

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No.: WITN3506

Exhibits: WITN3506002

WITN3506010

Dated: 14.10.19

**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 30 July 2019.

I, GRO-B will say as follows: -

**Section 1. Introduction**

1. My name is GRO-B. My date of birth is GRO-B 1975 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am the daughter of GRO-B GRO-B who was born on GRO-B 1952 and passed away on GRO-B GRO-B 2016.
2. I am not legally represented and the investigator has explained the Right to reply process, in relation to criticisms against individuals or organisations.
3. I contacted the Inquiry after seeing a picture of GRO-B on the local news. This was as a result of another witness from the GRO-B family providing oral evidence at the Leeds Hearing on GRO-B 2019. Having seen this

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unexpected picture, I have realised that no one has told GRO-B's story. I now wish to address this imbalance and relay the history of her story to the Inquiry.

4. I was born in Australia but have spent most of my life in the UK and now live with my partner and our children in Staffordshire. I intend to speak about my mother GRO-B. In particular, the nature of her illness, how the illness affected her, the treatment she received and the impact it had on me, my brother and our families.
5. I wish to provide this statement anonymously. It relates to past events that I want to move on from and I believe adding my name will not add any public value. As a family we have already endured a significant amount of media interest when I was growing up. I therefore wish to act as a responsible parent and shield my children from any publicity.
6. Throughout my statement I refer to certain dates and events. Due to the passage of time and the fact that some of these memories stem from my childhood these dates should be read as an approximation and not definitive timelines.

### **Section 2. How Affected**

7. It is my belief that my mother was infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) after having a sexual relationship with GRO-B GRO-B during the late 1980's GRO-B suffered from Haemophilia and I believe he had acquired HIV after receiving contaminated blood products. There are numerous press reports in national newspapers covering their relationship. [WITN3506002]
8. Mum had a troubled upbringing in Australia. When she was young GRO-B's mother was murdered by her father before he went on to commit suicide. GRO-B therefore, spent most of her life in foster care – separated from her siblings and family.

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9. [GRO-B] married when she was 17 and had a daughter. Sadly, the marriage did not last and they divorced. She then met my father who was visiting from England. Soon after I was born, my parents and I relocated to England where they got married. Again, the marriage did not last. [GRO-B] continued to stay in England for a number of years and went on to meet another man with whom she had my brother.
10. After a number of unsuccessful relationships [GRO-B] met [GRO-B] in Birmingham. At some point during this relationship [GRO-B] was infected with HIV through her sexual relationship with [GRO-B]. In [GRO-B]'s records I have found a letter written by Terry Davis (Project Worker at Barnardo's) to Ms Ann Hithersay (Macfarlane Trust) which states:

*"Dear Ann with regard to our conversation a month ago, I have pleasure in enclosing the information you asked for. [Name redacted] and [GRO-B] who were both infected with HIV by [GRO-B]..."*

[WITN3506003]

11. There were rumours circulating amongst [GRO-B]'s friends that he had received a large windfall and that he had HIV. This prompted [GRO-B] to get tested. After speaking to my brother, I believe this to be at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham around 1989 and a confirmatory test at [GRO-B] in March 1990. [WITN3506004]

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

12. As far as I know, [GRO-B] did not suffer from any other infections as a result of her relationship with [GRO-B].
13. [GRO-B] did, however, experience side effects of HIV and the medication used to suppress it, including Diabetes. These are described in more detail below.

**Section 4. Consent**

14. As far as I know, at no time during their relationship did GRO-B disclose to GRO-B that he was either suffering from Haemophilia or that he had been diagnosed with HIV. GRO-B did not discover his status until he received his first payment from the Macfarlane Trust and even at that time GRO-B was still denying he was HIV positive. This is evidenced by a letter from Birmingham City Council, Social Services department dated 3 July 1991 to the trustees of the Macfarlane (Special Payments). An extract from that letter at paragraph 5 is below:

*"When Mr GRO-B entered into the relationship with Mrs GRO-B at no time did he disclose that he was either suffering from Haemophilia or that he had been diagnosed as being HIV+. Mrs GRO-B did not discover his status until he received his first payment from the Macfarlane Trust and even at that time Mr GRO-B was still denying that he was HIV+. By that time the relationship had broken down and ended with Mr GRO-B physically assaulting Mrs GRO-B for which she received medical treatment. Legal action was taken and Mrs GRO-B received compensation of £825 under the criminal injuries legislation. As indicated previously Mrs GRO-B has now been diagnosed as being HIV+." Neil Williamson (Senior Social Worker)*

**[WITN3506005]**

**Section 5. Impact**

15. After her HIV diagnosis, GRO-B thought she was going to die and that she had received a death sentence. As all our family were in Australia, GRO-B my brother and I then moved to Melbourne, Australia. From memory, this was mid-December 1989. We lived in various places and then in accommodation provided for by the Salvation Army. There was another couple living there at the time.

16. [GRO-B] kept in contact with [GRO-B] by telephone and they were in love. I have provided a letter to the Inquiry written by [GRO-B] on 5 January 1990 to the Macfarlane Trust seeking a prompt payment of compensation so that he could resume a near normal life with his fiancée [GRO-B] who was at the time in Australia and has no means of returning to the UK on her own. **[WITN3506006]**

17. In 1990, [GRO-B] left Australia to return to England. My brother and I were left with the couple from the Salvation Army. They, however, ended up abandoning us on a street corner and we were homeless for a period of time. I eventually remembered where my aunt worked and we went there. Thankfully she took us in.

18. My aunt explained to my brother and I that [GRO-B] had a condition that she would die from. Given our age this came as a shock. My brother was particularly affected and it is something that he remembers vividly and this conversation came to stay with him throughout his life.

19. A period of time later, [GRO-B]'s relationship with [GRO-B] broke down. [GRO-B] found out [GRO-B] was seeing another woman. She went to try and find her. At this point [GRO-B] was beaten by [GRO-B] and two of his brothers to an inch of her life. At the time this was reported to the police but they did not prosecute due to lack of evidence. I have documentation dated in 1991 that she was awarded a sum of money relating to that assault to the sum of £835 from the criminal injuries' compensation board. **[WITN3506005]**

20. At some point [GRO-B] realised that HIV was a condition that could be managed by treatment and it was not a death sentence. She received treatment in Birmingham by Dr Shahmanesh. I recall [GRO-B] mentioning that she was well treated by the medical professionals.

21. [GRO-B] then sent for us to be returned to the UK. We arrived back in the UK at the end of June 1990. My brother and I then started attending school. [GRO-B] started to spend long periods of time in the pub. On reflection, I believe this was her coping mechanism.

22. Around 1992, a medical practitioner leaked a story to the press that a man in Birmingham was deliberately infecting women with HIV without sharing his diagnosis. [GRO-B] knew this man to be [GRO-B] and informed the [GRO-B] newspaper. She knew it had to be [GRO-B] because both when they were in a relationship and after, he denied being HIV positive. At the time, I believe [GRO-B] was told to take precautionary measures to avoid transmission by the medical professionals, however, this advice was not followed. My understanding was that this was a public health issue and not a criminal issue at that point.

23. Later, there were reports in national papers that the then Prime Minister, John Major, commissioned a report to ascertain what should be done around these public health issues. This is shown in a media article reported in the [GRO-B] newspaper, dated [GRO-B]/92 written by reporter David Graves. The article states Mr Major has ordered a full report on the case of the Birmingham man with the AIDS virus who has allegedly infected at least four women. [WITN3506007]

24. Once [GRO-B] revealed the identity of the man in the article to the press our lives changed overnight. I remember waking up and there were around 30 press reporters outside our home. [GRO-B] agreed an exclusive with the News of The World. As part of this agreement we were given accommodation and taken to a hotel in Stratford-upon-Avon. Once [GRO-B] finished the interview we were taken back home. [WITN3506002]

25. This started a chain of press and TV interviews which consumed our lives for around 5 months. There were so many different channels and outlets wanting to speak to us from all over the world. I remember participating in a programme with Kate Copstick from the BBC. I am not sure whether [GRO-B] was compensated for these, however, I assume she would have been.

26. The attention meant that our school lives were massively impacted. I eventually dropped out from school – as it all became too much. My

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brother experienced a lot of bullying and was branded and called "Aids boy", on a regular basis. He was deeply hurt by such ignorant comments.

27. My brother got married and moved up to Stoke in 1997. My mum followed shortly afterwards. I believe this was around 1998 – 1999. I decided to move up a few years later in 2001. It was refreshing – because it felt like a sense of normality had returned – people didn't know us and we felt we weren't hounded or judged. Looking back, people were very nasty before we moved. They would say things like *"Stay Away, I don't want to catch something off you"*.

28. GRO-B continued her treatment at North Staffordshire hospital. My brother or I would take her to the appointments / consultations. From memory, these visits were monthly – she would have her bloods taken, be weighed and receive prescription medication. I believe she was on a product called Sustiva.

29. Whilst GRO-B was on the medication her mental health was volatile. She would sometimes stop taking the tablets. She made numerous attempts to take her life. I recall one incident where she drank half a bottle of bleach. There were many others too – to name another – where she would overdose with pills.

30. I have seen a medical note where GRO-B had shared her symptoms with her doctor. They include side effects to the HIV drug "Efvirarenc" - insomnia, severe tiredness and when she finally got to sleep vivid and very frightening dreams. GRO-B also suffered from night sweats; constant fatigue; backache; anorexia; abdominal pain; diarrhoea and severe depression for which she was referred to a psychiatrist. [WITN3506008]

31. In 2013, the virus became non-detectable. This positivity was, however, short-lived and in 2014 things started to go downhill. Mum fell over in the kitchen and broke her hip. Paramedics attended and helped her back onto the settee after she refused to go to hospital. Despite being in so much pain she continued to refuse treatment.

32. We had to call the ambulance out around 15 times – she was just refusing to engage or cooperate with the paramedics. When she finally did – North Staffordshire hospital confirmed that she had fractured hip.
33. A common side effect to the HIV medication is weakened bones. I have no doubt that the medication contributed to her fracture. On the doctor's recommendation she had a hip replacement. She was discharged roughly 8 days after surgery, because she had close family nearby. I remember she was visited by nurses at home and she had to take injections to prevent her blood clotting.
34. Shortly afterwards, GRO-B's diabetes became an issue. I remember the nurses trying to help her manage the condition, but she did not want to know. She refused to exercise. It was like she had given up. Eventually she stopped eating – on one occasion I remember she had changed colour. My brother and I tried tirelessly to help her – to encourage her to take her medication but we couldn't convince her. She would ring us in the middle of the night. The situation deteriorated over time, she could no longer use the bathroom and would rely on adult nappies.
35. Around this time, it got so bad that we asked the GP to come and do a home visit. I recall he refused to come out and requested she go to the hospital. I believe the GP's name was Dr GRO-B. We would then be in a cycle where we would call the ambulance and she would refuse to go. It became so bad that we got to the stage where we considered whether she could be sectioned because she was not of sound mind.
36. We eventually spoke to another doctor in 2016. I believe his name was Dr Guindy – he had treated GRO-B before and was always kind and respectful. He came out and saw her and told her that she needed to go to hospital immediately and if she didn't she would be dead within 24 hours. GRO-B was, at this stage, just skin and bone – she had completely wasted away.



37. After attending hospital, GRO-B started feeling a bit more positive. A couple of weeks after that she developed an infection and my brother got a call from the hospital suggesting we come up to see her. When we arrived – she did not recognise us and the doctors could not explain why she was so confused. We did not want to watch GRO-B pass away so we decided to return home around 11pm. This was on GRO-B 2016.
38. We received a call the next day at 3 am and by the time we arrived she had passed away. She died on GRO-B 2016 and the cause of death is shown on the death certificate as 1) Escherichia coli bacteraemia b) Urinary Tract Infection and 2) Diabetes mellitus, frailty, HIV. [WITN3506009]
39. GRO-B had already paid ahead for her funeral expenses. When the funeral directors came out and discovered she had HIV her body was not treated with any respect. It was like she was hazardous waste. The body was not embalmed and was just left in the fridge. My eldest daughter took a picture of the body in the morgue – which went on to create a lot of family problems.
40. When GRO-B passed away it really impacted me. I felt a lot of guilt that I did not do more. I would cry but then just shut down all together. On reflection, my coping mechanism was to block all thoughts, however, this led me to develop anxiety.
41. Exactly a year on from GRO-B's death, I collapsed and thought I was going to die. An ambulance was called. It turned out that I had a severe anxiety attack. I then continued to suffer from anxiety attacks and after speaking to my GP I was diagnosed with a form of PTSD. I now do not leave the house much and take medication to prevent further episodes.
42. I feel GRO-B was treated badly by people in general. She was always very open about her HIV status and at the time people were very narrow minded. While attitudes have changed some people are still ignorant

even now. Every time I see negative attitudes on social media, I now try to educate and inform people.

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

43. To my knowledge, I do not believe GRO-B had any difficulties in obtaining any specific treatments.

44. Our family used to get psychological support through a programme called "Staffordshire Buddies". It is a support group for people with HIV and AIDS. Additionally, GRO-B's medical notes refer to her having been referred to a psychiatrist for her depression.

45. I have been also made aware of the Red Cross run helpline by the Inquiry staff and I have taken up the offer. I found the service friendly and helpful.

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

46. My knowledge of GRO-B's finances are limited. I have seen from documentation that GRO-B received a payment of £23,500 by The Macfarlane Trust. This was the maximum amount that was awarded as she was categorised as an "Infected intimate". I am not sure whether she had any difficulties in obtaining this payment. [WITN3506010]

47. I know GRO-B also received a monthly payment of £1229 per month when she passed away. I am not sure how long she had been receiving this for. She also received various amounts to help with home moves and appliances.

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

48. After GRO-B passed away, I eventually came to terms with her death and laid my thoughts and emotions to rest. Most of these events happened

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whilst I was a child and it was something that we just lived through so I never questioned how this terrible scandal came about. This whole scandal has had a profound effect on me and my brother.

49. The Inquiry being in the news reminded me of certain events and GRO-B

This made me look into the whole scandal. GRO-B was not directly infected by contaminated blood products, but as a result of having a relationship with someone who did. It was tragic and heart-breaking to read statements from families involved in this matter.

50. It is clear to see that lessons should be learned. It seems to me that back in the 70s and 80s mistakes were made on a catastrophic scale all around the world. Whilst it seems, other countries have accepted this and rectified their mistakes, our government do not seem so forthcoming. It is too late for my mum to finally see justice done, many more families who have lost loved ones and the victims still continue to seek justice. I hope all these individuals will get the answers they deserve as it has been a long time coming.

### **Statement of Truth**

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

Signed

GRO-B

Dated

14.10.19

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