

**ABUSE IN CARE ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY
TULOOU – OUR PACIFIC VOICES: TATALA E PULONGA**

Under	The Inquiries Act 2013
In the matter of	The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Historical Abuse in State Care and in the Care of Faith-based Institutions
Royal Commission:	Judge Coral Shaw (Chair) Ali'imua Sandra Alofivae Mr Paul Gibson Dr Anaru Erueti Ms Julia Steenson
Counsel:	Mr Simon Mount QC, Ms Kerryn Beaton QC, Ms Tania Sharkey, Mr Semisi Pohiva, Ms Reina Va'ai, Ms Nicole Copeland, Ms Sonja Cooper, Ms Amanda Hill for the Royal Commission Ms Rachael Schmidt-McCleave, Ms Julia White and Ms Alana Ruakere for the Crown Ms Fiona Guy Kidd QC for the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia
Venue:	Fale o Samoa 141 Bader Drive Māngere AUCKLAND
Date:	21 July 2021

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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1 [10.00 am]

2 **Hearing opens with prayer and song**

3 **CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister, for blessing our proceedings today. Ni sa bula vinaka to our Fijian
4 community who is honouring us with their presence today, you are most welcome. Thank
5 you for coming.

6 Today's proceedings are going to be led first by counsel Sonja Cooper who will lead
7 our first witness, but before she does that, I note the presence of Ms Guy Kidd who's here
8 for the Anglican Church, I believe, and I believe that Bishop Peter is with you as well.

9 **MS GUY KIDD:** Yes.

10 **CHAIR:** Bishop Peter is somebody who has given evidence for this evidence before, so Bishop
11 Peter welcome to you too.

12 **JOANNA CATHERINE HELEN OLDHAM**

13 **CHAIR:** Thank you. So on that note it's time that we brought our first witness through, thank you
14 Ms Cooper. Good morning Joanna.

15 A. Good morning.

16 **Q.** I'm sure you're feeling nervous and we acknowledge that and I hope that, as the time goes
17 on, you feel a little bit less nervous. I just want to let you know if at any time while you're
18 giving your evidence that you feel the need to stop and have a short break, please just let us
19 know. So we're in your hands, you just tell us if you'd like to have a break, all right?

20 A. Thank you.

21 **Q.** All right. So before we start, can I just ask you to take the affirmation. Do you solemnly,
22 sincerely and truly declare and affirm that the evidence you will give today will be the
23 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

24 A. Yes, I do.

25 **Q.** Thank you. Thank you Ms Cooper.

26 **QUESTIONING BY MS COOPER:** Thank you. So just to confirm, we're going to use your
27 maiden name throughout the course of this hearing. So confirming that your full name is
28 Joanna Catherine Helen Oldham?

29 A. Yes.

30 **Q.** And throughout your childhood you were known as Catherine while you were in care,
31 weren't you?

32 A. Yes.

33 **Q.** Just to set you within a timeframe, you were born in 1974 in Auckland?

34 A. Yes.

- 1 **Q.** Just going to start with the reality that you did not know your name until you were, your
2 first name, until you were 15 years old and got your birth certificate for the first time
3 because, as we've said, you were called Catherine and it wasn't until you got your birth
4 certificate you actually found out that your first name was Joanna?
- 5 **A.** Yes.
- 6 **Q.** And we're just going to call out witness 582002 with the paragraph under "Birth certificate"
7 and highlight that paragraph under "Birth certificate" thanks Alex. So this is 1989, so, as
8 you say, you would have been 15 at that time.
- 9 "Since the last report a birth certificate for Catherine has been obtained. This was
10 mainly for passport purposes. In receiving the birth certificate it was discovered that her
11 full name is Joanna Catherine Helen Oldham."
- 12 **A.** Yes.
- 13 **Q.** And as an adult you've chosen to use that name Joanna, haven't you, rather than Catherine?
- 14 **A.** Yeah, I have.
- 15 **Q.** So just turning to your early childhood.
- 16 **A.** Mmm-hmm.
- 17 **Q.** Your father is Pākehā and your mother is Tongan. That's correct, isn't it?
- 18 **A.** Yes.
- 19 **Q.** And you say in your witness statement that you weren't aware of your mother's ethnicity
20 while you were growing up because you lived mainly with your father who told you
21 different things about who your mother was and, as we'll show from your records, Social
22 Welfare never seemed to be aware of your heritage or culture. So can you just tell us a bit
23 of background about how your mother came to be in New Zealand from Tonga?
- 24 **A.** From what I understand my mother was brought to New Zealand with my grandmother, I
25 think my mother was 9 at the time. My grandmother left Tonga, she left my mother's
26 siblings in Tonga, travelled through Niue and came to New Zealand to find a better life for
27 herself and my mother, yeah.
- 28 **Q.** And then, so was there any connection with the Tongan culture that you're aware of for
29 your mother and her mother?
- 30 **A.** So I don't have any memories. I do have a memory of, of course, my father who's
31 European, taking me from my grandmother's house, but no, I don't have any memory of the
32 Tongan culture.
- 33 **Q.** So your parents married and they were together for a few years and you had an older sister
34 and yourself, and you talk about the fact that they separated shortly after you were born and

1 initially you were with your mother and family in Auckland. Just explain how you
2 understand that you came to be in your father's care and then shifted down to the South
3 Island?

4 A. From what I've been told, and I do, I do have a memory of playing in my grandmother's
5 yard in Auckland and I do have a memory of my father just picking me up from the front
6 yard and popping me in his car. Yeah, he just took us away. I do remember that they
7 fought a lot, there was a lot of violence in the home prior to that. Yeah, my father just took
8 us, he just took myself, he took my sister and he took us to Christchurch and I never saw
9 my mother again until I was 15.

10 Q. And the records show that eventually your father got custody of you?

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. And so then your mother eventually moved to Australia, didn't she?

13 A. Yeah, I wasn't aware that he got custody of -- I didn't realise that happened until we were
14 speaking, until I saw this, I didn't realise that it went through court, yeah.

15 Q. So you've said that as a child you didn't really know what your cultural ethnicity was?

16 A. Mmm.

17 Q. One of the things that you do remember is being different and that whatever that was, you
18 say in your statement "I was wrong." So tell me about your experience growing up in a
19 Pākehā family as a young half-Tongan woman, or child?

20 A. Yeah. So there was my sister and myself, and my sister's very fair so she took after the
21 European side, I, on the other hand, I look a lot like my mother and I'm dark. People say
22 you're not, but compared to the family that I was raised in, my father's family, I was, and
23 I always knew I was different. My grandmother, my father's mother was -- she was racist,
24 so she always reminded me that, you know, I was different. She'd call me names. So I was
25 just very aware from a very young age that I was brown and I looked a lot different.

26 Q. And one of the things that is clearly shown from your records is that in the years that you
27 spent in your father's side of the family, there was a lot of racism, so your father's new
28 partner called you a black bitch, your father told your social worker that one of the reasons
29 you'd gone into Kingslea was to teach you a lesson about where dirty Māori street kids end
30 up and lots of other records of that kind. Tell me what it was like with the family at family
31 gatherings?

32 A. So we would have -- when my father was home, because he spent a lot of time in prison,
33 we would have Sunday dinners at my grandmother's house, and you know, she would --
34 when she was drunk she was even more racist than usual, but, you know, we'd turn up in --

1 yeah.

2 **Q.** I think you were telling me that you would get your food wrapped up in a little bag and you
3 would be sent away?

4 **CHAIR:** Take a breath and have some water please and just look after yourself.

5 A. Yes, my grandmother was racist, so she would -- I'd be sent outside to eat, yeah.

6 **QUESTIONING BY MS COOPER CONTINUED:** And the rest of the family, including your
7 sister, would eat inside?

8 A. Mmm-hmm, yeah. I think -- yeah, I think -- I think talking about it is, you know, I've lived
9 with it for many years, but, you know, I think it's important for me to say, you know, I --
10 the reason I am emotional is because, you know, I feel that -- I feel sad that she was -- I feel
11 sad for her that she treated a child that way, so, you know, I've dealt with a lot of stuff, but,
12 you know, I feel for my grandmother, and talking about her in this way makes me a little bit
13 emotional.

14 **Q.** Yeah, of course.

15 A. You know, she loved me, but -- yeah.

16 **Q.** When you first got taken into care and I think it is a bit of a theme that is talked about
17 throughout probably this hearing, is that there was quite a lot of uncertainty around your
18 ethnicity?

19 A. Mmm.

20 **Q.** I'm actually going to start with the document we just called up first, because I hadn't
21 noticed that that's also relevant. So if we can just call up that document 2002, thank you
22 Alex. So if you just call out that first paragraph there you'll see there it starts with the
23 heading "Correction." "A correction from the last progress report, Catherine is part Tongan
24 and not Rarotongan as stated."

25 So that's coming towards the end of your time in care they're finally finding out
26 what your correct ethnicity is. We're just going to have a look at some other documents.
27 So if we can next have 582004. So we can see the date up the top there is 19 September
28 1985. So how old were you then, Jo?

29 A. I would have been 11.

30 **Q.** 11?

31 A. Yeah.

32 **Q.** Let's just highlight down there where it says "Race" and that's actually correct, isn't it, that
33 has you as half-Tongan?

34 A. Yeah.

- 1 **Q.** Half-European/Pākehā.
- 2 **A.** Mmm.
- 3 **Q.** And then we'll look at the next document, which is updated but we know it's at Allendale,
4 so that's either late 1985 or 1987. Again, we'll just call out the race there. You've become
5 half-Samoan there. And then if we look at the next document, and this is -- we can see the
6 date 1988 and if we look there at "Race", we have there Rarotonga and Caucasian. And I
7 think we had some other ethnicities in your records as well. Jo, do you know where that
8 information would have come from, were you ever asked about your ethnicity?
- 9 **A.** I was never asked. It's not -- yeah, I don't -- I was never asked.
- 10 **Q.** And would you have actually known what the answer was?
- 11 **A.** I would never have known, yeah, because it wasn't a conversation that my father or my
12 grandmother had with me, yeah.
- 13 **Q.** So we're just going to step back in time because that, you know, I think who you are and
14 your growing identity is important in terms of that, you know, uncertainty all the way
15 through really, that's even reflected in your records. So just explain a little bit what life was
16 like living with dad and your sister?
- 17 **A.** Well, for my sister it was better, because she was white. For myself it was, you know, it
18 was volatile, it was violent, it was abusive, you know, I was the target of most of that
19 abuse, partly because I was brown and I looked like my mum. I didn't know who she was.
20 Yeah, it was volatile, it was hard, yes.
- 21 **Q.** And you talk about the fact that your father dealt drugs?
- 22 **A.** Yeah.
- 23 **Q.** And so there were often Police coming into the house?
- 24 **A.** Yeah.
- 25 **Q.** And I suppose gang people coming into the house, can you talk about your memories of
26 that?
- 27 **A.** So I don't remember my sister being around, she was with my grandmother most of the
28 time, but if -- okay, I felt like my father's -- I was his prodigy, he was - he raised me to not
29 talk to Police officers, I was -- yeah.
- 30 **Q.** And you talked about actually stepping in front of Police officers from time to time?
- 31 **A.** Yeah.
- 32 **Q.** Or people who were coming to assault your dad?
- 33 **A.** Yeah, so my father's lifestyle as a drug dealer was very -- it was very violent and on many
34 occasions I would stand between him and a baseball bat from a very young age, you know,

1 if it wasn't gang members coming to the house it was Police, they would come and take
2 him, they'd come and take me, I'd spend nights in police stations while they were
3 interrogating him over different crimes.

4 **Q.** How old were you then when you were spending nights in Police stations?

5 A. 6, 5, from -- yeah, from a very young age. I think it was, you know, looking -- reading over
6 this has helped me to put a timeline on, you know, my young life, and from the age of
7 maybe 8 or 9 where this is recorded, from the age of 5 or 6, you know, is when my father
8 was being arrested and we were being taken to police stations and I was being detained in
9 Police custody with him. So yeah, from a young age.

10 **Q.** Do you know if any attempts were made to call family members to come and collect you or
11 even to call family members while they were arresting your father?

12 A. I knew from a very young age, because we moved, we were very -- we moved around a lot
13 when my dad took my sister and I from my mum, and I think I had a feeling that we were
14 being hidden and I think I knew that what was happening to my father and what was
15 happening to myself, like he didn't want people or maybe, you know, my family to know.
16 So I knew I was being hidden, yeah, no, I don't -- apart from my grandmother, which is my
17 father's mother, there was no outside help.

18 **Q.** And your father also had times in prison?

19 A. Mmm.

20 **Q.** So who would look after you then?

21 A. My grandmother, yeah, his mother.

22 **Q.** How was that?

23 A. It was hard, because of course she was racist. Yeah, it was hard.

24 **Q.** And tell us about school, your early experiences of starting school and how that was for
25 you?

26 A. It wasn't a great time because my experience as a 5, 6 year old was very different to the
27 other children in the class. I was held back, I think, at primary school and I didn't realise
28 that until my uncle told me, and I was like oh that's why I'm so big compared to the other
29 kids in the class. But -- yeah, so I didn't -- I didn't attend school, I didn't attend a primary
30 school where I learned anything, I didn't go to intermediate and I didn't go to college, I just
31 managed to teach myself what I know, so yeah.

32 **Q.** So the next topic that we are going to move on to is what happened, I suppose it's your first
33 sexual abuse, and this is when you are living with your grandmother, when your father's in
34 prison charged with a very serious offence.

1 A. Mmm-hmm.

2 Q. So you are required to join the church because that's where your grandmother went and
3 there you were sexually abused by the Reverend, and we can name him, Reverend
4 Oppenheim. So as much as you feel comfortable about, Jo.

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. Just talk about how that came about and what happened.

7 A. So my grandmother, she was a devout Christian, so when my father was in prison she
8 would come and live in our house and we attended a church in the neighbourhood.
9 I remember sporadically going to church with her at maybe 5 or 6, 6/7. At 9 years of age, I
10 think I was about 8 or 9, the Reverend took an interest in me and at that time, you know,
11 I thought -- I was quite happy about that interest because I thought, you know, I'm doing,
12 you know, this is great, I'm doing something right. So I would go to Sunday School and go
13 to church and be a part of the barbecues and so forth, and it was after a barbecue on an
14 Easter weekend that the Reverend asked me to visit him at his house after the barbecue and
15 he was going to talk to me about being an altar girl, which, you know, I was quite happy
16 about.

17 So the barbecue finished and I went home and I rode back on my bike and I went
18 to his house and as soon as he opened the door I knew he was drunk. I was young but I,
19 you know, I had a clue about alcohol and drugs and so forth, so I knew that he was
20 intoxicated, could smell it on him as soon as he opened the door. So yeah, he took me into
21 his house and when he took me into the room where he, you know, had a lot of
22 pornography lying around and I knew that I was in trouble, yeah. So I was disappointed.
23 That was my first feeling of disappointment because I was quite happy that, you know, I'd
24 gone to church and he was interested in me. Maybe, you know, I thought it was going to be
25 a better ending, I don't know, yeah. And yeah, he abused me.

26 Q. Yeah, so that's, do you want to talk about the details or shall we just -- I mean happy to
27 leave that out, it's in your statement.

28 **CHAIR:** Joanna, just to let you know we have your statement with all the details.

29 A. Yeah.

30 Q. And we've read it and you don't need to speak about it in public if you don't want to. So we
31 respect your right not to if you don't want to.

32 A. Yeah, probably not, probably won't go into detail if that's okay.

33 Q. And we completely respect that, but thank you for providing it to us.

34 A. Yeah.

- 1 **QUESTIONING BY MS COOPER CONTINUED:** So you're 8 or 9?
- 2 A. Yeah.
- 3 **Q.** And one of the things you say in your witness statement is you didn't really understand
4 what he was doing to you, but you didn't like it?
- 5 A. Yeah. I -- yeah. I hated it. It was, yeah, it was disgusting, yeah.
- 6 **Q.** And so that's the first time and it happened again, didn't it?
- 7 A. Yeah.
- 8 **Q.** So was it the same each time?
- 9 A. It was -- it was the same sort of abuse each time, yeah, it was, yeah, until I did become the
10 altar girl and I would -- he would ask me to come to church early on a Sunday and that
11 would be to put his robes on him and he would start to abuse me in the church before the
12 service. And he was also drunk then, yeah.
- 13 **Q.** So you say in your witness statement that to avoid this, to avoid having to go to church you
14 started to run away?
- 15 A. Mmm.
- 16 **Q.** So is this the first time you'd started running away or had that been something you'd done
17 earlier?
- 18 A. No, no, it was after the abuse, not wanting to be at home with, you know, my grandmother
19 who would make me go to church, yeah, I started running away from home. I think
20 I started having tantrums and just, you know, my behaviour changed, yeah.
- 21 **Q.** So you say "tantrums", what do you mean by that?
- 22 A. Like I'd just cry, I'd just cry and then, you know, it was -- I guess it was the response of
23 people not understanding, like my grandmother not understanding like what was wrong
24 with me. So in response to her anger then I would get angry and then it would result in
25 what looked like a tantrum, yeah.
- 26 **Q.** And this is the first time, of course, your grandmother calls Social Welfare in 1984 to get
27 some help. It's important as part of your story, isn't it, that you actually tried, or you did tell
28 people what the Reverend was doing to you, didn't you?
- 29 A. Yeah, I did.
- 30 **Q.** One of them was your grandmother?
- 31 A. Yeah, yeah.
- 32 **Q.** What was her response to that?
- 33 A. I can't remember her response, but I can remember feeling like -- I can remember feeling
34 like maybe it was my fault, you know, why do you look that way sort of -- so I don't

- 1 remember her response, I just remember feeling like it's my fault, yeah.
- 2 **Q.** And you now know, of course, many, many years later that an uncle spoke with someone at
3 the church and then the abuse stopped, or just after it had stopped and that the church
4 reassured your uncle that his actions, the Reverend's actions were known about and it was
5 being dealt with?
- 6 **A.** Yeah.
- 7 **Q.** When did you find out that your uncle had actually complained?
- 8 **A.** So a couple of years ago I think I had a conversation with my uncle, and this is my uncle
9 that left New Zealand because he couldn't deal with his mother, which is quite sad, so he
10 lives in Vancouver. So we're very close now, but it was a couple of years ago I was having
11 a conversation with him about this and he said to me that he remembered being in church
12 back when I was younger and the congregation, somebody in the congregation saying to
13 him that they knew that it was happening, yeah. They'd acknowledged it to him but he
14 only -- him and I only had the conversation a couple of years ago.
- 15 **Q.** And one of the things that you say in your witness statement is that you never, you know,
16 until a couple of years ago you had no knowledge about this, so nobody said anything to
17 you?
- 18 **A.** No.
- 19 **Q.** So from your perspective as a child, it just seemed like nobody was doing anything and that
20 made you pretty angry?
- 21 **A.** Yeah. I guess as a 9 -year-old child you can't put your finger on it, like you can't name it,
22 right? Like we can name it now, I can name it now, but back then I couldn't -- at the age of
23 8 or 9 I couldn't tell you why I was angry, you know? Yeah.
- 24 **Q.** So at about this time Social Welfare's just on the scene and this is obviously, as I say, your
25 father's in prison, so a Reverend gets in contact with Social Welfare asking for assistance
26 for you and your sister, and this is because you are causing trouble, and your father said to
27 be concerned, and at that stage Social Welfare's informed that the Reverend who's abusing
28 you is assisting the family and that this Reverend did not want the Welfare involved, and
29 that's actually recorded in one of the documents we have on your file.
- 30 **A.** [Nods].
- 31 **Q.** So as a result of that, there's no further action, is there?
- 32 **A.** No. I didn't, you know, I just saw -- I just read that in the last couple of weeks, I didn't
33 realise. Yeah, but that's surprising, yeah.
- 34 **Q.** So at that stage no checks on you, no checks on your family?

- 1 A. No.
- 2 Q. Just left. So things continue to escalate around this time, so you're dealing with the abuse
3 and so your father asks again towards the end of 1984 for help and you get sent to -- sorry,
4 we're at the beginning of 1984, you get sent to the Ford Milton children's home in early
5 1984. Just tell us what you remember about that children's home. Do you know even
6 where it was geographically?
- 7 A. No. It was in the middle of nowhere. It was horrible. Yeah.
- 8 Q. What sort of warning did you get that you were going there, what were you told?
- 9 A. I was told -- I was told nothing. There was not a conversation, it was just, just being picked
10 up from here and put over here, yeah.
- 11 Q. And you've talked about it being quite isolated. Were there other children in the home?
- 12 A. When I first went there there was just myself and there was another small boy who I felt
13 very sorry for, so I assumed the position of, I guess, an older sister. I don't know how old I
14 was, was I 8?
- 15 Q. Beginning of early 1984, so yeah.
- 16 A. Okay.
- 17 Q. No, 9.
- 18 A. Yeah, it was just, oh my gosh, that was horrible. It was -- so yeah, I mean as an adult I look
19 back and I think, you know, like you've taken a child who's been neglected, you know, well
20 who feels neglected, feels abandoned and you're taking her, you know, completely out of
21 the family unit and you're reinforcing that message by putting her somewhere in the middle
22 of nowhere, like reinforcing that message like, yeah, you are neglected, you are abandoned
23 and you're going to stay here, it's like it just blows my mind that -- yeah.
- 24 Q. And this was another place that you suffered abuse from one of the women who worked
25 there. So just talk a bit about that?
- 26 A. She was, call her the [GRO-B], she was [GRO-B], so she was very strict. She was definitely
27 [GRO-B], like she was scary. But you know what, it was the location of the place also. Like
28 I think it was, what, two hours out of Christchurch in the middle of nowhere, so -- and it
29 was a big old house, it was huge. I think there were like 19 rooms and there were only two
30 of us living there with an old [GRO-B] who would grab me by my hair if I wasn't using a
31 knife and fork properly, you know, we got strapped for not feeding the chickens or, you
32 know, not eating with manners at the table. I don't know what's worse though. So you're
33 taking a child who's broken, you're putting her somewhere in the middle of nowhere with

1 nobody. So was it the isolation or was it the abuse? Like I think it was the isolation, yeah.

2 **Q.** And so you ran away from there?

3 A. I think I stayed there for months, you know, I really missed my sister. So yeah, it was
4 really -- it was heart-breaking for me, you know, I was like where's my family, where's my
5 sister. I stayed there for nearly a year I think and then in the last few months I realised that
6 I hated being there, I had no control. I realised that if I ran away she -- it would cause
7 problems, so I ran away, she caught me, the **GRO-B** caught me, took me back to the house
8 and then I kind of thought to myself well this is working because she's not going to want
9 me here, so if she doesn't want me, I'm going to keep running away because she'll send me
10 back to my family. So I kept running away and she did, she came to the conclusion that she
11 was going to tell Social Welfare that she didn't want me there anymore, and for me that was
12 great, because I didn't want to be there, I wanted to go home, yeah.

13 **CHAIR:** Excuse me, Joanna, can you tell me, did you go to school during that year?

14 **MS COOPER:** Yes, I was going to ask that too.

15 **CHAIR:** Sorry, yes.

16 A. No.

17 **Q.** I'll let you carry on, Ms Cooper.

18 **QUESTIONING BY MS COOPER CONTINUED:** So did you have any education at all?

19 A. So I would be picked up and taken to a farm school during the day and they would teach
20 me crafts and the clever kids would be in the classroom, yeah.

21 **Q.** So no spelling or maths --

22 A. No.

23 **Q.** -- or anything?

24 A. But I can spell and I can read, I'm very intelligent.

25 **Q.** So you weren't quite successful in your running away, you didn't get to go home
26 immediately?

27 A. Yeah.

28 **Q.** You then go to the -- to a family home in **GRO-B** Street?

29 A. Yeah.

30 **Q.** What do you remember about that family home?

31 A. So they were European, they were nice enough but I was still very different, you know,
32 they were a European family, I was still a brown, you know, I didn't fit. And they tried to
33 enrol me in a school. I didn't fit, it was just, I guess, trying to put a round peg into a square

- 1 hole. It was just, yeah, I was just different.
- 2 **Q.** I think one of the things that you say in your witness statement is as you say no overt
3 racism but just you always had a sense that you didn't belong there?
- 4 **A.** Yeah, there was always an undertone of I always knew that I didn't belong. And it was the
5 colour, it was definitely the colour of my skin, yeah.
- 6 **Q.** So then you get placed back with dad in 1984, December 1984, but by January you're
7 already running away and staying overnight with street kids. So just talk a bit about what
8 was the attraction then to running away and hanging out with street kids?
- 9 **A.** Yeah, I don't think it was an attraction, I think I wasn't safe, I wasn't safe at home, I wasn't
10 safe with my dad, my dad's friends, I wasn't safe with my grandmother, I wasn't safe in
11 church, you know, where was I safe? Well, I was safer with people who -- with other kids
12 like myself who, I guess, just happened to be living on the street, yeah. And they were the
13 same, you know, they were the same colour as me.
- 14 **Q.** And the lack of safety at home included being sexually abused by father's friends?
- 15 **A.** Yeah.
- 16 **Q.** One of the things that was clear is that Social Welfare knew that this was happening. I'm
17 just going to call out a record which shows that Social Welfare knew that you were being
18 disciplined by your father's friends. So if we just call out 582012 and -- thank you. So
19 "Catherine has developed a very useful weapon or escape from a sometimes volatile and
20 physically authoritarian father who also happens to be handicapped physically, that is
21 running away."
- 22 Then if we look at the bottom paragraph just because it becomes important
23 because you went back and forth to dad. "I also feel at this stage Catherine would be ill-
24 advised to return to her father. She has reported to the person in charge of Holly House that
25 there are frequent visitors of her father's acquaintances from the prison who she describes
26 as creeps and who her father admits have been used to -manhandle her. His double
27 standard modus operandi is also confusing to her and will not sustain a -long-term-
28 relationship."
- 29 So did you know that social workers were aware this was going on at home?
- 30 **A.** No. I didn't know, yeah, no, I didn't, didn't know that at all.
- 31 **Q.** How do you feel about the fact that social workers knew this was going on at home and left
32 you there?
- 33 **A.** How do I feel now?
- 34 **Q.** Mmm.

- 1 A. Yeah, it just -- I don't know how I feel. Of course I feel angry, yeah, yeah, I feel angry,
2 yeah.
- 3 Q. So then you're back briefly in the GRO-B Street family home, run away, and you're found
4 with friends sniffing petrol in a barn. And then a complaint's laid that you're not under
5 proper control and at the age of 10 for the first time you end up in institutional care in
6 Kingslea. So Kingslea's the residence in Christchurch, yes, and that was just for girls at
7 that stage, was it, or was it for girls and boys?
- 8 A. It was just for girls.
- 9 Q. Just for girls?
- 10 A. Yeah.
- 11 Q. So you're 10 and one of the first things that happens to you is a medical check, and we'll
12 just call up witness 0582011 under the heading "Additional comment." So age 10 you're
13 being checked for VD and also pregnant check if you could be persuaded.
- 14 A. Yeah, I read that this morning.
- 15 Q. Any comment on that?
- 16 A. I just - yeah, I just think it's shocking. I think it's terrible. -I just think of my -- yeah, my
17 sister's 10 -year-old grandson and I just think oh my gosh, like, yeah, it's terrible.
- 18 Q. One of the realities for you at Kingslea was that you were the youngest there by a few
19 years?
- 20 A. Yeah.
- 21 Q. And we're going to look at another document which talks about that fact. So if we call out
22 witness 0582012. So if we just -- we'll wait for that. This is a document we've looked at
23 before, Joanna. So if we just note up the top there, so it's date 28 March 1985?
- 24 A. Mmm-hmm.
- 25 Q. "Catherine's situation of finding herself placed in Kingslea at 10 years of age appears to be
26 caused primarily by the fact that a) she is a high absconding risk, and b), in spite of her age
27 she tends to project an experience level well in advance of that." Do you think that's an
28 accurate description of you as a 10 -year-old?
- 29 A. Yeah, no. Yeah, I've looked over -- I've looked over these documents this morning and
30 can't believe that, you know, we're actually talking about a child here, we're talking about a
31 human, but yeah, I just -- yeah.
- 32 Q. So we'll move down to the paragraph starting "Her concrete thinking", again, bearing in
33 mind you're 10 years old.

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. "Her concrete thinking and lack of verbal dexterity makes her relationship with the girls a
3 fraught experience with the transitional group and the ever-present reality of older, heavier
4 girls moving into the unit on a day-to-day basis. Catherine finds it increasingly necessary
5 to rely on the secure unit to survive."

6 Then if we go to the next paragraph please. Because we're going to talk about
7 secure. But before then, "I believe Catherine is ill-placed in Kingslea as we are, by
8 inference, forcing a 10 -year-old girl to act, feel and think beyond her years, whereas I
9 believe she should be placed in a situation where she could begin to relearn how to behave
10 her own age." Do you agree with that?

11 A. No, I don't know how I feel about the whole thing. What are we talking about here, are we
12 talking about -- do you know what I mean, are we, like I just think are we talking about a
13 human life or are we talking about a test or a -- like it's just -- yeah, I think it's terrible.

14 Q. So presumably as a result of that --

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. -- intervention you then go back to a family home, but you don't last there long, I think the
17 records say you ran from there within an hour or two?

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. And so you were taken back to Kingslea and put in secure. And there you find yourself in
20 secure for a long period of time, six weeks?

21 A. Mmm.

22 Q. Including spending your 11th birthday in the secure unit. This is, as we've said, to protect
23 you from the older girls who were there. Tell us as a 10/11 year old girl what secure was
24 like. Explain what the physical surroundings were like first and then we'll talk about what
25 the day was like for you.

26 A. Yeah. So it was a concrete cell that was always like cold and wet. It was all concrete, you
27 had like a mattress on a concrete slab and you had like a stainless-steel table to eat off with
28 a concrete seat, big steel door. The only time it opened was to deliver the meals, which,
29 you know, it just - it blows my mind that, you know, it says that I'm in there for my own
30 safety or survival. I didn't- feel like that, like is that - am I being protected because I feel
31 like I'm being punished. So, yeah-, it was horrible.

32 Q. And there was a toilet also in your cell as well?

33 A. Yeah, there was a toilet in the cell.

34 Q. And one of the things you talk about, and again it's reflected in your records, is that this

- 1 isolation at this age made you want to die.
- 2 A. Mmm. Yeah.
- 3 Q. So just talk a bit about that.
- 4 A. I think what is the message that -- I guess what is the message that they were trying to give
5 me. Are they trying to reinforce that, you know, that I am a bad person, that I should be
6 alone, because I already know that, you know. Right from an early age of, I don't know, 5,
7 6, as early as I can remember, you know, I would go to sleep at night not wanting to wake
8 up in the morning and there you have it, I'm in a secure unit and, you know, a lot of -- many
9 nights I wanted to go to sleep and not wake up in the morning because, you know, anything
10 was going to be better than that.
- 11 Q. And you talk about in your statement about setting fire in your cell to get attention.
- 12 A. Yeah, which is also surprising because I was like we had that conversation it was kind of
13 like "Where did you get the lighter from?" My father brought it in for me, so, you know,
14 my father would come and visit me and I think he had given me like a little splint with
15 some matches and, yeah, it was -- I mean was it to get attention? I can't remember, was it
16 to actually kill myself? Maybe, I don't remember. But it did happen, yeah.
- 17 Q. And actually your records say that on one time you were asked what would have happened
18 if staff hadn't been able to save you and you said "It would have been better than waking up
19 in my cell again."
- 20 A. Yeah. You know, I think my best friend growing up was my sister and being taken away
21 and isolate -- being taken away and put in the middle of nowhere, first in Ford Milton and
22 then once again locked up and isolated again in the secure unit, was -- it was just soul
23 destroying, it was soul---destroying.
- 24 Q. And one of the things that made it worse for you was when you discovered that the staff
25 could hear you through the intercom?
- 26 A. Yeah.
- 27 Q. So just explain what happened there.
- 28 A. So I think I didn't realise for a long time that there were intercoms like in the ceiling and at
29 one point I was being led -- I was led out of my cell into -- I think I was taken to the Health
30 Unit, and I walked past the office and I heard the girl that was in the cell next to me, the
31 staff were listening to her in the staff room and I just instantly thought to myself -- I was
32 instantly ashamed because I thought to myself -- I was angry, kind of thought, you know,
33 these guys listening, like they've been listening to me, you know, and I -- there were times
34 in my -- you know, there were times where I'd cry myself to sleep, like I was just

1 embarrassed and I was ashamed and I was thinking, I can't believe these people are like
2 listening to us and they're not helping us. I mean it's hard to articulate these things when
3 you're that young, but, you know, looking back and looking back and reading and thinking
4 about how I felt is like, I remember it so clearly.

5 **Q.** And you say that by the time you came out of secure that first time you were unstoppable
6 and it was like they'd created a little monster. What do you think you mean by that?

7 **A.** So I was a survivor. What I mean by that is I guess I've been thinking about it today and,
8 you know, I was a young child that had -- that had survived a lot, and I think that I lived
9 every day in the fight or flight mode and most of my early years I was, you know, running
10 on adrenaline. I must have been, because, you know, I just ran from everything. Yeah.
11 I wasn't scared of anything. I'd faced a lot, especially growing up with my father and, you
12 know, his drug and gang, you know, volatile, yeah, I just faced a lot, so I wasn't scared of
13 anything, yeah.

14 **Q.** So you spent the next five years in and out of Kingslea and your records show that during
15 each placement most of that time was in secure. I'm just going to call out the very first
16 document that we had, witness 2002 thank you, we'll just show there. So this is 1989 that
17 your "absconding has increased over this period to the stage of six to eight week stay in
18 secure was required to slow Catherine down and stabilise her actions." Do you think it did
19 stabilise you?

20 **A.** No, and -- no.

21 **Q.** Because one of the things that you talked about was you actually got very good at escaping,
22 including from secure. And you had one occasion where your friends broke you or got you
23 out of the secure unit.

24 **A.** Yeah, I can't say I'm proud of -- I'm not proud of that, but I think, yeah, this is -- this is the
25 outcome of, I guess, yeah.

26 **Q.** One of the things that we also talk about in your witness statement is physical restraints by
27 staff members at Kingslea. That's obviously quite topical given what's come out in recent
28 weeks in the same institution almost. So talk about physical restraints by staff.

29 **A.** So they did physically restrain you. Of course, you know, their objective is to keep you
30 there at all costs, right, so if you're caught running away or you're caught acting in a way
31 that's not seen appropriate then you're restrained, so thrown to the ground and put in
32 different restraint holds and, you know, a lot of the staff would like inflict pain on you.

33 **Q.** And you've talked about them throwing on the odd punch from time to time.

34 **A.** Yeah, which is -- yeah.

1 **Q.** And this happened -- you've talked about when you're escaping, when you misbehaved. So
2 that included in public too when you escaped and were found in public places, you were
3 treated in the same way, weren't you?

4 **A.** Yes. So if -- I mean on many occasions I was found, you know, if I'd run away I'd be found
5 maybe in a street or a road and we were chased down and restrained and then -- it was
6 always painful, and there was always force that was unnecessary, and then the Police would
7 come in and then the Police would take over and also again, they used force that was
8 unnecessary. So it was quite normal. I think it was quite normal for us to -- yeah.

9 **Q.** Be treated roughly?

10 **A.** To be treated roughly, yeah.

11 **Q.** And we know from your records, and again just like how many staff members are we
12 talking about who would be involved in the restraints?

13 **A.** Sometimes up to four, yeah.

14 **Q.** So we're talking about when you're 10, 11?

15 **A.** Yeah.

16 **Q.** Up to 15?

17 **A.** Yeah.

18 **Q.** And we're just going to call out a record from when you are 11, it demonstrates that, so
19 that's 582015. So we can see that's 1985. So you've just had your 11th birthday. And then
20 if we can just see you're walking across Cathedral Square, so this is in Christchurch at
21 lunch time, and a social worker has seen you at a distance. And then if we call out
22 paragraph 3.

23 So then we've got three staff members, Mr [GRO-B], Mr [GRO-B] and the staff
24 member made a quick search of the dog house, you were located, you tried to run away, Mr
25 [GRO-B], Mr [GRO-B] restrained you while the other staff member telephoned the Police.

26 And then it says: "During the 5 or so minutes before Police arrived Catherine needed to be
27 restrained by the three of us. She was kicking, biting and swearing the whole time." And
28 then as you said, next paragraph down, 4, "When the Police arrived Catherine continued to
29 struggle and had to be handcuffed before being placed in a Police car." And then if we just
30 note there it says, the last sentence of paragraph 4, if we just call out that. "As Catherine
31 had been violent" -- no we've got, it's all right. I'll just read it out. "As Catherine had been
32 violent and was extremely upset, she was admitted to the secure unit." So you're back in
33 secure and then there's advice given that you're being held in the secure unit. Any comment

- 1 on that? Other than it is illustrative of what you've been talking about?
- 2 A. No words. Yeah.
- 3 Q. Were you a big 11 -year-old?
- 4 A. No. No. Of course it's extreme. Yeah.
- 5 Q. But you were sort of used to it by then, weren't you?
- 6 A. Oh definitely. Sort of a dance, right. So I think I was used to, you know, the authority
7 trying to hold me and me trying to run away because, you know, I didn't want to be there, it
8 was just -- yeah. And -- yeah, I don't know how, I don't know how I feel about it. Of
9 course it's extreme.
- 10 Q. And the other thing that happened to you that every time you were in secure, so this is
11 every time you ran away or misbehaved, and so you're put into secure, part of that process
12 was to be strip-searched?
- 13 A. Mmm.
- 14 Q. So again, starting at the age of 10?
- 15 A. [Nods].
- 16 Q. Talk about what that process was?
- 17 A. So the process was, you know, I just had to take everything off and stand in front of, you
18 know, up to three female staff members, you know, naked and it's just kind of, I guess --
19 how could I put it? I guess I felt like the message was just being reinforced. You are
20 nothing, you know, you are nothing, you don't -- you're not important, and, you know,
21 abuse is normal. Yeah.
- 22 Q. And you said that when you were very young you would be handed a nightie and then sent
23 to secure in just the nightie.
- 24 A. Mmm.
- 25 Q. But as you got older, you would be allowed to have clothes.
- 26 A. Yeah, so the first secure unit that was in Kingslea, the rules were very -- like that was the
27 concrete cell, you were strip-searched, you were put in a nightie, you didn't have your own
28 clothes, like the message was very clear, you know, yeah. Once that secure unit was pulled
29 down and there was another one rebuilt, I think, you know, with that came, you know, you
30 didn't have a concrete cell, you had a bit of carpet, it was nicer and you got to wear your
31 own clothes, so yeah.
- 32 Q. One thing I didn't ask you about in secure is whether you had any schooling during the day.
33 What was happening with your education all the periods you were in secure?
- 34 A. When I was in secure I don't remember getting schooling in the secure unit. When I was

1 out and placed in the house we had a school on site that we would attend, but not in the
2 secure unit, no. You got a pencil and a piece of paper.

3 **Q.** What did you do during the day?

4 **A.** Nothing. Nothing. I slept a lot, I cried a lot, yeah.

5 **Q.** And I know I'll just jump back to the strip-searches, but I think it's important because it's in
6 your statement is that part of the ways that the strip-searches made you feel, on top of being
7 degrading, was that it also brought back the memories of the sexual abuse you'd suffered,
8 didn't it?

9 **A.** Yeah, it was humiliating and if, you know, there was one thing that the sexual abuse from
10 the Reverend, you know, did to me it was humiliated me. So every time from, you know,
11 every time as a child you are asked to take your clothes off and stand in front of staff naked,
12 it's humiliating, it just, you know, every little bit of self-respect you have, I guess, is taken.

13 **Q.** And then we'll talk about Allendale. So obviously you had five years in and out of
14 Kingslea. Then you're also sent to Allendale Girls' Home in Auckland. So again, the first
15 time you go to Allendale is at age 11, and the second time is in 1987 when you're 13. And
16 again, each time you're there for several months and it's at this stage, isn't it, that you finally
17 have some contact with your maternal family?

18 **A.** My mother's family.

19 **Q.** Yes.

20 **A.** Yeah.

21 **Q.** So at this stage you could meet with your grandmother, that's right, and her partner and
22 they could take you on leave?

23 **A.** Mmm-hmm, yeah.

24 **Q.** So that's the first time you'd had that connection for six or seven years, I suppose?

25 **A.** Yeah.

26 **Q.** So how did you find that?

27 **A.** It was strange because -- it was strange because I'd experienced so much. So I guess
28 looking back I can see why it's strange, but I mean at the time you don't know why it
29 doesn't feel right, like you're meeting your family, I'm meeting my family, but, you know, it
30 doesn't feel right. I can't put my finger on it, but it's just -- is it the experiences I've had, is
31 it because I'm broken, is it because -- yeah. I'm not sure they understood me as well,
32 because of course they don't know what I've been through, you know, I'm meeting my
33 Tongan family for the first time and I don't think they really understand that the racism that,
34 you know, I went through with my father's family, there's a lot -- there's a lot that's unsaid

- 1 and, yeah, strange.
- 2 **Q.** Probably still learning about it as you are going through this process and today.
- 3 **A.** Pardon?
- 4 **Q.** And probably still your Tongan family are still learning about that as you go through this
5 process and give evidence.
- 6 **A.** Yeah, well it's a strange story eh, because, you know, we were kidnapped, my sister and I,
7 and we were separated from the Tongan side, I'm very, you know -- and -- yeah.
- 8 **Q.** So let's go back to Allendale. So you were continuing to abscond from Allendale as well?
- 9 **A.** Yeah. I feel like this running away thing is like it's really, it's really become a thing for me,
10 right. I guess I forgot how much -- how many times I ran away, yeah.
- 11 **Q.** And then you would be put in secure, so that was your experience, punishment for running
12 away?
- 13 **A.** Yeah.
- 14 **Q.** You're in secure again. What was secure like at Allendale?
- 15 **A.** It had become normal, it was just like being put in the naughty corner, I guess. Being
16 isolated was -- it had become -- it had become normal, you know, I was used to it.
- 17 **Q.** And when you were on the run you lived on the streets until you got caught. How did you
18 know where to go? Who were you hanging out with?
- 19 **A.** The girls who were in the home with me, yeah. I think it had become a habit, you know, I
20 don't know, a bad habit, yeah.
- 21 **Q.** And I just want to talk a bit about living on the streets, because that's your reality and it's
22 the reality, sadly, for a lot of kids and even still today. So I just want to talk a bit about
23 your life on the streets as a child. So you talk about feeling safer on the streets and you're
24 running there to avoid the sexual and physical abuse that was happening to you elsewhere,
25 but eventually the same started to happen on the streets, didn't it?
- 26 **A.** Yeah. As I became a young woman I guess I became more of a target. You know, just like
27 all of the other girls who, you know, were with me when we were in the same position as
28 we, of course, matured we became more of a target to strangers.
- 29 **Q.** And you've talked about in your statement about being sexually violated many times while
30 you were living on the streets.
- 31 **A.** Mmm.
- 32 **Q.** And sniffing solvent and drink to numb yourself and then starting to get on to harder drugs
33 just, you know, that's part of your trajectory. One of the things that is also clear is that,
34 again, Social Welfare knew that this was part of your life experience and we're just going to

1 call up a document. This is one of many references in your records about you being picked
2 up from the street. So this is witness 2017, again, 1989, so we've just got a timeframe. So
3 how old would you have been in 1989; 14, 15?

4 A. Okay, yeah.

5 **Q.** So if we can call out that first paragraph thank you. "Catherine was admitted to the secure
6 unit on 8 June 1989 at 10.30 pm. On arrival it was obvious that Catherine had received a
7 recent beating from the people she had been associating with. Her injuries included a very
8 puffy and bruised face, eyes and lips, lumps and dents on her head and bruising to her arms.
9 Query, also had been gang-raped."

10 And then if we just go down to the paragraph starting "The task I worked on with
11 Catherine." "She was quite willing to talk about her bumps and bruises and getting them
12 seen to, but when I mentioned the subject of an internal examination, as there was the
13 possibility of her having been gang-raped, she denied this and declined an internal
14 examination." And then it talks about staff could support you, accompany you there, and
15 then it goes on to you being visited on two occasions by your community worker. Just
16 thinking about that record now, any comment?

17 A. I was reading that this morning and it kind of just -- it blows my mind that you kind of go
18 from one statement that, you know, I'd obviously been beaten and gang-raped and then
19 straight on to the next story of oh what was the next part?

20 **Q.** It was about being visited on two occasions by your community worker.

21 A. Yeah, so it's kind of -- yeah, so she's been gang-raped and she's been, you know, she's been
22 beaten, but on to the next thing now, like it's just, yeah, I -- what is my initial thought? My
23 initial thought is I hope we're still not doing that, I hope we're not -- I hope we're not
24 treating children that way now, like that was my first, you know, my first thought is shit,
25 I hope we're not -- I hope something's changed. Like are we still treating children this way?
26 I hope not.

27 **Q.** Just thinking about it now as an adult --

28 A. Yeah.

29 **Q.** -- what do you think should have happened?

30 A. You know, I don't know what the answer is. I don't have the answer, but I don't know if
31 this is the right time to say it, I don't know if this is the right time to say it, but I think we
32 have to, you know, reading through this, I hope we're not, I hope we're not -- I hope we've
33 changed, I hope the processes have changed, because, you know, the reality is that from a
34 very young age I learned that I had to live in a fight or flight mode. Is it normal for a child

1 to have to live on adrenaline every day? Because as far as I know, that's supposed to be the
2 fight or flight mode is something that's supposed to save our lives. Are we supposed to live
3 in it every day? I don't think so. Is this, you know, the story of my running away
4 constantly; I don't know, is it possibly the outcome of having adrenaline run through a
5 child's veins like on a daily basis? I don't know. But I hope, I hope the processes have
6 changed, you know.

7 **CHAIR:** Ms Cooper, I think that might be a good time to take a break.

8 **MS COOPER:** Yes.

9 **CHAIR:** I sense you might need to warm up too so a hot drink might be good.

10 A. Yeah, I'm cold.

11 **Q.** I think we all need a hot something.

12 A. Yeah.

13 **Q.** So look let's take a break, thank you for what you've told us so far. I hope you're not too
14 daunted and that you will come back because we want to hear the rest of your extraordinary
15 story. So we'll take 15 minutes.

16 **MS COOPER:** Thank you.

17 **Adjournment from 11.28 am to 11.55 am**

18 **CHAIR:** Welcome back everybody. We'll just wait until everyone gets to their seats. Thank you.

19 Welcome back Joanna. Are you feeling warmer now?

20 A. Yes, thanks to the blanket.

21 **Q.** Yes Ms Cooper.

22 **QUESTIONING BY MS COOPER CONTINUED:** Thank you. So we had been talking a bit
23 about your life on the streets and before we leave that topic I just wanted to talk about your
24 time on the streets in Christchurch where you came into contact with a religious brother
25 who you talk about as being a constant presence when you were on the streets in
26 Christchurch. So can you just talk to that, we won't use his name, but if you could just talk
27 about your experiences with this religious brother.

28 A. He -- so he was present, he actually -- he would work with the social workers, you know,
29 he was involved in our care. He would pick -- so he was more interested in the boys and he
30 didn't like me. I had a lot to do with him. He -- I felt like he hated me. When we would
31 be, you know, outside of the homes and maybe on the streets, like living on the streets, he
32 would drive around in his van and pick up the boys and leave the girls. We knew where he
33 was taking the boys so we would walk over there and, you know, once he was asleep we
34 would sneak in to, you know, to get some shelter. But if he ever caught us it was strictly a

1 boys' home, he was strictly there for the boys, if he ever caught us he would drag us out by
2 our hair and, yes. I thought -- I thought at that time that it was religion, I thought that he
3 just -- it was part of his religion, he just didn't like women, he was only -- he only wanted to
4 help boys.

5 **Q.** What did you later come to learn?

6 **A.** It was only -- it was in the last few years actually I saw it on TV and when I saw it on the
7 news everything made sense, yeah. But at the time I think I had so much going on in my
8 own head, like I didn't ever think that that sort of thing would be possible, but it was, yeah.

9 **Q.** What you're talking about is sexual abuse of the boys?

10 **A.** Yeah, yeah, it all made sense. He -- yeah.

11 **Q.** So just again as you're getting a bit older, you have different placements?

12 **A.** Mmm-hmm.

13 **Q.** And the first placement was in Glenroy, so this is a Social Welfare family home. And this
14 was supposed to be a long time placement for you, but this is something that didn't last.
15 Can you just tell us about this placement, because this is another placement where you
16 experienced abuse.

17 **A.** So I was placed there, yeah, the family was -- there was the mother, the father and there
18 was two boys, one was very small and the older boy that was living there was two years
19 older than -- about two years older than myself. The mother and the father, like they had
20 different rooms, they were -- I mean they were a couple but they were -- it was strange
21 because they were not a couple, like they, you know, they weren't -- they didn't look like
22 they were happy. I did stay there, the older brother, he raped me on a couple of occasions,
23 and the father also. I'm not sure that they both knew that -- yeah, I don't -- I'm not sure they
24 both knew that they were both doing that to me, but, yeah, how did -- I think at that age,
25 you know, I was just used to that happening, like it didn't take me by surprise, it was just
26 once again it was disappointing, but, you know, life was a disappointment, so, yeah.

27 **Q.** And when we discussed this with you, you actually said that you blamed yourself for this
28 happening to you.

29 **A.** Yeah, you know, I did wonder, especially at that age, you know, was it, you know, was it
30 the way I looked, yeah. I just wasn't -- yeah. It was a common occurrence with, you know,
31 with men and -- yeah.

32 **Q.** And then you've gone back home briefly, home's unsafe as well for the same reasons, and
33 then you eventually move into the home of a family friend. And again, the only reason
34 why we refer to this placement is because it was approved by Social Welfare eventually,

- 1 even though the husband had been charged with sexual abuse against children. How was
2 this placement for you?
- 3 A. It was -- I wasn't abused at this placement, but by this time I was quite, at this age I was -- I
4 was very confident that, you know, I was quite a stroppy -- I think I was 15 years old, and if
5 I didn't want somebody touching me there was no way they were going to touch me. Yeah,
6 I didn't have a problem with -- I don't actually remember him being around the house too
7 much, yeah.
- 8 Q. So then in 1989, so this is four years after you've come into care, Social Welfare trials a
9 placement of you with your mother in Australia. So do you remember how old you were
10 when you last saw your mother at this stage? So you're coming up to 15, so how old are
11 you when you had last seen her?
- 12 A. I don't -- I don't have a memory of her. I actually have more memories of my grandmother
13 and my aunties than I do of my mother, yeah.
- 14 Q. And so you talk about it that you remember there was a Family Group Conference?
15 A. Mmm.
- 16 Q. Which your mother flew over to attend. Were you there?
17 A. I was at one, yes.
- 18 Q. And then you were told that you were going to live with your mother in Australia. Was
19 that something that you were involved in that decision, did you agree with it?
- 20 A. So I remember feeling like a problem. I remember sitting in Family Group Conferences
21 and just zoning out thinking these guys need to come to a decision of what they're going to
22 do with me, because I didn't belong anywhere. I remember feeling like that. So was I ever
23 asked what I want to do? No.
- 24 Q. Were you asked specifically if you want to go and live with mum?
25 A. No, I don't -- I wasn't asked, but that was the only solution, because nobody wanted me,
26 you know.
- 27 Q. Yeah.
28 A. Dad didn't want me, but also they didn't want me, you know, in the girls' homes, so that was
29 the only option.
- 30 Q. So you head over to Australia to your mum who you haven't seen, well you had no memory
31 of her?
32 A. Mmm.
- 33 Q. How did that go?
34 A. She was -- so we reached Australia, her -- she was sad, so, you know, her husband, her new

1 husband didn't like me and I knew that. I knew that from the minute I walked in the house
2 and met him, he didn't like me. So, you know, I'd had enough life experience to know that
3 I didn't want to be there, you know, I could read, you know, I could read anybody and I
4 don't know if you call it instinct or what you'd call it, but I met him and I knew he didn't
5 like me, and it didn't last. Two weeks later I was sent back.

6 **Q.** So two weeks and you're on a plane?

7 **A.** Yeah.

8 **Q.** Back to New Zealand?

9 **A.** Mmm.

10 **Q.** Did you know where you were going when you were put on a plane back to New Zealand?

11 **A.** No.

12 **Q.** Just --

13 **A.** I just, yeah, it was kind of like, yeah, no.

14 **Q.** And were you sent to Christchurch?

15 **A.** I think I went back to my dad's, I think, yeah.

16 **Q.** So back to dad and no really -- it doesn't sound like there's any thought about any wider
17 family from mum's side at this stage not being thought about?

18 **A.** Not that I remember. But I have to say I don't blame them, you know, because, yeah, you
19 know, I was -- yeah, by the time I was 15 I was angry, angry, angry girl, yeah.

20 **Q.** And when you came back you say in your witness statement just three weeks later you're
21 back on the streets, you're found by Police overdosed and in the home of an armed bank
22 robber, so you're taken to hospital and then back to Kingslea, back into secure, and you're
23 there for a few weeks and then you're placed with your sister for the first time. So your
24 sister's 18, you're 16. Tell us about that experience of being placed with your sister?

25 **A.** So I love my sister, so I was quite happy about that. But I mean I was found -- just going
26 back a bit, I was found overdosed, but I got the drugs from my dad's house, so, you know,
27 so...

28 **Q.** So we're talking about life with your sister?

29 **A.** Yeah, life with GRO-B. Just trying to remember it. She's been dead for a long time now
30 so it's not like, you know, I can go back and have a conversation with her about these
31 things, because she's been dead for so long now. But, yeah, I just remember we were both -
32 by that time we were both addicted to drugs, yeah-.

33 **Q.** And she had a small child as well, didn't she?

- 1 A. She did, yeah.
- 2 Q. Can you remember being checked on by Social Welfare while you were with your sister?
- 3 A. No, I don't remember Social Welfare checks.
- 4 Q. And you talk about during this time hanging out with your friends on the streets again and
5 getting into some trouble.
- 6 A. Yeah. So, yeah.
- 7 Q. So bounce back into Kingslea again and then you go to rehab in Hanmer?
- 8 A. Yeah.
- 9 Q. Did you find that helpful?
- 10 A. Now I would say no, because it just introduced me to -- because I was still quite young and
11 it just introduced me to people who were in their maybe 20s who were further in the game
12 than I was and they just brought me up to speed really quickly. So, you know, I left
13 Hanmer and I was an experienced, you know, I went in as a child and I came out as an
14 experienced drug dealer. And I had these contacts who were a lot older than me. So did it
15 help? No, no.
- 16 Q. And then at age 16 you're asked to go to court and you're told you've been discharged from
17 care. So you're a little over 16 at this stage. And I just want to read the comment that the
18 judge made to you at the time, because I just want you to comment on that. So the judge
19 commented to you that it was now for you to take responsibility for yourself and the way
20 you conducted your life and that the judge could only hope that sometime in the future you
21 would make choices more beneficial to your well-being. Any comment on that? What
22 resources and skills did you have at age 16?
- 23 A. I had absolutely no idea what he was talking about. I didn't even know that I was going to
24 leave that court case free, like I was just put in a van, taken to court to appear and then I
25 was, you know, he said a few things and I looked at him, just -- I had no idea what he was
26 talking about. I was led out of the room, put into the cell and was told that just wait here,
27 you're going to get some papers and then I was free. It was just kind of like --
- 28 Q. And one of the things that struck me about what you said about that is that throughout your
29 time people talked about you?
- 30 A. Yeah.
- 31 Q. But not to you?
- 32 A. Yeah. And I guess what I mean is I don't -- it kind of felt like they didn't care that I didn't
33 understand. It's kind of like, yeah, I just said it, yeah. So I never knew what the plan was,
34 I never knew what was going to happen. You know, people talked about what I -- where

- 1 I should go, where I wouldn't possibly be a problem maybe. And I think, you know, this
2 court case same thing, I didn't know what I was walking into. The judge did say what you
3 just said. I didn't understand him to say that, I just looked at him thinking -- not
4 understanding it at all, but then walking out of that place I was free, it was just so weird.
- 5 **Q.** And what was your life like at that stage, I mean what were you doing with your life at that
6 stage, living with your sister still?
- 7 **A.** So I think -- I can remember leaving the court rooms that day, going back to my sister's
8 house, and we just had a party that night, but I mean she had a party every night because --
9 yeah.
- 10 **Q.** And you talk about your life just really continuing to go downhill from there for quite a
11 while, ending up with you again going to rehab and that's at the time that you already have
12 your first child, so you're, what, 18 with your first child?
- 13 **A.** Mmm-hmm.
- 14 **Q.** And then after that you go back to dad, same old same old, and you lose custody of your
15 child at that stage --
- 16 **A.** Mmm-hmm.
- 17 **Q.** -- to his father. Then you had another child, didn't you?
- 18 **A.** Mmm-hmm. She passed away, yeah.
- 19 **Q.** So she died within three months, so that was cot death, wasn't it?
- 20 **A.** Yeah.
- 21 **Q.** And then the next year your sister died of an GRO-C, didn't she?
- 22 **A.** **[Nods]**.
- 23 **Q.** How old was your sister at that stage?
- 24 **A.** She was 26.
- 25 **Q.** So how did you feel, like how did you feel like your life was at that point in time? So
26 you're 24, 23/24.
- 27 **A.** Yeah, so by the age of 24 most of the people that I'd grown up with were dead, like they'd
28 killed themselves, they'd GRO-C, or they were killed in car accidents or murdered or
29 something like that. So by the age of 24 I was addicted to drugs, you know, my dad was
30 still alive, but he was addicted to drugs too, so we were no good for each other and I knew
31 that, and at 24 I think I'd left. After GRO-B died I'd left Christchurch and I'd moved to
32 Auckland and I'd tried to build a relationship with, you know, my mum's side of the family.
33 Which was difficult because, you know, I mean I left as a, what, a 3 -year-old, I was taken

1 as a 3 year old and I'd come back as a 24 -year-old nightmare. So it was hard, you know, it
2 was hard for them. It was hard for me. But, yeah.

3 **Q.** So you also -- I think this is a really important part of your story, is you went clean, stopped
4 any drugs?

5 **A.** Yeah. So yeah, so when my sister died, because I loved my sister, and she hadn't always
6 used drugs, but in the last year of her life she'd started to use drugs a lot more than myself
7 and my relationship with my sister was strained because, you know, I said to her "You need
8 to stop and we need to leave Christchurch" because in that year that she died a lot of our
9 friends had died. And our relationship was strained and she always said to me "You're the
10 strong one, you can leave, I'll never leave Christchurch." And it was one of the last
11 conversations I had with her. And actually when she did die I was in Auckland and it was
12 my half-sister who told me that **GRO-B** had passed away, so I actually had to go back to
13 Christchurch for her funeral. But I was strong enough to know that if I was going to
14 continue on that lifestyle I was going to die, and I don't know, I don't know what it is that --
15 yeah, I don't know why I had that in my mind, but it was like I have to leave Christchurch
16 or I'm going to die. So I did, yeah.

17 **Q.** And so you talked about that part of that was about reconnecting with your Tongan side of
18 the family?

19 **A.** Yeah.

20 **Q.** So just -- you said that that was hard on everybody. Can you unpack that --

21 **A.** Yeah.

22 **Q.** -- explain that a bit more?

23 **A.** So I think when I left Christchurch it was -- I had nowhere to go, because the only family I
24 had known was my father's side of the family, but I did know that I had family in
25 Auckland, so it just made sense to come to Auckland. And I always had a relationship with
26 my aunty, it was tough because, you know, in going back, you know, talking about the little
27 girl who was in a fight/flight survival mode like every day of her life, like she's an adult
28 now and I was, you know, I was -- yeah, so it was -- yeah, you know, I kind of turn up to
29 my family and, you know, we love each other, but I've got hard work, you know, yeah.
30 So...

31 **Q.** Just in terms of the Tongan culture, how do you feel in terms of being half-Tongan?

32 **A.** How do I feel about it?

33 **Q.** How much do you connect with that side of your culture and your -- who you are?

1 A. So I've been rejected from the European side and I've been rejected from the Tongan side
2 and not from my family. The thing -- when my grandmother came to New Zealand she
3 came -- from what I understand she didn't want to teach her children the Tongan ways, she
4 came here for a better life. I'm not sure what my grandmother's life was like, but I
5 understand it wasn't great in Tonga and that she had her own traumas, you know, that's why
6 she came here. So her not teaching my aunties, myself the Tongan language, it was her
7 choice; trying to reconnect with the Tongan community has been challenging because I
8 have been -- I've been rejected from the Tongan side as much as I have been rejected from
9 the European side. Today I choose to believe in humanity. You know, but in saying that,
10 you know, I have three children who are very patriotic and they're very immersed in their
11 Tongan culture and I completely support that. But for myself, and with everything that's
12 happened in my life, I just choose to believe in humanity like do I see colour? No, I don't,
13 I just, you know, yeah.

14 Q. So just unpacking that a bit more, because you have explained it really well, but you said in
15 your statement that when you think about your ethnicity as a young child you were quite
16 confused.

17 A. Mmm.

18 Q. You didn't know who or where you belonged to.

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. Because both sides of your heritage hated each other.

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. And you talk about that now you are comfortable with who you are.

23 A. Mmm.

24 Q. And that you've created your own identity.

25 A. Yeah. So I have created my own identity in the fact that, you know, I've come to terms
26 with the fact that what happened to me is not my fault, but I have a responsibility now for
27 my own life and for my children's life. So -- and part of that belief for me is, you know, not
28 having to believe that I'm Tongan, not having to believe that I'm white, but having to
29 believe that, you know, I am who I am, I'm a mother, I'm a niece, you know, yeah, I can't
30 identify as Tongan. I think that's just part of my story, yeah, it's just part of who I have
31 become, because of what I have been through. But in saying that, you know, I'm not white,
32 I'm not Tongan but I'm not a victim, so...

33 Q. And just to kind of talk about who you are in terms of building your own identity, you've
34 had a marriage.

- 1 A. Mmm-hmm.
- 2 **Q.** You've had more children, you've built a career. So you've got on and you've lived life.
- 3 A. Yeah. I think -- and I think we need to be talking about this more, there's like thousands of
4 people out there with my story, with a story, every family has a story, but it's just going
5 back to that whole thing of, you know, what happened to me, you know, it was not my
6 fault, but as an adult and as a mother, you know, having the responsibility to take care of
7 my own life, yeah. Lost the question, did I answer the question?
- 8 **Q.** Yes, no that's fine.
- 9 A. Yeah.
- 10 **Q.** So you've talked about how you've encouraged your own children so they're very much
11 loved by both sides, your side of the family and your ex-husband's side of the family.
- 12 A. Mmm.
- 13 **Q.** And that they're very immersed in their Tongan culture.
- 14 A. Yeah.
- 15 **Q.** And that you work together to support them in that.
- 16 A. Yes, yeah.
- 17 **Q.** But you also say, though, that because of your life experiences the trauma of your
18 childhood has remained with you and that you still have the urge to run when things get
19 hard.
- 20 A. Yeah. You know, and I have done, like I have run from a lot - in my adult life I have run
21 from a lot of uncomfortable situations which, you know, it was a habit. -So and it's that
22 fight and flight response, I think, you know, growing up I, you know, I chose to run from
23 everything and it's only in the last couple of years, it's only in the last couple of years that,
24 you know, I've realised that and been able to, I guess, go back and, you know, especially
25 watching my own children grow, I've watched them and I've thought to myself, I've
26 remembered myself as the 9-year-old child, as the 8-year-old child, 10, 15, and in my own
27 mind I've gone back and I've nurtured that child, you know, and I've had to do -- I've - and
28 it's helped, it's helped with my own healing and in a way this is too, I think, you know, in
29 saying that a lot of that it wasn't my fault, you know, speaking about it, being given the
30 opportunity to speak about it, it's also therapeutic, because you know, we have power in our
31 words. And so it's also part of like, you know, giving that back to those perpetrators when I
32 was young, because actually it's not my problem, you know, I can say it and I can name it
33 and I can leave it there, and I guess this is all part of, it's all part of the journey. I feel like
34 I'm- babbling.

- 1 **Q.** No, not at all. So just in terms of your journey, you've really only just embarked on the
2 kind of redress part of that journey.
- 3 **A.** Mmm.
- 4 **Q.** And you talk about that you thought about it in 2000, but you weren't strong enough at that
5 stage and it's actually only been in the last couple of years that you've been strong enough --
- 6 **A.** Mmm.
- 7 **Q.** -- to do that. So that's a process that you're still working through with Cooper Legal.
- 8 **A.** Yeah.
- 9 **Q.** So you've said that the process is still quite raw for you. Can you just explain a little bit
10 about what you mean about that?
- 11 **A.** So I think I, you know, five, ten years ago I could say, you know, I could have said, you
12 know, I'm at a point where I can talk about my story without having an emotional like
13 charge about that conversation and ending up in tears and like -- but it wasn't actually until
14 I -- I think I contacted -- until we started our working relationship that I've kind of thought
15 well, hang on I've got a lot more work to do, like it really is quite -- yeah, it's like, it's a
16 confronting -- I guess even this morning, you know, just talking about that little girl and,
17 you know, being raised as a State ward and like consistently running away, it's like coming
18 face-to-face with her, it's confronting, it's raw, but, yeah, here we are.
- 19 **Q.** And I did want to say that in terms of your church claim, so that's in respect of that
20 childhood abuse by the Reverend.
- 21 **A.** Yeah.
- 22 **Q.** The Anglican abuse, so that's been acknowledged very recently and that they've undertaken
23 to go through a redress process with you to put that right with you, so that's a very new
24 development.
- 25 **A.** Yeah.
- 26 **Q.** How do you feel about that?
- 27 **A.** So getting the letter when they said "We, you know, have no intention to", you know, I --
- 28 **Q.** No intention to dispute what --
- 29 **A.** Yeah, no intention to dispute it, it was -- you know, I feel like I could like exhale, right,
30 because oh, finally, you know. Because I did almost expect them to go "No, you're a liar,
31 that never happened", like I expected that. So to get that letter, you know, for them to
32 almost acknowledge, you know, "We're not going to dispute it, like we do know that this is
33 serious." Yeah, I'm relieved, yeah.
- 34 **Q.** One of the things that we talked about when we were preparing for today is if you could

1 talk to the Commission and to those who are here about any lessons that can be learned
2 from your experiences. I think you have actually talked a lot about that as you've gone
3 through your evidence. But just thinking about that, is there anything more that you would
4 like to say about the lessons to be learned from your experience as a child going through
5 these abusive experiences and in care?

6 A. Lessons?

7 Q. Mmm.

8 A. I'm not sure. So I'm here to -- I guess I'm here to share my story and I'm very aware that,
9 you know, when control has been taken away from you by people stronger than you, you
10 know, the power that we do have is in our words. So I don't know what the lessons are and
11 I don't know what the answers are. I know that there's people like myself and, you know,
12 one of the coaches in my boxing gym, you know, we don't have degrees, but we've got
13 some answers, and I think that I would like to see, I guess, in the future people like myself
14 and even my boxing gym because, you know, we actually have some answers, but because
15 we don't have degrees we're not looked at or not heard. Lessons? I'm not sure, yeah.

16 Q. One of the things that you said to me and I've got my notes of it because I just want to -- I
17 think it's an important thing that you said, is what kind of message are we trying to get
18 across to kids when we take them into care. And you talked about the fact that humans are
19 designed to be part of something, to be part of a community.

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. And you talked about that within the context of being isolated. So can you just --

22 A. Talk on that?

23 Q. -- talk on that, yeah.

24 A. Yeah. So I think through, you know, becoming a mother with, you know, the three
25 younger kids, I have an older son who, you know, is unfortunately, you know -- anyway,
26 but with the younger kids I've, you know, I really believe that we are created to be a part of
27 something and we're created to be a part of a community, whether it be a family, school, a
28 church, whatever, like we're created for relationships. So taking, you know, a child away
29 from one community and putting them, you know, not even in another community in the
30 middle of nowhere, like it's just reinforcing a negative message. You know, even, you
31 know, with the writing from, you know, the social workers and the reports and so forth,
32 like, you know, what is being said is, and what is being modelled to, I think, children is two
33 different things. We have to be reinforcing positive messages, not negative ones. Yeah.

34 Q. And one of the things we were talking about is what would have made a difference in your

- 1 life. I mean at those points where you are being taken away from what is familiar, what
2 would have made a difference in your life?
- 3 A. I think early intervention. Early appropriate intervention I think could have made a
4 difference. Would it? I don't know, but, you know, there were opportunities that were
5 missed, like there were -- like reading through this many times, you know, there could have
6 been interventions done and different things could have happened. I think we need to be
7 better, we need to be better at recognising and acting on it early, because you know, 15
8 years of age is like, you know, if you can -- if you spotted at 5 years of age, if you spot it at
9 6 years of age it needs to be -- yeah, we need to be better at dealing with those things, yeah.
10 I don't know, because -- yeah, it's interesting.
- 11 Q. One of the things I think you said to me is that what would have made a difference to you is
12 to actually be dealt with by someone who cared.
- 13 A. Yeah. And that's going back to, you know, what I was talking about is, you know, there's a
14 coach in my boxing gym who has no degree but understands this stuff really well and you
15 can't get that in a university, right? You -- yeah. I think compassion, yeah, is something
16 that you just can't find in a degree. Yeah.
- 17 Q. So Joanna, that's all the questions that I had. Is there anything you want to say at this point
18 and then I'll ask if the Commissioners have any questions for you?
- 19 A. I think I've said it. I think I've said it, yeah. Is that okay?
- 20 CHAIR: You certainly have said it. You certainly have. Would you -- I'm going to ask my
21 colleagues if they want to ask you any questions. Would you mind if we asked you a
22 question or two?
- 23 A. No, I don't mind.
- 24 Q. All right then, let's just see if anybody has any questions.
- 25 COMMISSIONER STEENSON: I don't have any questions, Joanna, but I just wanted to
26 acknowledge you and the empathy that you've shown for even your Tongan family and
27 your Pākehā grandmother, it's just a testimony to the kind of person and heart that you
28 have, and like so many other beautiful people that we've met through this Inquiry, you're
29 truly a survivor, truly a survivor. So yeah, ngā mihi.
- 30 A. Thank you.
- 31 COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE: Good morning Joanna. Can I just ask you one question around
32 the kids that you are with out on the streets?
- 33 A. Mmm.
- 34 Q. Do you remember the nationalities of what those kids were?

- 1 A. Yeah, mostly Māori in Christchurch. In Auckland when I came to Auckland I met more
2 Pacific Island children, but most of the children in Christchurch were Māori.
- 3 Q. And they were all around about the same age as you I think you said?
- 4 A. We were the same age, yeah.
- 5 Q. Thank you. That was it Joanna. Can I too just honour you for sharing your story. Thank
6 you for bringing your truth to us and for laying it on the fala, thank you for the talanoa?
- 7 A. Thank you.
- 8 **CHAIR:** And I add my acknowledgment of you. What hit me was your experience of reading
9 about yourself later and recognising that what was happening was you were being
10 processed as a piece of -- an object and not being treated like a human child, which is very
11 touching and distressing and disturbing. You kept saying "I was disappointed". My
12 goodness, I can't think of a more gentle word for what was a gross intrusion on your life.
13 But I have a question, and it arises from the little bit that you've shared with us about your
14 current work. I take it this boxing gym is one where children go, kids go, or adults as well?
- 15 A. Yeah, so it's taken a bit of a hit after Covid, but we're trying to rebuild it to become a
16 community gym, take youth classes.
- 17 Q. And it sounds as though -- again I'm just being intuitive here, I hope I'm on the right line --
18 that it's not just about boxing?
- 19 A. It's about relationship.
- 20 Q. Exactly, it's about relationships.
- 21 A. Yeah, it's about relationship.
- 22 Q. And then the other thing that came out that I just heard was these people don't have degrees
23 but they know how to deal and I think you've hit on something very important here. In an
24 ideal world, taking degrees out of it, do you see a place for survivors like yourself and the
25 people you're working with who have the empathy and the intuition and the understanding
26 and compassion, where do you see -- do you see a role for people like yourself and those in
27 helping us find solutions for children who are vulnerable?
- 28 A. I would like to think so. I would like to think so.
- 29 Q. Because you're the experts, aren't you?
- 30 A. Yeah, well...
- 31 Q. You've lived it?
- 32 A. We've lived it and we can spot it, we can feel it. You know, but I get disheartened because,
33 you know, I don't have a degree, I didn't go to school, and, you know, I've been in the same
34 job for a long time now, but filling out applications it's the first question they ask you, you

- 1 know, so I would like -- I would hope, I would hope that we could be a part of the solution.
- 2 **Q.** Yes.
- 3 **A.** Because, you know, we are, we're in the community, we're dealing with these people.
- 4 Every time I go to fill in a new position role somewhere, you know, the first question is,
- 5 you know, "What did you qualify as?" Or "Do you have any qualifications?" And I tear it
- 6 up.
- 7 **Q.** It's very disheartening, isn't it?
- 8 **A.** Yeah.
- 9 **Q.** Do you ever write down "The school of hard knocks"?
- 10 **A.** I don't get past the first question.
- 11 **Q.** I understand that.
- 12 **A.** Yeah.
- 13 **Q.** I think about this more, I think this is a dialogue that we're having, a talanoa to use the
- 14 Pacific term. We're very interested to hear -- nothing's worked so far.
- 15 **A.** Yeah.
- 16 **Q.** So let's find some new solutions.
- 17 **A.** Yeah.
- 18 **Q.** And if utilising the wisdom and the power and experience of people like yourself of
- 19 survivors who have been through the fire and emerged strong and whole?
- 20 **A.** Yes.
- 21 **Q.** If we can do that, then we should.
- 22 **A.** I hope so.
- 23 **Q.** So let's keep this talanoa open and onward.
- 24 **A.** Yeah.
- 25 **Q.** Thank you. I'm just going to pass you to my colleague, Commissioner Erueti.
- 26 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Kia ora Joanna, malo e lelei, ngā mihi nui ki a koe me tō whānau.
- 27 So on behalf of the Royal Commission I'd like to thank you from the bottom of our hearts
- 28 for coming and talking this morning to us and having the strength and the fortitude to do so.
- 29 We know it's not easy sitting in that chair. It's great to have your support there too, it's
- 30 awesome, it makes a difference. We learned heaps today and we're still learning lots and
- 31 it's really important for us to listen and learn. And your, you know, you've been through so
- 32 much in your life and up to the age of 16 had lived many lives and, as difficult as it is to
- 33 recount that here in the public domain, it's essential for us to have -- to learn and for the
- 34 public also to learn and to know these things.

