

**Witness Statement of: Hoang Khanh Quang**  
**No. of statement:** 2  
**Exhibits:** 1  
**Date of statement:** 23.02.20

## **GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY**

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### **WITNESS STATEMENT OF HOANG KHANH QUANG**

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This statement is a factual statement prepared for the Grenfell Tower Inquiry dealing with Modules 3 and 4 in Phase 2 only. It does not, and is not intended to set out my experiences on the night of the fire, or the impact that these events and the aftermath have had on me (and my family).

Signed ..... 

**I, HOANG KHANH QUANG, will say as follows:**

1. I was a resident of Grenfell Tower and I am a survivor of the fire which started on 14 June 2017. I am making this statement for the purpose of Phase 2 of the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry only.
2. I made a statement in Phase 1 of the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry (reference IWS00000080), dated 1 May 2018. This statement was translated into Chinese (IWS00001170), dated 1 May 2018.
3. I gave two witness statements to the police, dated 2 August 2017 and 8 November 2017. I wish for my statements to the Inquiry to be used as my evidence.
4. This statement addresses the issues within Module 3 (fire safety within the Tower and communication with residents) and Module 4 (aftermath) from the Inquiry's stated Phase 2 schedule. I deal with issues relating to Module 3 in paragraphs 5-42, and Module 4 in paragraphs 43-78.

### Module 3

#### Living in Grenfell Tower

5. I was born in Saigon, which is now called Ho Chi Minh City, in Vietnam. I moved to the UK in 1988 from Vietnam. I am a Vietnamese national. My first language is Cantonese and I also speak Vietnamese. I can speak, read and write a small amount of English.
6. When I moved to the UK, [REDACTED] Van Ho, and I were living with a friend in Ladbrooke Grove. We made a homelessness application in the February 1990 as I was pregnant with my oldest daughter Lucy. We were put in temporary accommodation in a hostel for short time in March 1990. Lucy was born in this month.
7. We asked the council (RBKC) for permanent accommodation. We were shown Flat 76 in Grenfell Tower. This was the only flat we were shown. RBKC offered this to us as permanent accommodation and we moved in in June 1990.
8. Flat 76 was a two-bedroom flat, which was on the north-east side of the Tower. In my Phase 1 statement (reference IWS/80) I have exhibited a layout of my flat (reference IWS00000081) and I have labelled the rooms and other features of the flat
9. Lucy was only three months old when we moved in. I had my second daughter, Jenny, in 1995. Van Ho moved out in 2001. We sent a letter to the council telling them that Van Ho had moved out.. I do not know if the Council removed Van Ho from their records and the tenancy agreement, but they were told that he left and they should have removed him from their records. I do know he was no longer listed as a resident for council tax purposes.
10. There was a Vietnamese community in the Fulham area which was not too far away from Grenfell. For under a year I had English lessons at St Clement and St James

Church, which is very close to Grenfell Tower on Sirdar Road. Others from the community attended these lessons.

11. Before the fire, I worked as a home carer in the Chinese community. I have described my career in paragraph 3 of my Phase 1 witness statement. Unfortunately, I have still not been able to work since the fire because of the impact the fire has had on my health.

#### Relationship with RBKC and the TMO

12. RBKC owned Grenfell Tower and I believed that the TMO were responsible for "running it" and this included being responsible for health and safety within the building and maintaining it.
13. I was a council tenant and I paid rent to the council each week. Some other charges were included in our rent, such as water.
14. I could make small changes to the flat, like painting the walls. If there were other issues, such as problems we had with the pipes leaking then the TMO would have to be contacted so they could fix this, as we were not allowed to. Most of the time, the workmen the TMO arranged to do repairs would not come quick enough and we would have to wait some time for things to be repaired.
15. If the TMO decided that they wanted to make changes to the flat (like they did during the Refurbishment), I felt that we would have to accept any changes they wanted to make. For example, I thought because water charges were included in the rent, the TMO could change the pipes in the flat even though we did not want them to. I did not think we could have a say in the works the TMO wanted to do to our flat.
16. Sometimes the TMO would send us a letter saying that work was going to be done on a certain date and time, but at other times the workmen would just turn up at the flat. All letters sent to me were written in English, so I could not understand them as I can only read a little bit of English. I had to rely on either Lucy or Jenny reading



letters to me. I believe that the TMO and RBKC were aware that my English is very limited.

17. If something went wrong in the flat, we would call or email the TMO. They had a helpline number that you could call and speak to someone over the phone. You often had to call the TMO two or three times before they would send someone round to fix the problem. I have described this in my Phase 1 statement at paragraph 21. Jenny made written complaints I think using a website I was aware of this at the time. Lucy would make complaints to them on email and over the phone.
18. There was an issue with pipes and lights in the kitchen, which I called the TMO about. Jenny and Lucy made other complaints. I have exhibited to this statement a copy of our flats repair data at **HQ/02**.

#### Health before the fire

19. Before the fire, I had asthma and knee pain that meant it was difficult for me to walk long distances. I relied on using the lifts to get to and from my flat. I was not registered as being physically disabled and I do not think the TMO knew about my mobility issues, although I don't remember ever having a meeting with the TMO or RBKC and being asked if living on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor was suitable for us.
20. The lifts would often break down, usually towards the end of the week. The TMO would not contact us directly if the lifts were out of order, they would just put up a sign to tell us. They did not contact about texts by the lift. I did not complain about the lifts personally, but I believe other residents did.
21. Sometimes both lifts would be out of service and I would have to use the stairs. It was very difficult for me to walk up to the 10<sup>th</sup> floor. I would be out of breath by the third or fourth floor and I would have to take a break. Because of my asthma I would get short of breath. I would have to stop several times on the stairwell.

## The Refurbishment

22. I have described the Refurbishment works in my Phase 1 witness statement, from paragraphs 15 to 20. I wish to go into more detail about these works in this statement.
23. RBKC built the new school (Kensington Aldridge Academy) on the football pitches and the car park at the north of Grenfell Tower. I believe I first learnt about the Refurbishment works after the school had been built. I remember that I received a letter or a leaflet that was delivered to me through the letterbox which informed us of the works that were to be done to Grenfell Tower. As it was written in English, Lucy had to translate it to me. I have referred to this in my Phase 1 statement at paragraph 15.
24. I was aware at the time that RBKC and the TMO were going to have cladding fixed on the outside of the Tower. At the time I thought this could only be a good thing, as it would make the Tower look nicer.
25. Rydon workers were working in my flat during 2015. My daughter Lucy was the main point of contact with Rydon because of my English. Arrangements would be made for workers to work in the flat, but often they would not turn up. I remember when the workers changed the boiler, they said they would come to my flat three times but each time they did not come. I would have to stay in the flat and wait for them and then they wouldn't turn up.
26. I remember that the windows in the flat were changed. As I have said in paragraph 16 of my Phase 1 statement, the old windows had an aluminium frame. The new windows that were installed had a plastic frame. There were no problems that I was aware of with the windows, like gaps or a draught coming through.
27. A new boiler was installed in my flat. There was no problem with the heating before it was changed, but we constantly had problems with pipes leaking afterwards. I have described this in my Phase 1 witness statement at paragraph 18. The old boiler was in a cupboard by the kitchen. Instead of installing the new boiler there, the workers installed the new boiler by the front door. It was to the right of the front

door as you walked in. It made the hallway area feel smaller. I didn't have a choice about where the boiler was and I thought it would have been better to have it in the same cupboard in the kitchen. I don't know why the location of it was changed.

28. The works being carried out meant putting new pipes in the walls of our flat and this meant holes were drilled into the walls and ceiling. The pipes came from outside the flat (through holes the workers had made) and into the flat through the ceiling, on the top right of the front door. At first, the pipes were not concealed so you could see them. I felt the inside of my flat was made to look ugly and unfinished because of all this. The pipes looked ugly. I felt like I couldn't say no to anything the TMO wanted to do. Sometime later workers did cover the pipes up with boxes, however the pipes lower down were not covered. I asked the workers to cover the pipes but they did not.
29. I did not feel the benefit of changing the heating system. There was no real improvement in the heating or pipes leaking. After the new boiler was fitted, and the new pipes were installed in the flat, water kept leaking in the kitchen and bathroom. I called the TMO using the helpline number. I think Lucy also complained about the leaks. I remember that a manager from Rydon came to my flat and said the leaks were caused by the "old system". I have described this in my Phase 1 statement a paragraph 20.
30. Whilst the workers were installing the pipes in the flat, they found flaking paint which they thought had asbestos in. This was in my bathroom. I was very worried about it. I didn't know whether it was safe for me to be living in the flat and this made me feel stressed. Lucy had to email Rydon and the TMO again and again asking for an update on the asbestos in the ceiling. Some of these emails are in my housing file and have been disclosed to the Inquiry (Reference – RYD00043473).
31. Eventually workmen came to my flat to remove the asbestos from the bathroom ceiling. They came dressed in protective suits. One worker stood in the bathroom and another was standing in the doorway of the bathroom. They did not tell us to remove towels, or toothbrushes or anything from the bathroom. I was standing nearby and the door to the bathroom was open. They took what looked to me to be



a giant piece of tape and used this to remove the asbestos from the ceiling. The work took them hours. When the workers were finished, they just took their stuff and left. I do not know if they cleaned the area.

### Fire Safety

32. I believed that the TMO were responsible for managing Grenfell Tower. If there had been a problem in the building that I needed to raise then I would have thought to contact the TMO (through my daughters Lucy and Jenny).
33. I cannot remember having ever received advice from RBKC or the TMO on what to do in the event of a fire. I had never received any training on how to evacuate. There were no fire drills. I don't remember having received information from RBKC or the TMO about how to evacuate and where to go. I had a tenant handbook but I could not read it because it was written in English. Anyway, I don't know whether it contained fire safety advice or not. I didn't know at the time of the fire that there was a stay put policy in the Tower.
34. There were fires in Grenfell Tower before 14 June 2017, which I have described in my Phase 1 statement at paragraphs 5 and 6. I didn't evacuate the building on those occasions. This was not because I was aware of the stay put policy, but because firefighters who came to the Tower told me directly to go back to my flat and because I didn't judge it to be a large fire from what I could see. During one of the fires in 1991, the fire brigade knocked on my door and told me to stay inside.
35. As mentioned within paragraph 6 of my Phase 1 witness statement, there was a fire in Flat 66 in around 2013. I became aware of the fire because I saw a little bit of smoke out of the window. I remember I opened the door and there was smoke in the hallway, but not thick smoke. A firefighter told Lucy (who was standing outside the Tower) that we were to stay in our flat.
36. I had two fire alarms in my flat. I have marked where they were on the floor plan of my flat that I exhibited to my Phase 1 witness statement (Reference IWS0000081). I don't remember anyone from the TMO or the fire brigade coming

to check fire alarms or anything like that, although, as mentioned in paragraph 20 of my Phase 1 witness statement, a manager from Rydon came to my flat when looking at my bathroom and replaced a battery in the smoke alarm. I had previously asked the TMO to fix the alarm but they told me they did not have the right size battery. I brought the battery myself and asked Rydon to change it for me when they came to the flat.

37. I don't remember hearing a fire alarm in the communal areas before the 14 June 2017. On the night of the fire, I didn't hear any alarms in the communal areas of Grenfell Tower make a sound. The reason I became aware of the fire on 14 June was because fire alarms in my flat went off. The first one to make a sound was in the hallway outside my bedroom.

38. Other than the fire alarm in the flat itself, there were no other fire safety appliances that I can recall. We did not have fire blankets in the flat. I know how to use fire extinguishers and fire blankets because I was trained as part of my job as a carer so I know how to deal with a fire in someone's flat.

#### My front door

39. I believe that the TMO replaced all the doors in the Tower. I don't know the reason we were given for why the doors needed changing. I remember that I asked the TMO if I could keep my front door but they said it had to change.

40. The old front door to the flat did not close on its own, so you would have to pull it to close and then lock it if you were leaving the flat. In paragraph 11 of my Phase 1 statement, I described my new front door as having "springs". What I meant by this is that it had a mechanism in the door (what I call "springs") which made the door close automatically. That meant you did not have to pull the door to close as it would close itself.

41. In paragraph 11 of my Phase 1 statement, I said that the springs were not working and so the TMO took the springs out. I want to clarify this. Sometime after the new door was fitted, it stopped closing properly. The door did not look like it fitted in



the frame. I believed at the time that it was the mechanism within the door that made it close which was stopping it from closing properly. I remember that I went downstairs to the ground floor of the Tower to speak with the TMO staff who worked on the concierge desk about this problem. The person I spoke to said that I needed to contact the company who made the door. I don't remember whether we did this or not but I know that a repairman was sent to our flat to look at the door.

42. The workman told us that there was a fault with the door and he took out the mechanism in the door which made it close. He did not say that we needed a whole new door. From then on, the door wouldn't close automatically on its own, so you would have to manually pull the door to lock it. At the time, I didn't know that a front door need to automatically close for fire safety.

#### **Module 4**

14<sup>th</sup> June 2017

43. I have described in detail events of the 14 June 2017 in paragraphs 22 to 35 of my Phase 1 statement. I do not want to go into detail about these events again unless I can add more detail to assist the Inquiry for Modules 3 and 4 only.
44. I left the Tower at around 01:27. I was wearing pyjamas, a jacket and some slippers. The only things I had with me were my reading glasses, mobile phone and my purse that had an oyster card and a small amount of cash inside. I did not have my bank card on me.
45. I stood around the area after leaving the Tower. I noticed I felt asthmatic from the smoke. I had left my asthma inhalers in my flat so I did not have these to take. Not having my asthma inhalers made me worry. I was panicking and my heart rate was fast. I saw my hands were shaking when I tried to call people on my phone to tell them where I was.
46. I was not taken to hospital on the night of the fire. I wasn't thinking about the medical attention that I might need. I felt just so confused about what I should do and where I should go. I saw that the emergency services were there at the Tower,

including paramedics, but no one approached me and asked me how I was, or suggested that I could or should get myself medically checked.

47. I have described in my Phase 1 statement (at paragraph 42 to 44) how I went to Paul's house (who is Lucy's partner) as he lived close to the Tower, in Barandon Walk. I could feel there was smoke inside my nose and that started to worry me. I felt congested. When I blew my nose, black soot came into the tissue. This made me panic. I could smell smoke still in my nose.
48. I drank tea at Paul's house to try to help me calm down, but as I was drinking it, I could taste smoke in my mouth. I kept coughing but there was no phlegm.
49. I have described in my Phase 1 statement (at paragraph 45) how Barandon Walk was suddenly evacuated by the police because it was thought to be dangerous to be there. We had to really quickly leave Paul's flat and go back outside. The police did not tell us where we should go or what we should do. Fortunately, my friend Yen lives in Robinson House, which is close by, and Lucy took me there so I had somewhere to stay. I don't know where else I could have gone after being evacuated from Barandon Walk if I had not had the option of going to Robinson House.
50. After arriving at Robinson House, I stayed up watching the news to try to find out what was happening at the Tower. My friends were calling me on my phone and trying to find out whether I was ok. I don't remember receiving any calls or text messages from the TMO or RBKC on the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017. I wasn't contacted by the police either or any official. I don't remember Lucy telling me she had received any contact from them on that day.

#### The Westway Centre

51. Later on in the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup> June, I went to the Westway Centre with my friend Yen. I found out that the Westway Centre was open for survivors through my friend's brother. He had seen that food and water was being delivered there, and that people were waiting outside the centre. I didn't know at the time who was organising this. I walked to the Westway Centre from Robinson House. I do not remember there being any security at the door. Inside the Westway Centre, I saw

that lots of food, clothes and necessities had been collected. They were all split into different sections. There were also mattresses on the floor.

52. The people who were working at the Westway Centre told me that I could take the food, clothes and necessities that I needed. I did not know at the time whether the people working at the Westway Centre were from RBKC or volunteers from the community because they were just wearing plain clothes and they did not have any visible ID and they did not tell me where they were from.
53. I did not speak to anyone, and no one approached me about emergency accommodation at that time. I did not know that it was available and I was not advised how to get it. I wasn't sure what to do.
54. Someone asked me to write down my name and the name of my family members, the flat I was from and my mobile number. I gave them my friend, Yen's mobile number because I was concerned about how I would be able to communicate with them because of my English and Yen speaks better English than I do. I don't know if this person was from RBKC or the TMO or was a volunteer. They did not identify who they were. They were not wearing a lanyard or name badge. I did not see any doctors or counsellors at the Westway Centre
55. I did not get any money from the Westway Centre at this time and no one told me if it was available. All I had was the cash in my purse that I had taken when I left my flat. I had to rely on the generosity of my friends that day for money and donations for food and water.
56. When I left the Westway Centre, I went back to Robinson House with my friend Yen. When I was there, Yen told me that she had received a text message about residents being able to get hotel accommodation. The text message told me I was to go to the Premier Inn in Earl's Court. I do not remember the message, whether it included any information about how to pay for transport to get there. My friend drove me to Earl's Court underground station where I met Lucy and Paul. We then walked to the hotel together.



### Emergency accommodation

57. I was housed at the Premier Inn in Earls Court from 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017 for seven months. This was the first time in my life that I had ever stayed in a hotel and it was a really difficult time for me.
58. When I arrived at the hotel, there were no officials from RBKC, from the TMO or other government organisation, or volunteers there to meet us. It was unclear what was happening. I went to the reception desk of the hotel, I gave them my name and the staff confirmed that I had a room there for the night. They told me that we would have to check-out the next day. They said that by then the hotel would have more information about how long we could stay there for. I did not know how the room was being paid for. I felt really worried. I thought where will I stay if I can't continue to stay here?
59. I think that someone from RBKC or the TMO should have been at the hotel when we arrived to give me information about what was happening. I would have felt a lot less anxious had I known then that I would not be asked to leave the hotel and that I could stay there until I could be rehoused. It was really stressful.
60. Hotel staff took me to my room, which was on the second floor. We were allocated one room which I had to share with Lucy and Paul that night because Barandon Walk was still evacuated. It was quite a small room with not a lot of space. The room had a double bed and a sofa bed. When Jenny came back from university on 15<sup>th</sup> June, she shared this room with me and Lucy.
61. I ate breakfast and dinner in the hotel but I usually ate lunch when I was out. I had no microwave or fridge in the room. There were no cooking facilities and so I was unable to cook for myself in the hotel. I am used to cooking and always used to cook for my family. Before the fire I had always cooked and eaten Asian food. The hotel only really served Western food so this was difficult for me. If the kitchen was closed, I did not order room service. I would sometimes buy food to snack on when in the hotel room. Since there was no fridge, all I could buy was dry goods, like bread. I also bought instant noodles that I made in a mug.

62. I felt like I had privacy when I was alone in my hotel room but I found having my room cleaned daily very difficult; it made me feel uncomfortable, and meant that I had to leave the room every morning and find something to do. I put up a "do not disturb" sign up some days so I that I did not have to leave the room.
63. I was not able to wash our clothes at the hotel. There were no laundry facilities. I had to take my clothes to a local laundrette to wash and dry them, and then take them back to the hotel. I could hand wash small items in the bathroom sink.
64. There was a section in the hotel where they put paper work and letters for Grenfell survivors. The letters had information in about places to go to get more information about what support was available to survivors and how we had to verify our identity to attend. My daughters would have to translate these for me as they were written in English. I remember getting letters from RBKC or the TMO but it was not until a week or so after the fire. All the other contact numbers were the personal numbers of volunteers that were supporting survivors. Volunteers came to the hotel with things to give us like clothes. Someone came and donated us a mini fridge and a microwave so I could use this to cook.
65. I think someone from RBKC should have been at the hotel during my stay to give me guidance. I had to keep going back and forth to the Westway Centre so often to get help and donations, because I had lost everything in the fire.

#### Relief Centres

66. I went back to the Grenfell area often for help. I had to arrange my own transport to get there. My daughter Jenny took me to the Portobello Rugby Club in the first week after the fire. I had no income and no savings to use and was using donations for food and to buy essential things. The Rugby Club gave me £200 and some essential items to take back with me like shampoo.
67. Lucy and Jenny really helped me with applying for a new passport and getting new glasses and things like that which I needed and had lost.

68. I remember going to St Clement Church after the fire. There were volunteers working there, sorting out donations. I think they were volunteers from the community.

69. In the centres I went to, I don't remember seeing anyone from the TMO or RBKC. As I have said, the people I saw were volunteers, I think from the community.

#### Financial support

70. Immediately after the fire, I did not have any bank cards and only a small amount of cash with me that I had in my purse. I didn't have access to money and I felt really anxious about this. I had to rely on my friends and family who were generous. They gave me some money initially so I could buy food and water. I didn't get any money from RBKC or the TMO when I first went to the Westway Centre (and I wasn't aware that anyone from RBKC or the TMO were there). Lucy had bought me clothes from a shop and she gave them to me to wear.

71. I went back to the Westway Centre several times through the week for food. I would go to and from the hotel.

72. I think that within the first seven days I was given £500 from the Westway Centre and as I have said above I received from the Rugby Portobello Club gave £200. I had lost everything in the fire and I needed my own clothes and to have my own things.

73. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) sent money to Lucy's bank account on 20<sup>th</sup> June for the whole family. It had to go into Lucy's bank account because I did not have any bank cards or account details. This money again was to help us replace the things that had been lost in the fire.

#### Social worker

74. We were given a social worker called Gareth within the first seven days of the fire. He asked me and Lucy many questions to find out what we needed like accommodation, seeing GPs, getting medically checked etc. Gareth would take us



to various medical appointments and meetings. I did not know at the time that Gareth worked for another borough.

#### Communication, information and assistance

75. I don't feel like RBKC and the TMO reached out to me and my family in the days after the fire. The first time that I recall direct contact from them was when I received a letter at the hotel from RBKC which was about a week after the fire. This was written in English and my daughter had to translate it for me. Support at that time came from my family and friends. I was reliant on them for getting me information about the places I should go to for help. I didn't feel that RBKC reached out and supported me in the aftermath of the fire or after this time.

76. Even when letters were sent to me in the hotel they were written in English and I couldn't read them. When there were meetings for residents I didn't have an interpreter so I couldn't understand what was being said. I would have felt more supported if RBKC had arranged an interpreter for me for meetings or had letters translated for me. It would have meant I could get information directly and not rely on my family and friends.

77. I think that in the days after the fire things were chaotic. The council didn't seem to be leading. I did not know what to do at the time as no one was co-ordinating a response.

#### Impact

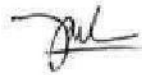
78. I don't want to go into detail in this public statement about the impact of losing my home, neighbours and community other than to say that the trauma of the fire and the aftermath of it has really affected me both physically and mentally and has changed the lives of my family.

**Statement of Truth**

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

I am willing for this statement to form part of the evidence before the Inquiry and to be published on the Inquiry's website.

**SIGNED:**



**DATE:**

23-02-20