

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

Under The Inquiries Act 2013

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

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

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

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

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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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9 **Adjournment from 10.51 am to 2 pm**

10 **[Private session]**

11 **CHAIR:** Afternoon Ms Beaton.

12 **MS BEATON:** Afternoon Madam Chair. Afternoon Commissioners. We're starting this
13 afternoon's session with witness Mrs EF who's with us.

14 **CHAIR:** Yes, hello and welcome, welcome to the Commission. And I see you've got some
15 support there with you. Who have we got there with you?

16 A. My husband.

17 **CHAIR:** Hello, nice to meet you.

18 **MS BEATON:** And we have Emily Moore from our team.

19 **CHAIR:** And Emily from your team, I recognise.

20 **MS BEATON:** Yes.

21 **CHAIR:** Just before we start, do you mind if you take the affirmation?

22 A. Yes.

23 **MRS EF (Affirmed)**

24 **QUESTIONING BY MS BEATON:** Thank you, Mrs EF, for coming and telling us about your
25 experiences in care today. You've given a witness statement to the Inquiry detailing in some
26 depth your experiences from I think about the age of nine when you first went into care; is
27 that correct?

28 A. Yes.

29 **Q.** You've also told us quite a bit of detail about what happened in your family life before you
30 went into care, and you've been able to do that partly or piece together things about what
31 happened to you and to your family because you've had access to your historic Social
32 Welfare records?

33 A. Yes.

34 **Q.** Is that right?

1 A. That's right.

2 Q. And you obtained those yourself?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. And why did you do that?

5 A. I felt like my life was a whole lot of scattered jigsaw puzzle pieces with bits missing and
6 I felt for me it was a God work that I needed to read from a book about my life story, and it
7 was like that's so impossible and then one day I had that revelation that hey my life's
8 actually written in Social Welfare paper, so yeah.

9 **CHAIR:** I hope it's been pointed out everything you're saying is being signed by our signers over
10 here and it's also being transcribed by a wonderful stenographer, so if you could all just
11 keep an eye on them, if I put my hand up just know just to slow down a wee bit, is that all
12 right?

13 A. Yes.

14 **QUESTIONING BY MS BEATON CONTINUED:** You've described in your statement that
15 your words are "I came from a dysfunctional family". Can you tell us about your family?

16 A. Yes, my mother had mental health issues and was often in and out of Porirua Hospital. We
17 had a lot of people coming and going in the home as caregivers. They were sort of
18 temporary care, my father was 20 years older than my mother, so he was in his 50s when I
19 was born. Yeah, home was pretty dysfunctional, really.

20 Q. You had an older brother I think about 18 months older than you?

21 A. 18 months older, yes.

22 Q. And your records I think show that when you were just a couple of weeks old your father
23 contacted Social Welfare for some help because I think your mother was unable to care for
24 you?

25 A. Wasn't coping, yeah.

26 Q. And your notes I think have shown you that you were cared for by others basically from the
27 time being a young baby for many years?

28 A. Yes.

29 Q. You've also in your statement described the abusive situation that was in your family home,
30 with your parents?

31 A. Yeah.

32 Q. Your father was abusive towards your mother?

33 A. Yes.

34 Q. And also, to I think you and to your brother?

- 1 A. Yes.
- 2 Q. What memory do you have of your mum in the home?
- 3 A. Very little memory of my mum. Mostly unwell in a dark room. I do have one positive
4 memory cooking with her, making cream cakes, so that's been a nice one to reflect back on,
5 but other than that, yeah, lots of turmoil, lots of abuse stuff happening. I remember things
6 like my father unwrapping the wadding off the hot water pipes and holding my mother's
7 hands to it. I remember the milk jug full of milk going across the table, you know, things
8 like that.
- 9 Q. Were Police involved from time to time?
- 10 A. Yeah, Police were involved. I remember clearly several times the Police coming, and we
11 were in an old villa home that had a bay window, and my brother and I used to run and hide
12 in behind the sofa that was in the bay window and that the Mariah was coming, the Police
13 were turning up.
- 14 Q. What do you think about your mother's history?
- 15 A. My mother was a foundling, so she was left as a baby, and she was found and put into a
16 home and then she was adopted later on, yeah.
- 17 Q. The abuse that you received from your father?
- 18 A. Yeah.
- 19 Q. Did you – at the time that that was happening, before you went into the care of the State,
20 did you tell anyone about what was going on?
- 21 A. No, no, I was a frightened, little girl.
- 22 Q. Then in February 1967 when you were nine, and we're at paragraph 14 of your statement,
23 you found out that your father, well in fact no, I'm wrong, you didn't know your father was
24 going to prison; correct?
- 25 A. That's right, no.
- 26 Q. But what you did know, because he announced it to you and your brother, is that you were
27 being taken into care?
- 28 A. That's right, we went to health camp, to Ōtaki Health Camp for six weeks and came home
29 and that night a letter was read to say that we were needing to be delivered to where we
30 were going, and we were then in care.
- 31 Q. And you were nine and I think your brother was how old then?
- 32 A. 10 and a half, yeah.
- 33 Q. You've given us some photographs of yourself and your brother when you were little?
- 34 A. Yeah.

- 1 **Q.** I wonder, Mr Registrar, just so the Commissioners can have some context. You've got that
2 photograph in front of you?
- 3 **A.** Yeah, that one's at the family home.
- 4 **Q.** At home with your parents you mean?
- 5 **A.** Yeah.
- 6 **Q.** Yes?
- 7 **A.** Yeah, I don't know that my mother was there, but you know.
- 8 **Q.** Okay. And how old do you think you might be in this?
- 9 **A.** I would say three to three and a half, my brother maybe five, no, it looks a bit younger,
10 yeah, maybe pre-school.
- 11 **Q.** And I think we have another one?
- 12 **A.** Yeah, so that one was taken just before we went into care.
- 13 **Q.** You haven't changed much. That's a great photograph, isn't it. When did you find out that
14 the reason that you went into State care when you were nine was because your father was
15 going to prison?
- 16 **A.** I clearly found out when I read my files.
- 17 **Q.** Right.
- 18 **A.** Whether or not I'd been told earlier and can't remember, may be the case.
- 19 **Q.** Was there any social worker who spent any time with you telling you about what was
20 happening when you were first going into care?
- 21 **A.** No, no, we went from home to a temporary home and then into a children's home. In fact,
22 my brother and I weren't together, I don't think, in the middle bit.
- 23 **Q.** So, I think the children's home was the first place you went, for how long, not very long?
- 24 **A.** No, I went to a family –
- 25 **Q.** A family sorry?
- 26 **A.** – and then went into a children's home.
- 27 **Q.** Okay. What were the timeframes for that, how long do you think you were there?
- 28 **A.** I can't remember, I've talked to the family since, but I haven't clarified how long I was with
29 the family for. I'd say just a very short time until they found or sorted the home.
- 30 **Q.** I see. And then you went into the, what we'll call the first of the children's homes?
- 31 **A.** Yeah.
- 32 **Q.** When you were nine?
- 33 **A.** Mmm-hmm.
- 34 **Q.** And was your brother there with you?

- 1 A. My brother was there with me, yeah, well, on paper he was there with me.
- 2 Q. Right.
- 3 A. Yeah.
- 4 Q. Your brother, so the Commissioners understand the context, your brother has since passed
5 away?
- 6 A. Yes, yeah.
- 7 Q. And what did your father do once he got out of prison?
- 8 A. As?
- 9 Q. Sorry, was he – when did he get out of prison, where were you at that point?
- 10 A. I would have still been in the children's home, in the first children's home when he came
11 out of prison.
- 12 Q. And he tried to contact you?
- 13 A. He was expecting that when he came out of prison we would be going home, that we were
14 only in temporary care because he volunteered us to go into care.
- 15 Q. You didn't know any of this at the time because you were so young, but you've since seen
16 from your file that he wrote a series of letters to Social Welfare?
- 17 A. Constant.
- 18 Q. Trying to get access to you and your brother effectively and to get you back?
- 19 A. Yes.
- 20 Q. And he visited you at the home?
- 21 A. Yes.
- 22 Q. I think he brought you gifts?
- 23 A. Yes, he brought a bike.
- 24 Q. What about social workers, did they visit you at the home?
- 25 A. I recall one time when I was given a gift but, I don't know, yeah.
- 26 Q. Okay.
- 27 A. Certainly no relationship with the social worker to, –
- 28 Q. No,
- 29 A. – yeah, remember.
- 30 Q. And there was a couple who ran that home who I think that you liked, this was a –
- 31 A. Yes.
- 32 Q. – a structured place for you?
- 33 A. Yeah, yeah. It was, I think it was a bit more private family home, yeah.

- 1 **Q.** And you've told us in your statement that this couple or this family were, at one point at
2 least, considering adopting you?
- 3 **A.** Yes, and another girl.
- 4 **Q.** But not your brother?
- 5 **A.** But not my brother, yeah. And of course, my father was very against that.
- 6 **Q.** But that didn't happen, and you were transferred to another family home?
- 7 **A.** Yes.
- 8 **Q.** But your brother?
- 9 **A.** The father of the foster home, he died, and so then they had to sort where we would go
10 next, and my brother and myself and another boy were transferred to our next home away
11 from the first town that we were in.
- 12 **Q.** Was there any effort, do you know from your records, for Social Welfare trying to place
13 you with a family member?
- 14 **A.** I think there were some elderly aunts who offered to be supportive, but because they were
15 elderly, bearing in mind my father was in his 50s, he was the youngest of nine children in
16 the family. So they were that much older, you know, probably, yeah considered just too
17 old, I don't know.
- 18 **Q.** So, you were transferred into the second home?
- 19 **A.** Yeah.
- 20 **Q.** Children's home?
- 21 **A.** Yeah.
- 22 **Q.** And I think your evidence is that you think you were there for periods of time between the
23 age of 10 and 14?
- 24 **A.** Yeah. At first, I was there for – from the middle of the year to, you know, around
25 Christmas, just after Christmas. And then I went back there several times between other
26 changes or, yeah.
- 27 **Q.** What kind of contact did you have with your father at that second home?
- 28 **A.** It had been arranged that my father could visit – he could have outings or take me out for
29 outings once a month on a Saturday or Sunday, preferably a Sunday because the Saturday
30 was a family day in the children's home, and he could pick me up from church and return
31 me to the children's home when it was dark.
- 32 **Q.** And was your brother also taken out on those visits?

- 1 A. To be honest, I couldn't say whether he came every time, but he was with me sometimes, at
2 least, yeah. So, we went into the children's home, I was always sent to the children's home
3 for his visits that weekend I'd have to bus into town, stay at the children's home.
- 4 Q. I see, for his visits?
- 5 A. Yeah, for his visits.
- 6 Q. He would come and pick you up at church, but you were at the time staying at the children's
7 home?
- 8 A. Yeah.
- 9 Q. You said in your statement that this children's home was never a base that you liked
10 returning to, this is at paragraph 36. You would always come back a couple of days prior to
11 a visit with your father and therefore anything associated with returning to that home had
12 fear attached to it?
- 13 A. Mmm.
- 14 Q. And as you've explained, we're not going to go into the detail of what happened to you, but
15 there were at least two incidents that you remember of abuse on you by your father?
- 16 A. Yeah.
- 17 Q. On those visits out of care?
- 18 A. Yes.
- 19 Q. At the time that those events happened, did you feel that – did you tell anybody, did you
20 feel that you could –
- 21 A. I told a foster family after one of the visits, and I can't remember whether I said it had
22 happened before, but I definitely talked about a particular event, yeah.
- 23 Q. And what happened when you told the foster mother?
- 24 A. They contacted the Social Welfare and then I was interviewed sometime later, yeah.
- 25 Q. Tell us about that, because it's something you've explained in your statement that it wasn't a
26 useful way of dealing with it from your perspective?
- 27 A. It felt quite frightening as a child to go into a room that was very sterile and four people
28 were there, one of the faces I knew well but hadn't had anything to do with him in – under
29 social work.
- 30 Q. Was that person a social worker?
- 31 A. He was a social worker, but I knew who he was through the church I was going to.
- 32 Q. Right.

- 1 A. And then two of the social workers, you know, that I'd had something to do with were there
2 and then somebody else, but the whole environment of being asked questions was quite
3 frightening, quite non-relational.
- 4 Q. And you didn't know at that age that your father had been to prison?
- 5 A. No.
- 6 Q. Or what he'd been to prison for?
- 7 A. I didn't know he'd been to prison, no.
- 8 Q. When did you find out that your father had been to prison for sexually abusing young girls?
- 9 A. To be honest, I'm wondering whether I only really understood that when I read my papers,
10 and that was 20 years ago.
- 11 Q. Yes. That's –
- 12 A. I did have some evidence in, you know, paperwork that I had obtained when my mother
13 died but I'd never really gone into it.
- 14 Q. It might be a good time to pull up one of these documents that you've seen on your file, and
15 it's for the record ORT0056976. If we could call out paras four and five perhaps to start
16 with. Just to give some context, this is a report or a one-page letter dated 5 June 1969 and it
17 refers to your mother's request for a report, so that must have been the intention of it?
- 18 **CHAIR:** We're just getting some help I think with the document.
- 19 **MS BEATON:** I'll keep talking shall I.
- 20 **CHAIR:** Help is coming, it's all right.
- 21 **QUESTIONING BY MS BEATON CONTINUED:** I can deal with the first couple of
22 paragraphs to set the scene for what we're going to see shortly. It refers to – effectively it's
23 a report on you, correct?
- 24 A. Mmm-hmm.
- 25 Q. And it tells when you were placed in the family home, then into foster home. It also
26 records in paragraph two, which we're not looking at, that your father visited you and your
27 brother?
- 28 A. Yes.
- 29 Q. Once a month, and it's described as this also providing an opportunity for the children to
30 see each other. So, at this point in time, you weren't obviously with your brother?
- 31 A. Mmm-hmm.
- 32 Q. Talks about your schooling and then in paragraphs four and five, this is a record of – this is
33 a Social Welfare record of your father's history for serving terms of imprisonment for
34 indecently assaulting young girls. It refers to him admitting one other offence on a 10-year-

1 old girl for which he was not charged, and during his second term of imprisonment he made
2 arrangements for the two children, that's you and your brother, to be placed in a children's
3 home in Palmerston North. And then on his release from prison, your father wanted the
4 children to return to live with him at Whanganui. It was at this time that he committed the
5 further offence of indecent assault on a young girl. This happened in your father's home
6 while you were at home on a weekend visit. Do you have any memory or recollection of
7 that?

8 A. No, I don't, but it obviously took place.

9 Q. Then in paragraph five it goes on to say because there was no woman in the home to care
10 for the children, and also in view of your father's record of indecent assaults on children,
11 the manager of the children's home instituted legal proceedings and it's a result of those that
12 you and your brother were committed to the superintendent's care.

13 A. Yeah, so that was all from the Palmerston North base and then, yeah.

14 Q. Yes. And then if we could look at paragraph six, please, call up paragraph six, thank you.
15 So, paragraph six says this:

16 "As far back as 1957 concern was expressed about this man's association with girl
17 State wards and he was formally warned to stop seeing these girls and writing to them.
18 Over this period, he has been described as mentally unstable and I would say from my
19 dealings with him that this description has been well justified. He would appear to have a
20 religious mania and can be a most unreasonable man to deal with."

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. So, 1957 I think was your year of birth?

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. How did you feel when reading this as an adult to learn that the State was aware that your
25 father was a sex offender on children at least from the year of your birth?

26 A. And classified a recidivist.

27 Q. Yes. How did that make you feel as an adult when you saw your records, knowing what
28 childhood you'd have?

29 A. It actually riled me that how could a child be made to go out with a person, or how could a
30 person like that have access to a child after all that?

31 Q. I'm going to ask you to call up another document please, ORT0056972. This is another
32 Social Welfare report dated October 1969. So about four months after the document we've
33 just seen?

34 A. Mmm.

- 1 **Q.** The beginning of this document, we don't need to see it, but it describes how you had
2 disclosed to your foster mother that you had been abused by your father on a couple of
3 these visits?
- 4 **A.** Yeah.
- 5 **Q.** And this report goes on to describe how you had been behaving and it describes you as
6 withdrawn and dreamy and very hard to wake in the morning?
- 7 **A.** Mmm-hmm.
- 8 **Q.** But that since your disclosure you'd been laughing and chatting is how you're described in
9 this. And the report from the social worker to the superintendent also goes on to say that,
10 basically it recommends that you shouldn't be required to visit with your father anymore,
11 correct?
- 12 **A.** Mmm-hmm.
- 13 **Q.** Then there's this paragraph 11 which is the superintendent – sorry, which is the, effectively
14 the chief social worker at the time to the superintendent?
- 15 **A.** Yes.
- 16 **Q.** And it says this: "Forwarded for your information. I agree with the recommendation to
17 restrict your father's contact with the children and to supervise any future contact. If you
18 agree, your father will be advised accordingly. Although we had considered the possibility
19 of something like this happening, it was thought that your brother's presence would be a
20 sufficient safeguard."
- 21 **A.** Mmm-hmm.
- 22 **Q.** How do you feel about that?
- 23 **A.** The brother, who was only 18 months older than me was clearly not going to be a
24 safeguard, yeah.
- 25 **Q.** Do you remember if you ever discussed what happened with you with your brother at the
26 time?
- 27 **A.** There was one occasion he, my brother arrived at our place, we were married, had two
28 children, and he desperately wanted to have a connection with his one sister, as he put it,
29 and somewhere along the lines I can't remember how the conversation happened, and
30 GRO-B-17 can't actually remember it, but I do vividly remember it, GRO-B-1 talked about
31 he alluded that he'd been abused himself, and – but the conversation didn't go any further
32 and I didn't want to open up anything more about that, because of the impact that it would
33 have on me to talk about it when – yeah.

- 1 **Q.** Okay.
- 2 **A.** As well.
- 3 **Q.** I'm going to ask you some questions now about the fact that after you made this disclosure
4 to your foster mother and then to the social workers, that you were sent to a psychologist?
- 5 **A.** Yes.
- 6 **Q.** Can you tell us about that?
- 7 **A.** Yeah, so after the interview they sent me to Hamilton for a psychologist or child
8 psychiatrist report, it was assumed I was like my mother and psychotic and I was put on
9 medication and that was something I never ever, ever wanted to be under. I took some
10 pills, didn't like it, stopped taking them – they increased the medication, or added
11 something to the medication, but then I refused to take them. Had a further appointment
12 with the psychologist and, or psychiatrist, whatever it was, and they resolved that my issues
13 were more around attachment than mental health.
- 14 **Q.** Than psychosis?
- 15 **A.** Psychosis, that was it, yeah.
- 16 **CHAIR:** Can I just ask how old you were when you went to that person?
- 17 **A.** Probably around the 14.
- 18 **Q.** About 14?
- 19 **A.** 14, yeah.
- 20 **Q.** Thank you.
- 21 **QUESTIONING BY MS BEATON CONTINUED:** So, I want to ask you some questions now
22 about some experiences you had in various placements because your records have
23 established that you were moved, I think 20 times, is that right?
- 24 **A.** Yeah.
- 25 **Q.** So, between children's homes and foster care placements?
- 26 **A.** Yeah.
- 27 **Q.** And that is partly explained, am I right, because you used to have to come back to the
28 children's homes in between placements with foster families?
- 29 **A.** Yes, yeah. So that's not the weekend visit ones.
- 30 **Q.** No.
- 31 **A.** That's the unknown where I'm going next ones.
- 32 **Q.** Tell us about that, how was it to deal with the fact you didn't know where you were going?
- 33 **A.** Life was always very different from one place to another, but...
- 34 **Q.** Yes.

- 1 A. But, yeah, the not knowing where you were going, not knowing when you were going, not
2 knowing how long you were going to be somewhere was always very hard is. Another
3 change and another change and –
- 4 Q. Who would tell you about the changes?
- 5 A. The social workers would.
- 6 Q. Would come and visit and tell you?
- 7 A. Yeah, yeah.
- 8 Q. And how much notice did you get?
- 9 A. I can't remember, but not much. There was one particular change I had. I was standing on
10 the steps of the church I attended and crying saying I'm off to a camp and I don't know
11 where I'm going to be living when I come back. And it was arranged after that time that I'd
12 be going back into the children's home, of course I was arriving back at children's home not
13 knowing how long I was going to be there, and in fact the very next morning I was woken
14 up and told I needed to, you know, rattle myself and get my gear ready because I'm going
15 to another home, I mean that was a typical –
- 16 Q. You mentioned camps, you were able to attend I think a number of –
- 17 A. Yeah.
- 18 Q. – faith-related camps and a health camp initially?
- 19 A. Yeah.
- 20 Q. How often did you go to those and how hard was it to –
- 21 A. Pretty much –
- 22 Q. – get them to send you on those?
- 23 A. Begging.
- 24 Q. Because they were something that you wanted to do?
- 25 A. It was something very important to me and, you know, my faith walk was strong, and I
26 think one of the other things I always felt safe, I always felt loved, I always felt secure,
27 even with people I didn't know at a camp, it always felt a safer place to be in. My best
28 memories will be my holidays going off to a camp somewhere. And – yeah.
- 29 Q. Did your brother ever go to those camps with you?
- 30 A. No, no. Sometimes I didn't know where he even was.
- 31 Q. Right.
- 32 A. Yeah. Right from when we were shifted to the second children's home, he – I don't think
33 he was in that children's home for as long as I was, I can't remember, but I don't think he
34 was. And then we were never together again after that, never stayed together apart from –

- 1 and I don't remember, I don't remember him coming back to the children's home either, so
2 yeah.
- 3 **Q.** Can we move on, I'll ask you some questions about the last foster care family that you lived
4 with. And I think you were there, you were with them from the age of about 14, your
5 records show, is that right?
- 6 **A.** Yeah.
- 7 **Q.** Until you were 18?
- 8 **A.** Yes, yeah.
- 9 **Q.** When you – I think you knew this family before you went to live with them, correct? So,
10 we're at paragraph 63 sorry.
- 11 **A.** I knew of this family, I didn't know them well.
- 12 **Q.** Right.
- 13 **A.** Like I observed them.
- 14 **Q.** Yes.
- 15 **A.** But not – I'd never been in their home or really connected with them relationally. But knew
16 of them enough.
- 17 **Q.** They had children?
- 18 **A.** They had children.
- 19 **Q.** Younger than you though?
- 20 **A.** Yes, they were eight and 10.
- 21 **Q.** And the father in this family, how did you feel about him?
- 22 **A.** Scary, he was quite an abusive man, and yeah.
- 23 **Q.** They did include you within their family life, though, you've told us in your statement?
- 24 **A.** Yes, yeah, and they tried to help with bridging relationships as well with my mother in
25 particular. I think they sort of understood that I didn't want anything to do with my father,
26 but once he died it was, you know, take care of mum, connect with mum.
- 27 **Q.** And he died I think in 1974?
- 28 **A.** Yes.
- 29 **Q.** So, when you were how old, about 16?
- 30 **A.** Yeah.
- 31 **Q.** Sorry?
- 32 **A.** 17? Yeah, just 17 he died. And when he died, it was like the biggest, heaviest weight off
33 me, yeah.
- 34 **Q.** Did that family know about the fact you'd been abused by your father previously?

- 1 A. No.
- 2 Q. Okay.
- 3 A. Unless they'd been told by someone else, but it was not something I ever –
- 4 Q. That you shared with them?
- 5 A. No.
- 6 Q. And you've told us in your statement, we're not going to go into the detail, but you also
- 7 suffered abuse in this setting from the father?
- 8 A. Yeah.
- 9 Q. I think on a relatively ongoing basis?
- 10 A. Yeah, it was for a period of time, yeah. In the early first couple of years.
- 11 Q. How did it stop?
- 12 A. Because I put a stop to it, yeah, and, you know, I became stronger, where I knew that
- 13 shouldn't happen and I didn't feel I had anyone to help me, so therefore I had to take control
- 14 of it myself. And so, I started addressing it, "don't you come near me, don't you come into
- 15 my room at night", you know, that sort of thing, yeah, and I started becoming quite, you
- 16 know, "keep away from me", yeah.
- 17 Q. Did you tell a social worker or your foster mother or anyone about what was happening?
- 18 You dealt with it yourself?
- 19 A. No, dealt with it myself, yeah. There was too much fear to talk about it again.
- 20 Q. So, you were discharged from Social Welfare's care, though, at 16?
- 21 A. Yes.
- 22 Q. Tell us about that?
- 23 A. Social worker came and told me that you're 16 now and there might have been a bit of
- 24 preparatory talking before that, that this would happen, but at 16 I was told, you know, you
- 25 can leave school and you know, part of that is the need to get a job, so as soon as you get a
- 26 job you can leave school, and you could also even leave where you're living and go flatting.
- 27 You're independent, you know, you can do that.
- 28 Q. Did you want to leave school at 16?
- 29 A. I was feeling quite secure at school, it was my second year sixth form, and I felt I was
- 30 focusing better. I'd struggled to focus, not necessarily struggled – it wasn't that I wasn't
- 31 bright enough, it was just everything that was going on I couldn't focus on school. In fact,
- 32 my early years I was considered quite bright, so you sort of had that – but I wasn't ready to
- 33 leave school. I was a year ahead of myself, so I only turned 13 until my first year of high

- 1 school. So, I felt young with the girls that I was with, but yeah, anyway, I went out and got
2 a job, left school, but stayed on where I was.
- 3 **Q.** In your witness statement at para 78, I'm going to ask you to read that out to us please. And
4 I know it's got some redactions in it, so –
- 5 **A.** Yeah.
- 6 **Q.** – just use perhaps "the family"?
- 7 **A.** I should not have stayed living with the family for as long as I did, but I wasn't ready to go
8 flatting. It wasn't an option in my mind. Although at 16 Social Welfare discharged me,
9 I stayed with the family because they offered to keep me on. The bottom line was the devil
10 I knew was better than the devil I didn't know. I paid board, purchased my own things. If I
11 was dropped off at work, I'd pay mileage.
- 12 **Q.** To your foster father?
- 13 **A.** Yeah, to my foster father. So, it was – yeah.
- 14 **Q.** I understand that members of your church that you were attending at the time, and still part
15 of I think, helped you to leave the foster home and go flatting with some friends, is that
16 right?
- 17 **A.** Yeah, so I went and saw the pastors of the church and I just said, "I need to get out of
18 where I'm living", and they understood that – enough that wasn't working relationally but
19 they didn't know anything that had been going on before, but we'd gone past the sexual
20 abuse stuff to no relationship or just being abusive verbally.
- 21 **Q.** Yes.
- 22 **A.** Because he became quite angry towards me as well, and they –
- 23 **Q.** Do you think that was as a result of you –
- 24 **A.** Yeah.
- 25 **Q.** – telling him to stop?
- 26 **A.** I only now get that.
- 27 **Q.** Yes.
- 28 **A.** Yeah, in fact it was just the other night, I was thinking, that's why.
- 29 **Q.** And you met your husband around about this point right when you were 18?
- 30 **A.** Yeah, prior to leaving that home I met GRO-B-17 and that wound things up in the home,
31 where –
- 32 **Q.** Do you mean with your foster father?

- 1 A. Foster father, he didn't want me having anything to do with **GRO-B-17**, I don't think she
2 did either really. I think they wanted to hold on to me. They actually wanted to adopt me
3 as well, and they got me to send away for my birth certificate and then I lied to them that
4 I didn't have it.
- 5 **Q.** Right.
- 6 A. Because –
- 7 **Q.** That wasn't something you wanted?
- 8 A. There was no way I was wanting them to have more control, it was less control.
- 9 **Q.** Yes. So, after you were discharged from Social Welfare care, did you pay your board or
10 something to your foster parents, did you, for another couple of years?
- 11 A. Yeah, as soon as I started working, I started paying board, yeah.
- 12 **Q.** Right, okay. In your statement at paragraph 83 you say, "I'm not going to allow my past to
13 affect my future", that was a deliberate decision that you made?
- 14 A. Yeah, yeah.
- 15 **Q.** What did you mean by that?
- 16 A. I knew that I was responsible for myself, you know, that – and if I was going to carry
17 through the blame and the judgment and the labels and the everything else and keep
18 carrying on, I'm, you know, victim, that was going to walk with me. And I just remember it
19 was like a visual thing ruling a line and stepping over it and I'm walking into my future and
20 the decisions I make here through, a lot of them were God-given decisions, you know,
21 I felt, yeah.
- 22 **Q.** Can I ask you some questions about the impacts that this – that your time in care have had
23 on you Mrs EF. I actually first want to ask you about education, because I think that is an
24 impact on you, because how many schools do you think you moved between during the
25 time you were – prior to 16?
- 26 A. I had just two primary schools, but I had three intermediate schools and I've got no
27 memory, no memory of anyone in the second primary school or the first two intermediates.
28 So, you don't build relationships, you don't have teachers that you – that are supporting you,
29 you don't have friends, moving from one town to another, you know, it was just – I was
30 literally picked up and brought, you know, out of school and brought to **GRO-B**. And –
- 31 **Q.** Were you able to develop relationships with teachers at your high school, for example,
32 when you were a teenager?

- 1 A. I had a couple of teachers that I was close to, and I had a very good friend who she had
2 gone through care in a children's home in another town and then came back to her mum and
3 she was – she understood me. We met each other in year nine.
- 4 Q. Right.
- 5 A. Yeah. And a friend still today.
- 6 Q. Yes. Is that friendship perhaps the longest?
- 7 A. Pretty much so, yeah, yeah, no she is, yeah. Oh, no, one other sorry. When I went flatting,
8 the girl I ended up flatting with, she had been at Teachers College when I was in the first
9 children's home, and she used to come into the children's home and take me out.
- 10 Q. Right.
- 11 A. Like she was at Teachers College, and she just did it as a little, you know, volunteer, go and
12 look after the children in the children's home.
- 13 Q. Yeah.
- 14 A. And she lived around the corner from the last family I lived with, and then I went flatting
15 with her, and then GRO-B-17 and I built our first house right beside her. So, she's been
16 part of my life since I was that little nine-year-old girl.
- 17 Q. Yeah. In your statement you talk at para 106 about an impact that you've described as
18 shutting down?
- 19 A. Yeah.
- 20 Q. Can you tell us about that?
- 21 A. The hard emotional stuff was always hard to deal with and particularly in the last home I
22 was in, they used to say I'd sleep a lot, if I was asked anything I'd shut down, yeah, just, you
23 know, when teachers were concerned and asking anything I'd say I'm fine.
- 24 Q. I think you saw in your notes on your Social Welfare files that you were often described "as
25 usual she says nothing"?
- 26 A. Yeah, yeah.
- 27 Q. So social workers had noticed that you were shutting down?
- 28 A. Yeah.
- 29 Q. That was a coping mechanism for you?
- 30 A. It was the only way to cope, yeah.
- 31 Q. As an adult has that affected your life, is it something that you still do from time to time?
- 32 A. Umm.
- 33 Q. Or are you on a mission now to be –

- 1 A. To be more relational and to work through stuff, yeah, yeah. Definitely been intentional to
2 work through.
- 3 Q. Yes. You also talk in your statement it has an impact on you is the lack of consistency,
4 which I understand you to mean in terms of your family, the family relationships that you
5 were supposed to be trying to have with your foster families; correct?
- 6 A. Yeah.
- 7 Q. And you say at paragraph 109 when you go through 20 changes in your young life, living in
8 different homes, you can't tell me that you'll be the person who you could have been?
- 9 A. Mmm-hmm.
- 10 Q. What did you mean, what do you mean by that?
- 11 A. Every home you go to has a different environment, you know, different atmosphere,
12 different ways of doing things, different values, different, even the way you use your knife
13 and fork, you make your bed, you iron your clothes, you put stuff away, everything is so
14 different from one home to another, and a lot of my life was observing how things were
15 done and trying to, yeah, monkey see monkey do just about.
- 16 Q. What about, you've also talked –
- 17 A. Or you're criticised for not doing it right, which was a lot.
- 18 Q. And a number of social workers is something that you think was difficult, was there a high
19 turnover of social workers?
- 20 A. I had four, maybe five social workers in less years than that.
- 21 Q. Right.
- 22 A. Yeah.
- 23 Q. A big theme in your statement, Mrs EF, is your separation from your brother?
- 24 A. Mmm-hmm.
- 25 Q. And what you've described is the intergenerational impacts of your experiences of care?
- 26 A. Mmm-hmm.
- 27 Q. We're at 115.
- 28 A. Yeah.
- 29 Q. You say there that it was always a big worry for you, you didn't know where he was, "this
30 separation had the biggest impact on me, he was my only family left and he was taken away
31 from me"?
- 32 A. Although my brother was 18 months older, I always looked after him, so I never saw him
33 any different, not able to do things, but I must have subconsciously, because I remember
34 running and doing something that he was asked to do, so I sort of had that looked after --

- 1 **Q.** To compensate for him?
- 2 **A.** To compensate for him, so he was classified a slow learner.
- 3 **Q.** Just before you go on, I wonder if we could have – you've given us some photographs of
4 your brother.
- 5 **A.** Mmm-hmm.
- 6 **Q.** Because he died a few years ago.
- 7 **A.** Yeah.
- 8 **Q.** And you kind of lost contact with him. This is him as a teenager; correct?
- 9 **A.** Mmm-hmm.
- 10 **Q.** Yeah.
- 11 **Q.** You'd lost contact with him for quite some time, I think, he came to visit you and your
12 family unexpectedly once?
- 13 **A.** Yes.
- 14 **Q.** And then he became quite unwell, and you went down to see him, he was in hospital?
- 15 **A.** Yeah.
- 16 **Q.** I wonder if we could have the next photo. So that's the two of you?
- 17 **A.** [Nods].
- 18 **Q.** Yeah. So, tell us about your brother's experiences of care in terms of what you know?
- 19 **A.** He was shifted a lot as well and he went to Campbell Park, Otekaieke, so he was down in
20 Oamaru and he went to Kimberley in Levin, he went to Lake Alice, and, you know, he had
21 several different families around the locations we were living in as well. Yeah, we were –
22 hardly ever saw one another, and I never knew really where he was a lot of the time.
- 23 **Q.** Part of your journey is obtaining records of your own history?
- 24 **A.** Yeah.
- 25 **Q.** But also of your brothers?
- 26 **A.** Yeah.
- 27 **Q.** You're in the process of doing that, is that right?
- 28 **A.** Yeah, yeah, where I can.
- 29 **Q.** At paragraph 123 you say that sadly he's not here to speak for himself, and sadly you were
30 not there all his life to support and protect him either and you say that you knew he
31 withdrew from being supported because he wanted to be by himself, and you go on to
32 describe about how you lost contact with him?
- 33 **A.** Yeah.

- 1 **Q.** I think you said before that you're not sure what happened to your brother while he was in
2 State care?
- 3 **A.** No.
- 4 **Q.** But you have concerns because of the life that he had to lead?
- 5 **A.** The pathway he took, yeah. He was very fearful, when we saw him on this particular
6 occasion, he was living in an independent care but with support flat, and he had a sign on
7 the door that nobody was to enter, he had a baseball bat behind the door, he was very, very
8 shut down, very, yeah, very affected and it had been a long-term effect, yeah.
- 9 **Q.** I take it your own children didn't really have a chance to know their uncle either?
- 10 **A.** No, no. In fact, it was on my way to visit my mother not long before she died that I started
11 talking to my children, our children about the lady we're going to see today, it was Mother's
12 Day and I'd talked to her in the morning and she said the best thing would be to see you, so
13 we dropped what we were doing, drove to Whanganui. And I'm explaining to the children
14 on our way down there that this woman, you know, like mum's, granny is dad's mum, this is
15 mum's mum. So, my children, our children didn't know anything about my side of the
16 family. Even now they say, "how come we never worked out where your family were?"
17 You know, they just – my family life was never talked about.
- 18 **Q.** Just briefly, in your statement you also talk about an impact on you from your childhood is
19 from seeing your mother when she was in mental health institutions. Tell us about that and
20 how that's affected you?
- 21 **A.** We'd be going to visit her, and she would have had shock treatment, and I remember the
22 padded cell, I remember her being quite drugged, you know, quite, yeah, and mental health
23 stuff is something I've never, never wanted to carry, yeah.
- 24 **Q.** When you say "carry", you mean in sense of supporting others?
- 25 **A.** Helping others, I'll feel for others, but it's something I just, I can't go there, yeah. I had a
26 job in occupational therapy as an aid and we worked in this psychiatric unit and one of my
27 jobs was to sit in a padded cell observing. And it was the hardest, hardest thing to do, it
28 was just a flashback of seeing my mother as a little girl.
- 29 **CHAIR:** Do you want to take a break?
- 30 **A.** I'm all right, yeah.
- 31 **QUESTIONING BY MS BEATON CONTINUED:** Can I ask you about redress?
- 32 **A.** Yeah.
- 33 **Q.** At paragraph 131 and 132, I might get you to read those to us.

- 1 A. Okay. I have battled in my head forever. The question of how come I was left vulnerable
2 to stay alone with my father, to have him visit and to be taken out by him, how come this
3 was allowed when there was not just one charge against him, but at least two, maybe three
4 were known.
- 5 **Q.** Once you disclosed, I think to your foster mother?
- 6 A. Yeah, that he'd been sexually abusing me then those visits got stopped but not until that
7 point. There should have been protection in place for me from the start. The nine -year-old
8 girl that was taken into care, there should have been instruction in place that never was a
9 child to be left alone or in a vulnerable position with a father. I just can't understand how
10 that ever happened.
- 11 **Q.** Yes.
- 12 **Q.** Have you ever made a claim, Ms EF, to ACC or to Department of Social Welfare?
- 13 A. No.
- 14 **Q.** Or MSD?
- 15 A. No, never made a claim.
- 16 **Q.** Why is that?
- 17 A. Too scared to go through all the process, to start all over again, you know, yeah, it's felt too
18 big a thing to do. And life has been busy, it was too hard a stuff to –
- 19 **Q.** I want to move to the end of your statement about your recommendations for the future,
20 which I know the Commissioners are very interested to hear from you. Do you want to
21 take us through those, what you think should change, having lived your experiences?
- 22 A. So, when I was working in boarding school, we used to have kids come in and out of
23 boarding school that was under CYFS, and I'd be frustrated thinking come on guys, just
24 give them the support they need, just give them the care they need, just give them the things
25 they need, you know, even sanitariums. I had one girl that we were providing sanitariums for
26 and it was like why are Social Welfare not doing this? You know, the simple basic things.
- 27 Another child I had; she was in GRO-B, but she came from another area and
28 her social worker was in the other area. The aunty and uncle she went home to in holidays
29 was in another area and it was like have something here on the local that's giving her
30 support, you know, it's just gaps missing. I know it's not always easy.
- 31 **Q.** To find the right place for children.
- 32 A. Yeah, yeah. Careful placement and wraparound support. For me, I think I always felt there
33 was only one person responsible for me and that there was no collaborative sort of care, and

1 some wraparound care is important, and that you're working with each other. I went and
2 I know some of that does happen now because recent, or before I finished my job, I went to
3 a family, a family, what do you call them, a family – it was one of those.

4 **Q.** Group conference, something like that?

5 **A.** A group conference, so that must be happening in some way now. And that's so, so
6 important that people are working together, maybe different aspects of life. It might be the
7 youth group leader, it might be the teacher that she did connect with at school, it might be
8 the friend's mother, it might be whatever, but there are people who it's more than just the
9 one social worker that you have no relationship with that you wouldn't tell anything to
10 that – yeah.

11 **Q.** You've also said in your statement there needs to be good records of abuse and complaints
12 need to be taken seriously?

13 **A.** Absolutely, yeah. It was clearly in my papers handed over and not acted upon. So – yeah.

14 **Q.** And finally, you've said at the end of your statement, siblings need to be kept connected?

15 **A.** So important, and you need to, you know, like I've only learned about the
16 broader my- broader family probably more in the last 25 to 30 years, I went to a family
17 reunion, I connected with a cousin of mine who is 20 years older, and she said look we're
18 having a family reunion, and this has all just been my hard work trying to find
19 people. -Facebook is wonderful.

20 **Q.** In some ways.

21 **A.** Well, it has been because I've found some people and said who I am and whatever and
22 started building bridges out in family. But it's been hard, but I think it's important to keep
23 some family anchors, because that's who we are, we are yeah-, it was only my father's side
24 because my mother's side was completely unknown and I didn't even know any of her
25 adopted family, like it's only in the last four years that I've connected with one member of
26 her adopted family. In the last two years I've connected with one of her biological family,
27 yeah-.

28 **Q.** So, for you, Mrs EF, the piecing together of what happened to you as a child has been a
29 journey for you, right?

30 **A.** Huge, huge, but good, yeah.

31 **Q.** Thank you. I don't have any more questions for you, but the Commissioners might.

32 **CHAIR:** Certainly.

33 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Mrs EF, I just wanted to say really that I've just been so moved
34 by the way in which you've been so generous in sharing your experiences and I just wanted

1 to acknowledge the enormous loss really in terms of the relationships that you've shared
2 with us, but also I think the thing that has stuck with me was the hard decisions you've had
3 to make about the intergenerational transfer of whakapapa.

4 A. Mmm-hmm.

5 **Q.** Which would be something very, very huge for not only your life but the successive
6 generations that are to come from your bloodlines?

7 A. And I had to protect our family from any of that coming into it, and that was in regards to
8 relationship with that foster family, I cut them off. I couldn't allow my brother to come and
9 stay in our home on the time - he just turned up, it was protection, I need to keep my family
10 safe. He could come for a visit but we're putting him in a hotel, yeah-.

11 **Q.** And recognising the anchors in your life which sound like now, today, faith and family?

12 A. Yeah.

13 **Q.** And how that's really guiding you forward?

14 A. The faith and family, or the faith were important, even as a little girl. In the moments of
15 fear there was enough faith established in me that I can even remember being behind the
16 sofa and How Great Thou Art would be a and- that's what I always came back to, that's
17 what always had me feel safe. My God, you know, he's never forsaken me, yeah-.

18 **Q.** Malie, thank you.

19 **CHAIR:** I think that explains why you can keep a smile on your face in the worst circumstances
20 which is extraordinary. I just want to ask you about your educational opportunities, or the
21 lack of them. It strikes me that you are a considerable intellect, you're obviously very
22 competent, but your schooling was --

23 A. So, broken.

24 **Q.** You've said it, so broken, so disjointed.

25 A. So broken, I used to take my schoolwork home and do it all over again.

26 **Q.** Did you?

27 A. It was the only way I could retain it, yeah, I'd have my good book and my school book.

28 **Q.** And was that because of the traumatic things that were happening to you, you were unable
29 to concentrate at school?

30 A. I remember all my years, particularly year 3rd, 4th, 5th form not being able to focus. And
31 one story we haven't shared, was being in a music class and the song I'm Nobody's Child
32 was one of our study songs and I'm sitting there weeping and then being told by the teacher,
33 who, you know, he was absolutely lovely, but he said, "if you're going to behave like that in
34 the classroom you can leave."

- 1 **Q.** So, would I be right to say you - and- then of course persuaded or encouraged to leave
2 school at 16 by the social worker?
- 3 **A.** Yeah, told I needed to get a job at the earliest because if I left it to the end of the year
4 everybody else would be out looking for jobs and I wouldn't be likely to get one.
- 5 **Q.** So, it's painted as an advantage for you to leave early?
- 6 **A.** Yeah.
- 7 **Q.** Do you regret the loss of further education?
- 8 **A.** Yeah, totally and many times I have thought I should be applying to study, but it felt too
9 huge, you know, even in recent years, I inquired about social work stuff and it's just - yeah-.
- 10 **Q.** It's a lost opportunity, but plainly you've made up for it in many other ways including your
11 family.
- 12 **A.** Yeah.
- 13 **Q.** That's - hugely admiring of you for that. Thank you for your story, I'm- just going to hand
14 up to Dr Erueti.
- 15 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Tena koe whaea. Thank you so much for your contributions to
16 this Inquiry, but in particular coming here today in the public domain and bearing all and
17 recognising how tough it is to go back and relive those memories and bring them up again
18 so that we can know what truly happened while children like yourself were in care and the
19 neglect and abuse, and the, well, to have your father come and take you out on those visits
20 is incomprehensible really how this could have been allowed to have happened. I know
21 you talk about things being too huge, the schooling and redress, but this was a huge
22 moment and you've persevered and come here, and you've done this, so, you know, bravo,
23 you can do it.
- 24 **A.** You know the early part of it, but if it wasn't for the way you've all supported, I wouldn't be
25 here either.
- 26 **Q.** Thank you, but it was your courage and commitment that got you through the door, that's
27 the most important thing and it got you through this door so that you could be here, and the
28 public at large can hear directly from you and that's so important. We've made
29 recommendations for reform to the redress schemes that are currently out there, so we're
30 hoping that it won't be so huge and daunting for survivors like yourself to enter that door,
31 because it should be welcoming like the door that we have at the Inquiry. But yeah, ngā
32 mihi mahana ki a koe me tō kōrero mai, i takoha mai, really appreciate it, and GRO-B-17

1 to come here and tautoko and provide support. We're indebted to you, so thank you so
2 much for your time, kia ora.

3 **CHAIR:** It's time for a cup of tea for all of us, let's take a break. And our next witness will be
4 here at 3 o'clock. Do you want to break at this stage, no, shall we - tell me how you'd- like
5 to run this.

6 **DR COOKE:** We were planning to take the break at the conclusion of the next witness. She was
7 given half an hour, so we could - I'm- quite happy to do it now or to take a few minutes to
8 give everyone a chance to readjust.

9 **CHAIR:** Yeah, just take a few minutes, so it's not a formal break but we'll just take a few minutes
10 and you let us know when you're ready for us.

11 **Adjournment from 3.13 pm to 3.19 pm**

12 **CHAIR:** Talofa, hello.

13 A. Hi.

14 **Q.** Thank you for coming. I'm just going to ask if you'll take the affirmation and then I'll turn
15 it over to Dr Cooke.

16 **ERICA MARIE DOBSON (Affirmed)**

17 **QUESTIONING BY DR COOKE:** Your name's Erica Dobson?

18 A. Correct.

19 **Q.** And you're here today with your sister Angela?

20 A. Yes.

21 **Q.** And you're 41 years of age?

22 A. 42 now.

23 **Q.** 42 now, right. We have no control over these things do we. And you're Cook Island
24 Māori?

25 A. Yes.

26 **Q.** And you're going to - you're- here to tell us primarily about your story in care, you were in
27 care from the age of 10 months through to about 5 years of age?

28 A. Yes.

29 **Q.** And there's going to be a focus on one particular foster family, isn't there?

30 A. Yes.

31 **Q.** And that's a family with which - where you were placed with, we're- going to call him your
32 brother?

33 A. Yes.

34 **Q.** Daryl Brougham?

- 1 A. Yes.
- 2 Q. And as part of that story we're going to hear how you were physically, sexually,
3 emotionally and psychologically abused by those particular caregivers, aren't we?
- 4 A. Yes.
- 5 Q. And we also know, don't you, that you've received some of your files, you've received your
6 files from MSD, didn't you?
- 7 A. Yes, correct.
- 8 Q. I understand that for many years you'd forgotten about the trauma you'd experienced and
9 wiped it from your memory?
- 10 A. Yes.
- 11 Q. Until you were reunited with Daryl?
- 12 A. Yes, correct.
- 13 Q. So, what was it when you caught up with Daryl, was that a trigger point that's- probably
14 not- a right word, that was the starting point for something for you about working out what
15 had happened?
- 16 A. Yeah, I believe it was the like beginning of my healing, you know, because for many years
17 those memories had been suppressed. However, the psychological damages still occurred,
18 and, you know, speaking with Daryl started to make me understand more about myself.
- 19 Q. Okay. While we're here talking this afternoon, if you want a break at any time just give us
20 a signal, a wave out and we'll make sure that we give you that time.
- 21 A. Okay.
- 22 Q. You do say, you've got your statement in front of you?
- 23 A. Yeah.
- 24 Q. You say, just note there final - right at the foot of the page on the first page, there's a final
25 sentence there, isn't there, which -is - do- you just want to note what that is?
- 26 A. Is this from number 4?
- 27 Q. Number 4, it starts with "I hope that my"?
- 28 A. I hope that my care experience will help improve the care system for children and those
29 who work in it.
- 30 Q. Just briefly about your pathway into care, we note, you've told us in your statement that
31 your mum is from the Cook Islands, and she was from a big family?
- 32 A. Yes.
- 33 Q. And your dad is half Māori?
- 34 A. [Nods].

- 1 **Q.** And he's Ngāti Kahungunu?
- 2 **A.** Yes.
- 3 **Q.** And you found out some years just recently that he was adopted?
- 4 **A.** Yes.
- 5 **Q.** And you also tell us that when you were growing up in South Auckland, which is where
6 you did grow up, with your mum and your sisters, you only grew up knowing just the one
7 side of the family?
- 8 **A.** Yes, correct.
- 9 **Q.** If you go over the page of your statement to paragraph 12, you'll see there, you say that
10 about what's happened since then, about how you've gone from not knowing that Māori
11 family to what's happened now, maybe you could tell us what changes have occurred in
12 recent years around making that connection?
- 13 **A.** So, over the years we searched through Facebook, and I found my aunty, my dad's
14 biological sister, and I reached out to her, and they were open and accepting of us. And my
15 sisters and I took a trip up to Rotorua to an uncle and he explained all of our Māori side,
16 because we had no knowledge of anything, and just amazing, you know, we never knew all
17 our life who we were as a Māori. And we had a big beautiful loving family that didn't
18 know about us girls, and so we eventually, my sister and I Angela, we went up to
19 Wellington and they took us to Masterton where our Māori side was and introduced us to
20 all our family and the whole family. They didn't even know about my dad, my father was
21 adopted out as soon as he was born, and all the family, a lot of them didn't know, it was a
22 secret, and then just meeting us girls, it was a beautiful experience, and, you know, it's the
23 family we've always wanted, so loving and accepting of us, and yeah, I cherish every
24 moment with them, so yeah.
- 25 **Q.** Thank you for that. And you'll know that, I should also add, the Commissioners have read
26 your statement so they're well familiar with what's in it, and I think it's important, having
27 you emphasise some of these particular points is of certain moment for them as well.
- 28 **A.** Yeah.
- 29 **Q.** So, I need to talk about why you went into care. And it does you-- do say that mum and
30 dad were parting a lot and you were left home a lot?
- 31 **A.** Yeah.
- 32 **Q.** On one occasion that occurred and one of your siblings went over to the neighbour's house
33 and said we're home alone and the consequence was that the Police came, and uplift
34 occurred?

- 1 A. Yes, correct.
- 2 Q. And in December, you were placed under a guardianship order from about May 1981, or
3 sorry, between May 81 and May 86, and that's the period of the time that you were in care?
- 4 A. Yes, correct.
- 5 Q. And just it- says as well that you were particularly malnourished at the time you were
6 uplifted, so there was- clearly some concerns, weren't there?
- 7 A. Āe, significant concerns, there were yeah--.
- 8 Q. I want to go now, if you turn over your page and we're going to go to paragraph 21. This is
9 the story of your time in care with this particular foster couple?
- 10 A. Yeah.
- 11 Q. So, you're ready for us to go through this journey together?
- 12 A. Yes.
- 13 Q. This is really your journey.
- 14 A. Read 21?
- 15 Q. You're ready to go?
- 16 A. Yeah.
- 17 Q. I'll just take you through it as we need to. Tell us about they-- were a Pākehā couple,
18 weren't they?
- 19 A. Yes, correct.
- 20 Q. Tell me about her, what was she like?
- 21 A. Yeah, she was definitely the head of the house, and she was a very cold woman towards me
22 and Daryl. She had no love in her. She was just really, really, really nasty, really evil to us
23 and I don't understand why she even fostered us.
- 24 Q. Because you use you-- say in that paragraph that she was like a witch?
- 25 A. Yeah, she was.
- 26 Q. Just really evil, which are two powerful words aren't they, to talk about a person and use
27 that language to say this is what she was like?
- 28 A. She was, yeah, she was very cold, very evil to us, and yeah, I don't know any other words
29 to describe her other than a witch.
- 30 Q. And you and Daryl were there over a period of a couple of years, weren't you?
- 31 A. Yeah, yes.
- 32 Q. And you were both small children?
- 33 A. Very small, yes.
- 34 Q. Who was the oldest?

- 1 A. Daryl was three months older than me.
- 2 Q. So, you could almost have a twin like relationship?
- 3 A. We were, yeah.
- 4 Q. And we know that this couple had lots of other children, and they also, I think you say in
5 your statement, there were about eight altogether at one point?
- 6 A. At the end, yeah, there were eight children.
- 7 Q. And that's when you - I know we're- skipping forward a bit, but was that when you were in
8 the United States?
- 9 A. I'm not 100% because I just - possibly. I just do remember there was a couple of other
10 younger children, yeah-.
- 11 Q. When you think about your time with them, this is just thinking overall, were you and
12 Daryl treated in the same way?
- 13 A. No, definitely not. We were like outcasts; we were treated differently to the other children.
- 14 Q. What I'll do is we'll come to that shortly, but we'll just get into the detail so we've set the
15 scene. But we know as well, don't we, that after you were placed with them
16 you - they- made the decision they were going to move to the United States?
- 17 A. Yes.
- 18 Q. And the social workers asked your mum and she said "no, my daughter's not going"?
- 19 A. Yes.
- 20 Q. And so, the foster caregivers immediately said, "take her away"?
- 21 A. Yes.
- 22 Q. Is that right? Yeah, and if you go over the page, we're now looking at what happened next.
23 You went to the Baptist children home in Manurewa, and you were there for about seven
24 weeks?
- 25 A. Yes.
- 26 Q. And you obviously now still have some memory of that, because if you look at that
27 paragraph 24, you'll see in the second line you tell us how you remember being can-- you
28 see that?
- 29 A. Yeah, I remember being sad and lonely and having - just- having my clown doll with me
30 and feeling emotionless, and my file refers to me as passive and emotionless at the
31 children's home.
- 32 Q. It was when you went there, they did some checks on you, didn't they?
- 33 A. Yeah.

- 1 **Q.** And they found, you say, that you'd been emotionally deprived, neglected and possibly
2 abused?
- 3 **A.** Yes.
- 4 **Q.** And this was after you'd spent a little bit of time with that foster family?
- 5 **A.** Yes, I think I was with them for about two years.
- 6 **Q.** Okay. Now if you just go over the page, you'll see at paragraph 32?
- 7 **A.** Yes.
- 8 **Q.** You'll see it says this is what happened before you went to California?
- 9 **A.** Yes.
- 10 **Q.** And this must come out of the medical assessment in part at least that was done
11 by when-- you were at the Manurewa family home?
- 12 **A.** Yes.
- 13 **Q.** And it talks there of many concerns held by medical professionals, social workers and
14 neighbours about your welfare. I'll just go through these so that and-- if you want to
15 elaborate on them and comment as we do that --
- 16 **A.** Okay.
- 17 **Q.** - please do so. So, because it's -quite there's- quite a number of things there, aren't there.
18 So even from April 81 there was a medical assessment found you had a loose left tooth and
19 bruising on your fingertips with no explanation. There was a bite mark observed on your
20 right cheek and any idea where that possibly came- from?
- 21 **A.** I had many bite marks, so I don't recall who did that one.
- 22 **Q.** And then, you know, this is also from the file that there was bruising observed on your
23 body?
- 24 **A.** Yeah.
- 25 **Q.** In April, in July there was fingertip bruising, November a neighbour raised concerns about
26 how you were being treated differently to the foster children in the home, to the birth
27 children in the home. 83 there was a home visit and bruising observed on your face?
- 28 **A.** Yeah.
- 29 **Q.** March 83, bruising on your body, May bite marks on your left cheek, May 83 again,
30 consistent bite marks on your body, June 83 your left cheek was quite scratched, the social
31 worker noted whenever she saw you and Daryl there was bruising or marks on your faces.
32 And if you go over the page and you'll see paragraph with a little M next to it, do you see
33 that?
- 34 **A.** Yeah.

- 1 **Q.** Do you want to read that to us?
- 2 **A.** 22 July 1983, a doctor's assessment reported that I had been neglected, emotionally
3 damaged and possibly abused. My social worker didn't accept the doctor's conclusions,
4 stating that it would be more damaging to remove me from the redacted-- - care-.
- 5 **Q.** That's the foster parents, isn't it?
- 6 **A.** Yeah, foster parents' care as I was already bonded to them.
- 7 **Q.** So notwithstanding all of the apparent abuse, hurt that you'd suffered in that home, the
8 foster workers made the decision, kei te pai, you're attached, off you go?
- 9 **A.** Whether it was good or bad, you know, it was the only connection I had so they put me
10 back with them.
- 11 **Q.** And if you look at the next paragraph, again it confirms the medical assessment which
12 described you as being a skinny child with a protuberant abdomen probably caused by
13 emotional deprivation?
- 14 **A.** Yes.
- 15 **Q.** And you'd had poor growth since over the period of being fostered?
- 16 **A.** Yeah.
- 17 **Q.** But we know, don't we, that your mum changed her mind, and you went to the States?
- 18 **A.** I did, yes.
- 19 **Q.** And that was after the medical assessments that we've just referred to with the knowledge
20 of the social workers?
- 21 **A.** Yes, correct.
- 22 **Q.** And you say in your statement at paragraph 27, you tell us that there was little, or no
23 monitoring done by New Zealand authorities of you when you were in the States?
- 24 **A.** Correct.
- 25 **Q.** Is it your understanding that you were still then a ward of the State?
- 26 **A.** Correct.
- 27 **Q.** Here in New Zealand?
- 28 **A.** Yes.
- 29 **Q.** Would you have looking-- back on what you know now, would you have had an
30 expectation there would have been some form of checking up on you to see how these two
31 kids were going?
- 32 **A.** Absolutely, yeah.

- 1 **Q.** If you look at, just going down you say at paragraph 29 that these caregivers, this is what
2 you now know, I assume, that they were never checked or vetted before you were placed in
3 their care?
- 4 **A.** Yes, correct. Sorry, what number was it?
- 5 **Q.** It's number 29.
- 6 **A.** Oh, going back, okay. Yes. Do you want me to read it?
- 7 **Q.** No, just if you have it there in front of you?
- 8 **A.** Yes.
- 9 **Q.** And you there refer to what you're telling us in your statement there is that there was so
10 many warning signs?
- 11 **A.** Yeah, correct.
- 12 **Q.** Is that correct? You there describe the foster mother, just towards the bottom of the page
13 there, you say that she was angry and do you want to just carry on reading the next few --
- 14 **A.** This is actually from the Social Welfare people.
- 15 **Q.** Okay.
- 16 **A.** This is their statement.
- 17 **Q.** This is their statement?
- 18 **A.** Yeah.
- 19 **Q.** Let's read it out.
- 20 **A.** There were lots of doctors' notes in my file about concerns of the abuse and there were lots
21 of notes about Mrs - the carer, always being angry, snappy, nasty and trying to play
22 supermum with all the children in her care. The abuse was littered throughout my file so
23 why didn't the Social Welfare not intervene-.
- 24 **Q.** We'll move on a bit more now. We're going to go over to - we're now going to go to those
25 paragraphs beginning around 34 and 35. It's a couple of pages on-.
- 26 **A.** Yeah.
- 27 **Q.** We've already covered -- we've covered in part -- sorry, if you go to 34 it tells us that you
28 were suffering significant abuse with these people when you were there in California and
29 you also say it could have occurred beforehand, but there you tell us, look at 34 and just tell
30 us about the last couple of lines about what you recall, what was happening to you and
31 Daryl?
- 32 **A.** Daryl and I were always locked in a room in a dark room, and we used to stand on each
33 other's backs to try and look out the window, and that's all I remember, I don't remember

- 1 ever playing with other kids. I just remember always being locked in a room hungry, no
2 food, and yeah, I don't understand why, yeah.
- 3 **Q.** You've already told us that you were treated differently to the biological children of the
4 family?
- 5 **A.** Yes.
- 6 **Q.** You say in the next paragraph, you give a couple of examples that you always had to sit
7 away from them during meals?
- 8 **A.** Yeah, we did, we had to sit on the floor in the corner.
- 9 **Q.** So, they're at table chairs or they might have had high chairs or whatever and you and
10 Daryl are on the floor?
- 11 **A.** In the corner, yeah.
- 12 **Q.** In the corner. You also tell us that you weren't - you- and Daryl were not allowed to play
13 with those other children?
- 14 **A.** Yeah, we weren't allowed to do anything, so it was like we weren't allowed to talk to
15 anyone, we weren't allowed to play with anyone, and - but we had each other, so, you
16 know, we were very happy- to have each other to talk to.
- 17 **Q.** I want to talk with you now about some of the harm that was - that you received at the
18 hands of your female caregiver-.
- 19 **A.** Yeah.
- 20 **Q.** You've noted that in the next paragraph. Do you want to - you- can either read it out or you
21 might just want to talk about it to the Commissioners about what happened?
- 22 **A.** Yeah. I was repeatedly beaten by the female carer and one time she beat me up with an
23 iron. I remember her hitting me, I don't know why, it was just we were always naughty in
24 her eyes, and my right shoulder, I remember blood pouring out of my shoulder, and
25 I remember being in a lot of pain and the father, I remember him taking me in the bathroom
26 and cleaning me up, and it made me feel like he actually cared about me, and that was like
27 a little bit of love that I actually felt like oh, you know, he cares about us because he's
28 cleaning me up, but he was just as bad as her.
- 29 **Q.** There was just - you're telling us that was really just an isolated occasion of caring pretty
30 well?-
- 31 **A.** Yeah.
- 32 **Q.** Okay. You say over the page that you've had flashbacks of some sexual abuse that
33 occurred over the years and that makes - you're pretty clear- that that happened to you when
34 you were with that couple?

1 A. Yeah, because, yeah, whatever I was taught by them it followed me for the rest, you know,
2 my years growing up as a child and the same games they used to play with me I used to
3 play with others, and I used to think growing up how does a child know how to do that?
4 And now I know why. And I do remember certain games that we used to play.

5 Q. And then you talk about some punishments that you received, and one of those
6 punishments explains why you don't like vinegar.

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. Tell us why you don't like vinegar.

9 A. She said that one time she said that I was we-- were dirty, we had filthy mouths and she
10 made us eat soap, she put, I remember a block of soap in our mouth and then was trying to
11 clean us out because she said that we were dirty kids and she poured vinegar down our
12 throats and, yeah, I just remember us crying and - yeah-.

13 Q. You also say in that paragraph that one of the punishments was to sit in the chicken coop?

14 A. Yeah, we used to get locked outside. I think this was in America, there was some chickens
15 and we used to have to sit outside all day in the chicken coop as punishment because we
16 were always naughty apparently.

17 Q. And was it a chicken coop that was being live to coop chickens, were you in there with the
18 chickens or was it just --

19 A. They were live chickens, so we had to sit in there and I remember just being dirty and
20 smelly.

21 Q. Okay. Thank you. And then you refer to again, in the next paragraph (b) being locked in
22 the room and you were always isolated together, but you go on to say that you were always
23 starving and thirsty when you were locked away and you give a couple of examples. Do
24 you want to tell us about those?

25 A. Yeah.

26 Q. You can either read it out or just speak to it.

27 A. Yeah, just I remember one time, this is when we were locked outside, Daryl, he found a
28 rotten apple in the rubbish and he started eating it, and he vomited everywhere. And
29 another time we were locked in the room, we managed to get out and we found a little cup
30 and it was night time, everyone was sleeping and we -- I remember I used to stand on
31 Daryl's back and I would open the door and we went into the toilet and I remember this one
32 clearly, we were having turns drinking the toilet water with our little cup and that was like
33 heaven, like you got to have a drink of something.

1 **Q.** And was it just can- you recall whether that was -just - was that a -one-off- occasion or did
2 it happen more?

3 **A.** It was a one-off occasion because our little cup got confiscated so we didn't have anything
4 to drink with and plus we did get a hiding, so they keep putting fear in us not to get out
5 again, so yeah.

6 **Q.** You tell us that on one occasion you stole some food?

7 **A.** Yeah, so --

8 **Q.** Hid it in a drawer?

9 **A.** Yeah, so there was another time I remember there was a big drawer and me and Daryl
10 snuck out, so we got good, we became really good at sneaking out, and we got out of the
11 room and I remember I was crawling on the floor and the family wasn't there, and then we
12 grabbed lots of food and we stole heaps of fruit and we ran back in the room and put it in
13 the bottom drawer, and I remember us, we were just like so happy to, wow, we got all this
14 food, and then I remember turning around and one of the kids was standing there and we
15 just -- our hearts just dropped, and we were begging him, please don't tell on us, and he just
16 ran out of the room and then the foster mother come in after that and she gave us a huge
17 hiding, and took all the food away from us and we were just depressed and miserable again.

18 **CHAIR:** Can I just clarify here; you were aged about 3 at this stage?

19 **A.** Yeah.

20 **Q.** And Daryl was how old?

21 **A.** 3 as well.

22 **Q.** You were just three months apart?

23 **A.** Three months apart.

24 **Q.** So, you were a couple of toddlers?

25 **A.** Yeah, that's why I used to stand on his back to reach the door handle, that's how little we
26 were.

27 **Q.** Although you then refer to the swimming pool incident, although you say you don't recall
28 too much detail of it, but what you do recall is - tells us a few things. You'll- see there that
29 you were swimming in the pool, and what happened?

30 **A.** All I remember is drowning, and then just from connecting with Daryl again, you know, he
31 filled in the blanks for me about how we - the neighbour across next door from us
32 apparently jumped in, jumped over the fence and helped us out of the pool. And that gave
33 me a lifetime of anxiety being in the water, when I couldn't- touch the bottom, I used to
34 have this big fear.

- 1 **Q.** But tell us why, do you have an understand of why you nearly drowned?
- 2 **A.** Yeah, our foster mother, you know, put us in the pool and then took the stairs away, so then
3 we couldn't get out. And being so young we didn't know how to swim, and then we started
4 drowning and that's when apparently the neighbour come over and helped us out, and I
5 think that's the time where there was a complaint from the neighbour how she used to treat
6 us really terrible, but she didn't that- person didn't want to be identified- according to the
7 files.
- 8 **Q.** Have you ever thought about putting - adding things up and coming to an answer around
9 being put into a pool at this age and by your caregiver, her apparently removing the steps,
10 her then leaving, apparently not- being around and the neighbour having to rescue you?
- 11 **A.** Yeah, I just think she was trying to kill us off, she just probably didn't want us anymore.
12 Like there was no love, I don't understand why she even had us, you know, like she was
13 just a very wicked lady, and her actions show.
- 14 **Q.** You say that you were all you- were forced to go to sleep every night. -Was it just you or
15 was it Daryl as well?
- 16 **A.** Me and Daryl.
- 17 **Q.** You and Daryl?
- 18 **A.** We would always be sleeping together, and yeah, this image in my head it haunted me for
19 years, because, you know, we used to be forced to sleep in the dark and then when we
20 would open our eyes she's sitting there staring at us, and because she was so white she
21 looked like a ghost and it was really scary, you know, just look up and she's there, and, you
22 know, that affected us for a really long time.
- 23 **Q.** When the Commissioners go later, read your statement again, reading about this time in the
24 States, where it says I i.e.,-- you Erica could-- they also read it as being this was happening
25 to us, to Daryl and me?
- 26 **A.** Yes, both of us, yeah.
- 27 **Q.** Because you say in the next paragraph, and you reiterate that you received no love or
28 attention from this woman, and she hated you. You felt coldness from her, no love?
- 29 **A.** Yeah.
- 30 **Q.** But you do say in hindsight - then- you talk about the blessing that you had, which was
31 Daryl?
- 32 **A.** Yeah.
- 33 **Q.** Do you want to tell us about that?

1 A. Well, you know, we weren't completely alone because we had each other, and we were like
2 twins, because we were we- did look alike when we were kids, and we were the only ones
3 that we had each other, so we -were he- protected me, he did, he protected me a lot. And
4 yeah-, I just I- thank God I had him, because I don't- think any child would be able to
5 survive it on their own.

6 Q. And then you were brought back to New Zealand?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. And you this-- is after 14 months in the States, and you went to the paediatric ward of
9 Auckland Hospital?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. And you say you were there for two weeks, and it felt like a long time. Do you
12 recall - do- you have any recollection of that time?

13 A. Yeah, I do. To be honest it felt like it was about six months. I remember we were so
14 happy, we were really, really happy being in the hospital. The nurses were really beautiful
15 and loving to us. I remember Daryl going to school there, I remember we used to ride our
16 bikes through the corridors and the nurses used to chase after us. It was a beautiful time for
17 us, we felt love, we felt care, we had food, we had our own beds, yeah.

18 Q. Gave you a chance to recover and repair?

19 A. Yeah, we got to be kids for once, you know, and yeah.

20 Q. Because you go on to say that the diagnosis was one of, you say, social neglect?

21 A. Mmm.

22 Q. That there were years of poor growth, poor feeding, emotional deprivation?

23 A. Mmm.

24 Q. Systematically starved?

25 A. Yeah.

26 Q. And you'd been physically, emotionally abused and it says as well that during a medical
27 assessment there was behaviour shown which indicated possible sexual abuse?

28 A. Mmm.

29 Q. So, you had that time, and you had the party when you left you tell us?

30 A. Yeah, so I remember we met our new foster carers, and they were really beautiful, and
31 I remember the nurses all put on a party for us, I remember a big table full of lollies and
32 chocolate and just goodies for us and we felt like a king and a queen, for once in our life.

33 Q. Then you left, you were obviously well enough to go?

34 A. Yeah.

- 1 **Q.** Then you went to a place in Bucklands Beach, and you were now 4 years of age?
- 2 **A.** Yes.
- 3 **Q.** But it didn't last, did it?
- 4 **A.** No.
- 5 **Q.** And this is when you and Daryl were separated?
- 6 **A.** Yeah, correct.
- 7 **Q.** Because you were placed back at home with your mum?
- 8 **A.** Yes.
- 9 **Q.** Tell us about how, was it did-- you know that you were going to be separated?
- 10 **A.** Not that I remember, no.
- 11 **Q.** And you say at paragraph 51 that this affected you so much, you say Daryl was all you had,
12 he was the only person who truly cared for me for many years it left a hole in my heart?
- 13 **A.** Yeah.
- 14 **Q.** Is there anything they're-- powerful words in themselves, but is there anything you want to
15 add to them right now?
- 16 **A.** Look, you know, it's a roller coaster of emotions, throughout the whole, you know,
17 experience and to have your only like- he was like my twin brother, he was the only one
18 that ever cared for me, and to have him ripped away from me, it left me scarred for life, you
19 know, and it gave me really bad separation anxiety. And that, yeah-, it affected me for
20 many, many years and I lost contact with him.
- 21 **Q.** Then you tell us, we've covered the previous paragraph, I just draw that paragraph 52,
22 we've just covered that in essence, but just draw it to your attention. Then you go back,
23 you're discharged from care of the State?
- 24 **A.** Yes.
- 25 **Q.** You're back with mum?
- 26 **A.** Yeah.
- 27 **Q.** February 1985. You tell us that she has a new partner, and he was nice, but mum had some
28 problems, and you refer to alcohol?
- 29 **A.** Yeah.
- 30 **Q.** And if you look at para 55 you talk about life at home with your siblings?
- 31 **A.** Yeah.
- 32 **Q.** Do you want to just summarise that for us, what it was like for you?
- 33 **A.** Yeah, it was really hard trying to fit in with my siblings, I always felt rejected, I always felt
34 I was just like someone for them to pick on. And I struggled to connect with them.

- 1 **Q.** Can you recall if Social Welfare provided any help to you or to the family upon your return
2 to help that transition of this little girl back into a family who she had known and who were
3 probably strangers to her?
- 4 **A.** Not that I remember, no.
- 5 **Q.** Nothing on the file that you recall?
- 6 **A.** No, I don't remember once I went back to my mum anyone visiting me.
- 7 **Q.** You tell us as well that "we know that if mum's got a new partner, it means dad's moved
8 on"?
- 9 **A.** Yes.
- 10 **Q.** And did you have a continuing relationship with your dad, did you go and see him?
- 11 **A.** GRO-B
- 12 **Q.** GRO-B
- 13 **A.** GRO-B
- 14 **Q.** GRO-B
- 15 **A.** GRO-B
- 16 **Q.** GRO-B
- 17 **A.** GRO-B
- 18 **Q.** So, we're going to be just- in the next paragraph you begin to start talking about some the of
19 the impact that that journey has had on you, that life journey. Do you want to tell us about,
20 summarise what's- in that paragraph for us?
- 21 **A.** Which number sorry?
- 22 **Q.** It's about 57.
- 23 **A.** Yeah, I used to suffer nightmares for years, I just I- always felt undervalued and invisible.
24 And which I know that's the root of my trauma from the abuse. My mum was never
25 affectionate towards me, she never hugged me or said, "I love you". And I don't blame her,
26 she didn't know how to herself, you know, but it -left made- me feel lonely and was very
27 painful growing up knowing that -no one's ever hugged you or loved you, or just gave you
28 any affection in my life. So yeah, that really damaged me massively with my- --
- 29 **Q.** If we look at what's happened as you went through your life, through adolescence and into
30 adulthood, you do tell us, and we've moved over the page now, that you got into bad
31 relationships or couldn't maintain relationships, that you'd help people but end up suffering?
- 32 **A.** Yeah. Because of my anxiety I didn't realise actually I was struggling with PTSD and
33 I every- single relationship I had I lost, I couldn't keep any relationships, and I didn't know

1 why. Because I had a huge heart and I wanted to help everybody, but I was a big-time
2 people pleaser and I would help to a point where I'm abusing myself too much and then I
3 would -become people- would abuse me, abuse my kindness and then I would become
4 extremely angry and then go crazy. And then all the million things I did right, that one big
5 anger you did, it just destroyed everything. And then I would lose relationships and every
6 single time I lost a relationship it was like that person had died. -That was the pain I felt
7 every time I lost a relationship, and it was extremely painful growing up going through that
8 all my life.

9 **Q.** You do say it had an impact on your mental health, you say that was bad?

10 **A.** Big time, yeah.

11 **Q.** And that obviously got to a point where you felt almost, by the sounds of things, in the
12 depths of despair?

13 **A.** Yeah, I had struggled with suicide from the age of 10 onwards, all my life, you know, felt
14 hopeless and felt insignificant like no one loved me.

15 **Q.** You talk about your own children, how many kids do you have?

16 **A.** I have two children.

17 **Q.** They have obviously had their own bits and pieces going on for them because you talk
18 about medical conditions?

19 **A.** Yeah, yes, both my children have autism, both of them have learning difficulties, my son
20 has a severe speech delay and I blame sometimes- I used to blame myself looking at my
21 kids, thinking it's your fault Erica because you didn't have an education, because
22 you're- uneducated, now your kids are suffering.

23 **Q.** Because you talk about how hard it was for you as a mum with kids with those issues and
24 how again it took you down a pathway of feeling why am I here?

25 **A.** Yeah.

26 **Q.** You use the words feeling lost, feeling alone and a life of heartbreak and rejection?

27 **A.** Mmm.

28 **Q.** If you just look at the end, the last couple of lines of paragraph 63 you say, you see where it
29 says being confused?

30 **A.** Yeah.

31 **Q.** Do you want to finish that paragraph off for us?

32 **A.** I had low self-esteem being angry, feeling no love, this is the effects of child abuse.

33 **Q.** GRO-B

- 1 A. GRO-B
- 2 Q. GRO-B
- 3 A. GRO-B
- 4 Q. GRO-B
- 5 A. GRO-B
- 6 Q. GRO-B
- 7 A. GRO-B
- 8 Q. GRO-B
- 9 A. GRO-B
- 10 Q. You talk about, you know, if you just look at paragraph 65 and just perhaps read the last
11 couple of sentences from the third line, the middle of the third line?
- 12 A. Yeah. Drinking destroyed me a lot, all my emotional problems came out when I drank and
13 after this, I would just want to take my own life.
- 14 Q. But then as we can see, and that's from you here today and physically, and of course in
15 many other ways through being going-- through this process, things turned around?
- 16 A. Yeah, they did.
- 17 Q. You talk about how you found faith, is that part of the reason for it?
- 18 A. It wasn't until I found my faith in Jesus, things started to turn around for me to get better.
19 I'm a survivor of all of that. I finally have light and peace in my life. And I want to share
20 the goodness of God to all of humanity and bring light into the darkness of every painful
21 heart.
- 22 Q. I want to finish by just talking about what's happened since then through redress. And
23 some your- thoughts about change. Just on the redress, you tell us that in 2011 you started
24 the historical claim process, with MSD?-
- 25 A. Mmm.
- 26 Q. And that an offer was made, a fast-track offer, let's get rid of her, and you declined that
27 didn't you, and you hung in there?
- 28 A. Yeah.
- 29 Q. And you had to retell everything, the stuff you've told us today no doubt?
- 30 A. Mmm.
- 31 Q. And you received a higher offer and an apology which you accepted?
- 32 A. Yeah.
- 33 Q. See that final paragraph, paragraph 70 on that page, can you read that out to us please?

- 1 A. The process was long and exhausting, the process was like putting a band aid on the issues.
2 For me there is no amount of money that would ever heal the wounds and the years that had
3 been stolen from my life because of the impacts of child abuse.
- 4 Q. If we turn over, you then tell us that in fact you've had there's-- been a further
5 acknowledgment by MSD about its failures, hasn't there?
- 6 A. Yes.
- 7 Q. Two significant practice failures, firstly failure to follow a recruitment process for the
8 caregivers, right, you say that they were not vetted, no referee checks, no home visits, no
9 forms completed, before they became your foster caregivers?
- 10 A. Mmm.
- 11 Q. There appeared to be no discussion about whether they understood the role and the
12 responsibilities of looking after children who were not their own?
- 13 A. Yeah.
- 14 Q. And there was a second failure, wasn't there?
- 15 A. Mmm.
- 16 Q. What was that?
- 17 A. By DSW to identify abuse and investigate concerns of abuse. This is obvious because the
18 abuse was littered throughout my file.
- 19 Q. Let's finish by talking about your ideas, what you think should change so that --
- 20 **CHAIR:** Just before you do that, I hope you don't mind me interrupting, but you applied, if I can
21 just put on the record so that the world can hear this, you applied for redress from MSD in
22 2011?
- 23 A. Yes.
- 24 Q. You received a Fast Track offer in 2015?
- 25 A. Yes.
- 26 Q. Not very fast, and when you rejected that you had to wait another year before you received
27 the next offer?
- 28 A. Yeah.
- 29 Q. So, your redress claim took from October 2011 to mid-2016 to be resolved, is that right?
- 30 A. Yes, correct.
- 31 Q. Do you want to say anything about how that process felt to you?
- 32 A. Oh, again, it was just really long and exhausting and many times I just wanted to quit and
33 say forget it, you know, because it was a bit of a slap in the face, I just felt like that they

1 were just trying to sweep it under the carpet and, you know, this is a lifetime of pain and
2 trauma and, yeah, I can't get that back.

3 **Q.** Some survivors have told us that going through this sort of process they regard as another
4 form of abuse?

5 **A.** Yeah.

6 **Q.** Would you agree with that?

7 **A.** Yeah, absolutely.

8 **Q.** Thank you for that, I just needed to cover that off before we move on to transformative
9 change, which is a good place to go to.

10 **QUESTIONING BY DR COOKE CONTINUED:** It is, isn't it. Tell us about, I think you've got
11 three particular proposals. Do you want to tell us what they are?

12 **A.** So just read 73?

13 **Q.** Yes.

14 **A.** I think there needs to be better communication between the Ministry and the carers,
15 families of the children and the children themselves. Without communication there is no
16 relationship. I don't recall ever being spoken to as a child. There should be proper
17 structures, policies, and procedures in place so that caregivers are always considered safe to
18 care for the child. The mental health and the backgrounds of caregivers need to be looked
19 into and understood. There must be ongoing check-ups and follow-ups on the caregivers
20 and children, and if there are any alarm bells the Ministry should act on it.

21 **Q.** This was really your summation, isn't it, of what could have been different?

22 **A.** Yeah.

23 **Q.** Hit us with that one.

24 **A.** Yeah, I think that if the carers had been properly vetted and inspected things may have been
25 different for me and Daryl. The signs of child abuse were there from the beginning, but no
26 one did anything about it.

27 **Q.** Thank you. Now, the Commissioners, I think the Commissioners may want to ask you
28 some questions, and I believe once that is finished there's going to be a poem followed by a
29 waiata.

30 **CHAIR:** I think I've asked my question.

31 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Tēnā koe Erica, I think it's fantastic you've connected with your
32 whānau in Rotorua after all this time, that's great to make that connection. I don't have any
33 questions. I thought, you know, through your Cook Island and your Māori whakapapa
34 having all those connections, I note your point with that whānau that you were with all

1 those years and where you suffered the abuse, they were neither Māori nor Cook Island
2 right?

3 A. No.

4 Q. Your sense is that that had a factor in their attitude towards both you and Daryl and your
5 treatment. Is that the sense you got from that?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. That it might have been a factor of race involved in your treatment as well?

8 A. Yeah, I believe so.

9 Q. Ka pai. Kei te mihi atu ki a koe whaea, ki tō whānau. Ngā manaakitanga ki a kōrua.

10 A. Thank you. Can I just say a few words?

11 Q. Before the poem?

12 A. Is that okay? I just wanted to share with the world about, you know, you know I know the
13 truth now and I believe that I've been healed from all this trauma and all this pain, and
14 I want to share with everything who's been broken-hearted, every single person who's been
15 abused that ever since I received Jesus as my Lord and saviour, my whole life has been
16 healed, transformed, restored, and I am a new creation. And I just pray in the name of
17 Jesus that every single person turns to him, turns to him, because man will always fail you,
18 but God will never. And I just thank you that everything that I've been, all my life I was
19 lost and now I'm found. I was rejected and now I'm accepted, I was broken and now I'm
20 restored, I was blind and now I see, I was weak and now I'm strong, I was hated but now
21 I'm loved. My disability is his ability to do all things for me.

22 My separation anxiety is gone, and I know that the peace of God is with me. No
23 one has ever put value in me but God. I turn to him for all my needs. And I used to, all my
24 fear that I had I know that the devil is a liar. And the devil has been defeated by the cross.
25 And I just pray in the name of Jesus that every single person will have him as their Lord.
26 When Jesus is the centre of everything, love and peace come, and the light, the darkness
27 will never be outshined by the light. So, I thank you, I thank you for the Royal
28 Commission for giving me this opportunity to share my story and to share the love of God
29 and what he does in our lives.

30 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Wonderful. Kia orana katoatoa Erica. Just on behalf of the
31 Commission before we hear your brother's, or we hear the poem and then we have the
32 waiata, can I just thank you on behalf of the Commission, just the courage and the strength
33 that you've shown, and just in those last moments when the cadence in your voice got

1 stronger and stronger, because you were anchoring yourself in a power that is much greater
2 than yours.

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. We can see that you've turned all of those things that others intended for harm for you in
5 particular those caregivers, you're turning it around for good and you're standing, you're
6 sending a very clear message that notwithstanding the darkness that's been in your life,
7 actually there is hope.

8 A. There is.

9 Q. There is hope and you're a wonderful example of that. So, we're very, very moved and I
10 was just thinking GRO-B.

11 Can I also just thank to your sister Angela who's standing there as a wonderful pou,
12 pou tū in support of your sister. Thank you, Angela, it's not always easy coming out and
13 talking about things about whānau, about kainga, about aiga that have been very painful in
14 the past and of course also in the honouring of the memory of your brother who you just
15 speak so beautifully about, yeah.

16 So, you have left us much, you have left us much to actually sow alongside all of
17 the other brave survivors that come forward, and just the wonderful example for us in
18 Pasifika to not be afraid, to be able to come forward, so thank you for that courage. Malie,
19 meitaki ma'ata.

20 "Hello, I want to share with you one of my deepest, deepest feelings of hurt while
21 being in foster care. I call this the centre of my hurt. And I've labelled this to be foster
22 care, where is my sister. Here we go.

23 My sister and I have just got back, we're in hospital, we're growing, we are intact,
24 we are placed with a beautiful loving couple, our eyes that glow we're out of trouble. My
25 sister and I we stay very close, we share, we care, we're bright as a rose, I love my sister
26 with all of my heart. We've shared an experience as big as a cart.

27 My first day of school back in New Zealand, I'm told I will be okay, it's actually like
28 play land. My sister says to me don't go, I say to her it's fine, I'll show you so. She looks at
29 me in the eye, I stay brave, I stay cool, but really, I want to cry. At school I had fun,
30 I paint, and I run, I drew pictures with felts, I wore my new belt, I missed my sister,
31 I thought of her, I love her so much, she is my very cure.

32 I finish school, I feel so cool. I want to show my sister my new learning tool. On
33 arrival home I call her name, my house parents look ashamed. I look and I look even under

1 the book. I check the room and under the bed. My house parents say something I forgot
 2 what they said. I check outside and around the yard, I stop, I think, she might be playing
 3 with the card. I call her name with a deeper tone, I'm afraid, I'm scared, she may be alone.
 4 I go to the room; I sit on her bed. I just remembered what the house parents said. 'Daryl,
 5 Daryl, your sister has gone. Please just stop, you need to calm down.'

6 Inside of myself I feel the anger, I want to smash everything, watch out you're in
 7 danger. My eyes they turn red as I sit on the bed, I start to repeatedly rub my head. My
 8 foster parents, they walk in the room, I turn, I look, then I just go boom. Where is my
 9 sister, where is she? You know that's all I have close to me. I'm angry, I'm hurt, I'm
 10 melting inside. I'm crying, I'm crying, I just want to hide. The anger rages even deeper in
 11 me. I feel it, I feel it, you wouldn't want to see. I can't believe they did that to us. We've
 12 been through a lot together I say with fuss.

13 We starved together in America and experienced abuse, we held on to each other
 14 with no excuse. We shared a traumatic emotional ride. This has come to an end, I'm only
 15 just 5. I dreamed for many years and often thought of her. And never forgot she was my
 16 cure. I learned later in life she was not my real sister, it doesn't matter to me, she fitted to
 17 be. Sis, sis, I love you sis. I thought of you always, I never did miss.

18 To the Government worker, who made that decision, I want you to know this was
 19 my greatest mission. That took years and years for me to see really that day what you did
 20 to me. That day was my first day at school, I'm a social worker now, I realise that's cruel.
 21 Other social workers please learn from this. It was wrong that's clear, I'm making you
 22 aware. Kia ora."

23 **CHAIR:** Not a dry eye in the house. Shall we go straight to the video? The waiata, this is what
 24 we need. Please come forward.

25 **SPEAKER:** We are here on behalf of the Royal Commission but also the Pacific team. It's a very
 26 familiar one, so I hope you enjoy and receive it as well. **[Waiata]**

27 A. Thank you so much, it was so beautiful.

28 **CHAIR:** Would you like to take a break or just continue?

29 **DR COOKE:** I think we can continue, which is the video of Daryl.

30 **CHAIR:** Just to note, this I think is not going to be live streamed, is it?

31 **DR COOKE:** That's correct, it's not live streamed.

32 **CHAIR:** So, people on the livestream won't be able to see it, I believe it's for copyright reasons.

33 **DR COOKE:** That is my understanding, some technical issue of that sort.

1 **CHAIR:** It has been shown on television in the past so probably available online somewhere in
2 you wanted to watch it.

3 **[Video played]**

4 "In 1908 I was placed into the New Zealand government State care system. This was due
5 to my parents being unable to look after me. For the next 18 years I have been placed into
6 79 foster homes, I have been subject to physical emotional and sexual abuse. I am Daryl, I
7 am a survivor of State care. I was born in Auckland in 1979 in November. According to
8 record, I was living with my biological mother and biological father who were both under
9 the Mental Health Act or in that time under Carrington Hospital.

10 One would think what are the chances of these two being able to look after a child,
11 and in the third month of my existence I ended up being placed by a rubbish bin. My father
12 dialled 111 for help. As the ambulance approached, he would have just left me there and
13 walked away. I was taken into Auckland Hospital and there I was assessed. My nappy had
14 not been changed in sometime. I had severe eczema burn, and at that stage I looked so bad
15 the Government then stepped in and made me a ward of the State.

16 I've tried to picture this many times. Glass bassinet, a family walking past, we'll
17 take that child. At the same time my foster sister, Erica, she I- don't know if she was next
18 to me or three or four glass boxes down, I don't know, yeah, we simply got chosen. The red
19 flags went up when bite marks started to appear, or bruises started to appear on just Erica
20 and me. So, in late 83, as I was entering the age of 4, my foster family had decided to move
21 to America-.

22 The record shows that prior to us leaving for the USA, that there were concerns that
23 were raised, failure to thrive, reoccurring bite marks on us, observation by a statutory social
24 worker indicated that every time they made a home visit, either myself or Erica had a bruise
25 or some type of mark. I remember opening the curtain and it was like a horrible, ugly, dirty
26 netting. And I could just hear the laughter of children. There was a world out there that
27 I hadn't seen.

28 A lot of the beatings were the- pulling of the ears was one, being hit across the head,
29 whacked on the shoulder. If I cried, I would get more. Then it was Erica's turn.
30 I remember starting kindergarten and the kindergarten asking, "what's that?" And I was
31 being asked questions, you know, how is it where you are, where you're living. The
32 concerns did go from the day care through to the child services. People did come to visit,
33 and they looked at Erica and I, asked us little questions, and it felt like the very next day I
34 was at this great big park, and I was able to press a button on a car, it was a Dukes of

1 Hazard car. And from what it appeared to look like was they were getting the photos in to
2 show that they were being great carers really-.

3 But it would become a lot worse for me. The nights got harder, and it started by
4 going to sleep and if you make a move or a sound, you will get the bash. I remember lying
5 there in the dark, you can feel like the breath, the breaths on your cheek, and you know
6 someone's there. The lights come on in the room and then I was asked to do certain things
7 to the foster mother, but I was shown by the foster father of how to do it. I remember
8 having to go up under my foster mother's dress and touch her inappropriately. This seemed
9 like days and months and just like an everyday occurrence, until Erica and I had to do
10 things to each other.

11 I would hate to think that she was trying to kill us off, but that's sure what it
12 appeared to look like in reality. Accident as you may say, and I think she had enough eyes
13 on her to the point of, yeah, these children are to be returned. All I remember from there is
14 being back on an aeroplane. I was really hoping that the next place I go to was going to be
15 one of the best places, but I was very doubtful, I was very fearful and most of all I felt am
16 I going to be safe.

17 After coming back from America and experiencing physical abuse, sexual abuse,
18 neglect in every form that you can think of, we went straight into Auckland Hospital. At
19 first, I was very cautious, very, very cautious, like why this? Like what do they want?
20 I remember asking if I was allowed the light on. And the nurse said, "yes of course, that's
21 fine." I think from there the feeling was like wow, this is just so different. Yeah, I mean
22 I felt so free. I felt I'm not going to get beaten.

23 I remember driving a long way, big house, I remember a lady coming out with a
24 man. The foster mother spoke with such a soft tone. I remember climbing into bed and it
25 was just like so soft and the quilt, the pillow you could sink in, but I did say "you don't
26 come into our room, eh?" The answer was "not unless you want us, you can call for us."
27 I felt settled, I felt loved, and I thought I was there forever.

28 In my room I had a treasure chest, the treasure chest for me was like I don't know, it
29 was somewhere I could go and say you know what? Yours, that's yours. The foster father
30 picked me up after school, he had this ghastly look on his face. I remember the foster
31 mother saying Daryl, rabbiting on about something. I looked for Erica, I went outside,
32 I went upstairs. Just as I turned it was like a flood like boof, that they had taken Erica
33 away.

1 I just went absolutely ballistic. Being so angry, everything in sight I just smashed,
2 chucked things through the window. I just didn't care, where is my sister, where is my
3 sister? So, my foster parents told me that Erica had gone back to her real family, but as a
4 child I didn't I- was her family-.

5 Erica leaving wasn't a decision made by the foster parents themselves, it was a
6 decision made by the State that they felt Erica would be best to go back home. My foster
7 parents really gave me the space to heal, gave me space and time to myself. In my treasure
8 chest I had the photo album of Erica and whenever I missed her, I would go back to the
9 photo album and just go through the photos, that was my way to cope. We sat down
10 together one night, and I remember my foster mother saying with great passion, "Daryl, we
11 love you so much, you've gone so far, and would you like us to be your mum and dad
12 forever?" And I said, "well of course, you already are." I was on cloud 9. I really was on
13 cloud 9. So, they approached the Government asking to adopt me.

14 One day I arrived home and the foster mum's crying, I could see her yelling, I could
15 see him getting very frustrated, she said, you know, it's time to go. She just looked at me
16 and just hugged me. I was just absolutely shocked and in tears, trying to figure out what
17 was going on, like what have I done wrong? I think the only thing I asked was is my
18 treasure chest in the car, to which was said yes. So, I thought to myself the only way to get
19 out of here is to be naughty. Let's make this very difficult. I would scream at my aunty, I
20 would yell at her, I ran away, I did every possible thing a child could think of to get out of
21 there. I put so much stress on her that she thought it was best that I go back into State care.
22 And I went yes, I'm going home.

23 So, as we pull into this driveway, I think we must be here to pick up another child or
24 something. And then I hear the boot open, and I think my gear's coming out. And my heart
25 just broke, I was expecting to go home. I sit down with a social worker and the caregiver,
26 and we go through the care plan. So, the age of 6 I was asked to sign a form to say that I
27 will not do drugs, not do alcohol, it was like a 1 to 10 house rules.

28 That home was a shocker. That home was one of the worst homes I've ever been in.
29 A lot of abuse happened at this place. One of the beatings got so bad that it drew blood.
30 I looked at the blood and I said you know what, he's only hurt the outside, but he hasn't hurt
31 the inside. I thought well, hang on, you can do anything you want to, you can beat this, but
32 you can't touch what's inside of here. That was a real powerful tool for me that I use a lot
33 growing up.

1 This certain day I wake up, turn the light on go to the wardrobe and oh my God my
2 treasure chest isn't there and I can't believe it. This was my connection to Erica. This was
3 my connection to that little bit of hope I had left that I could go back home. I asked the
4 lady did you take my chest? To which she said yes. And the conversation that it- took a lot
5 of bravery to do this, was that was mine and that led to me going outside, getting a bamboo
6 in order to be whacked on the hand for answering back-.

7 I was lost, I didn't know how to break this placement down because that meant a
8 beating, and when I was told I was leaving, I was like yay, like all Christmases at once. I
9 am so happy to get away from this hellhole, and I'm about to move to what every foster
10 child will dream about. You know, let's just hope that the madness has gone. I would have
11 been about 10 and a half. I was in the car with my social worker, and I asked why I'm
12 moving, and the social worker said to me, "Daryl, the 1989 Act states that if you're a Māori
13 child you are to be in a Māori home." And I didn't quite know what Māori was apart from
14 the scary dudes doing the haka on TV really, and I got to this placement, and as I arrived
15 there they were packing and it turned out that her husband had passed away, so I had to go
16 to a tangi, to a Māori tangi, and experience it the Māori way.

17 And I learned huge, I learned a lot. I saw her mamae, I saw her cry, I saw her pain
18 and I could also see she was a very nice lady, very nice. She had older children, I was the
19 youngest, yeah, I just felt really good, really good in this home. It was more of a family, it
20 was not restricted by rules, regulations, and you could sense by the people in it that it was a
21 place where people draw strengths upon everyone else. I knew by then that I was getting to
22 an age where I had to like try and stay still.

23 So, I worked really hard at this placement. So, one day the Government announced
24 that all foster homes are to go out, pick up some street kids, take them back to the home,
25 feed them, dress them, my job was to sweep the garage. And we were going to go marae
26 style as in mattresses on the ground. So, these guys turned up, they appeared to be quite
27 scary looking. They were sucking on those plastic bags, but they appeared friendly despite
28 that. They had a whole language to them, like "chur I've got food, or I've got clothes", or
29 "chur bro, yeah".

30 It was quite late at night and one of the boys asked me for a cup of tea. "Bro get a
31 cup of tea, come and talk to us." I made the cup of tea, went out and I was shoved to the
32 ground. All I heard was like laughter. They go to the corner of the garage and there's
33 spider webs there and, oh fuck I'll never forget it, this great big black spider just dropped.
34 He grabbed the spider and coming towards me, and I start to move a lot, and the more

1 I moved the more I get pinned down. "Open your mouth", and oh fuck, I felt the legs and
2 oh shit, and I just remember saying, you know, fuck it, and then I just went 1, 2, 3,
3 physically bit down and swallowed. And the boys were like "chur bro". And I just try and
4 head for the door eh, and the words I remember more than anything are, "if you say
5 anything we're going to fuck'n kill you."

6 I was trying to get myself together and I couldn't. And I had to break it, and I said
7 "I want to go. I want to leave today. I want out of here. I don't like you and I don't like
8 this. I don't like anyone here." And she rung the social worker. And the social worker
9 came to pick me up, my social worker turns to me, "you know Daryl, the way you're going,
10 you're going to end up in jail" and I thought how fuck'n dare you.

11 Around 11 years old, I was roughly into my 16th, 17th placement. My number
12 came up, they found a permanent placement. This family was wild, this family had three of
13 their own children, there was also three foster children, this guy was a maniac, this guy was
14 crazy, he was sergeant major. If you didn't do what you were told you got a beating. I got
15 it really hard. I got huge amounts of jobs. I was old enough now to sort of answer back a
16 little bit. I challenged processes because I could now weigh it up against other places, I had
17 lived in.

18 One day after another scuffle with the biological son, my punishment was to get up
19 at 6 o'clock on a Sunday morning and my job was to mow the lawns. But the trick was I
20 had to do it with a pair of scissors. The greatest day of that placement was when I got
21 home, and they weren't there anymore. They had gone. And these two people from
22 another country were there, never heard their accent before in my life, the guy spoke funny,
23 the lady spoke funny, but they were funny people. She goes "what are you doing?" I said,
24 "I'm doing my jobs", she goes "you don't need to do that, eh, come in, come in and sit
25 down."

26 This was one of the first homes ever that I received pocket money, and I remember
27 our foster father lining us all up and asking our age, and however old we were was exactly
28 how much money we got. So I was, what, 12, so I got \$12 and my gosh does \$12 buy you
29 a lot. Those were the days of the 2 cent lollies, you go down and there were \$2 and that's it,
30 you got 100 lollies easy eh.

31 An attachment started to happen because I was being treated like a kid. I just felt
32 like I could really enjoy this, you know? My schooling had increased dramatically. They
33 asked me like how long have you been in foster care? And I said from the age of three
34 months. I think it was the first time someone had ever said or asked me "how do you feel

1 Daryl about being in care?" I just said, "look to be honest with you I'm over it, I've had
2 enough." For months I believed that was going to be my last foster placement. Until one
3 day.

4 After years and years of being in so many homes and suffering so much abuse and
5 seen so much, I was being treated like a kid. You know, I was being treated like a human
6 being, I was given choices and the choices I had were really good choices. So, from the
7 age of 13 to 18 I had been in over 40 placements. Caregivers out there didn't want older
8 children, they wanted younger children. So, moving became the thing.

9 A ward of the State is discharged from 17 to 18. Usually, the 17th birthday and it
10 means that government has no responsibility of that child anymore. It's all relinquished.
11 So that's officially recognised when you enter through the courtroom and the judge stamps
12 that to say that you are now discharged from State care. Congratulations and good luck.
13 The judge said, and I'll never forget these words. "On behalf of society of New Zealand,
14 we congratulate you for living such a horrible life and coming out good."

15 That's when everyone started clapping and the feeling is just overwhelming, I'm
16 free. I don't have to answer to anyone anymore, I don't have to see goddamn anymore care
17 plans, no more house rules, no signing of house rules. For me it was, I think I got to be
18 Daryl. I survived 17 years of care because I chose never to give up, I chose to believe in
19 myself, and I always believed that hope exists. I am Daryl, I am a survivor of State care.
20 In 1980 I was placed into..."

21 **CHAIR:** Well, what more have you got to throw at us, Dr Cooke?

22 **DR COOKE:** The team has thrown this at you, Madam Chair.

23 **CHAIR:** The team.

24 **DR COOKE:** The team, and of course those people who have come forward over the course of
25 this week to tell their kōrero to you.

26 **CHAIR:** When I say throw, I just mean I think we've all felt the impact so strongly and so
27 appropriately we should be feeling this way. Thank you.

28 **DR COOKE:** We now have Emily Gao who is Daryl's widow. I believe she is here. And she is
29 going to read us an extract from Daryl's book.

30 **CHAIR:** What are we going to do with Erica and her sister? Stay there and be part of this if you
31 would like, that would be lovely.

32 A. We'll move over.

33 **DR COOKE:** As well, of course I've been reminded that we have in front of us the taonga and
34 Daryl's book, which I believe Anaru you're going to address.

1 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Yes, I am. Kei te mihi atu ki a koe whaea. Kei te maumaharatia
2 tōna makau, hoa pūmau, tuakana a Daryl. Tēnei te mihi mahana ki a ia, tēnei te mihi
3 mahana ki te whānau, ngā manaakitanga ki runga ki a koutou.

4 I want to say on behalf of the Inquiry, extend our gratitude for the gifting of Daryl's
5 book, his pukapuka here that he gifted to the Inquiry that was brought to us by Emily. But
6 also the taonga, which you won't be able to see at the back here, but it's a taniwha here, a
7 manaia that has been sitting in the Commissioner's room since you gifted it to us, so we're
8 always -- and his pukapuka is there on the ledge as well, so we're always mindful of his
9 great works and his determination, as we saw in the video clip, about how, against the odds,
10 he worked hard to get his degree and to be a social worker and to contribute back to the
11 tamariki who were in care.

12 And I know it's a difficult time for you all and we feel for you, all of you as whānau,
13 but we want to extend our gratitude and thank you for all the mahi that you are doing as
14 well for Daryl for this Inquiry. Kia ora, thank you.

15 **MS GAO:** Thanks. Thanks. I'm just reading out from Daryl's book and this portion relates to
16 Daryl being uplifted from a failed placement at 12 years old.

17 "At the Government office I was asked to sit in the TV room while they found a
18 suitable placement for me. This was the first time I had ever been in a government office
19 and finally I could put a face to the years of decision-making around my life. When
20 I looked around the room, I saw many social workers and they all appeared very busy. I
21 would love to say they found me a loving family who opened their home and hearts to me,
22 but that would be telling a lie.

23 The truth is from here on I was placed many times in many different child's homes.
24 These were homes run by private organisations contracted to the government to provide
25 bed nights for people like me to stay in. They were being used more and more as
26 government foster homes were slowly being closed and sold off. Not only did I stay in
27 many trust homes from here on, but I also had many different schools and social workers.
28 It seemed that most of the time the social workers didn't communicate with each other as
29 most moves meant I had to change schools to the point where I lost count.

30 Between 13 and 18 years old I was moved to over 20 placements. There were three
31 reasons why I was moved so often. Firstly, the trust homes were bankrupt and had to be
32 shut down. Secondly, the operations of the home was not up to standard and it also had to
33 be shut down. Thirdly, the bed nights of government had about run out, so I had to move to
34 one with bed nights available.

1 For me it soon become a game of cat and mouse as I was shovelled from pillar to
2 post to pass the time before I could be discharged from State care. Because of my age I
3 missed the opportunity to be adopted as it was always easier for a family to adopt and
4 create bonds with someone younger. Therefore, remaining in care was the only option I
5 had.

6 Of the 20 or so homes I stayed in, some were worse than others, and all had
7 adventures of their own, but a few things they all shared were house rules, care plans, and
8 mission statements to be the best provider of care to children, which I could argue with.

9 Out of many homes I had been in during the period, I can recall three that really
10 stood out above the rest. At one I was hit by the house mother's adult son, at another I
11 believe bad practice result in a murder, and at a third the house parents used drugs in the
12 home until I found them and throw them at my social worker in the office." At the end of
13 the book here is a personal message from Daryl as a survivor of foster care.

14 "I would first like to acknowledge all the foster parents out there who gave the time,
15 heart, passion and patience to look after foster children in their own homes, foster homes or
16 as key workers. I know it can be challenging role and sometimes you may feel you are
17 being pushed to the very limit. I'd like to say thank you for hanging in there.

18 But please remember that every foster child has something to say and wants to feel
19 loved, nurtured and part of a real family. Through all the not so good foster parents
20 I strongly urge you to resign and seek new employment elsewhere as you are causing
21 damage to children, damage that good caregivers eventually have to try and reverse.

22 To our social workers in the field of foster care, please remember you have a duty
23 under the code of ethics and legislation to keep every child safe and ensure their well-being.
24 Take time to listen. Hear the child and visit frequently to ensure those communication lines
25 stay open.

26 To the organisation that provided care to children in foster homes, remember that
27 foster parents' own children living in the home play a significant part in foster child's life.
28 Review your policy to ensure equality between them so there are no noticeable differences
29 between their levels of care.

30 Believe me, if it's noticeable to you, then the foster children would feel ten times
31 more. Breathing it, tasting it, and living it. To the Government, I strongly urge you to
32 create a specialised team to visit and audit each currently founded foster home for
33 deficiency in their practice. While examining the foster homes it's crucial to speak to the
34 children first and to ensure their needs are being met.

1 In addition, please stop or at least minimise multiple placements for foster child as
2 this adversely impacts their schooling, development, stability, and safety. I personally
3 survived the foster care system and its impacts because I choose not to give up and to fight
4 everything that was handed to me. At times I really felt like giving up and I had to dig deep
5 to survive. I was exposed to many things that put me in much danger and would like to
6 thank whoever or whatever was that protect me through that journey.

7 I mastered the foster care life and now that I have complete my degree in social
8 work, I want change for many thousands of children like me out there. I demand that
9 changes are made to support, nurture, and reduce impact of State care on those children,
10 because eventually they will grow up to be members of society. We must answer the
11 question have we, as a society, prepared each child to the best of our ability to be a
12 productive member of our society. To everyone who read this book, I say thank you for
13 taking the time to do so and to see life in foster care through my eyes.

14 My last message is for all foster children. Never give up and never accept
15 responsibilities for someone else's actions. Remember, not all foster parents are out there
16 to take your trust and spit it out. Stay strong, remain neutral and stay safe".

17 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Tēnā koe Emily, me te mōhio he uaua kē ki te hoki mahara ki ngā
18 wā o te pouiri me te mamae. It's tough thinking, bringing back those memories and
19 thoughts, but it's appropriate that we end in such a strong way from the words directly from
20 Daryl in this hearing after hearing four days now of survivor evidence. So again, thank you
21 so much to you and your whānau. Ngā mihi.

22 **CHAIR:** Thank you, thank you so much Emily. And that concludes the evidence?

23 **DR COOKE:** That concludes the evidence.

24 **CHAIR:** Thank you. Before I invite the kaikarakia could I just make a personal on behalf of the
25 Commissioners, thanks to every survivor who spoke to us this week. Whether it be through
26 others, through the videos, or in person, whether they appeared openly in the court, hearing
27 room or from another room, whether they appeared with their full faces or pixelated, every
28 one of those has made an incredible impression on us and a very, very important
29 contribution to our understandings and the foundations for our reports and our
30 recommendations where we aim for everything that they ask for, which is a vast
31 improvement in the way we care in this country. So, thank you to all the survivors.

32 The last thing is a public service announcement, that having concluded hearing
33 survivor testimony, tomorrow we will be hearing from more survivors and experts, and we
34 will be doing that by way of a roundtable. We will be descending from our mighty height

1 here, we will be coming down into the body of the room which will be reorganised, and we
2 will be conducting two panels of survivors and experts, a roundtable, a panel discussion, to
3 which public, of course, is invited to watch and observe. Where we aim to tease out the
4 systems' failures, the patterns, and try and unravel from those the directions that we shall be
5 taking in the future.

6 So, it's going to be a very important conversation of analysis, observations, and
7 hopefully for us, great insights into solutions to these terrible wicked problems that we've
8 been hearing about all week. So just to let you know, and I just need some guidance about
9 the time that it starts, Dr Cooke, is it 10 or is it 9.30?

10 **DR COOKE:** I've taken instructions, it is 9.30.

11 **CHAIR:** 9.30. So, if you wish to be here or if you wish to watch it's from 9.30 when we will be
12 all gathering for that, so thank you. On that note, kei a koe te karakia e te kaumatua.

13 **Karakia mutunga and waiata Porea Nei by Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei**

14 **Hearing adjourns at 5.11 pm to Friday, 17 June 2022 at 9.30 am**

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