

Witness Name: Graeme Barclay

Statement No.: WITN5359001

Exhibits: Nil

Dated: 6<sup>th</sup> June 2022

## **INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

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### **WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GRAEME BARCLAY**

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I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 29 March 2022.

I, Graeme Barclay, will say as follows: -

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

1. My name is Graeme Barclay. My date of birth is GRO-C 1960 and my address is GRO-C
2. I am very recently retired, having worked as a project director in civil engineering for over 30 years. I live with my wife and we have two grown-up children.
3. I intend to speak about my mother's infection with hepatitis C ("HCV"). In particular, the nature of her illness, how the illness affected her, the treatment received and the impact it had on her, my father, my family and our lives together.

## **Section 2. How Affected**

4. My mother, Mary Allan Healey, was born on GRO-C 1935 in Dundee. She lived at GRO-C Dundee at the time of her death.
  5. My mother and father had four children, including myself. The eldest son was born in 1957, followed by Brian in 1958, myself in 1960 and my younger sister in 1965.
  6. My brother Brian was born GRO-C at either Dundee Royal Infirmary, or possibly at Victoria Hospital Dundee (now closed). All I know about this birth was that my mother required a blood transfusion. I have no idea how many units she received nor whether any records exist of this transfusion. However, I know for sure that she received a blood transfusion at some stage during or as a result of the birth of my brother Brian in 1958.
  7. My Mum had always been healthy. She was a vivacious person with a get-up-and-go attitude. Mum worked as a weaver in Dundee for many years before deciding to become an auxiliary nurse at Dundee Royal Infirmary. This hospital closed and was incorporated into Ninewells Hospital, where she stayed for the rest of her working life.
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8. Between 1958 and the early 2000s, Mum's health was generally good. She retired in 1995 aged 60 of her own volition.
  9. In the early 2000s, Mum started to experience problems with her legs. They were bloated and her ankles were swollen due to fluid retention. She also began to feel fatigued and generally lacking in energy.
  10. In 2008 I received a phone call telling me to come home. I was working away, as I often did, at this time. My siblings had also been similarly summoned, which indicated some bad or at least important news was to be imparted. I duly came home and we, as a family gathered at Mum

and Dad's house and we were told by Mum that she had been diagnosed with HCV.

11. I was in shock. I didn't fully understand what this meant for Mum. I knew it was a blood disorder and thought that it attacked the liver or kidneys. I asked whether they could cure it or treat it. She didn't seem to know the answer. She was simply told by the doctors that she had 4 to 5 years left to live. We were all in shock.

12. I think Mum's diagnosis was at Ninewells Hospital, and I would imagine that it was a face-to-face appointment. As a nurse at the hospital, she was well known within the local medical fraternity. I seem to remember a professor who cared for Mum but I can't recall his name. At the time, they didn't know the cause of her infection.

13. It came as a complete surprise to learn about Mum's diagnosis. I was working away a lot at the time, Monday to Friday and very busy, so I was not always aware of Mum's health problems. I knew about her swollen legs and just thought this was a water retention issue. I believed she needed to rest and exercise a bit more. I had no inclination it could be related to such a serious illness.

14. The doctors in charge of Mum's care did not indicate that there was any treatment available to her. They suggested that they could alleviate the infection but not cure it. She was clearly in a risky place and had a limited number of years left.

15. At this time, we didn't know where or how Mum had acquired her HCV infection. We were mostly concerned about treating her, even though we had been told there was very little that they could do.

16. We established through a process of elimination, that Mum's infection with HCV was contracted through the blood transfusion she received in 1958 during the birth of Brian. The doctors explained that it must have been acquired through blood, so when they learnt of the blood transfusion, they concluded that this was the cause.

17. I was staggered that it took so long for Mum to develop symptoms, having been infected with HCV for 50 years. There were no other risk factors and she never drank alcohol. She always told us what happened during her day at the hospital, and she never mentioned a needlestick accident or similar injury.
18. Between 2008 and 2010, Mum became less outgoing and more introverted. She lost all her energy and physical strength. She still wanted to get out and do things but she wasn't able physically. Her swollen legs were like lead weights.
19. I remember on one occasion Mum lost her balance and fell over. She couldn't get herself up and my Dad couldn't lift her either. Fortunately, I was visiting them that day and was able to help. They were living in sheltered housing by this time she and I recall querying why she hadn't pulled the red cord to call for help, but they didn't want to make a fuss, which summed up Mum's attitude.
20. Around this time, roughly 2008, Mum was diagnosed with liver cancer. She received laser surgery on a lesion, which was successful. I don't think that I even knew that she had HCV at this point. I believe that we were told after that.
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21. On reflection, I believe that Mum kept her HCV infection from me for some years. I think she must have been diagnosed a long time before I was informed.
22. In 2010, Mum went into Ninewells Hospital on two occasions to drain the fluid in her legs. After the first occasion, this gave Mum a new lease of life. She could walk properly again and it was like having a huge weight lifted off her.
23. This new-found energy lasted for 2 weeks until she returned for the second drain. Mum was discharged from hospital but she was especially

prone to infection and went downhill rapidly. She wasn't well at all and she just stayed in bed.

24. Later on, Mum was suspected of having a minor stroke. Dad called the paramedics and she was taken to hospital. She was in hospital for 2 to 3 weeks before she sadly died on 25 August 2010, aged 74.

### **Section 3. Other Infections**

25. I do not believe that Mum had any other infections as a result of receiving an infected blood transfusion.

### **Section 4. Consent**

26. I have no knowledge of whether Mum consented to testing or treatment, whether explicitly or implicitly.

27. Knowing Mum's character, I think that she would have consented to the testing and treatment that she received. She worked within the medical community and she would have done anything to help other people. This would have been her primary concern. She had a lot of faith in the medical profession.

### **Section 5. Impact**

28. I believe that Mum's life was cut short by at least 10 years. She was an active, effervescent person who always instigated activities and days out as a family. She was the driver of the family.

29. Mum loved her grandchildren. As her health worsened, she became less and less mobile, which meant she wasn't able to visit them as often as she would have liked. Her inability to see them and babysit for them upset her deeply.

30. Mum's social life was curtailed by her deteriorating health. She stopped going to her social club and lost contact with her friends as a result.
31. There was no stigma connected to HCV in our house. My middle brother, Brian, was gay and he was diagnosed with AIDS in 1986. He sadly died in 1990. We as a family, all supported him fully. Some of Brian's personal friends had been disowned by their own families because of their persuasion, we, however stuck by him regardless. David, my eldest brother died suddenly aged 43 after a brain haemorrhage in 2000.
32. Naturally, the deaths of two of her children strongly affected Mum. Nobody wants to survive their own children. She was a private person despite her outgoing nature. On reflection, I think that Mum kept her HCV infection from my sister and I to stop us from worrying about her also. Knowing Mum as I did, she probably would have just accepted her diagnosis and her fate.
33. For the majority of the time that Mum was infected, I wasn't aware that she had HCV. I knew she received treatment for liver cancer just prior to me being informed that she had HCV. We then started to connect the dots with liver cancer and HCV. It all suddenly made sense once she told us about the HCV infection.
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34. I didn't find out personally that infected blood was the cause of Mum's HCV infection. It was when someone mentioned compensation that I began to realise what had happened. I thought how can you compensate someone for this? Were they going to give her another 2 years to live? It had nothing to do with money. It wasn't until the Inquiry that I learned of the extent of the contaminated blood scandal. I just put it down to an isolated medical accident and something that happens due to the nature of health care. I had no idea of the extent of this and how many people it had affected.
35. I wasn't working for the last 4 months of Mum's life, which allowed me to care for her when she was at her worst. I really cherish these moments

when I look back. I am glad and feel fortunate to have spent this valuable period with my parents.

36. My father was a laid-back person who kept himself to himself. In many ways, Dad needed Mum. They were childhood sweethearts and had been together since they were 14. Throughout her illness, Dad essentially became her carer. He was living and dealing with Mum's decline day in and day out.

37. After Mum's death, my father was devastated. He gave up on life after she passed. I remember him saying to me that there is no point anymore. Although he was aware of the serious nature of mum's illness way before the rest of the family and the associated consequences, this nevertheless did not soften the blow when she passed.

38. Dad stopped eating and lost his will to live. There was nothing for him to live for anymore. The surgeon said to me that he was fine physically but he had given up mentally. He soon worsened and he wasn't able to look after himself.

39. I came back to Dundee from working in London every weekend for 7 months after Mum's death to ensure that my father was clean, washed and fed. It put a lot of pressure on me and my wife, but I did what needed to be done. I was going to convert the study of our house into a bedroom with an ensuite but it soon became apparent that he needed 24/7 care due to the extent of his deteriorating health.

40. Dad's decline continued and he died at the end of March 2011, just 7 months after my Mum's death. It was crushing for me to witness his deterioration.

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

41. I am not aware that Mum faced any difficulties in obtaining treatment, care or support in consequence of her infection with HCV.

42. I don't know whether Mum was offered counselling or psychological support, though I don't think she would have accepted the offer anyway.

### **Section 7. Financial Assistance**

43. A nursing colleague of Mum's told us about the Skipton Fund shortly before she died. It was only when I heard of this that I became aware of the infected blood scandal. I told my parents to apply.

44. I think that Dad applied on Mum's behalf, I wasn't involved. I would imagine that there was some sort of proof that she had a blood transfusion as there was no issue with the application. I seem to recall that the doctors were able to trace it back to the childbirth in 1958, which I didn't know about at the time.

45. Mum received two payments from the Skipton Fund, I think of £25,000 each. I remember receiving a phone call on the day after her funeral informing me that she would receive a second payment from the Skipton Fund.

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### **Section 8. Other Issues**

46. I often think about my mother's illness and firmly believe that had she not been infected, that she would have most likely still been alive today. She had no history of illness till the HCV matter rose, was very active throughout her life and enjoyed socialising. The saddening thing of all, is the loss of her to her grandchildren. My eldest son, who is now 32 years old, often recalls the times he spent with granny and granda and still comments on how he wishes they were still around.

The worst thing about this tragedy, is not only how it cheated my mum of her life, but the enduring impact it has left on the remaining family.



**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated : 6<sup>th</sup> June 2022

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