INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF PAUL DONNELLY

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry rules 2006 dated 12th December 2018. I adopt the paragraph numbering in the Rule 9 request for ease of reference.

I, Paul Donnelly, will say as follows:-

1. Introduction

1. My name is Paul Donnelly. My date of birth is 1966 and my address is known to the Inquiry.

2. I intend to speak about my Father, Peter Donnelly, and his infection of HIV through contaminated blood which he contracted in 1985, subsequently leading to his death in 1989.

2. How Infected

1. I was 17/18 and in the mid-eighties. I had finished secondary school at this point and was heading to University. My parents lived in and I was
living in ______. My Father, Peter, commuted to the Royal Victoria hospital which was located in Belfast and around one-hour drive from ______.

2. My Father had severe haemophilia A and he was receiving Factor 8 to my knowledge. All of my Father’s treatment took place at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast. My Father’s GP was Dr Kellett and I recall a Dr Mayne who was a Consultant Haematologist and the Director of the Northern Ireland Haemophilia Centre. My youngest brother has been able to obtain the medical records thus being able to give more information in this respect.

3. It is hard to say exactly when Dad was infected as this isn’t in his medical notes. I think that the infected blood was from the Factor VIII that Dad was receiving which all took place at the Royal Victoria Hospital. From the medical records it seems that the HIV tests were negative many times but it is likely he was infected in the mid 1980’s.

4. My Father was involved in a car crash amidst all this and I think he would of received blood at this time but I’m not 100% sure. My Mother, Madelaine (who passed away in 2000), received training from the hospital or the haemophilia department to administer the Factor VIII and after my Father passed away Mum blamed herself for him contracting HIV as she was administering the injections of Factor VIII.

5. I was told by Mum that Dad had HIV; she just sat me down and told me. I was shocked to say the least. I am unable to recall exactly how I felt at the time but I remember that it was in the news at the time with the media scaremongering. I was unable to talk about it to anyone outside of the immediate family due to the ‘labelling’ effect of HIV and I felt that people would have distanced themselves and outcast the family from the community and for these reasons I kept it a secret.

6. The doctor in the hospital provided my Father with information about HIV but I’m not sure about how much. There are some notes in the medical records that Dad was provided information regarding when he was infected but no
detail of how. I believe that the Government at that time was flying blind and did not know the best course of action to take and Doctors kept information from the patient’s because of this. I don’t recall being given any information about any risk to myself only from what I was told by Mum and media/own research

3. Other Infections

1. As far as I can recall the only infections Dad had were HIV and haemophilia.

4. Consent

1. My Father was compon mentis and fully aware of the situation and was consensual in all proceedings. He would not have been aware of the risks of contracting HIV from the blood products he was given.

5. Impact

1. Dad was good at hiding emotions following being infected with HIV so we didn’t really see the mental effects and I was also living in Belfast at the time in University. Dad did have arthritis in his knees as result of Haemophilia.

2. I remember Dad being stable for a long time and then once illness took a hold there was a rapid decline and Dad died in October 1990.

3. My Mother was administering the Factor VIII before Dad was diagnosed with HIV. She blamed herself for Dad’s death much of the time and she used to say it was her ‘fault’ for the most part and used to drink as a result. My youngest brother Mark found her deceased and it impacted him. My Mum passing away impacted on my University studies and I lost focus and interest in my studies.

4. The stigma of HIV at the time was quite severe, thus I kept it a secret as not to be ostracised from the community and social groups. Very few family
members apart from very immediate family knew about the situation. If uncles and aunts did know then I cannot recall the effect it had on them.

5. My Father was unable to work during his treatment after diagnosis of HIV which inevitably led to further financial strain on the family due to this. I was still in full time education and the situation did impact my academic work at University level although there was no financial impact at this stage.

6. Treatment/Care/Support

1. I'm not able to recall if my Father faced any difficulties in obtaining treatment. However, no certainly no counselling or psychological support was given to either my Dad, my Mum or myself and my brothers.

7. Financial Assistance

1. There was money and financial assistance received. My two brothers have differences of opinion where it come from. I believe that my Mother agreed there was a fixed settlement from the Government. My youngest brother (who was under 18 at the time) thinks there was money from the sale on of a house held on Trust for him for his third level education and our Mother would go to the bank to access it. I think that the money was from British Government who set up a scheme and if my Mother took the money she was agreeing not to take action in future. I cannot say this for sure but it is in back of his mind as I remember the clause stating 'no future action.'. I cannot recall the process of Mum agreeing to the Government settlement at the time. I myself did not receive any financial assistance nor did middle brother.

8. Other Issues

1. There aren't any other issues that I may consider as evidence that may be relevant to the Inquiry's investigations.
Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

GRO-C

Signed...

11 April 2019

Dated...