

**ABUSE IN CARE ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY
TULOOU – OUR PACIFIC VOICES: TATALA E PULONGA**

Under The Inquiries Act 2013

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

Royal Commission: Judge Coral Shaw (Chair)
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Mr Paul Gibson
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Venue: Fale o Samoa
141 Bader Drive
Māngere
AUCKLAND

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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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1 [10.03 am]

2 **MR POHIVA:** Mālō e lelei. Unfortunately our Minister has been called away to an emergency so

3 I have been ordained for this morning. Let us pray. [**Prayer in Tongan**].

4 **CHAIR:** Thank you Minister. Now as your role as counsel you can call your first witness Leota.

5 **MR POHIVA:** Good morning Commissioners. Yes, our first witness for today is Leota Scanlon.

6 Leota will be sharing about his time as an inpatient in the Lake Alice Child and
7 Adolescents Unit; his time in family homes, foster care and borstal training as well, and
8 how this has all impacted on his life. I wonder if the affirmation can be taken at this time.

9 **LEOTA FRED SCANLON**

10 **CHAIR:** Yes. I'm just going to read you the affirmation, is that all right? Okay. Do you
11 solemnly, sincerely and truly declare and affirm that the evidence you will give to the
12 Commission will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

13 A. Yes.

14 **Q.** Thank you.

15 **QUESTIONING BY MR POHIVA:** Thank you Leota. And good morning to you.

16 A. Morning.

17 **Q.** For the benefit of everyone here, I will be taking you through your statement or parts of
18 your statement, but I understand that you have provided a full statement that will be
19 available on the website later, and the Commissioners have also read your full statement.

20 A. Yes.

21 **Q.** So for today's evidence I'll be taking you through that, or through parts of it. And also for
22 the benefit of our viewers you wanted to acknowledge the fact that there are screens for
23 your own comfort?

24 A. Yes.

25 **Q.** And not necessarily to be anonymous, you're not necessarily trying to hide from people?

26 A. Yes.

27 **Q.** It's just for your comfort today. To begin with, Leota, can I just ask you to introduce
28 yourself to everyone here?

29 A. My name is Leota Fred Scanlon, I was born in 1962, I now reside in Wairarapa, Masterton.

30 **Q.** And I just want to -- I understand you wanted to acknowledge the name Leota is actually a
31 matai name, is that right?

32 A. Yes.

33 **Q.** And you wanted to -- everyone to know that it's -- it was given to you by your father as a
34 first name?

- 1 A. Yes.
- 2 **Q.** As opposed to?
- 3 A. Yes as a name, not a title.
- 4 **Q.** Just referring to paragraph 2, what is your ethnicity, and do you link back to another
5 culture?
- 6 A. Samoan, I also go to or whakapapa to Māori side of the family in Whanganui through
7 marriage.
- 8 **Q.** I'm just going to ask you questions about your migration and how your family have ended
9 up in New Zealand. Could you share with us a bit about your parents first and then go into
10 some details how your first members of your family came to New Zealand?
- 11 A. Both my parents are part Samoan, Irish and German descent, they settled in Samoa. On my
12 father's side my granduncles and grandfather came over during the 30s back and forth from
13 Samoa to New Zealand and one of my granduncles settled in -- up the river in Rānana,
14 yeah, and he married a Māori lady, my nanny, which was from the river.
- 15 **Q.** And that's your connection with?
- 16 A. Yes.
- 17 **Q.** Māori?
- 18 A. Yeah.
- 19 **Q.** And just to clarify, your grandfather and his brothers were doing a lot of travelling back
20 and forth?
- 21 A. Yes.
- 22 **Q.** Since the 1930s?
- 23 A. Yes.
- 24 **Q.** And then settled in Whanganui, or your grandpa's brother settled in Whanganui?
- 25 A. Yes, yes, my koro, yeah.
- 26 **Q.** So when did your father come to New Zealand?
- 27 A. He came to New Zealand in 1945.
- 28 **Q.** And what was the circumstances of him coming to New Zealand?
- 29 A. I'd like to --
- 30 **Q.** You don't have to go into details, you can just --
- 31 A. I'd like to say for a better life, but no, he was sent there because there was a bit of politics in
32 the family or something like that, but yeah, that's the past.
- 33 **Q.** And eventually he was sent to live with your grandpa's brother?
- 34 A. Yes.

- 1 **Q.** And nana who lived in?
- 2 **A.** Rānana.
- 3 **Q.** And that was a -- so he was whangai'd into that family?
- 4 **A.** Yes, my nanny, yeah, whangai'd, all the kids from Samoa, they came from my dad's family,
5 and her family, the Māori side of the family, they couldn't have kids, so they whangai'd
6 every -- yeah.
- 7 **Q.** So it was your dad and siblings?
- 8 **A.** Yes.
- 9 **Q.** And other children that were whangai'd into the same --
- 10 **A.** Yes.
- 11 **Q.** -- family?
- 12 **A.** Yeah.
- 13 **Q.** And that's where your dad grew up in Whanganui?
- 14 **A.** Yes.
- 15 **Q.** Or Rānana?
- 16 **A.** Yes.
- 17 **Q.** Can I ask you about your dad and what was he like growing up?
- 18 **A.** He was -- he worked hard and drank hard and gave us a hiding a lot. He was very abusive,
19 yeah.
- 20 **Q.** What languages did he speak?
- 21 **A.** He spoke Samoan, he couldn't really get his head around English, so he spoke Māori. Our
22 nanny taught him to speak Māori fluently, and then he tried to learn English but it's more
23 like pigeon English and, yeah, he spoke Māori fluently.
- 24 **Q.** So it was difficult for him to --
- 25 **A.** Yes.
- 26 **Q.** -- grasping the English language?
- 27 **A.** The English language, yeah.
- 28 **Q.** But he learned to speak Te Reo?
- 29 **A.** Yes.
- 30 **Q.** And you mentioned that was easier for him?
- 31 **A.** Yeah, it was a lot easier for him to grasp the language, Māori.
- 32 **Q.** You attended school in Whanganui?
- 33 **A.** Yes.
- 34 **Q.** And you also attended church regularly growing up?

- 1 A. Yes, most of the time I -- yeah, we had Lotu Tamaiti and they couldn't handle me in there
2 so I ended up being in the main service with the adults because I was just a bit, yeah, hyper
3 and uncontrollable.
- 4 Q. And for the benefit of those who don't speak the Samoan language, Lotu Tamaiti is Sunday
5 School?
- 6 A. Kid's Sunday School, yeah.
- 7 Q. So you ended up being separated from them and joining the main church?
- 8 A. Yes, yes, with the adults, they could control me then, I was just -- yeah.
- 9 Q. Can I now ask you about your mum. When did she -- what happened to mum in 1974?
- 10 A. What was that again sorry?
- 11 Q. Your mum.
- 12 A. Yeah.
- 13 Q. She passed away in 1974, is that right?
- 14 A. Yes, yeah, yes she passed away.
- 15 Q. And you were 11 years old at the time?
- 16 A. Yes.
- 17 Q. At that time when mum passed away, who was at home at that time?
- 18 A. All my brothers and sister, we were all home.
- 19 Q. And after she passed away did they remain at home?
- 20 A. No, they more or less left as soon as we buried our mother, they left home and just me and
21 my little sister.
- 22 Q. So essentially after mum passed away it was you and your little sister?
- 23 A. Yeah, just me and my sister.
- 24 Q. And your dad?
- 25 A. Yes.
- 26 Q. How did mum's death impact you or affect you?
- 27 A. Like any 10 year old or 11 year old, just devastated, yeah, just -- yeah. Even now I want to
28 cry because I speak of my mum, her memory's still with me and always will be. Yeah, it
29 really stuffed me up.
- 30 Q. It really stuffed you up?
- 31 A. Yeah.
- 32 Q. And at the time when your mum passed away, your siblings had gone, your dad was
33 around, did you have any other support?
- 34 A. I had no support, not even from the family.

- 1 **Q.** Not even from --
- 2 **A.** No, it was just me and my sister.
- 3 **Q.** Any support from Social Welfare or anything like that?
- 4 **A.** Not until I started getting into trouble, fighting all the time, getting into trouble, that's the
5 only time they came in, but other than that it was just us, yeah, there was no really
6 Government or family support.
- 7 **Q.** Not long after mum passed away, and I'm referring to paragraph 11, how did you feel?
- 8 **A.** Because I wasn't there for her, you know, I should have been there, you know, I just lived
9 at home when she passed away, it made me angry, very angry, yeah, it just, yeah.
- 10 **Q.** And although dad was still around, was he there for you?
- 11 **A.** No, he wasn't, he'd just lost his wife, my mum, so I think, you know, the last thing before
12 he closed his eyes was her and the first thing he opened his eyes was her. So he was
13 grieving himself and he was getting drunk and abusive more and more.
- 14 **Q.** And the abuse carried on during that time?
- 15 **A.** Yes.
- 16 **Q.** And is that when you say you -- all the problems started for you?
- 17 **A.** Yes, all of the anger, the fighting, there was so much anger in me.
- 18 **Q.** So you mentioned fighting, you were fighting a lot?
- 19 **A.** Yeah.
- 20 **Q.** At school?
- 21 **A.** Yes.
- 22 **Q.** So essentially those were the circumstances before you were taken away to Lake Alice, is
23 that right?
- 24 **A.** Yes.
- 25 **Q.** I'm going to ask you more about that and the day you got taken to Lake Alice. Can you tell
26 us about that?
- 27 **A.** I remember the day when I got admitted. I got called to the principal's office and there was
28 a lady, she looked very eccentric, she had a Lucille Ball hairdo, she had her glasses and
29 I just remember her face and they wanted to take me to like a health camp I thought at the
30 time. And that would get me better, and yeah.
- 31 **Q.** Where did you see this lady?
- 32 **A.** What was that sorry?
- 33 **Q.** Where did you see this lady?
- 34 **A.** In the principal's office, yeah.

- 1 **Q.** And you understood that that lady was from Social Welfare?
- 2 **A.** Yes, yeah.
- 3 **Q.** So you got called to the principal's office?
- 4 **A.** Yes, first thing in the morning when I got there.
- 5 **Q.** So arriving at school --
- 6 **A.** Yeah.
- 7 **Q.** -- getting called to the principal's office. What happened when you got to the principal's
8 office?
- 9 **A.** They were just saying about, you know, how I've been -- how my behaviour had been and
10 why I was fighting, they wanted to send me to a place where I'd get better. I actually
11 assumed that it was like a health camp because some of my friends would be going to the
12 health camps back in that time and I didn't want to go, and they rang my father to ask
13 permission, I remember, and I was crying and they asked if they could send me to this
14 place, Lake Alice, and I got on to the phone and because my dad didn't understand English
15 properly, so I tried my best to speak Samoan and tell him that, you know, I didn't want to
16 go. But there was another -- there was another agenda that he had, and hence why I went to
17 Lake Alice, yeah.
- 18 **Q.** What did you tell your dad over the phone?
- 19 **A.** That I didn't want to go, I wanted to stay home, I wanted to go to school, you know, I'll stop
20 fighting, I'll try my best, yeah.
- 21 **Q.** And what happened after you told your dad that?
- 22 **A.** They took me to Lake Alice, yeah, yeah.
- 23 **Q.** Did the principal have any further conversation?
- 24 **A.** He just says that I would get better and that, yeah, that was it, I just -- they put me in her car
25 around she drove me to the hospital. Yeah, I remember when we drove through up the
26 drive through into Lake Alice, the place was sort of -- the buildings were square so I sort
27 of -- it reminded me of Miami, the old sort of looking buildings, yeah, and that hospital
28 smell, yes.
- 29 **Q.** Can I just take you back a bit?
- 30 **A.** Yes.
- 31 **Q.** You were taken away by the social worker?
- 32 **A.** Yes.
- 33 **Q.** And you remember your parents leaving home?
- 34 **A.** Yes.

- 1 **Q.** What happened there?
- 2 **A.** Could you say that again, my --
- 3 **Q.** Sorry.
- 4 **A.** I had that picture in my head.
- 5 **Q.** I'm referring to paragraph 16 of your statement.
- 6 **A.** Yeah.
- 7 **Q.** And --
- 8 **A.** Yeah, they took me, I was still in my school uniform and that, and they took me there and
9 when I -- I was pretty lost, I just remember the day as it was yesterday, and they just gave
10 me hospital clothes to put on, and we went into the office, we met Dr Leeks.
- 11 **Q.** And that's who you met when you first arrived?
- 12 **A.** Yeah, yes.
- 13 **Q.** And what happened?
- 14 **A.** He spoke to me about why I was sent there, you know, that I was angry and the social
15 worker had a conversation with him and that, yeah, he would get me better and that I was to
16 stay there and I remember saying that I wanted to go home next month or something like
17 that and he said we would work to that and, yeah, the social worker left and just he -- a
18 nurse came in and I was just in tears and the nurse that came in took me to the medical
19 room and gave me a needle in the side of my bum on the sort of hip, bum, whatever, and
20 I -- it just really stuffed me up, started to hurt on my right side, couldn't walk properly and I
21 was scared and, yeah, wasn't very good introduction to the place that was supposed to be
22 getting me better.
- 23 **Q.** So that was your first experience --
- 24 **A.** Yes.
- 25 **Q.** -- of the needle?
- 26 **A.** Yes.
- 27 **Q.** And when you say the needle, what was the needle, what was it called?
- 28 **A.** It was Paraldehyde. I don't think it was a drug there for us kids to get better, it was a drug
29 to punish us. When we got out of hand we got that and most of the time when we did get it
30 we spent time in bed, you know, because we couldn't move properly, yeah, yeah.
- 31 **Q.** And that basically happened when you first got there before?
- 32 **A.** Yes, yes, I -- yeah, the nurse gave it to me and I actually thought I was getting punished, I
33 don't know why, you know, why I was getting it, yeah.
- 34 **Q.** Because you mentioned that you -- straight after that you had to familiarise yourself?

- 1 A. Yes, so I was sort of like limping and, you know, they were sort of trying to hold me up but
2 I was -- yeah, and then they took me upstairs and, yeah, confined me to the bed and the next
3 day I couldn't move, it hurt every time I moved my right leg.
- 4 Q. We can talk more about that later when we --
- 5 A. Yeah, yes.
- 6 Q. -- get to it. But just on your first arrival, can you tell us what it was like, the buildings, you
7 mentioned earlier you went to?
- 8 A. Yeah, as you go in to the hospital there's a front entrance and it's sort of like -- it was like a
9 propeller, you know, with the rooms out this side to the side and it was round. When you
10 went in the office is to the right, the kitchen was on the left, the dining room, and the
11 medical room was down on the right from the office but on the other side, on the left and,
12 yeah, then you had the recreation room or the lounge and another room where we could
13 have group therapy and things like that, you know, to talk about our problems, yeah.
- 14 Q. So you'll talk about group therapy later on?
- 15 A. Yeah.
- 16 Q. But that's where you had it?
- 17 A. Then we had the -- up top there's stairs and we had the dormitories, you know, we had beds
18 on this side, the end of the building and on the left. At the end of those two rooms were
19 two like cells or, yeah, I don't know whether you could call it a quiet room, but it was a cell
20 where they locked us in and closed the shutters and, yeah, that's what I call it, they were
21 confinement rooms. That's where we got ECT and the needles now and again.
- 22 Q. So basically the dorms were upstairs?
- 23 A. Yes.
- 24 Q. To the side of a central --
- 25 A. Yes.
- 26 Q. -- area when you walk in?
- 27 A. Yes.
- 28 Q. And that's the entrance area with the medical --
- 29 A. Yes.
- 30 Q. -- and group therapy rooms?
- 31 A. Yeah.
- 32 Q. And to the sides are your dorms at the end of those --
- 33 A. Yeah.
- 34 Q. -- are the rooms?

- 1 A. There was a second floor so we had stairs going up a windy, yeah, circular.
- 2 Q. And in terms of other children there, were there other children at Lake Alice when you first
3 arrived, paragraph 24?
- 4 A. Yeah, there were other kids, there were, you know, a few IHC kids, yeah, a few IHC kids
5 and they were getting like the same things we were getting, just, yeah, shock.
- 6 Q. So they were getting the same treatment?
- 7 A. Yeah, yeah, it was, yeah, at the time I thought it must have been normal because they were
8 allowed to do it, so yeah.
- 9 Q. And there was also Polynesian kids there according to your statement?
- 10 A. There was a couple of us, yes.
- 11 Q. And can I now ask you about what happened on a normal day, and I'm referring to
12 paragraph 26 at Lake Alice?
- 13 A. You know, like we had, you know, like had breakfast, then school, we'd do it about three
14 hours of the day at school. It was down the road from our villa, our villa was villa 7. Yeah,
15 it was a good time to get away from our villa to go to school, and yeah, we'd have sports
16 and that and, yeah, little activities, but most of the time we were in the lounge and, yeah,
17 watching TV and things like that.
- 18 Q. On your days there, how did you feel?
- 19 A. Pardon?
- 20 Q. When you were at Lake Alice, what was your general feeling?
- 21 A. Oh just terrified, you know, I was scared, very scared, terrified. I was always crying in the
22 morning, so yeah, there was never a dry eye most of the time, yeah, it was -- yeah.
- 23 Q. You mentioned that there was an adult villa next to your --
- 24 A. Yes.
- 25 Q. -- unit?
- 26 A. Villa 8. It had adults, the men in it next to us, yeah, I remember there was a man there, the
27 nurses told us not to say "Porirua" because he would freak out, you know, just, yeah, into
28 rage and fit. And us being kids we thought we'd try it and say it and sure enough, he would
29 break down and nut out and that terrified us and, yeah, the nurses told us not to say it. But
30 yeah, he had another story himself I think, yeah.
- 31 Q. So quite vulnerable?
- 32 A. Yes.
- 33 Q. And then also during your time you mentioned you went on home leave to see your dad?
- 34 A. Yes, I went on home leave and I used to plead with him not to send me back, I was

- 1 terrified. I even told him I was getting the needle but, yeah, my father had another agenda
2 what he was doing, so he didn't really care, yeah, I just went back, just went back, yeah.
- 3 **Q.** You mentioned your preference of being at home and I'm referring to paragraph 30 of your
4 statement.
- 5 **A.** Yes.
- 6 **Q.** You preferred --
- 7 **A.** Yeah, I did, yeah, I preferred getting a hiding from my father because I knew that was
8 going to be over after the hiding, but it just felt like with Lake Alice I was getting punished
9 and, yeah, it was just, yeah, yeah, I would have rather got a hiding from my dad than to go
10 to that place and be a terrified kid.
- 11 **Q.** But you had to go back?
- 12 **A.** Yes, I had to, yeah. Yeah, it just felt as though when I think back in hindsight that we were
13 used as guinea pigs, you know, the drugs that they used for us was, you know, this will
14 quiet him down or her down or, you know, give him that and, you know, then after before,
15 you know, with the other drugs, you know, this is a punishment drug sort of thing, you
16 know, everything, drug reactions we'd get, you name it, yeah.
- 17 **Q.** You talk about running away from Lake Alice?
- 18 **A.** Yes, I run away a few times. Each time I got caught with some other boys, we didn't get
19 very far, but, yeah, they'd give us the needle and the first time I do remember is spending
20 about a week in those rooms I described at the end of the dormitories, the two rooms, the
21 confinement rooms. We were locked up in there, they had shutters so they locked those so
22 we couldn't -- yeah. It was like a cell, had a rectangle window I remember, and they had
23 keys like a prison officer keys, big keys and, yeah, they would lock us in and I'd hear the
24 keys coming and -- yeah. But yeah, they would give us the needle and we'd be confined to
25 the bed.
- 26 **Q.** And that happened after you tried to run away?
- 27 **A.** Yes, we got Paraldehyde injections, yeah, yeah, everything was, yes, ECT, you know, we'd
28 get threatened with stuff like that and the needles and, yeah, it's just -- that's why we ran
29 away was because of that, the ECT, the Paraldehyde, it was just, you know, we were kids,
30 we were terrified, you know? You know, I think in that generation that was normal, that
31 was normal, but today now that's not normal.
- 32 **Q.** And that's obviously you're trying to get away, but when they -- what happened, did they
33 catch you?
- 34 **A.** They caught us, yeah, the Police brought us back the first time, and yeah.

- 1 **Q.** And then further punishments for running away, is that right?
- 2 **A.** Yeah, yeah. We got as far as, I think the first time was Turakina and they caught us there,
3 and then yeah, we were taken back and injected and I couldn't walk for about four days.
4 They, you know, they could up the dosage.
- 5 **Q.** Right.
- 6 **A.** So yeah, I couldn't walk for about four days, every time I moved I cried, and yeah. Yeah.
- 7 **Q.** Leota, you've mentioned several different types of punishment according to your evidence?
- 8 **A.** Yes.
- 9 **Q.** Can I just take you through each one of them just so that we can have a clear picture of it.
10 Can we -- starting at paragraph 35.
- 11 **A.** Yeah.
- 12 **Q.** You mentioned group therapy earlier. Can you tell us about that?
- 13 **A.** Yeah, we would have like a talk, you know, in a group as kids with Dr Leeks and a couple
14 of nurses would sit in on it, you know, like they would be out of their uniforms and would
15 talk about things and, yeah, I thought it was going to be really good to get things off and
16 people would, you know, be there to awhi me. But no, if we said anything out of the
17 ordinary or swore, you know, the nurses would get us after the meeting and, you know, like
18 they wouldn't take it, you know, they'd -- yeah, they -- I remember one meeting we
19 had -- we said something about the nurses and there was a certain nurse there that took it to
20 heart and he actually threatened all us kids with ECT, yeah, and we were all in tears,
21 I remember that day because we were all crying and we were all in a sort of huddle by one
22 side of the wall and we were awhi'ng each other, us kids, you know, and I didn't think that
23 was normal for us kids to be doing that to awhi us when they should have been looking
24 after us, you know. Yeah, and he -- that nurse, yeah, this authority eh.
- 25 **Q.** So during those sessions you mentioned you thought it was going to be okay to share?
- 26 **A.** Yes, yes.
- 27 **Q.** But when you said something against --
- 28 **A.** Yeah, against him or the nurses or, just brought something that wasn't in those days not to
29 talk about, they would take it the wrong, you know, take it and punish us for it, and I didn't
30 think that was, you know, you don't do that, you know, I thought it was just to get out what
31 was inside us, you know, and make us better, you know, just -- yeah.
- 32 **Q.** So just to clarify my understanding, here you were thinking that it was a safe place for you
33 to share?
- 34 **A.** Yeah.

- 1 **Q.** And that wasn't -- that resulted in punishment?
- 2 **A.** It was never the same after that group, that first group **GRO-B** and I had. We hardly said
3 anything because of the repercussions of that first meeting, us kids wouldn't say much at
4 all. We couldn't because we had, yeah, certain other authority, authoritative people that
5 were in those groups that would, yes, punish us.
- 6 **Q.** And I think from your statement you said the nature of the comments that you guys made
7 were either cheeky, that kind of nature?
- 8 **A.** Yes, we were kids, yeah.
- 9 **Q.** Can I just move on, Leota.
- 10 **A.** Yes.
- 11 **Q.** You mentioned you got electric shocks and you also -- is that what you mean by ECT?
- 12 **A.** Yes, yeah.
- 13 **Q.** Can you tell us a bit more about that?
- 14 **A.** Oh I didn't think it was, you know, like to get us better, I think it was -- to me it was a
15 punishment, you know. The nurses, I think they enjoyed doing what they did, they didn't
16 minimise any of the pain that was caused. I remember -- I remember -- it was just, yeah.
17 They were just punishing us, that's all I can, you know, the nurses never explained why we
18 were getting electric shocks, they just took us there and, yeah, if we, you know, misbehaved
19 and they did threaten us with it, hence when I come back to what I said about that group
20 meeting, therapy, yeah, they did threaten us with the ECT.
- 21 **Q.** And just before we go further into that, you mentioned they didn't do anything to minimise
22 the pain, is that right?
- 23 **A.** Yeah, not really, no.
- 24 **Q.** What do you mean by that?
- 25 **A.** Oh I still, you know, like I don't know, it hurt, you know, but most of the time they'd drug
26 us up, you know, but there was one time where they were taking me, yeah, it was just, yeah,
27 they'd do it just for the sake of doing it, that's how it felt.
- 28 **Q.** So they didn't do any preparing or --
- 29 **A.** Yeah, I think they did, but, you know, most of the time when we did get those it was in the
30 seclusion room and they would, yeah, they would hold us. I remember, yeah, not wanting
31 to go and they would, yeah, they would -- if we got too out of hand they would drug us and
32 slow us down and get us up into the room, but yeah.
- 33 **Q.** You also mentioned that they threatened this a lot, is that right?

- 1 A. Yeah, they did, they did. It would resort some of us to tears, most of us, being threatened
2 with that.
- 3 Q. How many times did you actually get it, and I'm referring to paragraph 39 of your
4 statement. Take your time, Leota.
- 5 A. Yeah. I had it about three times, you know, I don't remember -- I don't remember Dr Leeks
6 being there, it was just mainly the nurses when we got the ECT. The nurses were always
7 there to give us the medication or the punishment, so yeah, they were more or less -- yeah.
- 8 Q. And then this happened in those rooms that you described?
- 9 A. Yes, there in the medical room.
- 10 Q. And what happened when you went into get this punishment?
- 11 A. I remember pissing my pants, going into the room, and then waking up in urinated clothes.
12 I remember changing them after a night and day in it, in those. I remember shitting the bed
13 too, because they had a little potty or -- yeah, a potty that we had to excruciate(sic) in.
14 Yeah, I was in there for about four days, five days. That was after I run away when they
15 did that to me. Yeah. So probably, yeah, for those four days I couldn't walk. I cried every
16 time I moved my legs, it was just -- yeah. Yeah, so I learned to keep very still, not as to
17 activate the pain that was going through my legs, yeah.
- 18 Q. And during the -- before the electric shocks you were tied down?
- 19 A. Yeah, yeah, we were tied down, yeah. So we can, you know, move too much, then it was
20 just used, but usually, you know, beforehand we were, you know, like unconscious all
21 drugged up, but yeah, now and again we'd probably go straight to -- from, you know, the
22 medical room to that room, seclusion room without medication before the ECT. Yeah.
- 23 Q. And then you remember waking up?
- 24 A. Yeah.
- 25 Q. And you said in your statement you -- the nurses told you to clean yourself up?
- 26 A. Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah.
- 27 Q. And we're at paragraph 41.
- 28 A. Yes. After I received the shocks I couldn't remember anything, yeah, honest. Yeah.
- 29 Q. And then as a result of the electric shocks that left marks on you?
- 30 A. Yes, on our temples.
- 31 Q. On your temple?
- 32 A. Yeah, here. The more you got the more it would be visible. Yeah, it was like eczema, but
33 it was round, yeah, yeah.
- 34 Q. And that stayed on you for how long?

1 A. Oh a few days, yeah, a few days, but yeah, it wasn't a good look, I suppose, yeah, yeah, and
2 with the drugs that we had to take after it, the sedatives or whatever, you know, it was just,
3 yeah.

4 **Q.** Before I move on to the next -- to Paraldehyde, was there anything else about electric
5 shocks you want to share?

6 A. Just couldn't understand why they were giving us kids that kind of treatment. You know,
7 like there was a kid, I think he was around about 6 or 7 and he was getting it, you know, he
8 was the youngest out of all of us and, yeah, they used -- they thought they could cure us
9 from being gay, from being angry, from taking epileptic fits and they thought they could
10 cure us. It terrified all of us, you know?

11 **Q.** It's okay, Leota, you can take a moment.

12 **CHAIR:** Would you like to take a break? Would you like a little rest.

13 A. Yes please.

14 **Q.** You would, okay, we'll take a break. You just let us know when you're ready to come
15 back.

16 **Adjournment from 10.47 am to 11.08 am**

17 **CHAIR:** Thank you for coming back. Are you okay?

18 A. Yes.

19 **Q.** Thank you. Thank you Mr Pohiva.

20 **MR POHIVA:** Thank you Commissioners. Leota wants to acknowledge the fact that Hake Halo
21 is there for him, remind him he wasn't alone at that time and also the support of Feke.

22 **CHAIR:** Yes, I didn't say it before but what the public can't see is that Leota is flanked by two
23 large and very significant people who are looking after him, and that's Hake Halo, himself a
24 survivor of Lake Alice and somebody who's been with us through this journey, and also
25 Feke who's one of our staff who is also a survivor, so he's well surrounded and well looked
26 after.

27 **QUESTIONING BY MR POHIVA CONTINUED:** Thank you very much, Leota. Before I ask
28 you about Paraldehyde, just when I'm asking you questions feel free to take your time.

29 A. Yes.

30 **Q.** And gather your thoughts before answering, so don't feel rushed. I'm now going to ask you
31 about the Paraldehyde injections, I know you've talked about that earlier on. Can you tell
32 us more about that and I'm referring to paragraph 43 of your statement.

33 A. Paraldehyde, it was -- when we always got that injection of Paraldehyde it left a taste like a
34 chemical taste in our mouths and, yeah, it wasn't a good taste, it wasn't a good feeling. It

1 was -- they thought it was just normal for us to get it and that was, you know, they -- if you
2 played up you got it, you got that Paraldehyde, you got that needle. We used to get a drug
3 called Largactil, that slowed us down, and if we didn't want to drink it orally, they would
4 inject us with it and that, yeah, that was even worse.

5 **Q.** So just on that Largactil, that's something different from Paraldehyde?

6 **A.** Yes, it was to slow us down, pacify us, you could call it that. If we didn't want to drink it
7 they would, yeah, put it in a needle and we had a choice, drink it or get the needle, and we
8 were scared of those needles. That just -- that would give us drug reactions, you know, like
9 if we didn't -- when it wore off, you know, our eyes would roll up in our head and we'd be
10 rocking back and forth, and we couldn't stop it because it was uncontrollable, it was -- yeah,
11 and yeah. And then they would give it and we would just sort of -- yeah. But yeah, they
12 were supposed to be medication, but it was -- to me it was a punishment, you know, to get
13 those drugs.

14 **Q.** And you would get that alternative to Paraldehyde?

15 **A.** No, no, it was a straight injection, and, yeah, like I said it left a really chemical taste in your
16 mouth, you know, it just -- It would be there for days.

17 **Q.** And that's the Paraldehyde?

18 **A.** Yeah, the Paraldehyde, yeah.

19 **Q.** And you talked about how that affected you physically. Can you tell us more about that,
20 and paragraph 45?

21 **A.** Yeah, yeah, it was given to us, the effects of it was, yeah, you know, it really hurt, it really
22 hurt, you know, you tensed your leg up it'd just -- or move it, it just -- pain would shoot up
23 into us. And it was the kind of pain that I wasn't used to. And a hit from my father, that
24 was nothing, but that was terrifying, because I didn't know what it was doing to me, and it
25 would take about a few days for it to wear off and I'd always be limping, all of us would be
26 limping if we got it, and then it would wear off and we'd walk normally and -- yeah.

27 **Q.** So just at paragraph 46 you were in that pain and nurses got you to do stuff?

28 **A.** Yeah, they would make us get up, walk around, you know, the grounds and that
29 and -- yeah, but -- yeah, that didn't really help, yeah. They'd force us up more or less, make
30 us walk.

31 **Q.** And just moving on to you say in your statement seclusion, is that the confinement rooms
32 that you talked about earlier in your evidence?

33 **A.** Yes, two rooms on either end of the dorms, yeah, they're the seclusion rooms, yeah.

34 **Q.** Can you tell us more about that, what happened there? And we're at paragraph 47.

- 1 A. When we got put in there, whether it be for ECT or just playing up and getting the needle,
2 we'd be put in there and confined in there, you know, for the whole day sometimes.
3 Depended on what we were doing playing up. So the more we played up, the more we, you
4 know, the drug was or the ultimate one was the ECT. So yeah, you know, so it depended
5 on how we reacted during day-to-day goings on in the hospital. But the rooms, yeah, they
6 were really secluded, just so confined, yeah, they had shutters, you know, there was a glass
7 window and when they closed the shutters it just went dark, you know, and this little wire
8 rectangle or square wire, I can't remember, and then the rectangle by the door, window, but
9 as I went to borstal they had rooms similar to that, so yeah, I call it a cell.
- 10 Q. You call a cell --
- 11 A. With a potty, yeah. Yeah.
- 12 Q. And you mentioned just now there were different levels of punishment, so they would --
- 13 A. Yeah.
- 14 Q. -- marry up the punishment with the behaviour that went on, is that what you mean?
- 15 A. Yes, yes. You know, yeah. But some, you know, I just thought that the nurses thought it
16 was just -- they got a kick from it, you know, they -- I truly believe they enjoyed what they
17 were doing to us, you know? They could go home to their bed at night and play with their
18 kids and, you know, and think nothing of it, but we were still there terrified as kids, yeah,
19 there was just -- now that I think back on, yeah, you know, they had a good life. Carried on
20 as if nothing happened. Us kids meant nothing.
- 21 Q. And just going to paragraph 49, you sometimes had a combination of punishments?
- 22 A. Yes.
- 23 Q. And the one time, can you tell us a bit more about that?
- 24 A. You know, we'd get put in that room, the seclusion room, and it was either ECT or
25 Paraldehyde. Didn't matter, we got put in there and, yeah, you know, like, you know,
26 pissing your pants before you even know what you're going to get, or know what you're
27 going to get and you're going up is not good, and then waking up to, you know, urinated
28 bed and even, you know, like I said, in the latter part I was saying shitting your bed, shitting
29 your pants, shitting the bed, you know. They locked the door and they enjoyed locking that
30 door and turning the key and leaving us kids in there, yeah, it was just -- we couldn't move
31 anyway, so, you know, but I do remember spending my time when I was awake crying,
32 crying for my mum. Yeah. But yeah.
- 33 Q. You mentioned at paragraph 51 you were also physically abused by some of the nurses in
34 seclusion?

- 1 A. Yes, I was. This certain nurse I was related to I found out in the end. He beat me up, I
2 don't know why. But as the years went by I found out he was, yes, my mum's first cousin's
3 son.
- 4 Q. And that was an isolated area?
- 5 A. Yes, he gave me a hiding.
- 6 Q. I'm now going to ask you about the staff -- more about the staff at Lake Alice and we're at
7 paragraph 53 -- sorry.
- 8 A. That was what I said just before.
- 9 Q. Yes, so paragraph 54.
- 10 A. Yeah. Oh, yes, I remember that day. It wasn't long after I had come off the Paraldehyde
11 and started walking properly and I spent time in the kitchen with one of the cleaners. She
12 was from the local pa up the line, and I was terrified and I asked her to put me in her boot
13 and take me home, I just wanted to get out of there, but she couldn't, she'd lose her job if
14 she, you know. But yeah, I pleaded with her, I was crying, and she was -- I could see in her
15 face that she was feeling for me but she couldn't, you know, and yeah, I got on with her
16 really good actually, yeah. From Ratana pa.
- 17 Q. And when you're ready you can carry on to paragraph 5.
- 18 A. Yeah. There was one nurse, yeah, that was very comforting, I think they should have had
19 more nurses like her. But they didn't. She took us for kapa haka and that, you know,
20 we -- yeah. Yeah, I remember the song that we used sing was Tutira Mai Nga Iwi. Yeah, it
21 was a pretty cool song, but yeah, that didn't last long.
- 22 Q. And that was in school?
- 23 A. No, actually it wasn't in school, it was during the weekend, she'd get us aside and we'd sing
24 Māori songs, Māori songs and yeah, it was good. But yeah, she was the only nurse that
25 really had a heart, yeah, I can say that, yeah, had a heart.
- 26 Q. Just moving on to paragraph 56.
- 27 A. I did say that, but yeah, yeah, the nurses did -- they got a kick out of giving us an injection.
28 They felt very authoritative and knew what they were going to -- about to do and they got a
29 kick from it, you know, you could see it in the eyes.
- 30 Q. And then that was from the staff?
- 31 A. Pardon, sorry?
- 32 Q. That was the staff?
- 33 A. Yes, the staff, the nurses, yeah.
- 34 Q. And just on that topic of staff, if I can take you back to paragraph 25, you mentioned there

- 1 was different treatment for different people?
- 2 A. Yes, there was. When I look back on it the treatments for us, if I can say, ethnic kids.
- 3 Q. So Māori and Polynesian?
- 4 A. Yeah, yes. I felt as though we got more of the punishment, maybe because we
- 5 had -- probably didn't listen not too much to the staff. Then the Pākehā kids, they
- 6 had -- they didn't get as bad treatment as what we got. I felt that, yeah, there was a
- 7 punishment for them and a punishment for us. When we got out of hand it was -- yeah,
- 8 yeah, I do believe that when I look back, now that I'm an adult, yeah.
- 9 Q. So essentially you're saying you got more punishment or...
- 10 A. Yeah, we got more. There's one rule for them and one rule for us.
- 11 Q. Thank you Leota. I'll just take you back to leaving Lake Alice, paragraph 58.
- 12 A. Yes, I left Lake Alice, really they didn't sign me off or anything, I left for leave and
- 13 I pleaded that they -- before I was supposed to come become to my dad and he finally gave
- 14 in, and I told him what they were doing and he actually -- I think he just actually
- 15 understood. But yeah, like I said before, he had another agenda why I was there for that
- 16 time. And then, yeah, he didn't send me back and then, I don't know, I was -- yeah, I was
- 17 just glad to see the back of the place. Then I had to fit into society back into the real world
- 18 and that was very hard, very hard.
- 19 Q. What were you trying to do, and paragraph 60?
- 20 A. Yeah, well, I wanted an education, I knew that. I tried enrolling back at school but they
- 21 wouldn't let me, they didn't want to give me an education. It didn't help with my father not
- 22 being there with me to enrol me, so I dressed myself into that school uniform and went
- 23 down there to enrol and they said no you can't. And yeah, that was the end of my
- 24 education. I think it was around, you know, 13 and I hadn't -- yeah. No education, so I had
- 25 to make my own education up.
- 26 Q. And that was immediately after your five months of --
- 27 A. Yeah.
- 28 Q. -- being in Lake Alice?
- 29 A. You know, like I never got any life skills, my father didn't have any life skills bringing us
- 30 up, me and my sister, and I never got any -- received any, you know, life skills from Lake
- 31 Alice, but pain and, you know, just thinking I'd done something wrong, why I went there,
- 32 you know, I was a kid that lost his mother and all I needed was them to -- "Are you okay?
- 33 You want a hug? Are you all right?" That's all I wanted. I was a kid that was grieving and
- 34 all they could do was give me that needles, electric shock treatment, that's like saying

1 "I love you, lie on the bed I'll give you an injection." That's not love. And that goes for my
2 father too. His love was his hand. I got no life skills, I had to make my own life skills and
3 survive in this real world in my own way. I did a lot of crime and that was to feed me and
4 my little sister, not because I wanted to get me material things, it was to survive and I did
5 my best for my little sister and me.

6 **Q.** So you started getting into crime?

7 **A.** Yes, but that was to survive, not to -- it was to feed me and my sister. We had nothing.

8 **Q.** Then what happened after that? And I'm referring to the other half of paragraph 61.

9 **A.** Yeah, all those crimes that I did to feed me and my sister drew the attention of the Police
10 and I got caught in the end, yes. Then they put me into Social Welfare. They call it some
11 Māori name now, but yeah, Social Welfare. And yeah, I -- one time over the holidays why
12 I was put in there, dad went to enjoy himself up here in Auckland and we were left in
13 Whanganui by ourselves and, yeah, we didn't have enough food, so I -- yeah, for money for
14 food. So yeah, I just went to the shop, just stole food for me and my sister and, yeah, I got
15 caught. But it was only to feed me and my sister, it wasn't to, I don't know, I was bored,
16 had to do it to feed me and her.

17 **Q.** Then the Police tried to find a social worker for you?

18 **A.** Yes, they did, yeah, they found a social worker, they had to -- they took me to -- they put
19 me in one of the family homes, or a temporary family home, yeah. I didn't like it there, but
20 it was nothing like Lake Alice, but yeah. Then they contacted dad and, yeah, social worker,
21 yeah, yeah. It's pretty messed up.

22 **Q.** Yeah, so there was a lot going on.

23 **A.** Yeah.

24 **Q.** And then your dad.

25 **A.** Yeah.

26 **Q.** When they contacted your dad he still wasn't around?

27 **A.** No, he did find out in the end, the social worker did contact him and with his lack of
28 English, yeah. He just says "Yeah take him", you know, and they put me in Social Welfare.

29 **Q.** And just at paragraph 65 when you're ready. Remember, Leota, you can take it at your own
30 pace. Share with us you being placed into supervision.

31 **A.** Yeah, I remember that, yeah. When I went to court it was a young persons hearing,
32 whatever they called it then, they placed me under the supervision of Social Welfare for 12
33 months, had a social worker there, he was pretty cool. He actually thought that I had
34 potential to, you know, to have a good life, to have an education and to be someone -- be

1 someone. Other social workers that I got, they just went through the motions, they were
2 there for their 9 to 5 job and to palm me on to the next person. Yeah. They just went
3 through the motions with me and, yeah, didn't really care, but yeah, he was one social
4 worker that stood out, you know, that I can remember in my life.

5 **Q.** And you still remember him to this day?

6 **A.** Yes, yes. I felt as though I let him down a lot, but, you know, I even told him that, but
7 yeah, that's another story.

8 **Q.** And when -- you mentioned when social workers tried to visit you at home, I'm at
9 paragraph 66.

10 **A.** Yeah.

11 **Q.** What did you do?

12 **A.** I just ran away, I ended up, yeah, in Auckland, just living off a paper run and, yeah.

13 **Q.** So just to clarify, you ended up here in Auckland after --

14 **A.** Yeah, I slept in the cemetery in Mt Eden, yeah. Took them a while to catch me, but, yeah,
15 they did eventually. And I went back, yeah, I went back to home, Whanganui, and I went
16 to another family home where one of the girls I was in Lake Alice with, her parents were
17 running the family home and, yeah, they didn't really like me. Maybe because maybe I'd
18 been to Lake Alice and they knew, yeah, their daughter was there, yeah.

19 **Q.** And how long were you there for?

20 **A.** Jeez, would be about three weeks, you know, three to four weeks, around there, roughly,
21 yeah. Yeah, and then I got kicked out of there, they just told me to leave and, yeah, I was
22 out on the street again and went back home to dad, but he just had a bottle in his hand and
23 he was just, yeah, just wasn't a very good environment, yeah. Yeah, just been placed under
24 foster care and that, yeah, wasn't -- yeah.

25 **Q.** You also went into borstal training, you mentioned that earlier.

26 **A.** Yes, borstal training.

27 **Q.** What was that?

28 **A.** It opened to eyes to -- that's where I, you know, racism, you know, it opened my eyes to
29 that. There were two gentlemen that -- at the time one was a race conciliation officer for
30 thing, they came and asked us about racism and that. I was only 15 when I went to borstal
31 and, yeah, I turned 16 when I was in there. Yeah. I don't know why they put me into
32 borstal, maybe because I was -- I was just getting out of hand. But yeah, just put me there
33 and just throw away the key sort of thing.

34 Had a tough time in borstal. I was always fighting and getting hidings and this

1 and that, prison officers, but I do maintain that I had a guardian angel with me when I was
2 in there, there's times, yeah, where I was in a dark place, yeah. Very dark place. Yeah,
3 after borstal I just returned home and it was still the same, the usual stance where my father
4 was at the kitchen table drunk, asleep, as I got off the bus and headed home and walked
5 through the door. That was the time I first contemplated taking my life and I have after that
6 tried to take it.

7 **Q.** Leota, you're touching on the impacts of your journey since and I'm just going to ask you to
8 go to paragraph 71 of your statement. Can you tell us about how your life has been
9 impacted since what happened to you in your early life?

10 **A.** I think not like every other young person, but the minority of young people at the time were
11 turning to alcohol and drugs, and I did that. It wasn't to experiment, it was to kill what
12 was -- what had happened in the past, to blot it away. But every time I was straight it all
13 came back in a big way. Alcohol I was drinking, you know, it was very bad. Drug taking,
14 any drug, you name it I took it. The alcohol, yeah, it was making me turn into my father, a
15 drunk, an alcoholic. It didn't help me, it just -- it just blotted the time when I was needing
16 that just a blank mind, the alcohol was blocking that. The drugs were blocking it, but at the
17 end of the day it always came back worse, you know, I was an angry kid and it made me an
18 angry youth, an angry young man and an angry adult.

19 And, you know, the impact of Lake Alice brought me into adulthood where
20 I didn't have proper relationships because I had no life skills, because there was no people
21 there to give me that education, to give me those life skills that I needed, because all they
22 wanted to do when they looked at me was throw away the key and give me a needle and
23 "Give him ECT, he'll be all right. He'll function." You know, I even resorted to violence in
24 my first marriage, you know, I own it, you know, hurting other people around me that
25 I loved. I was just angry. I've always been angry, I've been angry since I was a kid. But it
26 all comes down to that time when I was 11 when they could have just said "Are you okay?
27 Are you all right? You want to talk about it?" And give me an awhi, a hug. No-one's ever
28 given me that.

29 So my hug was a fist. You know, my family then, they went through my violence
30 and my, you know, and I couldn't talk to no-one. Couldn't talk to no-one. I would go away
31 and cry by myself. Just not wanting to open my eyes in the morning because I'd see the
32 same shit every day. I had no parenting skills and my two oldest kids felt the effect of a
33 cycle, which these people were supposed to help me stop, not to get angry, to be a normal
34 person, to function in this society. They never gave me nothing, there was nothing there for

1 me, no adult.

2 **CHAIR:** Would you like another break? Yes, I think so. We'll take a break and let him --

3 **MR POHIVA:** Thank you.

4 **CHAIR:** And if he doesn't want to come back. Leota, if it gets too much and you don't want to
5 come back we will understand, okay? So you don't feel obliged to come back unless you
6 really, really want to, okay.

7 A. I do want to come back.

8 **Q.** Do you?

9 A. Yes, you need to hear my story.

10 **Q.** Then I really admire you for that and thank you, but please take some time just to compose
11 yourself and --

12 A. Yes.

13 **Q.** -- be awhi'd by your brothers there, all right?

14 A. Yes, thank you.

15 **Q.** All right, we'll be back shortly.

16 **Adjournment from 11.43 am to 12.11 pm**

17 **CHAIR:** Yes, thank you.

18 **QUESTIONING BY MR POHIVA CONTINUED:** Thank you Commissioners. Leota, thank
19 you for your courage in coming back today. I understand that you are determined to tell
20 your story and that's great for us, so thank you very much.

21 A. Yes.

22 **Q.** Can I just take you back to paragraph 74 and we're almost there. You talk about your
23 parenting skills being affected and a time where you weren't able to stay in hospital too
24 long. Can you tell us about that?

25 A. Yeah, just coming from Lake Alice, but yeah, even when my kids were born, I couldn't stay
26 into the hospital for too long, it just reminded me of that hospital smell, that -- and no-one
27 knew what I was going through, you know, I just couldn't stay too long to see my kids born.
28 They reminded me of a lot of the ECT and that, you know, the shock treatment and all that,
29 all the bad things, you know, there was never a good thing in the hospital in Lake Alice. So
30 yeah, even when, you know, like I used to fight and hurt my hands and I wouldn't go to the
31 hospital, I would get the doctor to come and see me and stitch me up at home because
32 I didn't like the hospital environment because of Lake Alice.

33 **Q.** And it also isolated you from your family, is that right?

34 A. Yes, it did, it did, you know, now that my kids are all grown up and left, I've sort of

1 ostracised myself from my family, I'm a loner, I like myself to be alone, so I, you know, at
2 first it was not to hurt anyone that I love but to, you know, keep to myself, yes.

3 **Q.** You recently about four years ago got in trouble for alcohol-related?

4 **A.** Yes, the alcohol finally caught up with me, drink driving. I got a year in jail, the first adult
5 jail I'd been to, yeah. The last charge of drink driving was 23 years ago and just recently
6 I got sent to jail, you know, yeah. That blew me away because my last charge was 23 years
7 ago for drink driving, I still got jail, yeah, but it was a life lesson to learn what I was doing
8 was wrong.

9 **Q.** And you couldn't believe the sentence you got?

10 **A.** Yeah, I don't eh, you know, there's these boy racers that are going away, you know, taking
11 people's lives, I could have done the same thing too, but, you know, home detention and
12 I got jail after 23 years re-committing the same offence. It's – yeah, yeah.

13 **Q.** And just moving on, you had an interaction, or you had interactions with police officers?

14 **A.** Yeah. The Police didn't like me because I wasn't a very good person. They would tell my
15 mates' parents and that, you know, not to hang out with me because I was bad news. And
16 my mates would tell me what the Police would say to the parents and things like that. So in
17 the end my life was just being a loner and people kept away from me because, yeah, my
18 violence.

19 **Q.** And that links back to what you earlier said, you were getting into all of this trouble?

20 **A.** Yeah.

21 **Q.** But all you needed was support?

22 **A.** Yeah, yeah. Yeah the support was just like seeing a doctor and then reminded me of
23 Dr Leeks, that's what it was, he's just trying to get in here.

24 **Q.** And if I can refer to you paragraph 77, you mention your struggle?

25 **A.** Yes. The first time I, you know, I tried to take my life it was would have been 16 and
26 there's been attempts on my life a few times GRO-C

27 I was lucky I was too scared to take my life in the end. GRO-C

28 GRO-C I struggled with depression, yeah.

29 I struggled with it through my life, it's something I had to carry I think, I shouldn't have had
30 to carry, sorry. You know, I had a bad habit of saying sorry for what, you know, things like
31 that. Now I don't say that anymore.

32 **Q.** As part of your impacts, Leota, you also talk about having hip problems?

33 **A.** Yes, yeah. Some of it's through wear and tear, but I think the injections that I got was

1 probably a Guinness book of records of Paraldehyde on the sides of both of my cheeks of
2 my -- yeah, sides and that, and I had to have two hip replacements in the end, and yeah, like
3 I said, it was, you know, some of it was due to wear and tear, but within two years I had hip
4 replacements, couldn't walk very properly and it affected my way of working and being fit
5 and, yeah, just -- yeah. Yeah, my -- yeah. I'm recovering from my hip replacements. It
6 will be good to get back to work again after seeing -- having to go on a sickness benefit and
7 working all that time and, yeah, it just opened my eyes to the system again. Yeah.

8 **Q.** And just moving on to paragraph 80, you talk about not telling many people about what
9 happened to you.

10 **A.** No, I didn't. I didn't tell anyone what happened to me in Lake Alice, there's only a couple
11 of people, but they were the people that I was in there with that I kept in touch with. Our
12 conversations were, you know, about it, and people would overhear it, but we'd, you know,
13 our code word was Hotel California, you know, and that was our conversation about Lake
14 Alice. It felt like, you know, we couldn't leave that place, we were going to be there
15 forever, but we got out of there, but yeah, it left that mark of us having to carry it, yeah, and
16 try and get through this life.

17 **Q.** You also in your statement you refer to hating the fact that the nurses and the staff got to
18 live happy lives?

19 **A.** Yeah, they did, you know, like it's all right for them, you know, they, you know, they
20 abused us, they had no remorse or anything, they enjoyed it. They could go home at the
21 end of the day, we couldn't, you know, we spent most of our time in bed in the dormitories
22 crying ourselves to sleep. And if not we were drugged up and we don't remember the
23 evening or the day before. Dr Leeks, he's got a lot to answer for, you know, he could go
24 home and, you know, he didn't care about what happened, was happening to us, we were
25 experiments, we were guinea pigs, he just, you know, he got his paper done and handed
26 what they did with us and -- yeah.

27 **Q.** And just moving on, Leota, at paragraph 81 you talk of an aunty who --

28 **A.** Yes, yeah, I had an aunty that didn't know that I had been there and if she had found out
29 that I had been there, she probably would have given my dad a hiding and taken me.
30 And -- but she didn't, so what's happened has happened, you know, no would have could
31 have should have. Yeah, she would have taken me and I think it would have changed my
32 life, I probably would have joined the Army. But yeah, reflecting on that it's no use, you
33 know, I could have been, you know, this and that, but I wasn't, I was just an angry adult
34 then in the end. The people around me --

- 1 **Q.** In education -- sorry to interrupt you.
- 2 **A.** And the people around me that I love I hurt. So yeah. So the fact that I had to go through
3 that, there's a reason why I had to go through it. I'm slowly understanding it now.
- 4 **Q.** And you also mentioned that you lost out on education?
- 5 **A.** Yeah, the education, I would have loved to have an education, but I never got that chance,
6 there's no support and Social Welfare at the time they didn't really care if I got an
7 education, they were just palming me off, you know, they just, yeah. But I ended up
8 getting my own education and I become a chef, London City in Bulls(sic). I love, yeah, it
9 was really good. I was about 40 then, you know, but I was still in the industry, so you
10 know, I just needed that piece of paper and it helped me, yeah, it helped me.
- 11 **Q.** So you started learning life skills and educating yourself --
- 12 **A.** Yes.
- 13 **Q.** -- since that time?
- 14 **A.** I had to, yeah. My two oldest kids went through a lot of violence, but my other girls, they
15 never saw that side of me, so I had changed, you know, I was a lion but only with a bite and
16 that's it.
- 17 **Q.** So that impacted on your children?
- 18 **A.** Yes, it did, but my younger girls never saw the violence, so they only heard it from other
19 family members that, you know, what I was like then back in the day, but that's the past, so
20 I never told them anything about it, you know.
- 21 **Q.** You talk about getting anxious and I understand that that's one of the reasons why there's a
22 screen here today?
- 23 **A.** Yes.
- 24 **Q.** And that's because you're still impacted by what happened at Lake Alice, is that right?
- 25 **A.** Yes, it is, it is, yeah. My day consists of, when I go to Pak'n'Save or, you know, I have to
26 plan it and go there and get what I need and go, come back home to my place, my safe
27 place. If I get it wrong one, I will just -- it will all go to hell and I'll just say -- I'll just go
28 back and re plan it again, so I can't hang around too many people, not a crowd, a big crowd,
29 just yeah, yeah, hence I just -- yeah.
- 30 **Q.** And I must say you are doing really, really well despite your difficulties. You also talk
31 about getting counselling for the --
- 32 **A.** Yes, I'm getting counselling, yeah.
- 33 **Q.** And that's at paragraph 84.
- 34 **A.** At first it was hard to, you know, tell my story to that person, but, yeah.

- 1 **Q.** And why was that hard for you?
- 2 A. The counselling was for my daughter's passing and a lot to do with Lake Alice, **GRO-C**
- 3 **GRO-C** really impacted on me Lake Alice.
- 4 **Q.** But the counselling itself, you mention in your statement that that was difficult for you
- 5 because it reminded you of Lake Alice?
- 6 A. Yes.
- 7 **Q.** Or group therapy, is that correct?
- 8 A. Yeah, it did, it did, yeah. Yeah, but there was no nurses there to punish me, so it was, you
- 9 know --
- 10 **Q.** You eventually got into it?
- 11 A. Yes.
- 12 **Q.** Just moving on, Leota, you did go through a redress process and by that I'm talking about
- 13 the compensation you refer to in paragraph 85?
- 14 A. Yes.
- 15 **Q.** And you also got a letter of apology, is that right?
- 16 A. Yes, yeah, I did. It was good because it was going to feed my family and clothe -- get
- 17 better things for my kids, that's all I looked at. But, you know, like all the money in the
- 18 world is not going to change me, you know, it's not going to take me back to when I was
- 19 that 11 year old kid, you know, that's all I wanted was that awahi, was that skill or was that
- 20 "Are you all right?" You know, "Do you want a hug?" You know?
- 21 But it helped my family there, my kids, my girls, which was all right. Going
- 22 through what I went through there wasn't going to take that away with all the money in the
- 23 world they were going to give me, you know. I still wish I was that little kid, I really do.
- 24 You know, but not in Lake Alice. The, I don't know what you call, the mamae, the hurt
- 25 that's still there, still there. It will always be there. It's like my daughter passing, her
- 26 memory will always be there. But hers is -- yeah.
- 27 **Q.** And you talk about a formal apology in your statement.
- 28 A. Yes, we got a letter of apology, can I say the Prime Minister's name?
- 29 **Q.** **[Nods]**.
- 30 A. Helen Clark. But it didn't feel that, you know, it was "Sorry we did -- what happened
- 31 happened", you know, it didn't feel like it was, you know, yeah, maybe from a Jacinda
- 32 Ardern the Prime Minister now, if she said it I would believe it, because I voted for Labour,
- 33 but yeah, I would believe it because she is sincere as an individual, you know, yeah.

1 **Q.** So what you're saying is the sincerity of it --

2 **A.** Yeah.

3 **Q.** -- is important?

4 **A.** Yeah.

5 **Q.** Looking forward, and I'm at paragraph 88, can you talk to us about your thoughts, about the
6 way children are treated.

7 **A.** Well, the way I was treated kids are still getting treated not like, you know, exactly like
8 this, it's different time but same, excuse the expression, same shit. But, you know, I just
9 couldn't believe it the way I was treated, you know, in Lake Alice and -- I still get angry,
10 I do, it doesn't make me angry that these people could get away with what they did, you
11 know. From what I know now and then, if I -- I probably just would have tried to kill
12 myself there, what they did to me and other kids.

13 **Q.** And just moving on to paragraph 89, Leota.

14 **A.** Yeah. I'm here for the kids that, you know, that were in Lake Alice and to tell our story,
15 that people can hear what happened to us kids and the one person, Dr Leeks, to know that
16 New Zealand knows, the public knows what he did and he should be held accountable for.
17 You know, for what he did to us kids. He should be prosecuted, he should -- yeah, he
18 should be held accountable, he should be prosecuted, he should know that he did wrong,
19 he -- that was the wrong -- that was -- how he treated us kids, you know, just -- it just
20 reminded me of a song that was in the past, "We come in peace, shoot to kill", you know,
21 he just had no remorse, he just thought I'm right and that's it, now he's living the life of
22 Riley over in Australia and, you know, we're still going -- we're carrying that mamae, you
23 know? If it's one time he was on TV it was in the 1980s, just when I saw his face it brought
24 all that mamae, all that hurt. Yeah.

25 The children I think, you know, today need to have caregivers that care, that are
26 parents, guardians and tell our kids every day "I love you, have a great day", you know?
27 They need to feel important, our kids today. Not made to feel dumb, because I know what
28 it's like to be called dumb all the time, because of my education, because of how
29 I conducted myself in society because I looked at -- I was looked at as a dummy and a
30 troublemaker and a -- yeah.

31 **Q.** And also moving on, Leota, you thought it was important for staff or caregivers to be
32 screened?

33 **A.** Yeah, yeah. They should be screened. You know? What's happening to us then is
34 happening now, but in a different way with other carers. They need to be screened, they

1 need to, you know, be able to support these kids, young kids, young teenagers, young kids,
2 you know? So they don't go to places where, you know, it's not good. Yeah. There has to
3 be a better screening of these people that go and take -- be the guardians of teenagers,
4 young people. You know, I didn't have role models, that's what they should be. You
5 know? There was a lot of carers in that place where they walked, you know, they walked
6 the talk but no action, they just went through the motions. We were a piece of paper with a
7 number and passed on. You know, and -- yeah.

8 **Q.** And finally, you talk about the lack of support at home and parenting. Can you tell us
9 about that?

10 **A.** Well, I think everything comes back to, you know, like to where those kids are or to where
11 I was, the parenting, comes back to that, you know, our parents, my dad, my mum who had
12 passed away, he should have had some skills too, you know, but he didn't. And they need
13 those skills, those parenting skills, life skills to bring our kids in a better world, in society.

14 **Q.** And there's also no support for your parents at the time, is that right?

15 **A.** There was no support for my father. Even from his family, you know, he'd just lost his
16 wife, we had just lost our mum, it just -- after we buried our mother there was no family
17 contact after that. But when we were kids and our mother was alive there was family, but
18 when that happened, and, yeah, no support.

19 **Q.** And that links back to what you were saying before, all you needed was to be -- was awhi,
20 to be awhi'd?

21 **A.** Yes.

22 **Q.** And cared for and not to be put into Lake Alice.

23 **A.** Yeah.

24 **Q.** Leota, I thank you for your determination and courage for sharing your story. Before we
25 finish off and I hand it over to the Commissioners, is there anything else that you would
26 like to add? If not then I'll hand it over to the Commissioners.

27 **A.** I was 11 years old and we had people that were in charge of our safety. I was a grieving
28 kid, lost my mum, and all they needed to do was give me a hug and tell "Are you okay? Do
29 you need help? Do you want to talk?" That didn't happen. And yeah, that's it, yeah, that's
30 all I needed. Maybe my life might have gone another way, another journey. But I resigned
31 to the fact the journey I did was for a reason and I think that reason was to come here and
32 speak and tell our story, and that it never happens to any of our kids now in this future now
33 today. I know the past is the past, but yeah, people here need to know. Thank you for
34 listening --

1 **Q.** Thank you Leota.

2 **A.** -- to my story. Alofa atu.

3 **CHAIR:** Thank you. You have asked that we ask no questions and we respect that. So I'm going
4 to thank you. So tēnei te mihi mahana ki a koe e hoa, mō tō kōrero pōuri, tō mōhio, mō ō
5 whakaaro e pā ana ki ngā tamariki o tēnei wā. Tēnei te mihi, tēnei te mihi ki a koe. Leota,
6 on behalf of the Commissioners I want to thank you, and I've just thanked you for your sad
7 story, for your understanding of what has happened to you which you've conveyed and to
8 your thoughts about how children of today should be looked after.

9 I think we all -- we spoke of you in the break and we all acknowledged that you live
10 with your experience in Lake Alice to this very day, we can see you reliving as you're
11 telling. You can smell the smells, you can see the sights and that must be so painful, I can't
12 imagine how painful, but in spite of that, you have shown us enormous tenacity and
13 courage to come and share it, and I think you are a man driven to do that. I'm sorry that
14 that has to be the great aim of your life to tell that terrible story, but let me say it has not
15 been wasted.

16 I also want to acknowledge the presence in the room of the two people you lost,
17 your mother and your daughter. And those life experiences have shaped you and it's quite
18 plain that the grief that you've suffered as a result of their loss has been terrible and has had
19 consequences.

20 And the last thing I want to say is that I am -- on behalf of us all, so deeply sorry
21 that you were so badly let down by so many agencies, your own family, the education
22 system who turned you away when you tried to get an education, the justice system that
23 locked you up, the Police who bad-mouthed you and didn't see a troubled kid but a bad kid,
24 the Social Welfare who should have been there caring for a child in need, there are
25 probably more who let you down. But I want to say that we have heard what you've said,
26 we've listened very carefully and we thank you deeply for the courage that you've had to
27 come today and to share it with us, and I hope that in some small way this experience will
28 be something that will help you maybe just make life a little bit more bearable. And again,
29 ngā mihi mahana ki no, piripono, kua noho ana. Thank you to your two supporters who
30 have sat there and supported you throughout. Now I understand that you have a song.

31 **A.** It's a song my mum used to sing to me when -- it would get me to sleep after I had a bottle
32 of Coke or something and I'd be hōhā to her.

33 **Q.** I hope you're not going to put us to sleep, I hope it's going to wake us up.

34 **A.** It was real Coke too.

1 **Q.** Is there somebody from the audience who's going to set us off on this? It's worth standing
2 up for this song.

3 **[You Are My Sunshine song]**

4 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Malie fa'afetai lava Leota, malo soifua maua.

5 **CHAIR:** Thank you, please feel free now to leave, we just have some housekeeping matters. We
6 have 15 minutes, do you wish to embark on the next witness or how would you like to
7 manage it? Take some time.

8 **MR POHIVA:** Perhaps if we can take a break now and then we can come back --

9 **CHAIR:** Take the lunch break now you mean?

10 **MR POHIVA:** [Nods]. We can come back earlier.

11 **CHAIR:** So if we come back at, say, 2?

12 **MR POHIVA:** Yes, or quarter to.

13 **CHAIR:** I'm going to tell the world what's happening.

14 **MR POHIVA:** 2 is fine.

15 **CHAIR:** I have a Covid injection and I am told that having got there I have to wait there for about
16 20 minutes before I'm allowed out, so I will get back as soon as I possibly can. So let's say
17 we'll start just before 2 or as soon as I can get back, how's that.

18 **MR POHIVA:** Thank you.

19 **CHAIR:** All right, enjoy your lunch everybody.

20 **Lunch adjournment from 12.45 pm to 2.02 pm**

21 **CHAIR:** Welcome back everybody to the afternoon session of today. And hello Ms Va'ai.

22 **MS VA'AI:** Malo le soifua Madam Chair. Our next witness, his name is Mr TY, he's seated here
23 with his family. I also acknowledge his wife and his grandson who are also in the public
24 gallery. Mr TY is an anonymous witness and the way that he would like to present his
25 evidence today is by reading parts of his statement which he provided to the Royal
26 Commission and only answering a few questions and for the parts where he's reading there
27 are some redactions and for those words that need to be redacted he will be replacing them
28 with other words just so we're abiding by the general restriction orders. And I'd also like to
29 acknowledge the fact that there are parts of Mr TY's story that he would rather not speak
30 about in detail today, however he has shown immense courage by being here today and he's
31 grateful for the opportunity to share his story. Thank you.

32 **MR TY**

33 **CHAIR:** We acknowledge that courage, Mr TY, thank you very much indeed for coming today.
34 And before we start I'll just ask you to take the affirmation, all right? Do you solemnly,