

Witness Name: Glenis Hiria Philip-Barbara

Statement No.: WITN____001

Dated: 18.08.2022

ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

WITNESS STATEMENT OF GLENIS HIRIA PHILIP-BARBARA

I, Glenis Hiria Philip-Barbara, will say as follows:

Introduction

1. My full name is Glenis Hiria Philip-Barbara.
2. I am currently the Deputy Chief Executive Officer at Manatū Taonga | the Ministry for Culture and Heritage. I have held this role for just over a month.
3. Prior to this, I was the first Assistant Māori Commissioner (**AMC**) at the Office of the Children's Commissioner | Manaakitia Ā Tātou Tamariki (**OCC**). I held the position of ACM from 2 November 2020 to 15 July 2022.
4. I am appearing at this hearing before the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care under summonses.
5. I have read, and am familiar, with: (a) the briefs of evidence filed by Judge Frances Eivers and Ms Fiona Cassidy for the OCC; and (b) the OCC's written response to Notice to Produce No 480 pursuant to s 20 of the Inquiries Act 2013 (**the s 20 response**).

My experience

6. I hold a Bachelor's degree, majoring in Sociology and Māori Studies, a Post-Graduate Diploma in Professional Supervision, and a Master's Degree in Professional Creative Practice.
7. I have over 30 years of experience as a community advocate and a senior public service leader. Across my various roles, I have worked with whānau, hapū and iwi Māori to recover mātauranga Māori, revitalise te reo Māori, and centralise tikanga Māori practices. I also have particular expertise working with, and for, mokopuna Māori.
8. As Assistant Deputy Chief Executive Officer at the Ministry of Social Development, I led the Modernising CYF Programme. This was superseded by the Expert Advisory Group that went on to establish Oranga Tamariki. In this role, I worked closely with young care experienced people whose lived experience informed the shape of the new legislation and its priorities. I led the Māori staff collective Te

Pōtae Kōhatu Māori, whose insights and experience were carefully gathered from across the country and offered to the EAP. I also led on iwi and community relationships and worked with Waikato Tainui as they designed and developed Mokopuna Ora, with Ngāi Tahu as they established their relationship with CYF, Ngāpuhi on their well-established programmed, Ngāti Porou on their Youth Justice initiative and Ngāti Kahungunu on their Governance oversight of whānau services in their rohe.

9. As Chief Executive of Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori | Māori Language Commission, I established a focus on community-led language regeneration and a research centre for language revitalisation. Before that, I led the Māori Studies and Social Sciences Department at Tairāwhiti Polytechnic. I also worked as a researcher at the Indigenous Research Institute at the University of Auckland on a national investigation into the impact of family violence on wahine Māori.
10. In a whānau and hapū capacity, I have lived intergenerational experience of the practice of whāngai tamariki and working with whānau recovering from the negative impacts of colonisation rooted in racist ideologies. In a community capacity, I have worked in various governance roles concerned with the well-being of whānau, especially those whānau raising tamariki and mokopuna.
11. Finally, in my role as AMC, I:
 - a. seconded the services of a care experienced advisor from Voyce Whakarongo Mai to assist OCC with its work;
 - b. developed a strategic focus on improving outcomes for Māori and the elimination of racism from the public sector;
 - c. led Te Roopu (the Māori staff collective), including working with Te Roopu to strengthen and broaden a focus on te reo and tikanga Māori to inform OCC practice;
 - d. managed and strengthened key stakeholder relationships with external agencies and organisations, including Oranga Tamariki;
 - e. assessed policies and services under the Children's Commissioner Act 2003 and the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989; and

- f. developed a new Te Tiriti o Waitangi Strategy for the incoming (and now current) Children's Commissioner.

12. The strategies developed were informed by the voices of mokopuna and whānau Māori, these voices being central to conversations and considerations about how to improve outcomes for Māori.

13. Specific detail about the OCC's Te Tiriti journey, including the steps that I took as AMC to help this journey, can be found in the OCC's s 20 response.¹

Overview

14. In this brief of evidence, I draw on my experience as AMC and also on my previous experience, to provide some brief comments on:

- a. the current challenge faced by Aotearoa;
- b. why these issues matter;
- c. why we are here; and
- d. what we can do in the future.

15. In summary, it is clear Aotearoa faces a significant problem relating to inequitable outcomes for mokopuna Māori, particularly those in State care. This problem has existed for a long time and continues to exist today. We are here largely because mokopuna Māori have been separated from their language, culture and whakapapa.

16. A transformational and sustainable solution is urgently required. The solution must have Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Te Ao Māori as its foundation; this is what mokopuna Māori are telling us. Such change *is* achievable. Recent initiatives in other areas, such as education and health, show that by Māori, for Māori approaches lead to better outcomes for Māori. The positive steps taken in these areas are a source of inspiration and can be drawn on by the Royal Commission in recommending solutions to the present issues the Commission is dealing with.

¹ See the response to Questions 3, 10 and 11 in the s 20 response (**OCC0008309**).

Aotearoa's current challenge

17. The State recognised the issue of inequitable outcomes for Māori in the Department of Social Welfare, through the work leading to the publication of *Puao-te-Atatū* in 1988. However, these problems have always been known and discussed widely amongst Māori for many years since the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in 1840. I have met mokopuna in places of detention who have told me that their grandmothers and grandfathers were also detained in the very same places. This demonstrates the intergenerational nature of the problem we are faced with today.
18. While reviewing key issues for successive Children's Commissioners, I noted that the overrepresentation of mokopuna Māori in State care has been a concern for each Commissioner since the establishment of the role in 1989.

Why does this matter?

19. I have met many mokopuna from across the care system who have talked freely about their experiences. For far too many, there is a sense of inevitability about the horrible things that have happened to them. I have also spent time supporting care experienced new parents with a child in hospital, terrified that they would be subject to a report of concern because their newborn baby was in intensive care with breathing issues. Their fear was palpable, yet they had done nothing wrong. They are wonderful and caring parents with a history of State care experience that they said, "hangs over them like a dark cloud."
20. As a nation we have committed ourselves to making Aotearoa the very best place to be a child, and yet for care experienced mokopuna who I have spent time with, their almost fatalistic belief that only bad things come from any interaction with the State tells me we have a long way to go. For their basic human rights to find any form of expression they need to believe and trust that they are also worthy of our respect, our aroha and our care – because they are. We, the collective, all-encompassing we, need to be better and do better.

Why are we here?

21. The impact of colonisation and racist ideologies has wreaked havoc upon indigenous nations across the globe, including ancient cultures and societies across the Pacific and leading to the untimely death of many ancestors. As we know, here in Aotearoa, colonisation rooted in racist ideologies, assumed that Western systems and societies were superior to those ancient systems and societies already thriving here. This belief system separated Māori children from their language, culture and whakapapa, with catastrophic results that we can still see today. The loss of identity and whakapapa is something that many mokopuna Māori have spoken with me about as a key issue and pain point for them. Whakapapa knowledge connects mokopuna to their whānau, their whenua and their futures. Without that knowledge it is almost impossible to reconcile one's identity and culture with their lived realities.

22. Young people reflecting on the importance of whakapapa shared these gems with me:

- a. *“Whakapapa connects us to where we come from. Everyone has whakapapa and you need to know where you are from.”*
- b. *“It's like the movie Moana, they have stolen the heart inside you, but this does not define you, you know who you are.”*
- c. *“It's coming together as one. It's important so you can connect to all your different whānau so you know who you are. Otherwise, you over's.”*

23. I have also met many mokopuna across our communities who are proud descendants of signatories to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This has been a common ground that we have connected on as I am a proud descendant of Koiauriterangi and Rawiri Rangikatia, both signatories to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. In conversations about Te Tiriti and its significance today, mokopuna are quick to point out that for them, they expected that after signing Te Tiriti that Māori knowledge would continue to be prominent. They expected that we would become a bilingual nation and that Māori knowledge and ways of doing things would become normalised.

24. The generation of mokopuna who attended Kōhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Māori are even more direct. They have asked me over many years why all things Pākehā have become so dominant for so long in a country where their ancestors have retained continuous connection and occupation for over 40 generations. What I have been able to do lately is point to the initiatives all around us that signal a shift toward a more respectful attitude and valuing of Te Ao Māori here in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

What can we do?

25. We need to listen to what mokopuna are telling us about what they need in order to thrive. In my experience, mokopuna Māori are telling us that that they want to grow up with their whānau, in their communities, connected to their whakapapa and able to freely express their language and practise their culture.

26. Some positive initiatives already exist in other sectors.

27. For example, the establishment of Kōhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Māori. The establishment of these Māori educational institutions was hard won over the decades following the 1972 petition to see Māori language and culture included in New Zealand's education curriculum. Today, monitoring of educational outcomes for mokopuna Māori in mainstream schools and those in Kura Kaupapa Māori consistently show that mokopuna in Kura Kaupapa Māori do much better across all subjects. This is perhaps the earliest evidence available to Government of the efficacy of by Māori for Māori approaches.

28. Perhaps the most exciting initiative to give expression to the intent of Te Tiriti o Waitangi is the recent development of the new Health system. This is something that will address decades of inequitable outcomes in health, especially for Māori, Pacific and Disabled peoples. Where the health of Māori peoples is concerned, the new Māori Health Authority recognises that by Māori for Māori approaches to addressing Māori health and wellbeing works best. The evidence gathered and research conducted to make the case for a Māori Health Authority is an incredibly important source of information for this Inquiry.

29. I believe that the same logic can be applied to the challenges that this Royal Commission is currently facing in thinking about the future and the way the State responds to the abuse and neglect of children, young people and adults in need of support in Aotearoa.
30. The future wellbeing of our collective mokopuna and their whānau depends on us to make radical, transformational change to the way in which we are thinking about the problems and issues raised by survivors of State care.
31. Rather than constantly thinking about how to tweak or change the system, we have to find a different starting point that starts with a strong vision for the future that we can all work towards and a properly evidenced road map to guide us. Ample evidence about what works and does not work has been generously shared by survivors. Aotearoa as the best place to be a child is an example of that kind of a vision. For this Royal Commission I think the vision has to be focused on the right of every person to belong with and be safe with their whānau and communities. For this right to be realised, prioritising the wellbeing of whānau and communities is critical.
32. This vision of people being safe and with their whānau is captured in article two of Te Tiriti o Waitangi which guaranteed to Māori rangatiratanga over our kainga, our homes and communities. The destructive impact of colonisation and racist ideologies on whānau must continue to be addressed. Whānau must have support they trust in order to recover and realise their Te Tiriti rights and obligations. Centring Te Tiriti requires that this right is properly explored, understood, and designed into the future State.
33. The voices of survivors must continue to play a critical role in the development of the future State. The road to realising a new vision is a long one, and the existing system holds both a great deal of power and inertia. Survivors who are willing and ready to be involved in transforming the way the State responds to the abuse and neglect of children, young people and adults must have opportunities to lead and inform the new direction.
34. In the immortal words of Sir James Henare, “*we have come too far not to go further, we have done too much, not to do more*”.

35. Since 1989 thousands of people have given every waking moment to thinking about how to better serve those New Zealanders who are abused and neglected and in need of support. Some of those hardworking people have stories to tell about a system that did not enable them to act with compassion, to centre their humanity or give them the time, skills or support needed to work with whānau appropriately. This must change. There is much more work to do to assure every whānau that they will have the support they need when things get tough. For far too many whānau I've spoken with, reaching out to Oranga Tamariki and its predecessors for help out of utter desperation has resulted in trauma rather than support. They spoke of feeling powerless, hopeless, fearful and broken by an all powerful system who saw them and everyone connected with them as a threat to the safety of their children.
36. Of all the messages I have heard in my role as AMC, the most consistent from mokopuna, whānau members, kaimahi in the community and in the system is that mokopuna belong with their whānau. Whānau is where mokopuna find connection, confirm their identities, explore their wider whakapapa connections and can be held securely for the rest of their lives. While there are many definitions of whānau, mokopuna themselves are very capable of defining who it is in their lives that they trust, and who they consider whānau. What is needed to unlock these insights is trust. A mokopuna must trust an adult in order to volunteer such important and precious information. This is the nuance of the work that experienced and trusted kaimahi can express far more eloquently than I.
37. This Royal Commission is bigger, broader and has more powers than any other inquiry undertaken in Aotearoa. This in and of itself demonstrates the importance placed on this process. This is a moment in time that will take its own place in the history of this nation.
38. I encourage this Royal Commission to fully realise its power to make clear recommendations for a future in line with the moemoeā or aspiration of a young person from Ōtautahi who asked that we ensure that every mokopuna knows what it is to have *“support, stability and to be loved unconditionally. When a child is supported and feels the love, they are capable of anything.”* This is not something the State can deliver directly; a child needs a whānau to know the power of love.

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:  _____

Dated: _____ 18/8/2022 _____

Consent to use my statement

I, Glenis Hiria Philip-Barbara, confirm that by submitting my signed witness statement to the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care, I consent to its use in the following ways:

- reference and/or inclusion in any interim and/or final report;
- disclosure to those granted leave to appear, designated as core participants and where instructed, their legal representatives via the Inquiry's database or by any other means as directed by the Inquiry;
- presentation as evidence before the Inquiry, including at a public hearing;
- informing further investigation by the Inquiry;
- publication on the Inquiry website.

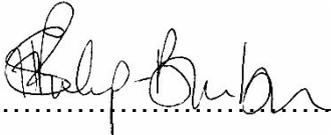
I also confirm that I have been advised of the option to seek anonymity and that if granted my identity may nevertheless be disclosed to a person or organisation, including any instructed legal representatives, who is the subject of criticism in my witness statement in order that they are afforded a fair opportunity to respond to the criticism.

Please tick one of the two following boxes:

if you are seeking anonymity

or

if you are happy for your identity to be known

Signed..........

Date.....18/8/2022.....