

**ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL ABUSE IN STATE CARE
AND IN THE CARE OF FAITH BASED INSTITUTIONS**

WITNESS STATEMENT OF ARTHUR WILLIAM TAYLOR

DATED: 3 October 2019

[1] My name is Arthur William Taylor. I am 63 years old. I am a survivor of abuse in state care.

[2] I am participating in the Royal Commission's work because I want to ensure that the interests of the tens of thousands of children who were in state care and who ended up in the criminal justice system, many serving sentences of imprisonment, are not overlooked.

[3] I know from my own experiences that a very high percentage of children who went through the Boys and Girls Homes of the sixties, seventies and eighties ended up in prison. There are many of them who are still in prison.

[4] Just as Australia has its "Stolen Generation", so does New Zealand as over 100,000 children, the vast majority Māori and Pasifika, were taken from their families and placed with strangers and had their lives irrevocably blighted as a result. This was not only to the detriment of themselves and their whānau, but to the community who suffered crime and enormous expenditure of public funds that I firmly believe would not have happened but for the abuse that was perpetrated against these children.

[5] Lessons need to be learned from this so that the mistakes of the past are never repeated, and there needs to be recognition and acknowledgment of the harm that was caused.

[6] To many who suffered it is like a thorn embedded very deeply that is always there, reminding them of what happened, and from time to time causes distress and pain when the

memories resurface and they think about how different their lives would have been had they not been placed in State “care”.

Circumstances of going into care

[7] I was a Pākehā New Zealander that came from a very loving family. I am the oldest child of six. My parents were farmers in the Waiotemarama District of the Hokianga and then had their own successful small business in Masterton. I went to Waiotemarama School until aged about nine years.

[8] None of my family have ever been involved with the State childcare system, criminal justice system or Police, except me.

[9] Because I was well ahead of the other children in my classes at Lansdowne Primary School and Masterton Intermediate, much of the school work was boring and did not challenge me. So I used to “wag” school – probably ten or twelve half days a month – and spend the time studying what I wanted to at the town library (no internet in those days, this was 1968) or swimming in the river and bushwalking.

[10] Nowadays there are processes in place (or I hope there are) that would recognise that I was a talented intelligent child, and I would be streamed into a class that challenged my abilities, and where I was taught at the level of my intelligence.

[11] But back then wagging school wasn’t tolerated in towns like Masterton and one day the Child Welfare Division of the Department of Education uplifted me and placed me in Epuni Boys Home for “NUPC” - not being under proper control.

[12] This was to the great surprise of me and my parents. I never appeared in any court; it was all dealt with in my absence. My parents never had a clue what was going on because in those days lawyers were the exception rather than the rule. There was no such thing as “lawyer for child”.

[13] I remember the day I was uplifted like it was yesterday. I was 11 years old. My parents owned a dairy and I used to help out in their shop. One morning these people turned up at the shop about 9.30am to take me away. There were two child welfare officers. My Mum was very distraught. She tried to stop them. She was asking what was going on and why. I got called into the back of the shop where Mum and Dad were talking to the officers. They told me they that I had to go with them. That I was going to be taken to another place. They didn't tell me where or why.

[14] I was terrified. I'd never been apart from my family, ever. I started screaming, struggling and fighting them. They put their hands on me to subdue me and I remember being down on the ground. The two of them couldn't remove me so they said they were going to call the police. No police came but instead a couple more child welfare officers turned up. There were then four of them, all men. They tied my hands behind my back with something. Then a doctor turned up and injected me in the buttocks. I remember them carrying me out to the back of a car. I remember lying in the backseat of the car with a man on either side of me. I remember going over the Rimutakas and looking out of the window at the sky. So I knew they were taking me a long way away from my family.

[15] I remember arriving at Epuni Boys home in Lower Hutt. We pulled right up to the front doors and they carried me into a dark bedroom. All the curtains were pulled. They left me there to sleep off the sedative. Later they came and got me and took all my clothes off me, and issued me with the boys home clothes, like school uniform clothes. They gave me some comics to read and left me in the room by myself.

[16] I didn't know what was going on. They didn't tell me where I was, I kept asking where my family were and when I was going home. They wouldn't tell me anything.

[17] Later on I remember being in the dining room. Still no-one had told me anything. There were loads of other kids there – 20 or 30 maybe – of all ages from about 7 years of age up to mid-teens. After the meal the kids were taken to a small gymnasium. Kids were playing table tennis and running around with medicine balls, playing cards. The gym was compulsory apparently.

[18] I had never been apart from my family in my life before this and it was a terrifying experience for me being placed with strangers. One of the children asked me what I “was in for”. I must have been told by then why I was there because I remember thinking that wagging school must be such a horrific crime for me to have ended up where I was, so I made an excuse not to tell him.

[19] The day after I got there one of the housemasters, Mr R called me in and basically interviewed me. Told me again that I was in there for wagging school – NUPC. I guess looking back it was kind of an induction. I got issued more clothes. He didn’t explain to me anything about how long I would be in there for or when I was getting back to my family. He told me I could write to them. I remember writing to my parents asking them to come and get me.

[20] I remember my parents turning up at Epuni within the first week, I think it was on the weekend. They brought me comics and chocolate. My Mum was very upset. She tried to see the manager but he wasn’t there. She didn’t make a scene but she was quite demanding about trying to find out how long I was there for and when they could take me home. They couldn’t give her any answers and fobbed her off to speak to the manager. My Dad was really quiet, which was normal for him as he was a soldier in World War II and was a quiet and reserved person as a result. My impression looking back now is that Dad believed that the State knew best and that there was nothing that could be done about it.

[21] I have no idea if my parents had to appear in court or were charged. Years later my Mum told me that Epuni had actually charged them money for my board while I was there.

[22] I remember that the staff wanted me to share my comics with the other kids who didn’t have any, but I wouldn’t. They were the only thing I had. Staff threatened me and told me bad things would happen to me if I didn’t do what I was told.

[23] Can you imagine an eleven-year-old child – especially one with my disposition and intelligence – suddenly separated from his parents, siblings, everything he has known up to that point in his life and placed in an institution like Epuni? This not only affected me but my parents and younger siblings, as we were a very close family.

[24] One of the worst things is, I was told nothing about how long I might be there – I had absolutely no idea whether it might be a matter of days or forever. To a child, even a week is a long time. I asked all the time, but no one would tell me.

Abuse at Epuni Boys Home

[25] I very quickly found out that wagging school was the very least of the reasons boys were in Epuni. Some were in there for serious assaults, sexual crimes, theft, burglary, car conversion and even one for killing one of his whānau. It didn't matter what reason you were there for, all of us (except the really young kids who were in the Kauri wing) were treated exactly the same by Epuni – the staff representing the State.

[26] I also found out that the qualities that were considered “good” in my old world, such as empathy, kind-heartedness, and helping those in distress or need, were seen as signs of weakness and had to be relegated far into the background if one were to survive, let alone succeed, in this “new world”.

[27] This “new world” was ruled by violence, constant fear and anxiety as to what would happen to you next and, above all, wanting to get out of the place but not knowing when you would be returned to your whānau. Beatings, fear, tears and an aching void where your whānau used to be, seemed the norm. There was so much uncertainty. I remember feeling constantly uncertain – what you'd now call stress – because they just never told me anything.

[28] Visits from whānau were discouraged, probably in case we told them what was happening to us or evidence of the physical abuse that went on – bruising, cuts, welts, black eyes – was seen by others. Very few of my letters ever reached home because staff were allowed to censor them. There were no phones.

[29] I witnessed and experienced some terrible and horrendous things in Epuni – as did anyone who had the misfortune to go there. It destroyed – emotionally, if not physically – many children who simply weren't tough enough to survive it.

[30] About two months after I had been admitted to Epuni, the Education Department's psychological service did a report on me dated 18 June 1968 – age eleven years, ten months – and on the Peabody Vocabulary Test I had a mental age of 18 years plus and an IQ of 140-150, which was above the 99th percentile for my age group. The same report said:

The profile here does not show any extreme responses, but there are some significant and perhaps conflicting trends.

He appears as being basically warm-hearted, good-natured, co-operative and easy going, with a tendency to be impulsive at times. He is also shown to be sentimental, emotional, and artistic, with a liking for people. On the other hand there are features associated with disobedience and rejection of authority. There is also a tendency for him to be self-effacing, depressed and incommunicative.

[31] Up to my admission to Epuni, I had been outgoing, sociable and displayed the qualities referred to in the first part of the preceding paragraph. The “conflicting trends” were that Epuni was beginning to “bite” and destroy my self-esteem, sense of self-worth and “good” characteristics that had been nurtured into me from birth by my parents and life experiences up to that point. This set the stage for much of the rest of my life.

[32] The first time in Epuni I was there about three months. There were lots of punishments during that time. The staff had a massive leather strap and I remember one day being called out of the shower by a housemaster. He took me outside and he and another housemaster took me into a room when I only had a towel on. One housemaster hit me with the strap multiple times while the other one held my hands. I had horrendous welts and marks on my back. I can't really remember what I'd actually done wrong, maybe wetting the bed or something which used to really annoy them.

[33] The violence on children used to happen in private rooms. I'd see bruises on kids, crying kids, it reminds me now of a bloody slaughterhouse with the fear so high among the animals. That's what it was like. It's the fear that the place engendered. Everyone was terrified all the time.

[34] I remember one little Māori kid who looking back was obviously being sexually abused by one of the housemasters. The housemaster used to take him into a room by himself. The kid always used to be terrified every time this housemaster was working but he would never say anything. Years later I saw this housemaster's name in the newspaper as he had been sent to prison for sexual abuse on kids at Epuni.

[35] They had a variety of punishments at Epuni. Standing "on the line" was another punishment. If one kid did something wrong they'd punish us all by making us stand on a line on the ground, literally for hours. If kids fell over, they'd get taken away and strapped. So the kids didn't dare to move and the groups would self-discipline. We were ruled by fear, of the staff and each other.

[36] The older kids were always beating up the little ones. Or fighting. It happened in front of staff all the time. Sometimes there was sadistic stuff, where older boys were really trying to hurt younger kids and clearly got pleasure out of it. I still don't understand it. It was a power thing.

[37] I never ever saw a staff member at Epuni intervene to stop this violence, not once. These kids never got disciplined for it, nothing was ever done about it. Housemasters would punish kids for minor things like not making their beds properly but there was no punishment for inflicting violence. Some of the staff seemed to think the violence was sport. They seemed to treat it as a form of control of the children, to keep them in line, keep them uneasy and controlled. Some of the older kids used to get favours like cigarettes from the staff. I know there were a couple of housemasters that didn't like it. They'd go all quiet and look uncomfortable about it. I don't remember them intervening or leaving though, I just knew they didn't approve of it.

[38] I absconded a couple of times that first time I was Epuni. I remember going into people's backyards and eating carrots and drinking milk. I remember sneaking on a train back to Masterton to go home to my parents. I got off the train and I couldn't believe it as the same social welfare officer, Mr G, who had taken me away was there to meet someone else. He

recognised me and took me to the child welfare office. He said I could go and see my parents and then I was driven back to Epuni.

[39] I don't know why I was eventually released from Epuni after my first stint but I got to go home to my parents. I started going to school at Masterton Intermediate. The other kids knew I'd been in the boys home and treated me like I was a criminal. The teachers did try and keep it quiet but it leaked out. I remember getting in fights and it being nasty and awful. I remember a nice teacher who tried to help, Mr R. I was top of the class again but I started wagging because I didn't want to be at school. I took up fishing in the local river.

[40] I was having to report to child welfare every couple of weeks on my own to see my welfare officer Mr G. I can't remember how it is I got to Epuni the second time but it was early 1969 as my youngest sister was born in June 1969 and I got out again just before she was born.

[41] The craziest thing I could not understand on my first and second stints at Epuni in 1968 and 1969 is that I was there for wagging school, but Epuni provided no schooling for me! At that time the Epuni school had not been built and the older children were schooled by correspondence, but not me. During my last stint there – 1970-1971 – I was allowed out to go to Hutt Valley Memorial Technical College, so achieved some normality in my schooling. Most children got well behind in their schooling and could never catch up so were cheated of their potential in life.

[42] By the third time I went to Epuni in 1970 they'd built actual cells for the children. Exactly the same as police cells. They put kids in there when they first arrived so they wouldn't run away. They called it the secure block. There was nothing at all to do – it was literally a bare cell. By that stage they were also delousing kids when they arrived – they'd make you get naked and put powder all over you.

[43] I'd kind of got used to being locked up by then so it wasn't so bad for me, because I'd spent several days in police cells after being caught after running away from Epuni. It was common for children to be kept in Police cells, always in isolation, for days and weeks on end. I have memories of being held in Police cells in Masterton, Lower Hutt and Wellington locked

up on my own 24 hours a day with no reading material (I've always loved to read from a very young age), and absolutely nothing to do and the only human contact the Police coming to check on me through a cell peephole every few hours. There was no such thing as a social worker or non-Police coming to check on or speak with you. Thinking about it now it was akin to torture. Nowadays it is recognised that such treatment of children is extremely damaging to a child and is abuse. Yet we still hear about times even now where children are remanded into police cells.

[44] I think I ran away about five times in total over the three times in Epuni. I always went home to my parents. I never stole cars or anything, but would sneak on the train. By that time my parents had moved to Porirua so it was easier to get home to them.

[45] I was threatened by the Epuni housemasters that if I kept running away I'd be sent to Kohitere Boys home. They called the worst part of Kohitere "The Block". They told me that it was a terrible place and I'd get beaten up all the time, and have to run around doing PE every day. I learned later from other people in borstal and in prison that Kohitere was a truly terrible place to be. I have heard some horrific stories about that place. I was lucky that I was never sent there.

[46] I remember starting to steal stuff when I ran away. This is when I think my resistance to being bad and committing crime was broken down. I started stealing money from milk bottles and clothes from back yards. It just became normal. Crime and violence was normalised when before it was totally alien to me – I'd never seen violence in my family home. When I first went there I'd be appalled at hearing kids' stories of the bad things they'd done – and then I wasn't appalled anymore. It became my normal.

[47] I eventually spent a total of 18 months in Epuni over three stints. I went from someone who thought wagging school must be a serious crime, to burglary and car conversion committed in the course of running away from Epuni when I was not kept in the Secure Block. I formed associations and friendships with some of those who were to become the most notorious and serious criminals in the land. I was educated in the ways of crime.

[48] One day during the third stint at Epuni I was getting punished for something by mowing the field – I was only allowed to wear my shorts and a singlet, no shoes, and it was cold and wet. I spent hours doing it. At the end of it Mr R the housemaster told me I then had to rake it all up. I was cold and hungry and exhausted. He threw a rake at me and told me to get onto it. I started and did it for about ten minutes and then I just sat down. He came running out abusing the hell out of me. I picked the rake up and threw it right at him and it clonked him on the head.

[49] There was hell to pay. The housemaster called out the other staff, including Mr G, and they manhandled me into the secure block and punched me, twisting my arms up behind my back. They put me in a secure cell and I spent a day there. The next day I was taken in a car to a doctor who asked me a whole lot of questions. Next thing I'm shipped off to Porirua Hospital and I'm in the psychiatric wing. It was a mixture of people, mostly adults. I remember my Mum arriving and I was so drugged up from pills they'd given me that I couldn't stand up. Mum was horrified and started yelling at the hospital staff. Later I learned that she phoned the Headmaster at Epuni and berated him about why I was in the psych ward. They told her they were trying to help me.

[50] I was in that ward for about a week and then I was moved to a child/adolescent ward which was a dormitory of about 20 kids, all boys, aged from about 7 years up to teenagers. I was there for about 3 or 4 months. I had no schooling at all during this period. But I wanted to learn. After the staff unlocked the ward in the morning I would go to the library at the hospital and wouldn't come back when I was supposed to. So staff would threaten me with ECT, electroconvulsive therapy, which was terrifying.

[51] Again it was the atmosphere of fear that prevailed, the orderlies could do anything. I saw them slap kids and drag them around, throw kids into secure solitary rooms, kick them in the buttocks. There weren't sadistic beatings by staff on kids, but the older kids were sadistic with violence and sexual abuse. This was the first time I saw sexual abuse happen. Older boys would force the younger ones to do sexual acts on them. I could look after myself so the older kids didn't victimise me but they picked on the weaker kids. I couldn't stick up for them at that age, I could have now, but not then.

[52] There was no supervision of us in this ward, we were just locked up and then this carry on would start happening. I had no actual psychiatric or psychological treatment at all while I was there. I was prescribed lots of medications including Valium which would make me a zombie. Lots of the kids were zombies. One of the kids told me to put the pill under my tongue and not to swallow it, so I used to do that and get rid of it. Again it was the fear and the constant state of unease.

[53] I was released from the hospital back to my parents. I must have been 15 years old then as I was living at home and started working at the Griffins factory in Lower Hutt. Then when I was 16 my Uncle got me a job at a car assembly plant.

[54] My first criminal conviction was in 1972 for forgery – forging post office saving books. I was sentenced to probation. The next time I was before the court I got sentenced to time in Borstal and I got flown to Invercargill with a police officer. I escaped from Borstal – I had a job in the laundry and we got a hacksaw from somewhere and my cellmate and I hacked through the bars and did a runner. We stole a landrover parked outside the prison and drove to Dunedin, then stole another car and drove to Timaru. The Police spotted us and there was a high speed car chase. We jumped out of the car and into a river – I remember the Police AOS were on the bridge looking for us – even though we were only teenage boys we were escapees - and we were throwing rocks at them. They had to wade out to get us from a shingle bank and they were pissed off about it and punched us when they got us. I was taken to Addington Men’s prison and later escaped from there. I went back before the Court and was sentenced to my first sentence of imprisonment of nine months’.

Impacts of abuse

[55] That was the beginning. In total I’ve spent about 40 of my 63 years in prison.

[56] I am absolutely certain that had I never been placed in Epuni I, and many other boys who were there with me and who I have come across over the years in prison, would not have become involved in crime. Nowadays nobody would be taken from their whānau for wagging at that age.

[57] Many years later I was in a cell at the Auckland District Court and the door opened and a man who was later to become one of Auckland's most senior detectives came in – I didn't recognise him at the time: ... "Hello Butch how are you?"..."How do you know my school nickname and what the f..k do you want copper?"..."Don't you recognise me I'm... .. I was in your class at Waiotemarama and Mr... was our teacher." We then shook hands and had a good old natter for about half an hour, catching up on old school mates and how our lives had gone. Just before he left he said: "Jesus look at the different paths in life we've gone down, and you were always considered the brainbox at school."

[58] Not being older and wiser, as I am now, but having the cockiness and brashness of youth, I said: "Well them's the breaks, nothing much I can do about it now". I feel quite sad now at being so blasé about things and now knowing there is always something you can do to change things if you have the right encouragement and support and the will to do so.

[59] Remembering this brings tears to my eyes, not for me but for the children who were never the same after Epuni. Most of the ones I knew have passed away, or became alcoholics/drug addicts, or ended up in psychiatric or other hospitals, or require some sort of ongoing state care. I have only heard of one or two who survived Epuni to lead a relatively normal life, probably because they were only there for a short time.

[60] My most intense distress and tears are for my family and especially for my wonderful darling mum, who was particularly distraught at losing me then, and for the many years in prison that it laid the groundwork for, so I could not be with her/them. I dread to think of the rivers of silent tears she must have cried for me. Rest in peace my magnificent mum who epitomised everything a great mum is.

[61] We are told that we have choices in life and are responsible for and must accept the consequences of those choices. I endorse that 100%, but I and the tens of thousands of other children placed in state care for "non-criminal" reasons essentially had our choices taken away from us. The state effectively removed our ability to lead productive, happy, crime-free lives where we would have contributed to our community instead of being a drain on it. I accept that this was not intended, but nevertheless it happened.

[62] I don't believe that I would have spent well more than half my life in prison – and 14 months in solitary confinement - if I hadn't been placed in state care and been abused and neglected, when I should have been protected. I am an articulate and intelligent person. I believe I would have got into an occupation or a profession, and had a "normal" life. I wasn't born "bad", I came from a good loving family who have continued to support me right throughout my life, and I am close to my siblings and family to this day. There were none of the usual drivers of crime for me when I entered the criminal justice system as a child.

[63] My life and the choices I've made, against the background of my childhood experiences, has had significant impacts on my relationships and my health. I have three children but I have not been around to devote my life to parenting them like a father normally would. I was married once but my wife died while I was in prison. While in prison I suffered from very high blood pressure from stress and was heavily medicated for that. Since my release on parole, I'm off all but one medication and my blood pressure is back to normal range.

This Inquiry and the future

[64] I believe it is very important that those who lost their childhoods to the state must have the opportunity to "vent" their feelings. As shown by South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings, that is a massive step towards healing and moving on.

[65] Many of the (then) children in state care have never been heard and have had no voice. Sadly, many of them have passed away having had their and their whānau's lives blighted, and having had no recognition from the state as to the crimes committed against them and which led them in to a life of crime themselves. For their lives to have meant something, their stories must be told.

[66] This Inquiry needs to investigate the circumstances of the children that were taken from their whānau for "non-crimes" such as wagging school (NUPC) and placed in state institutions with children that were in there for sometimes serious crimes, and how that affected their lives from that point onwards. This should never happen again.

[67] What about those who were put through this sort of treatment in the past receiving some recognition of how it must have affected them and ruined their and their whānau's life? The State should recognise its actions were a contributory factor to people leading difficult and painful lives, and that it has a particular obligation to go further to help these citizens.

[68] It hurts when those of us who went through this abuse at the hands of our own government are seemingly forgotten and no assistance is provided to us to put us in a position as close as possible to what we would surely have achieved, but for that abuse and our normal education being curtailed. A State agency or department should take ownership of how those children can best be helped to regain and enjoy what is left of their lives.

[69] Because those in state "care"/prison are recognised as having a "health" age up to 10 years older than those in the general population who were not subjected to such "care", there are not many from the sixties still alive, so their needs should be identified and dealt with as a matter of priority. I see it as a matter of simple justice that, as a minimum, State agencies dealing with them should explicitly recognise and take into account that a significant contributory factor to their lives being blighted, and any difficulties they may find themselves in through not having led a "normal" life, were caused or contributed to by the state itself, and it therefore has a special responsibility to them.

[70] The downstream effects of that abuse should, so far as reasonably possible, be mitigated by assistance being made available to them as a priority. The assistance should be with housing, counselling, and additional financial assistance where necessary.

[71] Those in prison should be given assistance to rehabilitate and mitigate any risk they may be seen as presenting so they transition as quickly as possible back into the community. The Parole Board should also recognise that the backdrop to their offending was the harm done them as children by the state. The vast majority never wanted to go to prison or engage in crime and this is relevant to any risk they may be seen to be. The State should fund appropriate state assistance and supervision to reintegrate people into society more quickly. There needs to be better support on the outside for people released from prison – it is

unacceptable that it can take months for people to be referred to counselling or drug/alcohol once they're released. It's setting people up to fail.

[72] As well there should be a genuine apology by the State to those children and their whānau/families for what occurred. I have made claims to both the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Health for the abuse I suffered. My claims were part of the fast track process and I have received monetary redress from both departments, as well as letters of apology. The letter from the Ministry of Health was from a legal advisor, a person to whom I had spoken to directly a couple of times; I had made a positive personal connection with him during the course of my claim process, and the letter of apology he wrote to me was genuine and heartfelt. It did help me move on, and brought me some level of peace. But the other letter from the other ministry was perfunctory and so it meant nothing.

[73] But ultimately, rather than apologies coming from employed civil servants, an acknowledgment of the horrendous harm caused and a formal apology by the State (as often occurs in treaty settlements), preferably by the sovereign's representative the Governor-General, would be more genuine and significant to me. It would signal to the rest of New Zealand an acceptance of the magnitude of what went on in state care. This would go some way to acknowledging the harm.

[74] I think there are also other some specific changes needed that I hope this Inquiry will address, which recent publicity about the uplift of children, particularly Maori children, has shown. The state should not take children away from their families unless it is genuinely to protect their safety, and should repeal the sections of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 which allow subsequent children to be uplifted if an older child has previously been. A senior lawyer should be required to review all uplift or removal applications for children and Oranga Tamariki should explore every practical option and fund support for families before uplifting – how did it become so commonplace that we remove children? Fundamental bonding is being interrupted far too often and abuse of children still goes on in state care. We are creating more generations of hurt children.

[75] I know most people are leading busy lives and are focussed on things that affect them and their loved ones. Some of them will probably say, “well why should we care, much of this happened a long time ago and doesn’t really affect us”. I say to those people that there are real benefits to you and your whānau/family in being part of a caring compassionate society that wants to make right the terrible injustices done to so many of your fellow Kiwis when they were mere children, rather than an uncaring one that doesn’t give a damn.

[76] Just two of those not insignificant benefits to us from learning as a community what happened, and ensuring it doesn’t happen again, is that it will make all of us a lot safer and save an enormous amount of public money that would then be available to spend on other things such as education and health.

[77] And at the end of the day, contributing to Aotearoa/New Zealand being a caring compassionate society that really does care about its members means that if and when you and your whānau /family need compassion, care and understanding it is far more likely that is what you will receive, rather than an uncaring “fend for yourself, you probably deserve what is happening/has happened to you” response.

[78] I want to thank everyone for your time and attention in listening to what I have said. I apologise if I may have appeared to you a bit “over the top” in stressing certain things, but I have lived this and to this day being taken from my loved ones and put in the alien world of Epuni and having seen so many lives blighted, including of course my own, is gut wrenching stuff to me.

[79] Please do not mistake my passion for wanting to do as much as I can to see this happens to as few children as possible in the future for anger, I am not angry just terribly sad that it could all have been so different for so many. We MUST do better.

DATED at Dunedin this 3rd day of October 2019

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'A W Taylor'.

A W Taylor