

Witness Name: Andrew Thomson

Statement No.: WITN2678001

Exhibits: NONE

Dated: 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2019

## **INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

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### **FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ANDREW THOMPSON**

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I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 5<sup>th</sup> November 2018.

I, Andrew Thompson, will say as follows:

#### **Section 1. Introduction**

1. My name is Andrew Thompson, my date of birth is GRO-C 1980, I am on disability benefit following a work related lung disease. My address is known to the inquiry. I intend to speak about my father, Bryce McRobert Thomson. In particular, the nature of his illness, how the illness affected him, the treatment received and the impact it had on him and our lives together.

2. My father had 3 brothers and one sister with my mother. I am the oldest son. We are a very close family. My father and I had a wonderful father and son relationship, we were very close. My mother and father split up when I was 10 years old, their break up was amicable and they had a shared custody agreement. My father was a very outgoing, playful, happy and funny character. He was a loving, devoted dad and I loved spending time with him. He would take my brothers, sister and I all over, to the zoo, museums, when we stayed with him over weekends.
3. In 1991, when my father was 32 years of age he was involved in a domestic dispute with his brother. This dispute resulted in my father being stabbed in the abdomen. He was rushed to Law Hospital, Carluke, South Lanarkshire where he required lifesaving surgery. He had to have his spleen removed and required a blood transfusion.
4. My father was given contaminated blood during the transfusion and this is how he became infected with hepatitis C genotype-3.
5. After the operation, my father always seemed to be ill, as a young boy, I just put this down to him recovering from his operation. He complained of feeling nauseous. He said he had a fever and was always very tired and lethargic. I remember my father was always going back and forward to the doctor to try and discover why he was feeling so ill all the time. His doctor was Dr Alkareshi, Branch Hill Wood medical practice, Wishaw.
6. In 2004, when I was 24 years old, my father summoned my brothers, sister and me to my mum's house. He told us that he had had a blood test in November 2003 and his results had come back. This was in the February 2004; he said he had been told he had hepatitis C and that it could be passed on to others. I remember he became fanatical about not wanting to infect us. He wouldn't let us use anything he had touched. He was always boiling glasses, cups and cutlery. He took his

condition very seriously but in hindsight, I don't think he knew much about hepatitis C.

7. My father did tell me that he got hepatitis C as a result of the blood transfusion he had during his surgery.
8. He didn't really give us much information about hepatitis C, only that it could be passed on. He emphasised we had not to use any towels that he had used.
9. I don't know if my father was given adequate information to understand and manage the infection. My brothers, sister and I were just told to be careful with our hygiene when in his company.

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10. I remember when my sister was young, an incident happened where my dad got a nose bleed and my sister, being young and not understanding, she licked her finger and wiped some blood off my dad's face. She then put his finger back in her mouth and licked it again to clean more of the blood off my dad's face. My dad panicked and immediately called a taxi and instantly took her to Monkland's hospital to be tested and luckily, the test came back negative. This incident changed my dad and he became totally paranoid with him infecting us.

11. My father was very ill after the operation, he was back and forth to his doctors, I find it hard to believe that his doctor didn't find out my father had hepatitis C earlier.

12. My father had been referred to the infectious disease clinic at Monkland's Hospital. I believe he was under Dr Dundas and Dr Todd. My dad had been told that hepatitis C was a life shortening illness and that he had around 10 years left to live.

### **Section 3. Other infections**

13. I do not know if my dad got any other infection other than hepatitis C as a result of being given infected blood.

### **Section 4. Consent**

14. I do not know if my dad was treated or tested without his knowledge, consent or without being adequate or full information, or for the purposes of research.

### **Section 5. Impact**

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15. My father became a different man after he had been told he had hepatitis C. Physically, he had been ill since his operation. He lost a lot of weight and was tired all the time. He went a yellowy pale colour.

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16. When my father was told he had hepatitis C, mentally, he changed overnight. He became very depressed and constantly worried about how we would all cope after his death. He became very reclusive and withdrawn. He was obsessed with cleanliness, not wanting to pass the infection on to us. He didn't see us as much as he did. I think that was the reason. My dad was a very fun loving man and a big joker and loved all his kids very much. As a result of someone's mistake in giving him this blood, not only did he die, but he lost himself and was not the same person. My dad was constantly ill, he developed brittle bones and was often at the doctors with broken limbs and ribs. He would often complain about severe stomach cramps. Prior to 1991, before the blood transfusion, he had only been to the doctors 4 times in his life. After 1991, he had been hundreds of times.

17. In 2004, my dad was diagnosed with liver cancer, due to the hepatitis C. He was given an option to be treated by removing the half of his liver that the tumour was in, so that the cancer would be removed. It

was hoped that the liver would regenerate itself. Sadly, the tumour had spread, the operation didn't work, and he was given 18 months to live, my dad passed away on the GRO-C 2006. He died paranoid, worried, shameful, scared and tired, less than a shell of the man he used to be.

18. When my dad was told he had hepatitis C, he told me that he would be having a treatment to try and clear the infection. I do not know what the treatment was, other than taking tablets. He would also have to go to Monklands Hospital for an injection once a week. I do not know what the injection was.

19. I do not know whether my dad faced any difficulties or obstacles in accessing this treatment.

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20. I do not know if there were any treatments that my father should have received but were not made available to him.

21. Whilst my father was on the treatment, his symptoms became worse. He became more of a recluse. He didn't want to go out of the house. He was constantly tired and very depressed. Physically, he looked very ill. He was very thin and fragile. He complained of his stomach and throat burning all the time.

22. I do not know if my fathers infected status impacted upon his treatment, medical or dental care for any other conditions.

23. The impact on contracting hepatitis C for my father was that ultimately, it cost him his life. He would have had 13 grandchildren but ultimately, he only got to see two. In the space of 2 years, he was told he had 10 years to live. Then he was told he had liver cancer and had only 18 months to live. The doctors told him that due to his alcohol intake, they could not do a liver transplant. This was totally untrue. My dad hardly drank alcohol. They had assumed he was an alcoholic or a very heavy

drinker. This was not the case. Their decision cost my father his life. Had he had the operation, he might still be here today.

24. My father was in a long-term relationship at the time. The relationship broke down because of my dad's depression and changed personality.

25. My dad was a social person but he stopped socialising with friends. He would still see his brothers and watch the football in the house with them. That was the extent of his socialising.

26. After my dad received the news he was going to die, he became very fearful of death and worried how we would all cope after he was gone. My dad was on benefits and had no savings. I remember he phoned me up one day crying, he said he had no money to pay for his funeral. He said, "I'm sorry son, but I can't even afford to die". He said that it was the biggest shame of his life. He would often phone me up apologising that he couldn't pay for his funeral. My dad and I went to Mcallister's funeral director in Wishaw. We discussed costs and I remember my dad felt so ashamed that it would be me paying for his funeral, rather than him.

27. My dad contracting hepatitis C and his ultimate death has had a massive impact on my personally. From being the age of 13 years, I can only ever remember my dad being ill and tired. Everything seemed to happen very fast in his last 2 years and I really did not have time to digest or think about what was going to happen. I pushed all my own feelings and emotions down as I had my brothers and sister to think about.

28. When my father passed away in the hospital, one of the nurses asked me if I wanted to see him after his passing. I remember one of my dad's eyes was open and that his skin was black to look at. I got a really big shock to see this and I gasped in horror and the nurse said that this was due to the type of cancer he died with and the hepatitis C

that caused him to look like this. I then stopped any of the rest of my family seeing him like this. I can still see this image of him in my head every time I think about him, even to this day. To be left with memories of your dad in constant, unimaginable pain and the image of him dead stuck in your head for the rest of your life has a huge impact on me as a person.

29. My dad was aware of the stigma of hepatitis C. I believe that was the reason he stopped socialising. I know he didn't tell anyone he had it. He did tell his close family, but that was all. We are a very close family but we only spoke about my father's condition within the family. It was a taboo subject really.

30. The impact of my father's illness and ultimate death was huge, not only on me but on my brothers and sister. We were robbed of our playful, fun loving, happy father.

31. There were no educational effects to my father on contracting hepatitis C.

32. My father worked for the forestry commission on the Blair Drummond wall. This was a safari park and my father was a general labourer. As a labourer, it was a physically demanding job. My father had to take a lot of time off work whilst he was ill. Eventually, he could no longer work at all and had to go on disability benefits.

#### **Section 6. Treatment, Care, Support**

33. I do not know if my father faced any difficulties or obstacle in obtaining treatment, care and support in consequence of being infected with hepatitis C.

34. I do not believe my father was offered any counselling or psychological support throughout his illness. If he did, he did not tell me about this. I

do believe that counselling or psychological support, would have been of benefit to my father, particularly in relation to his fear of death. I know that none of my family members have ever been offered counselling or psychological support.

#### **Section 7. Financial assistance**

35. I was informed through Thompsons solicitors that there was financial assistance available. I was sent an application form and I filled it in and sent it to the Scottish infected blood scheme.

36. I have been informed that I will be awarded £50,000. I should receive this payment on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2019.

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37. I found the process of applying for financial assistance relatively simple.

38. I did not face any difficulties or obstacles in applying for, or obtaining financial assistance.

39. I do not believe there were any preconditions imposed on the making of my application for financial assistance.

40. By contracting hepatitis C, my father had his whole life taken away and was left to live worrying about money. He had never been told about any support and funds like the Skipton fund that were set up to support him and other victims. I feel this was a disgrace.

#### **Section 8. Other issues**

41. I do not wish to remain anonymous in relation to this enquiry.

42. I am very angry and overwhelmingly sad that my father was failed like



this and this is all I feel when I think of him now. My life changed forever when my dad was diagnosed with hepatitis C and to be robbed of the memories that fathers and their children make together makes me sick to my stomach, more so due to the fact nobody has ever been held to account for killing him.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

26/2/2019