

Witness Name: GRO-A Mr EY

Statement No.: WITN0431001

Exhibits: WITN0431002–WITN0431007

Dated: 01/02/2022

ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

WITNESS STATEMENT OF GRO-A Mr EY

I, GRO-A Mr EY will say as follows:

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Ko Taranaki te maunga
Ko Ngāti te Whiti te Hapū
Ko Te Ati awa te Iwi
Ko Parihaka te marae
Ko GRO-A Mr EY taku ingoa.
- 1.2. My name is GRO-A Mr EY. I was born GRO-A 1949 in GRO-A Taranaki. I am currently GRO-A GRO-A and am 72 years old.
- 1.3. Mum's name was GRO-B Pops was known as GRO-B but his name was GRO-B
- 1.4. My iwi are Te Ati awa, Rangitane and Ngāi Tahu. My Mum's father was purebred Moriōri from the Chatham Islands.
- 1.5. My evidence is about my younger brother, James GRO-B. Everyone in the whānau called him Jimmy. Jimmy went to live at Tokanui Psychiatric Hospital and died while he was there.
- 1.6. I have reviewed some documents from Jimmy's file from Tokanui. I will refer to documents from this file to support my evidence.

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- 1.7. He was born [GRO-B] 1950 and was admitted to Tokanui Psychiatric Hospital on 11 April 1963. Two years later, on [GRO-B] 1965, Jimmy died while in care at Tokanui ("Letter from Doctor Boyd" [WITN0431002]).

Early life

- 1.8. Mum and Pops had four tamariki together. [GRO-B] is the oldest, I'm the next, Jimmy was the next after me and [GRO-B] is the youngest. Jimmy was 13 months younger than me. The four of us are full siblings and we were all born in [GRO-A]. Pops had a big first family with another woman, before he and Mum got together, so we also have 14 half-siblings.
- 1.9. Pops didn't interact with us kids. There were no in-depth conversations, it was only yes/no conversations we had with him. He would often sit outside at home, smoking his pipe.
- 1.10. Mum was a very gentle person. She always rallied around with aroha and connected to us all. But the violence at home, what happened there broke us all.
- 1.11. Pops was a very violent man towards Mum and me. I used to get bad knocks to the head – from his boots, from pieces of four by two – you name it. I was punched heavily in anger. Mum got the same treatment.
- 1.12. Jimmy was never hit by Pops but there was one horrible incident where Pops got very violent and Jimmy was caught up in it. We had had some family photos taken, just Mum and us kids, and we had all spoken about hiding the invoice from Pops when it arrived. But one day, we went to sit down at the table for dinner. Jimmy was out collecting the mail from the letterbox. He put the photographer's letter face-up right in front of Pops. We had forgotten to tell Jimmy to hide the bill.
- 1.13. Pops gave Mum one of the worst hidings. Everything on the dinner table went flying, food and drinks. Jimmy either jumped on top of Mum to try and protect her or fell off his stool. I remember he hit his head pretty hard on the floor. Mum was being bashed, she was on the floor. Then her body was covering Jimmy's, trying to protect him, all while she's being kicked. I could hear the thuds of the kicks. She was screaming, "help, help!"
- 1.14. I dived on top of her to try and protect her from the blows. The dining room was in tatters, broken glass, plates, spilt food and drink everywhere. Everyone was screaming. The girls had scattered. Pops finally stopped and it was all over. He went outside to sit on his box and smoke his pipe.
- 1.15. "You right, Mum?" I said. "Jimmy, you okay?" He replied, "Yep, sore all over". I later remember telling my sisters that Jimmy's head and leg were hurting him. "But he'll survive, thank God," I said. I don't know how anyone could have survived that treatment. It really disturbed me. Poor Jimmy he was caught in the eye of the storm, completely oblivious.
- 1.16. There was a story in our whanau that Jimmy was dropped by our half-sister [GRO-B] when he was just little and he bumped his head on the fireplace. I am not sure if that is true or if Jimmy was just born the way he was.

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- 1.17. When I was growing up, I realised that Jimmy was a bit affected. I remember his eyes used to roll rather oddly. Jimmy was slow and he struggled physically. I noticed something was wrong with his leg. He struggled but he was able to walk. He was slow in his reactions. He was able to communicate and could have simple talks with us and follow along if we asked him to do something.
- 1.18. I was very close to Jimmy. I loved him and took care of him. At home, we would play hide and seek or we'd take turns to get the newspaper and he would do all of that too. We would go into the paddocks to look at the ducks. We would play games of marbles. He was happy when we were around him. Jimmy always tried to join in and make an attempt at being with the kids.
- 1.19. Jimmy went to **GRO-B** school in **GRO-B** like the rest of us kids. He would sit at school alone a lot. I felt sad about that, so I'd sit with him or say, "someone go be by boy".
- 1.20. We would korero Māori at home and school – just small phrases like haere māi or kai. A nun at school heard me one day and told me to go into the passageway. She gave me the strap for it.

I jumped the gate, left school and walked home following the railway. It took me hours. When I got home, Mum asked me what I was doing there, so I explained what happened and that I had been strapped for speaking Māori. I think she felt disturbed about what happened and emotional. Mum stopped teaching us kids Māori from then on. She stopped to keep us all safe and so the same thing didn't happen to the other kids. We carried on singing waiata at home though, which made me happy.

Events leading up to admission in care

- 1.21. Jimmy was often going to the hospital or the doctors. He wasn't doing too well. I never really asked Mum what's wrong with Jimmy. If Mum and Pops were told anything, they never told us. When Mum would come back from appointments, we weren't given specific information about what happened at those appointments.
- 1.22. I think it was Pops who suggested that Jimmy go to a home. The doctors may have been the ones who first mentioned it to Mum and Pops. Then the name of Tokanui came up, I guess it was the doctor who said to try there.
- 1.23. The documents show that Jimmy was first offered a placement at Levin Hospital and Training School. Then his "early removal from the home" as a "matter of urgency" meant that Pops and Mum accepted an alternative placement to Levin, which was Tokanui. A social worker says that Jimmy appeared to be "of fairly low potential and not one who would benefit from a training programme" ("Letter to medical superintendent at Tokanui from social worker" [WITN0431003]).
- 1.24. Jimmy was struggling to walk and Mum said the hospital will get him a wheelchair and that sort of stuff. The documents say that Jimmy did not have one as he had outgrown his old one ("Social worker case notes" [WITN0431004]). I didn't know exactly what Tokanui was,

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I just knew it was a hospital. Jimmy was nearly 13 years old when he went there. Mum and Pops went up and dropped him off in the car.

2. Abuse

Tokenui Psychiatric Hospital

Arrival in institution

- 2.1. Our family doctor's name was Doctor Moss, he was a general practitioner in GRO-A. He was the referring doctor for Jimmy's admission to Tokanui ("Social worker case notes" [WITN0431004]).
- 2.2. Jimmy's weight is recorded as eight stone, nine ounces and his height as four foot nine inches ("Tokaui admissions document" [WITN0431005]).
- 2.3. On admission, he was diagnosed with a mental condition of "imbecility" ("Letter from Doctor Boyd" [WITN0431002]).

Family contact

- 2.4. When Jimmy went up to Tokanui, I'd ask Mum, "how's Jimmy getting on?" but it seemed to me that we lost contact with him for a year or at least I didn't know about any contact. I asked Mum a lot if we could visit. Then, one day, Mum said we're going to visit Jimmy. "Oh, wow" was what I thought. I felt happy and excited.
- 2.5. We went to Tokanui to visit Jimmy and that was the tragedy.
- 2.6. It was Mum, Pops, me and both my sisters who went to visit Jimmy. We sat outside at Tokanui, but Pops sat off to the side, smoking his pipe. He was aloof. I wasn't surprised by this.
- 2.7. The documents indicate this visit was probably on 15 February 1964 ("Patient ward record" [WITN0431006]).

Physical and medical abuse and neglect

- 2.8. Jimmy was in a wheelchair. He was squashed in. His stomach was bulging all over. It was huge. He was about 20 stone. He would have been over three times the size he should have been.

He couldn't acknowledge us. He couldn't even say anything. He was sitting there in a state of obvious anguish, in physical and mental pain.

- 2.9. I'm certain that Jimmy had been put on a lot of drugs. His head was hanging, and he was moaning. The expression on his face was morbid.
- 2.10. I sat next to him. I thought, "what's happening here?"

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Jimmy started trying to lift himself up. I think he needed to scratch. I could tell he was uncomfortable. I said, "hang on boy, hang on". I stood up behind and slightly to the side of him and started to lift his body fat up and away to expose the area he was trying to get to.

I looked down and all I could see was meat. His whole bottom was meat. It was raw. I said, "take a look at this!" Jimmy was all wet. And there was a pong, I smelt him. He hadn't been cleaned, and from what I saw, it looked like he wasn't being cleaned very often at all. The whole area he was sitting on was complete rawness.

"Mum," I said, "why is he like that? We gotta take him home. We can't leave him here." I kept repeating that he needed to come home. My sisters and me, we were crying. "They're not even looking after him, Mum. Something is wrong." Mum came along and looked. She used her hands and lifted his skin up to see. She looked on the other side of Jimmy's body too.

- 2.11. There was no bringing the doctors and nurses out and bringing Jimmy to a table to have a look, which is what I thought would have happened. Mum did korero with a nurse, but the girls and I went off to have a break, and I don't know what was said.
- 2.12. Pop said alright, that it was time to go. When we left Jimmy, there was no smile, no reaction from him. There was darkness in his eyes. In the car, we were still crying. We were all saying, "Mum, tell Pops to stop." Rather than stop, he carried on. My sisters and me were bawling in the backseat.
- 2.13. I think Jimmy would have been so lonely. We would have been his only visitors in the whole time he was there. One thing I hold on to is that once during our visit, I know that Jimmy recognised us and there was a very slight smile on his face. It was a distant smile – but it was there.
- 2.14. After leaving Jimmy at Tokanui, we went back home and we just got on with life. Mum showed her sadness and disappointment quietly. I think Mum must have talked to Pops about bringing Jimmy home, but Pops was stubborn.
- 2.15. My sisters came to me and said could I keep asking Mum to ask Pops about Jimmy coming home. As much as I would have liked to have a good talk with Mum about it, she was frightened. She was being abused and we had no-one that we could share that with. That was the other tragedy.
- 2.16. We desperately wanted Jimmy to come home. But when he did come back to Taranaki, it was in a box.

It must have been around 12 months after our visit when we got news Jimmy had died. I think Mum must have been contacted by someone. She said to me, "Jimmy's passed away".

- 2.17. On Jimmy's Notice of Death, it said that he became unwell on 10 July 1965 and he developed broncho pneumonia. He passed away at 11.20pm on 12 July 1965

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[WITN0431007]. The documents say the primary cause of his death was broncho pneumonia, with the second cause listed as progressive muscular dystrophy.

There is a handwritten note on his death notice asking Doctor Boyd at Tokanui to send a letter of condolence [WITN0431007]. The family was sent a letter on 23 July 1965 from him, but within it, he did not say sorry for your family's loss [WITN0431002]. To be honest, I'm not surprised.

3. Impact

- 3.1. It was only when Jimmy was dead that Pops finally made arrangements to bring him back to GRO-B. There was an argument about where he could be buried. He's buried in the GRO-B public cemetery, not in the family urupā. As we were Pops' second family, there was a stigma there. He didn't even get a headstone or a cross marking his grave.

When I would go to visit Jimmy, I would know where he was buried by visual markers that I memorised. I would see two trees and line them up and follow the line down and know where to go to be at his gravesite.

- 3.2. I have bouts of depression whenever I think about my brother, but the thoughts never cease. When I saw the abuse on Jimmy's body, it was horrific. It was abuse. For me to see his suffering, it is proof he was ill-treated. It all happened because I saw it with my own eyes.
- 3.3. I am still struggling and hurting. I am doing the best that I can. In my heart I know he suffered a lonely and painful death at Tokanui. To this day, that image of Jimmy at Tokanui haunts me.

I've never forgotten. Right to this very moment. Even when my sisters have said, "Oh let it be, GRO-B. How can it be? That's our brother. I needed to know what happened to Jimmy.

4. Redress

- 4.1. Every time I have approached an agency or department for help, I have been blocked. I have written so many letters. You can't just say there is no evidence that someone existed. Whānau deserve answers.

I tried requesting Jimmy's personal file through the Waikato District Health Board, through Archives New Zealand, through a historic claims process. At one point, I had over six sessions with some health worker sharing information and details to try and get some answers. I felt like I was being put through the ringer. I was providing the same information over and over, and then being asked for it again. I got a really shocking letter from Waikato District Health Board in response to my request to them. I felt like I was treated in a really bad manner. The letter was really depressing. But I didn't let it be. I'll never let it be.

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- 4.2. In another of many attempts to find out what happened to Jimmy, I wrote, "There must be some hospital records still available, still alive, to give me a glimmer of hope. After all, he was my brother. It appears I am the only person left who hasn't forgotten."
- 4.3. Where was his death certificate? Where were his documents? I needed them to help me rest. Jimmy was on this earth. He was alive and he had been here with us, but nothing was coming up. I needed to get it sorted properly. I just wanted acknowledgement of this sad, sad situation.
- 4.4. It was only going to the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care that I managed to find out more about Jimmy's death and for authorities to say that Jimmy was in their care. I could not get this before the Commission.

5. Looking forward

- 5.1. It should not be this way for whānau trying to find out what happened to their family member. My brother died in care. Jimmy didn't have a voice to express his pain and suffering. So, I must carry his voice from beyond the grave to ensure justice.
- 5.2. I believe Jimmy died unnecessarily. His mana needs to be restored but I feel that this cannot happen until his resting place is marked.
- 5.3. I'm so grateful this is coming into the light. This is what is needed. It is so important: the truth of it all, the abuse – because I saw it. We all saw it.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated: 01/02/2022