

Witness Name: Kathleen Patricia Coster
Statement No.: WITN0860001
Exhibits: WITN0860002 - WITN0860005
Dated: 9.03.2022

ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

WITNESS STATEMENT OF KATHLEEN PATRICIA COSTER

I, Kathleen Coster, states as follows: -

INTRODUCTION

1. My full name is Kathleen Patricia Coster, my name while I was in care was Kathleen GRO-B
2. I live in Christchurch and I am 59 years old, born on the GRO-B 1963.
3. I am making this statement in relation to my time in state care and the results of that care on my life.
4. When I was born I was given away to a foster family called the GRO-B-1
GRO-B-2 as social welfare were already involved with my family due to domestic violence issues.

GRO-B-1 GRO-B-2

– FOSTER HOME (age 0 – 7)

5. I grew up thinking that GRO-B-1 and GRO-B-2 were my mum and dad. I was treated really well by them. GRO-B-1 was loving but when GRO-B-2 would come home agitated, I would be locked in my room with my potty and toys for the evening. It was lonely but I was used to being on my own.
6. I was a spoilt child, my room was full with everything I could want. It was my safe space.

7. I was a happy, confident, rebellious child.
8. We moved to [GRO-B], so that I would be away from my birth family, to break that communication with my birth father. [GRO-B-2] was working on the dam there.
9. After a while we moved back to Christchurch and [GRO-B-1] ran a police cadet house, so I lived with the boys in blue from four to seven years old. They would take me out for breakfast. I saw them as helpful, but I saw them differently later when I was living with my parents.
10. My birth father would visit me, but I thought he was my uncle. He would be crying and upset when he visited. He would bring me lollies. [GRO-B-2] would get agitated when he left. Him and [GRO-B-1] would argue, but my birth father would keep coming to visit.
11. I understand that they wanted to adopt me but my birth father kept interfering.
12. When I was five, [GRO-B-1] and [GRO-B-2] took me to Australia. I was only there for a short period before my birth father came over and took me back to New Zealand. [GRO-B-1] then ended up moving back to New Zealand and I continued living with her.
13. I thought I was white because my parents were white. I didn't know the difference between dark and white. Because I had olive skin, [GRO-B-1] would say to people "she loves being out in the sun". So, I never thought anything of it.
14. I was an outspoken, happy kid. I was at school to play. I didn't have the world on my shoulders at this point.
15. I was seven years old when I had to leave the [GRO-B-1
GRO-B-2]. I went to school as normal, came home and my birth father was there. [GRO-B-1] was crying and [GRO-B-2] was upset. My bags were packed and that's when they explained to me that they weren't my parents, and that my "uncle" was actually my father.
16. My name was changed to Kathleen Coster. From that point on it was darkness. I was a completely different person from that day.

17. Bunny Matthews was one of my social workers. She was also linked to my mother, so when I went home to my birth parents, she was quite involved with me then, too.

GRO-B-3 AND GRO-B-4 - BIRTH PARENTS in GRO-B St Christchurch (from age 7)

18. I knew nothing about my siblings before coming home. I thought my parents were GRO-B-1 and GRO-B-2 and that I was an only child.

19. GRO-B-1 came with me home. I will never forget the look on my mother's face when I got home – it was a look of hatred. She didn't want it to happen. It was my father who had decided he was bringing me home. I was screaming down the driveway after GRO-B-1 cab when she left.

20. GRO-B-1 stayed in New Zealand for months trying to contact social welfare and me, but I never received those communications. She ended up moving back to Australia.

21. GRO-B-1 name was never allowed to be spoken in the house, or my mum would beat me.

22. My mum gave me beatings almost every day. My father was ignorant to most of the abuse as he wasn't often home. He didn't want the pressure of looking after kids and a house. He was only physical with me once, when he gave me a belt for ruining his darts set.

23. I instantly became a parent to the kids at home. There was GRO-B-5, GRO-B-6 and GRO-B-7 to there to start with, and then GRO-B-8 was born two weeks later but did not come home straight away. GRO-B-5 was brought up by my grandparents' in Picton. They whangai'd him to help my parents start their lives. My nana died and he was returned home. Then after another few year GRO-B-9 was born.

24. As I was the oldest daughter it was my job to run the house, so I was not allowed to make friends. I had to cook all meals and make sure everyone was fed. My mother had extreme OCD and would be watching me cook, to make sure I was doing it right. I had to be constantly watching and listening in case she attacked me while I was cooking.
25. I was always late to school as I had to get the kids up, washed, and fed. It got to the stage where I was always getting into trouble for being late – it was easier to be in trouble at school than trouble at home. Being at school was my time to go off and dream about where I had been with GRO-B-1.
26. I was going to school bruised, battered, anxious, I had migraines, and I didn't communicate well. When I got sick, I ended up in a health camp for a term. I went with GRO-B-6. There was no violence and we got to eat properly.

Physical abuse

27. There was crazy abuse in the home. It was like Once Were Warriors. GRO-B
GRO-B
28. I would be punished for anything – not wiping the bench properly, or dad not being home when he should be home. Anything that was attached to my father, I would be punished for.
29. I had a broken arms and leg, a split head, a split lip, all from my mum's abuse. She would pull my hair. She tried to drown me in the bath but luckily my father stopped that. Later she tried to put a 50 cent piece that was heated on the stove to teach me a lesson as she thought I had stolen some money.
30. I would grind my teeth when I slept, and she would pull me out of bed and take my clothes off and beat me. She would make me wait until she had gone back to bed before I could get dressed again and go back to bed.

31. She used jug cords to beat me, she would put pegs on my lips.
32. After she gave me a hiding, she would make me stand on my head behind the kitchen door.
33. If mum couldn't be bothered beating me, she would get GRO-B-6 to whack me around the head.
34. My mum broke my leg in four places when I was about ten years old. She pulled my right leg backwards over my back like a chicken bone.
35. If I got out of bed, she would attack me with my crutches.
36. I had a shorter leg as a result and had to walk with a roller every day to help lengthen it. Because my mum was so OCD, she made me constantly walk with it. Although it was hard at the time, that is one positive, as I have never had a limp again.
37. One time, my mum pulled, yanked and jumped on my arm until it broke. I think she thought she was a wrestler, I'm not sure what brought this on.
38. My dad had gone out and I was meant to clean the bathroom. My mother lost it and smacked me on the head. I had to clean the blood off the floor and was then sent to bed. My father found me in bed covered in blood. I was taken to central police station and photographed from head to toe. This was the catalyst for me to be moved out of my parent's care.
- I got treated in hospital for my injuries from my mum, I presume mum would explain them away at the hospital. Mum told me once that if I told anyone about her abuse she would kill me.
- One time when I was in hospital from the injuries, the staff told me it was my eleventh birthday, as they saw it on my files. I didn't even know.

39. I hated her guts. She had no compassion or love for me. In front of people, she would be the nicest person, but when that door was shut, I knew what I was going to get. She was abusive and psychotic. Her abuse was out the gate.
40. When the abuse happened, it was like she was a crazy person. After every beating, she would go to the bathroom and fix her face and makeup.
41. I didn't speak, communicate or function. I switched off when I was taken away from the GRO-B-1
GRO-B-2. I also switched off during the constant abuse. My mum called me "slow and dreamy" – I had to be in order to survive because I didn't know what was happening next. It wasn't a happy life, so I had to shut myself down.
42. My mum was a screamer, so the neighbours would call the police a lot.
43. One time I ran away and my Aunty, GRO-B-10, took me and hid me in a cupboard and told me to say nothing when the police came. The police came back again later and found me and took me home.
44. After the police report about my head injury, Mum had to be assessed. She was telling the doctors that she was going to kill me. She was admitted to Sunnyside. She made it clear to police that I was to blame, that I was going to kill her. My records say it was dangerous to have me near her.
45. My father came to the conclusion that it was better to take me away and have mum come back to the house, than take all the kids away, as there were no abuse issues with them. The police then pushed for the state ward application.
46. I am not sure if there was any involvement from Social Workers when I was at my parents but I presume there would have been at least when the Police were involved.
47. Once the police were involved, I was committed to the care of the Director-General of Social Welfare on 4 October 1974, for "living in a detrimental environment" **Refer**

WITN0860002 (Order Committing Child to the care of the Director-General, dated 4 October 1974).

GRO-B-11 GRO-B-12

– FOSTER HOME – Christchurch (age 7 – 11)

48. I went to live with Aunt [GRO-B-11] and Uncle [GRO-B-12]. They had four other children, two boys and two girls. They treated me the same as their own children, I felt that I was part of the family.
49. Uncle [GRO-B-12] was a firm man, as he was German. Aunt [GRO-B-11] was loving, caring and empathetic. When I first arrived, she did a lot of nurturing of me.
50. We moved from [GRO-B] to [GRO-B]. They portrayed it as though I was there to stay, and that my mum couldn't hurt me anymore. But when [GRO-B-12] was away, Mum would come and hurt me. I have learnt that from my file.
51. My mother didn't want me to be with Aunt [GRO-B-11], so she would often try to get me into trouble. I don't really know where she wanted me to be.
52. Uncle [GRO-B-12] said I was a good child, that I was settling in well and that he wanted to keep me, but it was my mother's interference that ruined things. Uncle [GRO-B-12] would come home and there would be marks on me, from my mum coming over and giving me a hiding.
53. Any school things that Aunt [GRO-B-11] paid for, mum would get angry. She wanted me to grow up hard. She thought I was too dreamy and slow.
54. Social Welfare wanted to put me in Girl Guides. Mum didn't want me going to Girl Guides, she wanted me at home. I don't know if there was anything said by [GRO-B-12] or [GRO-B-11] to Social Welfare about what my mum was doing.
55. My mother ruined my placement. There was no discussion. I was moved out of there.

56. In my mind, after moving me from [GRO-B-1], you could move me anywhere. My identity was already gone.

MR AND MRS [GRO-B-13] [GRO-B] STREET FAMILY HOME (age 11)

57. When I first went to the [GRO-B-13], it was just me and their two children. They treated me the same as their own.

58. Other children later came in, some were intellectually disabled. They were also treated the same.

59. The [GRO-B-13] were good, it was a safe home. I liked living there as they weren't my parents and didn't try to be. I didn't have to call them mum and dad, and I wasn't the only child in the house that wasn't theirs.

60. I would go to school (Woolston Primary), come home and do chores.

61. During one school holiday, I went on a train with my mother and sister to Riverton to stay with my grandfather. I think this was a test by Social Welfare to see what the relationship between my mother and myself would be like.

62. Going down on the train was fine, but once we arrived, I was back to my job of running the house. The abuse started to happen again.

63. When I came back a week later, Social Welfare asked if I wanted another holiday. I said "no" and told them what happened. Social Welfare then decided I would be moved outside of Christchurch so my mother couldn't have contact with me.

64. From then, the process of finding me a new placement began.

STRATHMORE GIRLS' HOME (age 11)

65. I went to Strathmore Girls Home, which was a transition home, for a week.

66. I didn't mind it there, it was just kids, staff and jobs. There was structure. There were no issues.

GRO-B-14 GRO-B-15

– FOSTER HOME – GRO-B (age 11)

67. I was with the GRO-B-14 GRO-B-15 for a few weeks. They had two daughters who were a few years older than me, they would have been about 13 years old.

68. They wanted me to call them mum and dad. I didn't want to because I hated women, because of the abuse from my mother, so I didn't want to call Mrs GRO-B-14 "mum", and I still had a connection with my father, so I didn't want to call Mr GRO-B-15 "dad".

69. Mr GRO-B-15 was a nice man, he would have me out doing the gardens with him and taking vegetables to the markets. He didn't treat me any different to his own daughters.

70. Mrs GRO-B-14 thought that I couldn't hear. She would discuss me with her friends and they would talk about bleaching my skin. In my mind I was white, since I had grown up with the GRO-B-1 GRO-B-2, thinking they were my parents, so I didn't understand why they would want to do that to me.

71. Mrs GRO-B-14 and her daughters thought I was deaf, because of the way I would shut down and be unresponsive due to coping with all of the trauma. I was only responsive to their animals. When people called me Kathy, I wouldn't respond, because from birth to seven years old I was Kathleen GRO-B. I hate being called Kathy.

72. They dressed me so that I looked like I was part of their family, because they were very particular and part of "high society". They dressed me properly, so I didn't look like a state ward.

73. I went to GRO-B Intermediate while I was living with them.

Racism

74. I remember the GRO-B-14 GRO-B-15 as "the Whites" because they were so anal about the colour of my skin.

75. They talked a lot about Māori's – saying they belong on the streets and that they're dirty.

76. I didn't stay with them long because the girls hated me. They were marchers and were a prominent white family. They were embarrassed someone "dirty" was living in their house. They would say things like "I wonder how long it would take to wash the dirt out of her skin?". I wasn't allowed to go to marching with them because I was black.

77. The daughters moved into their grandparent's house and gave Mrs [GRO-B-14] an ultimatum over me. So, I had to go.

78. I really didn't know who I was at this point. Being at the [GRO-B-14] [GRO-B-15] was the first time I realised there was something wrong with me from a colour point of view. It was horrible because I didn't fit in.

79. For a long time in my life after the [GRO-B-14] [GRO-B-15] I didn't go out into the sun.

80. Leaving the [GRO-B-14] [GRO-B-15] happened that same way as when I left [GRO-B-1] and when I left Auntie [GRO-B-11]. Out of the blue my stuff was packed and I was going. There was no discussion.

[GRO-B-16] [GRO-B-17] – FOSTER HOME - [GRO-B-1] (age 11)

81. The [GRO-B-16] [GRO-B-17] were an elderly couple. I stayed with them for about a term. They wanted to keep me permanently until Mr [GRO-B-6] decided I was evil and was to be put on a farm.

82. When I first arrived, there was two other foster children there, [GRO-B-18] and [GRO-B-19]. [GRO-B-19] had been hit by a car and had a brain injury. They also had their own daughter,

[GRO-B-20] or [GRO-B-20].

83. They took all my clothes, got rid of them and got me new clothes. They got me pleated kilts that go all the way to the ground, like the clothes worn in Gloriavale. This made the feeling of losing my identity much worse.

84. I was forced to go to church on Sundays and go to the Sallie's. I got to play the tambourine at the Christmas parade, however. That was my only highlight of living with them.

85. Mrs [GRO-B-17] was a lovely lady and we always had good food. I always used to try to be in the kitchen with her, since I was conditioned by my mum to always do the cooking, but she would tell me to go away, that I didn't need to be doing that.

86. During the start of my stay with the [GRO-B-16] [GRO-B-17] everything was focussed on [GRO-B-19] head injury.

87. After about 2-3 weeks, she started to shoo me out of the kitchen and send me into the lounge room where Mr [GRO-B-16] would sit with his radiogram. That's when the sexual abuse started.

Sexual abuse from Mr [GRO-B-16]

88. Mr [GRO-B-16] started with putting my hands in his pants and my face in his groin. He would put my hand in his pocket, where the bottom of the pocket wasn't sewn and he wasn't wearing anything underneath.

89. He would force me to perform oral sex – I wanted to bite it.

90. It was my first sexual experience of any kind. I didn't know it was sexual. I hadn't been exposed to any sexual abuse at all.

91. I knew something was wrong, but I didn't know what it was. It didn't make me feel good. I hated the smell.

92. When he first started doing it, [GRO-B-18] and I were really close, so I told her. She said don't worry, he's been doing that for a long time [GRO-B-18] and I would try to protect

each other. It was going on anytime I was sent to the lounge to keep out of Mrs [GRO-B-17] way. It probably happened about ten times.

93. Prior to the abuse happening, I was really happy, but I started to rebel. This is shown in my social welfare files notes, they show there were problems with me.

94. I started to shut down and refuse to do as I was told, including not go into the lounge room when Mrs [GRO-B-17] told me to. I'd misbehave so that she would send me to my room, or I would say that I had a headache and had to go to bed.

95. I became a sickly child. I hadn't been sick since being at home with my parents. I would always get headaches. I often couldn't get out of bed or go to school.

96. The change in my behaviour is what changed it for Mrs [GRO-B-17]. She went from being lovely and telling me she wanted to adopt me, to wanting to get rid of me.

97. I didn't tell anyone about the abuse because I had no one to tell. I didn't have a social worker. I was also scared. My mum used to tell me that if I told anyone about her abuse, she would kill me. I had trust in absolutely no one.

98. I was waiting for my dad to visit so I could tell him, but he never came.

99. There were three occasions where I sat outside all day, morning to night, waiting for my dad to visit as I thought he was going to. He never came. I couldn't get over the fact he never came. This added to me shutting down and getting headaches. I just couldn't function.

School

100. I was just dreaming my way through school. Nothing sunk in.

101. During a school holiday I was sent to the [GRO-B-21] [GRO-B-22] farm to see if I fit in. Mr and Mrs [GRO-B-21] had two other foster children, [GRO-B] and [GRO-B] who were there short term. They also had a son called [GRO-B-23], he was about seven years old.

102. [GRO-B-23] was a submissive little boy. [GRO-B-22] had nothing to do with him because he was too submissive.

103. When I visited, they let me choose a kitten to look after.

104. It was a really nice place to be. I learnt to milk cows, I had a lot of chores, but I also had a lot of freedom. We could make tree huts.

105. They acted really nice and made it so good that I wanted to come back and live with them.

106. I then went back to the [GRO-B-16
GRO-B-17] for over a month, before returning to the [GRO-B-21
GRO-B-22].

[GRO-B-21 GRO-B-22]

– FOSTER HOME – Motukaraka, Canterbury (age 12)

107. I only found out that I was moving to the farm when I was on the way there, I think a social worker took me.

108. I stayed with the [GRO-B-21
GRO-B-22] for a long time, for about three years.

109. When I arrived, I found out that they had put the kitten down because the time frame they were expecting me to arrive in didn't happen. They told me they didn't think I was coming back.

110. They made me call them mum and dad. [GRO-B-21] started to tell me that I was her daughter, and that I would be her only daughter.

111. When I arrived they had a two-year-old called [GRO-B-1]. He was left somewhere in a rubbish bag and they fostered him too.

Relationship with [GRO-B-21]

112. I went to school with [GRO-B-1] friend's son, who told me that [GRO-B-1] wanted to see me. I told [GRO-B-21] and [GRO-B-21] told me that was never going to happen and that I was there to stay. The more I nagged about wanting to see [GRO-B-1], the more my relationship with [GRO-B-21] changed.

Visit to Marylands

113. I was allowed to see [GRO-B-1] once with [GRO-B-21], and she made it clear it would be the just the one time. After that visit, [GRO-B-21] and my social worker at the time, Mrs [GRO-B], took me to Marylands to give me a "wake-up call". Mrs [GRO-B] must have gotten a letter from [GRO-B-1], telling her about how [GRO-B-21] and I visited her in Christchurch.
114. [GRO-B-21] and Mrs [GRO-B] told me that if I didn't change my behaviour that's where I'd end up.
115. I wrote letters to [GRO-B-1] but [GRO-B-21] wouldn't send them. I know that she would read them.
116. [GRO-B-21] became paranoid, and thought I was contacting [GRO-B-1] and my family.
117. During this time, Social Welfare had organised for me to have phone calls with [GRO-B-9], as I missed [GRO-B-9] and was always talking about [GRO-B-9]. [GRO-B-21] had taught me to knit, so I knitted jerseys to gift to [GRO-B-9]. [GRO-B-21] then decided I wasn't allowed to talk to [GRO-B-9], or my family. I wasn't allowed on the phone anymore, and I wasn't able to give [GRO-B-9] the jersey I made [GRO-B-9].
118. My relationship with [GRO-B-21] became really strained.
119. [GRO-B-21] started having an affair with another man. She would put me to bed at 6pm, and while [GRO-B-22] went out drinking, she would have another man over. I wanted to know what was going on, so I jumped out of my bedroom window and went around to the lounge and looked through the window. I saw [GRO-B-21] and another man having sex. I realised I could sneak out my window each night and no one would ever know. This went on for a while.
120. One day, the man must have left early and [GRO-B-21] found that I wasn't in my bed. [GRO-B-22] came home and they were looking for me. When I got home I realised they had been in my room and knew I'd get a hiding so I ran away.

121. [GRO-B-21] was a screamer, she would lose her shit and scream. To give me time away from her, [GRO-B-22] would take me out on the farm. He taught me to drive the truck and do the hay. I liked going out on the farm with him. Then the kisses goodnight from him changed, which I will come back to.
122. [GRO-B-21] would pull my hair. She would throw me on the ground. When she started to hit me, I snapped. After the abuse from my mother, I swore no woman would lay a finger on me again.
123. I started to retaliate – if she pulled my hair, I'd pull her hair back. If she slapped me, I'd slap her back. According to my files, [GRO-B-21] admitted to my psychiatrist at the time that she hit me first on one occasion **Refer WITN0860003** (Psychiatrist Report by Robyn Hewland, dated 22 November 1977).
124. My files say that [GRO-B-21] visited my social worker, Mrs [GRO-B], to tell her that I attacked her, and that I bit her. [GRO-B-21] also said that she had received calls from parents at school who said I also attacked their children, which wasn't true. The notes show that when the [social worker] contacted the school about the attacks, they were "most surprised" **Refer WITN0860004** (Social Worker notes, dated 21 March 1978).
125. Some stuff in my files was true, some wasn't. From what I recall, [GRO-B-21] had a blood issue where she would get big bruises very easily – so I think she blamed me for those marks.
126. When she started to force me to milk the cows with [GRO-B-22], that's where the sexual abuse from him would happen, I'd climb up a tree and scream at her. Eventually I would come down and get a hiding, but I felt much better for screaming.
- Sexual abuse by [GRO-B-22]*
127. [GRO-B-22] would watch me swim. He would drink his beer and watch me whenever I was in the pool. It made me uncomfortable.

128. [GRO-B-22] would drink a lot, every day.
129. At one stage [GRO-B-21] got sick, then [GRO-B-22] started sexually abusing me.
130. The first time he had sex with me was when [GRO-B-21] was in bed sick. [GRO-B-22] and I were in the lounge. He put his hand over my mouth so she wouldn't hear.
131. [GRO-B-22] told me that I couldn't tell [GRO-B-21], or I'd be kicked out of their home. I believed him. I didn't know any different.
132. It happened on the farm, in the hay sheds – he would sexually abuse me at any opportunity he got.
133. I got rebellious and I'd hit him in the penis.
134. I had to lock myself in my room at night as if I opened my door to go to the bathroom, he would appear.
135. I told [GRO-B-21] that [GRO-B-22] was doing things to me that he shouldn't be doing. She didn't care. She didn't give a shit. If I was out of the way, she could do what she wanted with whoever she wanted, like the man she was having an affair with.
136. I kept a diary where I wrote everything that happened in it. One day, I realised it was gone and that [GRO-B-21] was in the toilet. When I came back later, the diary was back in the drawer, so I knew she knew. I knew she read my diary and knew what [GRO-B-22] was doing to me.
137. I decided I would write whatever I wanted and eventually she would have to react. I wrote fantasy stuff – about boys, even though I didn't have a boyfriend.
138. [GRO-B-21] then told my social worker at the time [GRO-B] that I was having sex with a boy and that she thought I would get pregnant, even though I didn't have a boyfriend and I never went anywhere – just to school and back home again.
139. [The social worker] visited a couple of times, she was confused by my relationship with [GRO-B-21] and nothing was ever done apart from taking me to Strathmore Girls Home and putting me on a farm for a break for [GRO-B-21]

STRATHMORE GIRLS HOME (age 13)

140. When I started to misbehave at the [GRO-B-21
GRO-B-22], I was sent to the Girls Home so they could teach me a lesson, apparently to make me realise that I had a good home.
141. When I arrived, I had to take all my clothes off and be photographed. Staff members were there, as well as Mrs [GRO-B], my social worker. They said it was a “form of identification”.
142. I refused to be photographed, so I was sent to the cells until I had come to grips with it. It felt like I was in the cells forever, I’m not sure how long it was though.
143. In the cell there was a bible, and a pencil. There was nothing to write on.
144. There was a bed in the cell and I was fed if and when they remembered.
145. I remember there was a window, high up, and that I could hear voices of girls who were sitting outside.
146. Eventually I had to submit to the photograph being taken of me to get out of the cell. I had been in the cell for a long time with no interaction with any other girls. I was not mentally coping, so I gave in and had the naked photos done.

[GRO-B-21 GRO-B-22]

– FOSTER HOME (age 13)

147. After my stint in the Girls’ Home, I went back to the [GRO-B-21
GRO-B-22].
148. [GRO-B-21
GRO-B-22] were now also fostering a Samoan girl called [GRO-B-24]. We shared a bedroom, but we never talked. She bounced in and out of the [GRO-B-21
GRO-B-22].
149. [GRO-B-22] started to say to me that if I wouldn’t let him do what he wanted to me, he would do it to [GRO-B-24], so it was easier for me to go on with it.

Further Sexual abuse by [GRO-B-22]

150. One day when [GRO-B-22] and I were working on the farm, we were out in a paddock and he had sex with me. I tried to get away. My pants were down, and I was trying

to run away when my leg got caught on a barbed wire fence. It caused a large gash, about a foot long. Blood was gushing out and I could see all the white inside it.

151. [GRO-B-21] wouldn't take me to the hospital. She treated it at home. I was kept off from school for a while because of the injury.

152. Seeing the scar on my leg still brings back the memories. I still find it hard to look at.

153. I was attending school while I was at the [GRO-B-21] [GRO-B-22] but after my leg got cut I had some time off school.

154. [GRO-B-21] became sick with septicaemia and was in hospital for a long time. That's when the crazy sexual stuff happened, because she wasn't in the house. That's when [GRO-B-22] started having sexual intercourse with me in their bed.

155. [GRO-B-22] probably had sexual intercourse with me 100 times. He would do it at every opportunity that he had.

156. He would put his hands over my mouth and tie my wrists to the bed.

157. [GRO-B-22] would pick me up and drop me off whenever I had to go anywhere. Every time I had to go in the car with him, he would sexually abuse me. That meant I had two choices – stay at home where he would abuse me or have him pick me up where he would abuse me anyway.

Emotional abuse by [GRO-B-22]

158. Apart from the sexual abuse, [GRO-B-22] wasn't physically aggressive like [GRO-B-21]. He didn't beat me. It was more emotional abuse from him. He would fill my head with horrible things, like how I couldn't tell [GRO-B-21] what had happened because she would never believe me.

Reporting the sexual abuse to [GRO-B-21] (again)

159. I would tell [GRO-B-21] I needed to tell her something, but [GRO-B-22] would come in and say "don't worry, she told me, we need to go work on the farm now".

160. It got to the point where I would wet on a towel in my bedroom at night, instead of going to the toilet. This was because if he heard my door open, he would come and take me for sex. It was like he had a radar. [GRO-B-21] wouldn't notice because she would be out from sleeping pills.

Emotional abuse by [GRO-B-21]

161. [GRO-B-21] would tell me that I was going to be like my Mother. She would also make comments about me being Māori, or that I was going to "end up like a Māori". I would snap, another person would come out of me, I would be so angry.

Counselling

162. I started counselling while I lived with the [GRO-B-21 GRO-B-22]. I was chucked into a counselling session of about 15 of us. It was a bit like an AA meeting - we all went around and introduced ourselves. That's how I met one of my brother's for the first time since we were kids. We didn't know each other, we just kept staring at each other. Then when they said our names, we realised.

163. I only went once, I didn't go again because [GRO-B-21] didn't want to bring me into town. She said I didn't really need the counselling either.

164. I think the reason I got moved out in the end was because I got a new Social Worker Cyril Smith, he was amazing for me, he cared.

STRATHMORE GIRLS' HOME (age 14.5)

165. I was sent straight to the cells on arrival.

166. I had to visit the Girls' Home doctor, Doctor Fahy. He is the one who got imprisoned for sexual abuse of his patients. He said he had to do an internal examination on me. I freaked out and was running around. They put me back into the cells until I gave in and agreed to have the internal.

167. They said it was because they wanted to know if I was sexually active and whether I had any STDs.
168. I had to lie on a stainless-steel bed and put my feet in stirrups. I'd never seen anything like it in my life.
169. I was held down by a nurse while Doctor Fahy performed the internal. He wasn't gentle. It took forever. I freaked out and tensed up, which made it even worse. It was the worst experience.
170. I got really sick again afterwards. I even had a priest praying over me, as they thought I was going to die. The doctors didn't do anything as I was non-functional. I was in LaLa land. The girls would eat my food, so they assumed I was eating, but I wasn't. I was very unwell.
171. That part of my life cost me the ability to have more children, because after that, a smear to me was the biggest thing. Before having smear tests, I would vomit and have headaches. Because I couldn't deal with the smears, I avoided having them. This resulted in me having to get a radical hysterectomy later in life.
172. After the internal examination I was allowed up to the main house.
173. I learnt to stand up for myself. I got pushed down the stairs by a girl, so I pushed her down them. We became best friends.
174. In general, I had no issues at Strathmore. The man that ran it was a good man. I never had a problem with him. He would sit and talk to me.
175. I realised that my friend's dad was a warden at Paparoa prison and also worked at Strathmore. My friend's dad helped me get out of Strathmore before Christmas. He talked to my social worker, Cyril, and helped me transition to GRO-B-25
GRO-B-26.

BACK TO BIRTH PARENTS

176. I went back to my parents for a couple of days. It didn't go well. I used to go to bed and pray to die.

177. One time when my mum was abusing me, I played dead until she stopped. I would have rather stay in the cells in the Girls' Home than go back to my parents.

178

GRO-B

GRO-B-25
GRO-B-26

- FOSTER HOME (age 15)

179. I lived with GRO-B-25 GRO-B-26 for a couple of school terms, so about 6-8 months, I think it was the end of 5th form, summer and beginning of 6th form. They had a son called GRO-B-27 who was about the same age as me, and a daughter who was a bit older.

180. In the holidays I worked at Templeton Hospital, helping in the kitchens.

181. GRO-B-25 GRO-B-26 treated me like their family. I didn't want to leave, so I would do the housework to earn my keep.

182. Unfortunately, I had to leave as GRO-B-25 GRO-B-26 thought GRO-B-27 and I were getting too close.

183. A man called GRO-B-28 worked with GRO-B-25. GRO-B-28 had daughters. My social worker Cyril met with the GRO-B-28 GRO-B-29 and thought it would be a good fit for me with them.

GRO-B-28 GRO-B-29 **- FOSTER HOME (age 15)**

184. I lived with GRO-B-28 GRO-B-29 and their daughters for about 3 months.

185. I was 15 and wanted to leave school by this point. GRO-B-28 GRO-B-29 said that if I found a job, they would help me find a flat, but I had to wait until I was 16 to leave school.

186. I didn't want to live with anyone, I wanted to be independent, so I started looking for jobs. I got a job at Woolworths.

LIFE AFTER STATE CARE

Cyril Smith - social worker

187. Cyril agreed that school wasn't for me and that it would be better to get a job.

188. Cyril was a good man. As soon as I met him he told me about who he was, how he used to be a probation officer overseas but was also qualified to be a social worker as well. I liked him and he told me that he could read my situation. He knew what it was and was going to get me out of there. He even took me to stay with him and his wife in the interim before I went to one of the girls homes.

Discharge from state care

189. I moved in with a girl and slept on her couch. When the flat next door came up for rent, I moved in there. I was doing well on my own and not getting into any trouble. Cyril said that he wanted to discharge me. A letter from Cyril shows that I was discharged on 15 December 1981, although I was not altogether too happy about being discharged as I had no family and no support. **Refer WITN0860005** (Letter from Cyril Smith to Kath Coster, dated 23 December 1981, Social Worker notes dated 9 June 1981.

190. I worked at [GRO-B], but I hated it as I had to sit in one spot on the phone all day.

191. I worked at [GRO-B] as a machinist, then when I was 18, I worked at [GRO-B].

First daughter

192. I met [GRO-B-30] at [GRO-B]. We got engaged when I was 18 and I fell pregnant. After I had my daughter, the problems really began because [GRO-B-1] had come back from Australia and made contact with me. Then all the lies started to unravel about what happened, and why I had to leave her and live with my parents.

193. I couldn't handle having a relationship while having a child. [GRO-B-30] started showing her affection, so I started running away with my daughter and eventually left him.

194. The main reason I had stayed with him for as long as I did was because my mother said I couldn't stay with him, it wouldn't last. So, I wanted to defy her.

195. I was medicated a lot through that period after having my daughter, as I permanently lived in migraine land, I was so fatigued I couldn't function.

196. I left GRO-B-30 then met someone else, but I couldn't deal with sex and relationships, and any of that.

197. I tried to kill myself. GRO-C and realised I couldn't do that as it was worse than GRO-C

198. I then got an opportunity with a time share company. This job was a changing point in my life. It taught me self-esteem, confidence and self-worth. My job was to manage other people, and I enjoyed it.

Second daughter

199. I ended up having another child to a new partner. He was abusive. I left him and I left my daughter with him because she was everything to him. He also threatened me that if I went to court to get full custody, I'd never get her. I believed him.

200. For four years I lived on my own with my oldest daughter.

201. At that time, the abandonment and rejection issues hit home so I started doing some counselling. I had a counsellor for many years and unravelled a lot of family stuff. We also worked on the abuse side of things too.

202. I had started working at an insurance company, training people. I set up a brokerage for a company, and then set up a time share company. I earned good money and spoiled my children.

203. I realised I had to go back to my ex-partner as my youngest daughter wasn't coming home from school. That's when the abuse happened. I went from victim to an abuser.

204. It turned into an absolute nightmare which I wouldn't leave because I didn't want to leave her behind.

205. He was the best dad, he had a healthy relationship with her, he was protective. But that led to another problem – because once again, I was seeing someone be so close to my daughter. All I could see was red flags and alarm bells.

206. I ended up abusing him back. I was physically fighting with him because I wasn't running away. I had always been in flight mode, but now I was in fight mode.

207. I got a protection order and left because I thought I would hurt him.

Recent life

208. My youngest daughter moved to Wellington and became a dental assistant. She then went to Otago University to become a GRO-B. She graduates in December this year.

209. My older daughter is a motivational trainer and a personal assistant.

210. The most important thing to my daughters is their dads. I live with both my daughter's dads in Christchurch. I'm not 'with' either of them, but we all live together in a big house. I know it sounds odd.

211. I recently met a man who treated me well. It was foreign. I'm not used to that. Then my niece ended her own life, so I had to go away to organise the funeral for my family.

212. Just before I flew to Christchurch for the funeral, I was house sitting for the man that I was seeing, when someone attacked me while I was at home alone. I woke up on the kitchen floor, to the phone ringing. My head was split open. I had to get staples in my head and I'm not allowed to drive long distances.

213. GRO-B

214. I couldn't get the help I needed in Nelson, so I had to come back to Christchurch see a brain specialist, who told me I had to slow down, but now that they understand my history, they say that my brain handles trauma.

Helping other survivors

215. I did a free mind course, I learnt about cognitive science, and applied the tools I was learning to help myself, but also to help other survivors. For some reason they would all gravitate towards me.

216. I do a lot of mentoring of survivors. I prepare people for things like this, being interviewed by the Royal Commission. People call me at 11pm at night in the build-up to the process, during, and afterwards. I understand what it feels like – I have been through the same thing when I started going to counselling, where I was so stressed, I would not be able to mentally function for days. I would vomit on the way to counselling.

IMPACTS

Intergenerational

217. I am the third generation to be in state care. My grandmother and father both went through state care. The fourth generation is my nephew.

218. I visit someone I love on a regular basis. Someone I love ran away from GRO-B Children's Home. He's been in 63 placements in seven years but the downside is, I thought the system had changed.

Loss of identity

219. I have always struggled with not knowing who I am. From age zero to seven I was a happy child who knew who they were, then everything changed. I look at my life like Cinderella but back to front.

Loss of cultural identity

220. There was no way that I wanted to be Māori when all through state care it was drummed into me that Māori beat kids up and live on the streets. I wasn't told anything positive about Māori culture, only negative comments like I should "scrub" my skin.
221. I lied until I was in my 30's about being Māori. I said I was Greek. I just wouldn't acknowledge that I was Māori. I lost a lot of friends because of it.
222. I didn't fit in to the dark side because I was white. I was called a "plastic Māori". I just didn't fit the traits.
223. It's that I'm attached to look at me like it's disgraceful which doesn't help in my cultural journey. When I don't act in the way according to what they are expecting, they just shunt me aside. I have been an outsider through all of the homes, and then when I came to the end of that, they were expecting me to have some understanding of what is going on and I have none at all. It's not because I haven't wanted to or I haven't tried, it's like I conditioned my brain "I'm not Māori, I don't want it" and my brain isn't going to jump past that. I feel really ashamed, that I have to question what I'm hearing when teo reo is spoken.
224. My youngest daughter speaks te reo. I've tried time and time again to learn, but it doesn't stick. It's embarrassing, I go to hui' and I have to say I'm the most colonised person in the room but that's okay.
225. The biggest loss is that I had no knowledge of Māori culture when I had children. I knew they were going to miss out on their heritage because of my conditioning.
226. I have always been denied my Māori culture, if I had it, I could be doing the work I am doing now with survivors, but with a cultural lens, and I'd be all over it.
227. I believe one of the biggest things I wish had had was knowing who I am. I am still triggered by this as I look like a Maori and yet I have no understanding of my

culture, I am quite happy to say I am one of the most colonized Maoris you will come across. I have tried many times to learn my culture, but it just does not happen. I have been conditioned to think and behave in a certain way, which can be off-putting for myself and other Maori people that interact from a cultural perspective. Also, Family, that did not know I existed then or now, and I am still having to justify who I am at 59yrs of age.

228. Difficulty with intimate relationships

229. I can't have a healthy relationship because I don't know what that is. I struggle with love and being loved. If someone says they love me, my instant reaction is to back off a hundred miles.

230. I mistrust men and struggle with intimacy and sexual relationships. I find that I switch off and go into a blank place. I'd rather not go there. I'd rather live alone and have no sex for the rest of my life.

231. My recent relationship with a man that treated me well, that wanted to help me cook and make sure I was okay, that was all foreign to me. It brought up all my insecurities all over again.

Difficulty with friendships

232. I have more friends that are men because they are safe to me. I don't have many women friends, because of the issues with my Mum, and all the other foster mums.

Difficulty with being a parent

233. I found it difficult to understand the role and importance of being a parent. I had no role models to teach me how to be one. How to provide safety for my children and myself, or how to choose the right person to parent with.

Loss of connection with family

234. I resented my mum. I built a relationship with her before she died. GRO-C

GRO-C

235. I have gone back to try to build relationships with my family. We look alike, but we are nothing alike. It's hard for me that I don't fit in. I have very little to do with my family. My family now are my girls and the survivors I work with.

236. It's taken me a long time to build a connection with my younger daughter. Because I had left her, I created abandonment issues for her. Her father had also conditioned her to believe that I had left because I didn't want her.

Inability to have more children

237. Because of what Doctor Fahy did to me with the internal examination, I always struggled with smear tests, I avoided them.

238. I also thought that what Doctor Fahy did was normal. When I was pregnant, I went to GRO-B at the GRO-B Medical Centre. He performed a lot of internals on me during my pregnancy, all the time. I thought it was normal. It wasn't until years later that I realised I had let someone do it to me all over again. This experience also made me avoid smear tests.

239. As a result, I ended up getting cancer, which wasn't picked up early and I had to get a radical hysterectomy, meaning I couldn't have any more children. I would have liked to have had more children.

Medication

240. I've had lots of medication since I was a teenager, and into my adult years to cope with the trauma. I had spent all those years in freeze mode, medicated and frozen. It was my body's way of protecting me.

241. The medication had a huge impact on me. I stopped it all about 15 years ago to go on GRO-C which is a herbal medication. I have not had any pharmaceuticals ever since.

Ended their own life *attempts*

242. I have tried to take my life twice, once when I was 24, and again when I was 30 years old.

CLAIMS

ACC

243. My counsellor, Neil McPherson, helped me make an ACC claim when I had my second daughter.

244. I was initially assessed at 80% impairment from my abuse, but it was later dropped to 30% as they said the abuse from my mother didn't count. I get paid \$2,000 every year, which I mostly give away.

245. I felt that the process was a load of hogwash. From age zero to seven I was in foster care and I was safe. The state allowed me to go from there, back to the abuse. The physical and psychological impact of that was huge. The abandonment and the rejection was the biggest impact. My identity also completely changed.

246. I didn't understand anything about their processes. It was like talking to a brick wall.

MSD

247. I don't know anything about the MSD historical claims process but I would like to.

Redress & Recommendations for the future

MSD claims

248. If you die, your children should receive the pay-out from the government as they have also been impacted by the abuse.

Health package

249. There needs to be a complete health package put in place for survivors. A lot have gone through mental health issues, eating disorders, addictions, lost opportunities and inability to provide their family a home. A full health plan needs to be put in place for those people – from dentistry, and everything they should have received through care, and compensation for what they have suffered.

250. There should be health camps to teach them how to take care of themselves – teach them that it's okay to have a massage, to go somewhere and stare at the water. Teach them the basics – how to cook food and feed themselves.

251. When the money runs out, the health runs out, so there needs to be both.

Education

252. Education needs to be provided – for those children that went through trauma, school was non-existent. They were there, but not there. If a survivor wants to go back now and get some education, the state should pay. If they want to have a go, they should be able to have a go, because the state took that opportunity away from them.

253. Social workers

254. There needs to be enough social workers to do their job properly. When concerns are raised by children, they should not overlook them.

255. Social workers should be trained and equipped with the tools to deal with damaged children.

Foster parents

256. Foster parents should be vetted. There should be in-depth checks of the homes as the writing is on the wall in terms of how the home is kept. If you can't love your home, how can you love your kids.

257. Foster parents should be equipped with the tools to deal with damaged children that are in their care.

258. Foster parents should not see taking care of children as a form of income. I constantly heard parents complaining about late payments, and they resented us for it. It seemed to be all they cared about.

Support for families

259. Where the natural parents show that they can't cope, support should be provided to them. Don't remove the child, work with the parent so that the child can stay with the family.

Medical system

260. There needs to be a cut back on psychotic pharmaceutical drugs for children to manage them.

261. The system thinks that pharmaceuticals are the only option, but our bodies aren't made to have those long term.

GRO-C