Witness Name: GRO-A-MS CC

Statement No.: WITN3023001

Exhibits: WITN3023002 - WITN30230015

Dated: 01.04.2021

#### ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF GRO-A-MS CC

GRO-A-MS CC of Auckland, will say as follows: -

#### Introduction

1. My name is GRO-A-MS CC . I work as a carer at GRO-A which is a GRO-A subcontractor to **GRO-A** I also work as a I am the widow of GRO-B-1 . GRO-B-1 was a survivor of the Lake Alice hospital. He died of emphysema in GRO-B , just three months short of our 30th wedding anniversary. He started in the first group represented by Grant Cameron but ended up in the second group that was paid out by the government.

## 2. In this statement:

- I provide an overview of what GRO-B-1 has said based largely on his signed statement dated 14 March 2002, which he made for the Grant Cameron Class Action proceedings 'Grant Cameron statement'. [WITN3023002]
- I make comment on some of his records. Unfortunately most of his medical and all his nursing notes are not able to be located.
- I set out what GRO-B-1 told me about Lake Alice, how he fought to make Dr Leeks accountable and what his life was like when we were together.

3. I want to give the Royal Commission a picture of just how badly GRO-B-1 was treated at Lake Alice and how much Lake Alice affected him. Because it affected him, it also affected me and our children. I am giving this evidence for GRO-B-1.

## GRO-B-1 's early life before Lake Alice

- 4. GRO-B-1 was born on GRO-B 1958 to a Samoan father and Rarotongan mother. They were unmarried and his birth mother couldn't care for him. When he was 4 months old, his mother's cousin's family took him on as a whāngai child. At that time they had 4 children and after him they had another 6. The family spoke Rarotongan and Maori. He had very poor English when he started school and so was considered a slow learner.
- 5. GRO-B-1 was severely beaten and neglected by his whāngai mother, in particular. He told me, and the records, show that he often had cauliflower ears from beatings and ear pullings. His records show a teacher complaining about bruises and cuts on GRO-B-1 when he was 5 years old (letter dated 6 August 1969 from G Schmidt (DSW)) [WITN3023003]
- 6. In 1969, there was another complaint from a teacher when GRO-B-1 had just turned 11 (letter dated 4 September 1969 from Owairaka Boys Home) [WITN3023004]. It was recorded that he had a swollen eye, hair missing, new scratch marks and cauliflower ears. He was also difficult to manage at school (DSW letter 6 August 1969) [WITN3023003] He was removed from his family at that time and placed in Owairaka Boys Home on GRO-B 1969.
- 7. After unsuccessful return home, where he got into trouble due to violence, he was placed at Hokio Beach School for close to 2 years, from around 11 to 13. The records show that he was sexually assaulted over a period of time at Hokio by a teacher who was convicted of sexual assaults on several other boys at Hokio (file note dated 19 October 1978 by G Schmidt) [WITN3023005]
- 8. GRO-B-1 was then moved to Kohitere for 6 months. After he had assaulted boys there, he was moved to Lake Alice.

#### Admission to Lake Alice

9. GRO-B-1 spent 14 months in Lake Alice from GRO-B 1973 until GRO-B 1974. He was admitted aged 14 and left age 15. On 16 June 1973 GRO-B-1 was diagnosed by Dr Leeks as suffering from 'Aggressive Character Disorder' apparently based upon his history of violence (filenote dated 16 June 1973 from Dr Selwyn Leeks) [WITN3023006].

#### Sexual abuse

- 10 . At para 28 of his statement GRO-B-1 says that, not long after he was admitted, John Blackmore, one of the nurses, started taking him to his place in Marton on weekends. When he did so he forced him to do sexual favours on him. He sodomised GRO-B-1 on several occasions and then he would simply bring him back to Lake Alice as if nothing had happened (Grant Cameron Statement) [WITN3023002]
  - [29] I bought it up with another staff member, Steve Hunt, but nothing seemed to happen. I was still allowed to go home with Blackmore in the weekend. John Blackmore would sexually abuse me all weekend and then during the week I would simply be rejected by him as though nothing had happened.
  - [30] I was so angry with what had happened that about three months into this I started taking my anger out on the other boys by physically and sexually abusing them. Sexual gratification became a real need for me and John Blackmore's abuse of me was the beginning of the problems I had at Lake Alice.

#### **ECT**

- 12. GRO-B-1 was subjected to a horrific level of ECT and a lot of time in seclusion because of his sexual assaults on other boys. GRO-B-1 describes his first experience of electric shock this way (Grant Cameron statement) [WITN3023002]
  - [31] The first time I experienced the electric shock I was lead upstairs where the "treatment" was being administered. I had no idea what to expect as I was a pretty tough guy at the time, and could not see what

everyone was afraid of. I didn't believe the other's fear, thinking they were just wimps.

[32]Upstairs in a seclusion room I was laid out on a bed. One nurse put a rubber gag in my mouth and the others were restraining me (physically holding me down on the bed). Tongs were dipped into a bowl of water and then placed on my temples. While this was happening psychiatrist Selwyn Leeks said, "You've been quite naughty GRO-B-1 Some of the other patients have been complaining that you've been bullying them." I tried to deny this, but couldn't because of what was happening to me. A little silver box was just to the side of the bed. I didn't know what was happening, merely curious. I then saw Leeks turn the dial on the silver box.

[33] A flash of bright light went through my head with intense pain and I could not see. Leeks kept turning the knob, talking quietly in between, making it very difficult to hear what he was saying. The pain went through me around nine or ten times and although I am not sure of the exact time, the whole session seemed to last 30 minutes in total. This seemed to be the length of time most people were subjected to this cruelty. This was my introduction to ECT (electric shock therapy) – short shocks, then long ones. Leeks regulated them, speaking to me after each shock and saying I was bad and naughty.

[34]I was totally shattered afterwards and withdrew into myself. I felt half drugged and had to be assisted down the stairs and put into an armchair. I couldn't eat dinner that night. I felt lost, totally dazed and could not care for myself. I was in bed by around 5.30pm. It took me a few days to get over the treatment. I soon realised that this was no holiday camp.

13. GRO-B-1 says that after the first time there were many more. He fought all the way upstairs after the first one. His second shock was a lot longer and more drawn out. It was more intense and harsher than the first but, thankfully for him, only 5 minutes long. Anything anyone did that was unacceptable to the staff was put in the Day Book and bought up weekly when the weekly ECT happened.

#### **Environment of terror**

14 GRO-B-1 describes being herded into the Day Room and waiting for names to be called. Staff had put names down during the week for misbehaviour. He describes terror, sweaty palms, pacing and changing chairs while waiting for your name to be called. 15 . He describes having to watch other children being dragged, screaming and crying out of the room and up the stairs to get ECT. They had to listen to the sounds of people screaming, crying and yelling.

## Punishment for running away

16 GRO-B-1 said he thought he was going to die in Villa 11. He said he could not trust anyone at Lake Alice except the other boys. After two months he ran away. He was caught and bought back and put into seclusion. He describes what happened to him in this way (Grant Cameron statement) [WITN3023002]:

[42] ...Leeks saw me and said, "You're in for it now!" There was a mattress on the floor and the ECT machine was brought in. Leeks would say things like, "Why did you run away?" "ZAP" Leeks asked several questions of me and then zapped me before I had a chance to answer. All I could do was scream and cry until they went away. I think I was in seclusion for three days, and I cried all the time.

# Dr Leeks 'therapy sessions' with GRO-B-1

17. GRO-B-1 described having therapy sessions with Dr Leeks in this way (Grant Cameron statement) [WITN3023002]:

[47] After I had been in solitary confinement for running away Dr Leeks started giving me more electric shocks, but this time it was different. Leeks started putting the electrodes on other parts of my body. I was taken to the medical block (where the medicines were stored). Here prongs were put onto my legs and around my knees and again I was asked questions and then given short sharp shocks. This occurred while I was sitting down and the shocks were enough to make me leap out of the chair uncontrollably. One knee was done after the other.

[48] -[49] Also, during the sessions in the medical block, I was shocked on my hands as well. The sessions would last around 20 minutes and there would be approximately 15 shocks on each limb. At times Leeks would move the electrodes up each leg from my knee. If the prongs came off, Leeks made me pick them up and put them back on my leg. Each shock would leave red marks on my limbs and I had to keep moving the electrodes higher each time. Sometimes Leeks would also hold on to the top of the electrodes when they were on my hands and shock me.

[50]Dr Leeks would call these my "therapy sessions" and these would occur three times a week on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. These "therapy sessions" lasted approximately three to four weeks and to my knowledge I was the only one getting this type of treatment. I felt like I was being punished. While receiving the treatments on my limbs, some of the other patients were brought into the medical block and were asked to shock me.

### Being put into a deep sleep

18 **GRO-B-1** believes Dr GRO-B-300 did an experimental sleep treatment on him (Grant Cameron statement) [WITN3023002]:

[51] On another occasion I was taken up the stairs again to have the shock treatment, but this time it was different. I was given an injection and informed that I was going to be put to sleep. Some time later I came to, calling my sisters' names and crying heavily. Two of the other guys there were sitting beside my bed trying to comfort me because they were fearful for my life. To this day I have no knowledge of what Dr GRO-B-300 did to me while I was injected to sleep. I have heard of some children being given deep sleep therapy, and wonder whether I was given some version of this.

## Being beaten up by Dr GRO-B-300

19. GRO-B-1 described one incident where Dr GRO-B-3 physically attacked him while he was locked in a cell in seclusion. It was after he had sexually abused boys in Villa 11 and Dr GRO-B-300 was upset at having to explain to the parents what had happened to their boys because of him (Grant Cameron statement) [WITN3023002]:

[52] At one point I was transferred to the adults unit, Villa 8. I was locked up in the seclusion room, but this was different to the adolescent unit. There was nothing in the room. It was like a holding pen. [GRO-B-300] visited me there and physically assaulted me. He came into the room by himself and started swearing at me. He punched me in the head several times and pulled my hair and while I was on the floor he kicked me a couple of times, as well. (he had totally lost it)!

 $\operatorname{Dr} _{00}^{\operatorname{GRO-B-3}}$  using different ECT machine on him.

- 21. At [53] GRO-B-1 says that after Dr GRO-B-300 had beaten him up, he stood up, flicked his hair back and bought in other staff with a different ECT machine. The usual one was a brownish colour, but this one was silver. No-one restrained him, they did not need to as he was so scared. He was given ECT by Dr GRO-B-3 and then by probably seven or eight of the other patients. He said it may even have been more. He couldn't remember their names and his memory of the incident was fairly blurred. He remembers he was finally knocked out with one blast of the machine. He came to alone in the room and was kept there for approximately two days without food or drink or anyone talking with him.
- Commission of Human Rights about this incident. He describes being put in solitary confinement in villa 8 with nothing but a mattress on the floor. When Dr GRO-B-300 came to see him initially, Dr GRO-B-300 punched him in the head, pulled his hair, and kicked GRO-B-1 while GRO-B-1 was on the ground. GRO-B-1 said he was surprised at Dr GRO-B-300 having lost control. The next day, Dr Leeks administered ECT. GRO-B-1 said he thought he was going to die, and remembers Dr Leeks "cool blue eyes" looking through him.
- 23. The third day, GRO-B-1 describes Dr Leeks bringing in the ECT machine and several other boys, who all took turns giving him ECT. He was taken to maximum security at Lake Alice the next day (statement dated 29 September 2006 of GRO-B-1) [WITN3023007]. GRO-B-1 also provided a drawing of the seclusion room where this occurred (diagram dated 18 September 2006, of GRO-B-1) [WITN3023008].

### Dr Leeks shocking him while in maximum security seclusion

22. GRO-B-1 was also shocked with ECT by Dr Leeks when he was placed in maximum security. He said Dr Leeks used the knock out button and that was the last time he had ECT or saw Dr Leeks (Grant Cameron statement at [55]) [WITN3023002].

## Seclusion/ solitary confinement.

23 GRO-B-1 talks about his time in seclusion in Villa 11 and describes the room etc at [44] to [46]. He spent three periods of time in seclusion there: when he first arrived, after he ran away and after he had sexually assaulted other boys. He was also in seclusion in Villa 8 [52]. He spent the last 6 to 8 weeks of his stay in Lake Alice in the Maximum Security Block where hardened adult criminals were kept. He was in solitary confinement for the first 2 or 3 weeks of that time but after that allowed to mix with the others, many of whom were 'lifers' who would never be released (Grant Cameron statement) [WITN3023002].

#### Drugs

24. GRO-B-1 did not receive paraldehyde but did observe another boy receiving it. He could see the boys were in pain after receiving it from the way they walked or tried to walk. They also told him it was very painful and smelled bad. [58] He was put on Melleril when he was in the secure block. (Grant Cameron statement at [55]) [WITN3023002].

## What GRO-B-1 told me about his time in Lake Alice

- 25 GRO-B-1 told me about Dr Leeks pretty much as soon as we met, and we continued to talk about it during our marriage, especially when it came on the news. His primary focus during our marriage was bringing Dr Leeks to justice and making public what had happened to him as a young person in Lake Alice and other boys' homes.
- 26 GRO-B-1 told me he had been sexually abused by one of the male nurses at Lake Alice and that such behaviour didn't seem unusual there. He told me about how one of the nurses would regularly get into bed with the oldest boy in the hospital. I see from his notes that it is recorded that he was sexually abused by a staff member at Hokio Boys School. Also the man was later convicted of several offences in relation to boys at Hokio.

- 27. GRO-B-1 also told me he was taken to a photo studio when he was around 11 or 12 and living at Hokio and filmed in sexualised photos with nothing but underpants on. Those photos are part of the evidence in his statement in relation to abuse in residences. I believe this photography is part of the sexual grooming to which he was being subjected while in the boy's homes.
- 28 GRO-B-1 told me that, in such a sexual environment, he, in turn, began to sexually abuse other boys. He was caught. Dr Selwyn Leeks asked some other boys if they wanted to give him ECT as pay back. Some of the boys did. They gave him ECT on his genitals. They didn't use any anaesthetic. The whole point was just to inflict terrible pain. GRO-B-1 told me it was horrifically painful.

### My comment on Lake Alice notes.

- 29 . There are many aspects of the notes that are available that concern me. For example, on 2 May 1973, a staff member at Hokio would not give details of GRO-B-1 sexual abuse at Hokio to his social worker and tried to absolve the school from any liability on the basis that GRO-B-1 had misbehaved prior to Hokio (note dated 2 May 1973 from G. L Hermansson, counsellor at Hokio School) [WITN3023009]. They rejected the possibility that he could have been affected by this.
- 30 . There is no acceptance by Dr Leeks that a temporary house-master having sex with a 12-14 year old boy in the care of the state was sexual abuse of that boy (filenote dated 19 October 1978 by G Schmidt (DSW)) [WITN30230010]. Dr Leeks described it as GRO-B-1 being 'involved in homosexual activity' (file note dated 16 March 1974 by Dr Selwyn Leeks) [WITN30230011]. To me that is an unbelievable attitude. GRO-B-1 was being abused in the care of the state.
- 31. The records show that GRO-B-1 was charged with sexual abuse, in relation to his assaults on those other Lake Alice boys, while he was still at Lake Alice. I note that in a letter dated 10 June 1974, Dr Pugmire wrote to the Magistrates Court and recommended GRO-B-1 be 'dealt with as a delinquent rather than as a case of a psychiatric disorder' and that he be transferred to a Justice Department

institution (letter dated 10 June 1974b Dr S L Pugmire) [WITN3023012]. This was after Dr Leeks had been giving GRO-B-1 excruciatingly painful ECT treatments without an anaesthetic or muscle relaxant for 14 months. There was no justification for it. GRO-B-1 did not have a mental illness.

32. Dr Pugmire's letter also dismissed outright GRO-B-1 claims that he had been sexually abused by staff in Lake Alice and other prior residences. [WITN3023012].

When confronted by allegations against him he tried to protect himself by making wild allegations of being the victim of similar behaviour by Lake Alice staff. These allegations were immediately investigated by the local Police who established they were a complete fabrication. Research into this boy's background established he had made similar false allegations against staff in other institutions.

33. GRO-B-1 was not lying. It is recognised in his notes that he was abused at Hokio. He always maintained his claims about the sexual abuse of him at Hokio and Lake Alice.

#### Life after Lake Alice

34. GRO-B-1 was discharged from Lake Alice to Waikeria Borstal after 2 years. After that, he started associating with gangsters and consuming drugs and alcohol. For the next 10 years he was in and out of prison for violent offending (Grant Cameron Statement at [61]-[70]) [WITN3023002].

#### Marriage

35. I met GRO-B-1 when he was 28 years old. I was living with a girl called GRO-B at the time. GRO-B 's boyfriend was one of GRO-B-1 adoptive brothers and I met him through this connection. It turned out that I actually knew most of GRO-B-1 adoptive family already.

GRO-B-1 went back to prison for 2 years the day after our marriage for an indecent assault offence he committed before we met. That was his last conviction and jail term. For the remainder of his life, he stayed out of trouble. He was a good husband to me, and a good father to our two children, GRO-B (now 27) and GRO-B (now 30).

# GRO-B-1 healing

- GRO-B-1 healing was a process of steps. He described then in his statement. He met his natural mother and aunty. He started doing a lot of work on himself while in Maximum Security at GRO-B. He started working with a female counsellor who helped him to deal with all the abuse from his past. She helped him to come to terms with the abuse and neglect as a child, the abuse in Hokio and from John Blackmore at Lake Alice. He also had to come to terms with the abuse he had perpetrated on others (Grant Cameron Statement at [69]) [WITN3023002].
- 38 . He says that what started him on that process was meeting me. He really wanted to sort himself out. Our wedding was a wonderful day and both sets of parents were present. He started serving his term of imprisonment the next day. He was in solitary confinement in D block for the first ten months. I visited him every week and taught him to read and write. He put it this way Grant Cameron Statement at [70]) [WITN3023002].

Over the time I spent in prison I was able to look over my life and my relationships and I went through a process of forgiveness and became quite accepting of what had happened and who I was. I really accepted who I am, what I had to go through and what I wanted to do from now on. My adoptive parents were very afraid that they would lose me, but I had to reassure them that all was okay.

#### **Employment**

- 39 GRO-B-1 also worked briefly as a labourer from time to time, including at a panelbeaters. However, he had trouble taking instructions. I think all those years of violence and abuse in the system made him incapable of doing that. He relied on cannabis to calm himself down. If he didn't have it he would get very agitated. He wanted to work, but he couldn't because of these issues. I was usually the one working regularly. Sometimes we would have to borrow money from my mother to make ends meet.
- 40 . For over three years GRO-B-1 worked at the GRO-B He had learned to weave cane baskets in prison and he taught this skill to patients. It kept them calm. They were promised that if they could complete a basket they did not need to have medication GRO-B-1 was always disappointed to return after a week off and find the staff had been medicating patients. It was very important to GRO-B-1 to teach people how to weave so as to keep them off medication.
- 41 . Once our son GRO-B was born GRO-B-1 stayed home and looked after him. He developed diabetes as an infant and needed extra attention.
- 42 GRO-B-1 had emphysema and eventually died from it. It came from him smoking cigarettes and weed from the age of about 12.
- . I knew him for over three decades. I cannot make this clear enough. While he had issues, such as not being able to take instructions, he did not have any kind of mental disorder, or anything that would justify what was done to him at Lake Alice.

## Seeking justice

. When he was alive, GRO-B-1 was focussed on doing everything he could to bring Dr Leeks to justice. I know he talked with a group called CCHR, including Steve Green and Victor Boyd and they supported him. On 15 March 2002, the CCHR wrote to the New Zealand Police on behalf of GRO-B-1 (letter dated 15 March 2002 of Steve Green) [WITN3023013]. I don't think the Police did anything about his complaint.

- . He took two claims against the government. The first was about his treatment in Lake Alice, and was through a lawyer called Grant Cameron. A claim was part of a class action claim commenced by Grant Cameron in the High Court in Wellington on 20 April 1999 against the Attorney-General (Statement of Claim GRO-C HC Wellington 20 April 1999). WITN3023014]. In relation to his claim, it was alleged:
  - there were no valid medical grounds established for admission or remaining at LA;
  - incorrect or no proper diagnosis;
  - incorrect or unjustified medication by mouth or intramuscularly, particularly but not solely injections of paraldehyde (causing excruciating pain), at times administered as punishment and/or for sedation;
  - unjustified administration of unmodified ECT as a punishment, in conjunction with verbal threats, causing excruciating pain;
  - physical and verbal abuse by staff and patients;
  - solitary confinement; threats of it and ECT and drugs;
  - no consent obtained from plaintiff and or parents or guardians for treatment and/or medication or if obtained, not freely given or fully informed;
  - no consultation with or advice to parents;
  - being in an environment of intense and continual fear and trepidation; witnessing or hearing others being subjected to threats, physical and sexual abuse, and modified and unmodified ECT and paraldehyde injections.
- 46. His second claim was for his treatment in care, including the Hokio sexual abuse, and was taken by Sonja Cooper.
- 47 GRO-B-1 got settlements for both. I can't remember how much each of them was for. I do remember the first one we got, we used it to pay back my mum the money we owed her. We paid off our car. Then GRO-B-1 gave the remainder to his adopted siblings because they'd gone to visit him when he was in prison and he had been a difficult child in the family. I think he felt guilty about that. These settlements did not bring GRO-B-1 closure. He wanted Dr Leeks to be held to account. That was the only thing that would bring him closure.

### Lobbying for the Police to charge Dr Leeks

- 48. In 2006, GRO-B-1 was one of the people who lobbied, through CCHR, for the police to charge Dr Leeks and bring him back to be tried. The police had agreed to reopen an investigation into charging him. It was widely believed that Dr Leeks was going to be extradited from Australia.
- 49. Around this time my mother sat down with GRO-B-1 to write up a story of his life. It was never finished. It contains excerpts from his statement to Grant Cameron and adds others in from what he told her. It contains lots of gaps and questions for GRO-B-1. Mum GRO-B sent it to me in 2019, after GRO-B-1 had died as a record for the children. This is what he says about accountability (Diary of a Victim", dated 29 May 2006, incomplete): [WITN3023015].

I feel very strongly about what happened to me and the others in Villa 11 at Lake Alice Hospital.

Those who received this barbaric treatment will never forget the long term effects and the harm done to the patients. Part of the healing process will only come about when these details are taken through the courts and real justice is not only done, but also seen to be done. The people responsible for the treatment given should be made accountable for their actions. An opportunity should be offered to medical staff who were actively involved in the treatment and the administration of the ECT. Some may also feel the need to be part of that healing process by telling their side of the story.

The Government and associated departments need to look long and hard at the information supplied and to take steps to assist those whose punishment and torture were considered to be "treatment therapy". In this way the victims will finally be able to get on with their lives.

#### Separation of our family over expected publicity from prosecution

Anticipating a prosecution of Dr Leeks, GRO-B-1 sent me and the kids to live in Australia. He didn't want the kids to be affected by media attention around what happened to him at Lake Alice, and also the sexual abuse carried out upon him, and that he carried out. He knew it would be a big thing and he didn't want the children to be bullied at school because of him. GRO-B and GRO-B were only 10 and 14 at that point.

- . After two years of the family living apart nothing had happened and GRO-B-1 told us it looked like Dr Leeks was not going to be prosecuted after all. That was a huge let down and disappointment.
- 53. I had to then save for the next two years to afford the air fares to bring the family and our belongings home. My children were adult fares by then. GRO-B-1 couldn't come to visit us because his criminal history meant he couldn't get a visa to enter Australia. In all we lived in Australia for four years separated from GRO-B-1.

  Over that time, we could afford to come back to visit him only once.
- 54. It was hard to be separated at that time and it was hard to save for our fares on top of having to pay rent and support the children in Australia, and pay the rent back in Auckland. In the end it was for nothing, because the police never charged Selwyn Leeks. That was such a betrayal.

#### Effect on me and our family

55. GRO-B-1 was careful never to tell the kids about his experiences as Lake Alice. However since he has died the kids have read GRO-B-1 s "Diary of a Victim" and I have told them things. What happened to GRO-B-1 still affects me a lot and though it is very hard to do, I am giving this statement for GRO-B-1 It was so wrong what happened to him and he so wanted Dr Leeks bought to account and what had happened exposed so everyone would know. I am doing this for him and our children.

#### 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

| Dated:      |  |
|-------------|--|
|             |  |
| GRO-A-MS CC |  |



