

**ABUSE IN CARE ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY
MĀORI 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: Ms Julia Steenson
Dr Anaru Erueti
Mr Paul Gibson
Judge Coral Shaw
Ali'imua Sandra Alofivae

Counsel: Ms Julia Spelman, Mr Kingi Snelgar, Mr Wiremu Rikihana,
Mr Luke Claasen, Ms Maia Wikaira, Ms Alisha Castle,
Ms Tracey Norton, Ms Season-Mary Downs, Ms Alana Thomas, Mr Winston McCarthy, Mr Simon Mount QC,
Ms Kerry Beaton QC for the Royal Commission
Ms Melanie Baker, Ms Julia White and Mr Max Clarke-Parker for the Crown
Mr James Meagher for the Catholic Church
Ms Fiona Guy Kidd for the Anglican Church
Ms Sonya Cooper, Ms Amanda Hill as other counsel attending

Venue: Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei Tumutumuwhenua Marae
59b Kitemoana Road
Ōrākei
AUCKLAND

Date: 14 March 2022

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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1 [10.05 am]

2 **NGĀTI WHĀTUA KAUMĀTUA:** He hōnora, he kororia, he maungarongo ki te whenua,
3 he whakaaro pai ki ngā tāngata katoa.

4 [English: Honour, glory and peace to the land. May good thoughts come to all men]
5 Me inoi tātou.

6 (Karakia: Tēnei au, tēnei au ko te hōkai nei i taku tapuwae. Ko te hōkai-nuku, ko te
7 hōkai-rangi, ko te hōkai o tō tipuna a Tane-nui-a-rangi. I pikitia ai ki te Rangi-tūhāhā, ki
8 Tihi-i-manono. I rokohina atu ā, Ko Io-Matua-Kore anake. I riro iho ai ngā Kete o te
9 Wānanga. Ko te Kete Tūāuri, ko te Kete Tūātea, ko te Kete Aronui. Ka tiritiria, ka
10 poupoua ki a Papatūānuku. Ka puta te Ira-tangata ki te whai-ao, i te Ao-marama, tīhei
11 mauri ora!

12 [English: Here am I, here am I here am I swiftly moving by the power of my karakia
13 for swift movement. Swiftly moving over the earth. Swiftly moving through the heavens.
14 The swift movement of your ancestor, Tane-nui-a-rangi who climbed up to the isolated
15 realms to the summit of Manono and there found Io-the-Parentless alone. He brought back
16 down the Baskets of Knowledge, the Basket called Tūāuri, the Basket called Tūātea, the
17 Basket called Aronui. Portioned out, planted in Mother Earth the life principle of
18 humankind comes forth into the dawn into the world of light. I sneeze, there is life!]

19 (Waiata: Whakaaria mai tō rīpeka ki au, tīaho mai rā roto i te pō? Hei kona au, titiro
20 atu ai. Ora, mate, Hei au koe noho ai).

21 [English: Show your cross to me. Let it shine there in the darkness. To there I will
22 be looking. In life, in death, let me rest in thee.

23 **KAUMĀTUA TAIHAHA:** He riri, he riri, he toa, he toa. Papa tū ai, raru ai te kakau o te hoe. Ka pā
24 tao ko koe Māhuhu ki te rangi e rere ki tua o Hawaiki. He moana, he moana, he mānutanga
25 waka e. Ka makawera te patunga te ngākino o Tūwhakararo. Nau mai e waha, kō tāua ki
26 tāku. Ehara kei ahau he parā whara maungārongo, Kei ahau he horoa rā kē. Auē, te riri, auē
27 te nguha. Whiria te tuatini, taku kōtuku whenua. Whakatau mai taku whenua i tō tāmou ai,
28 tītī rawa, tītī rawa. Ōi, ō waka, turuki, turuki, paneke, paneke. Aha turuki turuki, paneke,
29 paneke. Aha tōia mai i te waka, kumea mai i te waka, ki te urunga, te waka, ki te moenga,
30 te waka. Ki te takotoranga i takoto ai te waka.

31 [English: Māhuhu ki te Rangi came from Hawaiki across the depths of the ocean.
32 Tuwhakararo welcome. Alas the great anger, the great heron lands, the great waka goes
33 forth and progresses, drag the canoe, pull the canoe to its resting place, to its lying state, to
34 its final resting place.]

1 Kei aku manuhiri tūārangi. Koutou katoa kua tae mai ki tēnei hui topa i tēnei rā. Tēnei a
 2 Tumutumuwhehua, e mihi nei, e tangi ki a koutou. Nau piki mai, nau kake mai, haere mai,
 3 haere mai, haere mai. Haramai ki tēnei wiki tuarua mō tēnei o ngā huihuinga. Kia
 4 whārikihia e koutou ngā rōpū purapura ora, i ngā kōrero mō ngā tūkinotanga kua pāngia ki
 5 a koutou. Whārikihia ki mua i te aroaro o te Kōmihana i tēnei rā. Whārikihia ki mua i te
 6 aroaro o Aotearoa whānui i tēnei rā. Kia mārama, kia mōhio ki ngā kōrero, ā, kia whai hua
 7 tātou. Kia whakatika ai tēnei āhuatanga i a tātou e anga nei ki mua. Kia ora ai tātou katoa.
 8 [English: To the many visitors who are attending this day Tumutumuwhehua welcomes
 9 you, welcome, welcome. Welcome to this second week of this Inquiry where it is laid out,
 10 the survivors' testimonies pertaining to the abuse wrought on you. Presenting them to the
 11 Commission and to the wider nation so that they understand what happened and we can
 12 alleviate these issues and focus on moving forward for the betterment of all.]

13 Nā reira, ka mihi atu rā ki a koutou me ngā manuhiri, kātahi ka tae mai i tēnei rā, hei
 14 whakataki i ētahi o ngā kōrero. Nā reira, ki a koe e te tuahine e Alana, tēnā koe. Nau mai
 15 hoki mai ki tō taha Ngāti Whātua e mihi atu nei ki a koe. Nā reira, kia tau ngā
 16 tauwhiroanga a Ihoa o ngā mano ki runga i a tātou katoa i tēnei rā. Kia puta mai ngā kōrero
 17 i runga i te tika me te pono. Kia puta mai he māramatanga mā tātou katoa hei arahina i a
 18 tātou. Mai tēnei wā tae noa ki te wā ka puta mai ngā pūrongo o te Kōmihana, i ngā marama
 19 e heke mai nei. Nā reira, e aku mana nui, e aku tapu nui. Tēnei a Ngāti Whātua e whakatau
 20 nei i a koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou. He wai.

21 Therefore, I salute you and also to our many visitors giving their support and I
 22 would like to acknowledge Alana's presence. Therefore, may God's protection be bestowed
 23 upon all today and so all the discussions come out in the world of light and continuing on to
 24 the publishing of the reports. Therefore, to all the people with great prestige, this is Ngāti
 25 Whātua, welcome, welcome. A song, thanks.]

26 (Waiata: Haere mai, Haere mai. E ngā iwi e, haere mai ki runga o te marae. Hui mai, tātou
 27 katoa. E hine mā, e tama mā. Hāpainga o, te mana Māori e. Kia rewa runga rawa i a ha hā
 28 E ngā iwi e. Haere mai, haere mai).

29 [English: Welcome, welcome. All the tribes. Welcome onto the courtyard, all of us
 30 gathered here. Young women, young men. Lift up your Maori honour to float up high. All
 31 the tribes

32 Welcome, welcome.]

33 Nō reira, kei aku hōpara makau rangi tēnei. Kia kaha koutou ngā kaikōrero i tēnei
 34 rā. Mā te Atua koutou katoa e manaaki, e tiaki. E te Kōmihana. Kia areare mai ngā taringa,

1 kia rongō koutou i te wairua, te hōhonutanga o ngā kōrero. Kia whai hua, kia whai i ngā
2 āhuatanga tika. Kia whakaora mai ēnei tūāhuatanga katoa. Tēnei ka mihi, tēnei ka tangi,
3 tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā rā tātou katoa.

4 ([English: Therefore in closing, I state this. Be strong to all those presenting today.
5 May God bless you all and keep you safe. To the Commission, please keep an attentive ear
6 so you may hear the depth of what is being said and to make appropriate measures to
7 remedy. In closing, thank you, greetings, welcome.

8 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Tēnā koe, kōrua i tō karakia, i tō kōrero i tēnei ata. Nāu i ara ai
9 i ngā kawa nei. Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou. Ngā mihi mahana ki a koutou. Ko te kai a te
10 rangatira he kōrero. Nō reira, nau mai, hoki mai ki Tumutumuwhenua, hākari anō ai.

11 [English: Thank you both for your prayer and your guiding words this morning. Greetings
12 and warm welcome to all. Dialogue is the food of chiefs and therefore welcome back to
13 Tumutumuwhenua, may we partake of these discussions once again.]

14 Welcome to the second week of the Royal Commission Māori hearing.

15 Just to remind you that our priority for the Royal Commission is to ensure that we
16 have an accessible hearing and so we have sign language interpreters, we also have Te Reo
17 Māori interpreters and we have our stenographer and our closed caption transcripts of the
18 hearing.

19 Ms Spelman, ngā mihi o te wā. Can you provide us with an overview of today's
20 hearing.

21 **MS SPELMAN:** Mauri ora ki te whare. Tēnā koe te heamana. Otirā, ata mārīe ki ngā Kōmihana
22 katoa. Ki a tātou katoa. Matu ake, e mihi ana ki tō tātou pou whakawairua i te rangi nei.
23 Tēnā koe matua. E te rangatira, matua Taiaha Hawke, nāu i whakatuwhera tō tātou
24 nohonga, whakamana ai te kaupapa, e mihi ana ki a koe. Kua kotahi wiki mātou o te
25 Kōmihana e noho ki raro i tō koutou manaaki i te wharau o Tumutumuwhenua. Me ngā piki
26 me ngā heke o te nohoanga nei. Kua tuhia ki te rae, ōu kōrero hei ārahi i a tātou i roto i ngā
27 tikanga o ā tātou matua tūpuna, ka tika.

28 [English: Well wishes to everyone in attendance and good morning to everybody. Firstly I
29 would like to acknowledge our tohunga who gave our prayers and also to Taiaha Hawke
30 who opened this day with the greetings. It has been one week that the Commission has
31 stayed under your protection, under the roof of Tumutumuwhenua and all the ups and
32 downs, it has been etched to the memory, your kōrero which you have bestowed upon us
33 throughout.]

1 Ka whakaaro ake au ki te whakataukī e noho hei pou mā mātou o te Kōmihana; Kia
2 whakatōmuri te haere whakamua me tōna hāngai ki ōu kōrero. Kia whakatōmuri tō mātou o
3 te Kōmihana nei haere whakamua i tēnei wiki hou. Tēnā koe, otirā koutou ngā rangatira o
4 Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei i tō koutou mākohakoha, i tō koutou marae, i ngā tini āhua nei. E
5 mihi ana.

6 I harken back to the proverb of the Commission "to look back in order to move
7 forward", in order to move forward in this week, therefore thank you, thank you all to the
8 Chiefs of Ngāti Whātua for your caring and warm welcome on your marae).

9 Madam Chair, just before I move to making some opening remarks, I wanted, of
10 course, to acknowledge our hosts, Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei for their ongoing manaaki to us
11 and there is also another appearance of counsel, counsel for the Catholic Church, just
12 briefly before I make some opening remarks. Tēnā koe. If we could please move to
13 counsel for the Catholic Church.

14 **MR MEAGHER:** Ata mārie ngā Kaikōmihana. Ko James Meagher tōku ingoa. Ko ahau tētahi o
15 ngā rōia mō Te Rōpū Tautoko.

16 [English: Good morning to the Commissioners, my name's James Meagher and I am the
17 lawyer of the supporting group.]

18 Commissioners, on behalf of the bishops and congregational leaders of the Catholic Church
19 in Aotearoa, thank you once again for the brief opportunity to note our appearance this
20 morning and to acknowledge the evidence of Mr Sweeney. Ngā mihi Paora (I salute you
21 Paora).

22 Watching via the livestream to listen and bear witness to the testimony of Paora are
23 representatives of the Catholic Church, including the Marist Brothers and representatives
24 from St Paul's College in Auckland. Kia ora tātou.

25 **MS SPELMAN:** Ka huri tātou ki te whakataukī i tēnei rā. "Te piko o te māhuri tērā te tipu o te
26 rākau".

27 [English: We now turn to the proverb for today "The way in which the young sapling is
28 nurtured (bent), determines how the tree will grow".]

29 The way in which a young sapling is grown determines how the tree will grow. Madam
30 Chair, that whakataukī is a thought to guide us throughout today as we consider the way
31 that tamariki are grown, and how they are grown and nurtured and how that determines the
32 shape of Aotearoa. We will hear evidence from survivors today that includes the
33 experience of the care to custody pipeline. In Aotearoa those who have experience in gangs

1 and those who are in prison are often viewed only at the tree end, as trees that have grown
2 wayward that can cause damage to places and people.

3 But today we turn to understanding the sapling, what happened in the early years,
4 the way in which we nurture, or as the case may be, we do not nurture young saplings, and
5 what that journey takes to becoming a tree. The witnesses today and further in the week
6 will speak to how abuse in care has contributed to the crisis of mass incarceration of Māori
7 in Aotearoa. And we note that the sapling, as with the tree, always has potential to grow in
8 new and upward directions. I tēnei rā, ngā wahanga e rua e whai ake nei. Today there will
9 be two sessions to follow.

10 We open this morning with Paora Sweeney who will be joining today by video link.
11 Mā counsel Alana Thomas ia e tiaki. Counsel Alana Thomas will be assisting him this
12 morning. Mr Sweeney will share about his experience of how he came to be in State care,
13 the abuse he experienced there, and the links between being put into care and going on to
14 be involved with gangs and incarceration.

15 In terms of timing, Madam Chair, that first session will be for the whole morning,
16 we will begin shortly and that will take us through to the lunch break with a short break
17 around 11.30. Whai muri te wā kai (following our break), ka tahuri atu tātou ki te kōrero a
18 Wiremu Waikari. Matua Wi will also be joining through video link and there will be a
19 prerecording played of his evidence which is about two and a half hours long. Mā Winston
20 McCarthy rāua ko Indiana Shewen ia e tiaki (Winston McCarthy and Indiana Shewen will
21 be supporting him). He will be assisted today by Winston McCarthy and Indiana Shewen
22 from the Royal Commission who are with him in person.

23 Matua Wi will speak to his experiences of adoption, State care, the impacts of the
24 abuse he experienced, which included physical, verbal, psychological, sexual and racial
25 abuse. He will also share his pathway to becoming a social worker and cultural advisor and
26 his recommendations for the cultural support and healing he considers necessary for Māori
27 survivors.

28 Nō reira, ki ngā whakaatu o te rā, ki ngā kaitautoko, otirā ki a koutou e mātakitaki
29 mai ana. Ki ngā māhuri, e mihi ana ki a koutou katoa. Tēnā tātou.

30 [English: Therefore, to those presenting today and to their supporters and to
31 everyone watching, to all the young people watching, welcome.] I'll now pass to
32 Ms Thomas.

33 **MS THOMAS:** Hei te ūpoko o tō tātou hui, tēnā koe. Otirā, ki ngā Kaikōmihana e honohono nei
34 ki tō tātou hui, ka nui te mihi atu ki a koutou. Matua rā, e tautoko mārika ana au i ngā kupu,

1 i ngā kōrero i utaina rā ki runga i tō tātou kaikarakia, ki runga i tō tātou kaimihi, kaikōrero i
 2 te rangi nei, tēnā kōrua. Tēnā kōrua i ō kupu. Tēnā kōrua i ō kōrero i whakahārō ake ai te
 3 manu aute o whakaponu ki runga ki ngā rangi tuangahuru, kia purea ai tātou e ngā hau o
 4 wairua mākohakoha, i ngā hau o wairua tapu. Nā kōrua anō tērā i whakatere ai tō tātou
 5 waka, kia pae ai ia ki tōna wāhi e tika ana, ki tōna Hawaiki houtanga, Ngāti Whātua tēnā
 6 koutou.

7 [English: To our head Commissioner, greetings. To all the commissioners connecting to
 8 this hearing, I acknowledge you all. Firstly, I would like to also support the words
 9 bestowed upon our minister and also to our speaker this morning. I salute you both for
 10 your guiding words of wisdom that were given to God above and hence their blessings
 11 bestowed on us and it was both of you who launched our waka today to get to the place
 12 where we need to be. So Ngāti Whātua thank you.]

13 E mihi ana hoki ki a koutou katoa i runga anō i te mōhio ko koutou tērā e pupuri ana i te
 14 mauri, e pupuri ana i te wairua o tēnei nohoanga. Ehara i te mea ko tēnei rangi nahe nei.
 15 Ehara i te mea ko ēnei wiki ki roto i tō koutou whare nahe nei. Engari, mai i te tīmatanga o
 16 te Royal Commission i roto i ngā tau kua hipa. Ko reira a Ngāti Whātua e mahi ana i te
 17 mahi, e pupuri ana i te mauri. Nō reira, tēnā koutou, ngā uri o Tuperiri. Tēnā koutou te
 18 whare o Tumutumuwhenua. Te whakapiringa o te kōrero, te whakapiringa o te tangata, te
 19 whakairinga o te kōrero, e tika ana kia mihia koutou Ngāti Whātua, tēnā koutou.

20 [English: I'd like to acknowledge all of you who hold the mauri, the life force, the
 21 spirit of this land. Not just for today, not just in these weeks we have attended your whare,
 22 but right from the start of the Royal Commission in the years gone by, therefore Ngāti
 23 Whātua, the holders of the life force, greetings to you, the descendants of Tuperiri and also
 24 to Tumutumuwhenua, the house where warm words and people are welcomed. Thank you.]

25 E tautoko ana hoki i ngā mihi ki a rātou kua taka kei tua o Nukutaurua. E kore a
 26 muri e hokia, ko rātou tēnā kua riro atu ki te ringa kaha o aituā, haere, haere, haere mai,
 27 haere. Ki ngā tini mate o te wā. Haere runga anō i te mōhio kei konei tonu ōu uri, kei konei
 28 tonu ō tamariki, mokopuna. Ka mutu, ka ora tonu koutou i roto i ō tātou, i roto i ō mātou
 29 rau mahara. Ka tangi tonu te ngākau, ka tangi tonu te ngākau, ka tangi tonu te ngākau,
 30 haramai, haere. Tauārai o te pō ki a rātou, tītoko o te ao marama ki a tātou. Tīhei mauri ora

31 [English: I support also the acknowledgments to those that have passed on and will
 32 never return who now sit with the Lord. Farewell, farewell. To all those, our many people
 33 who have passed, go in the knowledge that we are here, your descendants are here and that

1 you survive on in our memories. We bereave and we grieve for you, farewell. The
2 darkness to them, the light of world to the living, alas the breath of life.]

3 Tēnā tātou i whakarauika mai nei i tēnei wā. Kei ngā Kaikōmihana, kei ngā ūpoko e
4 noho ana i tō tātou taumata, ngā kaiurungi o tō tātou waka, tēnā koutou i a koutou hiki anō i
5 te hoe o tō tātou waka, kia toia rā ki uta, kia toia rā ki tai. E tere anō ai ki runga i ngā moana
6 o whakaaro nui, i ngā moana o whakaaro pono, i ngā moana o whakaaro hōhonu. I te
7 mutunga iho, i runga anō i te moana o te aroha ki ēnei mōrehu e tū, tū nei i roto i ēnei wiki.

8 [English: Greetings to everyone in attendance, to all the Commissioners, especially
9 the Chair, those who guide this waka. Thank you for uplifting, ensuring that we drag the
10 canoe to the right place where we want to on the seas of great thought, of great faith, of
11 great depth, of great love towards the survivors presenting the evidence in these weeks.]

12 A kāti. Ki ngā ringa e pau kaha nei ki te pupuri i te kakau o te hoe o te waka, kei
13 ngā kaitautoko, kei ngā kaiāwhina, tae atu rā ki tō tātou kaiwhakawhiti reo, anei ahau e
14 mihi atu nei. Me pēhea au e rere kupu whakamihi ki te kore e whakanui i te māia me te
15 kaha o ngā mōrehu katoa. E tū ana ki te tuku i ā rātou kōrero, ki te tuku hoki o rātou mamae
16 e tika ana me tuku. E tika ana ki a rere ēnā mamae, kia whakarērea tērā mamae. Me kaua
17 koutou e pupuri. Anei tētahi wāhi, wāhi haumarua kia tū koutou kite whakamōhio atu i a
18 koutou hīkoitanga, i a koutou takahitanga i ngā huarahi, i ngā whenua o tēnei ao. Kei ngā
19 mōrehu katoa, e mihi atu nei, e mihi atu nei.

20 [English: Also, to the people holding the handle of the waka and also to our
21 interpreters, I would also like to acknowledge them. How can I stand here today without
22 acknowledging all the survivors who stand presenting the hurt and to convey those that
23 hurt. It is good, it is only well to release, it is not well to hold on to that pain. Here is a
24 safe haven for you to stand and to release what you guys have walked in this world and
25 therefore to all you survivors I salute you.]

26 I runga i tēnā hei te ūpoko. Ko miss Thomas tēnei. Nōku te waimarie, te hōnore, te
27 whakakanohi i a Paora Sweeney i te rā nei. Nō reria, me tahuri atu tātou ki a Mr Sweeney i
28 tēnei wā.

29 [English: On top of that, I am Ms Thomas, it is my fortune that I am attending for
30 Paora Sweeney today and therefore let us turn to Mr Sweeney now.

31 So if we could go to Mr Sweeney now.

32 PAORA TUKUNOA SWEENEY

33 **QUESTIONING BY MS THOMAS:** Kia ora Paora, tēnā koe.

34 A. Kia ora.

1 **Q.** I want to, before we start with your statement, Paora, I want to acknowledge you and your
 2 whānau that have arrived here today, i runga anō i te mōhio, knowing very well this is not
 3 an easy thing for you to do and to give your evidence and your kōrero today, Paora. So
 4 I want to ensure that you deliver your kōrero in the way that you want to and feel most
 5 comfortable with. If you need to take a break, we can take a break. Kei a koe te tikanga,
 6 we're in your hands Paora as to how you want to proceed within this time.

7 So I know we've talked about how you want to introduce yourself or introduce your
 8 whānau. Did you want to do that, have a bit of a kōrero to begin our session, who's perhaps
 9 with you and ngā whakaahua, the pictures that are with you today. Ka tukuna te wā ki a koe
 10 (The time is over to you now).

11 **A.** Ka huri ake nei ki a koutou. Kia koutou te mana, e noho nā i te taumata o te wā. Tēnei te
 12 mihi aroha ki a koutou, mō te aroha i muri mai i ō koutou whakaaro ki te haramai nei,
 13 whakarongo ki ngā kōrero mō ngā hara o ngā wā i muri. Tēnei te mihi ki a koutou. Koina
 14 anō hoki, e te kaiwhakataū, Taiaha, mō tō kupu aroha, tō kupu tautoko ki a au nei me tōku
 15 nei whānau, mō ngā mōrehu o tēnei hara. Tēnei te mihi ki a koutou.

16 [English:(I would like to turn my immediate attention to the Commission sitting on the
 17 panel. I would like to salute you with love who have come with thoughts of love and to
 18 listen to the presentations of the abuse which happened in years gone by. Therefore,
 19 I thank you all. Thank you, Taiaha, for your words of love and support to myself, to my
 20 family, and to the survivors within this Inquiry. Therefore salutations.]

21 Tēnei tōku nei tama e noho nā, ko Tāwera. Me tōku nei tuahine, Ngahuia. Kua tae mai i
 22 runga i te karanga o tēnei wā, ki te tautoko, te awhi nei. Āe. Tēnei te mihi. Tēnei au, ko
 23 Paora Tukunoa Sweeney au, ka tū ake i raro i te mana. Nō Porourangi te taha ki tōku nei
 24 pāpā. Ko Harataunga tōku kāinga. Harataunga tōku marae, Rakairoa te whare. Ko Te
 25 Aitanga-a-Mate tōku nei hapū. Ko Nukutaimemeha tōku waka. Te taha o tōku nei whaea,
 26 tēnei te tamaiti o Ngahuia Whittaker. Ko Te Iti o Hauraki rāua ko Te Kotahitanga ngā
 27 whare, ko Hako te tangata. Tēnei te mihi ki a koutou.

28 [English: This is my son sitting here, Tawera and this is my sister Ngahuia. They
 29 have both come to support. Therefore, thank you. My name is Paora Sweeney, Ngāti
 30 Porou is my tribe on my father's side, Harataunga is my marae, Rakairoa is the whare, Te
 31 AitangaMate is the subtribe. My mother is Ngahuia Whittaker. Te Iti o Hauraki and
 32 Kotahitanga are the houses. Te Hako is the chief and thank you all.]

- 1 **Q.** Tēnā koe Paora. E mihi ana i ērā kupu. Me tō tō mai i ngā ingoa o tō tūpuna ki roto i tō
 2 tātou whare. Ngāti Porou, e mihi ana. E mihi ana hoki ki tō tama me tō tuahine e noho nei,
 3 hei taituarā mōu mō tēnei wahanga.
- 4 [English: I would like to acknowledge your words and also identifying with your ancestors.
 5 I would like to pay homage to Ngāti Porou, also to your son and to your sister in support in
 6 the session). So Paora I know that you've prepared a statement and that's been filed with
 7 the Commission and has been read. So what I would like us to do is go through the
 8 statement and I'll ask you some questions about what you've shared, but feel free to add
 9 anything that you might not have put in that statement to tell us about your childhood. Kei
 10 te pai terā? (Is that okay)?
- 11 **A.** I've been reading through the statement over the last few days and the timeline's a bit
 12 wrong, you know, I realise I'm just talking about incidents that happened and I think the
 13 timeline's a bit wrong.
- 14 **Q.** Okay, ka pai, we can correct those as we go.
- 15 **A.** But yeah, but it's there somewhere.
- 16 **Q.** Ka pai. So I think we'll start at the beginning Paora. So I want to take you back to 1960, in
 17 the early 60s, and can you tell us a bit about your whānau at that time, your parents, your
 18 siblings, what was your home life like in the early years?
- 19 **A.** We had a fantastic home life. We were very poor people, but we didn't know that. The kai
 20 we had was, you know, we loved it, we just – it was a fantastic life. There was no drinking
 21 or no – my dad didn't swear or yell, raise his voice to us, he never laid a hand on us as kids.
 22 We loved our dad, loved our mum. We're just a happy family, yeah. I don't know how else
 23 to say it, I have just wonderful memories of that time.
- 24 **Q.** How many siblings did you have, Paora?
- 25 **A.** I think there were nine of us, I think – eight of us. My little sister died when she was quite
 26 young and, yeah, I think there was just seven of us growing up. Four boys and three girls.
- 27 **Q.** Are you in the kei waenganui, in the middle?
- 28 **A.** Āe, āe.
- 29 **Q.** So early home life was enjoyable, kei reira te aroha i roto i tō koutou whanau, (the love was
 30 there in your family), Mum and Dad, and what did Dad do for mahi, Paora?
- 31 **A.** When my dad was in the Coromandel, he was in the bush, but then he got a job following
 32 the dams around the middle of the North Island I think he was – he might have been – he
 33 was a welder, so I think he was doing some welding while he was working for the Ministry

1 of Works. I think we moved to Mangakino, Aratiatia, Atiamuri and Tūrangi. It was a good
2 life for us.

3 **Q.** And, that was like that right up until you were about 11, 10 or 11, is that right?

4 **A.** Yeah, when I was 11, my mother died in a car crash in Thomas Road in Hamilton. My
5 sister was also in the car, she was really badly injured, really disfigured. But my mum died.
6 I remember my dad holding me in his arms, telling me there'd been an accident and he
7 didn't think mum was coming home. I don't think I realised what that meant. Even at the
8 funeral I didn't realise that my mum wasn't coming home.

9 **Q.** I know this is hard to talk about these tragedies, I also think it's very important for us to
10 know nē Paora, what life was like and what all of you tamariki had to go through. Did you
11 have any support at that time outside of your whānau, any counselling?

12 **A.** This is a funny thing, when my parents were alive, we would call everyone aunty and
13 uncle, but when my parents died, they all kicked me out of their house and I realised they
14 weren't aunty or uncle at all. So I brought my kids up not saying that because we just
15 called everyone uncle and aunty. I brought my kids up not to do that, just I told them who's
16 their uncle and aunty and that's it.

17 It was a difficult time. Yeah. I think the loss of our mum was a bit of a blow and
18 six weeks later my dad passed as well. And my sister woke me up one morning and asked
19 me to come with her because something had happened to my dad. And we went and found
20 him on the floor in the room, he had had a stroke, and I had to run down looking for
21 somebody with a telephone to ring the Police. The Police came and they took him to
22 hospital, and he died two days later. That was a bit of a blow for the family.

23 We buried my mum in Tūrangi because my dad wanted to be close to her, and then
24 when he died we buried him there as well. But somebody else had got between him, so
25 they were one – they were sort of separated. But then six weeks after my dad died, my
26 sister died in her sleep. Which was quite hard for us at the time. It was the sister that woke
27 me to help get my dad off the floor.

28 When that happened, I was asked to go with a relation who had adopted my little
29 brother and they asked me if I would go and settle him into his new house. So I didn't think
30 much of it, I had to go anyway, so I went there and we were there not long, a few weeks, a
31 month, when I heard him scream outside and I went outside and the lady had him by the
32 hair and she was whipping his legs with a stick. We'd never been hit in our lives, so that
33 was foreign to us.

1 So I attacked the lady and I picked up my little brother and she said her husband's
2 going to kill me when he gets home. So I picked up my little brother, I took him to the gate
3 because I was going to run away with him, but then I didn't know where to go, I had
4 nowhere to go to, so I put him down at the gate, this is probably the hardest thing that's ever
5 happened for me. I had to leave him at that house knowing that those people are hitting
6 him and I was the only person he knew. He was six years old, I was 11, I had nowhere to
7 go. So I put him down and I could hear him screaming as I was walking up the road and
8 I'd run back and hug him until he stopped screaming, I'd leave him again.

9 That was in a place called Whakamaru and I walked from Whakamaru back to
10 Tūrangi, I don't know how long that took. Every car that came I would hide in a drain
11 because I'd be thinking it was the husband looking for me. But I got back to Tūrangi and
12 I got picked – I went to my – my cousin found me in the street and took me home, made me
13 a bed in the garage. But a few days later the Social Welfare people picked me up. They
14 took me to the Hamilton Boys' Home.

15 **Q.** I just want to ask you, Paora, if you don't remember – I know you were only 11 still at this
16 time, is that right?

17 **A.** Yeah, I was still 11.

18 **Q.** So this was your first experience or meeting with the Social Welfare system.

19 **A.** Yeah.

20 **Q.** Can you remember what that process was like, who let them know to come and get you and
21 how were you, if at all, looked after?

22 **A.** I think it was my Uncle Much(?) that rung them and I loved my Uncle Much(?), he was
23 great to me. But I don't think he knew what to do with me, so he rung the Social Welfare
24 people. I woke up in the morning and the Social Welfare man was standing there and he
25 took me in his car from Tūrangi to the office in Taupō and then I went to the Boys' Home.
26 I think while I was in the Boys' -Home- I done an exam and I passed some exam and then
27 the Māori education foundation-- paid money for me to go to boarding school.

28 **Q.** Was that the Melville Home?

29 **A.** It was the Melville Boys' Home. It wasn't all lovely like that at Melville. When I got there
30 I got slapped around a bit. And I think,- and I think all the way through it – -I think
31 I wasn't responding to, you know, I wasn't responding to the things that the housemasters
32 were saying. I wasn't joining in the groups, I wasn't,- I was alone, I wasn't talking, and I
33 think they thought I was being cheeky so they were giving me a slap or grab my
34 hair -or -- I- just think I missed my mum. I just think that's all that was happening.

1 But I think they thought,- when I look back, I think they thought I was being cheeky
2 to them by not listening. I didn't know them, didn't know who they were, I didn't know
3 why I was there. I'd done nothing wrong. I got there, they locked me in the cell.
4 I remember standing on the line the first day out of the cell and a man came down the line
5 with two baskets, one had bananas, one had orange and he said, "What do you want?" And
6 I said "ah" and he bashed my bottom teeth through my lip and he said "I can't see any
7 fuck'n ahs in the basket. So what do you want?" And I said "ah" again and he said,
8 "Cheeky bastard eh." He grabbed me by the ear and he stood me by the wall. He said,
9 "You stay there." I think I stood there – I pissed my pants there. Later on- I woke up in the
10 room, I think I was in the infirmary. I think they thought I was being cheeky to them.

11 **Q.** And these were the kaimahi of the home that were supposed to be looking after you, nē?

12 **A.** Yeah.

13 **Q.** How many boys were in that home at that time, do you remember, Paora?

14 **A.** Must have been, I don't know, might be 50.

15 **Q.** Māori, Pākehā?

16 **A.** Everywhere we went it's mostly Māori people. Everywhere. And everywhere we went it's
17 Pākehā people in charge. When I was a little kid I thought Pākehā people ruled the world.
18 They were just –

19 **Q.** You talk a bit about the excessive punishments and the physical abuse that occurred at that
20 home. Did that happen to all of the boys, that type of experience?

21 **A.** Yeah, look I don't know, I mean I was only worried about me, but I saw a boy getting a
22 hiding with a belt, and because they had run away and we were all in the secure block, I
23 was only new there, and you had to stay a month or something in the secure block until
24 they let you out or something, and so some people had run away. And we had a thing
25 called "run away PT" and that was just a chance for them to knock us around and made us
26 walk around, duck walk around the field saying "quack quack" and they thought it was
27 funny. Boys would fall over crying and they'd pull them up. I think they wanted us to tell
28 them where the people were that ran away. We didn't know. But they found him, they
29 found them both and one of them got a hiding on the horse in the gym with a belt.

30 **Q.** And was it quite common for the boys to run away?

31 **A.** Yeah, everyone knew about run away PT, everyone hated that.

32 **Q.** You've spoken a few times about the secure unit, I think is it called the pound or the
33 digger?

34 **A.** Yeah, the pound, yeah.

1 **Q.** And you were put there straight away as soon as you arrived as an 11 -year-old and stayed
2 for a week. Can you tell us a bit about what that is?

3 **A.** Something happened, the night that I got there, sorry just another part of this, sorry. When
4 I first got there, I was just put in the pound and you're just in there, I think you have an
5 hour's recreation, and you just stay in the room all day. And that's all that happens, I don't
6 know why that happens, but that's all that happened.

7 **Q.** And you're in there by yourself?

8 **A.** Yeah.

9 **Q.** And you're out for just one hour of a day and that would happen for the whole week?

10 **A.** Yeah, they'll let us out for an hour to have a shower and they'll give us an orange or an
11 apple or something, then we go back in the cell.

12 **Q.** And you say that you were in there for the first week. Were you in the pound often, did
13 that happen quite a bit?

14 **A.** Yeah, not at Hamilton, not at Hamilton, but it did happen in the other boys' home. In
15 Hamilton I was in the pound twice because I won the exam and went to boarding school,
16 but then I ran away from the boarding school. I was only there three months or something,
17 a bit longer, and then I ran away and I ended up back into the Hamilton Boys' Home.

18 **Q.** So was it a school as well, did you have schooling there, Paora?

19 **A.** Well, I had the exam there in the Hamilton Boys' Home. That's all I remember. And I won
20 the exam, I got a pretty good mark, so they paid for my thing to go to boarding school.
21 And they sent me back from there to Kennedy Bay to my aunty's and then a Catholic priest
22 man came and picked me up and took me to Auckland.

23 **Q.** Before, because I do want to talk to you about that next place that you went to, Paora,
24 before that, just still back at the Melville Home in Hamilton, did you get any visits from
25 anyone, like social workers or anyone checking on you while you were there?

26 **A.** I don't know if I had any visit.

27 **Q.** Do you remember how long –

28 **A.** One good thing, though, there was a lady in the kitchen there knew my mum and she, you
29 know, she was really good to me. Well, you know, I mean she'll smile and say "hello" and
30 "how's things." But I just felt I was really thankful she was there.

31 **Q.** And this might be out of the timeline, because I know you said there are a few mistakes in
32 this, so correct me if I'm wrong, but was it when you were at the Hamilton Boys' Home that
33 you were taken back to Court in Taupō for a sentencing; is that right?

1 A. Yeah, look that's when I ran away from the boys' home and I went back to the Hamilton –
2 that's when I ran away from the boarding school and went back to Hamilton Boys' Home.
3 This is the thing that I was trying to have a look at the timeline, because I actually went to
4 two places in Taumarunui around this time and I ran away from both of them and went
5 back to the boys' home again. The Social Welfare man picked me up in Taumarunui, took
6 me back to the Hamilton Boys' Home. I ran away from the house that I was meant to be
7 staying at. They were not good to me and so I went back to the boys' home and then they
8 sent me to a family home.

9 **Q.** Was that like a foster care placement?

10 A. It was a foster care place and there was a little boy in there and a little girl and me, and
11 I ended up running away from there too. In that house the lady started sexually abusing me
12 and her husband, his name, I can't say his name, but her husband drove the Caltex petrol
13 tanker. He was hardly ever home, he was always delivering petrol out to farms or
14 wherever, and then she started doing things to me and then kept telling me that if her
15 husband found out he would kill me – don't let him, don't tell him what I was doing to her.
16 It was my fault. So I ended up, I ran away from there and when I –

17 **Q.** So that was a foster home, Paora, where that sexual abuse happened was a foster home?

18 A. Yeah, it was a family home, well-known family home in Taumarunui.

19 **Q.** And you were 11?

20 A. I was 12 then. By the time my sister Pauline died I was 12. And then when I ran away
21 from there I went back to Tūrangi and, well, I was just living on the street there and
22 sleeping in the buses, cardboard boxes or something. I would make huts down by the urupā
23 so I could see my parents and that there. But just down by the urupā there were the sports
24 clubs, so I started breaking into them at night and getting the pies and the chips that were in
25 the warmer. Soon I started taking alcohol and I started drinking myself into another world,
26 so I could talk with my mum.

27 At that time I got really unwell and I went and broke into a car at Great Lake
28 Motors where my mother was working at the time of her death. I broke into the car and
29 I hopped under the – I just wanted to be close to my mum. I hopped under the back seat
30 cover and went to sleep and the security guard found me, took me to Taupō Police Station.

31 A day later or two days later the judge said that he had to put me in protective
32 custody and then my sister came down from Hamilton, my sister GRO-B, and
33 she the- judge allowed her to come into the cell, bring some chicken and chips and a
34 CocaCola. She came in and I was really close to my sister, loved her, we hugged and

1 laughed and then she said, when it's time to go she said, "I'll see you on Saturday." That
2 night she was hitch-hiking home around the lake, and she was hit by a motorbike and
3 killed. I think, that's – life changed for me at that moment. I started to hate everyone,
4 everything, hate myself. I blamed myself for my sister's death. Yeah, there was a hole.
5 I got sentenced to Kohitere at that time, so we had my sister's funeral then they took me
6 down to Kohitere.

7 **Q.** How did you find out that she had passed away, Paora?

8 **A.** I'll tell you what happened. I know this might sound weird to you, but this happened. That
9 night I got back from Taupō Police Station back to Melville Boys' Home, it was about 11
10 o'clock at night, they went and locked me in a cell. Somebody else was asleep in the cell so
11 they put me on a mattress on the floor and then they turned the light in the hallway off and
12 it just went dark and my eyes started adjusting to the dark, but I could see this black thing
13 in the corner. It didn't go away and next minute it moved across the room and laid on top
14 of me and started laughing at me, I couldn't see anything but I could see teeth and it was
15 laughing at me, and I was screaming and I was soaking wet and screaming and yelling, and
16 then this thing hopped off me and started moving back towards the corner and then it
17 disappeared into the wall. As it disappeared into the wall I started calling out to my
18 mother. This tremendous peace came on me, it was like my mother had come and I don't
19 know why she was laughing at me.

20 But in the morning, I got called to the office, the boss' office and he told me my
21 sister had been hit by a motorbike and it was not likely that she was going to live. I think
22 she had already gone by then, I think my mum come and told me that she was going. After
23 my mum disappeared back into the wall, I was laying there in the dark and I heard this fulla
24 say, he said "are you Paul Sweeney?" And I said "yeah", and he said "Bro it's me" and he
25 told me – it was our neighbours from Tūrangi, it was their son and I used to go to school
26 with him. He said "I could hear you calling out all the names of your family." He said he
27 couldn't see anything, because I was telling him to press the buzzer, he said he couldn't see
28 anything. And in the morning they told me my sister had died.

29 **Q.** And you were able to attend her hui mate, her tangi?

30 **A.** They took me to the tangi and then they took me to Levin.

31 **Q.** And when you say who, is this Social Welfare, was it the home?

32 **A.** No, it was the Social Welfare people.

33 **Q.** So I want to be clear on our timeline again, Paora, so you can correct us. So that finished
34 your time at Melville, the Hamilton Boys' Home?

1 A. It did. Also in there was my stay at the school. I see the Catholic man that introduced
2 himself at the start, he's part of the St Paul School or something. There's some staff at the
3 school that wasn't good for me there. And I think the same thing is because I wasn't, just
4 wasn't getting involved with everything. So GRO-B, he was the master of
5 discipline or whatever he was, he caned me on the speaker in front of the school and then
6 he punched me up in his room. So I ran away from there. I had to keep going to the library
7 and write my day-dreams down because I was day-dreaming all the time and I was just
8 thinking of my family. I think they were just thinking I wasn't towing the line or
9 something. I didn't know how to deal with the death of my family. I've struggled with that
10 my whole life.

11 **Q.** You're still only very young at this time, weren't you, Paora, still 12?

12 A. Yeah, I was 12. I went to Hokio first, and I think they put me there by accident. I was
13 there maybe a week or something before I got picked up and taken to Kohitere. I didn't
14 actually know what was happening. And I was glad in the end I missed out Hokio and
15 went to Kohitere because I hear some bad stories from Hokio too.

16 **Q.** We've heard a lot of evidence within the Commission inquiries about Hokio and Kohitere—

17 A. Yeah, look —

18 **Q.** I know you were only at Hokio for a short while. Can you remember anything specific
19 from there, or generally how you felt in Hokio before going to Kohitere?

20 A. I actually felt scared at Hokio. When I look back on it I think that was the kaupapa, I think
21 the kaupapa was to keep us living in fear so that we were – they were able to control us. I
22 think when I hear people talk about abuse and that, I think they're thinking I'm going to say
23 that oh they held us down and thrashed us until we were – no, it wasn't like that, it was just
24 they will just walk past you and give you an elbow in the face or kick you in the nuts or
25 bang your head in the wall or – it was that type of thing, they just wanted to show you that
26 they were the boss, they were in control.

27 That was happening all the time, that's the thing that when I shared part of my story
28 with another man from the Commission – I don't know who that man was now. But I told
29 him what was happening in the dining room, and in the dining room when I look back on it
30 I think that they were trying to make us little Pākehā kids. And because we weren't allowed
31 to have our elbow on the table or our – we had to have our knife and fork by the plate in the
32 right way, we had to eat with our mouth closed. When we were kids we eat with our hands.
33 So when you go in the dining room you get slapped around and head banged in the table,
34 and I told the man about it and a few months later a movie came out called 'Savage' and

1 me and my son got an invite from the Police to go to the premiere and watch it. And in that
2 movie there was an incident in the kitchen where a fulla was getting beat up by one of the
3 housemasters. That's exactly what I told that man. So whoever wrote that story, the same
4 thing happened to me happened to him.

5 **Q.** Was there any type of recognition of Māori culture, of tikanga, at Hokio that you saw?

6 **A.** No, no. No, there was nothing like that.

7 **Q.** Even though the majority were Māori, tama Māori, nē?

8 **A.** Āe.

9 **Q.** So after Hokio you said you were taken to Kohitere, stayed at Hokio for a little while, went
10 to Kohitere. How old would you have been then, just so we're following the –

11 **A.** Yeah, I might have been getting on to 13 or something. I'm not quite sure, somewhere
12 around there, 12 and a half, 13.

13 **Q.** And you were in Kohitere for quite a bit longer, weren't you?

14 **A.** Yeah, I left there when I was 15 I think and went to Borstal, or went to DC, something –
15 I went to DC then I went to Borstal.

16 **Q.** Certainly those two years that you were there, 11, 13, age of a tama is kind of critical years
17 for growing a boy or a man. Can you share a little bit about what Kohitere was like and
18 how that's impacted?

19 **A.** I remember the first day that I got there and they had a system there amongst the boys, and
20 I think they were – you were either a "spanker" or a "spanker hard" or something was the
21 term they would use. And I think probably the day after I got there I had a fight in the
22 tennis court. The tennis court was a big fenced off – the court was fenced off and so that
23 everyone came inside the fence and closed the gate and you had a fight in the middle. And
24 I think that's just the standard welcoming thing when you go in the boys' home. I think the
25 next day I had a fight in the boiler room and then the ablution block. It just happened like
26 that. I don't know. There was a hierarchy there in Kohitere. Yeah, you just had to survive
27 it.

28 **Q.** And you talk about that in your statement about the influence of the gangs in Kohitere
29 amongst the boys?

30 **A.** Yeah, there was a big – there were two wings in Kohitere, one was Tui Villa and the other
31 one was Kiwi Villa. Tui Villa was a Mongrel Mob wing and Kiwi Villa was the Black
32 Power wing. And you were either or. There was no middle ground. And you fought for
33 your villa. It's just how it was. The gangs might have started 10 years before this, but this
34 is where they really – this was the breeding ground.

1 That whakataukī or that thing that that lady used about the young sapling or
 2 something growing up, I just thought that was just an appropriate thing, because all those
 3 people that I had been in the gangs and that with and Kohitere, I met them in prison my
 4 whole life. Walking through prison I met them. You know, if the Social Welfare was
 5 doing what they should have been doing, I should have been meeting them in university
 6 and polytech or,- but I met them in DC and Borstal and prison. It's just the same thing.
 7 You sort of had to survive in Kohitere, it's just the way it was. When I went there I was just
 8 a skinny little kid. But later on I had to fight to survive there- and I survived. I did survive
 9 and, yeah, there were some moments there that changed the whole world for me.

10 When I was there I had a fight in the common room and everyone was expecting
 11 this fight to go down, even the housemasters, and when it happened the two housemasters
 12 were in the common room when that happened. They just closed the door and we went at it
 13 in the common room, and I ended up cracking his skull and he had to go to hospital and
 14 they put me in the pound for three months. But when I got out of the pound the world
 15 changed for me. It was like I had the run of the place. I could walk to the front of the line,
 16 pick the best – sit on the best table, whatever, you know, the world just changed instantly
 17 for me. That's how it was. Then people trying to take that position off me, so we're
 18 fighting over it.

19 **Q.** So the staff really kind of encouraged that type of atmosphere at Kohitere, or at least didn't
 20 stop the violence?

21 **A.** Well, they knew this was going to happen. I cracked this fulla's skull, you know, we ended
 22 up good mates me and him, I met him in jail a couple of times. He was in another gang, I
 23 was in another gang, and we had this sort of thing between us – and he died of cancer two
 24 years ago. But yeah, that was the sort of life-changing moment for me in Kohitere.

25 **Q.** And you talk about – sorry.

26 **A.** There was another moment when I headbutted one of the housemasters in the pound and
 27 two people were holding me and he was yelling at me and I just headbutted him. And
 28 again, that changed things for me. You see at first they just knock you around, you don't do
 29 nothing. But in the end when you stand up for yourself and then the world changes for you
 30 there.

31 **Q.** So you've talked about the violence that occurred between the boys, but there was also
 32 violence with the staff members, physical abuse as well?

33 **A.** Yeah, there's a couple of people there that we all knew, they either had a terrible marriage
 34 or something, something was wrong and they were just knocking people around, and we all

1 knew who they were. And I thought later on after I headbutt (inaudible) they didn't come
2 near me again.

3 But they had a camp there and I got picked to go on the camp. Now it was a camp
4 for new people. I got picked to go on the camp and then when they all went out to do all
5 their new people stuff, I got kept back in the camp by a man called GRO-B was a bit of a
6 commando man and – but what I realise now he kept me there so he could beat me up over
7 the two days that I was there. He beat me up without hitting me, he beat me up by doing all
8 martial arts things on me and twisting my body around until I'm screaming. And then he'll
9 have a rest and he'd start again and nobody was there watching it. And I realise today that
10 he done that because it never left any mark on me. I thought he was very cunning how he
11 done that. I didn't think of that back then, but today I realise that's what he was doing.
12 Yeah, I think that he probably got told to do that.

13 **Q.** And if you don't mind, I think what you've said in your statement is quite a good reflection.
14 Do you mind if I read this one sentence out?

15 **A.** No.

16 **Q.** And you say: "When I look back these officers, they were my role models, they were now
17 my parents but fear was their way of disciplining."

18 And this is what you experienced at all those homes and how they controlled you?

19 **A.** Yeah. That was the way that they controlled everyone. But you see that's why I say when
20 I cracked that guy's head, my life changed, it was just instant. The fear went away, I was –
21 nobody messed with me. Yeah. And look, I became what other people would do to me
22 when I got there. Yeah, I was now running the show.

23 **Q.** That's the environment they created, nē?

24 **A.** Yeah, you had to be part of it, you just couldn't survive.

25 **Q.** You've talked about the secure or the pound a few times as well. Was this similar to the
26 Hamilton Boys' Home one?

27 **A.** No, this was a very different pound. I was in Wellington a couple of weeks ago and I came
28 back, I took my son there and my nephew to show them where I was and it's a very
29 different pound. Showed them the bed that I had slept on. When I was a little kid and I'd
30 get an earache or something, my dad and my mum would sit me on her lap, and she'd run
31 her hands through my hair. I'd be a little bit unwell, then she'd be humming this sound in
32 her stomach. She'd be holding me and rocking me and humming this sound, and when I
33 was in that pound, I would hop under the bed in a sort of foetal position, and I would be
34 humming that sound in my stomach. I would do that all day.

1 The sun would – the only way I knew the time was the shadow on the blocks when
2 the sun was coming down, when the sun got so – the shadow got so I knew that it was
3 going to be a time to have an orange or a banana or something, and then when it moved
4 again I knew what time was PT or lunch or something, but the whole time I laid under the
5 bed, I just think – like the lady that was abusing me, I would hop under the bed, she'd come
6 looking for me. She'd be calling out little funny things or something. I would hide from
7 her under the bed.

8 I just maybe want to share this little thing that in 2015 I was working in the prison
9 and the psychologist lady there kept walking behind me, having a go at me after the groups
10 or something, and I'd get back to my cell, I'd lock – back to my room, I'd lock my door,
11 she'd be banging on the door. And she'd do this over – because I wasn't following their
12 programme. And so I spoke with the manager and I said look if this carries on, I'm going to
13 leave.

14 So we talked, had a meeting with this lady and it stopped. On the way home I was
15 carpooling with another counsellor and they asked me what had happened, I told them, "Oh
16 she was chasing me in the room and I had to lock the door." And then she said "Oh yeah,
17 and what did that remind you of?" And I thought of it and I thought it reminded me of my
18 relationship with my wife, how she would chase me into the room, I'd lock the door and
19 she'd be banging on the thing, but she'd only be wanting to talk about the power bill or
20 something, or something like that.

21 So when this – and then when – when she said "Oh and then what did that remind
22 you of?" And she said that again, and then I realised that it reminded me of the lady that
23 was abusing me in the family home. And I wasn't running from my wife, I was running
24 from that. And when I look back on my life and I used to beat up women and I was in a
25 gang that really didn't care about it. But I didn't know why. But when I – when my life
26 changed and I realised it was wrong, what happened then was I started running away and
27 hiding, locking the door and I realised after what happened in the prison I went down and
28 done some work with the man who worked with this sort of stuff, but went down for three
29 days and he took me through that whole sexual abuse thing and I realised that I was doing
30 the things to women because I was afraid to be dominated. I was afraid, because that lady
31 was dominating me and making me do stuff I didn't want to do. She will give me some
32 lollies or some chocolate or a biscuit or I can stay up late, but don't tell GRO-B or he'll kill
33 me. Yeah, that was something that come out of my past. I realise that abuse thing has
34 destroyed all the relationships I've been in.

1 The sexual thing she would do, I would think those are the right things to do
2 because she was a Pākehā lady, they ruled the world. This is what you're meant to do. Yet
3 it was sick and mucked up. That destroyed my marriage and my first wife GRO-B
4 I realise I was traumatised by the thing that lady was doing. I didn't know what traumatised
5 was and we went away on a course just last year about abuse of children and things like
6 that, and we learned about trauma and I saw myself in there.

7 **Q.** Thank you for sharing that with us, Paora. It reminds me again of that whakataukī and that
8 you've also supported too, "te piko o te mahuri, tērā te tipu o te rākau" and the effects it has
9 had for our tamariki. I do want to just go back to Kohitere to ensure we've got all that
10 kōrero there. Before I do, I'm mindful we've been talking for a while. Did you want to
11 have a break at all, or do you want to just keep going? I'm in your hands.

12 **A.** Yeah, I might just go to the toilet if that's okay?

13 **Q.** Yeah, kei te pai tērā. Madam Chair, is that okay if we have a short adjournment?

14 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Kia ora Ms Thomas. Tēnā koe Mr Sweeney. Of course it is,
15 absolutely. Thank you counsel, we'll take a brief break and we'll pause the livestream and
16 return shortly.

17 **MS THOMAS:** Tēnā koe.

18 **Adjournment from 11.24 am to 11.47 am**

19 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Nau mai ano. Haere tonu Matua Sweeney.

20 **QUESTIONING BY MS THOMAS CONTINUED:** Nau mai hoki mai, Paora? Kei te pai koe,
21 you're ready to start again?

22 **A.** Āe, kia ora.

23 **Q.** Kia ora. So I want to pick up again at Kohitere where we left off and we were speaking
24 about the secure unit and what it was like in there. You'd been talking about the bed and
25 the mattress. You also say in your statement about when you don't do something right, they
26 would take your mattress off you. Can you talk to us a little bit about that?

27 **A.** Yeah, in the morning they would come and take your mattress away, so the bed is only a
28 wooden slab and in the winter it's freezing. So they would give the mattress back at dinner
29 time. And that really depended on who the housemaster was. It might be a prick and he'll
30 come and just take your mattress. He could be even nasty and put a bucket of water on the
31 floor.

32 **Q.** And that's how they punished you, was it?

33 **A.** Yeah, the pound wasn't enough, they had to give you a little bit more punishment. I was
34 sort of known as the 'secure king', I was there all the time. In the end I didn't care if I was

1 there. Yeah, I went back there a couple of weeks ago with my son and I realised I was just
2 a little kid in there. The place looks all different now. Back then, yeah, you've got no
3 control over your life, you're just locked in there.

4 **Q.** And like you said, it wasn't just for one or two days, you were in there for three months?

5 **A.** I was in there for months, yes, I was in there for months. I think they put me out of the
6 way. You know, I think some of the housemasters would use me to do things when they
7 wanted something happening with the boys. Other times I'd be the scapegoat sort of thing
8 and locked up. You know, when I look back on it now, that's really what was happening.
9 When I was married to my wife, a Pākehā woman, you know, middle class Pākehā woman,
10 one day she said to me that I talk really gruff, really sharp or something like that. And
11 I thought, you know, rubbish, you know, I didn't understand what she was saying. But then
12 one day I heard myself and I realised I talk like a prison officer. And that was a wonderful
13 moment for me because it allowed me to change from that and – but it made me realise that
14 they were my role models, I learned that they were all I knew, "do this, do that, go to bed,
15 pick that up". So, you know, I learned a lot of things from there from them and probably
16 that's how I ended up living my life.

17 My son just said something that I had said and when I'm working with the boys,
18 especially the boys in prison, I talk to them about secrets keep us sick and how they keep us
19 sick and I shared a little secret that I had with them. And that secret was when my parents
20 had died, you know, we still believe in Santa Claus. When my parents had died and by
21 Christmas time a new family was in our house and I was sleeping on the street. So I made
22 me a little hut next to the fence so that when Santa Claus would come, he would see me in
23 that little hut and give me a present in the morning. When I woke up in the morning he
24 didn't come. And that just devastated me. Not only did my parents – Santa Claus didn't
25 like me anymore. And that just absolutely devastated me.

26 I carried it all my life, and, you know, when I was able to share that I was released
27 from it, because I was afraid to share it. I mean they're going to take my patch off me if
28 I knew that I was there because Santa Claus never came. That was a big secret for me, but
29 it was real for me, and when I look back on that and how I used to dress, how I used to, you
30 know, have my patch on, my big ugly dreadlocks, big ugly beard and all my black clothes,
31 black cars, all my scary dogs and everything, I would stand in the corner of the pub and that
32 was my corner. When I look back on it now, I can see I was just a very lonely hurt kid and
33 that person standing in the corner was my representative. The real me was hidden away
34 inside behind all that big disguise. I was so afraid people would see this hurt little boy that

1 Santa Claus never came for. So I grew up like that and I think that that became just a part
 2 of my life and – but because of the world that I was in, that I had, you know, moved into, it
 3 enabled me to survive, you know, until now really.

4 To me all the hurt as a kid, I grew up – grew my life hiding behind all this blinken
 5 rubbish, heroin, morphine, I became a morphine addict, it just took the pain away instantly.
 6 But that was the hurt from my childhood and, you know, the lady that was meant to be my
 7 mum, you know, sexually abusing me and that's not a nice thing to say but she would do
 8 things to me. One time she sat on my face and rubbed herself all over my face. When she
 9 got off she said "Go wash your face, look at you, you silly boy", there was blood all over
 10 my face. I didn't know – I thought I had hurt her or something, I didn't know anything
 11 about that. But later on in life it disgusted me, I just felt humiliated by it. That was my
 12 mother. I run away from there and I got – went over and that's when my sister died. Yeah,
 13 I just – I think that that relationship with that lady has mucked my life up.

14 **Q.** And I think it's important for us to all hear that kōrero, Paora, so e mihi ana i tō kaha me tō
 15 māia kia whakatakoto i tō kōrero i roto i tēnei whare (I acknowledge your strength,
 16 resilience in presenting what you have presented today). Before we move on from
 17 Kohitere, was there anything else you wanted to talk about in terms of Kohitere?

18 **A.** There's lots of things from Kohitere. In one way I don't know how I would have survived
 19 on the street. And because I had rheumatic fever when I was a little kid, Kohitere gave me
 20 penicillin, so that was a good thing from there, they gave me penicillin for all the time that I
 21 was there. I had three meals a day, I had a bed to sleep, so at least I wasn't on the street,
 22 and I learned to survive. You know, I was a drug addict, but I survived, that has enabled
 23 me to walk through the hurt. When I – sorry, when I went to Hanmer Springs, the taha
 24 Māori programme, I was 31 years old and they had four mok – funerals there, four tangi for
 25 my family. And the first three tangi I couldn't handle it, there was snot, tears all over the
 26 floor, howling from my guts. But the last time I was able to help other people through it
 27 and it was gone. I was able to kick the morphine and heroin, everything, I didn't need it
 28 any longer. That was a life-changing moment for me, really how I ended up in the drug and
 29 alcohol field because that's all I knew. I found a way out and I knew how – why we were
 30 using the things we were using, I knew the hurt we were hiding from.

31 **Q.** So not only all this –

32 **A.** So Kohitere's left a huge imprint on my life. The other thing is all the gang members that
 33 I knew there, whether they're in one gang or the other, we're still lifetime friends. I see
 34 them now and a lot of them struggling in life. I think the sad thing is, you know, they've

1 also had kids now, you know, they haven't been able to bring up that well because of what's
2 happened for them. It's been a sad thing.

3 **Q.** So you were at these places and suffering physical abuse, all the emotional abuse, mental
4 abuse, and you also, if I was right what you said, had a heart problem as well all this time?

5 **A.** Yeah, I had a heart murmur when I was young, I was a sickly young kid.

6 **Q.** Did they know, did everybody like Social Welfare, the homes that you were in, did they
7 know about the heart problem you had?

8 **A.** Well, I think that when I went to Kohitere I got penicillin because they used to give it in an
9 injection, so they must have known. I didn't actually know until later on when I was still
10 getting the injection when I was about 20. I think probably because I was in prison all
11 those years that I was lucky that I was there because I was getting medication for that.

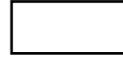
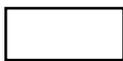
12 **Q.** So I want to talk a bit about after Kohitere and where you went and what happened then.
13 Can you talk to us about leaving Kohitere?

14 **A.** Yeah, I went to work for a man in Levin and we fell out and I ended up in the West Street
15 probation hostel in Palmerston North, and then I ran away from there and went back to
16 Tūrangi. And for some reason I ended up in Taumarunui again. And when I was in
17 Taumarunui I was staying on the street, I met a young man, he took me home to his place.
18 And the place was just a filthy dump of a place, and there was this big, huge lady there and
19 she'd – I realised she had eczema all over her face and her neck and she was so big that her
20 body had broken out of her skin and she really smelled and she laid on the couch all day.
21 She must have only been about 30 years old, 40. And I used to peel the things off her legs
22 in the morning when she used to wake up and I actually loved those people. They didn't
23 judge me, they didn't abuse me, call me "black cunt" or whatever that those other people
24 did, they were good to me.

25 One day the older brother got out of prison, he came home and he had a patch on. And I started
26 doing things with him, criminal things, getting food for the house, breaking into the trains
27 and things like that, just really getting food for his mum – his mum was the big lady. And
28 then one day he gave me a little denim jacket with a patch on it – I think I was 15 at this
29 time – had a little bulldog patch on the back of it. So that was in 1975 and I ended up in
30 DC. I got picked up on the streets and then I got put in detention centre in Hautu Prison.
31 That was for a three month sentence. While I was there I was working out on the forestry,
32 we were all working on the forestry, and a man came riding down along the fence line
33 calling out "Who is Paul Sweeney, who is Paul Sweeney?" And I went over to the fence,

1 I called out, I said, "That's me", he said "Bro, your brothers are in here." He said, "Come
2 up to the wire tomorrow, they'll be there."

3 The next day I went up the wire and my brothers, I hadn't seen them for years, they
4 were both in prison there, and I was in prison on one side of the wire, they were in prison
5 on the other side. It was just so good to see them. Yeah, it was so good to see them. That
6 was in 1975. 1975 I went to Borstal. I got out of DC and went to Borstal. And I lost track
7 of my brothers. In 76 I got out and went to Hamilton and I tried to start the Mongrel Mob
8 in Hamilton but never worked. I went back to jail, went back to Borstal, I got out in 78 and
9 went back with another guy and we started the Hamilton Mongrel Mob. That was in 1978.



10
11 My brother GRO-B came and my brother GRO-B came from Wellington, my
12 sister came down from Auckland, and my little brother got out of the boys' home, Melville
13 Boys' Home. And the one thing for my little brother, Alana, that when I was – I left him by
14 the letterbox all those years ago, it was heart-breaking, and one day we were coming back
15 from a convention and there was about seven cars, all Mongrel Mob cars, there were flags
16 flying and I was in the front and I said to them "Look I'm going to go through Mangakino
17 because my brother's there." And so, they followed me, and we pulled up at the school, my
18 little brother's school, and he come running out and he saw me there. I grabbed him and
19 held him in my arms, he was crying, I hugged him and I said to him "Noone will fuck us
20 around again." Back then I thought I had made it, I thought noone was going to touch us,
21 noone was going to touch my little brother.

22 Anyway, my little brother, he got out of the boys' home, he came to live with me in
23 Hamilton, he wanted to join the Mongrel Mob. I didn't want him to. So I went to the
24 Māori Education Foundation and I got him a scholarship to go to boarding school and I put
25 him into St Stephen's. He was only there for three months and he showed up at my house
26 and he said "I want to join the Mongrel Mob." I realised I had done that to him when
27 I showed up at the school. And when he was 17 years old, he killed a man in a gang fight
28 and he's been most of his life in prison now. To me, that was a result of him living in that
29 house where he was getting beated up as a child. He's still in jail at the moment.

30 **Q.** I think it's important to remember as well that these times that you're talking about when
31 you were in prison and Borstal at the Department of Corrections and then when you started
32 the Hamilton chapter of Mongrel Mob, you're still only 17, 18 at this time; is that right,
33 Paora?

- 1 A. Yeah. Yeah.
- 2 Q. And so then when did you find out and how did you find out that you weren't a State ward
3 anymore, that you were finally out of the system?
- 4 A. I didn't actually know that for many years. I'd actually forgotten about it. But I remember
5 the day I was made a State ward and I was put in protective custody. That was the day
6 before my sister died, got hit by the motorbike. And I was put in protective – the judge said
7 you need to – I need to place you in protective custody for my own good. And made me a
8 State ward, made me a ward of the State. And years later, I think I might have been 20-
9 something when I realised, something come up and I said "Oh, I might be a ward of the
10 State" and then they had a look and they said "No, you're no longer a ward of the State."
11 That must have been in my 20's or something.
- 12 Q. And how would you generally characterise your experience with the Social Welfare system
13 over those times, Paora?
- 14 A. Like I said, I thought if Social Welfare were doing what they were meant to be doing,
15 I shouldn't have gone to prison. You know, I don't think I'm that dumb. I could have made
16 something of my life. I just think – I don't know what they thought they were doing.
17 I haven't got a clue.
- 18 Q. And like you've –
- 19 A. I thought this, I did think, though, and I've shared this many times, because most of us were
20 Māori people there, I think they were trying to make Pākehā kids, I think they were trying
21 to make us behave like Pākehā kids. Especially that's all that came about at the dinner table
22 where you had to do all Pākehā things. We just ate with our hands when we were kids, we
23 didn't see anything wrong with it.
- 24 Q. And it's not just that that has the impacts into your adult life, nē, you know, that seven years
25 where you were going to different homes, Hokio, Kohitere, prison over those seven years
26 had huge impacts afterwards and you helpfully outline those in your statement. One of the
27 ones you talk about specifically is education. Could you talk a little bit about that and the
28 impacts it's had on any potential education you could have received?
- 29 A. Yeah, I think – when I went to Kohitere, because of the environment, education was the last
30 thing that you would think of. You needed to survive there. And in prison, you weren't
31 getting educated in prison. There's no school there. So I think – I stopped going to school
32 when I was 11 years old when my parents died. I went to the St Paul's for about three
33 months and didn't really have any education at all. There were no schools that I can

1 remember. We weren't sitting there in a class doing schoolwork. I don't know if that –
2 there was a farm and a forestry in Kohitere, that's where you went.

3 **Q.** And not only that, you outline the impacts that this has had with all of your relationships
4 with women, your children, the gangs, the intergenerational impact on Māori, the ability to
5 deal with grief, all of this comes from those times and has impacted you this way, hasn't it
6 Paora?

7 **A.** Yeah, yeah, probably one of the things that happened, when I was in prison, I think I might
8 have been four years into a seven year sentence when my children's mother and her mother
9 and a lawyer and a judge rung me in prison telling me that they're taking the kids and Nana
10 wasn't able to look after them all because she had arthritis, but she only wanted my girl, but
11 she could put my other girl in The Nest and my son could go somewhere, and there was no
12 way I was going to let that happen. You know, that happened to me.

13 And really, in the end the judge gave Nana interim custody and he said "I would
14 like to give Mr Sweeney a chance to get out and see if he can do what he said." So I got
15 out and I got my children and this is a great thing that happened. I married a Pākehā
16 woman. I know my family would scratch their head, you know, but I married a Pākehā
17 woman whom my sister hated at the very start and told her when I went to introduce them.
18 But she was a lovely lady and then we got divorced.

19 Now when I look back on it, I wasn't doing anything wrong in my marriage, but
20 there was so much I could have done better. But I just didn't know. One of the things that
21 happened when she left, I decided to do everything that she had done for my children, so
22 my children wouldn't miss out. And I modelled my life on how she lived. And I'm so
23 thankful for that because when I look at my children today, I'm so blessed by them. You
24 know, I'm grateful that I met her and just things, you know, I learned things along the way,
25 like not letting my children watch TV programmes, you know, if they were 8 years old
26 I wouldn't let them watch an R16 or an R whatever. So if they were 8 years old and I let
27 them watch an R16, that means I lose eight years of their life. That's eight years I can no
28 longer speak into because the TV has told them other things.

29 So I kept them at their age, brought them through life like that. If the TV was
30 swearing I'd turn the TV off, I didn't want the TV swearing at my kids. I don't want my
31 kids running around the school yard, next thing – we wouldn't swear at my house. When
32 my father brought us up there was no swearing in our home. So I went back to that with
33 my children and today when I listen to them speak beautiful, none of that foul rubbish
34 comes out of their spirits because nothing's gone in there. So I learned that and I learned

1 that because of what happened to me. I wanted something so different for my children.
2 There's no way that I wanted Welfare trying to take my kids, take my grandchildren.

3 When I have a look at my grandchildren today, they're the result of bringing up my
4 children right. When I see my grandchildren these beautiful kids, it's how they speak and
5 I said to my friend one day, he yells at his children all the time, and I said to him one day,
6 I said "You know, mate, your children, they don't talk to each other, they yell at each
7 other." I said, "They yell at each other because they copy you, that's how you talk to them."
8 And then he didn't understand, he sort of said "No", but later on he realised that was the
9 thing. And then I said to him something, I said to him this, I said "If you listened to the
10 way my children speak", I said "you'll know how I spoke to them." And that was a blessing
11 for me, because that's the truth of it. You know, I learned those, -and I learned those things
12 because I didn't want my children taken off me. -I wanted to bring them up right, and give
13 them a shot at life.

14 **Q.** I want to acknowledge the strength that it takes to make that decision and you aptly put a
15 heading in your statement "Turning my life around and breaking the cycle." Ko tērā kōrero
16 i whaka tinana ana (that statement really embodies that thought). Your mahi that you do or
17 did with drug counselling, now with the Refuge as well, e tino mihi ana i tēra kaha (I really
18 acknowledge you there). I was wondering if you were over and above all the obstacles in
19 your life that you personally have to get over, Paora?

20 **A.** I might say this Alana, in terms of the Refuge. When I tell people I'm working at the
21 Women's Refuge, people are shocked by that. You know, I've got a terrible record, I had a
22 terrible record. I just want to say about my record; for 31 years I was doing all sorts of
23 crazy stuff, drugs, alcohol, gangs, prison, whatever. I was off the rails. For 31 years, when
24 I was 31 I changed my life. When I was 31 I had a wonderful encounter with the Lord, it
25 just changed my life. I had something to change for.

26 But now it's been 31 years, I haven't offended, I haven't had drugs, alcohol, tobacco,
27 whatever. And when I look at that I think which is the more important record here?
28 Because today I've been sacked twice from my jobs because of my record, even though I've
29 told them my record at the start, yeah, that's good, yes, then they decide no, we're going to –
30 I've been sacked twice because of my record. When I have a look at my record, which is
31 the most important record? 31 years of being bad and 31 years of being good. You know,
32 31 years of – I mean I'm still being punished.

33 You know, here's something I know today. The Social Welfare have been able to
34 change their name. They cause all sorts of craziness and all sorts of rubbish, abuse people

1 and then they change their name. I can't change my name. I've kept the same name all the
 2 way through. They don't take the Social Welfare back to what they done when they – but
 3 they do for me. You know, when's that going to end, what do you have to do? What do
 4 you have to do to say look I no longer do – well here's the great thing, I've been employed
 5 by the Refuge. You know, my boss, he knows who I – knows my past, knows my story;
 6 and employed me. You know, that just speaks amazing things for my journey, but also for
 7 the whakaaro of the people that are running the Refuge. Yes, they know my past, but my
 8 boss is saying "We know you Paora."

9 I just feel so privileged to be able to work here with the background that I have.
 10 But, you know, it's because of that background I'm able to speak into a lot of situations.
 11 You know that lady that was chasing me around in the prison because I wasn't doing the
 12 Pākehā programme, I said to her "Look there's three Pākehā people in this group, you take
 13 those three in the room over here and I'll deal with the rest." Just blinken ridiculous, who
 14 does she think she's talking to? Full of crap. You know, "Look I've read the book", well,
 15 the book was written about me. One day we're hoping to be able to get on with our life and
 16 put this crap behind us.

17 **Q.** E tautoko ana i tō kōrero (I would like to support your statement).

18 **A.** This record that I've got, this record that I've got because of my life in the Welfare, running
 19 from the herd, escaping from the herd. That's why I've got the record that I've got. They've
 20 been abused by their women, I didn't act too kindly to women. And the Social Welfare
 21 done that.

22 **Q.** E tika ana when you said that it's through your experience that you can add perspective and
 23 value to making change for a way forward. So looking forward now, Paora, I wondered if
 24 you had some thoughts on what that change could look like and what you're looking for
 25 from this process and the Commission?

26 **A.** Probably from the Commission I would like for them to think of ways of dealing with our
 27 past record, not just for me, but for, you know, and I also know that people – everyone that
 28 says they're rehabilitated may not be rehabilitated. But there must be a way. Look when
 29 the prison – I got sacked from the prison because I went to a funeral of a gang member.
 30 Well, my relationship with that person allowed me to speak into the lives of all those gang
 31 members in the prison. I grew up brothers with that guy, we grew up in the welfare, in the
 32 same system together. They said to me "Please explain why you went to the funeral", I said
 33 "He died." You know, it's just what we do.

1 But they sacked me from there because of my relationship, the relationships that
2 I formed while I was in the Welfare. To me they've got to let that go. Like I said, I've been
3 sacked twice, twice I've gone to court, two judicial reviews, won them both. I've been very
4 lucky, I've got a friend who's a High Court Judge who's like a stepfather to me. As soon as
5 something happens, he gets all the best lawyers in the thing, and now at the moment they're
6 taking the Corrections back to court and suing them for me. So you know, I've been very
7 lucky, I've met this lawyer, you know, I was 17 years old and I was remanded in custody
8 for armed robbery and one night I was in the cells and I heard some footsteps walking
9 down the wing and it was a screw and a lawyer man. And I called out to him, the lawyer
10 came in and saw me, he sat with me, talked with me for a while, and then he got me out on
11 High Court bail. I don't know if they still have High Court bail today, but they used to back
12 then. He got me out on High Court bail and while I was out on High Court bail I got caught
13 doing another armed robbery and so they locked me up again and that man got me off both
14 charges found not guilty and he stuck with me my whole – I would go to his place for
15 dinner, he'd come to my place, lay on my couch, bring me food, whatever. He stuck with
16 me my whole life, right until today.

17 And when I asked him why he stuck with me, he said "You know, Paora, when
18 I saw you in that cell all those years ago, I thought you had such great potential, but you
19 never had a mum and dad", he said "I thought what would happen if I stood in the gap for
20 them." You know, he stuck with me and my family, my kids, loves my kids, you know, we
21 got the secret code to his – he's got a huge place in Auckland and he's got security stuff
22 because he's a High Court Judge, but we got the – you know, we can go there, just – he's
23 just like a father to me.

24 I've been very lucky because the two times I've been sacked he's turned that around
25 for me, he's got the best lawyers involved and – but I was sacked, two and a half years it
26 took to get the job back. And for the other one it took six years for them to find that I had
27 done nothing wrong. So that stuff just damages your career, your moving forward. In the
28 prison our manager was leaving, so I was going to take the manager's role, and then they
29 sacked me because I went to that funeral. And I asked to go to the funeral.

30 See they employ you because you've got this record, we think we can use – then
31 they use the same record to sack you. You know, to me that's the sort of thing that has to
32 stop. It's just crippling. You know, when they sacked me from the prison there's that big
33 shadow thing that comes over me, like what have I done? All the boys saying oh no, what's
34 he been really doing. I've done nothing. But it takes away from my message to them.

- 1 **Q.** Thank you for sharing that with us, Paora. If it's okay with you at this point the
2 Commissioners may have some pātai for you. Is it okay if they ask you some questions, kei
3 te pai tēnā? Madam Chair.
- 4 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Ngā mihi Ms Thomas. Tēnā koe Matua Paora. E mihi ana ki
5 a koe mō tō kōrero (thank you Matua Paora, I would like to acknowledge you for your
6 evidence today). I am going to ask Commissioner Gibson first if he has any pātai for you.
- 7 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Matua, no pātai, but really appreciating your evidence, the story
8 and wanting to particularly take up your last challenges around cleaning up the slate and the
9 impact of that on jobs and things like that, really appreciate the wisdom which you've said
10 to us, shared with us, kia ora.
- 11 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Thank you Commissioner Gibson. I have one pātai for you, if
12 that's all right Matua. Just around, do you remember, you- talked about in your statement
13 that at Kohitere there was some church involvement. -Do you remember much of what that
14 was?
- 15 **A.** Yes, there was a church, people that used to come, they used to come on some night and
16 play music and games. We had games in the hall. I forget their names, sorry, they were a
17 Māori family. But I forget, but they were part of a church. There was another group of
18 people who were also Christian people, they were the Young Farmers Club, or young
19 farmers something.
- 20 **Q.** Okay.
- 21 **A.** They were also Christian people, they would come too on a different night.
- 22 **Q.** And it was just random visits or regular visits?
- 23 **A.** Yeah, they never had church.
- 24 **Q.** Right, okay.
- 25 **A.** They were just church people.
- 26 **Q.** Okay, ka pai. That was really all that I had to ask. Thank you for your rich kōrero. I just
27 want to acknowledge your whānau and your son Kawera in the back and your sister
28 Ngahuia for being there and, yeah, ki te whānau Sweeney e mihi ana ki a koutou (to the
29 Sweeney whānau thank you for attending and your support). I'm going to pass over to
30 Commissioner Alofivae to see if she has any pātai for you.
- 31 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Talofa lava Matua. No pātai from me, but what I would like to
32 say is thank you very much for the richness of your insights. You've been able to clearly
33 articulate for us the change points in your life and how they've just taken you from strength

1 to strength. Thank you, I've been able to read your whole statement and so any questions
2 that I might have had around redress are actually – are in your statement.

3 And the only other thing I wanted to refer to was you've said on a number of
4 occasions now that you've referred to Christians and church and that you had an encounter
5 with the Lord, and that clearly again this was another very significant inroad into your life
6 and the number of people that really believe in your capability and who you were as a
7 person. So thank you for sharing your wisdom, because it's going to enrich our work very,
8 very much. Fa'afetai lava.

9 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Thank you Commissioner Alofivae. I think also the thing that
10 you've really helped to clarify for me is around the ongoing loss of opportunity, not just the
11 education that you lost as a young person in care, but the kind of ongoing system, struggles
12 you're having with your mahi. So thank you for that. I'm now going to pass to
13 Commissioner Erueti for any pātai.

14 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** E mihi ana ki a koe matua me tō whānau, tēnā koe i haere mai ki
15 te takoha i ō kōrero ki a mātou.

16 [English: I too would like to acknowledge you Matua and your whānau, gifting your kōrero
17 to us.] No pātai from me, Matua, but I do want to thank you for the vivid way in which
18 you've demonstrated that clear connection between the homes like Kohitere, Hokio, and
19 Borstal with prison, the clear pipeline that is there and how you talked about how you saw
20 your mates from Kohitere later in the Borstal and then later in prison when you all had so
21 much potential. It's clear and the path could have been something completely different, a
22 path or a future where you were at university or polytechnic studying and learning new
23 skills.

24 So I just want to thank you and mihi you and your whānau for your evidence today.
25 Nga manaakitanga ki runga i a koe me tō whanau.

26 [English: Well wishes and blessings to you and your whānau.]

27 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Tēnā koe Commissioner Erueti. I'm now going to ask
28 Commissioner Shaw too if she has any pātai for you and also to thank you on behalf of the
29 Royal Commission.

30 **COMMISSIONER SHAW:** Tēnā koe koutou ko tō whānau whānui e Paora.

31 [English: thank you to you and your family, e Paora]. You and I last spoke in 2019, I think
32 you were one of the first people to maybe register with the Commission, and so you were a
33 person who had an early session with me and, without revealing names, I can say that at
34 that session you were accompanied by the retired High Court Judge who you've spoken

1 about and it was a privilege to meet you at that stage and it's been a privilege to hear you
2 again, but more importantly, it's so important for Aotearoa New Zealand to hear your story,
3 your account.

4 Your experience of loss and rejection all through your life meant that you were a
5 hurt kid, you were hurt by the loss of course, the sad loss of your family, and then the State
6 who took you never nurtured or healed or educated you, and instead you were deprived of
7 the Māori world in which you have been raised in which you were safe and nurtured and
8 loved and cared for. And then you were abused sexually by a carer which just added to the
9 pain, hurt and destruction of relationships in the future.

10 So all of this is a horrific story. But something that sticks with me during our
11 private session has re-emerged again today, you carried your father's name and you didn't
12 want to dishonour him. So throughout your life, whatever has happened to you, you have
13 carried that name. And your story since the bad times has been one of redemption and by
14 that you honour the memory of your mother, June, and your father, Paora. And you have
15 set the finest example for your family, particularly for Tawera and all your other
16 descendants.

17 So it is a shining example of redemption that in spite of everything you have shone
18 through and in spite of everything the State has done to you, you have shone through. You
19 said to me back then and you said it again in your statement "My hope was to break the
20 cycle of offending and drugs in my life", and you have done that. And that is an
21 extraordinary testimony to an extraordinary man of strength and courage and wisdom. And
22 I think you have brought forward all the knowledge and learning you got as a tiny child
23 from your parents and somehow managed to revive it. Nō reira, tēnei te mihi ki a koe, ki a
24 koutou, ngā mihi, ngā mihi, ki a koutou katoa. [English: So I salute you all, thank u]

25 A. Kia ora Coral.

26 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Thank you Commissioner Shaw, e mihi ana ano ki a koe (I
27 would like to once again acknowledge you). Yes, thank you once again for your whakaaro
28 today. Ms Thomas.

29 **MS THOMAS:** Tēnā koe. Tēnā koe Paora. E te uri o Porourangi, kia tōwai noa i aku kupu i te
30 tīmatanga o tō tātou kōrero. Nōku te hōnore kia tū ki tō taha i te rangi nei. E mihi ana hoki i
31 tō manawa nui, i tō ngākau puare, i tō ngākau pono ki te tuku i ēnei mamae ki waenganui i
32 a tātou i tēnei rangi nei. Āe, i rongo mātou i tērā mamae, e rere tonu ana, engari kei te rongo
33 tātou i tō mana, kei te rongo mātou i tō whakapapa. Ā ko ērā mea rā e noho ana tuara hei

1 mōu, e pīkauria nei tō whānau i roto i tēnei ao. Nō reira, e mihi ana i tērā whakaaro, me ō
2 whānau. Hei te ngākau māhaki, hei te ngākau titikaha. E mihi ana ki a koe.

3 [English: Thank you Paora, the descendant of Porourangi. I'd just like to repeat my
4 opening statement that it is my honour to represent you today and I would like to
5 acknowledge huge heart and your honesty releasing this pain in front of us all. Yes, we all
6 heard the pain and suffering, but we also hear your mana, we hear your lineage, and those
7 things sit as a backbone for you, your whānau also. Therefore I would – I salute you and
8 your whānau being so open and vigilant in this matter).

9 I want to pass it back to you, Paora, to conclude this part of our session and our
10 kōrero. I also just want to acknowledge your son and your sister and the tautoko that
11 you've had today, your tama holding that whakaahua there for the whole time that we've
12 been speaking, and if you want to I thought you perhaps could share with us who those
13 whakaahua are. Kei a koe te tikanga (it's up to you) but I'll leave it to you, Paora, tēnā koe.

14 A. Thank you Alana. The last couple of days have been really quite difficult, you know,
15 looking through this again and, you know, knowing that you're going to have to share some
16 – to me there's some embarrassing stuff here and – but it's what I share with the guys, you
17 know, secrets, you know, keep us sick and, you know, once we share them they sort of lose
18 their power and I feel very heavy at the moment, but I'm really expecting this to lift off me
19 and walk in a new sort of – you always have that question, you know, these people have all
20 got away with it, how come?

21 Today I thought with this Commission thing I thought I'd be looking at them, but,
22 you know, again, they've changed their name, now they're hiding behind something else. I
23 can't stand Social Welfare. They're slippery. I thank you for the opportunity to share, I'm
24 so grateful that my son and my sister are here and my son's a tremendous strength to me,
25 he's everything I've wanted to be in my life. I wanted to put everything into him and bring
26 him up different, give him a shot at life that I never had. He makes me so proud.

27 Just to have my sister here today, I'm so glad she's here. We were separated at a
28 really early age and came back together a few years later and we've just stuck with that. I'm
29 close to my sister. I wish my brother would be here today but he'd be crying, so he can't do
30 that, he's Mongrel Mob.

31 Thank you for this time and look this is my mother here. This is the only picture we
32 have of our mother. I was in Ashburton, living in Ashburton about 30 years ago and my
33 brother rung me up, he told me to go to the bookshelf and have a look in this book on this
34 page and see what I thought. So I went to the bookshelf and I opened it up, I found the

1 book, I opened it up on the page and I saw a picture of my mum and dad in there and that's
2 the only picture we have of our mum. We lost everything when we lost our house when we
3 were kids, and all the photos, everything, and just to see, open the page and see my mum.
4 It was just such a wonderful moment. I don't know why she was taken when we were kids.

5 My dad here, that's my sister here, my brother's wife that passed away, and these are
6 my – these are my nieces. Their mum died when they were young and my niece became
7 a – she was sexually abused, became a drug addict and died last year very young, just hurt,
8 struggling with hurt, yeah. I'm so glad to be working in this field, yeah.

9 **Q.** Kia ora. Tēnā koe Paora.

10 **A.** Thank you for this time.

11 **Q.** Tēnā koe, otirā tēnā koutou katoa. (Thank you and thank you all). Did you have a waiata,
12 Paora?

13 **A.** Āe. (Waiata: Pūrea nei e te hau. Horoia e te ua. Whiti, whitia e te rā. Mahea ake ngā
14 pōrarururu. Makere ana ngā here. E rere wairua, e rere, ki ngā ao o te rangi. Whiti, whitia e
15 te rā. Mahea ake ngā pōrarururu. Makere ana ngā here. Makere ana ngā here.

16 [English: Scattered by the wind washed by the rain and transformed by the sun, all
17 doubts are swept away and all restraints are cast down. Fly O free spirit, fly to the clouds in
18 the heavens, transformed by the sun, with all doubts swept away and all restraints cast
19 down. Yes, all restraints are cast down.]

20 **MS SPELMAN:** Tēnā anō e te Heamana, tēnā koe te rangatira Matua Paora. (Thank you again
21 Madam Chair). Madam Chair, that brings us to the lunchtime adjournment. We are
22 slightly early and our next witness will be ready for 2.15 this afternoon.

23 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Thank you Ms Spelman. Āe, let's resume at 2.15.

24 **Lunch adjournment from 12.50 pm to 2.22 pm**

25