Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

HSC

Support person present: No

1. My name is HSC 1956. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

- 2. I didn't really know my parents. My father was in and out of prison and my mother left when I was four. My father took up with another woman. It seemed that when my mother left, my father took it out on me. When I was six or seven years old he tied me to a chair and beat the hell out of me. This lasted for three days and three nights. It was bad at times.
- 3. I had one brother called **and** and a sister called **brock**. I was the youngest. There is only a year between **brother** and I. There is three years between my brother and I. I stayed between my father and my uncle's house in **brock and the stayed** Paisley. It was a rough council estate. It was gang orientated and full of thieves.
- 4. One minute I was sitting having breakfast then I was taken in front of a Children's Panel in Paisley. I was nine years old. I haven't got a clue why. They brought me forward and actually called me a toe-rag. I was only a nine year old boy. I was sent to St Ninians, I think this was 1965.

St Ninians, Aberfoyle

5. I was taken by some lady. I don't know who she was. The building and surroundings were stunningly beautiful. It was like walking into a scene from Harry Potter but there was nothing 'Harry Potter' about it. The woman spoke to one of the head monks and then she was gone.

Routine at St Ninians

First day

- 6. The head monk was carried down the stairs by two other monks. He was a bit frail. He came down and welcomed me to St Ninians. He said that he hoped that I would enjoy my stay there. I looked around and thought that it might not be too bad there. I found out after a few days it wasn't the case.
- 7. They took me up to the dormitories. I was shown my bed. I heard some noise coming from one of the windows which was slightly open, I looked out and saw a lot of kids running about playing football. One of the monks took me down and he called all the lads together and introduced me. That was it basically, that was my introduction to St Ninians.

Mornings and bedtime

- 8. The dormitory was fairly big but it wasn't just one dormitory. There were about three or four dormitories. Some were smaller. I was in a fairly large one. I think there were eight or nine other children in my dormitory. They were about the same age as me.
- 9. I remember my brother walked in. He had been out somewhere on a trip. I didn't even know my brother was there. I thought to myself that isn't too bad because it was someone I actually knew. I hadn't had the faintest idea that he was there. I don't think the dormitories were done by age. My brother is nearly three years older.

There were others who were slightly older. I think there were about 35 or 40 other boys in the home. There were quite a number of lads there.

- There was a set time for going to bed but I can't remember. You didn't go to bed at midnight. The monks walked about checking we were in bed.
- 11. We got up fairly early. I think one of the monks would come in and get us up. They used to ring a bell sometimes. You would hear the bell and jump out of bed. I had to make my own bed. I never heard anything about bed wetting.

Staff

12. There was a man called Mr MCK. There were monks called Brother ZMJJ Brother MCT, Brother LUE and Brother MBZ. The most notorious one was Brother Benedict. I knew him as 'Bootsy'. They were all teachers.

Mealtimes/Food

- 13. The dining hall was at the very end of the building on the ground floor. It was actually the ladies from the village who came in and cooked our meals. We all ate together. We had mainly porridge, some bread and an egg or some sort. I had problems with certain foods. I can't drink milk or eat butter or cheese. I couldn't have them. I would be force fed sometimes. I used to run out of the dining room and vomit over the balustrade.
- 14. The monks thought it was fun. They would bring over some bread with thick margarine on it and would say "eat it". I would tell them that I didn't want to eat it. So I would get a slap. I would have a wee bit of it but my body would react to it. I felt nauseous. I was never asked if I had any special needs with food in St Ninians. You were just dropped in there and left to your own devices. Sometimes it was Mr MCK Brother MCT, Brother ZMJJ, Brother LUE and Brother MBZ. They found it hilarious at times. They seemed to find amusement in it.

Clothing / uniform

15. I didn't wear a school uniform. I think the clothing was provided by St Ninians. After school, we had tea and were allowed to play football and climb trees. The usual things. That's the things the evenings were made up of.

School

- 16. I couldn't read or write until I was ten years old. My father was a bit of a moron. As time went on, I realised that I had to, I wanted to learn so I applied myself in the proper fashion. Within twelve months I was top of the class in every subject. It was gold stars and bravo but it was tainted. I wanted to learn but once it was there it was as if they resented it.
- 17. They rang the bell and we went into a little yard at the back. We would have a break out there. It reminded me of a stable with the cobbled ground.

Trips / Holidays

- 18. They took us out on trips. I remember one time on a sports day we went to the Queen Victoria which was a privately run place. It was a boarding school, a massive place, with a swimming pool. It was stunning place. We went there for a sports day with other lads. I was rather envious of those lads. It was an eye opener from where we were. I didn't go on any holidays.
- 19. We were allowed home on 'home leave' sometimes. I think we came out on a Friday and went back on a Sunday but it wasn't every week. When I came out Things weren't right at home. I spent more time at my aunt and uncle's. They are the only family I've ever known. We would make our way back to Glasgow on a Sunday. There would be a van waiting for us at Buchanan Street Bus Station and they would take us all the way back to the school.

Birthdays and Christmas

20. My tenth, eleventh and twelfth birthdays were spent there. They weren't acknowledged at all. I have no recollection about Christmas. My mind had gone blank by then.

Visits / Inspections/ Review of Detention

- 21. There were no visits from social workers during my time. There was no vetting of staff. I never saw any inspections. I think that, if they took place, it was on occasions when we had been taken out for the day. I wouldn't be surprised if they brought somebody to look around then so that there would be no kids there.
- 22. My father came to visit once with a few of his friends. He was drunk and was asked to leave.

Healthcare

23. I had toothache once. It must have taken well over a week for them to get me to see a dentist. They brought the dentist into St Ninians. He wasn't too nice either.

Chores

24. I did a bit of cleaning. I wasn't always doing the same things. I would mop the floors or brush them and things like that. I think the chores were the most natural thing in the world.

Religion

25. When I look back I don't know why the monks bothered teaching religion. It was an absolute disgrace. It wasn't right. I had to go to chapel and do all that. It depended

on the Stations of the Cross. There might have been a session during the week. I have no faith whatsoever. I'm an atheist.

Abuse at St Ninians

26. There were maybe two incidents over the course of the week. I would go to bed worried and I would get up in the morning worried. After I learned to read and write I would go to the library because I was no longer just looking at pictures. I would spend a lot of time in there or I would go down to the stables and mingle with the ponies. I remember every one of their names.

Brother Benedict

- 27. My protagonist, Brother Benedict, is in prison today. He was known as 'Bootsy'. If ever the devil walked the earth, there's your man. I reported him to the police in England. They passed it onto the Scottish police.
- 28. Brother Benedict often took me down to the cellars. There were different passageways down there. He had a fascination with electric. He had old Bakelite phones, switches and alarms. I was electrocuted by my testicles. I remember I was standing near a table, the next minute two hands flew up my leg. I passed out. When I came to, he must have seen some hilarity in this because he was laughing. I certainly wasn't laughing. I was electrocuted a few times.
- 29. I was isolated. It was like taking one sheep away so that the others don't see too many things going on. That was how things operated. Brother Benedict told me to take my clothes off and have a shower. He would step in with a yard broom and scrub me with it. They certainly weren't nice people and I'll never forget them. I won't forget any of the lads who went there. I still remember their names and where they came from. I have lived with them in my memory every day of my life.

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Brother ^{zMJJ}

- 30. Brother ^{ZMJJ} would take me away into the bathroom as well. It was just me and him. There was a coldness about him. He didn't laugh like Bootsy. There was no mirth or laughing out loud. There was a cold approach to everything.
- 31. He took his penis out and wanted me to do things with it. I know a lot more about the birds and the bees than I should have at that age. I have seen many things that I shouldn't have seen as boy. I knew it was wrong. I have been battered more times than a fish. I became immune to it after a while. I'm surprised I haven't had a broken bone in my life.
- 32. I would sit down on occasions and I would watch two of the monks playing chess. I don't know why but I got engrossed in it. Months and months went by. One day I came after tea time and Brother was there. He asked me if I wanted to learn how to play so I sat down. I had an idea how to play and thought maybe I shouldn't but I set my pieces up. I actually beat him. The next thing I knew he punched me. I've never been punched so hard in my life. I never played chess again at St Ninians. It was almost like they wanted to take your inner self away. It was the first of many times I felt like that. The beatings were always for no reason. It was a game of chess. I was only a child. Why would you want to beat a child up?
- 33. They gave out the punishment as and when they deemed fit. It might have been if they were having a bad day, I haven't the faintest idea. I'd been having a hard day, every day after only three days at St Ninians.

Mr MCK

34. There was a teacher called Mr MCK. He was a civilian. He wasn't dressed as a monk. He taught English, reading, writing and Arithmetic, that sort of stuff. He had red hair. I think MCK was in his forties but that's just a guess.

- 35. His favourite punishment was the cane. He beat the living daylights out of me in front of the class one day. He lost control and struck me all over my body. Sometimes he would tell someone to stand up on the table and he would cane them. There were others times when he just lost the plot and would just go to town with the cane. He found it funny.
- 36. He used to masturbate in the back room after giving me the cane or he would play with himself behind his desk. That was how he got his kicks. It was disgusting. Reflecting back, he was perverted. There is no question about that. All the boys knew exactly what he was getting up to in that back room.
- 37. I knew what he was doing to at least two of the kids because I did something that I never thought I was capable of. I gave a young guy a hug one day. I'll never forget the look in his eyes. He literally had a haunted look in his poor eyes. This kid had been stripped of everything. There was nothing left. He was just a shell. I never thought I was capable of giving a kid a hug. I couldn't help myself from hugging him. You didn't do that kind of thing back in the day but I just couldn't help myself. I mean I was going through a bad time myself but this wee guy because of some of the details I knew, you walk in unexpected type of thing, you wouldn't believe it.
- 38. I didn't run away per se. One morning I decided to go for a walk instead of going to the classroom because it was a nice day. One of the monks found me and took me back. All hell broke loose after the monk left the room. MCK went mad with the cane in front of the classroom. There was no defence going on. It was indiscriminate. It didn't matter where he was striking you. I'm not talking about three or four blows. He just lost the plot. It was an assault. The other monks and staff knew what was going on.

Brother MBZ

39. I remember one time I was standing a bit away watching one of the monks tending to two beehives. I think it was Brother He called me over and asked if I'd like to give him a hand. He put the hood and gloves on me. The bees were flying about all

over the place. I haven't got the faintest idea what was going on in his head but he pulled the hood off me. I was chased by the bees and stung all over my neck and face. He was laughing. I ran all the way down to the stables. I saw somebody there and they put iodine over the stings. I had brown dots all over my face.

40. I didn't see a doctor or a nurse. I don't know how they would have explained it. If they had got someone from outside, in the village, it would have started ringing alarm bells.

Leaving St Ninians

- 41. I left in 1968. I was told I was going home the next week. I can't remember who told me. I wished they would have sent me home there and then. I was dropped off at Buchanan Street Bus Station. I walked down to Glasgow Central Station to get the train to Paisley Gilmour Street.
- 42. I went back to my father's briefly. I left after half an hour. I just knew things hadn't changed. Everything was wrong. I had become an outcast because he had taken up with a new woman and her two young daughters. I think myself and my sister, were a reminder of my mother to this other woman. I think there was some jealousy.
- 43. When I left in 1968, my brother didn't want to talk to me so we drifted apart. I was a reminder. I think he wished that I hadn't been there and only he would have known about it. I'm a constant reminder to my brother. After I left St Ninians things between me and my brother were never the same.

Life after being in care

45. I got into a bit of trouble and was sent to St Joseph's.

St Joseph's, Port Seton

46. St Joseph's was outside of Edinburgh, near Port Seton. I arrived there and it was more monks. I had just turned twelve. A couple of weeks later a few other lads turned up from St Ninians. I didn't intend to stay there for long. I could have quite easily walked out the door but I tried not to be too hasty.

Routine in St Joesph's

- 47. It wasn't too bad. It was a similar routine to St Ninians. I had science lessons in the school. I can't remember any names of the monks or brothers. There was a mixture of civilian staff and monks. It was all boys around my age, there were one or two who were older, just like in St Ninians. There were dormitories.
- 48. The religious instruction was the same as St Ninians. I had no choice unless I was dying. I had to go. There were no issues with bathing. They just left you alone. There was no one there. I suppose that's the normal thing to do. I was always apprehensive waiting for something to happen.
- 49. I didn't have any issues with the food in St Joseph's once I pointed out that I couldn't have dairy products. I didn't receive too many beatings or sexual advances. However I was beaten a few times.
- 50. I was always in the background and I kept a low profile. I'm sure there was some form of corporal punishment there but I kept out of the spotlight. I tended to keep myself to myself. I wasn't visited by anyone from social work. I didn't have any visits at all.

- 51. After school we went out to the football parks and there was an area for cricket. I think some of the boys played baseball. We were left to our own devices. They used to take us swimming and it was quite nice. I just didn't trust the monks.
- 52. One night, they took us to see a movie in the village. When we were coming back, one of the monks was getting a bit stroppy on the bus about something so I decided to leave. I told the others I was going over the wall. Before I knew it, everybody else was coming with me. I was there for no more than four months.
- 53. After running away, I was arrested in Edinburgh and taken to a remand centre. I can't remember the name. There were adult males and females in a separate bit. I was there for a couple of months until they decided what was going to happen. After that we were dispersed elsewhere.

St Mary's, Bishopbriggs

- 54. I was told that I was going to St Mary's in Bishopbriggs. There was no discussion about it. I was just told. Some of my friends followed.
 and and came. St Mary's was run by civilian staff. It was an open facility.
- 55. There were no issues within St Mary's. I didn't have any problems with food. They had their own bakery on the premises. I told one of the women from the kitchen about the foods that I couldn't eat. She noted it down and that was it.
- 56. There was no comparison with St Ninians. It wasn't a bad place. They tended to let you get on with things. There was a lot of things with sport happening.
- 57. We were in dormitories. There were four. There were ten in each one. There might have been the odd boy who was slightly older than me.

- 58. They celebrated Christmas at St Mary's. I know what Christmas is, but I haven't experienced it. What is normal for some people is different for others. I don't understand the normal. My life hasn't been normal.
- 59. The head master was an Irish man. He was a former boxer. He always threatened corporal punishment but he was actually a bit of a softie. He was a nice guy. I didn't see any form of corporal punishment.
- 60. I ran away a few times but it was just a bit of tomfoolery. It wasn't a case of taking liberties because he was a nice guy. The police would come to my Uncle and take me back. There was no punishment. I would just apologise and that was it.

Geisland, Beith

- 61. I had no respect for anyone or anything. I just went about doing things my own way. It's a horrible feeling not being answerable to anyone. I wouldn't take anything. I got myself into a spot of trouble again and I was transferred to Geisland. I'd been in St Mary's for about a year. I was fourteen. I'd been taken to the sheriff court to be dealt with. I had come of age now. The authority had gone up. It was in the early seventies.
- 62. I was taken there by a lady. Prior to me getting out of the car, I saw one of my wee friends who hadn't seen for years. It was an approved school. I think it was run privately by lairds. They paid the wages.
- 63. I had a bad encounter with the man SNR at first. His name was Mr ZD at first. His name was Mr ZD at first. He was ex RAF. He had been expecting me. This lady formally introduced me and put some paperwork in front of him. She left and it was just myself and Mr ZD in a big office. For this man, his corporal punishment was the belt. I noticed that there were putting greens out the window. I walked over to a stand with the putters in it and I picked one up. I told him if he ever thought of using the belt on me that this is what he would be getting. He was a wee bit shocked and taken aback.

64. From that moment onwards that man became a great mentor to me and helped me a great deal. He was a lovely man. He was quite a remarkable chap. He's about the only man I've ever respected throughout the whole system. I was just over fifteen.

Routine at Geisland

- 65. I did well at school in Geisland because I liked to do things. I could sit and have a game of chess without having my jaw broken. I could play sports that I liked. I loved gymnastics. Mr zero encouraged it and took a great interest in what I was doing.
- 66. There was quite a number of staff there. They actually had houses built on the area. The whole place had been built by lads who had been there over the decades. The staff stayed in the houses there. They mingled with the lads who stayed there. It was quite a place.
- 67. We stayed in dormitories again. Some of the lads were older. I knew that some of the lads were seventeen. I was fifteen. There weren't set times for going to bed or getting up. EZD was a stiff upper lip type. Mr EZD wanted you to be the man. He wanted to try to bring something out of you. I couldn't envisage anyone saying anything bad about him. He really went out of his way. He wanted you to leave there with your head held high and shoulders back and be strong.
- 68. The meals were brilliant. Nancy Wiggins was the cook. I remember once Mr zo asked me if I would like to go to a Robert Burns Night in Glasgow. He wanted me to say the Robert Burns grace. I agreed until he said I had to wear a kilt. Nancy Wiggins actually talked me around and I decided to go. She told me I would be okay. I eventually went wearing the sash and the kilt. I said grace in front of barristers, lawyers and their daughters and wives. It was a very grand affair. There was me, HSC
- 69. They took us to camps. It was very robust routine at times but it was always one of excitement. They had places you could stay there a few nights. You had the freedom of the place.

- I think schools should take a leaf out of Geisland's book. I studied a bit of mechanics and engineering. I did some painting and decorating.
- 71. My father visited me once. He was asked to leave. In fact, I wanted him to leave. He was an embarrassment.
- 72. I think the belt was just there for show. It was a deterrent. I didn't hear of it ever being used. We could be allowed to go on home leave. It would be from Friday to Sunday but you had to earn that. You can't be given something for nothing in return. You had to give a little yourself. I suppose it was part of the discipline structure and it worked. Mr wasn't being nasty, he wasn't that type of person.
- 73. I went back to my Uncle and Aunt and on home leave. They're the only family I really knew. My mother owned a paper shop on sister stayed there with her. I remember I wasn't allowed to go home one Christmas. The whole school went home except me. I was moved over to the main house for Christmas. Nancy Wiggins was elected to come and do Christmas dinner.
- 74. It was a bit unusual for me. It was a whole different ball game from other places. There is no comparison to St Ninians. They would bring me presents. I was there for Christmas and into New Year so I had the run of the place. I remember just before the bells at New Year, Mr zome over with a tray of drinks and asked me if I would like a drink. Nancy and a few other staff had come over for a few drinks. Afterwards they thought I had gone missing. I had fallen in a ditch covered in snow freezing cold. That's how they found me. I'd had too much alcohol. I'm not a great one for alcohol. It sends me somewhere else I don't want to be. I tend to tone that part of my life down. Everything was positive about it. It was a wonderful place. If I had gone there when I was nine years old it would have made the world of difference.
- 75. I didn't leave Geisland by choice. I had got into trouble on home leave at my Uncle and Aunt and so I had to leave.

- 76. At that particular time, Paisley was very gang orientated especially within the second second
- 77. After that, I got into trouble again through the gang related type of thing. I was then sentenced to Barlinnie Young Offenders Institution and transferred to Saughton Young Offenders Institution. Out of the blue, I received a letter from my mother. I hadn't had much contact with her. She lived in Manchester and told me to come down.

Life after care

- 78. I moved in with my mum when I was eighteen. It was just me and my mum. Unfortunately my mum died suddenly after I'd been there for only two weeks. She collapsed in front of me in the front room. I organised the funeral. The sad thing for me is that I couldn't shed a tear for my mother. She was a good person but I didn't really know her. She was a wonderful person. The best thing she did was to run away from my father because he wasn't a nice character at all.
- 79. After my mother died, the wrong crowd got mixed up with me. I got involved in one or two things. I had all sorts of problems through alcohol and drugs. I was sentenced to about fifteen years in prison. It was reduced to ten on appeal. There comes a time when you have to put your life in order one way or another. If you want to continue your life in that fashion, having no respect for authority and for other human beings, then you have a serious problem.
- 80. I met a beautiful girl and had a son. I had these moments where I went to dark places in my head so the marriage terminated after twelve years. I would just get up and leave the dining table and nobody would see me for a week or two because I have to be left on my own. I would never explain. To this day my ex-wife doesn't know anything about my life at St Ninians.

- 81. The proudest thing I have is my son. He went on to be a millionaire. He lives in and works for one of the biggest finance and business management companies in the world. His education has been tremendous. He won a scholarship. He studied in Germany and at University. He's bigger than me, he's six foot four. He's a wonderful young man.
- 82. I had two forms of employment. I went into business with my ex-mother-in-law running a delicatessen. It worked out okay for just over four years. She became ill and wanted to sell her share of the business. I didn't want to continue in the business without her so we sold up. I then worked for Marks and Spencer in made my way up to the PR Division. Unfortunately I didn't declare my criminal record so I was dismissed. I was prosecuted for that too in Sale Magistrates. From that point on it was a slow decline because I thought where do I go from here? There's always going to be a stigma left behind.
- 83. There used to be a time when I blamed everybody else for my problems. It made me messed up. I acted in anger and frustration. I lashed out at everything and everyone, to the wrong people. I know it was wrong.
- 84. I was an alcoholic for quite a while. I stopped drinking for nine years and stopped taking drugs twenty years ago.
- 85. I like to go travelling all over Europe and learn a wee bit more about different cultures. In that way, I'm beginning to find myself. There are wee bits missing but I'll get there.

Impact

86. I'm a little bit more analytical now. I think, looking back, it made me disillusioned. The anger is terrible. I've made bad decisions. My days of being in court rooms and prisons are over. I just want to find something for myself so that I don't feel this anger. I feel certain anger towards authority but I'm not always angry. If God had a

plan and put all those monks in the wrong place at the one time, maybe that's a good thing because he didn't sprinkle them around.

- 87. I try to break things down and solve my problems but it's not always easy. I can do it with everything else but it's that bit more difficult with St Ninians. It shouldn't have happened. I certainly didn't commit any crime to go there, none of those kids did. It's always there. Sometimes I go to a dark place. It just took me a long time to deal with it and to come to terms with things. Now I've got the right place and have the right people around me.
- 88. The people I have around about me now are very close and very dear. They would drop everything for me and I would do the same for them. I have a very close knit group of friends. The overall picture is that I'm a bit of a recluse. I'm very fortunate I have a nice place to live, no one bothers me. I like to be left alone. I'm not one for mingling with other people.
- 89. I went to see a psychiatrist once through my doctor. It was around 1993. I was sent to see another psychiatrist in the old Withington Hospital. It's no longer there. He told me that I had a better understanding of life than he did. I didn't have any other counselling.

Reporting of Abuse

90. I have given two statements to the police in 2016 and 2017 in England. I felt that the police were blasé in Scotland about this. I have kept a record of my dealings with the police. I was told that I had given so much information that had broadened the investigation. It took me four hours to make my statement. I told them about Bootsy electrocuting me. I was asked to give my second statement six months later. I haven't heard anything from the police or the CPS.

Records

91. Sometimes your memories stay longer than words. I haven't felt the need to obtain my records. When this investigation started, a lot of the monks destroyed the records and fled back to Ireland.

Lessons to be Learned

- 92. I have done this today because I feel that it's very important to let people know what was going on out there. It's very important.
- 93. There has to be empathy and understanding. There was no empathy in St Ninians. They treated the kids with callous indifference. It's sad because it was such a grand place. If they had looked after us, it could have been different. We would have benefited. I'm sure that a lot of those kids would have had a different outlook on life. They were never the same when they came out of there. They had all of the ingredients in place but it was the wrong people running the place. The kids don't want to be there, but they're there so give them a break. They didn't ask to be there so give them some hope or inspiration.
- 94. There is no question that opportunities were there. St Ninians could have been a private boarding school. It could have provided young boys, from Glasgow or Paisley, with opportunities that they wouldn't have had in normal circumstances. If people had acted as mentors and applied that, we might not be having this discussion. Some of the kids could have made it through the system and got themselves into a better position in life. They could have known, going home, that things can be better. The experience could have changed the outlook of the kids there.

- 95. It might have given us better focus and to grasp something that is good out of it. How can you come out of that and think that everything is going to be normal? I don't think that anyone who goes through that could come out from that. I haven't been through hell per se but it was my circumstances.
- 96. There needs to be more vetting. It has to be done. Everything always comes down to the money factor. What is more valuable, the child, or the money? I say the child is more important.

Other information

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97. 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.

