

**ABUSE IN CARE ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY
FOSTER CARE INQUIRY HEARING**

Under The Inquiries Act 2013

In the matter of The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Historical Abuse in State Care and in the Care of Faith-based Institutions

Royal Commission: Judge Coral Shaw (Chair)
Ali'imua Sandra Alofivae
Dr Anaru Erueti

Counsel: Mr Simon Mount QC, Ms Kerryn Beaton QC, Dr Allan Cooke
and Ms Aroha Fletcher for the Royal Commission
Ms Rachael Schmidt-McCleave, Ms Julia White and
Mr Max Clarke-Parker for the Crown

Venue: Level 2
Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry
414 Khyber Pass Road
AUCKLAND

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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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Adjournment from 12.46 pm to 12.53 pm

32

CHAIR: Good to see you all again. Let's do this properly.

33

KATHLEEN PATRICIA COSTER (Affirmed)

- 1 **QUESTIONING BY MS FLETCHER:** Kia ora Kath. Just for the people who are here, can you
2 just say who's in support here?
- 3 A. My cousin Tyrone, my counsellor, support, partner in crime, and Te Enga Harris, which is a
4 very good friend, also a survivor of State care.
- 5 **Q.** Kia ora. Just before we begin and just to help those who might not know a lot about you,
6 you've done a lot of work with survivors, especially those who have come forward to speak
7 to their experience to the Commissioners with the Inquiry stuff, so you've got quite a lot of
8 experience around that area eh, helping people navigate the abuses?
- 9 A. Yes.
- 10 **Q.** So, you know how hard it would be to share such kōrero?
- 11 A. Well I didn't, but I do know.
- 12 **Q.** So, we really appreciate you coming forward today and sharing your story, it's really
13 important. So, we'll just get a little bit of an icebreaker to get you into the throe of things.
14 So, you were born in 1963?
- 15 A. Yes.
- 16 **Q.** Do you have any children?
- 17 A. Yes, I have two daughters, a 39 -year-old daughter that lives in Australia and a 29 -year-old
18 daughter that lives in Whangarei.
- 19 **Q.** Any mokos as well?
- 20 A. Yes, I have a nine-year-old grandson that lives in Australia.
- 21 **Q.** Do they know about the history and what happened to you though?
- 22 A. My oldest daughter does, she knows some of it, but my youngest daughter doesn't because
23 it's not something I wanted to pour over my children because it was my journey and my
24 trauma.
- 25 **Q.** So that's why we say thank you for coming forward because we understand it's going to be
26 quite hard to share eh.
- 27 A. Mmm.
- 28 **Q.** I think we'll take a step back and we'll look at home life before you got into care. So
29 unfortunately, with the home life, it wasn't the greatest, eh?
- 30 A. No.
- 31 **Q.** In your statement you describe how Social Welfare was involved with your family due to
32 domestic violence?
- 33 A. Yeah.
- 34 **Q.** Did you want to speak a little bit about that?

1 A. From zero, from the beginning I can't really tell you too much about how they were
2 involved, but they were involved because of domestic violence. So, for probably up until
3 seven, not really, because I didn't know who they were.

4 Q. Okay. That's all right. Because from zero to seven, you were actually with another lady,
5 that was your mum at the time, eh?

6 A. Mmm-hmm.

7 Q. We'll call her your whāngai mum, your foster mum sorry?

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. So, from quite a young age you were removed from your family, you were placed with your
10 foster family who you called Mum and Dad?

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. You knew as Mum and Dad. Can you tell us a little bit about them and how they were?

13 A. Yeah. I was given away at birth, so they were my parents, one was Australian, one was
14 English. I was an only child, a very vibrant child, my home life was filled with lots of love.
15 I didn't know I was dark because growing up from zero to seven when people said, "oh
16 you've got a dark child there", she would say "well she spends a lot of time in the sun."

17 From zero to seven my name was Kathleen O'Hara, so she was a happy child, in a
18 loving environment, brought up with the boys in blue, so I had the boys in blue around me
19 in a positive aspect of my life. But we moved a lot from zero to seven, my father, which
20 I didn't know until years later, used to come and visit me and he was my uncle, and he
21 would appear, he'd be very upset, always full of love, always crying, he'd bring me lollies,
22 just wanted to wrap around me. But to me as a child I only ever knew him as my uncle,
23 I didn't know he was actually my parent.

24 So, from zero to seven we moved away quite a bit because my parents at that stage
25 wanted to adopt me, but my father didn't want to give me up because I was the first
26 daughter. So, he played quite a bit of an involvement in my life from zero to seven, which
27 prevented them from adopting me.

28 Q. So that must have been quite hard because from what you're saying in your statement that
29 was your mum and dad and you had a really strong secure connection with them, but your
30 father kept trying to come back in to take you away back to your biological family, is that
31 true?

32 A. Known as my uncle, yes.

33 Q. Known as your uncle. You were the only child in this placement?

34 A. Yes, I was.

- 1 **Q.** Yeah, none of your other siblings came around to visit or anything like that?
- 2 **A.** I didn't know I had any other siblings. I was an only child, and this was my family, and as
3 far as I was concerned, that was how it was.
- 4 **Q.** So, you describe coming home one day and your bags were packed, and everyone was a bit
5 upset, and then you were told you were going back to your other family, your biological
6 family, the one that you didn't know about?
- 7 **A.** Mmm-hmm.
- 8 **Q.** Can you tell us a little bit about that?
- 9 **A.** I remember coming home from school, swinging my shoes because I was quite an aloof
10 child but very vibrant. I came home and everything I owned was packed in bags when
11 I walked in, my mum was in tears, my father walked out of the room, and then my uncle
12 arrived with another uncle and that was when I found out I was going home. So, to me that
13 was a real big shock, because as far as I was concerned, I was at home, this was my life,
14 and from there life changed drastically for the worst.
- 15 **Q.** Before we get into your next placement, so was there any social worker or lawyer that came
16 to visit you to say "Hey, Kath, what do you want to do, do you want to stay here, or do you
17 want to move?"
- 18 **A.** No, I never saw a social worker or anybody other than my mum and dad.
- 19 **Q.** So, there was adults making decisions about you rather than with you, eh?
- 20 **A.** Definitely.
- 21 **Q.** The other damaging thing that happened, not only being moved from your mum and dad, is
22 that they actually changed your name without telling you, eh?
- 23 **A.** Yes, I grew up from zero to seven as Kathleen Elizabeth O'Hara. At the age of seven when
24 I went home to my parents my name became Kathleen Patricia Coster.
- 25 **Q.** And when you became Kathleen Coster, that's when the abuse journey happened, eh?
- 26 **A.** Mmmhmm. The transition from moving from my home was probably, well, was obviously
27 very traumatic looking back at it now, but it didn't seem real, because everything I knew of
28 was now gone. The transition to going home all of a sudden, my uncle becomes my father,
29 my mother's not my mother, my father's not my father, and then this woman is my mother.
30 I have other siblings which I never knew I had. When I went and changed over everything
31 that I owned prior to moving home was taken off me and put away. So, I lost everything.
- 32 **Q.** You lost your identity, your sense of self?
- 33 **A.** Definitely.

- 1 **Q.** No one helped you navigate any of those changes or anything like that, you
2 were -just, - you're- seven years old, you're a new person basically, new life?
- 3 **A.** Definitely.
- 4 **Q.** When you transitioned back to your biological family, that's in Christchurch?
- 5 **A.** Mmmhmm.
- 6 **Q.** Your mum, we'll call her your mum?
- 7 **A.** Mmm-hmm.
- 8 **Q.** She tried to help you with that transition, eh?
- 9 **A.** No, there was no help. My mum wasn't expecting me to come home.
- 10 **Q.** Yeah, not your biological mum, we're talking about your mum who you knew?
- 11 **A.** My first mum.
- 12 **Q.** Yeah, your first mum?
- 13 **A.** Can we call her Nancy then I don't get –
- 14 **CHAIR:** Let's just get this quite clear. We'll give a name to your biological mum, which will be a
15 different name –
- 16 **A.** Yeah.
- 17 **Q.** – from her?
- 18 **A.** Mmm-hmm.
- 19 **Q.** We'll give a name to your foster mum which will be different from what it actually is.
20 Would you like to choose, what name would you like to give your biological mum?
- 21 **A.** Mum.
- 22 **Q.** What would you like to give your foster mum, what would you like to call her?
- 23 **A.** Mary.
- 24 **Q.** We're all clear now who we're talking about.
- 25 **A.** Yeah.
- 26 **QUESTIONING BY MS FLETCHER CONTINUED:** Thank you Madam Chair. So, Mary, so
27 Mary helped you, she tried her best to help you transition to Mum.
- 28 **A.** Yes, she did, but it was decided that it was probably best she didn't in the transition.
29 I remember her coming to the home with me when we went there, not realising I was going
30 to be left behind, I remember her hopping in a taxi and leaving and then to be really honest
31 I don't remember much for the next few days.
- 32 **Q.** A big change, eh?
- 33 **A.** Huge change.

- 1 **Q.** Huge change. You told the Commissioners before that when you went to Christchurch to
2 Mum, and you had to start this new life?
- 3 **A.** Mmm-hmm.
- 4 **Q.** Mum didn't allow you to contact Mary?
- 5 **A.** No.
- 6 **Q.** After that point, Mary was now cut out of your life?
- 7 **A.** Mary was gone.
- 8 **Q.** Even though she was your stable caregiver?
- 9 **A.** It was the last time I saw her.
- 10 **Q.** So even though that was the last time you saw her, Mary's kept trying to contact you while
11 you were with your biological family, how did that go about?
- 12 **A.** It was never mentioned to me, because it was just never mentioned. To be very honest,
13 once I moved home to my mum, I didn't really take in anything. I didn't really know what
14 was going on, in fact I really didn't want to be there.
- 15 **Q.** You describe in your statement that that home was like being at Once Were Warriors?
- 16 **A.** Definitely.
- 17 **Q.** And you experienced and saw a lot of violence?
- 18 **A.** Definitely.
- 19 **Q.** Was your mum ever violent to the other children?
- 20 **A.** Not like she was to me, no.
- 21 **Q.** So, you were getting the brunt of the violence?
- 22 **A.** Definitely.
- 23 **Q.** In your statement you say that you were frequently beaten by your mum. Did you want to
24 talk about that?
- 25 **A.** Yeah. The abuse that I was subjected to going home was horrific abuse. Everything from
26 broken arms to legs, head cut open, hits around the head. It was ongoing, it was just
27 ongoing. A lot of it was resentment because I was there and that's what was drummed into
28 me, that I wasn't wanted, wished I was dead, wished I wasn't there, and the abuse went in
29 line with that.
- 30 **Q.** One of the things that might have compounded that is not only were you not getting the
31 love and support from Mum, but you were also made to be the mum of all the other kids?
- 32 **A.** Definitely, in those days the oldest daughter ran the house, she did everything, so I learned
33 to cook, I learned to clean. My job as the oldest daughter was to make sure my lower,
34 my- other siblings, the younger ones were taken care of. So, when it come to going to

1 school it was my job to make sure the breakfasts were done, that they were ready to go to
2 school before I could go to school. Yeah, I just became a mother of siblings, I had a
3 younger sibling that was a baby,- so I became a mother to a baby. So yeah.

4 **Q.** You were only seven still at this time?

5 **A.** Yes.

6 **Q.** In your statement you speak of suffering so much abuse and neglect that you started to shut
7 down and be in a dream-like state to try and cope with it; is that correct?

8 **A.** Yeah. I used to pray to die because I figured if I was dead, at least I wouldn't have to
9 endure anymore of the abuse. And I never fitted because I wasn't wanted, and you never
10 forgot that, you know, you never forgot when you hear it all the time, that's actually making
11 you believe it, you know. So, I just switched off, didn't communicate. When I look back at
12 my files it says it was this child that just existed. When I first read them, I was quite
13 shocked, but as I've worked my way through it and mind's opened up, I realise that that was
14 actually me, which was pretty hard to realise that I was just existing.

15 **Q.** It was a flip from your lifestyle and what you had with Mary to what you then had with
16 your mum eh?

17 **A.** It was a huge change, it was a massive change. My first seven years I was the child, I had a
18 babysitter if my mum was working, if Mary was working, she'd say,- it was a very loving
19 home, but I was surrounded by the boys in blue for a long time. So,- I spent a lot of time as
20 a young child from two years upwards singing with them in the mornings, having breakfast
21 with them in the mornings, going in the Police cars. So, my life there compared to going
22 home was like a complete transition to another planet.

23 **Q.** There's one point you put in your statement, you've already told the Commissioners, that
24 you- got a severe head injury from your mum, you got beaten really bad and the Police got
25 involved. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

26 **A.** Yeah, it was a day, my dad was never around very much, so Mum had to look after a lot of
27 siblings in a violent home. And I can't recall what the reason was, but an Ajax container
28 with the holes in it was smashed over my head and it split my head open. So, I was
29 scurried off to bed because you never told anybody what was going on because when you're
30 told if you tell anyone you're going to die, at that age you actually believe it. So,
31 I remember GRO-B-6 on the floor, and I remember my dad and someone else came in, the
32 next thing the Police arrived, I'm taken out of the home and taken into the Police Station
33 and photographed.

- 1 **Q.** What did your mum say to the doctors at that time?
- 2 **A.** That she wanted to kill me.
- 3 **Q.** In your statement you say that your dad had a think about what should be best for you, and
4 he decided that because you were the one that was more being abused than the others, that
5 you should leave the home rather than your mum; is that correct?
- 6 **A.** It was a decision between my dad and doctors, because I remember my mum was under
7 care, and the decision was made to remove me because it would have been easier to remove
8 one child than to replace a whole family. My father had come to the conclusion that it was
9 easier for him really because my mum, she ran the house. So, with my mum being away
10 because of what the Police had put in place, it meant my dad had to do that, which made it
11 difficult for him and the rest of my family.
- 12 **Q.** So, on 4 October 1974 you're committed to the Director-General of Social Welfare for
13 living in a detrimental environment, you're put into care?
- 14 **A.** Yeah.
- 15 **Q.** Because of a detrimental environment?
- 16 **A.** Yes.
- 17 **Q.** An environment you would have never been placed in had you been allowed to stay with
18 Mary?
- 19 **A.** Never.
- 20 **Q.** Just before we progress, can you tell us did someone, did a professional, a doctor, a police
21 officer, come and see you and talk to you about what was happening at home?
- 22 **A.** No, all I remember is being taken to the Police Station, it was late at night, going up to the
23 third floor, being photographed with all the injuries and then after that going home, and
24 then just someone coming to take me away when it was time to go. So, I knew nothing of
25 what was happening, or about to happen.
- 26 **Q.** No-one checked in to see how you were feeling or what was happening with you?
- 27 **A.** No.
- 28 **Q.** You then get shifted to what we're calling your aunt and uncle, the German aunt and uncle?
- 29 **A.** Yes.
- 30 **Q.** In Christchurch?
- 31 **A.** Yes.
- 32 **Q.** You were there from seven to 11, is that about right?

- 1 A. No, I was with Mum and Dad from seven until 11, at 11 the Department of Social Welfare
2 removed me from the home so my mother could come home and then I went to stay with an
3 aunty and an uncle.
- 4 Q. So, you were at 11 years old then?
- 5 A. Yeah.
- 6 Q. At that placement you felt like you were a part of the family though?
- 7 A. Mmm-hmm. Yes, I was.
- 8 Q. They nurtured you quite a lot?
- 9 A. They were great. I was included as part of their family; I wasn't any different to any other
10 child. My aunty was a very loving lady, so it was probably the first time in three years that
11 I'd ever had a cuddle, and she did the best for me, her and her husband, and she treated me
12 no different to her own children.
- 13 Q. That aunt and uncle, they actually wanted to adopt you as well, eh?
- 14 A. Yes, that was in the file.
- 15 Q. But Mum interfered with that process?
- 16 A. My mum interfered with it because my aunty was close to my mum and as far as she was
17 concerned, I came from another planet because it was the way I was, being non-functional.
18 She didn't want that responsibility on my aunty, so after a couple of times of my mother
19 coming to abuse me, it was decided by my uncle, my aunty and the Social Welfare to
20 remove me from there.
- 21 Q. So, you couldn't escape your mum even in a new placement, she tried to follow you?
- 22 A. Mmm.
- 23 Q. I'm just seeing if you're comfortable, did you want to read something from your statement?
- 24 A. You tell me the page.
- 25 Q. Page eight, if you get that in front of you.
- 26 A. Yeah.
- 27 Q. Paragraph 56?
- 28 A. In my mind after moving me from –
- 29 Q. Your aunt and uncle?
- 30 A. My aunt and uncle, you could move me anywhere. My identity was already gone.
- 31 Q. So, you're already having a very traumatic time after being separated from Mary, eh?
- 32 A. I didn't know who I was, one minute I was Kathleen O'Hara, this lively child, and the next
33 minute I was Kathleen Coster which was completely different. Kathleen O'Hara had long
34 hair, Kathleen Coster, her hair was taken away. So, my identity was completely gone.

- 1 **Q.** Following that placement, you went through quite a number of different foster homes. I
2 think at the age of 11 you went through four placements in quick succession, one after the
3 other. Overall, you went through about 10 foster placements; is that correct?
- 4 **A.** Yes, that's correct.
- 5 **Q.** Unfortunately, during your time in care, you suffered abuse and racism. Is it okay if we get
6 into a little bit of that?
- 7 **A.** Yeah, sure is.
- 8 **Q.** So, in terms of the racism, you can turn to it if you want, page nine of your statement,
9 you're placed with what you call 'the Whites?'
- 10 **A.** Mmm-hmm.
- 11 **Q.** Foster family?
- 12 **A.** Yes, correct.
- 13 **Q.** How old were you at the time?
- 14 **A.** I would have been just over 11, I hadn't been a ward of the State for long.
- 15 **Q.** So, you're only there for about three weeks, is that correct?
- 16 **A.** I think it might have been a little bit longer. I went from **GRO-B** street, which was a family
17 home, so it was great because the kids there, didn't, – they weren't any of our parents, so we
18 all got treated the same. They had, their parents actually wanted to take me in and provide
19 care for me, but for some reason to separate me from my mum, because my mother still had
20 access as long as- I was in Christchurch, they felt that it was best to move me out to **GRO-**
21 **B** which was out of town. So that's when I ended up with the Whites.
- 22 **Q.** When you were with the Whites, there was some very racist remarks made that you've
23 overhead. Do you want to tell us a little bit about those remarks?
- 24 **A.** When I arrived at the Whites it was a nice place and there were two daughters, a husband
25 and wife, they did a market garden, so it was quite good because you weren't confined to
26 anywhere. I spent a lot of time with the foster father in the garden, and the two daughters
27 weren't happy that Mum had taken a child in, and they weren't happy that Mum had taken a
28 dirty child in.
- 29 **Q.** A dirty child?
- 30 **A.** A dirty child.
- 31 **Q.** What's a dirty child?
- 32 **A.** A dirty child is someone that doesn't come clean when you scrub them.
- 33 **Q.** Your skin colour?

- 1 A. My skin colour. So, they made an ultimatum to their mother that unless they remove me,
2 they were leaving, which is what they did, they actually moved in with their grandmother,
3 and then I was moved from that home. I wasn't allowed to go, -they did marching- and
4 things like that, I wasn't allowed to go with them, I always spent time with the father going
5 to the markets or in the garden with him, but when it came to the two girls, I wasn't allowed
6 anything to do with them. Not because of the mother, but because of the behaviour, how
7 they reacted, because they would scream and yell at their mother that "we don't want her
8 here, can't you scrub her skin off" and "she's dirty and we shouldn't have her in our home."
- 9 Q. There's one conversation you can recall in your statement where you overhear the foster
10 caregiver talking to your friends about bleaching your skin?
- 11 A. Mmmhmm. She used to have a lot of her friends that used to come over because she was
12 high up in marching and things like that, and I remember listening to them, saying well
13 maybe we could bleach her skin to make it lighter. And I didn't really understand because I
14 was young, you know, because to be honest, until then I didn't understand that I was brown
15 because my parents were white, so from zero to seven, which is ingrained in me, I thought I
16 was white. And even going home to my parents, I thought I was white. It wasn't until
17 I came across the foster home with the Whites that I realised that there was something
18 wrong with my skin.
- 19 Q. That something wrong with your skin, you said that after you started hearing that it took a
20 negative impact on your self-esteem because you thought there was something wrong with
21 you?
- 22 A. Mmm-hmm, I was ashamed of being dark, because not only was the conversation about me
23 being dark, but it was derogative, it was, you know, she's just a Māori kid, you know, she's
24 going to be nobody, you know, all this negative stuff in regards to being Māori, and to be
25 honest, I actually believed that.
- 26 Q. I was just about to ask you, how has that experience of racism shaped your views in terms
27 of your identity and how you identified with yourself?
- 28 A. I lied about my identity until I was 30 years of age. My father's Greek so I thought the
29 easiest way to cover the colour of my skin was to say I was Greek, because I wasn't lying
30 but I just chose to say I didn't have any Māori blood going through my veins, I wouldn't
31 accept it at all.
- 32 Q. Is that still impacting your ability to wanting to reconnect with anything Te Ao Māori?
- 33 A. I think I had brainwashed myself in regards to, I was so ashamed of being who I was, that
34 when it came to learning Te Reo, it didn't stick, and it still doesn't. I find it very

- 1 uncomfortable when people speak to me in Te Reo because I have no idea what they're
2 saying to me, but I also find it very uncomfortable because a lot of people look at the
3 colouring of my skin and my age and assume that I should actually know my culture.
- 4 **Q.** Is there anything else you want to talk about the Whites before we move into your next
5 placement?
- 6 **A.** No.
- 7 **Q.** So, at your next placement –
- 8 **A.** Yes, there is.
- 9 **Q.** No, you go.
- 10 **A.** Yes, there is. When I left the Whites, you know, when my mum packed me away to go
11 through State care, she gave me an album and in the album were pictures of my mum and
12 my dad, my siblings and me. So that was the first place, because the girls didn't like having
13 me in their home, that I started to lose parts of my identity from my link to my family,
14 because when they saw them, it was like we were all dirty children. So therefore, I found
15 that pictures would go missing, pictures would go missing. So, over the years I lost the
16 memory of what my siblings actually looked like.
- 17 **Q.** Just for the people that are listening in, so you're 11 years old, you're with the Whites, you
18 had a photo album that was yours.
- 19 **A.** Yeah.
- 20 **Q.** And then the two girls that were living with you, because you had no other siblings there,
21 started taking photos out of that album, your personal things because of who you were in
22 your identity?
- 23 **A.** They were ashamed of me and so was the mother, but the mother was polite about how she
24 said it to her friends, because as a child you're not deaf, you know, and whether you're
25 communicating or not you can still hear. And the conversations that were taking place
26 around me, it was pretty obvious that the mother had become embarrassed not realising
27 what she had done to her family by taking a dark child.
- 28 **Q.** Just moving to your next placement, so you're placed with an elderly foster couple, you're
29 still 11, they used to dress you in clothes that “made you look like you came out of
30 Gloriavale”, I think those were your words in your statement?
- 31 **A.** Mmm-hmm.
- 32 **Q.** Unfortunately, those caregivers were quite abusive towards you?
- 33 **A.** The mother wasn't, the mother was quite amazed the fact that I could cook and clean and do
34 things, but she didn't want me to do that, she wanted me to be a child with the other

1 children. But her husband was a paedophile, and I didn't even know what a paedophile
2 meant in those days, so instead of having me doing stuff in the kitchen, it was easy for her
3 to send me into the lounge which had chairs and a radiogram and that's where he used to sit
4 every day. So, at this stage when I first went there, they were going to adopt me, they
5 wanted to adopt me because I was this perfect child that could do things and I was slowly
6 coming out of it, of the trauma.

7 But then my behaviour changed, and my behaviour changed because I'd never seen
8 a penis in my life, let alone have to put my face near it. So, I started to freak out. So how
9 I dealt with that first of all was I spent a lot of time in bed sick. I just couldn't cope, and
10 this had happened to me with my parents. And so, I spent a lot of time in bed, there were
11 three girls that were there, this was happening to all of us. So, we'd have to go into the
12 lounge with him, he'd put his, – our hands in his pants, they had no pockets in them and
13 then he'd force our faces into his groin.

14 **Q.** It's okay, you can have a pause.

15 **A.** And then he would ejaculate on you.

16 **Q.** Do you want to take a pause?

17 **A.** **[Shakes head].**

18 **Q.** In your statement with all the horrid things that you were subjected to as a child in their
19 care, you couldn't trust anyone to report the abuse and you tried, there was a time that you
20 tried?

21 **A.** How could you report to anybody about anything? You know, I'd gone from being this
22 normal child to this abusive situation where I was drummed into me if you told anybody
23 your life was threatened. And then you go to places, or you hear they don't want you and
24 then you have to pull yourself together. You have to pull yourself together the best way
25 that you can. And my way was shutting down.

26 **Q.** That's because you didn't have anyone there to love and support you and to awhi you?

27 **A.** I saw the social worker, the social worker would drop you off, you never saw them again.

28 **Q.** You say that, you just alluded to before to the Commissioners, that with what you went
29 through with your mum the previous time, the abuse was so severe that you couldn't trust to
30 tell anyone, eh?

31 **A.** Because it was drummed into me.

32 **Q.** With the abuse that was happening to you, did it impact the way you go to school, were you
33 still able to go to school at that time?

- 1 A. When I was at home with the abuse that was happening at home, because there were a lot
2 of marks, I was made to stay at home quite a bit in the room in bed, out of the way. School,
3 when I went to school, I didn't really take in much of the schooling, but it was a place of
4 safety in some ways, rather than being at home. I didn't have many friends, because my job
5 was to be the parent and to come home straight away. But also, it was a fear if I told the
6 wrong people, then the outcome wouldn't be good.
- 7 **Q.** Would the fear be if you told someone you might get back to Mum?
- 8 A. I never wanted to go back to Mum.
- 9 **Q.** Okay. Were you trying to put up with the abuse then, so you didn't have to go back home?
- 10 A. I just thought it was normal. From one extreme to the other. I didn't think about the past
11 abuse, because the abuse that was happening at the time was completely different and like
12 I said, I just shut down.
- 13 **Q.** You were removed from that place, though, and then you went to a place in Motukarara,
14 can you recall that?
- 15 A. Yeah, Motukarara.
- 16 **Q.** Were you 12 at the time?
- 17 A. Yeah, I was.
- 18 **Q.** I'll just have a little bit of a pause here, Mr Registrar, if you can bring up document number
19 WITN0860003. It should come up on the screen in front of you but let me know if it
20 doesn't. So, at this time when you're in Motukarara, the female caregiver wasn't the best?
- 21 A. No, not at all. She was nice at the beginning when I first arrived, because she'd never had a
22 daughter of her own, so she thought it was good that she was going to have a daughter. But
23 as time went by things changed for the worst. And I was getting to the stage where I'd
24 sworn, after the abuse I'd been through because of my mum, no woman would ever touch
25 me again. So, her abuse became my abuse, because I started to fight back.
- 26 **Q.** So, she used to hit you?
- 27 A. Yeah. Swear at me, pull my hair, scratch me. But we're in the country and because we
28 were in the country you didn't see a social worker unless I'd supposedly done something
29 wrong or I needed clothes, because some of the problem that was put upon me in that home
30 was actually caused through the Department of Social Welfare, and it was caused because
31 there'd be things I'd need for school or there'd be things that I needed, and including
32 payment of me living there, that never went on time, and she resented that, and part of that
33 resentment was put on me, because I was a form of income for her.
- 34 **Q.** So, you weren't a child that should be loved, you were a child that should pay her way?

- 1 A. She should never have had children under any circumstances.
- 2 Q. If we look at this document, so it's one that's done by the Department of Social Welfare, it's
3 a report signed by a Robyn Hewland. The report discusses your connection to Mary and
4 the relationship you had with the Motukarara foster caregivers, I'm not quite sure you'll be
5 able to see it, but if we go to paragraph five.
- 6 A. Is that with which reference?
- 7 Q. Yeah, I'll just see if we can scroll up, can you scroll up please? With reference to hurting,
8 if you can scroll to that one, just so we can see.
- 9 A. Oh yeah. With reference to hurting.
- 10 **CHAIR:** You can call that out by highlighting it.
- 11 A. Thank you.
- 12 **QUESTIONING BY MS FLETCHER CONTINUED:** So, we've got a Department of Social
13 Welfare document confirming that you tried to tell people that you were being hit.
- 14 A. Yeah.
- 15 Q. So, you're telling this person that you're being hit?
- 16 A. Mmm-hmm.
- 17 Q. We can all see that. "She didn't believe me and hit me, and I hit her back. And again, each
18 time she hit me or was shitty to me."
- 19 A. Mmm.
- 20 Q. If we can then go to the last paragraph of this document, please and highlight that. The
21 very end. Mrs – GRO-B-21 – cannot face any foster placement failure and is so well
22 motivated to continue trying but needs to support her own reality confronting of Kathy with
23 her actions. She admits she shouts and did hit her first once, but she -said - then she
24 apologised immediately. So, she's acknowledging that she hit you, but you still
25 remained- there?
- 26 A. Yeah.
- 27 Q. Even though you were in this abusive situation where you're reporting to people about the
28 physical abuses that you suffered, with the sexual abuses, you still actually tried to tell her
29 about that as well, but she didn't listen?
- 30 A. No. There was no one to tell, because I lived in the middle of nowhere. So being on a farm
31 you only saw the social worker very rarely, if at all really. When the sexual abuse started to
32 happen in the home, I tried to tell her, but she wasn't interested at all, and the reason she
33 wasn't interested at all is because they were having their own marital problems. She was

1 having an affair with a man in the house, and she would force me to go with her husband
2 because she didn't want to know about it. It got to the stage the more I tried to tell her, the
3 more he would intervene, before she would listen.

4 **Q.** You say that she would force you to go with her husband, did she encourage the sexual
5 abuse?

6 **A.** A lot of me fighting back was because – a lot of the abuse happened in the farm in the
7 milking sheds, the hay bales, everywhere we went, the truck, the lot. And when she used to
8 make me go with him, I would react. In fact, I'd be really violent and abusive to try and get
9 to stay home. But that never worked at all.

10 **Q.** In your statement it's coming across that you had no-one there to support you and you had
11 to rely upon yourself to try and protect yourself a lot of the times.

12 **A.** Yeah.

13 **Q.** If you don't mind, if you have your statement in front of you and to help the Commissioners
14 understand your position, at page 19, can you go to page 19. Should be paragraph 160.

15 **A.** Do you want me to read it?

16 **Q.** You described how the sexual abuse was so bad that you had to come up with different
17 ways to try and prevent it from happening because no one was believing you.

18 **A.** Yeah.

19 **Q.** Can you read what happened?

20 **A.** Yeah. The mother got sick, I'd never had sex with anyone in my life, let alone have a
21 boyfriend. My mum was sick in bed and that's when the first violation from a sexual point
22 of view happened. That's when my virginity was taken from me, in the lounge while she is
23 medicated in the bedroom. This used to happen a lot because she was medicated for, – I
24 don't know what she was medicated for. But she was medicated a lot and because she had a
25 partner, they would go away to Dunedin and do things, so it meant I was left in the house
26 with him. We had another young girl that came in and it was put to me, if I didn't do what
27 he said, then he was going to do it to her. So, I changed my attitude and I just allowed
28 whatever to happen happen, because I didn't want her to go through what I went through.

29 So, the sex started in the house while she was in it. When she went, it took place in
30 her bedroom. He was out the gate, you know, like tied you up, did whatever he wanted to
31 do with you, and how did I cope with it? I just switched off. I just switched completely
32 off. And sometimes I could see what was happening to me, but I wasn't there. And
33 because I did a lot of work on the farm with him, because when I first went to the farm, he
34 was actually really good. But I noticed when it got to the stage I was starting to develop,

1 and he would be at the window watching me. The good night kiss on the cheek ended up
2 being on your lips.

3 At night when she was asleep, I would stay in my room, because if I came out of the
4 room and I knew he was up, I knew what I was in for. So even if I wanted to go to the
5 toilet, it was easier to put a towel on the floor and wee on the towel than to go out of the
6 room, and I knew that it didn't matter if your door was locked, because if they wanted to get
7 to you, they're going to get to you. And that was under the roof of where I was placed.

8 So, for me to have a life I had to make a choice, because no one was going to save
9 me, and I mean I didn't even know whether I was going to make it from one day to the next.
10 But I knew if I had to go somewhere and he was picking me up, then I knew what my
11 payment was going to be on the way home from wherever I was going. And like I said,
12 I just switched off to it. I allowed it to happen. And I'd given up the fight, because I used
13 to hit him and kick at him and scream, but no one gave a hoot about what I was going
14 through.

15 As time went by, I remember being attacked in the paddock with my pants down
16 around my ankles trying to get away, and I ripped down the side of my leg on the barbed
17 wire fence. And it was opened, it was white flesh, not a lot of blood, but it was a deep gash
18 down the side. And GRO-B-21 – sorry.

19 **Q.** That's okay, you're all right.

20 **A.** Said we can't take her to a doctor, and we can't take her to a hospital. So, she stuck –
21 stitched things on my leg and I wasn't allowed to go to school for a while until it healed up
22 to where I could go, and that was the beginning of a real nightmare, because then she knew
23 what was happening. But still would rather have her husband have sex with me and do
24 what he was doing to me so she could live her life with her boyfriend.

25 **Q.** Do you want to take a pause?

26 **A.** No.

27 **Q.** Are you sure?

28 **A.** Yeah, I'm fine.

29 **Q.** You didn't have any of the support. Randomly she tried to put you into counselling to help
30 you with your emotions and your feelings instead of actually recognising the abuse that you
31 were going through?

32 **A.** I was, – the social worker came a couple of times and talked, and then I remember going
33 into the Department of Social Welfare in the middle of Christchurch and there were loads

1 of us, there was about 15 of us, and my foster mum didn't want me to go, which was, – it
 2 was about a 40 minute drive to where we were going into town, so therefore it was you
 3 can't say this or you can't say that. But I was quite defiant at that stage, and I thought I was
 4 going to go and share my story.

5 But when I went there, I remember looking across the room at a male version of me
 6 and it was GRO-B-6. Once she found out GRO-B-6 was there, that was the end of it.
 7 I didn't go back again. While I lived with him there was an arrangement I could speak to
 8 my mum and my siblings. Not that I wanted to speak to my mother because I didn't, but
 9 I did want to speak to my siblings, especially my youngest brother which was really
 10 important and an older brother. It just never happened; I wasn't allowed to. My family got
 11 really probably upset with me because they thought it was me not wanting to talk to them.
 12 But I wanted to talk to them, but when the abuse started to happen, I wasn't able to go
 13 anywhere, talk to anyone at all, because it was a risk, especially my parents.

14 One day we had gone to a hotel, because they were farmers, so every second
 15 weekend was a weekend he didn't work. We went to a hotel and this man came up to me
 16 and bought me a bag of chips and a drink and it was my father. From that day onwards all
 17 communication with my family was gone because they thought I had organised it. I didn't
 18 even know the telephone number. And that was a common attitude. The same went with
 19 Mary, my first mum, you know, she had tried to contact me so many times through this
 20 foster parent. But because of her possessiveness in regards to me, I never saw anything in
 21 regards to her contact with me, until I saw my files.

22 **Q.** So was there an environment where they tried to control you and allow the abuse to keep
 23 happening by cutting you off from all your networks and all your –

24 **A.** I was cut off from everybody anyway, you know, third, fourth form I didn't spend a lot of
 25 time at school because I mentally couldn't deal with it.

26 **Q.** With the time you spent with Motukarara, that abuse continued until you got a new social
 27 worker, is it Cyril Smith?

28 **A.** Yes, I –

29 **Q.** Do you want to tell us a bit about Cyril?

30 **A.** Cyril saved my life, actually I'm wearing him today in my locket. There's my aunty that
 31 took care of me and Cyril Smith my social worker. I've carried it for 46 years because
 32 these two people, if it wasn't for them, I wouldn't be here today. He had come over from
 33 overseas, he was English, he was a probation officer that was trained to be a social welfare,

1 a social worker as well as a probation officer. When he came to New Zealand, he changed
2 his role from a probation officer to be a social worker. And he was the biggest blessing that
3 walked into my life. He saw something in me that my other social workers didn't see —.

4 But in fairness to the other social workers, I was a child that hated women. Here I
5 am with two Social Welfare workers that are women. So, there was always going to be that
6 bit of agitation, resistance, definitely no trust. When Cyril came in, I changed. Because
7 I trusted him, I started to open up. I was removed from the house and that was one of my
8 introductions actually before Cyril came.

9 **Q.** To Strathmore?

10 **A.** I was put into Strathmore the first time. I'd been into Strathmore three times actually. The
11 first time I was younger and that was okay, I thought it was okay, because I could see if
12 Mum was coming, and I could hide and didn't have to see her. The second time was when I
13 was at the foster parents in Motukaraka.

14 **Q.** Yeah.

15 **A.** That was when I went there, and it was a whole different ball game.

16 **Q.** Do you mind if we talk a little bit about Strathmore in the later years?

17 **A.** Yeah.

18 **Q.** Okay, so when you first had your time at Motukarara you were sent to the Strathmore Girls'
19 Home, it was kind of like a respite thing for your caregiver, that's where you met a
20 Dr Fahey at the time?

21 **A.** Yes.

22 **Q.** And when you were there how old were you, can you recall?

23 **A.** Maybe 13.

24 **Q.** Maybe 13. In your second instance you were there, you were told that they would need to
25 photograph you?

26 **A.** Yes. I went with my social worker, my social worker picked me up from Motukarara, put
27 me in the car and said, "we're going to the Girls' home." Because I had been there before
28 I thought this is good, at least I'm not going to be molested and I thought there's a lot of
29 kids there that don't have parents so I'm going to be okay. So, my social worker took me
30 down to the back of Strathmore where you went through a games room and into a little
31 room where my social worker and some staff member there were having a conversation and
32 they said "well, we need to photograph you naked so that we can identify you if you ran
33 away", and I just lost it.

34 **Q.** You were put into an isolation room until you complied; is that correct?

1 A. Yeah. My social worker went, and it was really good to see it in my file, because
2 sometimes you think am I actually getting this right for this particular part. So, I was taken
3 from this isolation room, and I was put into the cells, which were down the back. I'd never,
4 – I had no friends, so sitting in those cells was a real big shock, because the only sound of
5 people were the girls that were on the other side of the wall, so I got to listen to their voices,
6 and I sort of know them by just hearing their conversations without actually seeing their
7 faces.

8 So, I stayed in there a long time, a long time. But eventually I was going crazy.
9 You know, because even if I wanted to kill myself there was nothing there to do it with.
10 You know, in an isolated room with bars, I had done nothing wrong, absolutely nothing and
11 here I am in a jail like an adult goes to jail. So, I gave in, and I let them photograph me, so
12 that I could be moved up to the house. But then I found out before I could go up to the
13 house, I had to have an internal. I didn't even know what an internal was. So, I was taken
14 to the room and showed what the room looked like. I lost it, I threw things, I swore,
15 I kicked, I wasn't going to let them do. It was scary.

16 So, I went back to the cells again until eventually I knew I had no choice, if
17 I wanted to go anywhere from here, I had to get out of the cells. So, when it came time to
18 doing the internal, it was an experience I've never forgotten in my life. I remember being
19 held down by the lady there and this man doing this stuff and the stirrups and having to put
20 my legs in them. And then having the thing put inside me, I just blacked out. I'd gone back
21 to that state I'd always been in when things were too traumatic and, you know, apart from
22 fighting my foster mother, I was the most quietest person that you'd come across, nothing
23 like I am now.

24 And the Girls' home was quite good too, though, because that's where I learned to
25 stand up for myself. One of the girls pushed me down the stairs, so I got up and I stood up
26 for myself. In the Girls' home it also taught me things like rewards. You know, if you
27 wanted to do things you had jobs to do, you had charts to work for and goals to do, and I
28 was always a pleaser and I enjoyed that. You know, some of the girls scared me. The
29 house itself, Strathmore scared me anyway because it had ghosts in it and, – but on
30 the -flipside,- it was also better than being sexually molested every single day. You know?

31 **Q.** There were just some things, though, with the conduct of what you experienced at
32 Strathmore that has then impacted upon your life as an adult?

33 A. Definitely, Dr Fahey, the internals. I had cervical cancer 2009. The reason I had it is
34 because I wouldn't do smears. And the reason I wouldn't do smears is because I had tried to

1 do smears, but I'd end up vomiting, I'd have anxiety, I'd have headaches, anything that
2 could possibly come in to change my mental mindset and physical mindset for me not to do
3 it, I didn't do it. So, years later I was contacted to say that I had cervical cancer and within
4 six months I had a full radical hysterectomy. So, for me that was really huge because all
5 my life, from a young child, my passion with children, because in the homes I wrapped
6 around them, because I was the oldest one and it was my job to protect. But it prevented
7 me from having a relationship, a normal relationship of any kind.

8 And the biggest thing for me is, putting all the other abuse aside, is actually that.
9 Because when it comes to having children, I didn't want to have children, I had been
10 conditioned by the State and every place they'd put me in, I was going to be like my mum, I
11 was going to do to my children exactly what she did to me, I wasn't worthy of doing
12 anything and I believed that, right up to having my daughter, which set off a whole
13 different problem for me as a 19 year old.

14 **Q.** Did you want to talk about that?

15 **A.** Yeah. Cyril had got me out of State care early. Actually, I wanted to stay in his care
16 longer, for as long as I possibly could, because when I left the Girls' home, instead of going
17 back to the GRO-B-21 he organised through a friend, which was a prison officer, to take
18 me to their home for Christmas, and he never let me go back. So, I didn't go back to the
19 GRO-B-21 and I didn't go back to the Girls' home.

20 And that was a beginning of a few more placements, but he walked alongside of me,
21 you know, and he also taught me if you want to leave school, you get a job, Kath, and you
22 can go. So, I did. And then when I went and got a job, he said to me "Kath, we will find
23 you a flat with someone" and he did, and he took me there, he introduced me to them and it
24 was a young girl, I slept on the couch in the lounge, but it was way better than being where
25 I'd been. Cyril looked over me even though I wasn't a ward of the State, right up until I got
26 engaged and right up until I had my daughter. And then Cyril went to the North Island.
27 And I missed him, I missed his security, but most of all I could talk to him about anything.

28 So, I met a man, and he was a good man, but I had problems, I was 19 years of age,
29 unravelling all this sexual crap, abandonment, rejection, still not happy with who I was, and
30 now I'm pregnant, well actually prior to that, I have to go back a bit. Prior to this when I
31 was with the GRO-B-21 I was taken by the foster mother, social worker who had come,
32 and they were taking me to Marylands, which is part of St John of Gods. And I was taken
33 there, and I was told this is where you're going if you don't pull yourself together and do

1 what you're told. I remember walking around the place looking at the children in the place
2 and thinking oh my God, this is worse than Strathmore, and I behaved.

3 **Q.** It was that power and control dynamic again, eh?

4 **A.** Yeah, and at the same time my first mum, my foster mum, she came over from Australia
5 and it was organised that my foster mother at that stage was going to take me to see her.
6 When we went to see her, she shared how she'd been trying to contact me, she had been
7 sending letters and cards and things like that to me and I was horrified. But she also asked
8 me did I want to go and live with her then, and I said no because I didn't know who she
9 was, she'd abandoned me once, and wasn't going to do it again. So, from that particular
10 meeting was how I got to Marylands, it was from this place straight to Marylands from
11 there, to give me a wakeup call, you know, because I did do some things, like climb the tree
12 and swear at her from the top of my lungs in the middle of the country calling her all the
13 names under the sun because that's what I believed she was. But I knew I'd have to sit there
14 all day, because I knew what was coming when I come down. So, some days I sat there the
15 whole day and I felt good about that, you know, but it was a form of abuse. I was
16 becoming an abuser.

17 **Q.** Is it your attempts at trying to control a situation?

18 **A.** Yeah, definitely, definitely. You know, my daughter when I found out I was pregnant,
19 I didn't know what to do. I didn't know what to do at all.

20 **Q.** Going back on that, because in your statement you say that the abuses that you suffered
21 from mum were so severe that it then impacted upon your ability to connect to women, to
22 your own children later in life, eh?

23 **A.** Yeah, especially strong women. You know, I've had more friends that are men. It's not
24 until probably the last couple of years with the survivors that I've actually become more
25 comfortable in my skin, but then with survivors we speak a different language. Because of
26 the love of my dad, which I never lost, I always had this soft spot when it comes to men
27 versus women. Men weren't catty, and I felt comfortable.

28 **Q.** I'm actually done with my questions, Kath, unless you want to share anything else with
29 those in attendance before I pass you over to the Commissioners?

30 **A.** For me and why I'm sitting here today is because of someone that I love that's still in care
31 today. The reason I have shared this story is because there's a little me that needed to have
32 a voice. I'm very good at speaking on behalf of a 59-year-old. Coming in today I knew I
33 had to change my hats. I've had a head injury with the Lake Alice hearings around that

1 time, which has affected me cognitively when it comes to reading, so thank you Aroha.
2 But it is what it is, it's part of a journey.

3 And for me and what I experienced in foster care, the homes, no child should ever,
4 ever have to ever endure that. Especially a female when it comes to sexual violation,
5 because it affects your relationships. At 19 years of age when I was a mum for the first
6 time, I should have had tools to be a mother, especially with the State taking me off my
7 parents, even though they weren't perfect, and taking that role over. They did more damage
8 to my spirit than anything.

9 The State to me, I thought it was going to be a good thing. I thought it was going to
10 save me. And it did in some ways, because the physical abuse stopped. But from a sexual
11 point of view, being a female, when you have been a victim to predators' time and time
12 again, you'll end up wearing a mask that every predator out there knows you're a victim and
13 they take advantage of that.

14 For the good men in my life, I feel sorry for them now, and the reason being is they
15 shouldn't have endured what I put upon them. It was easier to attract myself to an abuser
16 because I started to stand up for myself as a woman, but the downside of that was I also
17 became the abuser. I worked with a psychologist for 17 years and I've unravelled
18 everything time and time again to be who I am today. And it's unfortunate now because of
19 someone I love that's still in care today, I was responsible because he had to go into care.
20 And when I see someone that I love and I made the call, seeing the system has changed, is
21 something I have to live with. Especially when they are a male and they have been violated
22 in every possible way and been through every home and institute in this country through no
23 fault of his own but because our system can't get it right.

24 And it's important to get it right, because my children are blessed. They haven't
25 been molested, but on the flip-side of the coin, they suffered because of my abuse. And it's
26 taken me 39 years to build my relationship with my oldest daughter and I'm still working
27 my way with my youngest daughter. It's a life sentence State care. It's not something that
28 you can think I'm 16, I'm 18, I'm out of here and it's gone. It's embedded in your soul.

29 So, this is what I would like to say from State care. The State took my life. It
30 allowed damage to a child that was already traumatised when they got it, and they
31 continually traumatised it in one or more ways. But it takes your soul and your spirit
32 because when you're a child and you can't function, it's your spirit that is not functioning.

33 I have worked all my life, I've tried to take my life twice, first time at 24 years of
34 age because I couldn't cope with being a mother. At 35 I was in an abusive relationship,

1 I left, and I tried to do it then. But I figured out pretty quick, I've never done anything
2 perfect in my life so why would I get this right. God has played a very big part in my life
3 because I learned to live from the inside out, not the outside in. And there's so many
4 different dimensions to healing. But we'll always carry it with us for the rest of our lives.

5 If I murdered someone, I would go to jail for maybe eight years and then I'd get out
6 and I would have a life, but that would be my choice on the crime I've caused. I was told
7 I would be a criminal and I'd do all of that. I never did any of it because I had a point to
8 prove. I'm not a criminal, never will be. I didn't even understand criminals until I became
9 involved with the Royal Commission. And that taught me a lot.

10 And I am thankful to the Royal Commission and the reason being is I have had the
11 opportunity to wrap around so many survivors because a lot of us survivors undermined our
12 abuse and with walking alongside all the survivors I've walked with, I undermined my
13 abuse, because there were so many horrific stories.

14 But the sad part for me is, when I became involved with the Royal Commission,
15 little did I know I'd be sitting beside my cousin, and then to find out two more of my
16 cousins have gone through Lake Alice. My father was a ward of the State, he wasn't Māori.
17 My grandmother was an orphan, she wasn't Māori. When you go through and you're wired
18 a certain way and you come back to your family with no connection, they thought I was a
19 plastic Māori and what does that mean? I don't behave the way they behave. But I'm okay
20 with that because I am who I am. I will learn to become proud of being Māori, but I feel I
21 don't need to because my youngest daughter's very strong in te reo, she's been a university
22 graduate and a te reo, Māori leader for the Otago University. So, it might have skipped me,
23 but it's still in the next generation.

24 So, all I want to see is, you know, I look at the education side of things for me. If
25 I hadn't had been dealing with so much trauma my schooling would have been different.
26 From the medical side of things, maybe if the doctors had done something about it when I
27 was coming in with buckle marks and bruises all over me and open wounds, maybe they
28 should have made a complaint to someone. Because anxiety, unless you live it, you'll never
29 understand it. And it changes with time.

30 Department of Social Welfare have taken my life. They've stopped me from having
31 tools to have a normal relationship. They've prevented me from having the tools to be a
32 good parent, and most importantly they've taken my self-worth, my self-confidence and my
33 self-esteem. But I'm very blessed at the age of 30, someone took the opportunity to give
34 me a chance to do something, and I run and set up medical companies, insurance

1 companies, I've managed health clubs, I've lifted up people in so many different walks of
2 life. But if I didn't have the trauma and the understanding, I wouldn't be who I am to do
3 what I do today.

4 So, I just want this Inquiry to hear what we're saying, because it is a hard thing to sit
5 here. I always sit there, and I can be the class clown and put a smile on his face. It's a very
6 different thing sitting here today, because my family will see this, my friends will see this,
7 and you're always going to get some judgment from somewhere. So, I know that it hasn't
8 ended here today. But at least I've got tools to put it back into place.

9 And I have to say something, Coral, we've worked alongside you, and you know my
10 personality. And I probably owe you an apology because you were one of those strong
11 women, and it's only just taken the last two weeks for me to drop it into place to why
12 I struggled, and I realised what it is now.

13 **CHAIR:** Thank you Kath. I'm going to hand you over to Sandra to thank you, because I know
14 you've shared with her before. I just want to say, because I've been a judge in my time, that
15 when people watch you, they should judge you for what you are, and that is brave, and
16 strong, and a survivor, and I can't imagine how anyone could see you as anything but that.
17 So be proud. Thank you.

18 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** I'll say thank you too, kei te mihi ki a koe, Kath. And thank you
19 for your mahi for the Inquiry and stepping up and speaking to us today. I also thank you,
20 Tyrone, and whaea for your support, kei te mihi ki a koutou.

21 **CHAIR:** And the last word, as ever, comes from Sandra.

22 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** You are a remarkable woman Kathleen Patricia Coster.

23 A. No, it's actually going to be Kathleen Patricia O'Hara Coster because that's me.

24 **Q.** Love it. Claiming your identity back, because you now have the power to do it and the
25 strength to do it. I know, Kath, that you've shared with us that you can't understand te reo
26 or your language in any depth, but I do just want to say one phrase to you in my own
27 language, which is Samoan, malo la e loto toa, malo la e loto finau. So, what I'm saying to
28 you, Kath, is, and you've referred to God as someone, as – what I'm taking from this is it
29 was something that's made a significant difference in your life eh.

30 A. Yes.

31 **Q.** For others it's a trigger, but for you it's something that's been very profound. Yeah. So
32 what essentially I'm saying is, you know, we give the victory, we give praise for the victory
33 and the strength that there's a warrior spirit within you that's managed to just fight through
34 this, and you have had to fight, everything you've had to work out, all of those neural

1 pathways in your brain and in your mind, how to keep yourself safe, how to understand
2 what was happening to you, and to put parameters around it so that actually at a point in
3 your life you were able to turn around and in actual fact be a blessing to a number of others.
4 And you named it, you said when you were 30 years old you were able to then set up
5 companies and to be – insurance companies and to make, just speak wisdom into people's
6 lives.

7 So, what others intended for harm to you, Kath, and actually did harm you, you've
8 turned that into this phenomenal power of good that is actually enriching others. So, I just
9 want to say thank you on behalf of the Commission, on behalf of Coral and Anaru and our
10 other Commissioners for the privilege, and I know it wasn't easy for you to come because
11 you're actually quite a private person despite, you know, the fact you've got this quite an
12 open and a really friendly persona. But the fact that you can look past yourself and do this
13 for that young one that you love in care which you've spoken to us about before, speaks
14 about your enormous love and your hope for change in our nation.

15 And so, to you, Tyrone, and to whaea who's there as well, and I know you've got a
16 couple of others who have come to support you today, thank you for continuing to be the
17 pou that she needs in her life, the pou of strength, the pou of hope. So, in all things, Kath,
18 we know that going forward it's not always an easy road and every day is different, but the
19 fact that you keep showing up and the fact that every day you want to make a difference to
20 someone else's life, that gives us hope in our work. And that we're going to see this
21 through to the point.

22 So, thank you for standing with us, thank you for standing with the Commission and
23 being able to do our work, to be able to offer up recommendations that can make a
24 difference to our kids currently in care and for the future generations, malie.

25 **MR MARKS:** Can I just say something quickly, if you need your insurance updated just give her
26 a call.

27 **CHAIR:** We're happy to be a vehicle for your advertisement, thank you Tyrone, what a wonderful
28 note on which to end. Go and take care of yourselves now and have a good afternoon, and
29 have a good rest after this, thank you so much. We'll take a break. Did you want to say
30 something before we started?

31 **DR COOKE:** Yes, just briefly. Just to get the timetable right.

32 **CHAIR:** Yes.

33 **DR COOKE:** I was wondering if we would come back at perhaps quarter to.

34 **CHAIR:** Yes.

1 **DR COOKE:** We would then – we then have two experts this afternoon.

2 **CHAIR:** Yes.

3 **DR COOKE:** And if we had the first, who's Dr Cargo, until 3.30, then have a break and then we
4 would have Dr Mikahere-Hall say from 4 until 4.45.

5 **CHAIR:** Until the end.

6 **DR COOKE:** Until the end.

7 **CHAIR:** Yes, that's fine.

8 **DR COOKE:** Because you have their reports, and we'll talk to them.

9 **CHAIR:** Exactly, and you can talk to –

10 **DR COOKE:** Yes.

11 **CHAIR:** That's fine. Thank you for that. So, we'll resume again at quarter to 3.

12 **Lunch adjournment from 2.11 pm to 2.54 pm**