

Witness Name: [GRO-A Mr VT]

Statement No.: WITN[0581]001

Exhibits: [WITN[0581]002] - [WITN[0581]012]

Dated: 2021

ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

WITNESS STATEMENT OF [GRO-A Mr VT]

IN RESPECT OF THE PACIFIC PEOPLE'S INVESTIGATION

I, [GRO-A Mr VT] state: -

INTRODUCTION

1. My full name is [GRO-A Mr VT]. I am often called [GRO-A Mr VT]. I was born on [GRO-A] 1986 in Samoa, in Solosolo, although my New Zealand birth certificate says I was born in Apia. I have never seen my Samoan birth certificate.
2. Only very recently, I discovered that [GRO-A Mr VT] was not the name I was given at birth. When I was born, my parents named me [GRO-A]. My grandparents adopted me when I was about 4, and my name was changed to [GRO-A Mr VT] when I came to New Zealand.

3. I didn't know I was adopted until I was about 19 years old. Up until then, I thought my grandfather and grandmother were my parents. I thought my birth mother was my sister and I still treat her like that now.
4. I have never had anything to do with my birth father. My birth mother's name is [GRO-B-1]. I don't really have a relationship with her, although I talk to her daughter sometimes. I asked her about my birth father once, and all she told me was that he lives in Australia and has his own kids. That connection would be important for me. My CYFS records often don't spell the names of my family members right, or are confused about the relationships in my family.
5. My grandfather's name was also [GRO-B-2]. My grandmother's name is [GRO-B-3], although my records often call her [GRO-B]. Throughout this statement, I will call them my mother and father, because that is how I think of them, even now. My mum died in 2015. My dad is still alive, but we don't have a good relationship.
6. I don't know why my family didn't tell me I had been adopted. I think I still have a lot of resentment about that.
7. My father was the first one to come to New Zealand from Samoa. He got a work visa and then brought me, my brother and my mother over. We stayed in Blenheim for a couple of years. We lived with an aunty on my mum's side. My brother's name is [GRO-B-4]. Before we came to New Zealand, his name was [GRO-B]. I am not sure why my parents changed his name.
8. When we lived in Blenheim, we learned English through a school at a Catholic church. I didn't know any English before we arrived. My father would give us beatings at home if he heard us speaking English. Home was quite contradictory – mum was really loving but dad would hit us.
9. After a couple of years, we moved to Sydenham in Christchurch. I went to [GRO-A] Primary. We had a translator at the school so we could understand the work. The translator was a Samoan volunteer. He would discipline me by hitting me in the back and the head if I did not listen. I got suspended from there for

throwing a rock at a kid. My brother also threw a rubbish bin through a window. We got punished when we got home as well, as my father gave me a hiding.

10. I felt really isolated in Sydenham. The only other brown person around was the translator.
11. After a year and a half or so, we went to live in Hoon Hay. I was more comfortable there, as there were more brown faces at the school. I looked after my little brother.
12. Most of my family have been able to go back to Samoa since we moved here. I don't know many of my family members who still live there though. My parents coped differently with coming to New Zealand. My father grew a lot of vegetables and brought his own Samoan flavour to our lives. My mother never worked due to her health – she had emphysema even though she didn't smoke. Language was a barrier for both of them. Mum was on a benefit but there weren't any translators at WINZ so one of the other family members would have to go with her to help.
13. I remember my mother's struggle to support me and my younger brother. My dad was working as a fruit picker and it felt like my family was struggling. We went to a 7th Day Adventist Church. I saw a lot of our money go to the Church and I didn't think that was right when my mum was struggling, so I sort of took it into my own hands to steal to put food in the cupboards and money in her purse. I felt the responsibility of an older brother, that was my role. I started getting into fights at school.
14. My education was pretty basic. I learned English by listening to other people. My reading and writing weren't at the same level as other kids. I had to copy the work of other people, or get them to do it for me. I had trouble focusing and sometimes I got my Palagi friends to do my homework for me.
15. Before I turned about 15, I thought the violence from my father was normal. It was just discipline. It was the norm. When I was older, I tried to protect my brother from it. The violence from my father also changed when I got older, from open-

handed slaps to closed-fist punches. I never saw my father being violent towards my mother.

16. I grew up with values of respecting my elders – that was massive. You served others before serving yourself. We didn't talk about problems. If you had an issue, you read the Bible and prayed about it. I went through a lot of shit and didn't tell anyone except my brother.
17. I don't really subscribe to this value system anymore. The religious life held me and my brother back. I still believe in respecting my elders, though.
18. I see the Church as something that made my mother healthy. She would try to get to Church to speak from the Bible. We went every Saturday and mum sang in the choir. My sister was a teacher in the Church and my brother was a youth leader. I didn't become a Church leader like that – I just became a leader of my own world. I resented the Church and ministers who had flash houses while we struggled, but I tried to see it from my mother's perspective.

CYFS Involvement

19. The first records CYFS made about me recorded concerns by my school when I was 10 and a half years old. I was at GRO-A Primary School.
20. It was also around that time that I was turning up at school with bruises and black eyes from my father. I got hit by my dad if I was backchatting, drinking, being disrespectful or not listening. It was discipline, but quite violent. One time, I ran away from him and when I got back, he made me sit in a particular spot in front of him and he beat me with a bit of wood. There was a culture of no tolerance for backchat or disrespect in the house.
21. While I lived at home, CYFS received many reports of the abuse I was experiencing, and the injuries I had, but nothing much was done to help me. The first reports about violence were in August 1996.
22. In October 1996 CYFS notes recorded that my family was resistant to CYFS involvement. CYFS helped a cultural consultant called Losa Tamati work with my

family for about five weeks. It was recorded in December 1996 that Losa Tamati had found out that I was being neglected and physically abused at home, but when she wouldn't help my family deny it, she was excluded from my family. It was recorded that the perpetrator was my 25-year-old brother [GRO-B-5] who I referred to as "the bully". I was really afraid of my oldest brother [GRO-B-5]. He would punch me in the face and threaten me.

23. In November 1996, CYFS made an application for a declaration that I was in need of care and protection and I was put in the interim custody of CYFS. Initially, my family hid me from CYFS and refused to tell them where I was. I was then put with some foster parents called [GRO-B-6] and [GRO-B-7]. I lived with them on and off until May 1997, but often lived at home as well.

Kingslea Care and Protection Unit

24. On 11 December 1996, I was admitted to Kingslea for just over a month. This was the first of many admissions to Kingslea during my time in CYFS care. I was only 10 years old when I went there the first time.
25. Like any 10-year-old, I missed my parents and just wanted to be at home. I cried a lot, and I was angry that I had to be away from my family.
26. On 14 December 1996, after my parents visited, I tried to run away to be with them. I had to spend a night in the Secure Unit. It was a proper lockup place, and it was really scary for me.
27. My parents came to visit me again the next day, but staff asked them to leave.
[WITN 0581 002]
28. Throughout my admissions to Kingslea, there were a few Pacific Island boys in the residence, but the kids were mostly Māori. There wasn't a lot of cultural stuff in Kingslea and it was mostly Māori-based. There was one staff member who was from the Islands who talked to me sometimes, but that was about it. For me, I went along with the Māori stuff as I felt I belonged in that culture.

29. I think if I'd received more cultural support while I was still in Care and Protection, it might have helped me more. By the time I got to the Youth Justice residences, it would have just triggered bad memories.

Return Home

30. On 4 February 1997, my CYFS notes say that I had been seriously physically assaulted by my brother, while my mother watched. There were more reports of violence at home over the next few months.
31. I came to the attention of Youth Aid in September 1997, and even Youth Aid said that there were serious care and protection concerns for me. The reports about the violence at home kept happening through November 1997, when Youth Aid told CYFS that they were concerned I was not safe at home. My family even told CYFS that they assaulted me because they could think of no other way to discipline me.
32. On 21 November 1997, CYFS held a family meeting about the safety concerns for me. It took CYFS around 50 days to hold the meeting after a notification that I might be at risk. My family acknowledged that I had been beaten by my father and my older brother because of my behaviour. My father promised he would not hit me again. My parents voluntarily placed me in care for a month on the same day. I ran away on the second day. When I went back to the foster placement I had been put in, I told the foster parent that my father would shoot me if I went home again. Despite this, CYFS let me go home at the end of the month. Within that month away from home, it was noted that I was barely going to school.
33. I remember the first time I got put into a Family Home. I didn't always understand what they were saying to me. The first time I had a woman from a different race try to comfort me, I was shocked. I ran away from a lot of these placements to get home. I felt safer there because it was normal for me. I defended my parents to CYFS because I thought it was normal.

34. On 24 February 1998, CYFS received a report that my mum had tied my legs together and beaten me. A paediatrician told CYFS that I had bruising consistent with being assaulted with an electrical cord.
35. On 2 March 1998, Youth Aid told CYFS that my parents were secretive, especially as to how they disciplined me. On the same day, CYFS told the Family Court that my parents were not willing to work with them and that CYFS getting involved in my life would put my safety at risk. [WITN 0581 003] There were more reports of assaults by my mum on 5 March 1998 and Youth Aid told CYFS that I was at risk of being badly injured by my parents.
36. On 5 March 1998, a senior Constable wrote to CYFS, expressing his concern about my home and my offending. He wrote that my parents' only solution to my behaviour was to badly beat me. He wrote that: "on one occasion, it was alleged that they had broken [GRO-A Mr VT] eye socket bone [GRO-A Mr VT] would not tell Police and CYFS what really happened and his parents were really evasive. This is not the first and last time [GRO-A Mr VT] had reportedly been assaulted." On the same day, I was placed at Kingslea.
37. On 6 March 1998, a woman from the Methodist Child and Family Services wrote a letter, part of which is on my CYFS files. She wrote that a number of my family members would physically abuse me. She wrote that I believed the way I was treated at home, although I did not like it, was ok. She wrote that foster homes were not an option for me as I was strongly connected with my family.
38. By October 1998, I was living at home again after some time at Kingslea, and CYFS recorded that this was only because they couldn't find another placement for me.

Kingslea – Readmission

39. The next time I went to Kingslea was on 26 March 1998. Youth Aid wanted me locked up, because I was getting into mischief. I had only just turned 12 years old, and I was placed in the Care and Protection Secure Unit.

40. When I first arrived at Kingslea, I didn't have a change of clothes. I had to stay in my dirty clothes. I stayed in the Secure Unit for a couple of days.
41. I ran away from Kingslea again, and I was missing for over two weeks. When I was found, I got put back in the Secure Unit. [GRO-C]
 [GRO-C] [GRO-C]
 [GRO-C] [WITN 0581 004]

Physical Abuse/Threats and Time Out

42. I was restrained a lot by staff at Kingslea. At times, staff would use so much force it would make me think "I'm sure they can't do that to a kid". One of the staff there was a big Pacific Island man called [GRO-B]. He was one of the staff who would restrain me.
43. When I was restrained, the staff would throw me to the ground, and put a knee in the back of my neck or head. Sometimes a couple of staff would pin me down using their knees. I was restrained like this all the time, even when incidents did not involve me. I even got restrained when other people were causing trouble.
44. I think that I got restrained more than once a week at Kingslea. It would normally start with staff telling me that they wanted to take me to the Time Out room. There were two Time Out rooms, one in the open unit and one in Secure. I'd spent 15-20 minutes in there each time, but the length of time would depend on the staff assessing me and deciding whether I was still angry.
45. The Time Out rooms were small rooms with nothing in them. I hated it and when staff would tell me to go there, I got really worked up and I would lash out. Staff would restrain me and shove me in the Time Out room.
46. During these times in Kingslea, I was bullied, assaulted and intimidated by other residents. I was depressed and wanted to harm myself. There were lots of records from Kingslea in June 1998 showing that other boys were picking on me and that I was in a really bad frame of mind. I was described as feeling lonely, unloved, worthless, sad and withdrawn. Even after I had been in Kingslea that

time, in June 1998 CYFS was recording that under no circumstances should I go home because it was not safe. Even after writing that, they sent me home to my parents. I'd often go missing, for weeks at a time.

47. I had a cousin who worked at Kingslea, although I don't know if the staff knew he was my cousin. He found me smoking weed with another boy and made me give it to him. He gave it back to me when I got out. He tried to keep me on the straight and narrow.
48. Each time I was put in Kingslea for a short period, my social worker was supposed to find me somewhere stable to live on my release. He never did, and lots of times I was just sent home again to the same situation. In my records, there is a letter from me to my social worker [GRO-C] saying "Dear [GRO-C] you are really pissing my of and I am starting to get anry with you and can you please see about were I am going to go and I am really worried about that and all I need to know is were I am going when I leve here that's all I wan't to say right now". [WITN[0581]005] He never responded to me.
49. The social workers at Kingslea wrote that my discharge was disorganised each time. Sometimes, plans for my discharge were made the day before, or even the day of my discharge. On 23 June 1998, staff members at Kingslea described my field social worker's work as "disgusting" and another said that a letter of complaint should be sent to their supervisors.

[GRO-B-8]

50. Throughout my time in CYFS care, I was in and out of a lot of different foster placements and Family Homes. On 28 July 1998, when I was 12, I was placed on a farm with [GRO-B-8]. I stayed with him until 21 September 1998. There was no support in place for me while I lived with [GRO-B-8]. I had a growing substance abuse problem by then and I would drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes and smoke marijuana. I was often unsupervised while I lived there, although [GRO-B-8] [GRO-B-8] knew a lot about what I was up to, including the drinking and smoking. At least once, Mr [GRO-B-8] and I drank kava together. I ran away from this placement quite a few times, then committed offences.

51. In August 1998, I started attending Intermediate school, at first for only two or three hours a day. Even then, I did not go regularly. I didn't have the right school uniform, and I was often sent home from school because of that. I didn't have enough personal clothing either. It took about a month for my social worker to get me a uniform and another two weeks for my social worker to get money for clothing for me. When the placement with [GRO-B-8] broke down, CYFS had not organised anywhere for me to go, so I went home. My CYFS records say there was nowhere else they could find for me.
52. In October 1998, it was recorded that I was not attending school, or any other programme and I needed to be placed somewhere else. I was placed in the custody of CYFS, and the Director-General of CYFS was made my additional guardian. After the orders were made, no one really looked at them again for about a year. I was running away, and the Police would put me in places like the [GRO-B] Family Home, where I would run away again. I ran away from [GRO-B] once and I wasn't found for nearly seven weeks. I had been taken off my social workers caseload and I wasn't allocated to another social worker until 17 December 1998. Because of that, nobody tried to find me while I was missing.
53. On 10 December 1998, I spent the night in the Police cells. The Police refused to return me to my parents' home. Youth Aid often complained about me going back home, but CYFS would say that there was nowhere else for me to go.

Eastland Youth Rescue Trust ("Eastland")

54. I can see from my records that, in March 1999, my social worker talked about my case with a Senior CYFS Manager. The Manager said that because I was 13 years old, I was not able to go into a Youth Justice residence, but she gave my social worker the name of a course called Eastland which was a six-month alternative course in Omaio, near Whakatāne. The next day, the same manager wrote: " I feel that, even though [Eastland] usually take the 14 plus age group and most of these young people are under a supervision with activity order and placed there with the agreement of their guardians, [GRO-A Mr VT] would be well placed there." [WITN 0581 006].

55. I don't know why that manager thought I would be ok at a bush programme for people over the age of 14 who were in the Youth Justice system.
56. On 6 April 1999, I got picked up on further charges and put in Kingslea for five days. I spent four of those days in the Secure Unit, and at least one of those days I was held longer than the law allows in the Secure Unit.
57. My records also say that I had infected gums, but it doesn't say anything about me seeing a dentist.
58. My records show that CYFS talked to a woman called Margaret Butler at Eastland. The social worker wrote that Ms Butler was "very apprehensive about accepting GRO-A
Mr VT onto the programme because he is only 13 years old. I asked her please get in touch with Patty Green. Kingslea officials want GRO-A
Mr VT out of Secure before Monday." A few days later, Ms Butler repeated her concerns about my age and whether I would cope in the bush and was physically strong. It looks like my placement at Eastland was rushed because Kingslea did not want me there anymore. [WITN 0581 007]
59. My social worker told me about Eastland. They told me it was an outdoor pursuits type programme, where I could do rock climbing, kayaking and other sports, and learn life skills. I was told I would be able to speak with my social worker every two weeks. I was quite excited by all of this, particularly because I was getting out of Kingslea.
60. Months before I went there, I know from records that all of the Senior Managers at CYFS were told that only boys aged between 14 and 17 who were physically strong and under Youth Court orders could go to Eastland. I was under care and protection orders and not a supervision with activity order. I was only 13 and I was not physically strong. I should never have been sent there.

61. On 13 April 1999 I was sent to Eastland. I was supposed to be staying there for six months, but I only lived there until I ran away for the third time on 30 April 1999. It was an incredibly brutal two and a half weeks.
62. A lot of clothing was brought for me for my time at Eastland. I did not get to keep it very long. I was not enrolled in any school to do any education while I was at Eastland.
63. Eastland was run by a man called [GRO-B-9]. I did not know it at the time, but he had been involved with a programme called Moerangi Treks, which had been investigated by CYFS for abusing kids. CYFS had stopped using Moerangi Treks, and [GRO-B-9] had started at Eastland on the same property, almost straight away, and got paid by CYFS to take kids on his programme.
64. When I got to Eastland, I was taken to [GRO-B-9]'s house. After the social worker or tracker who had taken me there left, [GRO-B-9] made me sit on a log and shaved off my hair. When I protested and swore, he hit me around the ears. After that, he made me ride a horse bareback to the campsite, which was about an hour away. When I fell off the horse, [GRO-B-9] swore at me and threatened me with a hiding if I did not get back on. He also threatened me with violence if I ran away.
65. My first few days at Eastland were spent doing hard labour, while [GRO-B-9] ordered me and the boys around, yelling and swearing at us. He would often swear at me and put me down as well as the other boys. He also made racist comments, like calling me a "coconut cunt" or telling me to move my "black ass".
66. The work involved carrying large trees across the stream. At first, I didn't want to do the work, but two older boys gave me a hiding, so I did the work after that. Apart from two boys, almost all of the boys on the programme were violent towards me. I can remember the names of five other boys, but there were two, [GRO-B-10] and [GRO-B-11] who were ok towards me.
67. In the first two days, the other boys stole all of my new clothes.

68. [GRO-B-10] who was the only other boy from the South Island on the programme, told me that I would get beaten up if I stayed at the camp, so the two of us ran away the next morning. I took [GRO-B-9]'s .22 rifle and some bullets from his truck. [GRO-B-11] joined in with us too. Several hours after we had run away, I could hear [GRO-B-9] and the other boys coming after us in the truck. We tried to hide. [GRO-B-9] caught [GRO-B-10] and he fired several shots from another rifle into the bush near me, to try to draw me out. I came out of the bush with my hands up, holding the rifle in the air, and surrendered. [GRO-B-9] grabbed the rifle from me and told me to kneel down. He smashed the butt of it into my head at least twice, splitting my head open and making me bleed heaps. [GRO-B-9] kicked me in the ribs and threatened to kill me if I tried anything else. He fired the rifle into the river or the ground. It was right by my ear, so the noise hurt my ears.
69. [GRO-B-9] put me in his truck and wrapped a towel or a bandage around my head, but that was the only medical attention I got. He had to drive to the police station because he reported me missing. There was only one police officer in the area. He saw my head, but didn't say anything. When we got back to the camp, [GRO-B-9] made me and [GRO-B-10] remove our pants and shoes and jog back over the rocks. The other boys rode on horses beside us, hitting us and whipping us with sticks along the way.
70. After we got back to the campsite, the other boys seriously beat me on a daily basis and threatened me with more hidings as punishment for absconding. I had black eyes, a split lip and a lot of swelling and bruising. At least three times, I told [GRO-B-9] about the bullying and violence. [GRO-B-9] told me that he would talk to the boys, as he did not like bullies, but then did not do anything.
71. [GRO-B-9] punished [GRO-B-10] and I for the rest of our time at Eastland for this attempt to run away. For example, he made me carry a large generator over a barbed wire fence just wearing my underwear. He did this several times.
72. Sometimes, [GRO-B-9] watched other boys hit me and did not try to stop them. Once, an older boy made me go down to the river to fight with him. When I got there, all the other boys were waiting for me and they gave me a serious

beating. They picked up an old-fashioned washing machine roller, a wringer, and smashed it on my back. [GRO-B-9] would have noticed all of the boys were missing from the camp, so I think he knew what was happening.

73. Other times, the older boys tied up or chained me, [GRO-B-11] or [GRO-B-10] to a pole outside at night-time. The other boys could yank on the chains from their tents. Sometimes, the three of us had dog chains tied around our necks and the other boys would drag us around and urinate on us. That happened about three times. The other boys stubbed cigarette butts out on my face and made me lie down in the freezing river in my underpants. [GRO-B-9] was around the camp somewhere when these things were happening, but I do not know if he saw it.
74. I made a second attempt to run away from Eastland, this time on my own. [GRO-B-9] caught me again, and made me run back to the camp in my underwear and bare feet. He made me stay up all night scrubbing a tarpaulin floor with a toothbrush for hours. I was still only allowed to wear my underpants. He made [GRO-B-10] [GRO-B-10] do the punishment too, even though he was not involved in the second attempt to run away.
75. I had to do this punishment over at least three nights. One night, I was made to do it completely naked. I was really sleep deprived and several times I fell asleep. I was woken up by being kicked in the face, probably from other residents. During those nights, I was sexually abused by two different boys. I had injuries to my anus as a result of one of those assaults.
76. The next day, I told [GRO-B-9] about the sexual assaults and showed him my injuries. He got angry and talked about shooting those boys. Instead, he tied one of the boys to the back of a horse by his hands, then rode the horse around the yard and across the stream, dragging him behind him. That day, I asked [GRO-B-9] if I could call my social worker and he refused, saying I could only use the phone when he said I could. I was still left in my underpants that whole day.
77. Later that day, [GRO-B-9]'s young kids were at the camp and they shot at me and [GRO-B-10] with BB guns, while [GRO-B-9] sat there watching and laughing.

When I told the kids to fuck off, [GRO-B-9] told several boys to sort me out, and I was beaten up for what I had said.

78. That night, everyone, except probably [GRO-B-9], was sitting around the fire eating porridge. Another boy tipped my porridge onto the rocks. I complained, because I was starving. He laughed at me and told me to eat the porridge off the rocks, which I did. I didn't get fed very often at Eastland. When I challenged the boy who had tipped my porridge on to the rocks, I got beaten up by several of the other boys. After hitting me, they tied me to a tree and threw buckets of water over me. They left me there for several hours, still only wearing my underpants. During that time, another boy cut a tattoo out of my arm with a swiss army knife. I do not know if I told [GRO-B-9] about having a tattoo cut out of my arm, but [GRO-B-9] thought I had done it to myself.
79. The next morning, I stole someone's clothes and a sleeping bag and ran away again. [GRO-B-9] sent the boys out looking for me and I was found by an older boy and a tutor named [GRO-B], who occasionally helped [GRO-B-9] out. The older boy beat me up for absconding and gave me a black eye and made me take my shoes off. He made me walk back to the camp but I managed to escape again and I hid in the bushes, terrified, for two or three days before being picked up by a stranger and taken to Ōpōtiki Hospital.
80. A note in my records dated 3 May 1999 records that [GRO-C] rang CYFS to say that I had run away for the third time and they could not find me. She had been told I was at the Ōpōtiki Medical Centre. She said that they did not know how I had got there, "but that they guessed he may have been disturbed while trying to steal and that he may have been beaten.. [GRO-C] said that [GRO-A Mr V T] had broken ribs...the Police were questioning [GRO-A Mr V T] as [GRO-C] was talking with me". My records say that [GRO-C] wanted the Police to return me to Eastland.
81. On the same day, a Doctor rang CYFS and advised that I had disclosed being physically assaulted by my caregivers. The Police also rang CYFS that day. The Police had interviewed me, and I had said that I had been beaten by [GRO-B-9] [GRO-B-9] with a rifle butt. I told them a lot about the physical abuse and they agreed that I could stay in hospital and not go back to Eastland. My records say that I

would be reallocated a new social worker with “cultural knowledge and social work experience”, as it looked like my social worker at that point did not have either of those things.

82. The Police later faxed through an eight-page statement to CYFS about my allegations at Eastland. [WITN 0581 008]. I don't know why, but the Police only ever investigated allegations about the sexual assaults from the two residents. They did not investigate any allegations against [GRO-B-9]. Other notes say that the Police were friends with [GRO-B-9] and it was a small community.
83. I was seen by a social worker after I was returned to Christchurch. They recorded that I had bruising on my feet, my right foot was partially bandaged, my left foot had slight scarring from severe blistering. I had black eyes. [WITN 0581 009] The social worker rang the policeman who was supposed to be investigating Eastland but he didn't seem to be doing much. [WITN 0581 010]
84. The sexual abuse allegations were not investigated for over a year. Not only did CYFS put me in a dangerous place, but it absolutely failed to address the things that happened to me. My Christchurch social worker had not even told the Whakatāne office that I was at Eastland.
85. I know from my records that [GRO-C] sent a statement to CYFS, denying a lot of what I had said. However, [GRO-B-9] had agreed that he had fired a gun into the bush and that he had tackled me to take the gun from him. [GRO-C] [GRO-C] wrote that I was possibly hit with the gun during the tussle causing the wound on my head. She says I was thrown in the river because I was a “constant bed wetter”. [GRO-B-9] did a statement later, as well.
86. On 4 May 1999, I was put in a Family Home in Whakatane overnight. My records say that I did not have any personal belongings. I had no clothes, toiletries or a bag. Even my underwear had been taken and I had none of my own.
87. I know now that, as a result of what happened to me, CYFS stopped using Eastland on 24 May 1999 and all the boys were taken off the programme. I know

that some of those boys were interviewed as part of the investigation. Those interviews were provided to my lawyers. I also know that my lawyers got a lot of information about Eastland under the Official Information Act, which will be provided to the Royal Commission. The Eastland programme only lasted a year between opening and having everyone removed.

88. I should never have gone to that programme. It was incredibly violent and the things that happened there have scarred me for life.

Kingslea - readmission

89. I got put back in Kingslea again after my return to Christchurch. I was still under Family Court orders at that time. I was in there for about a month, and then went back on 20 August 1999 and stayed there until 10 April 2000. This long period of time in Kingslea was because I was waiting for CYFS to organise a placement with my family in Samoa.
90. I can see from my records that this was first raised at a Family Group Conference on 17 September 1999, and it was agreed that I should go back to Samoa if suitable care and education arrangements could be arranged. There were huge delays with this, mostly by my social worker, [GRO-C-1]. Kingslea staff got annoyed because they did not hear from him very much. By the end of September 1999, the same CYFS manager who said I should go to Eastland wrote that she was worried I would become "yet another Christchurch case that sits in residence".
91. On 30 September 1999, I had a medical examination. This showed a lot of scars on my body including a four-centimetre scar on my scalp from where I was butted with a rifle. The doctor also noted scars on my anal region. I understand that I could have had a medical examination when I first disclosed the sexual abuse, but it does not look like I had one. Later, the Police said no charges could be laid because there was no medical evidence to support my allegations.

92. In the meantime, it looked like GRO-C-1 was talking to my parents and their families and they were trying to send me back to Samoa. CYFS continued to work on this, and I stayed in Kingslea. A lot of my records from this time show how unhappy and frustrated I was.
93. I was shocked and traumatised when I got back to Kingslea after Eastland. My behaviour changed and I became more violent.
94. I have talked about the restraints at Kingslea earlier in my statement. On 17 October 1999 and 21 November 1999, I suffered injuries while I was being restrained. The nurse's notes describe my right arm being twisted up my back and then knelt on by a staff member.
95. There are other notes on my file about the restraint on 17 October 1999. I did not want to go to time out and I got angry, but I did not get violent. I got restrained to the ground by at least four adult males. They shoved a knee into my shoulder and I felt it pop. It really hurt. My shoulder was badly hurt and I had to see the Kingslea nurse. I was taken to hospital.
96. I was restrained badly again a few weeks later. Staff said I wouldn't move to the Time Out room and that I supposedly pushed a staff member. I remember that I did do that, but only because they got right up in my face and were yelling at me for not going to time out.
97. I was having a lot of flashbacks to the abuse I had experienced while I was at Kingslea. It made life really hard for me. I asked for counselling to help me, but even the counselling was delayed. My notes show a lot of restraints in January 2000.
98. I was strip-searched a lot at Kingslea. I had to take off all my clothes in front of the staff. They would give me a towel at the start, but then I had to give it to a staff member, so I was completely naked. I had to turn around while staff looked at me. Sometimes I had to squat. Once, I had to lift up my penis. I was often strip-searched for stupid things, sometimes if a staff smelt weed. Sometimes I think the staff made up excuses to search us, it was a power thing. I found the strip

searches very difficult after the sexual abuse I had experienced. I tried to tell the staff, but they just threatened me with more strip searches.

99. I got put in the Secure Unit a lot at Kingslea. While in Secure, I spent a lot of time in isolation, and I ate my meals in my cell. If I did not misbehave, I could go out of my cell for meals. Sometimes, if I had been good, I was allowed to mix with some of the other boys who were also in Secure. There was not much else to do in there. I had a few books and magazines and I could talk to some of the other boys who were locked in other cells.
100. In February 2000, my proposed placement in Samoa fell through, because my relatives did not agree to look after me. It looked like my relative had not been told they were nominated to care for me before CYFS started the caregiver assessment process. I stayed in Kingslea.
101. I was still having problems with my social worker. I wrote to the Chief Executive of CYFS on 10 March 2000, saying: "I just want to know how long I am in this place. Every time I ring [GRO-C-1] he is always not there. I am just confused. I do not know when I am getting out. I do want to make some changes in my life. I just want to go home...if you can please help [GRO-C-1] just to move things a bit faster...can I please work my way back home...I just cannot get hold of [GRO-C-1]." [WITN0581011]
102. In April 2000, an FGC agreed I would return to the care of my parents. It was not clear what support they would get from CYFS while I lived there. [GRO-C-1]'s notes from around this time do not mention the history of abuse in my family home at all.
103. In June 2001, I got put in the Secure Unit at Kingslea after I admitted stealing a radio. I knew that you could only be put in Secure if you were violent, or they thought you were going to run away. I shouldn't have been put in there for taking a radio.

Lower North Youth Justice Residence (“Lower North”) – Palmerston North

104. Before I went to Lower North the first time, on 24 September 2002, I had bounced around different placements and programmes, including foster placements and living at home. I was repeatedly remanded to Lower North, and then I was sentenced to a three-month supervision with residence order on 28 February 2003. I served all of that time at Lower North.
105. Every time I was at Lower North, I was bullied and threatened by other residents. In response, I fought back. The only thing I could do was defend myself. The staff would see me getting beaten up and see my injuries. My mum even tried telling them but they did not do anything.
106. I got placed in the Secure Unit a lot at Lower North, sometimes for silly things. One time, I was placed in Secure for flicking another resident with a tea towel.
107. All I remember from being in the Secure Unit is being locked down a lot. I was isolated for most of the day and probably let out for about an hour. I ate my meals in my cell. I had a few books in my cell, and I could write to my parents. Most of the day, I just sat and stared out of the window. I did not do any school work.
108. On 8 July 2003, I was remanded to Christchurch Men’s Prison and I had charges transferred to the District Court. I shifted from one State institution to another. CYFS closed their file a few weeks later. I was later sent to Youth prison.
109. There’s a photo of me in my CYFS file from when I was a teenager. I wasn’t very big or scary. I’m just a kid. [WITN 0581 012]

Life after CYFS care

110. I have struggled with drug and alcohol use for most of my life. I went to jail in 2004-2005 and just kept going back. I’ve probably spent around 2 years in the community since 2005. I am quite institutionalised. I don’t know how to live in the real world, I feel safer in prison.

111. I have a history of depression and anxiety. [GRO-C]
[GRO-C]
[GRO-C] Mental health got involved with me at that point. I was diagnosed with PTSD and borderline personality disorder.
112. I hate the system, and I don't trust anyone in it. The system abandoned me and traumatised me.
113. I first contacted Cooper Legal about taking a civil claim in around 2007 or 2008. I later got parole and didn't stay in contact with Cooper Legal, so my claim didn't go any further. In 2012, after I had addressed a few of my issues (but not my drug and alcohol use) I got back in contact with Cooper Legal and restarted the claims process.
114. In 2013 I was living in the community with my partner. Her ex-partner didn't like me so he reported to CYFS that I was living with her. I had a criminal record and I wasn't allowed to stay there. She couldn't even stay at my place. The shit hit the fan and I started drinking. I went to jail for aggravated robbery later that year.
115. My claim documents were sent to Crown Law in February 2014 and Cooper Legal provided more information about Eastland in 2015. Because nothing was happening on my claim, my claim was filed in the Court and progressed towards a trial. I got released from prison in 2018 but had problems with housing, because places I could live weren't approved because Oranga Tamariki didn't want me living with kids. I couldn't live with my sister, or in Housing New Zealand flats. I ended up in Salvation Army accommodation but there were a lot of drug users there.
116. I eventually went to Polytech to do a plumbing and gasfitting course. Housing was still hard and the Parole Board had imposed conditions which were hard to comply with. I eventually gave up Polytech and went looking for jobs, which were hard to get. I couldn't get a lot of help from WINZ and I ended up selling drugs to make money. I eventually started using drugs as well. [GRO-C]
[GRO-C]
[GRO-C] I spent 8 weeks in hospital before going back to jail. I was later

sentenced to 9 years in prison.

GRO-C

GRO-C

117. I have had a lot of health issues

GRO-C

Healthcare in prison has not been very good for me.

Settlement of Civil Claim

118. The claims process run by MSD was appalling. Nobody fronted up. It would have been good to have a Pacific person to talk to, someone who listened to what happened to me. You can't apologise properly if you don't know what happened.

119. In February 2019, MSD made an offer of settlement to me, which I accepted. That brought my claim to an end. I have been told that the settlement I have received is one of the highest MSD has paid anyone to date.

120. I got an apology letter with my settlement, but it looked like the same format that was sent to everyone. It felt hollow, to be honest. All the money in the world won't wash this away. They knew not to put me at places like Eastland but did it anyway. I don't know if the people responsible at CYFS were ever reprimanded.

121. I think it would have been more useful to get Samoans to talk about things, rather than cover them up. Get the Matai's to help people talk about abuse and guide them without judgement, rather than tell them to internalise it and pray about it.

Family and Culture

122. I don't know my daughter, GRO-B-12. She was born out of a brief relationship I had with her mother, while I was on the run from a CYFS residence. I think her mother told her that someone else was her father. I am working on this, because I don't want her to think I don't care about her.

123. I have another daughter, GRO-B-13, who is six months older than GRO-B-12. I had a relationship with her mum while I was in residence. Our daughter was born on my 16th birthday. She has had her own daughter. She looks like me.

124. I don't look like anyone in my family. I would like to know where my genetics come from.
125. My brother GRO-B-4 was never in care, except for a short stint in Youth prison. He is in the Airforce now. He is married and doing well. He is only a year younger than me. We have a strong bond but I've missed a lot to do with him because of being in jail.
126. My biggest support is my adult daughter and my partner and her kids (who I see as my kids).
127. I feel a connection with other guys I was in care with. I think we could have been somewhere else in different circumstances, if we hadn't gone through all that.
128. I feel like I was a happy kid who had to create a mask to survive. I had so many different masks that it got confusing.
129. I wish I had never come to New Zealand. I believe that, if I had stayed in Samoa, I would have had better discipline to keep my life on track. I have a lot of identity issues and I don't have any sense of belonging.
130. I still speak Samoan fluently. I practice on my own, or with other guys who speak it. However, there are some parts of my culture, and the values I was taught, that I resent. I resent some of my family for holding those values as well. There have been programmes in prison for Pacific Islanders but they are always tied to the Church.
131. I think the highest Pacific value is to respect elders and humble yourself, which is why a lot of us will not talk about abuse, out of respect for that person and their family. I told lies and made excuses for the abuse I experienced because of those values.

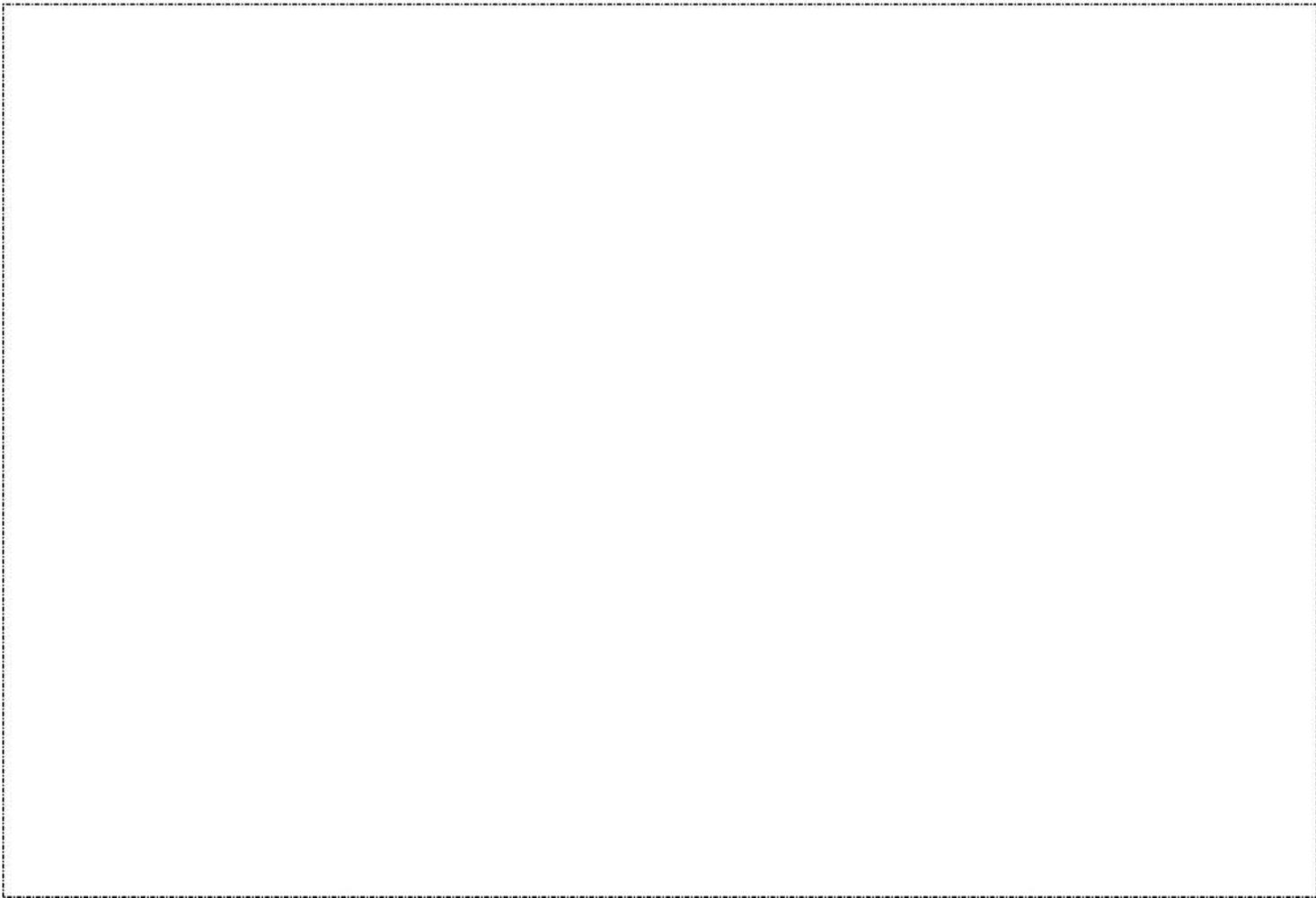
132. I know the history of Pacific people here in New Zealand. I know the sacrifices which were made to bring us here which has made me reluctant, sometimes, to talk about some things. I don't want that to happen to my kids. I want them to always feel like they can speak up.

Statement of Truth

This statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and was made by me knowing that it may be used as evidence by the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care.

Signed:  GRO-A _____

Dated: 5th July 2021.



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