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Witness Name:

GRO-B

Statement No: WITN5010001

Exhibits: Nil

Dated:

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF

GRO-B

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 4 November 2021.

I, **GRO-B** will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is **GRO-B** My date of birth is **GRO-B** 1961. I live in **GRO-B** Scotland and my full address is known to the Inquiry. I am happily married to my wife, **GRO-B** and we have been married for 35 years. Prior to being medically retired, I was a Civil Servant for 20 years working for the Ministry of Defence. I worked in construction and then worked at **GRO-B** **GRO-B** My wife has also worked for the Civil Service for the past 40 years.
2. I intend to speak about my infection with Hepatitis C ("HCV"). In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the

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treatment received and the impact it had on me, my wife and our lives together.

3. I can confirm that I have chosen to not have legal representation and that I am happy for the Inquiry Team to assist me with my statement. The Inquiry Investigator has explained the Inquiry's Statement of Approach and the anonymity process to me. I wish to be anonymous.
4. I also confirm that I have had the 'Right to Reply' procedure explained to me, and that if I am critical of a medical professional or organisation, they will have the right to reply to that criticism.
5. I wish to acknowledge that naturally as time passes, memories may fade. I have been able to provide approximate time frames to matters based on life events in some instances. However, these timeframes should be accepted as 'near to' rather than precise dates.

Section 2. How Infected

6. When I was about 12 years old, I was a fan of Bruce Lee and his martial art skills and whilst messing around with my mates, I did a karate kick at a red telephone box. The glass shattered and cut my leg, causing it to bleed heavily. I then tried to run away but I couldn't and I fell down to the ground, so my friends carried me to my father's house about 100 yards away.
7. My father took me to the A&E department at GRO-B Hospital and they put my leg in a plastic boot while I waited to see the doctor. The boot filled with blood and as I had lost so much blood, I required a blood transfusion.
8. After the transfusion, I carried on as normal, living my life until I began feeling unwell in August 2011. I therefore booked an appointment with my GP at the GRO-B Although my GP at the time

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has now left as he was unhappy with how the practice was being run. My GP took one look at me and became very concerned as I looked yellow and jaundiced. He then asked me how soon I could get to hospital. My nephew came to pick me up and we went to the GRO-B Hospital. GRO-B

9. At the GRO-B Hospital, they ran tests and checked the condition of my liver. I was then told that my liver was in a bad way and that its condition was not going to improve, so I would need a liver transplant. I did not process anything further at that point and what the doctor said to me as I was in extreme shock. On hearing this news, I wanted to jump off a bridge.
10. The GRO-D placed me on the liver transplant waiting list. It was a matter of urgency to get a transplant and we were told to basically wait by the phone. There were two bags packed ready near the front door, as I anxiously waited for a call from the hospital offering me a new liver. I would wake up six or seven times a night worrying.
11. While I waited for the transplant, I became increasingly unwell with hyponatremia as my blood salt levels were so low. My wife would regularly call an ambulance to take me into hospital. I was taken by ambulance to the Royal Alexandra Hospital for treatment on a few occasions.
12. It got so bad that I would end up lying on the floor in my living room with no energy. GRO-B would phone me every day from work to make sure I was alright but most of the time I would be spouting random, stupid things down the phone and she wouldn't be able to understand anything I was saying. On one occasion, I seemed really unwell and so my wife sent my friend to come and check on me because she was at work. When he arrived, I started to slump down in the sofa and my

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friend became concerned so he went to get my wife and an ambulance was called. I would be taken to hospital and I would be given a drip.

13. I would have blackouts. It was a bit like being unconscious and I would lose touch with reality. I felt like I was a hindrance or an onus on people. I kept trying to convince myself that I was alright but I wasn't. Luckily, my wife was there to make me feel better. This period is a blur and it was my wife that would tell me what had happened. The onerous was more on her and I was unaware of what was going on.

14. I also soiled myself and my weight went up to 25 stone.

15. I kept being admitted to the Royal Alexandra Hospital and I became increasingly unwell. On the last occasion, in roughly, January 2012, I was taken to hospital by an ambulance and it was decided to keep me in until they had a new liver available for me.

16. During my hospital stay at the GRO-D it was then that I was told that I had HCV. I assume they discovered it through blood tests that they were undertaking to monitor my health.

17. The only source of infection is from the blood transfusion that I had when I was younger. I am not an intravenous drug user and have never used intravenous drugs. I also do not have any piercings or tattoos.

18. I was basically just told about the HCV infection and then I went straight onto the treatment. Nobody told me how to properly manage the HCV or whether anyone else should get tested.

19. I waited around six months on the transplant waiting list before I received my liver transplant.

Section 3. Other Infections

20. I do not believe that I received any other infection other than HCV as a result of being given infected blood. I have, however, only ever been tested for HCV.

21. I was never tested for anything else, including HIV.

Section 4. Consent

22. As it was the 1970s, my parents did not sign any consent forms or anything like that for my blood transfusion. Back then things like that would not have happened.

23. As I will detail in the next section, when I was being treated for my depression, it felt as though I was treated like a guinea pig. They told me it would be trial and error until they found a medication which suited me.

Section 5. Impact

24. When all of this transpired, it was difficult, but your first instinct is to fight for your life. Naturally on some occasions I would become angry and upset, but I kept fighting through. You have to be positive, if you give in, then you lose. HCV was an illness I had to cure.

25. I was more worried about my wife having the virus than myself. I did not want her going through what I had, and having to have a transplant. I told GRO-B to get a HCV test and thankfully, all was okay and the blood test came back negative. The hospital did not suggest this and it was something I had to ask GRO-B to do.

26. In total I waited around six months until I underwent a liver transplant at the GRO-D I was under the care of four surgeons,

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one of them being Dr Bathgate but I cannot recall the name of the others. Dr Bathgate was stunning and treated me very well, he gave me 100 per cent. They were all good surgeons as well as the rest of the department.

27. The transplant was seemingly a success until I began to go yellow and looked jaundiced shortly after my first operation. I was out of it and I did not know that my liver was failing at the time. My wife discussed my deteriorating health with the doctors who said they were looking into further ways to treat me.

28. Three weeks after my transplant, the new liver failed and I urgently needed a new one. The doctors did not think I was strong enough to have a second transplant as it would require another 12-hour operation. However, luckily another liver had become available and I underwent a successful second transplant of my liver. Although I am told that I died on the operating table.

29. Following the second transplant, I stayed in hospital for another six months as I was recovering and I could not walk. I was also given tubes for eating as I could not eat and eating was making me sick. People were bringing in anything, like Chinese food, to try to get me to eat. Nothing worked and so the only way I could eat was through tubes down my nose, which I would rip out during the night. As a result, I lost around fourteen stone in weight. The doctors instructed me to try and put on weight. I can remember looking at myself and I looked awful.

30. I remained in hospital for a year as I could not walk. I was using a walking frame and I could not even walk ten yards. I could not even walk to the toilet. It took me a year but I learnt to walk again, slowly day by day.

31. I was let out of hospital on New Year's Day 2013.

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32. Once discharged, I used to go swimming quite a bit to build up my fitness again. On the first occasion, I had to be lifted out of the pool, because I could not pull myself out, as I had lost all of my core muscles. I then started going to the gym to try and build up my muscle.

33. I had to be very cautious going to the gym during Covid-19 as I was given immunosuppressants to take as a result of HCV, and it keeps my liver working. This meant that I was clinically vulnerable. If one person had Covid-19 then I would have caught it. I would get a text from the NHS every single day during the pandemic, warning me about Covid-19. I did not have to wait for the vaccine and luckily, I got priority vaccine doses; I have had seven boosters.

34. I currently take medicine twice a day for my liver, which keeps me alive.

35. I then developed hernias in my chest from going to the gym. This is therefore linked to the HCV. I had to have mesh implanted into my chest. I was worried about having further operations after my transplant but the doctor who treated me was fantastic. Compared to the huge scar across my stomach from my liver transplant, there was only a small scar across my stomach for the mesh implants. I still have two remaining hernias but as they are so close to my liver, they cannot operate on them. I am used to the mesh but I can feel it at times digging in my ribs.

36. I also developed an infection after the transplant and had to go back to the GRO-D It felt like someone had nailed nails into me. It was found that my kidney function level had dropped and I was told to drink a lot of water to flush out the enzymes.

37. I have spoken with the GRO-D recently and my kidney results were a little bit off but they were keeping an eye on it.

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38. I also suffered from gastroenteritis while in hospital.

39. In hospital, I was put on a lot of prescription medication which caused me to hallucinate. I would think that I had no nose, being in other places, seeing Michael Jackson and it being my 21st birthday again. I was away from the world. I would also accuse my wife of ridiculous things such as asking her why I had not seen her for weeks when she had been at the hospital all day. I remember the doctor asking me the date or who the Prime Minister was and I was not able to answer. I had conversations with the doctors when I was ill, which I cannot recall and during this time, I would have said or agreed with anything that was not correct.

40. After discovering I had HCV, I was referred to Dr GRO-D in hepatology, who put me on treatment to clear the HCV. The treatment was in the form of a daily oral tablet which I took for six weeks. I remember something being mentioned about how they were between £200 and £300 per tablet. I was told it was very expensive. I remember her mentioning that I should be honoured to be receiving the medication. Although I was not told this in a negative way, but I was well informed about the treatment's cost.

41. During treatment, I went in for check-ups roughly twice a week to test my viral load. There were no side-effects from the HCV medication, that I can remember. Although I was already extremely unwell with the liver transplant and recovering from that, so I do not think I would have noticed.

42. After treatment, I was put onto steroids to bring my weight back up and I was not being or feeling like myself at all.

43. In terms of aftercare, I now only attend the hospital yearly for check-ups on my liver. Previously, I used to attend the hospital every month,

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and then twice a year for liver check- ups. During covid, check-ups were reduced from this period.

44. I suffer with bad acid reflux issues and often experience severe pain. I have been prescribed Omeprazole to help relieve the symptoms. I take this once a day and this will likely be for life. It sometimes feels as though I am having a heart attack. I remember asking my wife to call an ambulance on one occasion. This is a result of the HCV because I never suffered from this issue before.

45. In light of everything that has happened, two years after the transplants, I became very depressed. I shut things out as a coping mechanism; it is a Scottish thing to internalise emotions and I did not want to seem weak. I spoke with my GP about depression and she said she was going to refer me to somebody but there was a year and a half waiting list. I could not wait that long so I thought I would just have to fight it on my own.

46. I was prescribed medication for my depression. I was put on three or four different types of antidepressants but they were driving me insane. I had horrendous side-effects from these tablets and the doctor would keep saying it was a process of trial and error; if a particular medication did not work, we would try another option. I did not feel right taking them. In this regard, I felt like a bit of a guinea pig.

47. The medication caused a total change in me. It changed my personality and I did not like it. I remember banging on my neighbour's car window and shouting that they were not allowed to park there, but they had every right to park where they had. My wife bore the real brunt of this and she felt as if she was treading on egg shells as my behaviour became unpredictable. All sorts of things were going on in my head and I was having a psychotic episode. I was also not able to perform sexually. Due to the side-effects, I stopped taking the depression medication as I could no longer deal with it.

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48. In terms of my social life, I completely stopped going to football after the HCV, but before this, I would travel to home and away games. Even going out, we rarely go out anymore. Since I became unwell, I have not attended a family party. My life became revolved around covid, as I was vulnerable due to my medication that I require due to HCV. I do not think HCV impacted social drinking, because I have not drunk alcohol in ten years. Even before this, I was just an average drinker and would only drink a couple of pints here and there when I went to the football.
49. The financial burden of HCV has been particularly severe. I was medically retired from my role and I had been working up until I became ill from HCV. On my last day of work, I walked in and I was only there for five minutes when my boss took one look at me and said I was too unwell to work, which later transpired to be the HCV.
50. We have struggled financially going from two wages to only one. I would not have stopped working if it wasn't for the HCV infection. It frustrates me, as I would like to treat my wife and get her things but I can't. I feel like I have let her down. We need a new boiler and a new kitchen. It feels like I am doomed. Nonetheless, we get by. I really wanted my wife to retire by now but due to the HCV this has not been possible.
51. When I was forced to leave my job due to ill health, the director of the company said to me that as I had been a good attender, the door would be left open if I ever wanted to return. I never felt well enough to return and I have taken a long time to recover. Also, when you are reaching a certain age, with me being 61, you are not employable anymore. You wonder what the point is in even trying, they want someone young and fit. I have been out of it for so long now and my old role's responsibilities have also changed. My work had required me to be very strong and fit, and I really enjoyed it.

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52. When I was medically retired, I was entitled to Personal Independence Payment (PIP), but even this was extremely difficult to obtain and I had to fight for it. I went to a tribunal in Glasgow on three different occasions and won each time. I was entitled to the enhanced rate of PIP for both the daily living and mobility components of PIP, but now I am only entitled to the standard rate for daily living.
53. The hospital was on the other side of Scotland and it was a nightmare for my wife. During the time I was in hospital for my transplant operations, GRO-B had to live opposite the hospital to care for me. She had to pay for an Airbnb for over four months which was a significant financial burden. There was no financial assistance offered to cover the rent. GRO-B was meant to be able to stay in a dormitory at the hospital but the doctors were staying there instead.
54. One of the nurses told us that we could apply to get the costs covered so I tried but to no avail. The GRO-D did not offer any sort of financial support whilst I was in hospital, apart from £100. At first GRO-B said no as she thought this was not adequate. Although thankfully, in terms of her job, her boss was sympathetic and he said he did not want to see her back at work until I was on the mend.
55. I have never received travel compensation for making trips to hospital for my check-ups. Luckily, there is a nice couple round the corner who can drive us to the hospital when we need it. My friend would not ask for money but we would take them for a Chinese meal to say thank you. GRO-B would also have to take the day off as annual leave to attend appointments with me.
56. The drive to and from Edinburgh takes up a great deal of time and I did not want to put other people in danger being driven there. The hospital asked me to get the train but that necessitated getting the first train at 6:00am to get there for 12:00pm appointments. The journey involved two trains and two buses.

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57. Applying for insurance or mortgages was not an issue as I have never been abroad and my house has been predominantly paid for by GRO-B

58. All of this has had a negative impact on GRO-B. Initially, GRO-B was quite laid back with it all compared to me. She is a very intelligent lady, having done a lot of university degrees and received flying colours in everything. I have always been more worried about my wife than myself.

59. GRO-B was the strong one but eventually everything caught up with her, there was too much to fight against and she had a breakdown. It all went downhill. Who could even blame her considering what she had to endure. GRO-B went to the GP and she was prescribed medication for a couple of years, and went to counselling through the NHS to help her cope. She was off work for six months as a result.

60. In a way I thought if I had died my wife would be looked after through the bereavement pay-out from the Civil Service. I was thinking if I cannot make it through, what can I do to make her feel better.

61. In terms of stigma, I would not say I had necessarily kept it quiet from people, nor was I ever told to by the hospital. I told close friends who I had grown up with, as we tell each other everything and I did not lose any friends as a result of the infection.

62. However, I did start becoming wary that I could put someone at risk and infect them. Therefore this had an impact on my relationship with my wife as I would worry that I could infect her even when just kissing her. I was afraid to infect others and I do not think I fully understood how the hepatitis virus was transmitted.

63. When I was having my liver transplant at the GRO-D
GRO-D I was asked whether I had ever taken drugs and I admitted to doing so when I was younger. During the 1970s, like many others, I

smoked marijuana. However, I have never taken intravenous drugs. It would not have even been possible to, as I have bad veins. I remember once it took a clinician 13 attempts to get blood from my veins. How could I possibly have ever injected anything?

64. I do think I faced some stigma from the [GRO-D] as I think they wrongly assumed that I was infected with HCV as a result of intravenous drug abuse. I also had to go get my blood tests taken at the same place that drug addicts went to. I did feel that I should not be here, but I just got on with it.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

65. All the doctors have been incredible. I do not feel that I received any ill treatment from doctors and I was treated very well. Dr [GRO-D] was particularly outstanding and one of the best doctors I have ever had.

66. There was never any burden with accessing and paying for prescriptions as they are free in Scotland.

67. I cannot really say whether adequate information was given to me about how to manage the HCV infection. As mentioned earlier, I was basically just told about it and then I went straight onto the treatment.

68. As I did not visit the dentist when I had HCV, I never informed them about the infection. I therefore did not face any barriers to receiving any other treatment such as dental appointments.

69. There was never any counselling or psychological support ever made available to me in consequence of being infected with HCV. When I was struggling with my mental health, I was told that there would be a one and a half year waiting time to see someone, so I did not bother.

70. Although I do not want to complain as my care and treatment was fantastic, the after care for myself and my wife has been non-existent. I brought it up once during an appointment and they said they were trying to work on aftercare.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

71. In around 2015, the [GRO-D] told me about the Skipton Fund. After this, I phoned the Skipton Fund and they sent the application form to my house which was completed and sent back to them.

72. Skipton refused my application on the basis that I had apparently used intravenous drugs before. As I mentioned before, I have never used intravenous drugs and I never said I had, to anyone ever. Apparently, the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary had put on my application form that I used intravenous drugs but they later denied writing anything like that. My consultant told me that they did not even mention the use of drugs.

73. Skipton said that I would have to come to a hearing in London and speak to lawyers, even though I was in Scotland and was unwell. When my Skipton application was rejected, I never appealed as I lost heart. I was trying to focus on my recovery and getting better, and I did not want the hassle of going through the process again. Also, both of my parents had recently died at that time, one in [GRO-B] and one in [GRO-B] and so I was not in the right frame of mind.

74. After being refused by Skipton, a doctor gave me the forms for the Scottish Infected Blood Support Scheme (SIBSS). However, I never attempted to apply for the SIBSS.

75. I requested my medical records from my GP at [GRO-B] [GRO-B] they said that they had no records from before 1981. The

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records were apparently lost in transit and they could not find anything. I asked them again and they said they had been lost or destroyed.

76. The Inquiry Investigator then provided me with SIBSS's contact information. I got in contact with them and they asked for my medical records. I have obtained my GP records and I was charged £20 for these. I then contacted them again and I was told over the phone that I am not able to receive the payments. This phone call lasted a couple of minutes.

77. I have therefore received no compensation for being infected thought my blood transfusion.

Section 8. Other Issues

78. I have nothing further to comment on.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-B

Dated

13-6-23