

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

LZJ

Support person present:

1. My name is LZJ My date of birth is 1946. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I have no memories of life before going into care. Through the Child Migrant Trust I now understand that my father was called [REDACTED] who was born in 1910 and died in 1977. My mother was called [REDACTED] and she was born [REDACTED] 1910 and died [REDACTED] 1979.

Life in care – Nazareth House, Aberdeen

3. I understand that I went in to Nazareth House just three days before I turned five which would be [REDACTED] 1951. I know that from some records that I managed to obtain. I think I got them by writing to the child immigration people that sent us out here. Really the only memories that I have of being there are that a lady used to come and take me out. She used to take me to a house.
4. Prior to that, I've no idea where I was. I have a [REDACTED] called [REDACTED] but I don't remember [REDACTED] being there. Maybe it was an all-girls home.

General

5. I don't remember nuns, I just remember women there. I have only very vague memories of things at Nazareth House.

Washing and bathing/Hygiene

6. I remember that there were lots of baths in a big room. They didn't have showers. There was a group of girls and they put these big McIntosh clothes on us, like a big gown thing to go into the bath. Afterwards we took them off.

Schooling

7. I remember that we were schooled there. I also remember that I had glasses there. I don't remember getting them but I know that I had them when I was coming to Australia. One memory that I have is of a girl getting stung on the neck by a bee, so there must have been a lot of flowers there.

Healthcare

8. They did identify that I had eyesight problems and I got glasses whilst at Nazareth House. I think that actually caused a delay in me going to Australia. I think we were supposed to go in 1954 but it got put back because of me having to get my eyes looked at. I know from the medical records, that I eventually received that I had spinal meningitis in 1947. I don't know if this had any longer term effects on my health.

Visitors

9. The only visitor that I can recall having is the lady that used to come and take me away to her house. This house was away from Nazareth House but I don't know where. It must have been winter time because she always had the fire on. She would put rags in my hair, ringlets and she would paint my nails. I don't know who this woman was. She would quite often come and pick me up and take me there.

Migration

Selection/information

10. All I remember was them taking us up to a room, I think my brother [REDACTED] was with me and a lady said, "Do you want to go to Australia?" I don't know who the lady was. She asked if we liked apples and bananas and told us that there were bananas and apples on the trees in Australia. I said, "Oh yeah, I'll go there". It could have been round the block for all I know, I genuinely didn't know where Australia was. That is my first recollection of my [REDACTED] I don't remember ever meeting [REDACTED] before that.
11. They just called us in and said, "[REDACTED] and LZJ [REDACTED] do you want to go to Australia and by the way your name will now be [REDACTED] There was no explanation as to why our name was to be changed to [REDACTED] I just accepted that I had a [REDACTED] [REDACTED] called [REDACTED] it was just another bit of information being given to me. When I was told about the name [REDACTED] I had no idea that this was my father's name.

Leaving Scotland

12. We left Aberdeen on Monday [REDACTED] 1955. I don't remember how we got from Aberdeen to England, I just remember that it was freezing cold. They told us that we would be travelling to England where we would meet up with some other children. We would then all be traveling together to Australia. I think when we arrived in England we met four more children. They were two Irish and two English children.
13. The ship that was taking us to Australia was called 'The Strathaird'. From records I have now seen, I believe it sailed from London to Sydney. It departed [REDACTED] 1955 and it was due to arrive in Sydney on [REDACTED] 1955.
14. I remember the meals on the ship being really good. From my records I understand that each child had to have their own suitcase. I also remember the records saying that we should have '*light clothing for the tropics*' and '*warmer clothing for the first half*

of the journey'. I remember having a suitcase when we arrived at Neerkol. I believe the suitcase was packed for us before we left and it contained new clothes.

16. On board the ship we had a couple of women who were supervising or looking after us. They had boarded with us in London. I don't know who these women were but they settled us in and were on board throughout the journey. They would take us along to the dining room at meal times. I think that the two ladies must have had our documentation or papers with them because I don't remember ever seeing or carrying any. I don't actually remember the accommodation on the ship.
17. I remember this other boy, one of the six of us who boarded together he was called [REDACTED]. Often we were in the cafeteria area of the ship where they sold fish and chips. [REDACTED] was only a little kid, he was quite a cute boy and the staff there liked him. They used to give him fish and chips. [REDACTED] would never share them, so one night I hid until he was coming out with his fish and chips and I snatched them from him. [REDACTED] grabbed my glasses and threw them overboard. It was just kids messing about but I had major problems managing after that without my glasses. I never got glasses again until I was a young woman.
18. Of the children that travelled with us I remember [REDACTED] and his sister [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] they were English. The other two who were older than us were [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and they were Irish. So we were three separate sets of a brother and a sister. We never really discussed where the others were from. I definitely hadn't seen them before we got on the ship.
19. I think we had a fair degree of freedom on the ship. I don't remember being told we had to stay in the cabin or anything. There were lots of other people on the ship but it didn't really dawn on us where they had come from or where they were going. We were just living on a ship and these people were living and existing around us.
20. We had no idea about what it was going to be like when we arrived in Australia. Just that there was going to be lots of fruit. We didn't know if there were going to be kangaroos everywhere, we just didn't know.

21. I had no thoughts about family being left behind in Scotland or anything because my life experience was always Nazareth House, I had no concept of a family. That is until I got to Australia and I told the other children that my name was [REDACTED] and that [REDACTED] was going to come and get me. People said to me that no one was going to come and get me. My only aspiration when I arrived at Neerkol was that someone was going to come and get me and take me away from there. Because as soon as I arrived I realised that this was an orphanage and I didn't want to stay there.

Life in care – St Joseph's Home, Neerkol, Queensland, Australia

General

22. When we arrived in Sydney we went to somebody's great big house, I think we were there for maybe two or three days. There was a chap there and I think that there was a lady as well. The two or three days there was fine. The two women who had been with us on the ship were no longer there, I don't know what happened to them.
23. They then put the six of us on a bus and we made our way from Sydney up to Neerkol in Queensland. Knowing the distance now as an adult the trip must have taken a really long time on this bus. There were other people on the bus as well. I think it was just a service bus going north. I think it would have taken about a day and a half to get up there. I don't recall there being anyone supervising us on the bus but there must have been someone. I can't imagine six kids just being packed off on a service bus and turning up at Neerkol.

First day at institution

24. The bus dropped us off somewhere near the orphanage and we were then picked up by a car. Neerkol had its own car, and I remember someone driving us up a long driveway. We were then met off the bus at Neerkol by nuns. Someone told me that they were Irish nuns but I wouldn't know. At the entrance of the orphanage was a sign that said 'St Joseph's Home, Neerkol'.

25. Neerkol was made up of all different buildings. The layout I remember was a presbytery on one side, just past that was a wooden dormitory that was just for boys, then there was a huge brick building and that was where the nuns stayed. Beside the nun's accommodation was a church and just round a bit further was a nursery for the babies up to the age of four. A bit further round again was a two storey building and that was the girl's dormitory. That was for girls aged from five to fourteen. Then a bit further down was the school. The whole place was self-sufficient. I think they had a few hundred acres of land as well along with their own cattle and chicken.
26. The nuns then took us to our dormitories and they showed us where we would be sleeping. The dormitories weren't set out in age groups they were girls in one area and boys in another. Boys and girls were kept apart almost all of the time. The nuns took us to our dormitories and I remember still having my suitcase at that point.
27. Next thing I remember was the nuns taking my suitcase with all my clothes away. I remember I wanted to keep this one dress, it was green and it had this shirring on the front. They said, 'no, you can't have your own clothes'. So all of my clothes were just gone. You just had to have the same clothes that everybody else had.
28. The nuns gave you clothes with your number on them. You weren't a name anymore you were just a number. The nuns never used your name, they referred to you as your number. Everything had your number on it. They gave you underwear which was made there on the premises. I had a calico singlet which was just a piece of material with holes cut out and it was stitched down the side. The pants were the same and then a dress, that's all you got, no shoes no nothing. You got shoes on a Sunday only, other times you were barefoot.
29. The first incident that I remember at the orphanage was some kids carrying piles of sheets on their shoulders to the laundry and a nun came and whacked one of the kids across the face. I couldn't believe it, I thought to myself, 'I won't be staying here'. There were hundreds of kids there and I remember them always telling me that I wouldn't be leaving. They said 'nobody leaves here'. I remember introducing myself to other girls and them telling me that I didn't have a name anymore, I was just a number. I was shocked.

30. I remember one day calling an English girl called [REDACTED] by her surname. This was just after we'd arrived. She whacked me across the face. She said, 'You don't call me by name here'.
31. I remember telling the nuns that they needed to get me some glasses because [REDACTED] had thrown mine overboard. They told me that I wouldn't be getting any glasses and that I was the same as everyone else there and nobody else had glasses.
32. This was all a pretty major shock to me. Aberdeen as I remembered hadn't been too bad. The ship had been pretty good and now it was starting to hit me, the shock of being in Neerkol. The six of us that had sailed together were split up when we were in the home. Boys were mostly in one place and the girls in another. We only ever saw the boys, including [REDACTED] at mealtimes and occasionally in school.

Mornings

33. Every morning you had to get up at 06:30 hrs. The nun in charge of our dormitory would come round and say, 'Come on, get up, get out of bed'. You had to make your bed and get dressed then you went to church. This happened every day. Before that the nun in charge would appoint one girl to go round and check the beds. They were checking to see if anyone had wet the bed. If someone had wet the bed they would get belted by the nun with a bamboo cane. Thank god, I never wet the bed. The children who had wet the bed would have to then go to the laundry and get their sheets washed.
34. After church we would go to the dining room for breakfast. After breakfast we would go back to the dormitory and clean our teeth. We all had our own toothbrushes. Someone would stand with the cake of soap and we would all just put soap on our brushes and clean our teeth. There was no toothpaste. Then we would wash and go to school.

Mealtimes

35. The dining room was used by all the dormitories. The boys and the girls stayed segregated though. The tables were set up for six children to a table and there were nuns in there supervising. For breakfast, you would go in and it would be already there sitting on the table. There would be twelve pieces of bread with syrup and there would be a billy-can thing with tea already made up. So you got two slices of bread and a cup of whatever was in that pot. Sometimes we got a porridge which was like semolina and sometimes it came as a brown type of semolina. That was exactly the same every day except Sundays when the food wasn't so bad
36. On Sundays you went in and you stood up near your chair, you weren't allowed to sit down until you drank what was in front of you in a cup. One Sunday it was Epsom Salts and the next Sunday it was Sennatin. These were laxative drinks to make the kids go to the toilet. Once you had that, you could sit down and have your cornflakes. So that was the extra thing on a Sunday, the cornflakes as well as your bread and syrup.
37. At lunchtime we were given a hot meal, usually a stew of some sort. With that you either got cabbage, pumpkin or peas, you didn't get potatoes. There was also a pudding which was tapioca or sago. I think the food was all sourced from the orphanage. They had their own cattle and chickens and they made their bread.
38. At tea time you would come in and the table was set. There were twelve pieces of bread on the table and it was bread and dripping. In the pot it was cocoa and a jug of water from the tap. We didn't have a particular seating order, after a while as you became friends with people you got into the habit of dining with your own group of friends.
39. There was no supper time. After tea time, that was it, there was no more food. Therefore you had to eat your food during the day. That was all you got. If you didn't eat what was put in front of you then you didn't eat at all. I was one of the children however that used to go round the back of the building and spit out the meat. It was revolting and fatty. I don't think that anyone ever dared to refuse to eat the food though.

There were nuns there supervising the meals all the time. One of the nuns called Sister MWT used to walk around with a bell in her hand. If you ever slouched, she would dig you in the back with the wooden handle of the bell to make you sit up straight. It was quite painful.

Bedtimes

40. In my girls only dormitory there were lots of little beds lined up next to each other. The girls in my dormitory were all of a similar age. I think there were thirty to forty girls who slept there and a little alcove was at the end where a nun slept. The nun who supervised us was called Sister DGR. She was in charge of the dormitory. There were no lockers or private space for you to keep any personal stuff. Not that we had anything anyway. We just had beds. I think we just hung our clothes over the end of the bed.
41. As a young girl we went to bed at around 7:00 pm. As we got older around thirteen, and I became a 'working girl' at the home we were allowed to go to bed a bit later. Partly that was because we were working till later.

Washing and bathing/Hygiene

42. You would have a bath every day which the nuns would supervise. The nuns were probably just there to make sure you were sitting in the cold water because there was no hot water. The soap was made at the home, it was kerosene soap. You had to boil it all up and lay it out. Then you had to cut it into blocks. But everyone got a bath and it was different water because we had plenty of cold water. I think we had our own towels. I don't even know what time of day it was that we had baths, I think it may have been after school.
43. There were two toilets at the end of the dormitory on a veranda. They didn't have doors or anything, just cloth screens. The bathing was further down in another building. There were hand basins, toilets and a bath. The only time the girls were allowed hot

water, was when they were menstruating, you were allowed a bucket of hot water to wash with then.

44. The older boys did used to have a chore which was fetching hot water from the boiler. But that was for the nuns not the children.

Leisure Time

45. Later on at school as you got a bit older, maybe ten to twelve years old, we did play basketball after school. We had teams playing basketball on the cement. Other than that you went up to the dormitories after school. I don't really know what the girls that didn't play basketball did because the nuns didn't allow girls to sit around in groups and talk. Sport was encouraged though. The boys played Australian Rules Football. [REDACTED] got involved and played that. We've got photographs of those teams. Everyone's hair looks the same because of the way it was cut.

Trips and holidays

46. In the holidays you would go to stay with families who had children of a similar age to you. Sometimes you would stay with a family for a period of six weeks or so. That would be over the Christmas holiday period which was our summer holidays. These families were from all over the state. One lot of people I stayed with weren't very nice. They had two daughters and these girls would go off with their friends in to town in Rockhampton which was only about thirteen miles away. I would be left at home scrubbing the house and the stairs. I would be working at their home all throughout the holidays. Then they would take you back to the orphanage and ask for you again the next year.
47. My experience was that I was fed alright. Some kids had to eat away from the family but I was allowed to eat at mealtimes with them. My role was that I was definitely working for them all the time I was there. I would have been about fourteen at this

time. I remember that they were called MWU - MWV It wasn't a good experience.

48. Some of the kids had good experiences when they went to stay with families. One family that I did stay with was a good experience. I can't remember their name but at Christmas time they asked me what I wanted for Christmas. I asked them for a bottle of Blue Swan ink because we had dipping pens and I was used to us making our own ink at the orphanage. The one we made was a black powder. But I knew you could buy this commercial blue ink and I asked for it and they gave it to me. I thought this was so good. When I went back I had to hand all my presents back in to the nuns. However I managed to keep back my precious bottle of blue ink which I hid. But I couldn't ever use it because it was blue and the nuns would know. It dried up and got hard so it was ruined.
49. You really never dared not to hand your gifts back to the nuns. I'd taken a real risk with the ink. The nuns would use the surrendered gifts to hand out again the next year, on this one day which was called the 'Birthday Day'. Nobody's actual birthday was ever celebrated, it was just this one day, a day off school. We never went anywhere though. There were no additional gifts given out, just the ones that they had confiscated before. It wasn't your specific gift you got back either, it could have been anybody's gift.
50. Not everybody went to a family at the holidays. For instance I had refused to go back to the MWU - MWV because I knew they just wanted me to work for them. The nuns had a holiday place near the beach where they used to go called Emu Park and it was better to go there with the nuns than to a family that made you work. I think the option not to go with a family was only available to you as you got older. When you were younger it was 'tough luck, off you go'. I finished school when I was thirteen so I got a little bit more leeway because I was working at the orphanage by then.
51. One good thing about Emu Park was that you could go and pick mangos from the trees. You'd be told 'Don't come back with mango sores or you'll get belted'. When you picked the mangos the juice used to run up your arm and you can get sores from it. That was good fun though and you could go to the beach.

Schooling

52. The school was in the grounds of the home. The school day was from about 9:00 am, just a normal school day. The teaching was done by different nuns. One nun who was a big woman called Sister ^{DGT} [REDACTED]. We called her [REDACTED], and she used to sit there with a cane getting fed up if you got answers wrong. Because I needed glasses I couldn't see the board so I was eventually moved up to the back of the class with the 'dunces'. Once I was there I definitely couldn't see anything and therefore I had no chance of learning anything. I did tell the nuns that I couldn't see anything but they didn't care.
53. They did a lot of singing at the school. They sent some of us to the Eisteddfod, which is a music festival. They sent [REDACTED] there because he was a really good singer. He won a lot of prizes for them because of his singing. [REDACTED] was also very clever, he didn't need glasses.
54. You were only schooled until about thirteen or fourteen at the orphanage then you would go off to a college. The girls went to the Range College. When you finished the school at the home you did a State exam. The nuns then used to take the girls into town to get measured up for these quite nice uniforms to go to college. Anyway, I never got measured up for a uniform, I thought they'd forgotten to take me. But then they told me that I wasn't going because I was a 'dunce' and that I would stay at the orphanage and begin working there.
55. To this day no one has ever officially told me why I wasn't going to college. I didn't have any glasses so schooling at the home did nothing for me. [REDACTED] brother was very clever so he went on to a college where he boarded. He did very well, he was a smart boy. [REDACTED] would write letters back to the Mother Superior with updates. She called me in one time to see his letters and to say how well he was doing. I told her that I couldn't see it to read it. She just said to me, "You need glasses". After all that time with me asking for glasses and the nuns ignoring me they were now acknowledging that I had eye problems. By this stage my education had finished and I was seventeen.

Medical Issues

56. Sometimes the dentist came. He was called Mr Smith, he came to the orphanage for years. He would bring his surgery to a siding, outside the home near where there were some railway carriages. One way of getting better food was, to pretend to have a toothache. The dentist would then pull a tooth out. You came back with your mouth stuffed with cotton wool. Then you might get a boiled egg or some jam and bread rather than dripping and bread.
57. So it was good to get your back teeth pulled out. We didn't have toothache, we would just say we did so that we could get something different to eat. The home would drop you off for a check-up and he would examine your teeth. You would just say that one of your teeth was hurting and he would just pull it out.
58. Although the home was self-contained, there was no actual medical wing or anything. I don't really remember there being a lot of sickness or anything there. The one time that I do remember a doctor coming in was when one of the girls got pregnant. Some of the girls used to run away to Rockhampton which was fifteen miles off but the police always brought them back.
59. I remember one time one of the girls, who had run away called [REDACTED] was in the toilet and she was yelling with stomach ache. So we got the nuns and said that [REDACTED] was sick in the toilet. Anyway the nuns came up and they eventually emerged with a baby. Anyway [REDACTED] was whisked away and we never heard from her ever again. This other girl and I had to clean up all this mess. It was horrific, we couldn't understand what had happened. You would think that you would have noticed a girl was pregnant but we were so poorly nourished and the working girls were always carrying linen around in their arms so you might not have seen it.
60. So after that incident the orphanage brought a doctor out and all the girls had to get checked. We had to stand in a line and be looked at by the doctor. I kept going to the back of the line until the doctor eventually ran out of time and had to go back to town. No one touched me. I would have been fifteen or sixteen at this time and I was one of the working girls. The working girls were the only ones who had sufficient freedom to

actually run away. I never ran away though because I was too scared, I was very timid in there. I think it was mostly the Australian girls who ran away but we never saw [REDACTED] the girl who had the baby ever again.

61. We never got any sex education as we grew into young women. When you got your period they gave you little towels that you had to wash out and re-use. When my periods first came the nuns told me that I would be bleeding until I was about 50. I was terrified, I thought they meant every day. That was the time when you were allowed the bucket of hot water. I remember that if ice cream came from the Rotary or anything when you were on your period, they wouldn't let you have it. They said that you couldn't have anything cold.
62. With regards sex education, I do remember going to the office once and the nun saying something like, 'You've got a pearl and when you lose it, you can never get it back'. I looked at one of the other girls and said, 'What are they talking about? That was it.'

Religious instruction

63. There were different nuns who did different jobs. There were the ones that looked after or supervised the children but there were also nuns whose job it was to look after the presbytery. We used to go to church on a Sunday. I remember when I first arrived in the February it was so hot and I just keeled over in church and passed out. I got the cane from one of the nuns for that. I was told that you can't do that in church, but I couldn't help it, I was so hot.
64. You'd be in the church for a while because you had to do all the stations of the cross. God featured highly, all the way through the education.

Work

65. I had wanted to go to college with the other girls. I had looked forward to getting a nice uniform. When that opportunity was taken away from me I just sort of folded in to life

as a 'working girl' at the home. Between the age of thirteen and eighteen, you got jobs like working in the laundry. There was a big boiler there and all of the washing was done at the orphanage. The girls would do all the washing and then hang it out on the clothes line. If you didn't get the qualifications to go to High School you stayed there and the girls became what was termed 'working girls'. There was plenty of hot water for the washing, just not for the kids.

66. About twice a year the 'working girls' got given a bit of money and we got to go shopping in Rockhampton. We could buy what we wanted. The nuns took us into town and then they would come and pick us up. We had slightly better clothes when we were working and we could buy clothes as well. We could buy proper pants, proper underwear. I think this was instead of giving us any pay.
67. You would get given your area to work in and I worked for a while in the presbytery because there was a priest called Father MWW that lived there. I used to clean the house, I also went to the kitchen to pick up his meals and bring them up to the presbytery. He got great meals, different from the kids and what he didn't eat I ate. He got nice food with bread and butter and nice sweets. It was all made in the same kitchen as where the children's food was made.
68. Father MWW was okay to me but there was a lot of talk amongst the kids that he molested the boys. I never saw that though.
69. The nuns got better food as well. There were girls whose job it was to get their food and take it up to the convent. There was nice bread and jam, cereal and tea.
70. I would also take Father MWW dirty clothes down to the laundry where they got washed. I would go and pick them up when they were clean, take them back and pack them away for him. I did this from about thirteen or fourteen onwards.
71. However even when you were young you had work to do. The dormitories had polished floors and the kids were expected to keep the floors shiny. To do this we used blankets. One kid would sit on the blanket and the other would pull them along. Then they would swap over.

72. Once I'd stopped working in the presbytery I moved on to looking after the young boys. They were aged from six to twelve. I did this up until I was eighteen.

Christmas and Birthdays

73. Once a year at the orphanage they had something called a 'Birthday Day'. It was the 8th September every year. It was a day where it was everybody's birthday. So we had a day off and we played games. It was a happy day and we got presents but it was usually the presents that they took from us when we came back from holidays or the Christmas before. They would give the kids some of the gifts they'd been given when families had taken them in over the holidays.
74. They played games on 'Birthday Day' and I remember the nuns being mean sometimes and saying to me, "You're not going on my team for needle threading on 'Birthday Day', you can't even see to thread the needle." At Christmas time before you went away to stay with people, if that was what you were doing, there was no celebration that I can remember. I think maybe the nuns celebrated themselves by having better food.

Visitors

75. The Bishops and the important Catholic people would come and visit the home. Also at the weekends we would have visits from people like the Rotary or one of those charitable organisations. They would bring these huge big vats with ice blocks in them. We got them when they came. It was unbearably hot at times of the year.
76. They would sometimes take the boys down to the creek to teach them swimming. Other than that Catholic people would come but they were there to see the nuns not the kids. I remember there were some English kids called [REDACTED] and their mother had died. Their father used to come sometimes and take them out. Some of the white Australian kids got visitors occasionally but not the Aboriginal kids, they got no visitors.

77. The orphanage was made up of a number of black Aboriginal kids. There was also a lot of white Australian kids and a much smaller number were British and Irish kids. There was no difference in how the children were treated by the nuns. They were all treated the same. There was always a steady stream of children entering the home from Catholic backgrounds if their parent died or their circumstances meant they needed a home.

Family

78. Although [REDACTED] was at the Orphanage, I had literally no contact with him all the way through my time there. So even when [REDACTED] went off the boarding school I didn't think too much of it because I didn't see him anyway.

Emotional care/support

79. The nuns offered us no sort of love or emotional support.

Personal Possessions

80. Personal possessions were frowned upon. When I arrived my suitcase had been taken away from me with my clothing in it. Any gifts that you were given were taken away. I did hide the blue ink but it dried up before I ever got a chance to use it.

Abuse

81. The nuns were in charge. I was a timid girl and was constantly afraid. But kids did get slapped and hit by the nuns and it could be for almost anything. They used the cane, a belt and they slapped children. There was the nun who used the handle of the bell to hurt children in the dining hall.

Life after the institution(s)

82. As I got older and was a working girl I was looking at the kids moving on from the orphanage and I decided that I had to get out. I was told that I was different from the others because I was a migrant. I was told that I had to stay until I was 21. I was eighteen and I just told them that I didn't want to be there anymore and that I would be going. I'd been there for ten years. When she realised how determined I was the Mother Superior said that she would see what she could do.
83. So, she got me a job way out in the West of Queensland where there were hundreds of acres of sheep farmers. She got me a job in this little town called Richmond. I was taken down to Rockhampton and put on this tiny six seater plane and flown to Richmond in Queensland. I'd never been on a plane before and I'd had no preparation for the world outside the home. All I kept thinking was that I'd got away. I'd no idea where I was going because I'd only really ever been there in the orphanage. I was still informed by letter though that I was a Ward of the State until I was 21.
84. I was met off the plane by a lady called [REDACTED] and she told me that I'd be working for her. Since that day I have only ever returned to the orphanage for reunions. [REDACTED] then took me to their house in the town where she and her family lived and she introduced me to her husband and her children. It was a tiny little town out in the sticks. I think it had a school and a hospital. [REDACTED] paid me a wage to live and work there. It went straight in to the bank as I didn't need money because I was living at her home. I really didn't know how to spend money anyway.
85. I stayed living with [REDACTED] and she had what was called a 'Child Minding Centre'. Families would drop their kids off there. [REDACTED] husband had a little Commer bus and he would go out and pick up and drop off little kids. The kids would stay there at the centre while the parents worked for the day. During the day there would be around fifteen to twenty kids. I think this was about 1965. As [REDACTED] Child Minding Centre became better known, people would come in from outside of town and drop children off for the weekend. They would then go to the races or to balls. They would come back and pick the kids up on a Monday morning.

86. There were a lot of children coming through the centre. On top of that [REDACTED] had boarding children who lived way out. They would come in to attend school and go home on a Friday night. My job was to help out with all the children. There was such a difference between how these children were cared for from the way we were brought up in the orphanage. These children were in a loving home. [REDACTED] treated all the kids the same regardless if they were boarders, day kids or even her own kids. They were all happy kids and they had nice food.

Life After the [REDACTED] Family in Richmond

87. I stayed in Richmond for about twelve months and then I felt that there must be more to the world. I told [REDACTED] and she asked me what I was going to do. I said, I think I'm going to be a nurse. [REDACTED] said that she didn't think I could be a nurse because I had no education. I said, "I think I will".
88. So we wrote to a lot of hospitals and [REDACTED] helped me with the letters. Even although [REDACTED] didn't think any would take me on. One hospital did respond positively however. It was a hospital way up in a place called Mareeba near Cairns. So off I went to Mareeba and started nursing. It was pretty tough. The nursing was fine but the exams were really tough for someone who had no education. I did two years and I passed the medical exams on anatomy and physiology. I flew through those because I was interested. However I really struggled with the maths and instead of becoming a Nursing Sister at the end of my training I became an Assistant in Nursing.
89. Whilst I was up there in Mareeba I was discovering more about the world all the time. I remember going into town one day and seeing my first set of traffic lights. There were such a lot of normal things that people take for granted that I had never encountered before. I ended up moving around a bit. I went to Brisbane, back up to Cairns, I went to Sydney and all the while I was nursing. I did more exams and became what is known as an Enrolled Nurse and you can work almost anywhere with that certificate.
90. I then went to Sydney to live and after a break from working I started to look around again for a job. I found this little quiet private hospital and when I showed them my

paperwork they saw the name [REDACTED] in my certificates and gave me a job straight away. He said to me, '[REDACTED] you can start on Monday'. On this occasion the change to my father's name when I left Scotland actually helped me. I worked at that little hospital for years, in the operating theatre.

91. I eventually moved up to the sunshine coast and by that stage I'd had a partner and we had a little business delivering orange juice. We sold the business and moved up with a little bit of money behind us. However I got bored not working, so I rang a few hospitals and I was eventually offered a six week contract doing night duty. I said, 'No thanks, I don't do night duty, those days are over'. I offered to do day duty and they gave me a job. I was there for twenty odd years. I studied a bit more there and became what is classed as an Endorsed Enrolled Nurse which was a bit higher up again.
92. I eventually got a bit bored doing that and decided that I wanted to be a veterinary nurse. So I studied and became a Vet nurse and I worked in a Vet's surgery for about eight years. Then I decided I wanted a pet shop so my partner [REDACTED] and I opened one. On and off I was able to use my nursing qualification down the years and work at a variety of hospitals.
93. My partner [REDACTED] eventually had a job that meant I didn't have to work anymore but I still got bored. I've worked in a charity shop and more recently I saw a notice on the board at the supermarket for someone to work in a cattery. So I now do that a couple of mornings a week.

My Brother [REDACTED]

94. After leaving the orphanage [REDACTED] and I hadn't kept in touch. About ten to fifteen years later when I was working in a hospital I got a message from the manager of the hospital to say that a man had been trying to get a hold of me. She told me that it was my brother and I didn't believe her after all those years. She said the man's name was [REDACTED] so I thought that it could be him. He rang back and I spoke to him. He said that he was coming up from Melbourne for a few weeks and he asked to stay with me. I said that of course he could.

95. The only other contact I had really had from [REDACTED] down the years had been drunken phone calls in the middle of the night. I'd even rung up Telstra the telephone company to try and work out the cheapest ways of receiving his phone calls because [REDACTED] would always reverse the charges because he didn't have any money. The phone company had given me a plan for when he wanted to call me. He had to phone a special number which prevented him having to use reverse charges. I gave him some boundaries to work within regarding when he could phone. So he would ring now and then but it did surprise me when he rang my place of work and left a message.
96. His visit was a nightmare. He nearly drove me nuts while he was there. He stayed for about six or seven weeks without any money. He flew up but I have no idea how he got the money to do that. I picked him up at the airport. He just sat around smoking and drinking everything that I had in the house, including the cooking wine. He said one day that when he came into money he was going to pay off my mortgage. I said that he was never going to have any money. I was talking about his lifestyle but he got so angry with me for saying that. He picked up his bags and he was gone for about four days. When he came back he said he'd been sleeping down at the stables.
97. Eventually I told him that I was putting him on a train back to Melbourne. He'd been staying with me for too long and it wasn't doing either of us any good. When we got to the station he confessed that he didn't have the money for the ticket. He suggested that I just give him the money but I insisted that I buy his ticket. So we did that and he went home.
98. The only contact that I had from him after that was occasional updates telling me that he was sleeping rough or in cheap hotel rooms. I had actually encouraged him to speak to the Child Migrant Trust and get some help from them. He did end up contacting CMT and they arranged for him to go to the UK where he met up with our brother. Just before he went the CMT and the Salvation Army managed to fix him up with a little place to stay and he loved it. He went to the UK but about three weeks after he came back he had a stroke. He'd had medication which he hadn't been taking.

99. I was working at the vets at the time and they were so kind. I had no money and they arranged for [REDACTED] and I to fly down to care for [REDACTED] and they covered the cost. [REDACTED] and I ended up staying for a while to try and help [REDACTED] get sorted out.
100. [REDACTED] was such a clever young man and he had such promise but the stories were that visitors to the orphanage like the Rotary and others had been sexually abusing some of the children and [REDACTED] was one of the boys who had fallen prey to those men. These men used to take the boys down the creek and give them cigarettes and there were always rumours about what they were doing with the boys. [REDACTED] has said that things went on and I think these things preyed on his mind down the years. One of the men was called Mr MXX and I think the priest called Father MWW as well. It was all around that [REDACTED] had been sexually abused.
101. I think [REDACTED] took to drink to push memories out of his mind. Then in the course of his life, things just haven't worked out for him. [REDACTED] was smart as a young man though. He could have been Prime Minister of Australia. Everything just fell apart.

Other action taken

102. I've never taken any action against anyone in relation to what happened to myself or [REDACTED] I've always just tried to get on with my life. It wasn't Gordon Brown's fault that we got sent to Australia anyway.

Child Migrant Trust and family tracing

103. I started writing to the Child Migrants Trust in the late eighties. I had initially tried through the Salvation Army when I was in Richmond to trace my Scottish family. I needed a birth certificate and I had no papers. I was writing to Catholic immigration people and they were just saying that there was nothing that they could tell me other than, 'You're parents weren't married and your mother was a waitress and your father was a chair maker'. I was very cross about the way they had dealt with me. I wrote

back to them and said that I'm sure my father could make tables as well as chairs. They just had no concept about the needs of other people.

104. I think eventually the Catholic Immigration people got me the short version of my birth certificate for a fee. That allowed me to enter nursing. Eventually though it was only through my relationship with the Child Migrants Trust that I found out about my family. I found out that my mother re-married. She was originally married to Mr [REDACTED] and he was killed in the war. They had only been married about ten months. My mother had a relationship with our father [REDACTED] sometime after that and [REDACTED] and I were a result of that. However she then met a Mr [REDACTED] who she then married. She married him in 1951 which was just after she put us in Nazareth House Aberdeen.
105. She married Mr [REDACTED] and they had three children, two sons and a daughter. When the Child Migrant Trust found them, the elder brother [REDACTED] didn't want to meet me. I accepted that. He didn't know me. [REDACTED] my other brother who is blind and my sister [REDACTED] wanted to know who I was. So then the CMT arranged for me to go over to the UK and meet with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]
106. It was in the nineties that I went back and met them. I stayed for a few weeks, it was a really lovely trip. [REDACTED] was able to tell me that my mother had died. We went to the cemetery where mum was buried. When I came back to Australia the CMT had found my family on my father's side and discovered that I had a brother who lives in Israel and a sister who lives in New York. They were from the [REDACTED] family. I've actually been to Israel twice to meet my brother but I haven't been to New York. Many of the trips had been arranged and paid for by CMT. The Child Migrant Trust also helped me get hold of my records.
107. I had real problems getting a passport originally because I had no papers. The man in the Post Office in Australia did me a real favour. A documentary had been shown on TV called 'Lost Children of the Empire' and there had been quite an impact in the media after it. I don't think people had been aware of the migrant children. The man in the Post Office was saying that I just didn't have the paperwork to get an Australian passport. I told him that I was one of these children and he immediately helped me. I don't think I would have got a passport without his help. I had initially got a British

passport but it transpired that unless I got a visa or an Australian Passport I would have problems re-entering the country if I left.

108. The Child Migrant Trust also selected me to go back to the UK when Gordon Brown who was then the Prime Minister gave his apology in parliament to all the child migrants. A few of us were selected to go and we stayed in a nice hotel and we went to Westminster where Gordon Brown gave a speech. He then met and spent time with the child migrants that were there. He asked about what had happened to us, how we had left the UK and what life was like at the institutions. He was a bit angry to hear our histories.
109. I did meet some people through the CMT who had similar experiences to myself. One of them was [REDACTED] and she travelled to the UK for the apology as well. She has had psychiatric problems though. She left care and went into the army. I think it was the safety of being regimented. In later years though she has had problems with gambling and slot machines. Through the CMT [REDACTED] did find her family in the UK. Her sister died recently though so that's not been good for her.

Impact

110. It's strange because I was really timid in the orphanage and I became a much more assertive person as an adult and I remember that some people who were more confident in there have not flourished so well outside. In the eighties a woman called [REDACTED] who is a bit of a historian about Neerkol organised a reunion at the orphanage. By the eighties the place had been turned into a conference centre. I decided to go, we got lots of good food this time.
111. It was nice to see all the kids again as adults. There were even a couple of the old nuns there. Sister Joseph was there. She had worked with me looking after the boys. Also Sister Finter, who looked after small girls. They didn't speak about what had happened back there.

112. A lot of kids died out there and there is a cemetery up on the hill behind the orphanage. I know there have been newspaper articles about it. Children died when I was there, it might have been the babies I don't know for sure.
113. I did ask [REDACTED] the historian if [REDACTED] a girl I used to know was coming to the reunion and she said no but that she would take me to see her. We went to visit her and here was this girl with black eyes. Apparently she had this terrible husband that was beating her up. She was black and blue and she said that she couldn't go to the reunion. So people have suffered in lots of ways even after they left the orphanage. Then I remembered that when I left there at eighteen I decided that no one was ever going to hit me ever again. No one was going to cut my hair and I was going to have a house and a car.

Final thoughts

114. The worst thing that I feel about being in care is that they didn't educate me and it was their fault. They knew that I needed the glasses. It wouldn't have cost them anything to get me glasses, the government were paying for the children out there.
115. As children we didn't have a choice about going to Australia. If you like apples and oranges you go to Australia if you don't you stay in Scotland. That was it. I wonder what life would have been like if I'd never been brought out. Would I have had the happy life I have now and would I have stayed in the orphanage in Scotland, maybe have been educated and moved on to being something? I am happy in Australia and I have a wonderful husband and I've enjoyed nursing but I do wonder what I would have been if I'd stayed and had an education because I actually had glasses over in Scotland but not here.
116. The [REDACTED] family that I went to work for in Richmond when I first left Neerkol have stayed in touch with me all these years. They were like my Australian family. [REDACTED] the husband gave me away at my wedding. Unfortunately he recently passed away.
117. I have an Australian passport but I am Scottish no matter what.

118. I hope that the Public Inquiry will help people recognise that it wasn't just English children who were sent to Australia. There were many Scottish children as well. I know that Scottish children were sent to Rhodesia and Canada. I hope the Inquiry will help these people be heard as well.
119. 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.

LZJ

Signed.....

Dated.....

18/4/2019,