dorms. **LSU** was in a different dorm. The dorms had iron beds with rubber mattresses and a pillow and blanket. There was a cubicle where the nun who was in charge sat. There was a window in the room that looked into the dorm, with a curtain. If she heard anyone talking, she would open the curtains and my goodness, if you were caught you would get it.
29. There were three nuns and each had a little room. Each one was in charge of a separate group, in different dormitories. There was **LSV** whose real name was Sister **LSV** Sister **LSW**, who we called **LSW** and Sister **MEJ** who we called **MEJ**. They were the main ones we had. There were different nuns who came when those three went on holiday to Ballarat.
30. **LSV** was about fifty, she was short and fat. **LSW** was short but not as fat as **LSV** **MEJ** was in charge. She was the better of a bad lot. She was about in her forties. She was a very tall nun. She wasn't as bad as the other two.

Mornings

31. **LSV** was in charge of our dormitory. She got us up about six o'clock, we got dressed and went right to mass. After mass it was breakfast. She woke us up with a bell. Mass lasted about forty five minutes and we were kneeling down all that time.

32. The church was on the floor where the nuns actually lived, the elderly men were on this floor too. We walked there in pairs. There was no talking allowed. It was from one side of the building to the next.
33. At breakfast all the girls ate together in the dining hall. I can't remember seeing **LSU** that much. I didn't get to know her until we were in Camberwell for a couple of years. I knew she was my sister. She was a different grade and had different friends. I was always friendly with a girl called **CGM**. She was in my dormitory.

Mealtimes

34. For breakfast we were given 'gluggy' porridge and a piece of toast all the time. The nuns didn't eat with us but they supervised. We had to eat our vegetables. I hate them even today. They were always sloppy and soggy. They were horrible.
35. We got boiled potatoes. They had these two big cauldrons and they were full of grease. They cooked sausages in them. I don't like sausages. The girls had to empty them and wash them. The meals were terrible but we had to eat them. The veggies were sloppy. I used to put my veggies under the table or pass them to a girl who would eat them.
36. If you didn't eat your dinner you were sent to your bed. We had dinner around five o'clock, so if you didn't eat it you would be in bed for about five thirty and you didn't get sweet, which was either tapioca or these boiled sweets. The nuns made sure you were in bed. They would supervise or they'd send one of the other girls up.

Washing and bathing/Hygiene

37. We had a bath about once a week. About four or five of us would share the water before it was changed.

Leisure time

38. I was very rarely in the playground as I was always working. I had to work after school all the time and I didn't get home until four thirty or five o'clock. I didn't do any homework because of having to work when I got home. I left school after two years.
39. I remember the orphanage celebrating the Olympic games in 1956 because we got a TV. Someone donated it. I remember it was 1956 as that was the year televisions came out.

Trips and holidays

40. We went on holiday at Christmas time in December. We went for two weeks to different places with different families. I stayed in Pascoe Vale once and Geelong. Some of the people you stayed with were good but some treated us like slaves. We would go on Boxing Day. Some gave us clothes or toys but the nuns would take them from us when we got back to Nazareth House.

Schooling

41. We got more of an education in Kilmarnock than in Camberwell. In Camberwell if you weren't in the laundry or cleaning windows, you were scrubbing floors.
42. They sent me to Kildara college when I was about fourteen years old. I had to get two trams there and back every day. I only went for two years then I just left. I didn't even have a primary school education and they expected me to go to high school. **LSU** learnt typing and short hand and others went to different schools. Only two of us went to the same place. We heard later that the nuns got paid by the government to send us to these places. I couldn't do the school work. When I had homework to do I still had to do the work in the convent. Working with the elderly ladies, in the laundry or scrubbing floors.
43. I don't think the nuns had an education themselves. They couldn't look after girls. It was all wrong.

Healthcare

44. There was no health care there. In the elderly care there was a nun who was a nurse. She looked after the older ladies and I had to go up there every day and help her. She was lovely. She left the convent and got married. I was glad because she didn't belong there.
45. I remember I had a boil on my knee and couldn't kneel down in church. LSV and LSW would tell me to kneel down. I told them I had a sore knee but they told me to kneel down anyway. They had no sympathy for you. I went up to the nurse and she bandaged it up. She wasn't there that long. She was young and lovely. I can't remember her name. I worked with her in the aged care and she was helping me along all the time. That became a job for me after Nazareth House until I had to give it up when [REDACTED] my husband, [REDACTED].

Religious instruction

46. A priest took the mass. They got the priests from St Dominic's Catholic school and church in Melbourne. So any one of them would come up and do the mass.

Work

47. I started work in the laundry and I was using a great big ironing press and it would turn round and you would grab the sheet off before it turned round again. We also had to have a couple of girls to fold them. We even had to clean the nun's habits. We had to do all that. Your hands got burnt all the time. It was on a Monday that we did the laundry. Cleaning was an everyday thing.
48. Once every four or five months we had to clean the windows. You pulled them up, sat backwards on the ledge outside and cleaned the windows, five storeys up. Other girls were meant to hold your legs but they were always mucking about. I don't know if anyone had a serious accident. It would be a surprise if they didn't. The nuns, all three of them, told us to do this. This was all when you were meant to be at school. You were taken out of school all the time.

49. Some of the girls were working in the kitchen. They were not cooking but doing the dishes and peeling potatoes and veggies.

Christmas and Birthdays

50. At Christmas we had to go to midnight mass. We maybe got a little stocking with lollies in it. On Boxing Day we would go to our holiday places. We didn't get anything on our birthday.

Visitors

51. We got no visitors there. If the welfare came the nuns never let on. You would have people coming round and looking at the place but they didn't speak to us.

Personal Possessions

52. I had nothing of my own in Nazareth House. Every year we got six bikes from the auxiliary, who raised money for the place. We could ride them round for a couple of days on a flat roof space that we had, then they were gone and we never got them back again. Everything we got was taken from us so we didn't have anything.
53. Our clothes were second hand, I think they were from the poor box. I had a school uniform for Kildara but not for Nazareth House. It was a navy blue blazer, tie and skirt.

Discipline

54. If you were caught talking in the dormitory you had to get out of bed, go downstairs and scrub the passages or the stairs. Four or five flights of stairs, on our knees. It was LSV or LSW who made you do it. This took us about two hours in the middle of the night. If it wasn't done properly we had to do it again.

55. The tiles were very cold. I think they were ceramic and you would be on your knees scrubbing if you were talking. There were no outsiders who came in to clean. The girls did it all. We worked and worked and worked.

Nature and frequency of abuse

56. I started working with the aged care. One night Sister ^{LSW} woke me up and told me to do the most distressing and completely wrong thing the nuns ever made me do. I was thirteen years old and I was asked to lay out a dead body. It wasn't just making me do that, it was the fact that I was woken in the night at about one or two in the morning. Without any preparation I was taken by Sister ^{LSW} who I was afraid of, to lay out the body of a poor old lady who had died in the night.
57. I remember it very clearly as it was horrible and upsetting. Sister ^{LSW} made me do all the most private and personal things while she stood back. She asked me if I was afraid of dead bodies. What could I say?
58. In the room the old lady was dead in her bed. Sister ^{LSW} pulled back the sheets and made me take off all her clothes. I had to wash both sides of her body. I remember how she was going cold and her body was very heavy. Sister ^{LSW} made me stuff cotton wool into all her body cavities, even her backside. I felt sick and afraid. But I was obedient and I did it without saying a word. The nun just stood there and watched me do that upsetting work. They all thought they were above dirty or hard work. Afterwards I was sent back to bed, but I didn't sleep a wink that night.
59. It was frightening in the elderly care in Nazareth House. I had never seen anyone with dementia. These people would come up and you had no idea what they wanted. But I actually did like the aged care. I didn't know anything better and I just did it, but I didn't get paid for it.
60. You would get hit with a ruler or whatever was handy regularly. I got hit with a ruler over the hand by Sister ^{MEJ}. I was upset because I didn't get into trouble much. ^{LSU} did get into trouble. She was stronger than me as a kid. I did what I had to do to keep the peace. I don't know if she hit me was because I couldn't do some

of the maths work she gave me. I can't do maths, I've never been able to do it. I can read. I do a lot of reading.

61. The discipline for talking or not eating was scrubbing the floor. Sometimes they would use canes in the class and the girls would be whacked. I saw this regularly. They would take girls to the front of the class and give them the strap. They had straps, canes and rulers. LSV and LSW were the main instigators. This would happen every day.
62. If girls didn't conform they would go to a place called Abbotsford, it's near Collingwood, as punishment. If they were drinking or swearing the nuns would send them off there. Discipline in Camberwell was far and beyond what was acceptable.

Reporting of abuse

63. Who could we report things to? They would say we were lying. We have never reported it to the police. I can't say I hope they all get what they deserve because they're all dead.

Life after the institutions

64. I was given no preparation for life after Camberwell. You generally stayed until you were fifteen or sixteen. There were a couple of girls that stayed a bit longer. I knew what I wanted to do. So the nuns made up for all the brutality and got me into mother craft nursing. Mother craft nursing is looking after new born babies in maternity hospitals.
65. I think I was fifteen when I left. I wanted to do general nursing but the nuns told me I was too young but I could do mother craft nursing. I went to St Joseph's in Broadmeadows hospital. They were a catholic order and then I went to St Vincent's to do work experience. In that respect I probably did a lot better than a lot of the other girls because I got a course and a degree and did that.

66. I got a reference from Sister MEJ [REDACTED] after I left. It said I was a very good worker, reliable, responsible and punctual when I was working in the aged care, from 1959 to 1963. I never got paid for any work I did at Camberwell.
67. Broadmeadows was for unmarried mothers. They would go there for two weeks, earn their keep and have their babies in St Vincent's. They would then go home and their babies would go to Broadmeadows. That's how we would do our training. And then, in the long run doctors and nurses who couldn't have babies adopted them. It was very sad what the unmarried mothers went through.
68. I was in Broadmeadows for two years after I finished my course. I then went to Richmond and I worked in the kindergarten there. That's when MEJ [REDACTED] asked me to go back to do the kindergarten at Nazareth House.
69. I met my husband about two years before I went back to Nazareth House to work in the kindergarten. We met at ten pin bowling. I left Nazareth House when I was five months pregnant. I was twenty five when I got married. [REDACTED] is my husband, he gets called [REDACTED] He is [REDACTED]
70. I only worked at the kindergarten at Nazareth House for about a couple of years. I became pregnant in April and in December I told them I wasn't coming back, so I left. I had nothing to do with the nuns while I was there and they didn't have anything to do with me. I ran the kindergarten and it was downstairs where the kids would go outside and play.
71. I went back to work after sixteen years after having my two boys. I did a dementia course after I went back to work. Three different courses. I gave up work eighteen years ago when [REDACTED] had a car accident. I had to be home for him. He is in a care home now. He has two carers. He comes to the house twice a week to see our dog, and I go to see him.

Treatment/support

72. I have flashbacks and nightmares about my time in Nazareth House. I have seen a psychologist, Peter Murray, for the last ten years. At a stage I was seeing him every week, but it brings back memories. I phased it out a bit. The last time I went to see him was about a month ago. The doctors know about my past and put me on to Peter. He is a very nice man.

Records and family tracing

73. I have no records from my time in care, **LSU** and I went to the Immigration Office but didn't get anything. I've never seen my records.
74. I went on holiday to Pascoe Vale, over Essenden way. The people we went on holiday with knew we had a brother who was in the British army. So I got in touch with the British army in Australia and spoke to them and told them what had happened. They said they would do what they could. The next thing we knew, we got a letter from **LSU** to say that we were his sisters. We found out we had four brothers and two sisters.
75. The first time I went back to Scotland I took my mother out to lunch. I thought she'd maybe talk to me, but she was very quiet. I think she was maybe embarrassed or ashamed. She came to the airport with the boys, all the brothers. They all came to get me and that was the first time I'd met her. I was working then and I was married, so I must have been about twenty six or twenty seven. She didn't want to talk. I asked one of the brothers why she wouldn't speak to me and he said he didn't know. About six years later she was dead. I only met her the once.
76. My other brothers and sisters are, from oldest to youngest, **LSU**, **LSU**, **LSU**, **LSU**, **LSU** and **LSU**. So **LSU** and I are second and third or first and second. We don't know. We were never given any knowledge of our siblings while we were in Camberwell. **LSU** and I have always been pretty close. When we were little we weren't as close but as we've got older I've always sort of looked after her.

77. Months ago I tried ringing my older brother, [REDACTED] and he has blocked my number. We had got on really well with all of them. I think it's to do with the Child Migrant stuff. The last time [REDACTED] and I went to Scotland was a couple of years ago and we stayed in Glasgow. Only one of them came up to see us. They are all still in Dumfries. I've accepted it now, but it was hard. One of them came out twice and stayed at mine and one came out once and now we don't hear from them or see them.

Other matters relating to migration

78. I have an Australian passport however I lost it the last time I went to Scotland. I had to get a new one and the Child Migrant Trust got it for me. I was going to have to wait three weeks to get it and we were only over for two weeks.
79. I have had assistance from the Child Migrant Trust to get over to Scotland. I have never received any monetary redress for my time in care. I receive a full senior pension.

Impact

80. I am very laid back. It took me a long time when I got married to consummate the marriage. That's why we only had two kids. I would have loved to have had a lot of children but I think of what I've been through. I'm nervous. I'm not as outspoken as [REDACTED] I think since this has been going on, our family in Scotland don't want anything to do with us.
81. I never told my in-laws or my friends where I grew up as I was embarrassed. [REDACTED] would have told his mum and dad. That had a big effect on me. I have two sons and they always say to me that it wasn't my fault and I shouldn't take the blame. But I tell them it's hard.
82. It takes me a while to get to know strangers. I think it's because of what we went through. We didn't get time in the classroom so my education suffered. The work I did affected my interest in school work. I didn't have the time or the inclination.

83. We are all suffering now from osteoarthritis. CGM has had two hip replacements and a full knee reconstruction. I have arthritis in my hands. I had an operation last November. It's still not right. It has to be from the work we had to do as kids in Nazareth House for all those years.
84. I think they should make sure the nuns learn how to bring up kids. They had no idea, they probably aren't even teachers.

Final thoughts

85. I miss Scotland very much. I've been back a few times. We were born there and we don't speak the language. When I'm there though I miss Australia.
86. I would hope that children aren't treated like slaves, that they have better food, schooling and just better treatment overall. I hope they are not rushing back from school and looking after old people.
87. On behalf of all the other children that go through it, someone has to speak to it. I just hope that it comes out that it's been worthwhile for us to speak out.
88. 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..... LST

Dated..... 20-03-19