

**Witness Name:** GRO-A-Mr PM

**Statement No.:** WITN0302001

**Dated:** 23/03/2021

**Exhibits:** WITN0302002-WITN0302009

## ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

### FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF GRO-A-Mr PM

I, GRO-A-Mr PM, say as follows:

1. I was born on GRO-B 1974 in GRO-B.
2. My occupation is a truck driver though I am not currently employed.
3. I am remembering information from around 30 years ago and will recall it to the best of my ability.

#### Early life

4. I am from GRO-B but grew up in GRO-B. My mother and I moved to Melbourne when I was about 10 years old. Around six months after moving to Australia, my mother died. I found her collapsed on the floor one day when I got home from school. She died in hospital a week later. My mother had only told her sister that she had cancer. I didn't know. She was 39 years old and died of cancer. That was when my world turned upside down.
5. I didn't want to, but I had to move back to New Zealand. I lived with my father, his new wife and two stepsisters. Going home to live with my Dad didn't feel so good. Our relationship was strained because I had left to live in Australia with my mother. I had just lost my mother and I didn't want another one in my stepmother.

GRO-C

6. I attended GRO-B College until around fourth form. I was good at school and sports but began to hang out with the wrong people and became involved in burglaries. I didn't have a mother and father and proper family. I had a stepmother and stepsisters that didn't want me. I was running away a lot, though would often come home for dinner. I didn't want to be at home. Most of the time I was only stealing food to survive but it did progress to stealing things like cars.
7. The police brought me home several times. The youngest age that I recall being held in a police cell was at around 14 years of age. On one occasion, my parents told the police not to bring me home. I had just become a nuisance to them and they wanted me to go somewhere else.
8. When I was 12 years old I was considered uncontrollable and taken into state care. On looking back at the situation, I think my father and stepmother were trying to make me a state ward. Later, my social worker told me that my parents were the issue, rather than me.

#### Hamilton Boys' Home

9. I recall that when I was around 13 years old, I was sent to Hamilton Boys' Home, where I stayed for a number of months. I do not remember how I got to the Boys' Home, but when I first arrived, I recall that I was sent to the secure unit and that I was in the secure unit for a few weeks.
10. My records show, however, that I was at Hamilton Boys' Home multiple times between 1988 and 1991. My first stay was from 10 June 1988 to 13 June 1988 [ WITN0302002 ]. My second stay was from 26 January 1989 to 31 January 1989 [ WITN0302003 ]. I was also sent to Hamilton Boys' Home (then known as Hamilton Residential Services) for two weeks in January 1990, before being sent to Whakapakari [ WITN0302004 ].
11. I think my parents may have visited me once while I was at the Boys' Home.
12. Staying in the secure unit was a very traumatic experience. I was kept alone in a cell overnight but let out to the communal room during the day. There were many Māori staff and children at the Boys' Home. I don't think that being Pakeha helped me.
13. Hamilton Boys' Home was terribly abusive, but I was too scared to run away. I was beaten by both staff and the other boys, though I cannot recall any of their

names. I just remember that the boys were all bigger than me, Māori and all covered in tats. I do not know why I would get beaten, but it would often happen in the games room and the gym, amongst other places. I do not recall having access to any medical care or examinations after I had been beaten. Looking back, I think I would have been too scared to make any complaints. I was too spooked to step out of line.

14. During the day, we would go to the school and build wakas and do other cultural activities. The Boys' Home was good in that way. I think there was a little bit of book learning too. We were also taken on outings, including to the Les Mills Gym.
15. I recall incidents of sexual abuse and exposure occurring in the changing rooms of the Les Mills Gym. It was perpetrated by both male and female Boys' Home staff and members of the public. Boys would go in and out of the changing rooms with these adults. I recall a couple of the female staff were involved. One female staff member used to expose herself to the boys.
16. The boys would talk about what had happened afterward. This was my first experience of these types of situations. I was not involved, though the boys who were involved were older than me. The incidents at the gym happened several times. As an adult, I look back and realise that there was grooming occurring.
17. I recall that it was one of the staff members who used to knock the boys around that would take us to Les Mills. This man came into my cell and knocked me around a few times. He would do it to other kids as well. He was a Māori man. I cannot recall his name.
18. A female member of staff once tried to fondle me in the hallway of the Boys' Home but Piripi Pikari, another staff member caught her. Piripi was angry about it. This was the same female staff member who used to expose herself to the boys at the gym.

### **Foster Care**

19. After leaving Hamilton Boys' Home, I went to stay at a number of foster homes and farm care placements. One of these foster homes was in Paeroa. I remember that this foster home was like a military camp. There was a lot of sexual abuse at this placement by older boys, both toward me and the other kids. I remember getting bullied into doing minor sexual stuff.

GRO-C

20. I didn't want to be in foster homes, so I would run away a lot. The police would find me and take me back to Hamilton Boys' Home or Weymouth. I tried to go back to my parents in [GRO-B], but they didn't want me.

21. When between placements, I needed to eat so I continued to do burglaries.

### **Weymouth Boys' Home**

22. When I arrived at Weymouth, I was a ward of the state. I do not recall how I arrived at Weymouth or where I was living prior to my admission.

23. I do not remember how old I was or how long I stayed there for. I may have been sent there because I had been running away from placements or had broken the law.

24. I was first placed in Weymouth on 26 March 1991. [WITN0302005] My records also show that I ran away on 4 April 1991 and was apprehended and returned to Weymouth on 29 April 1991.

25. When I first arrived, I was sent to solitary for a week. I was then released into the general population and was badly beaten by a staff member. There was no medical treatment available after the beatings. During this placement, I had no contact with social workers and my parents did not visit me.

26. I was placed in secure on 30 April 1991 when I was returned to Weymouth after absconding. [WITN0302006] The District Court ordered on 6 May 1991 that I be kept in secure until 20 May 1991. [WITN0302007] When I absconded from Weymouth I would do car conversions and burglaries, mainly to get around and to get food.

27. There were some strange kids at Weymouth. I was locked up with two kids named [GRO-B-1] and [GRO-B-2]. They had shot and killed a farmer and had been in the news.

28. I recall staff letting three or four boys into my bedroom to beat me. On one occasion, I had a staff member beating me while the other was acting as the look out before they swapped over. I don't recall there being a reason the staff would beat me, though I think the other boys used to beat me up because I would stand up for myself. I once used a frying pan and a plate as self-defence.

29. I did not experience any sexual abuse at Weymouth. I think I was overlooked because I was quite innocent.

GRO-C

30. There was also a gang culture at Weymouth. I recall one group being called the 'Crips' or something similar.
31. There were a lot of Māori and Pacific Island boys at Weymouth. I noticed that kids were treated differently because of their skin colour and often the Māori kids were treated better.
32. I would describe Weymouth as a hellhole. There was a real bad culture there. Full of beatings from both kids and the staff.
33. There were two staff members who were particularly vicious. They would orchestrate some of the beatings which occurred. Both of them were well-built and the other was a little bit of a 'Rangi Māori'. One was GRO-B than the other and had some kind of [REDACTED] GRO-B [REDACTED].
34. On one occasion I was taken down a hill, like a side of a football field, and beaten up by other kids. I believe this was arranged by those two staff as they were often acting as lookouts when things like that would happen. Looking back, I think some of these beatings stemmed from me running away all the time.
35. Sometimes I would fight back and would defend myself as well as I could. But I was in a constant state of being battered, bruised and sore. The staff pulled all the strings, you couldn't just walk up to the medical unit and get help. I think as far as they were concerned, I deserved what I got.
36. After a while, I couldn't take anymore so I escaped by climbing the fence in my pyjamas. The staff never caught me but eventually the police did. I was returned to Weymouth and put in the secure unit and beaten again. I felt as if I had no one to turn to and it was no good going to the staff as they were no help.
37. I don't recall telling my social worker Tony about the beatings that were happening. When I saw him, I was mainly just excited to see a friend, rather than complaining about things that were going on.

### Whakapakari

38. At 15 years of age, I was taken to Whakapakari, where I believe I stayed for a few months.
39. My records show, however, that I was at Whakapakari for only one month in February and March of 1990. [ WITN0302004 ] [ WITN0302008 ]

40. I arrived by boat and was dropped off at the main wharf at Great Barrier Island and then taken to Mangati Bay. I don't recall if there were other kids on the boat with me.
41. Whakapakari was run by John da Silva and his wife. There was also a camp supervisor who was responsible for the daily activities and made us work. I do not recall any names except for John da Silva and the supervisor, whose name could have been GRO-B-3 or GRO-B-3.
42. When I first arrived, I thought Whakapakari was wonderful. We did activities like snorkelling, diving and fishing. They kind of nurtured us a little bit to start with. We were split into groups of three or four kids and stayed in tents with around 10 other boys. There were only a handful of white boys and we stuck together. There were lots of boys there, some the same age as me and some a lot older than me.
43. We ate in a shed which was a kitchen and dining room together, with a dirt floor and had timber tables. We did chores like fix nets and gut fish and did some cooking and cleaning. John's wife oversaw the cooking and cleaning.
44. However, things changed quite quickly. For me, the first alarm bells were when at night, I could hear children screaming.
45. The supervisor was a Māori man. He always carried a rifle, though I am unsure why he carried it as John never carried a gun. He would always wave his gun around and use it when giving us direction. The supervisor oversaw the physical discipline of the boys. He would beat us and get kids to beat one another.
46. Because the supervisor would sleep in the kid's tents, I noticed him moving around the beds at night and doing things to the boys. I would see him doing this every night, though it never happened to me. I didn't know what he was doing to the boys because it was dark, but I am guessing he was sexually abusing them.
47. On one occasion, myself and two other young boys were taken into a tent by the supervisor. The three of us were Pakeha boys and had recently arrived at Whakapakari. The supervisor had two older boys with him and told the three of us young boy not to turn around when he began to beat us and told us to take off our clothes. He then told the older boys to fuck us. I freaked out and ran past the older boys and out of the tent. I was petrified. The supervisor caught me and

beat me, hitting me in the back of the head with his gun. He told me not to go anywhere.

48. The supervisor returned to the tent and I could hear some horrible noises. The two older kids soon came out of the tent. The younger kids had been beaten and raped. One of the young boys came out saying 'They fucked me up the arse'. He was literally holding his arse. He was in severe pain. The second boy was speechless, holding his arse and could barely walk. I don't remember the names of any of these boys. I don't know whether it was the supervisor or the older boys who had raped the younger boys. There were times where I don't think that the older boys even knew what to do, they were doing what the supervisor told them.
49. On another occasion, two white boys, a Māori boy and myself were taken to a flat grassy section by a creek by the camp supervisor. I remember being pulled out of the shed and taken away from the camp. Here, he made us dig our own graves. The holes were deep, and we were made to get in and lay face down. We weren't allowed to look, and he threatened to shoot us. The supervisor started shooting into the air and we were screaming, begging for our lives and freaking out. It was horrifying.
50. When we tried to get out of the holes, he would just kick us and beat us back in. I thought this was going to be the end of my life. I don't know what any of us had done to deserve that treatment.
51. Another incident was when me and some other kids were taken up the hill and attempts were made by the older kids and supervisor to beat us up and rape us. It was the same older boys involved again. I remember that we got a huge beating. The supervisor told us again to get our clothes off. He would use his gun to tell people what to do. Because I had been in a similar sort of situation, I knew what was going to happen. So, the first opportunity I had, I ran away down one side of the hill and another boy ran down the other side. But I got away and ran into the shed back at camp. John da Silva was there, and I remember running back in shed, looking scared and upset but John shut me down and just smiled at me.
52. It was then that I knew that I had no one to turn to. I was shit scared.

53. I can't recall any times that I felt unsafe around John, except when he disregarded me when I came to him with the complaint about the supervisor. He seemed quite inspirational, but I lost respect for him after that. John didn't have much involvement with us. But he must have known what was going on as he was running the show.
54. I may have been chosen on these occasions because I was new, but I do not really know. I don't know if this sort of thing happened to any of the other boys at the camp. I don't think we spoke about it, though we would talk about how Whakapakari was such a crazy place and how scared we were.
55. There was a little island off Whakapakari that was called 'Alcatraz' where we would be sent, I think as punishment. Groups of boys would be left there together. I liked being out there because I was away from the supervisor.
56. There were many beatings while at Whakapakari, both by other boys and by the supervisor. Sometimes he would line us up and beat us. I recall a group named the 'Flying Squad' who were a group of kids who used to beat people up. There were never any beatings from John. I think that the supervisor used to orchestrate all the beatings and rapings. There always seemed to be two or three older kids that were under his direction. He created a sick culture at Whakapakari, like a fight and rape club. I still wonder where he learnt to be the way he was.
57. There were no first aid kits or medical care that I can remember. I don't know what was done about urgent medical care on the island.
58. There weren't many girls sent to Whakapakari. While I was there, I recall a girl arriving and some nasty stuff happened to her. This girl had her own tent, and she was kept close to camp. There was some strict guidelines because of her, but that was just a load of shit. I remember her coming forward while she was there and complain about rapes. I don't recall how I heard about this, maybe it was just from discussion between the boys. She used to sniff glue or petrol and do a lot of drugs and was still somehow doing this on the island. She may have been Pakeha, but I can't remember exactly. I do not know what happened to her as I left before she did.
59. The day before leaving Whakapakari, the supervisor approached myself and another boy while holding his gun. He marched us with his gun to his camper

which was located next to the main camp. I remember him saying "Get in there. You two are sleeping in there with me". This was the first time I had been in the camper. If I knew what was going to happen, I would never have gone in there.

60. He followed us into the camper with the gun and said "Get on the fucking bed."

He put the gun down on the counter. I remember seeing it there, all night, it was sitting there all night.

61. I was on the right and the other boy was on the left side of the bed. He proceeded to rape myself and the other kid on the other side.

62. He was in the middle and he'd started raping me, trying to fuck me up the arse and all sorts – forced me to wank him off. I was just fucking petrified. It was too much pain for me to take and I started squealing and freaking out and he smashed my head down into the fucking pillow. And I just went into shock, shut down in shock, and that's when he's turned to the other kid and raped him. We had to stay in that bed all night. We had to stay there all night until the next day. What happened in that cabin was putrid. I didn't get a wink of sleep. I couldn't have possibly slept. I stayed awake all night just freaking out from what I'd just been through. I remember some vivid things. Like the gun was left on the table. I did not get any sleep because I was so scared.

63. The next day the other boy and I left the island. I can't recall what the supervisor had said to me, but I remember being very scared and telling him that I would never tell anyone. I am pretty sure this happened on the journey from Mangati Bay to Tryphena. Whatever he said, I just remember that he freaked me out. I recall that I had made up my mind that I was never going to tell anyone because I wanted to live. I didn't want to die. From that point on I felt like a dead man walking.

64. My records show that I was released from DSW custody shortly after returning from Whakapakari but I can't recall where I went. [ WITN0302008 ]. I went in and out of Weymouth a few times, but I am unsure of when this was.

65. I remember being put back into a secure unit, time in isolation and more beatings. But nothing was as bad as Whakapakari.

66. I might have also been placed in other foster homes. My parents then became involved, and I remember going home at some stage. It was a short-lived thing.

GRO-C

67. At around 15 years old, I went to [GRO-C] boarding school and would go home to my father's place once a month. [GRO-C] boarding school which I attended for around a year. I suffered many beatings there, mainly just for being white. I was beaten by groups of senior boys, including the First XV. A record of this appears on a psychologist's report from the time. [WITN0302009] I would run away from [GRO-C] to try to escape the beatings. I didn't report it to staff, you just weren't allowed to.
68. Once again [GRO-C] was a terrible place but way better than Whakapakari. I pretty much didn't fear anything after that place.
69. When I was in state care, I had a really good case worker named Tony. Though, I still never felt that I could tell him about what had happened at Whakapakari.

### Life After Care

70. After I left state care, I went to Raglan to go surfing. I was trying to work but I was pretty dysfunctional. I had some interactions with the police and ended up in corrective training at Turangi. It was here that I decided I didn't want to be in trouble with the law anymore. I learnt a lot at corrective training, including ethics and discipline. I felt like I didn't want that life anymore. I felt like a lot of things just hadn't gone my way and had probably contributed to where I was, like not much of a home life and having to fend for myself.
71. Two weeks before I turned 17 I was arrested by the police for cultivating cannabis and some other related charges. Instead of letting me appear in court, as a youth, the police held me in police cells for 2 weeks, until I turned 17. Just so I could then appear in court as an adult and be sentenced like an adult. I was sentenced to corrective training and went to Waikeria Prison. Being sentenced as an adult and having a drug conviction at such a young age had a massive impact on my job prospects.
72. After leaving Turangi and Waikeria, I kept out of trouble for years and moved to Australia and America. I just wanted to get away from New Zealand. After Whakapakari, I felt like I was always on the run. Looking back, I see my situation differently but at that point it felt like moving away was for my own survival.
73. In Australia I worked mainly as a truck driver. I met my then partner and had two children. During this relationship, I was arrested for cultivating cannabis and

sent to prison. I was in prison for around two and a half years for various charges. I ended up in a few prisons in Australia.

74. In 2015, I was deported back to New Zealand and began truck driving again.
75. Around April 2020, I started meeting with my counsellor. I felt overwhelmed like I had opened a can of worms. I had to stop driving trucks toward the end of 2020 because I wasn't coping with the pressures of driving such heavy trucks and I was unable to concentrate.
76. I pretty much had a nervous breakdown and I was a danger on the roads. I was driving trucks and found myself at intersections, not knowing which way to go or even drive into the intersection. It was dangerous for me and others. I couldn't concentrate and all of the above just came to a head. My mind was on the abuse and that box that all this had been hidden in for so long, just came open. .

### **Impacts**

77. It has been a big journey to get to where I am today, and I'm still figuring things out. I feel that I am now in a good place. I'm doing counselling, but things are still a struggle. Recently, I have found I am stuttering and struggling with my words. Looking back, I also have difficulty trying to place where I was and when.
78. The relationship with my parents has been up and down since being put into care. They have recently told me that I had complained to them about Whakapakari when I was younger. I am pretty sure they had previously said they didn't recall me mentioning it.
79. I felt lots of shame and couldn't tell anyone about what had happened to me. My mind was dysfunctional and I just walked around for many years trying to hide in my head what had happened. I felt quite embarrassed about what had happened, and I didn't want to tell anyone because I thought I would be killed if I ever told anybody.
80. I have found relationships and intimacy to be very difficult. I had a big problem with that. The intimacy thing was like taboo for a very long time. It took me many years to feel comfortable with these sorts of situations. It took me quite a few years to go through with the 'act'. It was a terrible feeling.

81. I ended up going to a brothel and spending some time with a woman there to learn about intimacy, she knew something horrible had happened to me in the past. I went there a number of times. She nurtured me for quite a long time. I never had sex with her, but it was really helpful.
82. Drugs, alcohol and meth have played parts in many aspects of my life. Meth was more to do with truck driving in Australia and the need to stay awake. Not now.
83. Recently I have been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. I went on some medication which wasn't the best thing for me.
84. Whakapakari taught me that bad things can come with smiles. Just because someone is smiling at you doesn't mean they're nice. I have been taught to see beyond a smile. This reasoning has cost me a few friendships along the way. I have wiped a lot of people out of my life because of not taking smiles at face value. It has taught me to really investigate my surroundings and to question people's motives.
85. I am trying to look after myself now. But it is still a struggle and will be for quite a while. I want to have a nice future.
- 86.

#### **ACC and MSD**

87. When I was in Linton Prison in 2019, I was told about the claims process for those who had been placed in care as children. Claims were the talk of the town in prison, but I wasn't really interested at first.
88. I started talking to another inmate about my time at Whakapakari. He mentioned that I could look at putting in a claim. That got me thinking and I went and did a bit of research.
89. I called Sonja Cooper. She mentioned that I could get counselling from ACC. I thought "stuff them, I will sue these bastards".
90. I managed to get Sensitive Claim Counselling through ACC. My counsellor, Lindsay, has been great.
91. When I contacted MSD, I asked about compensation. My case manager said that I was up to no good and trying to scam them. I struggled to get anyone to answer my calls.

92. The way that I see it, is that they invaded my life and ruined it and when I asked for help they sent me away. I just wanted to get back on my feet and I got nothing. That is why I am so bitter about going to the authorities for help.
93. ACC think I'm a scammer too. As I stated at paragraphs 73 and 74, I had to stop driving trucks because of my Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. I have contacted ACC about my PTSD to try and get paid leave from work, but they won't help me. It has totally worn me down. I feel I have been juggled around several times and have been treated like a crook.
94. It has actually driven me down into a place that is not good for me. It is bullshit. I am still seeing doctors and psychiatrists. And they are all trying to wear me down. They don't even know what I have been through. They haven't seen my file, don't know the abuse I suffered in care and they keep making me repeat my abuse.
95. I have absolutely no faith in ACC and MSD. They don't know me, but they question me, trying to catch me out to be a liar. I am not a liar. They question me about my honesty levels. I am completely worn out from dealing with ACC. I have had nothing but grief from them. I only wanted to get help. I can never deal with the same person and it is like they just want to wear me down so I go away. All I want to do is work again.
96. The system got me raped. The system got me where I am now. And when I do speak up they all run for the woods.

### **Recommendations**

97. My one recommendation for change would be to keep more of an eye on the children. Don't turn your back on them. They just dumped us and turned their back on us. I don't remember anyone reaching out to me and asking anything.

### **Statement of Truth**

**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.

GRO-C

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

*[Handwritten signature]*

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

*23-3-21*