

Witness Name:

Statement No.: WITN0349001

Exhibits: WITN0349002 – WITN0349007

Dated: 24 November 2020

ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

DRAFT WITNESS STATEMENT OF (Deceased)

I, will say:

My life before Lake Alice.

(See also Statement for Grant Cameron Proceedings, para 1 to 10, [WITN0349002])

1 I am a survivor of Lake Alice. I was born on and named I am one of two children, My brother, is older than me.

2 My deceased father is Maori. His tribes are Ngai Tahu and Ngati Kahununu . His father was the first Maori in New Zealand. My father was kind and caring to me and I loved him. However he was a truck driver and often away from home on the roads.

- 3 Mum's name is [GRO-B], called [GRO-B] for short. She hated me from the day I was born. Unfortunately she was an evil, nasty manipulative person. She was Pakeha. My pakeha ancestry on both sides of the family is Scottish, as the name [GRO-B] indicates. I had one brother called [GRO-B] who was [GRO-B] [GRO-B] older than me. When he was 12 he was sent away to be a [GRO-C].
- 4 I lived with my mother and father until I was about 5. Dad saw what was happening to me with Mum and arranged for me to be bought up by my auntie [GRO-B] and Uncle [GRO-B].

How I ended up in Lake Alice

See also:

- Statement for Grant Cameron proceedings, para 11 to 13, 37 [WITN0349002]
- Chronology [WITN0349004]
- Crown Law Summary [WITN0349003]
- [GRO-B] Fact File cover sheet [WITN0349005]

- 5 I have huge gaps in my memory in relation to my time in Lake Alice. I have no idea how old I was when I was sent there or how long I was at Lake Alice. I had no idea why I was taken there. I have locked down so many things in my life to survive. Lots of Lake Alice is locked down but I have flashbacks about things that happened there. No-one ever told me why I was there or how I came to be put there. All I knew is that to me Lake Alice felt like everything but the gas chambers.
- 6 When I was 12, I was raped by one of mum's sister's husbands right before Christmas. I didn't think I could tell my father because I believe that he would have tried to kill the man. I also loved Auntie [GRO-B] I didn't tell my mother because it wasn't worth telling her anything.

- 7 I know that I was strong willed and reacting against my mother all the time because she was so unkind to me. I was probably considered to have behavioural problems. I went to **GRO-B** High School in **GRO-B** I recall that when I was in high school my mother took me to see a doctor and he got me to draw various pictures. It was not long after that that I was sent to Lake Alice.
- 8 I recall the day Mum picked me up from school in my school uniform and took me there. I didn't know why I was going there.
- 9 A girl who I knew before she was in lake Alice was there. Her name was **GRO-B**. She had been adopted by parents who were in the Salvation Army. She and I became friends.

Accommodation – being put in ward with mentally ill male and female adults

(See also Statement for Grant Cameron proceedings para 14, 16, 18, 39 – 44 [WITN0349002]).

- 10 I was put into an adult ward with mentally ill male and female adults. I was terrified of them. I knew another girl who was there, called **GRO-B** and we became friends. There were girls who were younger than us there also. It was our job to look after the younger ones and we were very protective of them.
- 11 We were locked down at night and the doors not opened until morning. I was extremely fearful and stressed about being locked in. To this day I have claustrophobia because of that.

Looking after younger children

- 12 The older girls like me and younger girls spent the day in the children's ward and were taken to the adult's ward after dinner around 7 pm. We older girls were expected to look after the young children. We were very protective of them.

- 13 I have a vivid memory of a young boy of 5- 6 years old standing on the steps of Lake Alice holding a teddy bear and screaming for his mum and dad. He had been dropped off in a car and left alone there. He was pakeha. That cut me to the core. He was a very quiet child.

Being given painful drugs and seclusion for not taking contraceptive pill

See also:

- Statement for Grant Cameron proceedings, para 44 [WITN0349002]
- Summary by Crown Law Office [WITN0349003]

- 14 Not long after I was put into Lake Alice I recall being given a small white pill and told to take it. I refused. I assume it was a contraceptive pill. Because I refused I was put into a padded cell and held down by staff while I was given an injection in my backside. I believe it was paraldehyde. It was very painful. When I woke up I had no underpants on. I didn't know how long I was knocked out or how my pants came to be removed. I was taken out of the cell after my friend [GRO-B] and another girl had gone to see Victor Souterik and asked him to help get me out of there.

Being punished with drugs and seclusion for disrupting group therapy

(See also statement for Grant Cameron proceedings para 19 -22, 27 – 32 [WITN0349002])

- 15 I recall once when I was in a group therapy session I saw my father's truck pull up outside the door. I now think that was probably after he found out I was in there. I jumped up from the session and ran to the windows, pulled back the curtain and screamed out to my father. I was dragged out of the session, taken upstairs where I was put into a padded cell and given drugs.
- 16 I was given drugs one other time. I don't know what I did wrong. I was put into a padded cell.

Terror at being taken upstairs where ECT was given

See also:

- Statement for Grant Cameron proceedings para 23 to 26, 49 [WITN0349002])
- Chronology [WITN0349004]

17 The staff always threatened that if we didn't behave we would be sent 'upstairs'. Everyone was terrified of being sent up there. I was petrified of it. I recall there was a girl who went to primary school at the same time I was there in [GRO-B]. Her name was [GRO-B]. I only saw her once. She was being taken 'upstairs' and then I saw her being brought down on a stretcher looking terrible. I never saw her again. I saw a lot of children and young people going upstairs and being taken downstairs later on stretchers looking terrible.

Selwyn Leeks

18 We didn't see much of Selwyn Lakes but we all knew who he was. He was the big boss and everyone was petrified of him. I was also.

Group Therapy

(See also statement for Grant Cameron proceedings para 22 [WITN0349002])

19 I hated group therapy sessions. We were expected to say things but I never knew what to say. You got into trouble if you didn't speak. I was too young to know what to say.

Sexual Assault

See also:

- statement for Grant Cameron proceedings para 36, [WITN0349002]
- Summary by Crown Law Office [WITN0349003]

20 I was not afraid of the other boys my age but I was very afraid of the other mentally ill adults in the ward and of some of the staff. Once they had a disco

and I was very excited and looking forward to it. However one of the adults in the ward grabbed me out from the dance floor, took me into a corner and started feeling me up all over. I could see that there were a couple of staff members watching him doing it to me and doing nothing.

Education

(See also statement for Grant Cameron proceedings para 38, **[WITN0349002]**)

21 I recall going to a school class only two days while I was there.

Positive memories

(see also statement for Grant Cameron proceedings, paras 34, **[WITN0349002]**)

22 I recall there being a point system leading to rewards. If you got enough points you were allowed to go to a lolly shop which was on the premises. I remember that we would get bags of lollies from there. That is a happy memory.

Discharge from Lake Alice

- See Statement for Grant Cameron para 45-49 **[WITN0349002]**
- See Crown Law Summary **[WITN0349003]**
- See chronology **[WITN03049004]**

Life after Lake Alice

See also:

- Statement for Grant Cameron proceedings, paras 50 to 79, **[WITN0349002]**)
- See PNHBS social work report **[WITN0249006]**
- See Social Work discharge report **[WITN0349007]**

23 My school would not take me back after I had been at Lake Alice. I recall it being something about not having a gym uniform any more. I don't know what

happened to it and why Lake Alice didn't keep it for me. Going to Lake Alice was the end of my education.

- 24 My life since has been trying to run away and keep ahead of the bad memories.

Having children

See also:

- Statement for Grant Cameron proceedings, para 56 - 59 **[WITN0349002]**)
- PNHB social work report 10/03/88 **[WITN 0349006]**

- 25 I married on 15 July which was days after my 16th birthday . I was in early pregnancy and not showing and my mother told me I had to get married. I did not want to. However she wanted her daughter to have a white wedding and there wasn't much time. She told me I had to choose a man and I chose a man whose surname was . He was not the father of my baby. I left him after one month of marriage.

- 26 My baby was born on of the following year. My parents more or less bought up .

- 27 I had two more children after that and spent many years with their father for their sake, even though he was a violent abusive man. I was not a good mother. I was so disturbed and carrying so much trauma from my childhood and adolescent years that I just didn't have the ability to mother them properly. That is a big grief of mine.

- 28 I left New Zealand for Australia and lived over there for many years.

Life in Australia

(See also statement for Grant Cameron proceedings, para 63 **[WITN0349002]**)

29 At first I worked driving trucks in the mines north of Perth but then I drove large trucks all over Australia. This had been my father's occupation and I loved it. I found driving helped with blocking painful memories. Sometimes I was on the road for 3 months at a time. I didn't have a fixed address so I would use my mother's address for that.

Taking a claim for my time in Lake Alice.

See also:

- Statement for Grant Cameron proceedings **[WITN0349002]**
- Crown Law Office summary **[WITN0349003]**

30 I recall I was working in the mines in Australia when I was called to a telephone and it was my father. He said that someone was going to ring me about being in Lake Alice and I had to speak with them as a claim was being made and I should be part of it. I told him I didn't want to speak to anyone. He said I would be helping other people by doing it and I deserved to get some money for what had happened to me.

31 I recall after that, speaking to a person about Lake Alice for quite a while. They asked me all sorts of questions.

32 By the time the payment came my father was dead. I arranged for it to be put into a term deposit in New Zealand. I gave the address of my mother to the bank as I had no fixed abode in Australia. From memory the amount was \$47,000.00. I vaguely recall the name 'Grant Cameron' being the lawyer but I only recall this after my lawyer asked me if it was him.

Returning to New Zealand

33 I only came back to New Zealand about 3 years ago and did so in the hope of making peace with my mother before she died. It didn't happen and I regret ever coming back.

34 One of the first things she told me was that she had opened my bank statements and forged my signature on the withdrawal form so she could take the money I had invested. She told me she deserved it as if it wasn't for her I wouldn't have been in Lake Alice. I understand she had done it in conjunction with my daughter **GRO-B**.

35 I never pursued a fraud case because my daughter is a good mother to her children and I would never want her to be put into prison and them to suffer. However what they did has caused me and **GRO-B** to be estranged. My mother died without any reconciliation. She was particularly horrible to me. For example one day she saw the bridges I have because I have lost so many teeth and she clamped them so they wouldn't fit again.

36 Since being home I have had two episodes of concussion. I have had an accident and injured my ankle and cannot walk very far. Despite a long working history, I have ended up on a benefit. I moved to **GRO-B** because that was where my mother and daughter were.

Police approaching me about my time in Lake Alice

36 About two and a half weeks ago the police knocked on the door of my unit and told me they wanted to talk to me about Lake Alice because they were investigating whether to prosecute Selwyn Leeks. My legs turned to jelly instantly. I invited them in as I was worried that the neighbours might hear that I had been there.

37 I was so shocked that Selwyn Leeks was not already in jail. I couldn't take in what they were saying. I believed he had been jailed the same time I got my compensation and that was why I was getting it. The betrayal by the police in not doing their job hit me hard. I felt so let down by the police.

38 I refused to speak to a male police officer. The police returned with a female officer called **GRO-C**. She was cold, impatient and aggressive. I told her I did not want to do any interview so as to cover the police for what they had not done properly the first time. I told her I would not do it with two- way

mirrors. She said there wouldn't be two way mirrors. I also said there was no way I could talk without a counsellor. She said that they could do the interview and then I could go to the counsellor. I said I would need to before and she said they would do the interview after I had seen the counsellor. She gave me some notes and left for me to think it over.

39 I went into shock after she had left. All the trauma of Lake Alice came back and **GRO-C** reminded me of the staff at Lake Alice, she was so cold and insensitive. I felt suicidal and rang a close girlfriend friend in Australia. She stayed up with me all night by Zoom to keep me alive. She looked up Lake Alice on the website and found there was a lawyer, Frances Joychild, for Lake Alice survivors. I rang her several times over the weekend and got hold of her on Monday morning. We were in contact during the week and she visited me the next week. A nicer police woman police officer called Phillipa, called during that week and then came and visited me and had a cup of tea with me. I told her about my experience with the police turning up and I was going to talk it over with my lawyer first before making a decision.

40 After talking it through with my lawyer I decided not to give a police statement. I feel betrayed and let down by the police that they haven't already put him behind bars and the cost to me of going through it all again in a police interview is too high. My mental health has taken a huge backwards step since the police visit. I am back just staying in the unit all day and taking sleeping pills to kill the memories. I sleep a lot. It is hard just to go out to the letter box.

Impact of Lake Alice

(See also statement for Grant Cameron proceedings, paras 64 to 79
[WITN0349002])

41 For years I held it against my father that he had put me in Lake Alice. I had loved and trusted him and felt betrayed. It was not until he died **GRO-B** December 2000 that I learned at the inquest that it was my mother who had signed me over as a state ward, not him. I now understand that he was the

one who got me out of Lake Alice once he found out I was in there. I have a lot of grief about losing that loving relationship with my father because of a mistaken belief.

42 I believe Lake Alice was the final straw for me. I believe the trauma there, on top of earlier traumas such as the rape and my mother's cruel behaviour to me, finally killed the opportunities for happiness, stability and love in my adult life. To be put in a place that had everything except the gas chambers killed my ability to trust and love anyone again.

43 I know I have lots of blocked memories. I feel so locked down. I don't know all that happened to me there. All I recall is what I have said in this witness statement. I have blocked down so many memories and my whole body feels blocked.

My current situation and hopes for the future

44 I am very poor living off a benefit and so it is very hard to improve my situation. I am living in GRO-B which I have no connection with. As I said I came here because that was where my mother lived. I had no friends here and have huge issues in trusting anyone. I am so stressed I forget things often. I am isolated and very depressed. I am regularly suicidal.

45 ACC now funds weekly counselling for me to try and improve my mental health. Counselling is the one outing I have besides getting groceries. I am sincerely wanting to improve my mental health and have some happiness in my life. At the moment it is very bad due to the memories that have resurfaced.

44 I would love to be able to afford to go for a drive. Just to get out of the unit I live in. I have a ute which was given to me by a man from Canada I encountered here before he died. I cannot afford to drive it. I would also love to be able to attend to personal matters such as getting a haircut. I've carried

- round a photo of how I would like my hair to look for years now but I cannot afford to get it cut and coloured.
- 45 I would also like to get a proper set of teeth. Winz turned me down for a loan. I have very few molars left and so have to use the front teeth to try and chew. My front teeth are loose and not in good condition either. As I said I did have plates for some missing teeth (which I bought when I was working in Australia) but they no longer fit me after my mother deliberately clamped them so they wouldn't fit.
- 46 I have a phone that cost \$300 with a WINZ loan. My counsellor explained to them I needed a phone because of my mental health. I often have to fight to stay alive and will call someone if I get deep into 'the swamp' as I call it. The phone often freezes and doesn't always work. Having a reliable phone would be a huge support.
- 47 I would like to improve the massive trust issues I have with other people, neighbours, strangers, officials. WINZ have been so horrible to me that I cannot go near them anymore. I went in today to visit them and had to leave as I broke down in tears.
- 48 I still suffer from fear and shame from having been in a mental institution. There is huge stigma against people with mental illnesses and people judge you and look down on you when they hear about your background.
- 49 I would like to give evidence at the Inquiry but it would have to be anonymously and not using my real name.
- 50 I am helping to fight this case because I don't want anyone to go through what I went through.

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 State Care.

Signed place

This [] day of December 2021

This statement was prepared on 23 November 2021, by counsel Frances Joychild QC, following an interview with Ms GRO-B-Ms LL in her home at GRO-B GRO-B on Monday 23 November 2021 at 10.30 am.

Ms GRO-B-Ms LL died in December 2021, prior to Christmas and before her Privacy Act document requests had arrived and her statement finalised with her. Her death has been referred to the Coroner.