

Witness Name: GRO-A Mr EH

Statement No.: WITN1045001

Dated: 19.04.2022

ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

WITNESS STATEMENT OF GRO-A Mr EH

I, GRO-A Mr EH states as follows: -

Introduction

1. My full name is GRO-A Mr EH, I am known as GRO-A Mr EH, I was born GRO-A 1943 in Mangare.
2. I currently reside in GRO-A.
3. This statement discusses my time in multiple foster homes and Ōwairaka Boys' Home while in the care of the state.

Early life and childhood

4. Before I was born my family was already under the attention of Social Welfare. My mother was GRO-B, she was never there for any of us and my father was GRO-B. My father was a drinker, he hardly worked. I was the fourth youngest in a family of 15: eight boys and six girls. The eldest is my

sister who is now 91, [GRO-B]. She was the matriarch of the family. I have four brothers, my oldest sister and another half-sister still alive.

5. I have only small recollection of my life at home before entering care. I remember all the kids had to sleep in one bed, but there were not enough blankets. I have one memory from when I was very little of running around with no clothes on, just a singlet.
6. I don't remember anything violent happening at home. We must not have had much food. I used to eat out of the horse trough owned by Mr [GRO-B] our neighbour. I would see him going to feed his horses and I would try and beat the horse to the food. It would be scraps of apples and cucumbers.
7. My father hardly worked, he had to pay five pounds a month as maintenance for us. My mother was having an affair with another man who was from the Salvation Army. The man already had five children from his own family. When my mother one more child, my father allowed three younger brothers of mine to be adopted, but he wouldn't let me be adopted. I think this was because he wanted me to be with him, and possibly he suspected that the other boys were not his - the two youngest ones didn't look like [GRO-A]. To me even today, I don't think they are my full brothers. My brothers who were adopted had quite a good life.

Entry into Care

8. There was social welfare involvement with my family in 1942, before I was born. I know there were concerns that my parents wouldn't be able to look after us. The situation at home was reviewed every year, sometimes it was okay and other times the comments would suggest the place was a mess and the kids were not well fed.

9. In June 1946, there was an investigation by Child Welfare following a complaint made about my family. The Superintendent of the Child Welfare Division approved the committal of the children in my family to the care of the state, if conditions in our home did not improve. I think it was a poor housing situation and possibly there was some neglect on the part of my parents.
10. In October 1947, there were complaints regarding our living circumstances. At that time, committal of the children was recommended and approved. Then, in November 1947, according to my records, the children were placed on legal supervision for a year. I was still living with my parents at this point.
11. On 23 March 1949, when I was five years old, a complaint action was taken by Child Welfare, and I was committed to the care of the Superintendent of Child Welfare. That was when I entered state care and became a ward of the state, other people would call us "inmates".
12. Apparently, my uncle down in Huntly had wanted to adopt me. He had taken me for a while when I was a baby. That didn't happen because my dad didn't want him to take me. I'm not sure what my dad's attachment to me was, we looked similar though. We both had dark features. I know my father was good to me. Later, he would bring me lollies and see me on a farm in GRO-B.
13. I think my brother might have gone into care before I did. I remember him telling me that he had got two and sixpence from Mr Skuse, a social worker. I don't know whether my three younger brothers were adopted before or after I went into care. I don't recall them being at home, perhaps they went into care before me.

Life in Care

Girls' Home - GRO-B

(23 March 1949 – 11 May 1949)

14. When I was five and a half years old I was moved to [GRO-B]. I only found out later on in life where I was I was put. I was only put there because I couldn't go to a boys' home because I was too young, so they put me in a girls' home.
15. The girls would do things like put sheets over their heads and light candles to pretend to be ghosts. It was really scary to a young boy.
16. Life there was terrible. They were bad girls a lot of them. They weren't good, they used to punch and fight. I used to get scared. They'd fight at dinner, they would throw food in front of each other. The girls would fight in front of me and it was scary.

Sexual abuse

17. I was sexually abused there by a couple of older girls. The first night in the home I was in bed, and I was asleep. When I woke up they were in my bed and playing with me. There were about 12 girls in that dormitory. I just woke up in the morning and I was lying on the floor, I didn't want to move or do anything. The girls had fondled me and done bad things to me.
18. This would happen every couple of nights. I would cry and I used to run down the back of the section where the home was and climb a tree and sit up there and try and hide from what was happening. Then they would call me and say, 'Where's [GRO-B-A Mr EH], They'd tease me and say 'he's up the tree, he's like a monkey'. I tried to raise it, but I was ignored.

Physical abuse

19. Treatment from the staff wasn't good either. [GRO-B] would yell at me and pull my hair. I recall being manhandled by the staff and slapped and knocked around. They fed us horrible food: tripe and onions, smoked fish and milk.

20. My social worker at the time was Mrs Wishart. I preferred the social welfare women, the men were too rough. I used to wish Mrs Wishart was my mother, she was kind.

Mr and Mrs Christina [GRO-B] Foster Home – [GRO-C]

(11 May 1949 – 5 March 1950)

21. My first foster home was in [GRO-C]. Mrs [GRO-B] was the woman who ran the home. Mr [GRO-B], her husband, also lived there and they had a boarder. I don't remember his name.

22. I attended [GRO-C] Primary School while I lived with the [GRO-B].

Physical abuse

23. Mrs [GRO-B] passed away later on while I was there, but she used to physically abuse me. She would lock me in the room with a little fox terrier and the cat. The cat and dog would fight, and I couldn't get out because she would lock the door. I tried to look after the cat and stop all that by throwing the cat out the window. But I got scratched and it was frightening. These things I remember, and they stay with you.

Sexual abuse

24. The boarder in the home tried to sexually abuse me. I told him to leave me alone and I would tell him to get away. He would say things like "jump over here and I'll feel you boy". I used to poke my tongue out at him and run away, he would grab me and try to pull me in. I tried kicking him, it was bad. He would have lollies and things like that. One time he grabbed hold of me, I knew what that was about because I had already had that experience.

Leaving the home

25. Mrs [GRO-B] died on [GRO-C]. I was the one who found her. I remember going into the room yelling something like “welfare is here”. I went over to touch her, and she didn’t move. I had heard Mr Skuse say that Mrs [GRO-B] had cancer and that she was dying.
26. She had wanted to adopt me, I think Mr Skuse tried to stop it. My father came to the house the same time as welfare and I imagine that he would have stopped that. I was glad about that.
27. After Mrs [GRO-B] died, I was placed in Ōwairaka from 5 March until 27 March 1950.

[GRO-B-1]
[GRO-B-2] Foster Home – [GRO-C], Auckland

(27 March 1950 – 7 April 1952)

28. I lived with [GRO-B-1] and [GRO-B-2] at [GRO-C]. They had a son, same age as me his name was also [GRO-B-3]. I called him [GRO-B-3].
29. Mrs [GRO-B-1] was an ex-school teacher. She was nice. I found [GRO-B-2] a bit of a hard man. Later in life though, [GRO-B-2] wrote to the Social Welfare Department in relation to me. He wrote a letter to Social Welfare at the time explaining about me being sexually abused. I never knew about it at the time, but I saw the letter later on.
30. I don’t recall Social welfare ever visiting me in the time I lived there.
31. While I was living with the [GRO-B-1]
[GRO-B-2] I got sick and ended up in hospital for about three weeks with appendicitis.

Physical abuse

32. In the time I lived there, if I did something wrong then [GRO-B-2] would get us in the shed, boxing gloves on, and hold me for his son to punch me. I used to try and punch back but I couldn’t. I was only a small boy, I wasn’t very big, and he

was quite a big solid boy. I would end up with a blood nose. The son was about a year younger than me.

Leaving the [GRO-B-1
GRO-B-2]

33. Eventually the [GRO-B-1
GRO-B-2] shifted to Helensville and they didn't want me to go with them. They reckoned there was no room, so they got rid of me. I'm glad they didn't want me. Mrs [GRO-B-1] stated that she would gladly have me back. If welfare had followed that up, I think I would have stayed with them permanently.

[GRO-B] *Foster Home* - [GRO-B], *Auckland*

(7 April 1952 – 12 June 1952)

34. The [GRO-B] owned a manufacturing business making [GRO-C] [GRO-C] which was a [GRO-B]. I think they were French. The father's name was [GRO-B-4].

35. They had a boy who was older than me. I told the boy things that had happened to me and he would laugh at me. He told his father what had happened to me.

36. I attended [GRO-B] Primary School while I lived in this home.

Sexual abuse

37. Mr [GRO-B-4] sexually abused me a couple of times. He attempted to sodomise me, but I got away. One night I was in bed, and he come in and he said to me to hop up, take my clothes off, my pyjamas off. I said I was cold, so I didn't want to. He sat me on his knee, and he started fondling me, and told me that he liked me and that I was a good boy and all this sort of thing. That time there was no penetration or anything, he tried to though. I tried to hit him as hard as

I could, and I just ran outside and stayed outside all night. I just stayed out there; I didn't go back inside.

Social welfare involvement

38. The next day after that happened, I told Mr Skuse, my welfare officer, because he came over. He said 'We better get you out of here'. But nothing ever happened to those people that did that to me. Mr Skuse should've acted on it and done something about it.

39. I think it might have been two or three weeks until I got out of the GRO-B home. I pretended that I got sick, and I wanted to go to hospital. I thought by me doing this I would be able to get out and then I could run away from hospital, but it didn't happen like that.

40. I still had two social welfare officers at the time: Mr Skuse and Miss Wishart. Miss Wishart didn't come to see me though, Mr Skuse was the main welfare officer. Mr Skuse was also a welfare officer for my brother, I found out later on. My brother had got along well with him. Mr Skuse treated him good, but he didn't treat me good. He used to pull my hair. I was told I was pretty cheeky.

Ōwairaka Boys' Home

(12 June – 22 August 1952)

41. From the GRO-B I went to the boys' home in Ōwairaka and that was just as bad as being in a foster home. I was illtreated in the boys' home. There were 14- or 15-year-old boys in there. I was nine years old, only a young kid.

42. I went to Ōwairaka School while I was there and everyday welfare would walk us to school and back to the home again. We would also have to walk home for lunch. Backwards and forwards all day this would go on. We had nice

clean clothes to wear to school. If we ever tried to tell the teachers about what was happening, we would be told to shut up.

43. If we did something wrong, we used to have to cut firewood with a saw, this was the hardest task, and we would have to do it every day for about an hour. We had to cut firewood in bare feet, and I recall having blisters on my feet. We had to have cold showers as punishment. There were also other tasks we had to do like weeding the garden, washing windows, polishing floors, and cleaning showers.

44. One time I jumped out a window and ran away. I got found by the police the next day and brought back, to be belted up again. After running away, I was locked in the dormitory for a week, only allowed out for meals. During that time, I had nothing to do, I wasn't allowed to go to school. We were punished for trying to run away or other misbehaviour.

Physical abuse

45. The other punishment we had regularly was getting tapped with a piece of wood on the backside of our legs. It would be hard enough that I was left with welts and bleeding on my legs. Mr Ricketts was the one who always did it.

46. One day, Mr Ricketts took us for a walk up Mt Albert. We had eaten monkey apples from the trees up the mount, and when we got back, we were punished by having to drinking warm Epsom salts. I couldn't drink it, so they got a teapot and tipped it down my throat. I vomited like hell. I just felt at the time that I wanted to die. I didn't want to carry on.

47. We were put in boxing rings with older boys, and they would beat the younger ones up. Staff would put us in the boxing ring and would make us fight.

48. I made one good friend, GRO-B He and I would try and stick up for each other. That stopped another couple of boys bullying me.

49. There was a kind staff member called Mrs Swan. She used to run into Mr Rickett's office when he hit us and tell him to stop. She said that if she didn't work there, she would've taken me to live with her.

50. The other staff, the people who looked after us, I don't think they would have had children of their own. They would beat us and bang our heads into walls. Sometimes I would be walking and suddenly my head would be hit into the wall. We were never looked after properly. I remember having cracks between my toes and sores.

51. The food was terrible at Ōwairaka. We were given tripe, swedes and parsnip. They would make you sit until you ate it or they would spoon it down your throat. We would have one piece of bread in the morning with a little bit of butter. There wasn't enough food to eat.

Complaint to social welfare

52. I told the welfare officers what was happening to me. I complained to Mr Skuse, he was my welfare officer at the time, and Miss Wishart. She helped me to try and get over it, but I wasn't in touch with her enough. She wasn't allowed to, I don't think. Mr Skuse was the main welfare officer, and he would just tell me to shut up and give me a clip on the head.

53. I left Ōwairaka when someone decided that they wanted me. They used to line us up, people would come in and look at you and see if they wanted you.

Holiday with the [GRO-B] Family

(22 August – 5 September 1952)

54. I lived with the [GRO-B]'s for three weeks. It was the best part of my life that, of being in care. The lady was a beautiful lady, she was a lovely lady.

55. Up near the house, the big motorway was being built, that was first part at [GRO-B] which was very close to us. The [GRO-B]'s son and I would go up there and play all the time, and the men up on the bulldozers used to give us lunch. We used to have a good time up there. That was the best holiday I've ever, ever had in my life, to get away from all this abuse.

56. I wish they would've taken me, but it was just a holiday. I don't know what that meant. Maybe Welfare decided that I'd had enough of the boys' home, and they gave me a bit of a rest, but I went back to the boys' home again.

Return to Ōwairaka and other foster homes

(5 September – 10 October 1952)

57. During this period, I just kept going back and forth either in foster care or back at Ōwairaka. I didn't want to go back to the boys' home, but I was only a child, so I didn't really understand what was happening to me.

58. I would try and run away. I'd always get caught though. I hid in a hedge for two days. A lady found me and took me back to her house. She made me a drink of cocoa and some biscuits. She asked where I was from and I told her, Ōwairaka. She rang the police because they'd been looking for me. I was taken back to the boys' home again after that.

[GRO-B-5] and [GRO-B-6] *Foster Home* - [GRO-C]

(10 October 1952 – 30 June 1954)

59. I lived with the [GRO-B-5
GRO-B-6] for nearly two years. I was placed there by social welfare when I was 10 years old.

60. [GRO-B-6] was a [GRO-C]. He had his own [GRO-C] company with his brother, [GRO-C]. They would take dairy and cattle. [GRO-B-6] and

[GRO-B-5] had three children: two boys and a girl. He had been in the army, in the war. I think he had some PTSD. He cared for his kids more than he cared for me. I was just a welfare boy.

61. I attended [GRO-B] primary and I think my record was pretty good. I loved going to school.

Neglect and psychological abuse

62. I didn't like the place because my bedroom was in a shed outside, even though there was a room in the house I could have slept in. I had no light out there and I only had the outside toilet. They had one inside, but I wasn't allowed in the house. I wasn't allowed to sit down in the sitting room by the fire or anything. I was sent outside to my room like a prison.

63. At night-time, I was so frightened. I had to get out of bed to go down this footpath to the toilet downstairs, outside toilet.

64. I used to go bird nesting, I used to love little birds, I still love birds today. One day I saw this nest had little birds in it and I thought that they were going to die because they were cold, that the mother might've left. I took these little birds home with me. I got some worms to feed them, but they were half dead anyway. I tried to warm them up, so I went to bed that night and I put them in bed with me. That was the worst thing I could have done. I must've rolled on top of them, killed the whole lot, squashed them, and there was a big mess on the bed. Mrs [GRO-B-5] asked if I pooped the bed, and I didn't dare tell her. Eventually she guessed, and when I told her what they were, I got another beating for that. Then I started peeing the bed. I couldn't help it. I just couldn't stop peeing the bed.

65. I was so frightened, and I couldn't sleep at night. The thoughts of what's going to happen to me or what I've done wrong that day would be told. When I

started peeing the bed, Mrs [GRO-B-5] came in with a bit of string and told me if I don't behave myself, she'll tie my penis up. That made me more frightened.

66. I don't remember much about the food, but I must have got hungry because I would sometimes eat the dog meat. Can't have been fed enough.

Work and exploitation

67. At the [GRO-B-5] [GRO-B-6]s one of my duties, at ten years old, was to go down to the [GRO-C]s farm with an empty billy and get the milk. I would then walk back up to home again, rain, hail, or snow. It was about half a mile and I would do it in bare feet. It was out of [GRO-C], out the back way to [GRO-C], through up over the [GRO-B] Hills and down in [GRO-C]. It was all metal roads those days.

68. Every morning, before I went to school, I used to have to do all my duties and get the milk. When I got home, I was to get the coal in, do the firewood, feed the dog and the chooks. I was a slave.

Physical Abuse

69. [GRO-B-6] was a drunkard, he used to drink a lot. He would physically abuse me, it wasn't sexual.

70. There was an incident one day when I went wanted to go to the toilet but didn't want to rush back to the house. So, I had to pee against the building. Mrs [GRO-B-5] son told Mrs [GRO-B-5] that I was flashing. I think he told his mother I was showing my penis to his sister. They said I was sexually involved with her, and it was because of my past, I wasn't though. Mr [GRO-B-6] called me over. He had come home half drunk and he was told the story. He went to the bathroom and told me to stand where I was and take all my clothes off. He went and got his big leather strap. He come out and he just let me have it over the back. It was so painful. He just kept strapping me and saying I wasn't to do that again.

71. It must have been one of those razor straps because I was bleeding. He had hit my bum, testicles, legs and back. I was sore and swollen all over. I was really beaten and he also kicked me. Eventually, his wife told him to stop.

72. I couldn't go anywhere, so I was told to just take my clothes and go back to my room where the chook house was. I had to wash in the tubs outside the washhouse. I thought to myself as a child, that was cruel.

73. Mrs [GRO-B-7] who lived down the road, took care of me after. I think she might have rung the social welfare department.

74. I think I ran down there after it happened, and she might have rung the Social Welfare Department.

75. It wasn't just that once, though. Mr [GRO-B-6] used to beat the hell out of me all the time. I would say it was once a week. So, I'd retaliate all the time. I'd misbehave a lot, but I did it because of what he was doing to me, I just I couldn't stand it there. Every time he hit me it was fists, kicking, razor strap. It was for things like forgetting the milk. Would have to write out 500 lines: "I must not forget", and then he would beat me.

76. I moved from there because they reckoned I was bad to the daughter [GRO-B-] I was not to be placed around anymore homes where there was a girl.

Complaint to social welfare

77. Mr Skuse visited and I told him what was happening to me. I showed him the marks on my back. I'm not sure what happened after that.

[GRO-B-7]S - [GRO-C]

(30 June 1954 – 14 July 1954)

78. I went to stay with the [GRO-B-7]'s because the [GRO-B-5
GRO-B-6] went on a holiday. The [GRO-B-5
GRO-B-6]s didn't want to take me with them, because I was a "bad boy". Mrs

[GRO-B-5] got fed up with me not doing as I was told. I didn't like her, and I would tell her to her face. They said I was becoming a "sexually inclined child". So, then they put me down the road with Mrs [GRO-B-7]. The [GRO-B-7]s were good people.

Mr and Mrs [GRO-B-8]
[GRO-B-9] Foster Home – [GRO-B]

(17 January 1955 – 28 December 1959)

79. When I was 12 years old, I lived with [GRO-B-8] and [GRO-B-9] in [GRO-B]. I lived with them for about three or four years. They had two boys of their own: [GRO-B-10], who was 18, and [GRO-B-11], who was about 12. The boys didn't have to help out like I had to. I had a lot of trouble with [GRO-B-11] as we were about the same age. We used to fight, but that is natural with kids, I think. He was never asked to do anything.

80. I thought they were good otherwise. They'd had Welfare children before, [GRO-B] was one of them, and he was a nice boy too. [GRO-B] was also a ward of the state. Mrs [GRO-B-8] had wanted to look after her own brother who was a ward of the state, but apparently she wasn't allowed to. In those days, they didn't make effort to place children with their family. That's how they got rid of you. The people who took us on, they got one pound, seven shillings and sixpence a week, for looking after us. I remember that vividly.

81. Only one thing went wrong there, was going swimming in the water hole and the boys threw me in off the waterfall into the pool. I couldn't swim very well. The waterfall was about a mile down the road, and I nearly drowned that day, I was gasping when I got out. They came and pulled me out in the end, and I told Mrs [GRO-B-8] what happened, and she said, 'Oh, that's kids' stuff.' Well kids' stuff is kids' stuff I suppose.

82. While I was living with the GRO-B-8 GRO-B-9 on 12 January 1959, I commenced work at GRO-B Grocery Store in GRO-B I was 15 and paying my rent then, not Social Welfare. I was working with Mr Stewart in the shop and boarding with Mrs GRO-B-8 where I was helping with the cows as well. I wanted farm work, I didn't want enclosed work.

83. I was also attending school - I went to GRO-B Primary School.

84. Social Welfare wanted me to stay there. I didn't want to stay there, I wanted to go and do my own thing. I was starting to feel that I was just about ready to go and do my own work.

Unpaid labour

85. The GRO-B-8 GRO-B-9 lived on a little farmlet and they had a market garden and 10 cows. I was a slave. I would have to get up in the mornings and before school I'd have to go and milk the cows by hand before, put the cream out, feed the pigs, have breakfast, get ready, and then go to school. It was the same thing at night again: go and get the cows in, milk the cows again.

86. I had to do the market garden, which was about an acre. We would weed the onions and had to do the potatoes. I think that part of my life was a learning curve for me to be there.

Physical abuse

87. I know Mrs GRO-B-8 was a good lady and we actually got on well. Mrs GRO-B-8 was like a mother to me. She cared and she was nice to me. However, she did beat me up a couple of times – when I said I wasn't going to milk the cows. I said I wanted her son to help, and he wouldn't, but she slapped me with a stick around the legs. I didn't receive any abuse from GRO-B-9.

88. Every time we had a bath I would have to go and wash the older son, [GRO-B-10]s back. He would leave the water in and tell me to get in after him. The sons would have a bath with fresh water.

89. Mrs [GRO-B-8] wanted me out of the way, to go to camp. Social Welfare paid for it. I went to the YMCA Camp Hunua for two weeks on 17 January 1956. When I left, Mrs [GRO-B-8] got another boy from Aitutaki. After that, I had a brief holiday with a Mrs [GRO-B] who lived in Naenae. I caught the train all the way down the North Island to get there. I remember it being a good holiday.

Middlemore Hospital Admission

(November – December 1958)

90. I was admitted to Middlemore Hospital in November 1958. I had torn cartilage and a growth in my shin bone. The doctors took that off and they removed the cartilage out of my knee.

Foster Home with Mr [GRO-B-12] – [GRO-B]

(28 December 1959 – 22 December 1960)

91. I had wanted to go on a farm, so Social Welfare found me this farm up north to go onto. Welfare put me on the bus and sent me there. I was picked up by Mr [GRO-B-12] right before the [GRO-B] Forest – [GRO-C] they called it.

92. Mr [GRO-B-12] was my boss. He was disabled from the waist down and he couldn't walk. He had crutches and he used to drag his legs. Mr [GRO-B-12] had a wife. She had been a schoolteacher and she was an old battle-ax.

Unpaid labour

93. They had a farm which was 500 acres with 1000 sheep, about 200 cattle. I had to do the shepherding of the sheep and lambing the ewes. Mr [GRO-B-12] would tell me what to do and I'd do it. I was the only helper on the farm and I had to do the whole lot.
94. Because of his disability, Mr [GRO-B-12] needed extra help. When I felt like Mr [GRO-B-12] wanted to go to the toilet, I would have to help him off the tractor because he used to pee his pants because he couldn't control himself. This was part of my job at 16 and a half years old. I would have to get him onto the ground so he could do what he wanted to do, and then I had to lift him back onto the tractor and get him in. Eventually Mr [GRO-B-12] let me drive the tractor, but I hated going on it.
95. There was an accident that happened that really impacted me. One day Mr [GRO-B-12] told me to go and do the sheep, or something like that. Later on, he came screaming towards me on the tractor, and the tractor actually went over the bank, and tipped him off way down this gully. I couldn't do anything. I said, 'Well, you stay here. I'll go and get help. You wait here'. I wasn't going to get him back up the hill, and I couldn't get the tractor out, it was stuck, but he made me tie a rope around him so that I could try and winch him up with the tractor.
96. I got him up the top and he was all bleeding, it was horrible. I got him to lean over me and walk all the way back up the fence line so I could get him home. It took me about half a day and I had to drag him. When we got there, Mrs [GRO-B-12] told me off, gave me a slap over the face, 'Why didn't you come back home and get help?'. I said I couldn't leave him because he might have died down there. It was pretty scary, I was only a young boy.

97. I used to have to kill sheep. I love animals and I never wanted to hurt an animal. I had to learn how to kill a sheep and skin it for the food. I'd have to kill a sheep once a fortnight.

98. My other jobs included rounding up the sheep, milking the house cow, lambing, fencing, getting the bales of hay and feeding all the cattle. I'd have to do everything. I was a slave.

99. I was only getting four pound two and eight a week. I wanted to work on a sheep farm, but I didn't know that I was going to be put on the farm with a man who was disabled. But social welfare knew, because they had put a boy there before me, and had also put a boy there after me. Later in life, in the Army, I met the boy who was there after me. We realised that we had very similar experiences.

100. I had to wash my own clothes, do my own ironing if I was going to go out. I couldn't wash my own clothes properly, because I wasn't allowed to use the washing machine and I had to use the tub.

101. I wasn't allowed inside the house itself. I had a bedroom in the house, but I wasn't allowed into any other part of the house, except the kitchen. I would eat in my room and listen to the radio. My bedroom was a real mess, I'd throw the clothes in the corner and wait until I could wash them. I think I was too untidy for them.

Physical abuse

102. Other than working me, Mr GRO-B-12 didn't treat me well. He would whack me with his walking sticks.

Engagement with Social Welfare

103. I still had visits from my Social Welfare Officer in Whangārei. I can't remember his name. I didn't like him because he used to tell me to pull my

head in and shut up and do the work. I was visited about four times in the year I was there. I was ignored and just told to get on with my job and that I was a naughty boy.

104. While I was at [GRO-B-12]'s farm, I used to go off to parties. I wanted to get away from there, so I went with this Māori boy down the road. He was a nice fellow, [GRO-B]. I remember him quite vividly. I bought a little motor scooter. I wasn't supposed to have it, but that was my freedom. I used to scoot around to his place on it, and at night time the father used to drink beer, sometimes they would give me some. They had guitars going and singing Māori songs, waiata and all that. I used to love doing it. I'd get home about two in the morning.

105. I eventually made myself so unpopular at the [GRO-B-12]'s that they got rid of me. They achieved their purpose by using me for cheap labour.

106. My welfare officer was from Whangarei. He said I had to stay, but I told him I was going to leave. Then, from 30 November until 16 December 1960, I was admitted to [GRO-B] Hospital for an operation. That's when Mr [GRO-B-12] realised he couldn't run the farm without me, and they had to get someone else in. I was kicked out. Apparently I was sacked because my room was a mess. I got sent back to Mrs [GRO-B-8] and all my things were there when I got there.

[GRO-B-13] *Foster Home - Miranda*

(22 December 1960 – 29 December 1960)

107. I went to do some temporary work on a farm in Miranda. That was hard too. I hadn't been on farms that milked cows with the proper milking machines, so I had to learn that. I only knew how to milk a cow by hand.

Physical abuse

108. I wasn't treated well. I used to be given a hiding and he would kick me. I was only there for a week.

Mrs GRO-B-8

(11 May 1961 – 19 May 1961)

109. I stayed with the GRO-B-8 GRO-B-9 for a week. I think I was sent back there because I needed a break after working on the farm for a year.

GRO-B-14 – Pukeno

(29 December 1960 – 1 June 1961)

110. GRO-B-14 was good to me; he was a good man. He wanted me to go to the South Island with him to do agricultural work. He reckoned I was a good tractor driver, so he wanted me to go with him. I refused to go though because I didn't want to leave the area I was from.

GRO-B-15 Farm – GRO-B

(1 June 1961 – 22 August 1961)

111. I worked on the GRO-B-15's Farm for a couple of months it was run by Mr GRO-B-16, but Mrs GRO-B-15 was supposed to be my caregiver.

Unpaid labour

112. It was a sheep and cattle farm. They tried to give me work which was not healthy.

Neglect

113. I never got any food. They used to starve me. Mrs GRO-B-15 who was supposed to look after me, was never there and she used to be a secretary to

[GRO-C] Some person in an office, I think she was a politician. Mrs [GRO-B-15] was always in Auckland and then would stay the night in Auckland, so I'd go without food for a couple of days, not being fed. The house was locked, so I couldn't get into the house. Mr [GRO-B-16] said he wasn't paid to look after me, so he wouldn't feed me.

114. My social welfare officer wrote at the time that I wasn't being fed. His name was E.D Hodder. He was alright, he was from [GRO-B]

Final years in state care

115. In August 1961 I started working at the [GRO-C] sawmill. I had a friend who worked there, and I thought this was an escape from Welfare. There was a man who was a school teacher who was supposed to bank my money, he was a friend of Mr Hodder's. I'd give him the money to bank and I don't know how he banked it or anything. This was arranged by Mr Hodder. I was working, and I was getting about 11 pounds a week, and I'd keep my pocket money. I used to work a lot of overtime on Saturdays. I gave him six pounds per week to bank, and I'd keep four pounds for myself. I had to pay board up there in the sawmill. I had a little hut with a room. Although he was a schoolteacher, and he was supposed to be a trusted man, I never saw a bank book, or anything. Then I ran away from there. I don't know what happened to the money.

116. I was 18 years old, but I was still a ward of the State. I don't know why they reckoned that I wasn't secure enough to be on my own. All I wanted to do was be on my own. I tried to run away from the Welfare, but every time I ran away they'd catch me. I don't know how they did it.

117. Soon I ran away to [GRO-C]. On 27 October 1961 I started working at the [GRO-C] Dairy Factory, but that only lasted a couple of weeks. I was getting restless. I got into a bit of trouble in [GRO-C]
118. On 4 December 1961, when I was nearly 19 years old, I started working for [GRO-C] in Auckland. I was still a ward of the state. I knew then that I wanted to do was just be on my own.
119. I pinched a car and got put into Waikeria. I had a whole lot of tattoos done and I ended up with an infection. I went to hospital to get it checked, but when I got back the carers told me to get lost.
120. I then decided to go to Whakatane because I had a sister there, [GRO-B]. She lived in [GRO-C] Street in Whakatane, so I went to see her. I was kicked out of there as well, by her husband. I wasn't welcome there. I took a mate of mine with me and that's what upset [GRO-B]'s husband, I think because he thought that there was something going on between my friend and [GRO-C]
121. I got a job in Whakatane, but it didn't suit me so I decided to go hitchhiking. I was going to go somewhere, I didn't care where it was, I just wanted to go.
122. I got to Wairoa, and I went to stay in this boarding house. I needed to pay before I stayed there. I had a watch so I gave them the watch as security as I only had 20 pounds. But it wasn't my watch, it belonged to someone else, I'd pinched it. The boy that I pinched it off complained to the police that I'd stolen a watch. These people rang them up, cos it had his name on the back, it wasn't my name that I gave them, so they rang the police.
123. In the morning I didn't get the watch back. I started hitchhiking back to where I came from, and I got about halfway back I think and the police car stopped, picked me up, and said that I was a naughty boy. 'Are you the one

that we're looking for from Wairoa?' I said, 'Oh, probably.' The police took me back. They charged me with being idle and disorderly and obtaining credit by fraud. A big lot of hoo-ha over a watch.

124. I got locked up for three weeks in Whakatane and welfare put me to work on a farm in [GRO-C], just out of Whakatane. I hardly ever got paid there. I was on probation, and I was still under supervision with Child Welfare. The guy that employed me, he was a sharemilker. He was a Korean War veteran, and he was quite nasty to me. He used to skip milking and take off and go gambling, so I'd have to do all the farm work. Another one of these slaves again, but no money coming in. I was supposed to be paid the money out by the farmer, enough to allow me to catch a bus to Napier.

125. That's when I ran away from there as well. I hitchhiked to Napier and got my own job working on the gasworks and repairing gas counters.

126. Then I met my first wife, when I was 19 years old. She was a Māori girl from up north, a [GRO-B] from the [GRO-B] [GRO-B] was her uncle.

127. She told me she was pregnant, and I didn't know what to do. Her mother said to me I had to marry her daughter because she was pregnant. I said I couldn't because I had no money.

128. I went to the courthouse in Napier to see the probation officer, I was on probation at the time. I asked for the money that welfare had been holding for me. I said that I was old enough and wanted my money. The officer told me that there was only 100 pounds in the bank. After all those years.

129. I know the [GRO-B] placement wasn't banking my money. He gave me my hundred pounds, 99 pounds actually. He told me he didn't want to see me again.

130. So, I got married. That lasted 10 years. We didn't have any biological children. As it turned out, she wasn't pregnant at all, I was tricked. We adopted a child later.

131. When I got married, I was discharged from welfare (Notice of discharge from Child Welfare, 26 April 1962 [ORT0002729_00002]). I was 19 years old. I needed permission from my mother because I was under 21. My mother said I could put the suit on her account, it was 20 pounds. I later got a letter from her lawyer and she was suing me for the money.

Life after care

Relationships

132. After I got married, I had a period in my life that I couldn't settle down. I was in a stage of my life that was just lost. I felt so lost. I felt like killing myself at that time, because I didn't know what I was doing.

133. The marriage didn't last, and I went and did my own thing. I have had two other marriages – been married three times in total. I couldn't settle down. I think where I fell down, was that I had no mother figure. I had no one to care, no one to love me and no one to guide me.

134. I ran away to the Cook Islands and had a couple of relationships. I then went to live in Samoa and worked there for a year. I married a woman, and we adopted her [GRO-B]'s son, [GRO-B] [GRO-B]

[GRO-B]

135 [GRO-B]

GRO-B

136. I had a good friend, an GRO-B, called GRO-B. He was a great friend of mine, he would tell me I could stay with him. I was really beaten up by the Samoan boys.

GRO-C

GRO-C

137. In terms of relationships with my family, I still have relationships with two of my brothers. My brother, GRO-B, used to come and visit me. We would go out together and party when we were working on farms in GRO-B. GRO-B has passed away. GRO-B is quite close to me though. I put on a GRO-B reunion in GRO-B and tried to get them all together. It was a fleeting moment though.

138. After I went into care, I didn't continue to regularly see my family. I connected with GRO-B while I was in care. Her husband would come and pick me up from Owairaka to see my brothers, GRO-B and GRO-B, but apparently we weren't supposed to mix. When I was with GRO-B-5 GRO-B-6 at GRO-B, my other two brothers were just across the paddock and I wasn't able to see them. After I went into care, I was never sent home again.

Family

139. Two of my siblings were also in care – the three oldest ones. When I lived with the GRO-B-5 GRO-B-6, across the paddock, about half a mile across the paddock was one of my brothers. He lived with the GRO-B. Social welfare never really allowed me to see my brothers. They told me they would get the addresses of all my brothers and sisters so I could write them letters. But they never got me the addresses. This was a neglect on their part.

140. During my time in care, visits from my father were seldom. When he did visit, he had alcohol on his breath, and he would be sent away. But he did turn up occasionally up until I was later living in [GRO-B].

Work

141. I feel like as a result of being in care, I suffered a loss of opportunities. Particularly the ability to work and the ability to earn money. When my marriage broke down, I took off but I wasn't paid out. While I was in care, I was supposed to be earning money, but this wasn't set aside for me.

142. When I was still in care, they asked me what I wanted to do. I said I wanted to join the Navy but I ended up failing the medical exam. I didn't want to keep going to school, but then I was put in the Army. I like being outdoors. I was in the territorial forces for nine years between [GRO-B] and [GRO-B]. I reached the rank of Sergeant. I actually loved it. I'm quite proud of it. I still find now that I am particular, and everything needs to be in its place.

143. I became an electrician, and I did that for a few years.

Health

144. While I was in care, I had a lot of illnesses: tonsillitis, appendix out, cartilage in knees out, and again in [GRO-B] – so both legs. The doctors thought I was epileptic when with I was living with [GRO-B-4]. This was because I used to make myself froth at the mouth. I wanted to try and get out, so it was all an act. I also used to put my finger down mouth to make myself sick. I also was told I have a scar on my lung from bronchitis. When I lived with the [GRO-B-5]
[GRO-B-6], I had an eye issue after having something stuck in my eye.

145. Since leaving care, I have had problems with my back. I think this is as a result of all the work I was required to do on a young body.

146. I have had struggles with my mental health after being in care. Sometimes I will go into room when [GRO-B
-17] my partner isn't there and I will just cry. I don't know why. I think it is always in the back of my mind. I can't sleep without sleeping pills because my mind wanders too much. Sometimes, I can't remember what I did yesterday, but I can remember what happened back then.
147. I have considered suicide in the past. I used to have a drinking problem. I would drink and not care, and then I would think about suicide.
148. In some ways, I think I have a more open outlook on life than I used to. I have learned a lot in life about how to treat children and learning that the way I was brought up in social welfare care was wrong.

Recent life

149. At the end of the 1990's, I decided that because I'd been in the army, I could join the RSA, so I did, in [GRO-C]. Then, because I was a member of the [GRO-C] club in [GRO-C], and I ended up the bar manager there. I did well for myself there, but those things were happening, but it wasn't doing me any good as a person. I kept thinking backwards and backwards, what's going on with my life?
150. In 2000, things changed significantly in my life. I was at a stage in my life where the whole thing had been bad. I'd been married, lost the house and I just fell to bits. When I first met [GRO-B
-17] I was a little skinny man, to bone.
151. I have been with [GRO-B
-17] 22 years. She found me wandering the streets, I met people I could drink with and I would drink heavily. I couldn't settle down after the marriage break ups.

152. I eventually got married to [GRO-B-17]. She looked after me when I was in a bad place, I came very close to killing myself, but I had just met [GRO-B-17] and it was that fact that saved me.
153. I ended up the [GRO-C] of the [GRO-C] RSA. I did welfare work and I loved doing the welfare work. I would go and cut lawns or hedges. I did funerals. Because I'm an electrician by trade I would fix their stoves for them, for nothing. I became who I am today.
154. Currently, I am looking forward to attending the national's [GRO-C] tournament, where I'm competing for the New Zealand disabled team.
155. I had three brothers younger than me who were adopted. I didn't see them again for years. When I met [GRO-B-17] we went looking for them.

Redress

156. I received an ex-gratia payment in 2011. In 2005 I met and was interviewed by a couple of women in respect of an historical claim. I found that process terrifying. There was one woman from Palmerston North and one from Wellington. Within half an hour they said "well, this is what happened". I don't know how they could do that.
157. I got \$15,000 from MSD as an "acknowledgement of the failures" in my care. I never got an apology from the Crown, just from Garth Young. The process took far too long, and the money was nowhere near enough. I would like this readdressed. I need an apology from the Crown, not Garth Young. I was not given any clarity on what failures MSD were accepting by giving me the money for. I don't know whether they believed anything, they never said.

Recommendations for the future

158. I'd like to tell the Prime Minister to please look after the kids in care. Vet the people that you send them to. Make sure they are honest people, and make sure you've got a background of those people, especially of foster parents that you're sending children to. But, also, please put them with whānau.
159. I think that is the main thing to my way of thinking, is strangers are not good for kids. Unless they've had foster children all the time, and they've been recommended for that purpose. I think that's where it went wrong with me. I had an uncle that wanted to take me in Huntly. My father wouldn't allow that either. I think he wanted to bring me up and adopt me. I think if I'd have been adopted then it would've been okay for me. All of my brothers that have been adopted, now are different to us.
160. Kids need someone who cares to guide them and teach them.
161. It is also important to give kids the opportunity to create a relationship and bond with a welfare officer. They also shouldn't be called welfare officers, they should be called something that is a friendly name. Somehow kids should be able to contact welfare officer without the foster parents knowing.
162. We are the unfortunate ones. There was no one there you could turn to. We weren't given the right to know what life was all about. It is so important that these cases are being heard and that the government is listening. They need to make sure it never happens again.

Statement of Truth

This statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and was made by me knowing that it may be used as evidence by the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care.

Signed  GRO-C

Dated: 19/04/2022