

**Witness Name:** Harry Daniel Tutahi

**Statement No:** WITN0524001

**Dated:** 10/8/2021

14/8/2021

**ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE**

---

**WITNESS STATEMENT OF HARRY DANIEL TUTAHI**

---

I, Harry Daniel Tutahi, will say as follows:

**Introduction**

1. My full name is Harry Daniel Tutahi. I was born on [GRO-C] 1966 in Upper Hutt, and I am of Māori descent.
2. My mother's name is Nan Horiana Maemae Tutahi and my father's name is Peter Tutahi, they are both deceased.
3. My parents had seven children, from oldest to youngest: [GRO-B] [GRO-B] me, [GRO-B] [GRO-B] and [GRO-B]. My older brother Mannie passed away before I was born.
4. My wife's name is Maria Tutahi and we have been together for 30 years. We have five children and fourteen mokopuna; two of which we have also raised.
5. I was prompted to come forward for this kaupapa after seeing a video of another survivor who shared their story. I remember thinking that their

story was similar to my own experiences, and this gave me the courage to take the first steps to engage with the Royal Commission and share my story.

6. My evidence relates to my time in State care and the abuse I suffered at the various Family Homes I was sent to: Epuni Boy's Home, Holdsworth, Hōkio Beach Training School which eventually led me to periods of incarceration at Mt Crawford Remand, Rangipou Corrective Training, Tongariro Corrective Training, Waikeria Borstal and Rimutaka Prison. My story speaks to the pipeline from care to prison.

#### **Circumstances of going into care**

7. I have few memories of my childhood growing up; I have tried to obtain this from my older brother, but he has few memories also. However, over the years as I have unpacked my experiences in State care, certain memories have returned to me.
8. I remember living at home in Naenae with my parents and all of my siblings in the same household. I was 3 years old when they separated.
9. Growing up I can recall my mother struggling with mental illness. She had periods of wellness and unwellness throughout our lives. I have clear memories of her periods of unwellness because her behavior changed. She would become manic about the house being spotlessly clean. We had to wait outside while she scrubbed the house from top to bottom and we were not allowed back inside until she was finished.
10. My mother's mental illness also meant she was in and out of Porirua Hospital receiving shock treatment.
11. I found out as an adult that my mother was diagnosed with manic depressive disorder. During her periods of unwellness she was unable to care for us, so we were removed from her care. My mother was medicated, but she also self-medicated with alcohol.
12. I was about 4 years old when I was placed in the care of my Aunty. I do not know if it was the State or my family who placed me there. I spent a

- short period of time with my Aunty before I was returned to the care of my parents in Upper Hutt.
13. I was enrolled at a school in Upper Hutt when I turned 5 years old. I recall not having enough clothing for school and having no shoes. The clothing that I did have was not always suitable for the conditions, for example I remember wearing a pair of shorts, a singlet and no shoes to school in the rain.
  14. I was about 8 years old when a police officer arrived at our home and told me and [GRO-B] to pack our bags because we were leaving. The police officer never explained to us why we had to leave our home and our family. I now know it was because she was assessed as unwell and able to care for all her children, so two of us were removed.
  15. [GRO-B] and [GRO-B] were the only ones left in my mother's care. My younger siblings [GRO-B] and [GRO-B] were adopted out to Pākeha families.
  16. [GRO-B] and I were placed in a family home in Naenae.

### **Naenae Family Home**

17. I spent 2 years here. It was run by a Pākeha couple and there were up to seven other boys in the home at any given time. I remember most of the boys were Māori.
18. We had a very strict routine enforced by the Pākeha man. We had to be up every morning at 7.30am and do lots of chores before and after school. We also did chores throughout the weekends. All our chores had to be done to perfection or we had to do them again, or got more chores, or we were punished.
19. I always did what I was told to do, but the Pākeha man still picked on me. I felt that he did not like me.
20. All us boys slept in a bedroom upstairs. My only happy memory here was the little time we got to play together between chores. At these times we were able to have some fun and bond to each other, like a family.
21. After our first year there, [GRO-B] was removed. Nobody explained to me why he was taken, or where he had gone. I think the Pākeha man did not like that we were close, so he separated us.

22. I was 9 years old, and for the first time in my life I had no one. I was confused, sad and frightened about what was going to happen to me.
23. During our first year there, we received no news of our family. The situation did not change for me over the next year. I still received no news of [GRO-B] or my family. I got no visits, phone calls or letters from them, they were lost to me.
24. I remember a few social worker visits, 3 maybe 4 at most. They never asked how I was or gave me any information about my parents or siblings. I felt small; I felt like I did not matter to them or anyone else.
25. My separation from [GRO-B] had a profound effect on me. From that point on my life took a turn for the worse.

#### *Punishment*

26. One form of punishment by the Pākeha man was to lock us boys in a small, dark, broom cupboard downstairs.
27. I was never put in the cupboard, but I can remember it happening to many of the boys that came and went from the home.
28. I remember one time when [GRO-B] was placed in the broom cupboard. He was 10 years old, and I can still hear him screaming to be let out. He was told to shut up or he would stay in the broom cupboard longer. He was locked in there for hours before the Pākeha man let him out.

#### *Physical abuse*

29. I remember one of the boys stole a jacket and the Pākeha man thought it was me. I denied it was me, but he did not believe me. He took me into the sitting room and hit me repeatedly across the back of my legs with a spade used to shovel coal from the fire pit. I was in pain for a few days after this hiding and I received no medical attention.
30. I told a social worker about this hiding and not long afterwards my father turned up to take me to his home. I only stayed with my father for a few days before he dropped me off to another family home because he could

not look after me. I remember the little time that I had with my father as being a happy time for me as I was with my family.

31. I learned from this experience that speaking to adults only makes your situation worse. I also learned that if I was going to survive, I needed to keep my head down and my mouth shut. I carried these lessons with me throughout my entire time in care.

### **Epuni Family Home (“The [GRO-B-1]”)**

32. I was about 10 years old when my father dropped me off at a family home in Epuni.
33. The family home was run by a Māori couple called the [GRO-B-1]. They had one child of their own, and there were another four of us who were in their care. I did not spend long here, but it was quite a good experience for me.
34. One of the older boys asked me if I wanted to take off with him. He did not have a driver's license, but he knew how to drive so I took off with him. We stole a car and drove to Masterton. The next day we were picked up by the police and they placed us in Epuni Boy's Home.

### **Epuni Boy's Home (“Epuni”)**

35. I was 10 years old when I arrived at Epuni. I would be in and out of here three times over the next two years.
36. I was placed in the secure unit. No one explained to me why I was not returned to the [GRO-B-1] or why I had been put into the secure unit. I remember being confused and scared.
37. The secure unit looked like a concrete jail cell, and I spent about four to five days in there. I lived in darkness. The lights were only switched on when staff brought my meals in or my bedding in and out. I was given three meals a day, and my bedding was brought in at night and removed in the morning. This is the only contact I had with people, staff members. I lived in darkness, isolated from everyone and scared.
38. After my time in the secure block, I was released into the home. It was a big home with more than twenty boys there at any given time ranging in

age from 9 –16 years. We all ate communally and had our own bedrooms within the dormitories. Teachers were brought in for our schooling, but I do not remember the level of teaching being very good.

39. I kept to myself at Epuni. I chose to quietly observe what was going on around me, to keep my head down and stay out of trouble.

40. I have some good memories of my time in Epuni like playing rugby with the other boys. But I also have a lot of bad memories about the abuse I suffered there.

#### *Physical abuse*

41. I received my first hiding not long after I was released from the secure unit. I went outside to play, and a group of boys gave me a hiding. They repeatedly punched and kicked me. I rolled myself up into a ball and cradled my head to protect myself. I learned that this hiding was part of an unspoken initiation process at Epuni.

42. I recall three more similar beatings, before I retaliated.

43. The second hiding occurred while I was outside playing in the field. I had done nothing to trigger a hiding but one of the boys came up to me and started punching me.

44. The third hiding was when one of the older boys banged my head against a concrete wall three to four times. He got really angry with me because no matter how hard he hit my head up against the wall, I would not cry. I suffered a large hematoma on the back of my head from this hiding.

45. The fourth hiding occurred in the dining room. One of the older boys started punching me and the staff did nothing to stop it. I knew that I had to stand up for myself, so I jumped up on the table, grabbed a cup and smashed it into the boy's arm. I made his arm bleed, and it was only then that staff intervened and broke us up.

46. I did not disclose any of the abuse to staff as I did not feel this was an option for me. If they were not prepared to intervene to stop the violence, I had no confidence they were going to help me. I was also worried I

would be labelled as a "nark" and it would make things worse for me, so I kept my mouth shut.

47. I never initiated fights, it was always the older boys picking on the younger ones. I would get bad hidings, but I refused to cry as it would signal weakness and I would become a target. I do think however, this also made my abusers angry, so they would beat me harder.
48. I eventually learned to retaliate, or the beatings would only get worst. I had to stand up for myself as no one else was going to stand up for me.

Staff member GRO-B-2

49. I remember one staff member well, Mr GRO-B-2 He had a short wick and would often get angry at us.
50. I got into a fight with another boy. Mr GRO-B-2 was growling me and I answered him back. He was furious, threw me to the ground and kicked me several times to the head. I remember he was wearing cowboy boots and it really hurt. There were other staff present but they did not intervene or try to stop him.
51. When Mr GRO-B-2 had finished kicking me, he dragged me all the way to the secure block, threw me in a cell and turned the lights off.
52. This was my second time in the secure unit. I spent one week there in total darkness for most of that time. Again, I only saw light when staff came in with meals or bedding. However, this time I only received a mattress and no blanket or pillow. I was in no doubt that Mr GRO-B-2 was punishing me for talking back to him.
53. I developed a real fear of the dark because of my time in the secure unit. I was left in a concrete cell, on a concrete floor to stare at concrete walls. I started banging my head repeatedly against the concrete walls to cope. I remember doing this for at least thirty minutes on each occasion. If I was not banging my head against a concrete wall, I was walking around in circles.
54. The days were long, spent in silence and darkness. It was during this time that I missed GRO-B-2 and my family the most. I was incredibly sad and very confused about what I had done to deserve such harsh punishment.

55. I developed anxiety after my time in the secure unit. I was and continue to be, scared of the dark. If I am triggered by a stressful situation, I become anxious. I react by my breathing becoming irregular and rapid. I start unconsciously scratching my left arm. I do not realise I am doing it, but it is obvious to others.

### **Second time at Epuni**

56. I was out of Epuni for three months before I was returned. I have no memory of where or what I was doing during these three months. My only memory is returning to this place.

57. I was placed in the secure unit, with identical experiences to my first two times.

58. This time however my second stay at Epuni was different because I did not tolerate any more hidings, I hit back. Consequently, I was not bullied as much.

### *Punishment*

59. The main form of punishment at Epuni was secure unit. Another punishment was standing in the yard in the pouring rain for hours at a time. It did not take much to be punished, it could be a little as answering back. I think they enjoyed punishing us.

### *Family Home in Naenae*

60. In between my last time at Epuni and running away, I remember I was placed with a couple [GRO-B] (Pākeha) and her husband (Māori). They had two children of their own, and one other boy in their care. I did not spend long here, but I recall it being a safe place.

61. I was picked up by a social worker who returned me to Epuni for the third time.

### **My third time in Epuni**

62. I was around 11 years old and spend another three months at Epuni. Again, I spent time in the secure unit before being placed in the home with the other boys.

63. I was there for a month when some of the boys asked me to run away with them. We took off in the middle of the night, but we only got as far as a nearby hill before the staff found us. We were taken back to Epuni.

#### *Physical Training ("PT")*

64. We were all placed in separate secure units for running away.

65. I spent one week in secure but this time it was different because we were disciplined by extreme physical training.

66. We were taken to the gym separately each day. We were made to do an obstacle course, running and jumping up and down boxes while the staff yelled at us. We were also made to hold heavy medicine balls up for about ten minutes at a time. If we dropped the ball, we were smacked. I made sure never to drop the medicine ball.

67. It was physically and mentally tough, it felt like they were trying to break us. My first two stints in Epuni had hardened me so I never broke. I look back and I feel ok about the extreme physical training because it allowed me to get out of the secure unit.

#### **Holdsworth Boy's Home ("Holdsworth")**

68. My memories at Holdsworth are distorted by my time at Epuni, Hōkio and running away.

69. I remember that there were about twenty or so boys there at any given time. The boys were a mixture of Pākeha, Pacific Island and Māori. We all lived and slept in one big dormitory.

70. I did run away but I never made it far. I was found by a staff member who returned me to Holdsworth. That same staff member beat me before placing me in the secure unit. I was there for a week.

71. I also remember whenever any of the boys misbehaved, they were placed in a van, and we never saw them again. The staff never told us where they had gone or what had happened to them. I drew the conclusion that it

would be best if I kept my head down and stayed out of trouble. I did not want to disappear too.

72. I have a good memory of my time at Holdsworth. I had an art teacher who was good to me. It was the first time I can remember enjoying learning while I was in State care.

73. I cannot remember how long I spent at Holdsworth, or how old I was when I arrived or left. I do remember going from there to Hōkio Beach Training School though.

### **Hōkio Beach Training School (“Hōkio”)**

74. I was about 12 years old when I was placed at Hōkio and I spent 18 months here.

75. Hōkio looked like Epuni except it was by the beach. There were more than twenty boys at a time here. We had our own rooms, and most of us were Māori.

76. On my first day here, a group of three boys led me away out of sight of any staff members. I knew immediately this was my initiation hiding into Hōkio. I did not resist, I just wanted the hiding over and done with. We walked over a bridge and the boys laid into me. I was fighting back, but one of them threw sand in my eyes so I could not see anything. I rolled up into a ball on the ground and took the beating. I had the same experience in Epuni and Holdsworth. I knew what to expect, you took the beatings and got on with it.

77. I remember having teachers come into Hōkio, but I do not remember the lessons being very good. I never had any further education after Hōkio, it stopped here. I also remember the bullying continuing here.

### *Physical Abuse*

78. On one occasion, I was playing table tennis and the boy I was playing with got angry at me. He whacked me across the head with his racket. On another occasion, I was sitting in the dining room and one of the boys started hassling me. I got smart to him, and we got into a fist fight.

79. The bullying was always the same; the older boys bullying the younger boys. They needed for us to know who was boss. The staff never intervened unless it got out of hand. I remember on one occasion it did, so staff pulled the older boy off the younger boy and the older boy was taken to the secure unit.

80. I never felt safe at Hōkio but then I never felt safe at Epuni or Holdsworth. I think the staff accepted a culture of violence and turned a blind eye intervening very rarely. Again, I learned to keep my head down and my mouth shut.

#### *Staff punishment*

81. One time the bullying was so severe that I ran away to escape it. I only went over the sandhills and when I returned I was punished for running away. The headmaster asked me why I had run away, and when I disclosed the abuse he punished me not the older boys who were bullying us.

82. The headmaster strapped me across my hand with a leather strap about a dozen times and then I was taken to the secure unit. I know the other boys were strapped by the headmaster. It happened behind closed doors, but we talked about it between ourselves.

#### *Sexual abuse*

83. I was sexually violated at the age 12 or 13 years old. I was polishing the floors and one of the older boys came up behind me and felt me up. I reacted badly and attacked him. No one was around, and I did not tell anyone about it. I was embarrassed about it. Consequently, nothing happened to either of us afterwards.

84. I reacted badly because I was sexually abused at the age of 3 or 4 years of age. A visitor came to our home and sexually abused me. I told my stepfather, but he did not do anything about it. After this incident, I do not like being touched by anyone. I believe this is also why I reacted the way I did.

### **Return Home**

85. I returned to my mother's care when I was about 15 years old.
86. It was bittersweet in that I had been returned to what were essentially strangers. I was 8 years old when I was removed from my mother's care, I had lived the last 7 years away from my family. In 7 years, I had not had a single visit, phone call or letter from any of my them. I was struggling with feelings of abandonment, hurt, pain, sadness, grief and loss.
87. I stayed with my mother for about 6 months. My mother was still unwell and could not really look after me. I do remember feeling grateful to be home with my family though.
88. My older brother was living at home. We had no money and consequently there was never enough food in the house to feed us all. My brother and I broke into a home to steal food and I was arrested.

### **Mount Crawford on remand**

89. I was 16 years old when I was sent to Mount Crawford on remand for burglary.
90. The Youth Unit was full, so I was placed with the adults. There was a strong gang presence there. I remember feeling very afraid. I was only 16 years old.
91. When I was in the yard, I was made to play a game similar to rugby known as "crash". The aim of the game was to smash whoever was in possession of the ball.
92. I was too scared to say no to crash as I knew it would mean a hiding. When I played the men made sure to give me the ball, so I would get smashed. On one occasion I was picked up off the ground and spear tackled to the ground. I broke three fingers. I never cried because tears were a sign of weakness and if you were weak, you would never survive.
93. The prison officers took me to the hospital for treatment. When I returned to Mt Crawford I was placed into secure. I now know they did this to protect me from the other men. I spent the rest of my time in secure isolated from the other men.

94. A couple of weeks passed, and I was taken to court. I had no social worker or family member there for me at the time. The Judge told me I was being sent to Rangipou Corrective Training.

### **Rangipou Corrective Training (“Rangipou”)**

95. I spent 12 weeks at Rangipou. It was an army-military style training camp for boys who misbehaved.

96. GRO-B-3 was a staff member working at Rangipou. I answered him back and he kicked me hard on the back of my legs. I ran away, and I almost made it as far as Tūrangi when the Police picked me up and returned me to Rangipou.

97. As punishment for running away I was placed in the secure unit. The next morning, GRO-B-3 walked into my unit and gave me a good hiding. I curled up into a ball on the ground to protect myself while he kicked, punched and slapped me. No one was there to stop it and I did not tell anyone about what happened to me.

98. I know very well what happens when you “nark” things only get worse for you. I remember every hiding I got, including the names and faces of every staff member who abused me in facilities where they were meant to be caring for me.

### *Tongariro Corrective Training (“Tongariro”)*

99. After I was released from Rangipou, I returned to live with my mother in Naenae. It did not take long before I was arrested for burglary again, and I was sent to Tongariro this time.

100. On my first night here, one of the other boys and I stole a staff member’s car and took off to Hastings.

101. The very next day the Police found us, but instead of returning us to Tongariro we were taken to Waikeria Borstal.

### **Waikeria Borstal (“Waikeria”)**

102. When I arrived at Waikeria I was 17 years old, and I spent 18 months there.

103. Waikeria was very similar to Mount Crawford, there was violence all around us and a strong gang presence. I was constantly bullied and intimidated into joining a gang. I was followed around the yard and even into the shower. I managed to get away and avoid a hiding.

104. The staff were never around when gangs were bullying and intimidating me into joining a gang, so I had to do something to protect myself. I deliberately did something to put myself in secure, it was the only way I could keep myself safe. I was used to being isolated from others and I made sure that this is where I spent most of my time at Waikeria.

105. While I was in secure, we would spend 1 hour in the yard a day. We were allowed to eat with the others but the rest of the time we were locked up in the wing. We could spend more time out of secure, but I chose not to, to protect myself from the others. This strategy served me well as my 18-month sentence was reduced to 1 year on good behavior.

106. I know that many of the boys I went through state care with ended up in gangs. I never joined a gang because I did not want a life of crime, drugs and violence. I kept to myself. I consider the fact that I did not join a gang to be the only positive that came out of my time in prison.

#### **Waikeria**

107. I was released from Waikeria and I returned to live with my mother. This was short lived however because I reoffended. I was sentenced to 1 year at Waikeria for charges of theft and car conversion.

108. Again, I kept my head down and my mouth shut. Consequently, I was released early for good behavior.

109. I was not released for long, I reoffended but this time I was sent to Rimutaka Prison.

#### **Rimutaka Prison ("Rimutaka")**

110. I spent 3-6 months at Rimutaka.

111. When I arrived at Rimutaka, I can remember being pressured by a gang member on my second day there to join a gang. I deliberately misbehaved so that the staff would put me in isolation.
112. I spent seven days there, and I used that time to formulate a safety plan. I knew that I had to eliminate any potential weaknesses that could be used against me. I also needed to be a loner if I was going to survive.
113. When I was released into the compound, I walked around keeping my distance from the others because I knew the gangs were watching me and looking for new recruitments.
114. One day I was playing pool when the same gang member who approached me earlier came in the room and started mouthing off at me. I had to deal with him, otherwise he would not have given up. I put down the cue, picked up a pool ball and threw it at him. It did not hit him, it hit the wall but was enough to send a clear message to him. He did not retaliate, and when I walked up to him and stared him in the eyes, he backed up and left the room.
115. It was an intense moment, but it worked because he left. It also showed others watching that I was not weak, and I was not to be messed with. I earned their respect. My strength and how I coped with the pressure to join the gangs came about because of my time in State care. I had been abused and pain did not deter me from sticking up for myself.

*Prison officer*

116. I was in the compound when I was approached by a Māori prison officer, Mr Phillip Nuku. He told me he had been watching me, I was a loner and something about me had him stumped. The compound was filled with gang members, so they had a clear view of me too. If Mr Nuku was stumped by me, chances were, so were the gang members.
117. My strategy was, keep my head down and my mouth shut. If I did this, I would survive Rimutaka and hopefully obtain an early release.
118. Shortly after my encounter with Mr Nuku, I got work experience and to go on a life skills course. I believe Mr Nuku saw potential in me and

was instrumental in making these opportunities happen for me. I think Mr Nuku wanted me to turn my life around.

119. I was 19 years old when I obtained an early release from Rimutaka for good behavior.

#### **Release from care and custody**

120. I was told that a social worker would meet me outside the prison gates to take me to their offices to help me transition back into society. No one turned up.

121. I walked to the train station and caught the train into town. I walked to the nearest social welfare office, and they gave me enough money to live on for a week. I received no other support or offers of support in terms of education, housing, health or employment.

122. I had been in State care from the age of 8 until 19 years of age or a total of 11 years. I was completely disconnected from my family, extended family and my culture. I had no education. I had nowhere to live. I had no friends or anyone I could turn to.

123. I had spent most of my life in isolation from everyone and everything. Social welfare was not going to support me, so I had to work it all out for myself. My story is no different from anyone else I had been in State care with. I was either going to make it or I was not. I chose to try my best to make it.

124. I got a fulltime job. I worked there for a very long time. I also met my wife there, I was 21 years old when I met her.

#### **Maria and my whānau**

125. When I first met Maria, I had established a reputation as being the life of the party by my friends and colleagues. The routine was I would get paid on Thursday, I would go to the pub and drink from Thursday until Sunday. I believed real men drank alcohol and partied all weekend.

126. I drank heavily into my late 20s. I reflect on this and now understand that I was using alcohol to deal with what I had been through. I used alcohol as a coping mechanism for all the pain and suffering I had

experienced in State care. Maria was the one person who was able to make me change.

127. Maria showed me the importance of education, employment and “whānau”. Maria had been brought up strong in her Māoritanga and she had a strong sense of whānau. Maria introduced these things to me, she showed me a better way to live my life.

128. Maria miscarried our first child. When she was pregnant with our second child, she gave me an ultimatum to stay or leave. If I chose to stay, I had to stop drinking and be a responsible father. I chose to stay.

129. Maria gave me the opportunity to be a father. This was a key turning point for me, I will always be grateful to Maria for this. Maria showed me how to be a good father, we have instilled our tamariki with good values: respect, hard work, education is key but whānau is everything.

130. Maria and I have been together for over thirty years. She is my rock and my strongest support. I shudder to think where I would be without her.

## **Impacts**

### *Psychological impacts*

131. The most significant impact of my time in State care was anger. I internalised it, so my anger had nowhere else to go. It would manifest itself every so often. I would get angry over nothing at all really, but I would never take it out on Maria or our tamariki. I am not a violent person by nature, but I was incredibly angry over my time in State care.

132. Maria noticed patterns of behavior which were directly related to the significant amount of time I spent isolated in secure units. I preferred to sleep with the lights on. If I was triggered or under stress, I would rock back and forth or bang my head against the wall. Maria said my facial expressions would change and I would start fiddling with my hands. I never noticed until Maria pointed it out.

133. When I over think things or things become too much for me, I am transported back to a bad time in State care. I can be triggered by loud noises, a raised voice or arguing. I react by withdrawing into myself. I isolate myself from everyone. During these times I am physically present but mentally absent. I often go into these states for hours at a time, but I have no concept of time. What appears to me to be minutes can be several hours. The only person that understands this is Maria; no one else understands what I have been through and why I am the way that I am.

134. My family thought that I was crazy when I got into these states. I was unable to share my time in State care with my tamariki until recently. I could not find the words. I had buried everything that I had been through deep inside me. Knowing that other survivors are sharing their stories has given me the strength to share mine. I had very recently reconnected with my siblings, and they are sharing their own experiences in State care with me. I hope we can heal each other.

*Mental breakdown in Lower Hutt Hospital*

135. In 1998, I had a mental break down attributable to a range of things. I lost my job, we were struggling financially, and Maria and my children left me. I thought I had lost them forever.

136. I was crying and shaking uncontrollably. I was taken by ambulance to Lower Hutt Hospital. I was incoherent, and the hospital staff could not understand what I was trying to tell them. They called the crisis team, I was assessed and admitted into the mental health unit for 4 weeks with depression and anxiety.

137. The staff told me I was admitted voluntarily so I could leave anytime. It did not feel this way to me. I remember trying to escape by removing all the screws from the window. The unit reminded me of my time in all the secure units I had ever been sent to. I wanted to be reunited with my family.

138. I was given medication for my anxiety and depression. I was compliant, and I was improving so I was released into residence. I spent 4 weeks in residence before I was discharged home.

*Move to Christchurch*

139. In 2005, our family moved to Christchurch.

140. It was a real struggle for me to adjust to life in Christchurch, it was a huge culture shock for me. I had moved away from everything that was familiar to me including all my support systems.

141. A week after we arrived, I was drinking alcohol with my sister. I was unhappy in Christchurch and I wanted to go home. I got agitated and angry and I got into an argument with my sister. She hit me, but I did not retaliate. My daughter called the Police, and I spent the weekend in the cells.

142. On the Monday morning, I appeared at court before a Judge who had read my files. He questioned me about my time in State care. He told me he was impressed at how far I had come since my days in State care. He was also impressed that all my family were there to support me. The judge gave me a suspended sentence. I was discharged but ordered not to come back to court within the next 12 months. The Judge genuinely believed in me, he gave me a second chance.

143. This was the first time in my entire life that I had ever been treated with dignity and respect by someone in authority. I felt the Judge had read my file, he understood me without judging me because of my past. The way I was treated that day had a profound effect on me. I have never appeared in court again.

144. I tried hard to get a job in Christchurch, I applied for over 30 different jobs. I would get an interview over the phone but once they saw me, I never progressed to the interview. They told me to leave. I know they rejected me because I was Māori with tattoos and convictions. They never gave me a chance.

145. I eventually got a job over the phone without an interview because my employer was satisfied with my work experience and skills. I still

remember the supervisor's reaction when I showed up on my first day, he was shocked with what he saw.

146. My supervisor was a Pākeha man, and I really struggled under his supervision. He frequently demeaned me or put me down in front of others. It was a very difficult time for me. I felt isolated and I had no one to talk to about the way I was being treated. The company had over 150 employees, only 10 of those were Māori and only 2 of the 10 were in my team. I made a formal complaint which was resolved by mediation in 2011.
147. We lived in Christchurch for 9 years before moving to Hamilton. Many of my experiences in Christchurch were triggered by my time in State care. I felt real racism for the first time. I felt discriminated against for being Māori, for having criminal convictions and tattoos. It was not a positive experience for me at all.

## **Present day**

### *Recovery and healing*

148. I continued to take medication to manage my anxiety and depression, but I found over time the medication amplified my symptoms. I was constantly tired and became increasingly less able to control my own thoughts on medication. It got to a point where medication was becoming far more detrimental than positive for me, so I had to explore other methods of managing my mental health.
149. I decided on a physically healthier lifestyle. I joined a gym and I worked out daily. This has worked for me as I am able to release all my stress and anxiety in a good way. I come home physically exhausted, but I have much greater mental clarity. I have a better understanding and awareness of myself, my behaviors and emotions. I am proud to say I have been medication free since 2010.
150. I am actively involved in my tamariki and mokopuna every day. My love of them and Maria sustains me and keeps me well.

151. I know that the suffering did not stop for some of the boys I was in care with once they were discharged from care. They lived terrible lives and some even took their own lives My nature coupled with Maria's love and support helped me survive, but so many others were not as fortunate as me.

### *Fatherhood*

152. Being a father was quite hard at first. I really struggled to trust others with my tamariki and was very protective of them. I have never abused them because I did not want them to go through what I had been through. I wanted a better life for my tamariki, than the life I had in State care.

153. I never had a "father" in the true sense of the word. I work hard to be a good father to my tamariki. I work hard to ensure they have a safe, loving and stable home free from drug and alcohol and where education always comes first.

154. It is paramount to me that my tamariki know they can rely on me for guidance, support and encouragement in whatever they do. They have responded to this with unconditional love to me. I am healed by their love. I continue to be sustained by their love.

### **Redress**

155. I really do not know what redress looks like for me. I have been asked this question and I do not know the answers.

156. I only know that I have healed myself. I think this speaks to my resilience and strength of character.

157. I know that Maria's love and my family's love have healed me. I was lucky but other survivors are not as lucky as me. Maybe the State could assist survivors with reconnecting with whānau, hapu and iwi.

158. I know that Maria's love of her culture has influenced her love of my culture. Maria lives and breathes her culture every day and so do I. This has healed me. Maybe the State could help reconnect survivors with their culture.

159. Many survivors that I was in care with had poor life outcomes. I believe the State has a responsibility to ensure that survivors have a roof over their head, food in their puku and clothes on their backs.

160. When I reflect on my time in care, there are some simple things that the State could have done to make things easier for me.

**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.

**Harry Daniel Tutahi**

Signed:

GRO-C

Dated: 18/08/2021

## Annex A

### Consent to use my statement

I, Harry Daniel Tutahi, 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:

- publication on the Inquiry website;
- 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.

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
- if you are happy for your identity to be known

Signed.....

GRO-C

Date: 14/08/2021