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2 **ANNE HILL - AFFIRMED**
3 **EXAMINED BY MS HARONGA**
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6 **MS HARONGA:** Tēnā koutou e ngā Kai Kōmihana. Tēnei te mihi
7 atu ki ā koe (Greetings to Commissioners, greetings to the
8 witness). Anne, can I please ask you to introduce yourself
9 to the Commissioners, this morning.

10 **CHAIR:** Just pull the microphone up a little bit, please,
11 Ms Haronga.

12 A. Hello, my name is Anne Hill.

13 **CHAIR:** I will give you the affirmation. (Witness
14 affirmed). Thank you very much.

15 **MS HARONGA:**

16 Q. Thank you, Anne. Just confirm for the public, your
17 preference is to be called Annie?

18 A. Annie.

19 Q. Would you like to introduce your support person seated with
20 you?

21 A. This is my sister Marcelle.

22 **CHAIR:** Welcome, Marcelle.

23 A. She is my support person but we are also both part of the
24 same abuse story.

25 **CHAIR:** Just make sure you talk into the microphone as
26 well, so we can all hear you.

27 A. Okay. If I look this way?

28 **CHAIR:** Yes, look at her.

29 **MS HARONGA:**

30 Q. Marcel, I understand you would like to provide some
31 photographs before we begin the evidence this morning, some
32 photographs of you and your sisters as children to be
33 presented to the Commissioners to frame their listening to
34 your evidence. If I could ask Madam Registrar to take
35 those photographs. (Photographs handed to Commissioners).

1 **CHAIR:** Would you like to explain who we are looking at
2 here?

3 **MARCELLE:** What is there is our family, it is my little
4 sister, the little one is Annie, and I am the middle one,
5 Marcelle, and that is my oldest sister Claire and there's
6 one there with our mother Daphne.

7 **CHAIR:** Thank you for that. I will pass them to my
8 colleagues and then we will return them straight to you, if
9 you like.

10 **MS HARONGA:** Just for members of the public, it is not our
11 intention to exhibit those photographs.

12 **CHAIR:** Thank you very much for sharing with us, it brings
13 your whole family to life.

14 **MS HARONGA:**

15 Q. Annie, you are here to give evidence today that relates to
16 a statement prepared in September for this Commission?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Do you have that statement before you?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. As you are aware, that statement can be taken as read by
21 the Commissioners who have it available and for the benefit
22 of those watching either here in the hearing room or over
23 the livestream, that statement will be available publicly
24 at the conclusion of your evidence today.

25 What we will do now is just read parts of your statement
26 so that the people can hear it from you directly. I
27 understand there are some things you would like to add
28 along the way and we will pause as necessary for you to be
29 able to do so and expand on any points. I may also ask you
30 questions as we go along as well. The Commissioners, as
31 you've indicated to me, are welcome to ask you questions or
32 Marcelle questions throughout and at the end also.

33 So, again, we can take a break at any time and for as
34 long as you need. So, shall we get started?

1 If I could invite you to read paragraphs 1.1-1.6 from
2 the introduction section?

3 A. So, my name is Anne Louise Hill (nee Byrne), I am 58 years
4 old and I was born in England in 1962. I live in Whangarei
5 and I am a New Zealand citizen.

6 I was sexually abused by Fr Michael Shirres from the age
7 of 4 until the age of 12. Some of the abuse occurred while
8 I was in the care of the Star of the Sea Orphanage in
9 Howick, Auckland, which was run by the Sisters of Mercy.
10 The orphanage came under the Diocese of Auckland.

11 I have complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, known as
12 PTSD. This affects my memory, concentration, and ability
13 to work. I have also experienced other health problems
14 which may be discussed further.

15 I trained as a primary teacher and a secondary teacher.
16 I have a Fine Arts degree. In recent years I have done
17 voluntary work like visiting elderly people in rest homes,
18 giving people foot massages, helping out with dog training.
19 I am no longer able to pursue the career that I had
20 envisaged.

21 This is the background. Our father, Alfred Byrne, was
22 an Irish orphan and our mother, Daphne, was a World War II
23 refugee from Burma. My mother survived the 1941-1942
24 bombings of Rangoon, after that she lived in India and then
25 England where she met our father. I have two sisters,
26 Marcelle and Claire.

27 Q. Actually, Annie, I'm sorry, I did forget. Did you want to
28 make a comment acknowledging your sister Claire who can't
29 be here today?

30 A. Yes, that might be -

31 Q. A good time.

32 A. A good moment. My sister sent me a very beautiful letter
33 which I will pass on to the Commissioners later. But for
34 now I just want to say she has a couple of questions. What
35 she said here is, "What is redress? To restore, to fix, to

1 heal, to make whole or better. Who can give us back our
2 relationship with our father, our mother or restore a
3 broken family to us?"

4 Q. Thank you for sharing those words from Claire, Annie. We
5 are back up to section 1.6.

6 A. So, in 1966 we travelled as a family to New Zealand on an
7 Italian ship called the Flavia. We moved from a North
8 London environment. My father sold the family home to come
9 to New Zealand believing our family, and in particular our
10 mother, would have a better life here.

11 Q. What was it about life in the UK that was difficult for
12 your father and your mother?

13 A. At that time in the 60s, attitudes to racial minorities
14 were beginning to become evident. I think both to be
15 Irish, or to be an Asian migrant were challenging things to
16 be. I think he looked at his children and wondered if he
17 could do something better for them.

18 Q. And that was the solution, was to come to New Zealand?

19 A. (Nods).

20 Q. You detail your journey over and then the next section that
21 we're going to turn to is the section around the abuse.
22 Again for the benefit of those listening, moving to that
23 second statement which outlines the abuse you suffered as a
24 child and young person from age 4 through to 12, you've
25 said to me that you would like for me to set out the
26 context for the abuse and for you to share in addition to
27 your statement, some important points about the abuse.
28 You've suggested this so that those watching who won't get
29 a chance to read your statement until after this evidence
30 has streamed understand the context but without you having
31 to detail what went on again, as you have already bravely
32 done in your written statement, thank you.

33 So, I'm now to summarise the abuse section. From your
34 arrival in this country, you found yourself with your
35 family in Auckland and your main perpetrator, Fr Michael

1 Shirres, Dominican Priest, had regular access to you and
2 your sisters in your family home where he abused you. At
3 that point, you were 4 years old.

4 Shortly after, you and your sisters were placed in an
5 orphanage called Star of the Sea run by the Sisters of
6 Mercy. Shirres had access to you as well there and he
7 continued to abuse you there. You were still 4, you left
8 the orphanage aged at around 7 approximately because you
9 can't be sure and went back to the care of your mother.
10 Still, Michael Shirres, your perpetrator, was involved in
11 your family life. At this point, he had begun a
12 relationship with your mother and he continued to abuse
13 you -

14 **CHAIR:** Speed.

15 **MS HARONGA:** Too fast?

16 **CHAIR:** Yes, thank you. You just got to the part about the
17 relationship with Annie's mother.

18 **MS HARONGA:**

19 Q. At that point when you returned to your mother's care,
20 Shirres had begun a relationship with your mother. He
21 still had access to you, he continued to abuse you up until
22 age 12.

23 So, some of the key points that you want to discuss this
24 morning, can you speak about the pattern of ingratiating
25 that was used by Shirres?

26 A. Yes. The reason I have talked to you about it being a
27 pattern is that when I made our family's story public,
28 other families contacted me. Up until then, although to be
29 clear, there are strange bits of information that float
30 around when you live in a family like that but if someone
31 had asked me, I would have said that in some way we were
32 special, even though obviously by the time I'd gone to the
33 media I knew he had abused other children. What he had
34 done with our family had become something quite different,
35 where our father was alienated, and remember he's called

1 'Father', and there was a sense that he could possibly be
2 our father one day, so that's a little bit different to
3 what happens in a straight abuse.

4 Q. Are you talking about the relationship between him and your
5 mother?

6 A. More the way he conducted himself in the family home. So,
7 when he arrived at home, we would be excited. When I say
8 "we" I'm talking about one of my sisters, about us. We
9 were almost programmed to go "this is wonderful, he's
10 here".

11 So, when I made my story public, I was really shocked to
12 have other people say similar things, that he had
13 ingratiated himself into their families. So, the pattern I
14 saw, from listening to people who do not want to speak, is
15 that a vulnerable family in need of ministry would, if you
16 like, become a target. And while ministering, he was also
17 abusing children in the family. What happened over the
18 years for us, I think this is the right time to explain, is
19 there was a sense that there was a good child and maybe a
20 not so good child. And, again, we found this, I've seen
21 this echo with other people. One family member might still
22 be inclined to have pity.

23 **CHAIR:** Pity for whom?

24 A. For Michael. So, when people talk about what a family
25 should do, it's important to remember that we don't know
26 who these families are when we talk about "families". But
27 in our family, for example, my father was excluded. I had
28 a positive view of Michael. Our oldest sister I think saw
29 through him quite quickly and raised an issue but it wasn't
30 three people that were adults responding. We're talking
31 about three children who didn't talk to each other. Does
32 that make sense?

33 **MS HARONGA:**

1 Q. Completely. So, you're talking there about the confusion
2 in hindsight that Michael Shirres had such a role in your
3 family whilst also being your abuser?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Is that what you are talking about?

6 A. Yes, and the status, that we were a family that had a
7 priest visiting in a car.

8 Q. Were there other elements of status that you were proud of
9 as a young girl relating to Michael Shirres?

10 A. When we were in the orphanage, I think I saw that as a
11 positive thing that he visited because the nuns would get
12 excited and I think I thought that meant we were, you know,
13 a little bit special.

14 Q. What did you learn of Michael Shirres and his impact on or
15 patterns of behaviour with other cultures, particularly
16 Māori, at that time?

17 A. When we first were visited, if you asked me to describe the
18 man who visited, he was a European New Zealander. He had
19 lived overseas with other nation and Pacific communities, I
20 believe, but the man who came to the door was a Pākehā. My
21 mother because of her experiences had assumed that when she
22 came to New Zealand she would learn Māori, that that would
23 be the first thing, and she had said this to him and
24 encouraged him. So, they actually went together to Kingi
25 Ihaka's lessons and I think from there, Michael became more
26 and more involved with Māori people. The Church sent him
27 to, you know, learn the language in an academic sense.
28 When I think back, we witnessed this change. So, the man
29 who came to our house in Mangere, which is when I'm over 8,
30 starts to speak with almost a Māori accent. He arrives
31 with Māori treasures, greenstone, and I mean big
32 greenstone, beautiful objects that he has been given by
33 Māori because of the respect they have for him. And he's
34 quite eloquent. I remember a lot of table discussions
35 about what he was learning. And so, it's as if this Pākehā

1 person morphed into something quite unique and, as I got
2 older, I became aware that other people had given up quite
3 a lot of respect for this.

4 Q. Thanks, Annie. We're just going to move now for you to
5 introduce your memories around Star of the Sea and the
6 Sisters of Mercy. You have spoken briefly about the sort
7 of status that Michael Shirres would have when he visited
8 you there. Did you hold any blames towards the nuns about
9 anything that might be perceived as a failure to protect
10 you from him?

11 A. That specific issue, no.

12 Q. Can you tell us about why you think that?

13 A. Because the nuns had nearly as little power as we did.
14 They worked for the Auckland Diocese. They struggled, as
15 far as I understood, to feed us adequately. They were
16 poor. They didn't have a car. Sorry about the 'ums'.

17 And, again, what is "they", this is a group of women.
18 The woman in charge to my dying day I will think of with
19 love and respect. This was a good woman but she was in
20 charge of a group of people who came from all sorts of
21 different experiences and they were supposedly, we say a
22 community. But if you think about what that might have
23 actually been like, a group of women with very few
24 resources caring for traumatised children. Mainly I feel
25 sorry for them.

26 Q. So, your statement mentions one incident where you and
27 Marcel witnessed some physical abuse against or abuse by
28 the nuns to two Māori girls. Can you talk to us a little
29 bit about those girls before we talk about the abuse
30 incident? What their experience was, as you saw it, in the
31 orphanage?

32 A. Okay. I need to -

33 Q. Yeah, take your time.

1 A. There's just one thing I want to qualify. In my memory,
2 the nuns were mainly Pākehā. That's important when people
3 imagine a community of nuns in those days.

4 So, these - to explain their situation, I have to
5 explain a little bit about mine. So, when we went to the
6 orphanage, my sisters were separated from me because we
7 lived in dorms and they went to day school, so I was left
8 alone in a room that was part of the convent, and that was
9 for, you know, an extended period of time. There was
10 nothing in the room.

11 When these two little girls arrived, they obviously had
12 a big impact on me because there were children and I
13 was - I just remember being at first, you know, just the
14 shock that I wasn't alone. And now a memory that is really
15 more from now, when I think back now I can remember things
16 like they had, I am not sure if they were scars or stabs
17 but these children were clearly not privileged and they
18 were distressed. But we talked to each other and we gained
19 impressions.

20 Then one day there was an event, part of it is my
21 memory, part of it has been filled in for me but my
22 childhood experience was some lollies had been stolen and
23 the lollies were found under the pillow of one of those two
24 children. The nuns had decided that they would get a
25 confession. What I literally experienced was going past a
26 room and seeing those two girls being hit. Now, being hit
27 was not an unusual thing but this was more like a - you
28 have to kind of bear with me please and imagine a group of
29 people in black habits, someone had a shoe in their hand,
30 someone was hitting one of the children and then this was
31 going on with another nun. So, it was like a group of
32 people continuously - I can't even think of a word for it.

33 **CHAIR:** It sounds like taking turns?

34 A. Yes, yes, yes. And there was some discussion. You know,
35 you could hear distressful noises. Now, I don't remember

1 at what time my sister became involved or whether we were
2 together, I just have this memory of seeing the girls and
3 then my sister seeing the girls and I think that then, this
4 is from our discussion, some time must have gone by because
5 we went past the room again and it was still happening.

6 **MS HARONGA:**

7 Q. Was that unusual?

8 A. This happened, this is the only time I experienced this.
9 So, this was like - it was, you know, we were little but
10 seeing children continuously hit is different from a
11 punishment being given. Anyway, my sister, who was older,
12 was really upset and I was really upset and she literally
13 went into the nuns area. So, you know, it's separated out
14 but she broke through into where the head nun was in bed,
15 she was recovering from some sort of heart problem, and my
16 sister got her out of bed and made her come to stop this,
17 which she did.

18 Q. Would that have been normal for a child at the orphanage to
19 go and wake the head nun?

20 A. No, no, no, that broke every, you know, it's a mythic story
21 now, the girl that went in. She was in trouble with the
22 other nuns for doing that. Can I just explain? They
23 wanted the girls to confess to stealing the lollies. I
24 later talked to the nun that was in charge of my dormitory,
25 and I remember saying to her, "Why has this happened?" as
26 you might when you're 4, and her telling me that they were
27 very bad girls because they had stolen and they must admit
28 it. And we're talking children under 4, little.

29 **CHAIR:** Yes, I was going to ask you what sort of age were
30 these two little girls?

31 A. Well, the reason they were with me is -

32 **CHAIR:** They were pre-school?

33 A. Yes, we were all pre-schoolers. But coming up, one of us
34 at least because I went to school a month or so later. Old

1 enough to know what's happening, young enough not to have
2 any status.

3 **CHAIR:** Yes.

4 **MS HARONGA:**

5 Q. Just to drill down on this ethnicity issue, you're also
6 part of a minority ethnic group, what did you interpret
7 from the nuns' treatment of those girls?

8 A. It might sound a little odd but I actually think we became
9 politicized is probably not the right word but I know from
10 then that things did not go well for you if you were Māori,
11 they really didn't, they didn't. It was an unspoken
12 reality. Some people may have had positive experiences, I
13 think our oldest sister speaks fondly of good experiences,
14 but there was a hierarchy of who was favoured and
15 traumatised little minority children were not high in the
16 hierarchy and it was just a given.

17 Q. Had you ever experienced that in your life before?

18 A. No.

19 Q. So, just moving to the effect of going to the orphanage
20 actually for your family unit. So, what happened to your
21 relationship with your father from there?

22 A. I consider that my relationship with both my parents broke
23 then. So, just to explain, my family, my father and mother
24 had a domestic, in my mind it was over the priest and some
25 other issues. When I say in my mind, I am just
26 acknowledging that time and history may change things but I
27 can still run like a movie in my head of my father coming
28 to the door having been estranged, my other sister and I
29 opening the door, there's a domestic, my mother goes into
30 the bathroom. The Police arrive. My father is just
31 waiting quietly for them. They take my father away. I do
32 not know where my mother is. Then I'm somewhere on my own.
33 We recently talked about it and we all think we were at
34 chicken farms, so I don't know, the chicken farming
35 community must have helped out. But then we were in a car,

1 we were driven to the door of the orphanage and, in my
2 memory, the woman driving us says, "Get out of the car, you
3 go there now".

4 Q. Was there any influence over that, in your memory, from
5 Michael Shirres?

6 A. Yes, he'd been at the house. When the Police came, in that
7 sort of, what would you call it, in that movie in my head,
8 I never questioned why he was there but now I suspect maybe
9 someone in the neighbourhood maybe contacted him or maybe
10 it was a Sunday and he was coming anyway but he was there.

11 Q. The next section that we were going to talk about is the
12 impact of abuse beginning at paragraph 3.1 on page 8.

13 **CHAIR:** Can I just confirm because I have your brief of
14 evidence here which will go up on the website but you were
15 there for two years at this orphanage; is that right?

16 A. Yes, but we have the date of entry, I haven't been able to
17 access the date of exit.

18 **CHAIR:** That's all right, I am just wanting approximate.
19 It wasn't a short-lived experience?

20 A. No.

21 **CHAIR:** This went on for some time?

22 A. Yes.

23 **CHAIR:** Thank you.

24 **MS HARONGA:**

25 Q. Were there any other remarks - it could also be an
26 appropriate place to talk about the web page, if you wanted
27 to, otherwise we can talk about that later.

28 A. Yes, because in a way I'm here for two reasons.

29 Originally, I went to the Commission not so much to give an
30 account of our abuse but because of the circumstances that
31 happened later in my life. Just for now, one of those was
32 that I did a Facebook page for Star of the Sea, partly
33 because I was looking for my childhood and that - I think I
34 called it something like the Star of the Sea Orphans
35 Survivors Howick because there's lots of Star of the Seas

1 and over time people would write in with questions and I
2 became aware that the questions are quite tragic, you know,
3 "I want to know something about my great aunt. I want to
4 find out what happened to my mother in the 50s", you know,
5 and you would have these conversations with people.

6 Q. We will touch on the website maybe again as well. The next
7 section was going to be a significant part of reading, so
8 this is an appropriate time to stop.

9 **CHAIR:** I think it probably is. Is that all right with
10 you? It's lunchtime, it gives us an opportunity to have a
11 break and then for us to come back after lunch; does that
12 suit you?

13 A. Yes.

14 **CHAIR:** Thank you, Annie.

15 **MS HARONGA:** What time would you -

16 **CHAIR:** How are we going for time? 2.00 seems to be a good
17 time, so if that suits everybody, we will come back at 2.00
18 and resume your evidence then. Thank you, Ms Haronga.

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21 **Hearing adjourned from 1.00 p.m. until 2.00 p.m.**

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23

24 **MS HARONGA:**

25 Q. Annie, where we got to before the lunch break was you were
26 about to read the impacts of abuse section beginning at
27 paragraph 3.1 on page 8. Just take your time getting
28 there.

29 A. Oh, okay, yeah. The impact of the abuse. I have struggled
30 with the effects of abuse for my entire life.

31 The education system also failed me. I have no
32 expectation of being safe in a school. That is why I did
33 not disclose the abuse from Michael while at school. I am
34 referring to secondary school. I was treated with
35 antidepressants at the end of my secondary schooling for

1 what they then called emotional exhaustion. Nowadays I
2 think they call it a breakdown.

3 Family. The abuse at times caused major rifts and
4 breakdowns in all my relationships within the family.

5 My relationship with my mother was totally broken down.
6 My relationship with my father was awkward, having been
7 separated at 4 years old. It was also affected by his lack
8 of response to one of his friend's abuse of me. With my
9 father, he and I would talk about politics and ideas but
10 not family issues. I had become proficient in keeping
11 secrets.

12 I need to explain that we took a case, I don't know if
13 you call it a case but my father put a complaint to the
14 Bishop and to the Dominicans when we were adults, it caused
15 all sorts of problems that will become clear. So, we're
16 talking post that.

17 Except for two visits after that came up, I didn't see
18 my father for the rest of his life. 1997, he died in 2003,
19 I think. I feared his anger, his depression and his
20 frustration. I know my father challenged the Church in the
21 1990s, it's recorded in The Tablet newspaper. He went to
22 great lengths to document history.

23 Q. Can you pause there and maybe, and take a moment if you
24 need but also, could you characterise when you say
25 "challenged the Church", what kinds of things was he doing
26 in that newspaper?

27 A. Yes. I need to explain, as I said, our relationship had
28 broken down. I spent a little bit of time with him when I
29 was about 16. You know, there were times when it was not a
30 complete disaster. But when I found out more about my
31 abuse as an adult, I was really, really traumatised and
32 ashamed and I didn't want my father to know any of the
33 details. So, when I heard that he was making a complaint
34 about my abuse, I reacted by trying to shut him down
35 because when you all talk about your fathers, you might be

1 talking about an intimate relationship, but this man was
2 removed from my life at 4, apart from those kind of visits
3 that you have. I would no more have told him about my body
4 than - that in itself would have been traumatic because we
5 had nothing to build on because it was broken.

6 So, when I say he went to great lengths, he took it upon
7 himself to stand up at St Benedict's in Auckland and call
8 Fr Shirres out to say he was abuser but I had no part in
9 that. He wrote about the Dominicans and he went to many
10 better-informed people, so a number of lawyers in Auckland
11 would have known on a social level that my father, Alfred
12 Byrne, felt that this man was a criminal. It was one of
13 those, you could call it like an open secret, so "there's
14 Alfie and he's that problem man who keeps saying bad things
15 about the Church and even his daughter doesn't support
16 him". I think that's a fair picture. Is there anything
17 else?

18 Q. No, we can continue on.

19 A. Okay. I ended up having a relationship with my school
20 teacher that started when I was aged 14, and that's just to
21 provide context. I am still ashamed of my teenage self and
22 my lack of ability to speak to anyone honestly in my family
23 until very recent years. I feared Michael, I feared my
24 father's friend and I literally had no-one to turn to in
25 the adult world.

26 I did bring up two excellent stepchildren and my only
27 son and I am proud of them.

28 Some of this is repeating, so if I jump that's why.

29 In 1977, when I was 15, I first saw a psychiatrist. It
30 was Dr Ogg. My ex-husband allowed me to visit Dr Ogg but
31 told me not to tell him about the abuse.

32 I only spoke about the neglect at Star of the Sea, I
33 don't think I would have even used the word "neglect" and
34 not the abuse of Michael. I saw it as separate, the nuns
35 having provided the basic shelter and food we needed. Any

1 little kindness was magnified, such as a nun giving me
2 three guavas to eat. I was starved for affection or any
3 touch.

4 Medical impact. I suffer from complex PTSD. I have a
5 description here but I would just like to say complex PTSD
6 is indescribable. You will hear descriptors but like right
7 now I am having trauma, that's okay, that's fine because I
8 could possibly, you know, stand on my head while having
9 trauma and some people wouldn't notice. It affects my
10 memory, concentration, especially my ability to work and to
11 make successful friendships and relationships. I also have
12 intermittent aphasia which was the result of a stroke and
13 other health problems. I have Graves' disease and I needed
14 medical repair and management of my reproductive system.

15 I developed a serious lung infection in my 20s and at
16 age 27 I had part of my lung removed. I had an operation
17 at Mercy Hospital in Auckland to remove a lobe. During the
18 operation, there was a discussion as to when I had started
19 coughing. It was then that it was suggested that I had
20 pits in my lungs due to pneumonia I suffered from and never
21 got treated as a child at Star of the Sea. The thoracotomy
22 operation was a real trigger for all the abuse that
23 occurred in the orphanage. The next time I was booked for
24 surgery there I cancelled it while I was already in the
25 prep room.

26 In 1991, I had major surgery that took four hours. The
27 surgeon told me afterwards that he could tell I had been
28 sexually abused as a child. I had signs of an untreated
29 sexually transmitted disease, P, what's it called, pelvic
30 inflammatory disease, which I had had symptoms of since age
31 7. This had caused considerable damage. It took the
32 surgeon a long time to remove the scarring but he was
33 pleased I would be able to conceive a child.

34 After my surgery, I became depressed. My surgeon told
35 me that I needed to get help. He was the first person to

1 ask the right questions about what I had gone through but
2 unfortunately he died not long after that. I was then
3 referred to a psychiatrist and from there, he referred me
4 to a female counsellor. I feel like there's things I need
5 to explain but I can't think what they are.

6 Q. Do you want to have a glass of water?

7 A. Every time I go to the doctor, not my GP but every time I
8 have a medical intervention, I end up having to explain my
9 surgical history. Actually, I even have a red bangle that
10 they put on me at hospital to identify me as PTSD. So, if
11 they're not already treating me like a minority, I'm also
12 treated like a bit of a nutter.

13 **CHAIR:** You feel labelled?

14 A. Yes but I have to do that or it's worse.

15 So, I have received treatment for years. Because of
16 this, I was unable to continue working as a teacher. I
17 continued to not be able to hold down work to this day.
18 Can I just add to that, that I have a Masters Degree in
19 Fine Arts from the Royal Institute of Technology in
20 Melbourne but I actually would not be able to hold down the
21 most limited job, although I'm sure some people think I
22 should.

23 **MS HARONGA:**

24 Q. Just pausing there, Annie. The impacts of abuse that
25 you've bravely gone through with us just now, can you add
26 to that any impact on your faith or as you might describe?

27 A. I kept trying to be faithful, sometimes. So, there were
28 periods of my life where I would have said, "Oh no, I'm not
29 related to Church" but I would find myself going back.
30 After the lung surgery, I moved from Auckland, where I
31 worked in a state school, to Northland, where I worked in a
32 Catholic school. So, at that point I was very impressed by
33 the Rector Fr Darby and I began to think of myself as maybe
34 a lapsed Catholic who had married a divorced person but
35 this was my culture. And I think if you understand the

1 fragmentation of the family, that was one thing I was
2 allowed to identify with. No matter how broken, at least I
3 could say I was that.

4 **CHAIR:** Is that because that was the least shameful thing
5 in your life? Is that what you're saying? It's sort of
6 socially acceptable to come from a broken family?

7 A. It was - I think it was partly the lack of self that comes
8 with this. You get very lost about who you are and even
9 though I knew that this priest had created so many
10 problems, I tried to separate it from what I saw as the
11 good things. And one of the good things was Fr Darby who
12 was very intellectual and very gentle with me and would
13 talk about high theology in a low kind of way. So, yeah,
14 it was something I could participate in.

15 **MS HARONGA:**

16 Q. At the time you were working at Pompallier College,
17 Catholicism was part of your identity back again at that
18 point?

19 A. It was kind of, I suppose other people judge - I don't
20 know. I know for me going to Mass on Thursday morning,
21 listening to the priests who were on the staff relating to
22 the Catholic kids and other kids, I felt like I was trying
23 to rebuild some sort of life.

24 Q. I think that does explain it for us, Annie, thank you,
25 because we're about to then turn to section 4 which is the
26 lead into your eventual redress process that you undertook
27 with the relevant Church authorities. But, of course, at
28 that time you were there working at a Catholic school ran
29 by the Marist Fathers?

30 A. Yes.

31 Q. So, it did help to give some context as to your
32 relationship?

33 A. Yes, I just suddenly realise how odd it must seem.

34 Q. I wonder if you would like to read through from paragraphs
35 4.1-4.6?

1 A. Sure. I'm going to leave out a name, just because it's
2 there randomly.

3 Q. That's fine.

4 A. Otherwise, it will sound like I'm pinpointing someone.

5 Redress. In 1990, I left Auckland and moved to
6 Whangarei where I began teaching. So, the first person I
7 disclosed to was the current Head of Religious Studies
8 there. When I say current, he was current at the time. I
9 told him in the early 1990s. He had come to my art room
10 and we were talking, we'd become colleagues, and he started
11 to talk to me about his concerns about two young boys who
12 he defined as Polynesian who had been abused by a priest,
13 he told me he had talked to the parents and they would not
14 make a complaint.

15 Q. Maybe just take a breath.

16 A. For a long time I thought it was only my family who had
17 been abused by Michael, so I told him about my abuse and
18 out came the name Michael Shirres and I remember being
19 surprised that there were boys that Michael had abused as
20 well.

21 Q. Can you clarify that, Annie? You're talking that your
22 colleague was telling you about an incident?

23 A. Yes, that he had been involved in and his frustration that
24 he couldn't take it further because in his mind he needed
25 the parental consent.

26 Q. And this was your same perpetrator?

27 A. And it was the same man, so I said to him "you're talking
28 about Michael" in the same breath as he's saying "Michael".

29 Q. How old were you at this point, 1990?

30 A. 28 or 27.

31 Q. And was this the first person outside of your family or an
32 intimate partner that you had ever disclosed your abuse to?

33 A. I have no memory of disclosing to other people.

34 Q. Thank you, continue on.

1 A. So, when I disclosed, I asked this man to go to the Bishop.
2 I think I've explained he was a priest. I'm unsure if he
3 did. What he did do was go to the Head of the Dominicans,
4 it may have been the Bishop, that was Bishop Denis Ryan,
5 whoever it was told Kevin to go to the Dominicans.

6 One time I indicated Mike Shirres' name to Fr Darby, his
7 response was to tell me some men should never be allowed to
8 be priests. I felt he was genuinely supportive and I
9 didn't ask him to do anything, assuming it had already been
10 done. So, what I'm trying to say there is, to me, if I've
11 told a priest this thing that I think is of world news
12 seriousness, that surely I wouldn't need to tell it again.
13 I thought, thought that the Bishop was going to drive to
14 the school and fall on his knees outside my classroom. To
15 me, there was this thing in my head, of course they'll be
16 so upset.

17 Fr Darby retired, time went by. By early 1993, I was
18 still teaching at Pompallier but I was finding it really
19 hard to continue working in a Catholic environment. I'd
20 reduced my hours to 4 days a week and that was because of
21 the stress. And then one day I came into the staffroom and
22 there was an advertisement on the school notice board
23 saying that Michael Shirres was coming to the school to
24 speak about Māori spirituality.

25 So, then I disclosed again to the new Principal. He
26 setup a meeting with Gloria Ramsay, sorry his name was Jim
27 Gersham and I think I understood it that Gloria ran an
28 abuse survivor network at the Auckland Diocese and the idea
29 was she would now make a formal complaint.

30 Q. If we can just pause there, you had the help of your
31 Principal, Fr Jim. You were here yesterday for Frances
32 Tagaloa's evidence and some of the other and we heard
33 yesterday in the Church's opening statement that the
34 Catholic Church is made up of numerous autonomous entities.
35 Did you understand that at the time?

1 A. No, not really. I had a friend on the staff who was a
2 priest who would sometimes explain things about, for
3 example, why had - I didn't understand why the other person
4 had gone to the Dominicans or the Bishop. I didn't know
5 who was getting, look I just didn't know, I didn't
6 understand what was going on. I was telling them an
7 emotional thing that was being processed in a different way
8 to people I didn't know.

9 Q. How did you navigate that? Was that through the support of
10 the Principal?

11 A. That should be a simple 'yes' but it wasn't actually
12 navigated. We're now talking about a period of time from
13 1991 to 1995 and by then my brain was not - my brain had
14 melted, my brain had melted, I was trying to go to work.

15 Q. So, I guess, and maybe you've just said it, but I would be
16 looking for any comment you might be able to make about the
17 difficulty survivors face when trying to navigate through
18 the different entities?

19 A. Oh yes, yeah. Well, you are - it's almost, I would say
20 some well-intentioned people, like my colleague, were
21 genuinely trying to say, "Look, this is going to the
22 Dominicans so it may not happen over here or this is one
23 group and this is another". The difficulty is, there were
24 well intentioned people helping as friends and then there
25 was this kind of like a systemic problem. And that is when
26 you ask a Catholic priest where the Church is because you
27 want to complain, they tell you that you're the Church
28 around they say it in such a way that spiritually that's
29 true. But if you want somebody to pay petrol or parking
30 tickets, I don't think you split it up amongst the
31 congregation. So, it's a sort of word, it's like there's a
32 hierarchy of theory. You've got high theory that's, you
33 know, academic and then you've got what we tell the masses,
34 and the masses I think genuinely believe that they are the
35 body of Christ. I think they manipulate that.

1 Q. So, where we left your statement was you are being to go
2 into the meeting with Gloria Ramsay. Can you share with us
3 any memories of that?

4 A. Yeah, that was actually one of those good experiences and
5 that, I think, was what was so confusing, is there would be
6 positive things happening and then the other things that I
7 didn't understand. It's almost like you're a child trying
8 to deal with something quite toxic but Gloria came to my
9 home and took a statement from me and at that point I was
10 like, yeah, this is good.

11 Q. You felt listened to?

12 A. Yeah, yes, I did.

13 Q. And that statement we have exhibited it in the bundle,
14 witness number 0013003, page 02.

15 A. Yep.

16 Q. I wonder if the Trial Director could bring that up. We're
17 looking specifically at point 5 when we get to there, Trial
18 Director.

19 Annie, have you got that page before you?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. What I'm directing you to is some of the requests that you
22 made through Gloria Ramsay who took your complaint. Would
23 you like to talk to us about those or any one in
24 particular?

25 A. Yes. The first ones are what you would imagine from a
26 survivor talking about themselves and their family. But
27 number 5 is the one which led to, I think, retraumatising.
28 If you can be retraumatized from that much trauma. If you
29 could say, this was 100% trauma and then add this. So, my
30 question that day that Gloria recorded was, "How can
31 Michael be 'Safe' when he still has the Mana of the Māori
32 community. The children of the Māori people will be
33 vulnerable. She asks", referring to me, "if the
34 Church/Dominican order", both of them "think that it is
35 O.K. to abuse Māori/coloured children. Are they considered

1 safe to be hurt? She doesn't believe that he should be
2 allowed to hold his Mana". That for me is a big one.

3 Q. I wonder if we could dwell on this point. You talked
4 earlier about your knowledge as a child of Michael's
5 growing relationship with Māoridom. At this time, early
6 1993-1994, what was your knowledge of Michael's mana in the
7 Māori community?

8 A. Well, just the fact that he was meant to be coming to our
9 school to discuss Māori spirituality is a straightforward
10 indication. By that time he also had a PhD and had been a
11 lecturer at Auckland University and I think they called it
12 Māori Anthropology, I'm not sure but he and Henare Tate had
13 put together a course that was quite respected, that a lot
14 of Māori people were involved in and it's this ...

15 Q. That comes a bit later in 1997.

16 A. So, he - another thing to add to that is even when I was at
17 university, at Art School, I recall a day when I actually
18 saw the same sign of "Michael Shirres is coming to talk
19 about Māori spirituality", it's like this was a big day,
20 you know. So, he had a lot of status.

21 Q. Before we move on from that, is there anything else you
22 want to say there?

23 A. About Michael?

24 Q. About that particular issue at that point in time.

25 A. Just that I felt, there was that sort of feeling of he was
26 sort of embedded. If I saw a piece of carving, I would
27 think, oh maybe he's touched it.

28 Q. Thanks, Annie. Reflecting now with some hindsight on
29 Gloria's involvement, did you have any views around the
30 adequacy or otherwise of her coming to represent the
31 Dominicans to you?

32 A. I can just say that if someone else had been going to talk
33 to someone, I probably would have recommended her. So,
34 yeah, that wasn't a trauma.

35 Q. And did you have any follow-up with her after that meeting?

1 A. No. I received a report. I had her phone number though,
2 she'd given me her home phone number.

3 Q. You did later talk to her as well?

4 A. Many, many years later, yes.

5 Q. So, at this time, you were also going through probably what
6 could be termed a separate process with the Dominicans?

7 A. Well, apparently, this is why I got so confused, the
8 Bishop's office lent the Dominicans Gloria. How do you
9 unwrap that?

10 Q. Yeah, we'll hear from Gloria later today, so perhaps she
11 can shed some light or otherwise on that.

12 A. Yep.

13 Q. I guess if we turn back to your statement at 4.7, you could
14 read from there and add anything -

15 A. Okay, I've got it. Under "Jim was then put in touch"?

16 Q. That's right.

17 A. So, "Jim", that's the then current Principal, "was
18 then" - I've said here "put in touch" but what I understand
19 is that Jim and Fr Murnane, that's Fr Murnane is from the
20 Dominicans were in contact. "Jim inferred to me that he
21 knew Michael was an abuser". Jim also spoke what Pākehā
22 consider fluent Māori, so had moved in that kind of circle.

23 So then my sister and I went and talked to Peter Murnane
24 "and asked why nothing had been done" in my first complaint
25 and he told us he thought the complaint was about a woman
26 and not a child, as if that was okay. Later, the person I
27 first disclosed to wrote a letter about our discussion and
28 all he really had to say in it "was that I hated Michael".
29 So, can I just explain that between 1991 and 1993, the
30 issues in Boston, which is the stuff that was highlighted
31 in the *Spotlight*, were just coming out and so, I think
32 people who originally were chatting, were now becoming
33 defensive.

1 "On 29 June 1994, I got a letter from the manager of the
2 Protocol Advisory Committee ...", which I think is the
3 Bishops' one.

4 Q. That's right.

5 A. " ...Terry Leslie, informing me that Michael had been
6 enrolled in the SAFE programme and that he was withdrawn
7 from all Ministry and priestly functions from May 1994 and
8 he was no longer allowed to teach at the Catholic Institute
9 of Theology".

10 Q. If we can just pause on that point. Was that the first
11 time you heard about any disciplinary action for Michael or
12 were you aware of something earlier?

13 A. I really don't recall. I would imagine that would have
14 been the first time. Jim may have said something to me.
15 Can I just say that the real issue for saying that, is that
16 you can see in that, that what I said about the Māori part
17 just was totally ignored. So, it was almost as if I hadn't
18 said it.

19 Do you want me to go on?

20 Q. Yes.

21 A. "I contacted a lawyer" and I had come to believe that the
22 Church would take things more seriously or would only take
23 things more seriously when "it became about money". I saw
24 a Whangārei lawyer. Can I name him?

25 Q. Yes.

26 A. Chris Muston, who acted for me on the understanding that he
27 would have to get his payment from the Church because I
28 couldn't pay him, and he took that on.

29 "Paddy O'Driscoll was the Dominicans' Catholic lawyer"
30 that I remember.

31 "My sister", this sister "and I, had a meeting with the
32 head of the Dominicans from Australia". So, just to give
33 you a little explanation, we've got Michael Shirres was a
34 Dominican, Peter Murnane was the Head of his Order in
35 New Zealand in Auckland but the person they got me to have

1 the meeting with was the head of the order in Australia and
2 that's Mark O'Brien who I think was a theologian as well.

3 "After that meeting" Paddy rang me and "offered me
4 \$20,000". I heard or knew by that stage that "Michael had
5 confessed". We had a phone call that took about two hours,
6 with me explaining why that wasn't an acceptable response.

7 Q. Was your lawyer present for that phone call?

8 A. No, we were on our own. I mean, I was on my own in a room
9 talking to Paddy. So, he started with an offer of \$20,000.
10 We had a conversation where he began to talk about some of
11 his own experiences and it went to \$50,000.

12 Q. At any point, were you encouraged to speak to your lawyer
13 about that offer?

14 A. No, I wasn't actually. I didn't even think about it.

15 Q. Were they aware you were represented at that time?

16 A. I don't remember anything like that. I just remember we
17 had this meeting with the lawyers, which was really
18 horrible. Mark O'Brien actually made me feel, you know,
19 like I might as well go to hell now.

20 Q. Was there something you wanted to share about your feelings
21 there, in terms of – you reflected earlier about the body
22 of the Church and taking from the body of the Church in
23 that meeting?

24 A. Oh yes. One of the comments made to me was that if I asked
25 for compensation, call it what you like but, you know, we
26 were discussing you haven't really got to the guts of what
27 I'm trying to ask you to understand. I was told that Fr
28 Murnane had to grow his own vegetables and this was taking
29 money from the poor basically.

30 Q. Are you saying that was said to you?

31 A. That's what was conveyed to me. To be honest, I didn't
32 believe him.

33 When I made that agreement, I then on the same phone
34 call said that I suggested they make the same agreement
35 with my sisters and not go through the same debacle, and

1 they agreed to that. And I've said here, "I was naive to
2 think that they accepted" my requests about the Māori part
3 be addressed. So, I had that written on paper. We said
4 it, Gloria had heard it. I presumed in this exchange that
5 that would be addressed.

6 Q. If you could continue reading from there, over the page.

7 A. Okay. There was this issue. When Michael confessed, he
8 didn't confess to me, he confessed in a letter to my
9 father. In the letter, he talked about sexual -
10 sorry - sexually abusing the three daughters and the
11 relationship with our mother. As a result of that, I felt
12 Michael had been quite cunning because he knew I would
13 never expose that while my mother was alive. So, yeah,
14 making the complaint "caused a lot of problems". I'm just
15 trying to explain it a little bit more simply.

16 My mother was quite suicidal. So, the idea that maybe
17 we should have just gone public was affected by wanting to
18 protect her. I don't know if that's a sufficient
19 explanation.

20 Q. Certainly.

21 A. And all this was about Michael's behaviour, not Star of the
22 Sea.

23 Q. Did your father have a difference of opinion as well about
24 how it should be handled?

25 A. Yes, he wanted to go to - well, he wanted the daughters and
26 him to go as a group. There's three of us. I worked in a
27 Catholic school, I felt it made more sense and it was right
28 for the three daughters to be a group. And, as I said
29 earlier, I had - I think I met my father twice for the rest
30 of our lives. It became -

31 Q. Did you have a difference of opinion with him about using
32 the media?

33 A. Yes, I did. I was horrified at the idea that our story
34 would be public. I'm still horrified. I'm horrified right
35 now but there doesn't seem to be any other way to address

1 the need for real change. As you know, I could show you
2 many, many pieces of paper, none of which have resulted in
3 authentic understanding.

4 Anyway, he died. That sounds easy, doesn't it. He
5 died, I didn't go to the funeral. My son didn't go to the
6 funeral. My son met his grandfather twice.

7 And then I found the papers that he had left. Yes, he
8 posted them to me before he died.

9 Q. This is your father?

10 A. Yes. So, at some point I sat and saw, perhaps for the
11 first time, his point of view. And I've given many of
12 those papers but not all to the Commission and what I came
13 to understand is that I, with my sisters, doing what we
14 did, had come to one settlement and my father had come to a
15 separate one. In the separate one, the Church lawyers in
16 his account had gagged him in such a way that he agreed to
17 try to stop us talking about the situation.

18 Q. Can you go into some more detail about that?

19 A. Well, that created this - I now understand why we just
20 couldn't fix things. My sister overseas has a letter that
21 I'll pass on. She talks about how she took matters into
22 her own hand and talked to our father and what came through
23 to her was that even though he was so angry about Michael
24 Shirres and the behaviour of the Dominicans, he (a) felt
25 that the Bishop of Auckland was the person who should have
26 disciplined the Dominicans for him and he - can you just
27 help me a minute? Where am I?

28 Q. The Confidentiality Agreement that you discovered after
29 your father's passing.

30 A. Yeah. So, when I saw the papers, there were all sorts of
31 things, letters from a Queen's Counsel, statements from
32 people witnessing things, people going, you know, this is
33 terrible. One of the letters was from a Fr Toomey, it was
34 on quite flash paper. It starts off being sympathetic to
35 my father and in the last paragraph virtually says

1 something like, "You are in danger of slanderism" or
2 whatever the word is. Here we are, we're being sympathetic
3 and we're telling you off. This is actually a really key
4 thing.

5 My father was actually a good Catholic. If a priest
6 told him off, he felt terrible. When the Catholic Church
7 told - in his mind - when the Catholic lawyers, for want of
8 a better word, gagged him, he saw that as the Church
9 gagging him and he wouldn't fight it. I don't know if you
10 can understand how complex that is. Even though he saw it
11 as morally wrong, he was a Catholic to the bone. He had
12 been in a seminary briefly. He could not let go of his
13 love of the Church and his obedience. To be frank, I think
14 what he let go of - I don't think he meant to - but he let
15 go of me at age four. It was just too difficult to fight
16 someone like Michael Shirres who appeared to have such
17 status and there was Dad, you know, a depressed young man
18 who had a temper and couldn't really articulate. He could
19 be very articulate with academics but it was different with
20 priests.

21 Q. So, if we could just, again dwelling on this issue of
22 confidentiality agreements, you are saying you weren't
23 aware until your father had passed that he had signed a
24 Confidentiality Agreement with the Dominicans?

25 A. Their lawyers.

26 Q. Their lawyers. Had you also signed a confidentiality or
27 non-disclosure agreement?

28 A. Yes but mine was different and had quite a different tone.

29 Q. What was the tone of yours?

30 A. Sort of like "we don't really want" - I don't remember it
31 being particularly long. It was almost like, well - I
32 actually got some advice on it later and the main thing was
33 I was not to say how much money they paid me. I think
34 that's the correct interpretation. And I *believed* I was
35 gagged but when I read my father's, I can see the

1 difference. So, I thought I was gagged. I thought I
2 wasn't allowed to tell people but my father was more - it
3 was more than implied with him.

4 Q. How long did you live under the understanding that you
5 weren't allowed to speak of the abuse?

6 A. Until I came back to New Zealand and - there's exactly two
7 things here and it is partly the PTSD. One of the things
8 in Dad's letters was one - one was from the Archbishop Tom
9 Williams and one was from the MP Phillida Bunkle. Sorry, I
10 can't make this clear but I think you'll understand. The
11 guts of it was that Tom Williams, who was an Archbishop,
12 said that they were not be holding people to any gags, and
13 it was a very clear statement, "Tom Williams says we will
14 not stop you". Even though I'd read that piece of paper,
15 it didn't really go in because I can remember trying to
16 contact NOPS [National Office of Professional Standards] to
17 say, "Can I have something in writing saying I am allowed
18 to talk about this?" and I got no reply. So, it was like,
19 yes, I've seen this but is it true? Added to that, in my
20 ridiculous need to have community, I had started to study
21 at the Good Shepherd College, so I was studying theology
22 and I can remember being told by colleague/friend/priest
23 that he didn't believe that the gags held anymore.

24 I took that letter to the Bishop of Auckland thinking
25 that - I'm sorry, I've made a little jump here. Once I
26 woke up, I and my sister took that letter to the Bishop of
27 Auckland -

28 Q. You are talking about your father's letter?

29 A. The one that he sent me from Tom Williams and the one from
30 Phillida Bunkle, to say to the Bishop, "Look, there are no
31 gags", thinking the obvious thing would be to publish that
32 so that anyone who had experienced what we'd experienced
33 would know that, in fact, the Catholic Church wasn't going
34 to silence us anymore. This is a timeframe from 1991, you

1 know, to the 21st century. And then that letter just
2 disappeared.

3 Q. You were hoping for some sort of supported publication of
4 that?

5 A. Yes, I would imagine a four-page spread in national papers
6 because surely you would want to let people know (a) that
7 they're not gagged, because you care, remember you care?
8 And because you've said repeatedly to the public that you
9 want to help. So, I literally, with my sister - so I got
10 all these letters. Sorry, I need to just explain. That
11 happened, time went by. I got the letters out but there's
12 another little incident. Can I just flick to the little
13 incident?

14 Q. Go right ahead.

15 A. So, I've come back to New Zealand, years have gone by and I
16 start to work, which is really good. I was at
17 Victoria Park and there was a store with Māori artefacts,
18 Māori art, and I picked up a card and it had a quote from
19 Michael Shirres on the card, like to endorse the Māori
20 quality, so I thought that's a bit strange. Around the
21 same time on the Internet I had discovered there was a web
22 page about Michael and there was also a publication of his
23 book.

24 Q. So, maybe now is a good time to refer to that book.
25 There's a passage here that the witness is going to refer
26 to. Madam Registrar has it on the projector. We haven't
27 exhibited it but it is part of the public record. When we
28 can bring that up. So, Annie, if you could show us the
29 book and tell us the book's title?

30 A. This is *Te Tangata*, the human person in English, it has
31 Michael Shirres at the bottom and OP, the Order of
32 Preachers. It's published in 1997, if you note everything
33 that happened is before 1997, well before.

34 Q. So, turning to what's actually highlighted helpfully by
35 Madam Registrar, as in the preface?

1 A. Is it okay if I read it?

2 Q. Yes.

3 A. This was written by Henare Tate, "I complement Pā Shirres
4 on his great effort in producing this book at this
5 difficult stage in his life's journey and thank him for his
6 taonga and ōhākī".

7 Q. It has the date 26 February 1997, what did that mean to
8 you?

9 A. It raised the question, and the question is either Henare
10 Tate did not know that he was working with a child sex
11 abuser or he did know and thought this was okay.

12 If he did know, one would wonder why he would do this?
13 If he didn't know, why didn't he know given what we'd done?
14 To me, this was the first evidence that they had not really
15 listened and they had continued to wheel him out *for Māori*.
16 So, please don't tell me we are keeping children safe but
17 we're not going to communicate with the Māori community.

18 So, this is actually where that very garbled story - and
19 I know it's garbled because it was garbled to Liv - but
20 this is where I realised that seriously, the hypocrisy of
21 this is one thing, the cruelty is another. If you did want
22 to read this, and you can buy it, it's about \$50 on
23 Fishpond, I think, or you can get it from a library, but
24 this book is actually about Māori tapu, the intrinsic
25 person, the soul, what makes a human being, how to use
26 karakia. This to me is the most offensive document in our
27 country. I cannot - you have just heard me speak after
28 lunch and that's me in trauma. I'm really lost, and I know
29 I was lost thinking oh no I'm stuffing it up. This is me
30 out of trauma. You see this, this book was written by a
31 known sex abuser. It was promoted by the Catholic Church.
32 I don't give a stuff which body you want to call it or
33 which organisation. Don't tell me that the Bishop of
34 Auckland did not know this was published. Don't tell me
35 that other Catholic academics didn't know this book was

1 published. And explain to me why I found dozens of
2 references to Michael Shirres telling Māori people what
3 their spirituality is. So, something shifted in me. I
4 watched Māori girls treated in the most inhumane of ways.
5 I then grow up in a country where I was told there was no
6 racism and I had a vivid imagination. I worked in a school
7 where there were a number of Pasifika Island/Māori
8 children, there was no doubt in my mind that I encountered
9 children who were not unfamiliar with that kind of
10 hypocrisy. I have lived to see what's happened in
11 Northland and if anyone here doesn't know about Northland
12 just go look up P. Sorry I'm angry. I mean, the idea that
13 any lawyer or academic wants to defend this fills me with
14 shame as a New Zealand citizen. The idea that the Bishop
15 of Auckland went to the media and said that the Dominicans
16 are doing a good job fills me with disgust. I have stories
17 in my head that I have been told by other survivors of this
18 man. I have been told stories that you can be told too if
19 you choose to go and spend time in Northland. I have been
20 told that Māori Catholics will be looking after the
21 Catholic Church's interests. Māori Catholics in
22 Northland - and perhaps someone can help me if I'm
23 wrong - but, as far as I can see, I mean we do have people
24 in charge of Māori Catholicism in the areas and so
25 on - nothing, nothing has been done. I went back into the
26 Catholic Church, I can say to you, as a parishioner,
27 nothing has been done and now we have stories in the media
28 about what is happening to Māori people and the way people
29 just make comments about Northland and I would just like to
30 remind you that Northland was colonised. The man who
31 sexually abused me colonised Māori spiritual theology and
32 no-one has cleaned it up. He is quoted in religious
33 education books. I stole this book, I stole it from Good
34 Shepherd College where there were two copies available.
35 Q. Do you want to have a water before we move on?

1 A. Is that clear?

2 Q. Yes, crystal.

3 A. Sorry.

4 Q. No need to apologise, Annie.

5 A. I found my inner Irishman.

6 **CHAIR:** Are you holding on all right there?

7 A. (Nods).

8 **CHAIR:** Are you okay to carry on?

9 A. Yes, you bet ya.

10 **CHAIR:** Good, carry on.

11 Q. Just before we leave that topic and I want to expand on the
12 idea of Māori Catholicism in Auckland which we have spoken
13 about in length and you have signposted there where we
14 might be able to go.

15 In your statement we exhibited your media article when
16 you went public with your story and that also covered some
17 of these issues as well, but we also have the Reckoning
18 podcast as well which is a great resource about these
19 issues. Can you tell us a little bit about that feedback
20 that you received from your public speaking about this?

21 A. Do you want that in the context of Māori or in the context
22 of -

23 Q. I guess if you could do both, it would be fantastic.

24 A. Okay. I'm sorry I have to often say "somebody told me" but
25 people are actually quite frightened about speaking on this
26 topic. So, "somebody told me" is basically me protecting
27 good people.

28 So, the article came out by Mick Hall, he really
29 researched it well, he covered the people who are experts,
30 there was theory, he spoke to Gloria Ramsay and exposed us
31 as I had agreed. I wasn't prepared for what came next,
32 which was many phone calls, emails, radio. The message I
33 got from someone who worked with a lot of school teachers
34 who were in touch with Māori ideas, was that people would
35 not be saying anything against Pā Shirres. The Bishop made

1 a statement which, on the face of it, sounds like a really
2 good example of the new, what do you call it, safeguarding?
3 So, it's a piece of paper that I found at Church and it
4 basically said the Dominicans were horrified or sad about
5 what had happened and that if you wanted help over Shirres
6 you could go to NOPS. So, I know that he came and actually
7 went to the Church at Moerewa which is an area that
8 struggles, and has a Catholic centre. The media was
9 reporting the Bishop thought everything was pretty good and
10 thank you and don't worry because NOPS is going to come and
11 help you. The message from the local people was, you know,
12 this is Pā Shirres, what are you talking about. Bear in
13 mind that Michael Shirres was very big on Bastion Point and
14 Treaty issues. I don't know if it makes sense, he was a
15 hero.

16 Basically, I went from being afraid and sure that there
17 were a lot more stories just because of what people told
18 me, to having people saying, "I was abused, please don't
19 use my name" and that is one of the biggest problems, I
20 think, for the Commission, is we talk about reaching
21 people. I would say to you that probably very few people
22 in Northland Hospital know that the Commission is on. I
23 would say very few people in schools know the Commission is
24 on. I live in Northland. Northland has not been reached.
25 I have a computer, I'm literate. We're talking about a
26 region where people kind of have to go on a ferry boat to
27 get down to a hospital which is miles from where they live.
28 We're talking about an area with systemic poverty. The
29 Bishop of Auckland goes up one day and tells the people
30 that they can contact NOPS. Can you see a problem?

31 So, I hear from people that the Church is trying hard.
32 I hear from people who say everything is better now, we
33 have *The Path to Healing*, and it is an ineffective ugly
34 document.

1 Q. Before we move to *A Path to Healing*, just lingering on your
2 actual redress process, which I accept we did jump ahead.

3 A. Sorry.

4 Q. That's not your fault, it was very compelling evidence so I
5 didn't want to interrupt you.

6 At the time you made your disclosure, Shirres was still
7 alive and you've noted in your statement that the Police
8 were never notified about Michael and he was never
9 prosecuted. That's because you didn't make a complaint, in
10 terms of your abuse, that's why they weren't notified. Can
11 you talk us through that?

12 A. I didn't notify, partly because as a four-year-old girl I
13 watched the Police take my father away. I had been given
14 to believe that going to the Police would be a traumatic
15 experience and I rather foolishly accepted that. Also, in
16 those days, when I talk to people now it's as if we
17 misinterpreted the law, but there was a thing about
18 10 years after an event and people like me didn't know the
19 difference between whether something was criminal or civil.
20 So, you would hear things and think, oh no, I mustn't do
21 that. Also, there was no mother. You know, I mean really
22 my parents were lost to me from 1966 but I still liked to
23 kind of talk to the body, you know.

24 Q. Are you saying it would have been difficult for your mother
25 if you'd gone to the Police?

26 A. My mother said - and I have no doubt - that she would kill
27 herself. I have no doubt.

28 Q. In that comment, you know, you are encapsulating the range
29 of perspectives on Michael Shirres, still within your
30 family?

31 A. Yeah, we're talking five people who are never addressed by
32 one of these many bodies.

33 Q. That was going to be my next question. Did you receive any
34 apology in person from any Church authority responsible for
35 Shirres?

1 A. My father did.

2 Q. In person?

3 A. A yellow letter, a letter on yellow paper. I don't know,
4 my father didn't talk to me. I love this notion of the
5 family. We could not have been more separated, and that's
6 one of the other things. You know, the whole thing about
7 the Catholic assumption, they assume they know. They even
8 assume they're listening. If they wanted to listen, they
9 could talk to us. My email was in the paper.

10 Q. And what would you expect the Church to have done when
11 they're dealing with your father and you and your sisters
12 separately and you didn't know? What would you have hoped,
13 looking back now?

14 A. You see, I think the thing is there were two Bishops of
15 Auckland, Bishop Browne and then Bishop Dunn. I think they
16 feigned confusion. Excuse me. (Short pause). I just had
17 this memory of my father telling my other sister about
18 being humiliated by the Bishop, various inferences that he
19 was a troublemaker. If you go through all the letters and
20 all the documentation, it's all quite clear. I was saying
21 I don't want my father involved. My sister was saying I
22 don't want my mother dead. My other sister was saying,
23 where is the justice for the abuse? None of us spoke to
24 each other. The three of us, I'm not sure when we were
25 actually together again. It might have only been about
26 five years ago, I'm not sure. The pain of this is not old.
27 This is not historical pain.

28 Sorry, can I talk about Fr Toomey?

29 Q. Certainly.

30 A. As I said, I went back to Good Shepherd College and studied
31 Christology, I love all that. I studied Pastoral Theology
32 and that's what happened. I got a little bit disconnected
33 I think from things, but anyway, I was studying these
34 things, then it got really stressful, another breakdown and
35 I went home to Northland and stayed there. I was getting

1 so ill that I wanted to contact the Dominicans and ask for
2 help with counselling. I did that, met the head of the
3 Dominicans and had had a discussion with him. There was a
4 witness. In that discussion, I said I've seen things like
5 this [refers to book by Shirres, Te Tangata], I don't think
6 you ever listened to what I said about Māori, I am unwell,
7 I need you to help with my counselling and I need you to
8 pay attention. You let a priest do -

9 Q. This was you, Annie, asking for some pastoral support post
10 settlement?

11 A. Yes and for them to make good the situation that I felt
12 they had allowed to happen. Fr Toomey put his hand up,
13 told me he would only talk about what he had in writing,
14 didn't pay for my counselling and left.

15 When I went home, I thought, I don't know what I thought
16 but a few months later there was an article published,
17 written by Fr Toomey, comparing Michael Shirres to Thomas
18 Aquinas. So, after some effort that was removed from web
19 pages etc., although obviously if you have a hard copy of
20 the Catholic news you can find it and obviously it's been
21 put around.

22 I want to explain to you that a very broken version of
23 me went to the head of the Dominicans, raised this. I was
24 given good words, apart from "no, we don't want to hear
25 about anyone except those that are recorded" and that's how
26 much he meant it.

27 Q. So, if we could just pause there, Annie, because we're
28 really coming to the end of your whole statement and your
29 story. I appreciate you've been in the witness box for a
30 long time. We have some sort of closing questions that
31 you've been planning to answer. How are you going in
32 there?

33 A. Fine, okay.

34 Q. What we'd like to look to really is the overall redress
35 process, and I know you've had a good look at the modern

1 *Path to Healing* document. There is one part in that
2 document that talks about the destruction of records after
3 50 years. Can you just tell me, as a survivor, how you
4 interpret that paragraph and what your concerns are about
5 it?

6 A. It tells me that they clearly didn't think about the people
7 you've seen in this room. I can understand saying at least
8 50 years about something but basically, what they say is
9 that - I haven't got it here, but they talk about the fact
10 that after 50 years things will be destroyed. I am 58, so
11 that means if I hadn't come to terms with my abuse until
12 now, the evidence would be lost. Can I also say - because
13 it's really important - one of the other things I found out
14 when I just declared my story with a lot of pressure, is
15 the Catholic Church, Dominicans and the local parish priest
16 where we lived knew that Michael Shirres had a history of
17 child sexual abuse in 1966. They knew that when they did
18 the *Path to Healing*.

19 Q. And I think that was really your main point that you
20 actually wanted to end on?

21 A. No, there's another little bit.

22 Q. I wonder if you could share that.

23 A. I will try and be brief.

24 Q. And what that really goes to, what you're about to share,
25 is what you think the Church authorities dealing with
26 survivors need to be informed by, is that right?

27 A. Yes. There's a few little points. One is, you know, I
28 wrote to the Rōpū [Te Rōpū Tautoko] and offered to talk to
29 them. So, if they wanted to be informed and understand a
30 survivor, they have had an opportunity. They didn't take
31 it.

32 I approached - no, actually the Bishop of Auckland
33 offered that I help with the 2020 book. Virginia Noonan, I
34 think she did answer the phone in the end but basically, I
35 would just encourage anyone to ring NOPS and see how long

1 it takes to get an answer. And when you do get an answer,
2 how much it actually shows any kind of empathy or
3 understanding.

4 So, in that, I discovered and thought this was actually
5 really priceless. It's what they do with crisis
6 management. There are three things you do in a crisis.
7 We've done them with Covid. You cordon, so you stop the
8 spread of the problem. You contain and deal with it, you
9 put boundaries on it. Then you care. The Catholic Church
10 does not know how to cordon because it doesn't even know
11 what it is, it can't find itself. If you can't find
12 yourself but you can find a lawyer, that tells me something
13 isn't quite right in your practice. We have had 2000 years
14 to work out how to behave like Christians. There is no
15 more time, in my opinion we should not be using government
16 funds to support an institution that cannot pick up the
17 phone. That is a failure in basic practice.

18 When they do pick up a phone, they don't understand what
19 their own culture is doing, what's happened or who it's
20 happened to. They have no understanding about trauma and
21 sexual abuse which makes me wonder how they can possibly
22 understand things like the crucifixion.

23 And the only way that I think we can ever see progress,
24 so to now call a halt and say to the Catholic Church,
25 "Stop, you were cordoned, you need to be contained. Yes,
26 you have a right to care". To do that, I think there
27 should be a levy on people who use Catholic facilities and
28 the Catholic Church should be paying a levy. I don't think
29 that New Zealanders would put their taxes into any other
30 system that was this confused.

31 **MS HARONGA:** Thank you, Annie, for your evidence today. I
32 think we've certainly covered a full range and that really
33 just speaks to your varied experiences with the Church. I
34 will pass back to Madam Chair for any questions.

1 **CHAIR:** Annie, we have conferred and we are not going to
2 ask any further questions. I just want to make it quite
3 clear that's not because we're not interested. We are
4 completely absorbed in what you've told us. We have read
5 your statement. We have read the accompanying documents
6 which speak volumes, quite frankly, and so we are not going
7 to put you through the ordeal of raising further minutiae,
8 I think we have plenty here for us. I will ask Dr Erueti
9 to address you.

10 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Tēnā koe, kua tāe mai mātou ki te wā
11 mutunga (inaudible words).....anei mātou te Kōmihana tēnei te
12 mihi nui ki ā koe. Kei te mihi hoki ki tō whānau, ki ā koe.
13 (Thank you, we have come to the end of your evidence.....the
14 Commission would like to thank you and your family today).
15 On behalf of the Inquiry, I want to thank you for coming
16 and sharing your experience and recognising how difficult
17 it is to speak in the public domain. But, as you say,
18 there can be a lot of passing around of paper and shuffling
19 of paper is one thing but to come here and hold forth and
20 talk and give compelling evidence about your experience is
21 another thing. So, on behalf of all of us, we want to
22 thank you for your korero. Kia ora.

23 **MS HARONGA:** If we could take five minutes?

24 **CHAIR:** We will take the afternoon adjournment, it's right
25 on time, before we start a new witness. Thank you very
26 much.

27

28 **Hearing adjourned from 3.25 p.m. until 3.40 p.m.**

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