

Witness Name: GRO-A Ms AH

Statement No: WITN0702001

Exhibits: WITN0702002 – WITN0702004

Dated:

ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

WITNESS STATEMENT OF GRO-A Ms AH IN RESPECT OF THE MĀORI INVESTIGATION

I, GRO-A Ms AH, state: -

INTRODUCTION

1. My full name is GRO-A Ms AH I was born on GRO-C 1988.
2. My parents are GRO-B and GRO-B. I have five siblings. Their names are GRO-A Ms AK, GRO-A Mr AI, GRO-A Ms AG, GRO-A Ms AJ and GRO-B-1. My iwi is Tainui.
3. When we were growing up, my dad was largely fluent in te reo Māori, but my mum did not speak any. I did not learn much tikanga from my parents when we were in their care. These days, I know that dad

mainly speaks english. I think this is because everyone speaks english, while reo is not spoken by as many people.

4. I grew up in Pukekohe and Hamilton with my whānau. Dad was violent towards my mother, which myself and my siblings often witnessed. Both of my parents, but especially my dad, were involved with Black Power.

Notice of CYFS

5. On 6 January 1996, a neighbour of my whānau rang the police because three of my siblings and I had been left at home alone by mum. By the time the police arrived, mum had got back home and the police said they could not do anything. The police advised my neighbour to tell CYFS about her concerns for us, which she did. The neighbour said she had spoken to me, and I had told her that mum often left us home alone, which I did not mind, but I did not like caring for my younger siblings, especially the baby.
6. When the police arrived, they said I was wearing a bloody nightie, and asked me how it had happened. Our neighbour said that I had told her that mum hit me, and I was scared of mum. The neighbour also said that one of the other neighbours had seen mum hit me in the face with a ride-on bike that day, and that she had seen my toddler sibling get punched in the face with a closed fist. That neighbour also said she was concerned about keeping her anonymity, because mum had threatened her before and because Black Power members often visited our house.
7. I remember mum hitting me when I would play up or talk back, but not particularly badly, and that she would sometimes leave us home alone.
8. The original neighbour also told CYFS that mum verbally abused us every day and would shout "Get inside you fucking kids. You're pissing me off" at us.

9. The neighbour said mum would let us wander the streets, and multiple neighbours had seen us playing on the roads off the footpath.
10. She said that she was concerned that we were not being fed, because one of the neighbours had given us food in the past and thought that we appeared hungry.
11. On 8 January 1996, social worker Jodie Wendon asked the police officer who had responded to the call, Constable Taylor, what had happened. Constable Taylor told her that mum was aggressive towards him and the other police officer. Constable Taylor interviewed me while the other officer talked to our mum. Constable Taylor reported that I told him that our mum hit me, when he asked why I had blood down my nightie. Constable Taylor said he consulted with his senior, but there was nothing they could do, so they left my siblings and me with mum. Constable Taylor said that he thought mum had been drinking, but otherwise the house looked good. He told Ms Wendon that he was glad CYFS was looking into the situation because he was concerned about it.
12. Later that day, Ms Wendon rang the neighbour who had called CYFS about my family. The neighbour thought things were better at our house, and she had seen us outside but not on the road. Ms Wendon said CYFS would be visiting our whānau the next day and that if our neighbour had any concerns that night, she could ring the duty social worker. Ms Wendon also said that she had contacted the police and was surprised that they had not taken any action. The neighbour agreed with her, and Ms Wendon said that she would call them tonight and tell them that they should respond if they got a call about us.
13. On 9 January 1996, officer Jeffcoat told social worker Julie Gower that mum had told the police that she had only “popped out for 5 minutes” and that a cousin had been at the house looking after us. He said that the police were not going to take any action, but were concerned that my siblings and me were not being adequately cared for. Ms Gower

asked officer Jeffcoat about my bloody nightie, and he said that I had told them that our mum had hit me. He gave Ms Gower our mum's name, but said he did not know what my or my siblings' names were.

14. In the afternoon, Ms Wendon tried to visit our house with another social worker, but found no one home. She said that our backyard was "untidy and overgrown" and "there were flies everywhere".
15. Ms Wendon then rang the neighbour who had originally called CYFS, and told her that they had been to visit but no one had been home. The neighbour said she had seen our mum leave with me and four of my siblings that morning around 8:30am and that, because it was benefit day, we would likely be back in the afternoon and mum would be drinking. Ms Wendon asked the neighbour to call CYFS when she saw us return home.
16. Ms Wendon then spoke with a different neighbour. They said that after the police had left, mum came outside to verbally abuse them. A little bit later, mum left again, leaving my siblings and me alone. A different neighbour then gave our mum a "blasting" because "they couldn't believe that she would do it again so soon" after the police left.
17. They also said that my siblings and I had visited them the previous day to ask to use their phone, and they had overheard one of us ring an aunty and ask for food because we were hungry. They said they thought it was the same aunty who sometimes visited us.
18. The neighbour said that our mum was friendly when she had not been drinking, and that she was often outside doing washing. They said that she kept the inside of the house tidy, but not the outside. Our mum usually had someone from the Salvation Army come to mow the lawns, but this had not happened for a while. The neighbour also had not seen the Church groups who would drop us food parcels for quite a while.
19. The neighbour said that mum had told them that my siblings and I were with our father for Christmas, but they were not sure where he lived.

20. They said that mum drank quite a lot, even though she was still breast-feeding my youngest sibling. They thought she had moved to Hamilton from Auckland to escape an abusive relationship with our father.
21. The neighbour thought that my siblings and I were quite afraid of mum, especially when she had been drinking. They said that they could “see fear” in our eyes.
22. Overall, they said they thought that mum was “an ok mother when she hasn’t been drinking, but is definitely an unfit mother when drinking”.
23. They said that my siblings and I did not come over as often as we used to, but that they had come home to find us in their house quite a few times.
24. They said that their partner had “had words” with mum once, but had come out in the morning to find a tyre on their car had been punctured, so they did not do it again.
25. They also said that they had seen one of my younger siblings get punched in the face.
26. Ms Wendon asked the neighbour to keep an eye on me and my siblings, and to call her when we arrived back home that day.
27. Ms Wendon then rang the Papakura CYFS office to ask what that office knew about our whānau. According to a social worker there, they knew about our whānau because of their involvement with our aunty and her tamariki.
28. At the end of that day, Ms Wendon made an investigation plan. She said she would request access to our files, make further inquiries about our whānau and our parents’ care of us by talking to the neighbours, and contact our mum, even though Ms Wendon thought that she would “tell [CYFS] to F* off anyway, no matter what the approach is”. After she had spoken to our mum, Ms Wendon would review our situation, because it might be that my siblings and I needed medical check-ups

or it might be better for her to contact our aunty about us, though Ms Wendon thought she would be "just as anti-[CYFS] as mother will be".

29. On 11 January 1996, a neighbour told Ms Wendon that my immediate whānau had not been seen since the previous Tuesday when they had seen my aunty pick us and our mum up.
30. On 12 January 1996, a neighbour told Ms Wendon that we had all arrived back home.
31. Ms Wendon rang the neighbours a lot between 15 and 30 January 1996 to ask if we were home. The neighbours told her that we were not, but our stuff still seemed to be in the house.
32. On 23 January 1996, Ms Wendon tried to visit us but found no one was home. She talked to one of our neighbours, who said that my siblings and I had been at his house a lot. We would sleep there and ask for food. He said he was very concerned about us, especially because he sometimes saw us sleeping on the driveway with just a blanket thrown over us. Ms Wendon asked him to call if anyone came home.
33. On 26 January 1996, Ms Wendon told the police that our whānau had moved back to Pukekohe.
34. On 30 January 1996, a neighbour told Ms Wendon that we had arrived home. Our mum told everyone that we had been at a tangi.
35. On 31 January 1996, Ms Wendon asked a neighbour if we were home. She said that we were, and that she had asked mum if we would be sticking around. She had said that we would be.
36. Later that day, Ms Wendon and Mr Clarke visited our whānau. They explained why CYPS had been notified. Mum said that the previous incident was the first and only time she had left us home alone. She explained that I had the bloody nightie because I often got a bloody nose, and that the blood would have been from that.

37. She said that she yelled at us, but she had never hit any of us. She did not know about the incident where one of us had been hit with a bike. She said that our dad physically abused her.
38. Ms Wendon and Mr Clarke suggested that mum should ask our neighbours for support if she needed it, and she said she would, even though she did not know the neighbours very well.
39. Mum said that she was struggling to feed us. Ms Wendon said she could drop around a food parcel, and mum said that would be helpful.
40. She also said that she would like to work on her parenting skills, and Ms Wendon said that she would try to put her in contact with an agency who could help, like Maatua Whangai.
41. Later that day, Ms Wendon dropped off a food parcel. My brother and I had arrived home from school when she arrived, and she thought we looked happy.
42. Ms Wendon visited us again on 5 February 1996. My older sister was also home, and mum told Ms Wendon that my brother was going to stay with our dad and my older sister for a while, so she could cope better with looking after us. Ms Wendon said she would connect mum with Maatua Whangai as soon as possible.
43. Later that day, a neighbour told Ms Wendon that there was a lot of noise coming from our house and that he had given mum a lot of food that week so we could eat. He also said that there was a man at our house, and that he was concerned for us.
44. On 9 February 1996, a neighbour made a formal notification about us to CYFS. They said that we did not wash, were often left alone to look after our baby sibling, had gone over to the neighbour in the night to ask them to feed and settle our baby sibling because our mum would not wake up, there were maggots in the house, but no good food, and

we were never given lunches. They also said that our dad had rolled the car the previous night while two of my siblings were in it with him.

45. Ms Wendon rang our school, Fairfield Primary, who said that my siblings and I had not been enrolled in school that year, and my brother was the only one who had been enrolled the previous year.
46. A different neighbour then told Ms Wendon that our dad had been pacing up and down the street, and that she had been the one to go to our house to help our baby sibling get to sleep. Ms Wendon told her that she would visit us that day.
47. Ms Wendon then rang a different neighbour, who said that our dad had been abusing everyone on the street, but she had not seen him for an hour. This neighbour also said that she had been the one who saw mum hit one of us with a bike soon after Christmas.
48. Ms Wendon then visited us, but our dad was not home. Our mum said that she and our dad were back together, and the plan was for all of us to go live in Pukekohe, but she was scared to go with him. She had told him that morning that she would not go to Pukekohe, but she did not think she could stand up to him again, and she seemed very nervous about him getting home while social workers were there.
49. Ms Wendon asked our mum if she and us children were safe with our dad. She said that he was good with us and had never hit us, which was true.
50. While there, Ms Wendon observed that mum did not seem to be able to control us very well. While she and mum were talking, we were running around and fighting each other, and mum did not seem to notice.
51. Before she left, Ms Wendon organised for one of the neighbours to call her if he heard any fighting and screaming from our house. She saw our dad arrive home while she was talking to the neighbour.

52. After they left, the social workers went to the local police station to say that the police needed to respond urgently if they got a call about us.

Uplift

53. Ms Wendon and Mr Clarke went back to their offices. After discussing our case with their manager and the CYFS lawyers, they decided that we should be uplifted under Place of Safety Warrants because of the abuse and neglect from both of our parents.
54. Ms Wendon, three other social workers and three police officers came to our house. Mum came outside, and they explained why they had come, which upset mum. The social workers removed us from the house one by one, quietly, because dad was sleeping inside. They said that mum could come with us, which she agreed to.
55. The social workers had to drive around to find GRO-A
Ms AK, as she was at the shops with one of our cousins. When they found her, they had to wrestle her into the car. When we arrived at the Women's Refuge, the social workers had to wrestle her out of the car again. Eventually, they decided that they should let her go because they were causing distress and would have to use too much force to keep her there.
56. Ms Wendon said that I tried to follow GRO-A
Ms AK, and a social worker chased me down, only for me to run again. Eventually Ms Wendon was able to get me back into the car, and she had to sit in the back seat with me, to restrain me for the car ride. She said that I pinched her and tried to open the car door.
57. Ms Wendon and her group then met representatives from Women's Refuge at the police station and they agreed to take us into the Refuge in the Tokoroa district. The safe houses within the Hamilton district were known within gang circles, and they were worried that dad would find where we were.

58. Once there, the Refuge workers told Ms Wendon that they had received two calls from our mum in the short space since the social workers had left, asking if she could leave us at the Refuge and go home by herself, then changing her mind.
59. Dad had also called the police about us being missing, and had also gone to the Citizens Advice Bureau to ask for help. Mr Clarke spoke to him later that night.
60. On 12 February 1996, CYFS removed us from mum's care because she could not cope with caring for all of us. The Refuge workers said that we had run around the Refuge, drawn on the walls, broken toys, did not know how to use cutlery, and that mum had no control over us.

Huntly foster home

61. We were all separated, and my brother and I were placed in a foster home in Huntly. The caregiver was an older Māori woman named GRO-B I do not remember much about her, but I remember that she was a good caregiver.

Records

62. On 12 February 1996, our whānau member GRO-B who worked for the Whakatane CYFS offices, told Ms Gower that she thought our whānau could care for us. She said that our parents had the potential to be good parents, but they were too much into the gang scene.
63. GRO-B later rang Ms Wendon and told her that there had been a whānau meeting, and the whānau wanted to support our dad to care for us because our mum was a chronic alcoholic. GRO-B wanted CYFS to contact the whānau about us, to make sure they knew how much long-term support our dad would need from them.
64. On 13 February 1996, Ms Wendon called our dad to set up a meeting. He cried during the call, said that he did not understand why this had happened or where we were, and that he wanted us back in his care.

Ms Wendon set up a meeting for 15 February 1996. At the meeting, she was to explain why we had been uplifted and that any return to dad's care would have to be "fully explored" by CYFS before it would happen.

65. On 15 February 1996, the whānau meeting went ahead. Our parents, several aunts and uncles, and four social workers attended. The social workers said that we had been uplifted because mum left us home alone, physically and verbally abused us, did not supervise us or feed us properly, we did not have good social skills, had health issues, and did not attend school. There were also concerns about dad assaulting mum and that he had had a car accident while my siblings were in the car with him.
66. Dad said that mum had planned with him for the whole family to move to Pukekohe on the day we were uplifted. She had then rung him from Women's Refuge and asked him to come and get her. My parents wanted to get back together, move to Pukekohe, and care for us there.
67. Our wider whānau said that they wanted us to go into our dad's care, but CYFS said that was not possible. In the meantime, CYFS thought that we could be cared for by different whānau members and the social workers gave them application forms.
68. On 19 February 1996, dad told Ms Wendon that he did not want any of us to be cared for by our whānau members and that he would rather we stay in foster care. He said that he cared for us a lot and he had been very upset since the meeting.
69. That same day, another social worker told Ms Wendon that our whānau had been in contact saying that they were sad about it, but our dad had been in touch and said he wanted us to stay in foster care, which they respected. Ms Wendon thought this was sad, because it was important for us to be placed with whānau so we could have contact with our parents and the rest of our whānau.

70. On 1 March 1996, the Family Court directed that a Family Group Conference (“FGC”) should be held before it made any declarations about my siblings and me.
71. On 15 March 1996, mum told Ms Wendon that she and my dad were no longer together, but that she thought he was a good father and should care for all of us.
72. On 28 March 1996, dad told Ms Wendon that he was now happy for other whānau members to care for us. He wanted GRO-A Ms
AG and me to be placed with our aunt GRO-B. Ms Wendon said that she would get the Papakura CYFS offices to do background checks on the people he wanted us placed with.
73. On 20 April 1996, Mr Clarke said that our cases would be transferred to the Papakura CYFS offices after the FGC was held, because the Papakura CYFS offices did not have placements for us yet.
74. Around 10 May 1996, my siblings and I were placed into a Huakina Development Trust Family Home in Mangere.

Māngere Family Home

75. I do not remember much about this Family Home, but I do not remember any abuse happening there. There were four caregivers I remember. The ones I remember most were a Māori man and a Pākehā woman, who I think were married.

Records

76. On 13 May 1996, social worker GRO-B was told that dad was in Mt Eden Prison. His social worker, Anna Tuigalamana, asked if she could represent him at the FGC scheduled for 17 May 1996. Ms GRO-B said that she would have to check with the FGC Coordinator, Sonna Rameka.

77. The FGC went ahead on 16 May 1996. It was decided that [GRO-B-1] [GRO-A Ms AG] and I would be placed with whānau caregiver [GRO-B]. It was also decided that none of us would be allowed to go visit dad while he was in prison, but mum could have access with us whenever she wanted, as long as the caregiver was there to supervise.

[GRO-B]

78. [GRO-B] was my dad's aunt, and I called her Nana. I did not like living with her, because she would speak badly of our dad and our whānau, and told me that I would never amount to anything except getting pregnant.
79. I ran away from Nana at least once or twice a week because of the comments she would make, and because I really wanted to be with my siblings and parents.

Records

80. On 6 June 1996, the custody of my siblings and me was granted to the CYFS Director-General by Judge Robinson, after our dad withdrew his objection and accepted the plan that had been presented at the FGC.
81. On 1 July 1996, I was placed back into the Family Home run by the Huakina Development Trust in Mangere. From my records, it looks like one of my siblings was also placed there with me. I think it was [GRO-A Mr AI] but I am not sure.

Māngere Family Home (second admission)

Records

82. On 16 August 1996, Ms [GRO-B] had a meeting with our mum. She said that mum was attending a course with Homebuilders, and was improving with the support she was receiving from different services.

83. On 19 August 1996, Ms [GRO-B] said it was important that mum continue to receive support as it would be important if she was to have us back in her care in the future.
84. On 16 September 1996, social workers and special services employees had a meeting about my siblings and me with mum, to update her on how we were doing. As part of that meeting, our counsellors shared the “rules” they had asked us to create for living with our mum. My counsellor said that my rules were the “loudest”.
85. I can see from my records that mum stormed out of the room during this part of the meeting, and confessed that she had previously physically abused my siblings and me. She later apologised for storming out and asked for the meeting to continue. She said that she accepted the changes that we had requested, and the professionals said that she had instilled good qualities in us, like loyalty and kinship. Those at the meeting agreed that mum could have the care of two of my younger siblings in the supervised environment at Barnados, which everyone was happy with. The move to Barnados went ahead on 24 September 1996.
86. On 16 May 1997, Barnados employee Trish Robinson told Ms Waru that mum had been visiting dad recently, and that had caused her behaviour to deteriorate. She had been aggressive towards me and my siblings and other families at the residence she was staying in, she was breaking the rules of the residence, and the employees at the residence were unable to reason with her. She had left the previous night and did not return until the early hours of that day, and Ms Robinson was worried that she would leave my siblings home alone. Ms Waru said that if she did, she should call the after-hours duty social worker.
87. On 2 August 1997, social worker Grace Matiu said that although [GRO-A Ms AK] [GRO-A Ms AG] [GRO-A Mr AI] and I were still at the Huakina Family Home, mum had taken us to see dad in prison. Ms Matiu thought [GRO-A Ms AK] and

I were “emotionally affected” by these visits, because we had both gone back 10 steps in our progress. She said that mum’s counselling sessions had been cancelled because she was not attending them, and that she had moved out of Barnados to a house in Mangere, South Auckland, but that she wanted to keep in touch with Barnados support staff. She also said that she and dad were broken up for good, and she had a new partner who was supportive of her and us children.

88. Ms Matiu said that CYFS needed to monitor whether we were safe having access with our mum. She said that she was okay with us staying in the Family Home for the moment, but CYFS needed to think about long-term placements for us, ideally with whānau.
89. On 29 August 1997, CYFS social workers, Huakina Trust employees, our caregivers and our relief caregivers had a meeting about my siblings and me. They were all concerned about me because my bad behaviour had gotten me dismissed from school. They agreed that a CYFS social worker would visit my school to talk to the school about me. They also agreed that access with mum should start happening again.
90. The outcome of that meeting was that my school wanted to meet with other professionals to create a plan of action if I was going back to that school.
91. On 9 September 1997, a case conference was held about my siblings and me, to decide on a long-term stable placement for us and whānau members [GRO-B-2, GRO-B-3] were suggested. CYFS also wanted to have meetings about our needs for schooling, and organise for us to have access with mum.
92. On 30 September 1997, a counsellor named Marion Kirker told Ms Waru that we needed to be told gently that we would not be returning to the care of mum, especially because one of my siblings and I were displaying suicidal tendencies. Ms Kirker also said that I had been sleeping with a knife under my bed.

93. On 15 December 1997, Ms Matiu said that we would all be spending time with mum in Mangakino over Christmas, because CYFS was pleased with how she was caring for my two younger siblings. We would be with mum between 17 December 1997 and 16 January 1998.

Mother's care

Neglect

94. Mum still had problems with alcohol when we were placed back with her. She would often leave me in charge of my younger siblings and go down to the pub to drink. She would spend all of her money on alcohol, which is why we never had enough to eat and would have to go and ask the neighbours for food.
95. Each time she would leave, I would ask her where she was going. She would tell me to "fuck off" and to watch my younger siblings while she was gone.
96. One time, I walked to the pub with my younger siblings and stood outside screaming for mum. She eventually came out of the pub, and asked me what I was doing there. She whacked me for leaving the house, and for bringing my younger siblings with me.

Physical abuse

97. Mum slapped me and kicked me up the bum every couple of days, usually when I said that I did not want to look after my younger siblings.

Records

98. On 19 June 1998, one of the employees at my school rang Huakina Trust worker [GRO-B] who put her through to Ms [GRO-B]. The employee said that I had run away from home and was complaining that our mum was going out drinking and leaving my siblings and me home alone.

99. They employee said I had run away because mum had come home with “love bites” on her neck, and I had challenged her about them. Mum did not appreciate that, and I had run away with the keys to my aunty’s car and the house keys, because I thought mum would give me a hiding.
100. Ms [GRO-B] rang our neighbour, who said he was concerned for us. He said that my uncle had been released from prison, and he and his girlfriend were living with us. He and his girlfriend seemed to have issues with domestic violence, although our neighbour did not think that we had witnessed any of it.
101. Ms [GRO-B] told Ms Waru about this information and they agreed to visit us the following week.
102. The social workers visited us at school and mum at home on 2 July 1998. During the interview, mum said that she had been out drinking, but had left us with a friend down the road. CYFS did not seem to have any concerns for us.
103. On 6 July 1998, our babysitter made a notification of concern about us because mum was going on drinking binges, spending all her money on alcohol, was not feeding us properly, and had recently left us with the babysitter for the whole weekend.
104. On 27 July 1998, CYFS was told that I kept running away from home because mum was beating me, and that I refused to go back to her care or go to school. I was staying with a neighbour called [GRO-B]
105. There is a note in my records that says I told social workers that [GRO-B] was sexually abusing me.
106. Mum used [GRO-B] as a kind of babysitter, and we would go there overnight sometimes. At night, he would come into my room and touch my private parts over my clothes. Even though I told CYFS about it, I can see from my records that nothing was done.

107. On 10 August 1998, social worker Claire Horton said that CYFS needed to look into removing us from mum's care.
108. On 25 August 1998, CYFS was told that our mum had abandoned us to go to Auckland. She had left us with the local Māori Warden, who requested that CYFS come pick us up.
109. We were placed in the Pukekohe Family Home overnight.
110. On 26 August 1998, we were placed back with mum after she had moved to a new flat, and the social workers had bought us a meal at McDonalds.
111. On 4 September 1998, CYFS was told that mum had left us home alone and the Tokoroa CYFS offices had serious concerns about us continuing to be placed with mum.
112. That same day, mum's landlord told CYFS that we had walked down to McDonalds to get food because there was no food in the house and mum could not be woken up. The landlord wanted us uplifted, so CYFS social workers went to the McDonalds and picked us up.
113. On 9 September 1998, Ms Waru asked [GRO-B-2] if she would be able to care for my siblings and me. She said that she was.
114. My siblings and I were placed with [GRO-B-2] and [GRO-B-3] on 17 September 1998.

[GRO-B-2] **and** [GRO-B-3] **Townhouse**

115. [GRO-B-2] and [GRO-B-3] were the cousins of our grandfather on our dad's side.
116. After about a month of us being there, [GRO-B-2] and [GRO-B-3] became abusive.

Work

117. [GRO-B-2] would make my older sister and me do a lot of chores. We would be forced to cook for everyone, clean the whole house, do the washing

and garden for the whole household. She worked us like we were her personal slaves.

118. GRO-B-2 would also keep GRO-A Ms AK and me home from school to do chores, which really affected our education.
119. I usually enjoyed school when I was allowed to go, mainly because it gave me a chance to be away from GRO-B-2

Physical abuse

120. GRO-B-2 would punch me with a closed fist to my face and my body and hit me with any object she could reach. This included sticks, a wooden spoon, TV aerials, and the jug cord. Sometimes, she would make us all walk in a circle around her while she hit us with a stick. I remember this happening once because she thought one of us had stolen food.
121. The times when she hit me with a stick or slapped me was when I did something wrong in the garden.
122. One time GRO-B-2 gave me a concussion by punching me in the face. The next day, I went to school and slept through most of the day. My teacher ended up driving me home that day.
123. Another time, she threw a rock or a piece of metal at me. It hit me in the stomach, and I fell over. I was so winded that I could not breathe, and I thought I was going to die.
124. GRO-B-3 would also either backhand or slap me over the head, or hit me with a stick anywhere he could reach. This was mainly when I did something wrong with my outside chores. Even with this abuse, I preferred to be outside with him doing chores than inside with GRO-B-2
125. One time, however, GRO-B₃ seriously physically abused me. He asked me to go get him a "kapock", and I did not know what that was. I asked him what it was, and he just repeated "kapock". I was scared, so I went inside and got him a chair. He got really mad, absolutely lost the plot,

and punched me in the head and on my arms repeatedly. After he had beat me, he yelled at me that he had wanted “a fucking mattress”.

126. Less often, GRO-B-2 and GRO-B-3 children would punch us in the head because we did not get them whatever they had asked us to get them fast enough, or did not do the task they asked fast enough.
127. I remember that we were all constantly bruised from the abuse by GRO-B-2 GRO-B-3 and their children.

Verbal abuse

128. GRO-B-2 would constantly tell me that I was useless, hopeless and worthless. She would tell me that no one wanted us, and that our parents had abandoned us. This psychological abuse really stuck with me, and hurt, especially because it felt like we were never going to be able to get away from her.

Neglect

129. While I was at this placement, I started getting rashes. They became so painful that I walked myself down to the doctors, which was on the same road as the house we lived in, and enrolled myself so I could see a doctor. They asked me where my parents were and I told them that my nana was at home. I do not remember if they asked me anything else.

Move

130. After about a year and a half, GRO-B-2 and GRO-B-3 moved the entire household out to their farm near GRO-A Marae. They continued to abuse us on the farm.

Physical abuse

131. I remember a particular time on the farm when GRO-B-2 punched me unconscious because I mixed the towels with the clothes, while I was doing the washing. I do not think I was unconscious for that long,

maybe a few seconds, because when I woke up she was still punching me and screaming at me. I kept apologising, but she kept hitting me.

132. Even though I had clearly been knocked unconscious, she and [GRO-B-3] never took me to the doctors.
133. Another time, after one of us had complained about the abuse and someone had investigated [GRO-B-2] she sat us all down in a circle to talk to us about it. I do not remember much of what she said, but at the end she asked us if we wanted to stay or if we wanted to leave. I said I wanted to leave, and she whacked me.

Neglect

134. While we were on the farm, I often stole food from other kids at school because we were never given enough food to eat or we were only given the rotten food by [GRO-B-2]

Records

135. On 10 January 2000, [GRO-B-2] told CYFS that a recent visit from our dad at the farm, who had been released from prison, had gone very well.
136. On 18 September 2000, our Lawyer for Child, Grant Litchfield noted that there had been concerns raised that [GRO-B-2] was hitting us. In response, Ms [GRO-B] said CYFS would prefer to “work with” [GRO-B-2] than organise a new placement for us. [WITN0702002]
137. These records make me angry. It feels like the social workers from CYFS did not care about us, or they could not be bothered to find a new placement, or maybe they just did not want to do their job.
138. On 29 September 2000, [GRO-B-2] told CYFS that they, along with us, were moving to the farm in [GRO-B]
139. On 13 November 2000, Ms [GRO-B] said CYFS had investigated the concerns about us being hit, and had offered support to [GRO-B-2] but that she thought this was not necessary.

140. On 14 June 2001, [GRO-B-2] told CYFS during a visit from social workers that she was home-schooling me because of my behavioural issues, but did not seem to have any education planned. She also admitted that she felt it was necessary to “whack”, “boot” and “shove” us to discipline us and that she did not know any other way to do it. She also referred to us as being a source of income for her. [WITN0702003]
141. Because of these comments by [GRO-B-2] CYFS started looking into a new placement for us on 21 June 2001. In the meantime, we stayed with [GRO-B-2] and continued to get abused.
142. On 1 November 2001, CYFS found a caregiver for us named [GRO-B-2] [GRO-B-2]. We were moved into her care on 2 November 2001.

GRO-B-4*Physical abuse*

143. [GRO-B-4] would punch and slap me in the face and head for talking back to her or arguing with her.

Neglect

144. [GRO-B-4] kicked [GRO-A Ms AK] and me out of her house multiple times, or I would run away a lot. She never came looking for me, even though the farm we were on was isolated and there was nowhere for me to go.
145. [GRO-A Ms AK] ended up running away after we got into an argument about a bracelet. I ran away not long after.

Records

146. On 25 December 2001, my records show that I had ran away from [GRO-B-4] and stayed with relatives. [GRO-B-4] said she thought I would return, but I did not.

Pukekohe family members

147. During this period, I lived with other members of my whānau, including with GRO-A
Ms AK, dad, aunties and my cousins.

Lack of CYFS support

148. I do not remember ever having a social worker visit me while I was in these placements. There is a note on my records that I was not going to school very often.

149. Living with my whānau was pretty good, because it was the opposite of being in care. My whānau would not tell me what to do, they let me do what I wanted.

150. Smoking and drinking was pretty normalised with my whānau, so I started getting alcohol, marijuana and cigarettes off of them.

151. Around this time, I also started getting involved in gangs and with gang members, and I started offending.

152. I was eventually caught by Police trying to steal a car, which I was charged for. CYFS did not help me at all when I was arrested or when I was charged.

Records

153. On 21 January 2002, social worker Cheryle Rangi-Butler noted that I was not attending school and was blocking any attempts by CYFS to know my whereabouts or stabilise my situation. Those efforts did not seem to include trying to visit me.

154. On 24 January 2002, there was a notification from a whānau member that GRO-A
Ms AK and I had been smoking and drinking while we were staying with different whānau members, and I had tried to steal a jeep from an aunty. She wanted to know who was supposed to be looking after us.

155. On 27 March 2002, Ms Rangi-Butler noted that I had been staying with mum since February 2001. I do not remember staying with my mum around this time.
156. In April 2002, my records say that I moved in with dad and his new partner because mum said she could not handle me.
157. On 30 April 2002, a report recorded that CYFS did not think GRO-A
Ms AK and I were able to “follow through” with any plans or caregivers they set up for us, because we could not make “positive choices that will enhance their future wellbeing” and that we were currently with dad. CYFS did not think they could find long-term placements for us because of our attitudes, but did not support either of our parents becoming permanent caregivers to us.[WITN0702004]
158. After the GRO-B-2
GRO-B-3 I did not want to be in CYFS care any longer because the social workers had not supported us or looked after us, and I felt like we had to do it on our own if we wanted to be properly looked after. I was tired of being told what to do when that had never gotten me anything good. I wanted to stay with the whānau I felt wanted by. The whole experience had just made me more anti-CYFS.
159. On 17 June 2002, I asked CYFS to place me somewhere else because dad and I had an argument and he had hit me. CYFS placed me in the Thomas Avenue Family Home run by something called the Primary Care Group. The caregiver was called GRO-B. This was in the West Auckland area.

Thomas Avenue Family Home

160. I only remember being at this placement for two days, but was abused while I was there.

Physical abuse

161. When I refused to do my chores, one of the caregivers at this placement yelled and swore at me. She shouted that I had “better do

my fucking chores” and threatened “don’t make me fucking come down there because you know what you’re going to get if you make me come down there”. I would backtalk to her, and she would run down the stairs and slap me around my head.

162. [REDACTED] GRO-B

163. [REDACTED] and other caregivers at this Family Home would also hold me down and sit on me, for up to an hour, to stop me from leaving. I remember having bruises on my arms and knees from these restraints.

Records

164. On 3 July 2002, CYFS recorded that no one knew where [REDACTED] GRO-A
Ms AK and I were.

165. On 12 July 2002, the duty social worker noted that another person and I had run away from the Family Home. A caregiver at the Family Home said that, as punishment, we would be in locked in our rooms. By 19 July 2002, it was noted that I had run away again.

166. My records show that I was found and returned to the Family Home on 30 July 2002, and that I would have to appear in court for assaulting a police officer.

167. I remember this incident. I had been hanging out with a guy in his car, and asked him to take me home. He refused, and I noticed that there was a cop across the street. I got out of the car and asked him for help to take me home. Instead he arrested me and I spent the night in the cells, even though I was only thirteen and had not done anything wrong. My caregivers picked me up in the morning, and I was told the charges would be dropped because I was too young to be charged.

168. On 6 August 2002, [REDACTED] GRO-B took me to the local CYFS office because she was worried that I would be a threat to the safety of the other staff while she was away on annual leave. She suggested I stay with dad, so they took me to him, but he was not at home. I refused to get back

in the car with the social workers, and ran to stay with whānau in Pokeno.

169. On 27 September 2002, CYFS was told that dad encouraged GRO-A Ms AK and me to drink and use drugs.
170. On 15 October 2002, a social worker dropped my clothes to dad's house. When she arrived, she found GRO-A
Ms AK and me there with gang members.
171. On 19 December 2002, I appeared in the Pukekohe Youth Court on charges of kidnapping, two charges of unlawfully getting into a motor vehicle, two charges of conspiracy to commit kidnapping, aggravated robbery and aggravated assault. The matter was adjourned to 20 December 2002, where Judge Simpson ordered that I be placed in a residence under a s 238(1)(d) order until 17 January 2003.
172. I remember being really confused about these charges. Dad had punched me earlier in the day, and I needed a car so I could get out of Pukekohe. My cousin and I had tried to steal a car from an older lady while she was getting in her car. My cousin had jumped in the driver's side, but the lady still had the keys, so we ended up running. I do not know how that got turned into kidnapping.
173. I was placed at the Lower North Youth Justice Residence in Palmerston North on 23 December 2002.

Palmerston North Youth Justice Residence

Verbal abuse

174. The staff would verbally abuse us by telling us to "use your fucking brains" when they thought we were doing something stupid.
175. Most of the staff at this placement were either racist or allowed racism to happen. I remember one staff member, in particular, seemed to have it out for me. GRO-B

GRO-B

176. She would constantly make comments about “those brown people” when me and other Māori or Pasifika residents were in earshot.
177. Sometimes, I would call her out. I told her that I had heard what she had said, and that she was racist.
178. I would get taken to the Secure Unit for talking back like that, and for not listening. This happened about three times a week.

Secure Unit

179. Each time I was put in the Secure Unit, I was kept in my cell for three days.
180. In the cell, there was a toilet and a mattress. The mattress was taken out during the day, and there was only a hard bench to sit on. I was only let out to eat meals.
181. Being stuck in the Secure Unit with nothing to do made me feel like I was going crazy. I got angrier and angrier about being put in there, and I swore and yelled at the staff. This meant they kept putting me back in the Secure Unit, seeming to expect that I would change, but it just made me much worse.

Restraint

182. Most of the time when I was taken to the Secure Unit for talking back, I would be restrained by the staff.
183. This would involve two or three staff members, usually the big lady and one or two men, twisting my arms behind my back and forcing me to faceplant into the ground. They would carry me to Secure restrained like that. I remember having bruises on my wrists and ankles because of these restraints.

Records

184. On 17 January 2003, the Youth Court ordered me back to Lower North Youth Justice residence. I was escorted there on 18 January 2003.
185. I appeared in court again on 21 February 2003 and 5 March 2003.
186. I left the residence on 7 May 2003, and was placed with a foster caregiver named [GRO-B] in Otara. My records show that I ran away from the CYFS offices on 8 May 2003.
187. My records show I came back on 9 May 2003 and was placed with [GRO-B] and [GRO-B-5] that day. I was only there briefly, as it was an emergency placement.
188. I was placed in a residential programme, Te Whakaruahau o Te Tewha Tehwa ("Whakatane Girls' Home") in the Whakatane area run by Te Tewha Tewha Charitable Trust for three months on 19 May 2003.

Whakatane Girls' Home

189. This placement was a cabin in the middle of the bush, and it took an hour by boat ride to get there. There was no power or hot water. Because it was so far away, CYFS social workers never visited me there.
190. I remember feeling hopeless at this placement, especially because it was so isolated. I felt like I deserved punishment.

Work

191. We were forced to get water, dig holes, cook and hand-wash everything at this placement. We had to walk for miles to collect water for cooking, drinking and showering from the creek. There was no school there ever.
192. In our downtime, the staff taught us how to knit.

Physical abuse

193. There would often be fights between the residents, where girls would scratch and pull each other's hair. The staff would sometimes not intervene, and simply watch while we fought. I was involved in a fight like this once, against two other girls. I got some scratches and bruising, but no other injuries.
194. It felt like fights at this placement were always going to happen. I do not know what CYFS expected when they placed damaged girls, some with violent offending records, in the middle of nowhere.

Verbal abuse

195. I remember the staff would swear at me, call me a "bitch", and tell me that I was stuck out there because I was a "bitch". They would tell us to run away if we did not like it, but that there was nowhere for us to go in the middle of nowhere.

Records

196. My records show that the programme was cancelled in June 2003, and I was placed in a Papakura Home with [GRO-B-5] and [GRO-B] on 20 June 2003.

Papakura Home

197. The caregivers were a couple named [GRO-B-5] and [GRO-B], the same ones I had been placed with before on an emergency placement. They were reformed gang members, but they did not seem to be reformed to me. [GRO-B] was alright, but [GRO-B-5] abused me, usually when [GRO-B] was out.

Education

198. Because of my previous offending, bad behaviour, and lack of previous education, it was difficult to find a school that would accept me. [GRO-B-5] and [GRO-B] ultimately did not find one that would take me, so I did not attend school while I was placed with them.

Verbal abuse

199. [GRO-B-5] would swear at me a lot, and he would call me a “bitch” and a “loser”.

Physical abuse

200. [GRO-B-5] would slap me and backhand me across the face and body, usually when I had not done the cleaning they way he wanted me to do it. These attacks always seemed tactical, because they hurt a lot but I never remember having any bruising.

Records

201. My records show an FGC was held for me in relation to a recent car theft on 8 July 2003. It was decided that the police would apply for a supervision order and an informal plan would be made for me. This was accepted by the Pukekohe Youth Court on 11 July 2003. The supervision order ended on 7 November 2003.
202. On 8 August 2003, I appeared in the Pukekohe Youth Court, where my case was adjourned until 3 October 2003.
203. I appeared again on 3 October 2003, and all matters were discharged under s 238(a).
204. On 7 November 2003, [GRO-B] rang CYFS to report that I had run away the previous night, but had appeared again in the morning. She thought I would run away again.
205. On 26 January 2004, I stopped living with [GRO-B] and [GRO-B-5] due to my “behaviours in the home” according to my records.
206. On 16 March 2004, CYFS noted that I was still “missing” and was living with various whānau in the Waiuku area.
207. On 20 May 2004, social worker Sharon Fitzpatrick said that I had agreed to meet with her the next week and I was currently living in

Waiuku, although she noted I had been living in Huntly the previous week.

208. I remember this social worker, because I kept calling her for help with food and clothing. She always told me she could not give me anything unless I was in a CYFS approved home, which I thought was ridiculous considering I needed help and was in CYFS custody.
209. On 23 June 2004, Ms Fitzpatrick noted I was living with GRO-A
Ms AK in Waiuku and had a full-time job as a gardener.

Discharge

210. My records say that I was discharged from State care on 10 September 2004, but CYFS was still providing me with some financial support in December 2004. I do not remember ever receiving any sort of financial support from CYFS.
211. On 19 March 2005, social worker Phil Cribb told me that CYFS was looking into discharging me so I could go on a benefit. I had told social workers that I was pregnant, and really needed to get on a benefit.
212. On 21 July 2005, a social worker noted I was living with GRO-A Ms AK
213. On 2 August 2005, social worker Patricia Thrupp filed an order to discharge me from State care. I was formally discharged on 2 September 2005.
214. Being out of care was great, because I could finally get on a benefit and properly support myself, even if I did have other issues.

Effects

215. For me, the hardest thing about being in State care was being separated from my siblings. I had a feeling of total sadness every time it would happen.

216. My relationship with my parents has suffered because of the separation. I only see dad rarely, because he is stuck in his own past trauma and is violent because of it. I am currently living with mum, and we are re-building our relationship, but it has been a long process over many years.
217. Because of my time in care, I received little to no education, and I feel I have been severely disadvantaged because of that. I loved school, but I was often stopped from going, or did not have enough knowledge of the basics to continue attending school.
218. I feel like I lost a lot of opportunities because of my time in care. I remember that, as a kid, I wanted to be a doctor or a nurse, but my lack of education and damage meant I could not pursue it.
219. I feel like I got stuck in the same cycle of lost opportunities and neglect that generations of my family have gotten stuck in, and that I had no one to look up to because of that cycle.
220. I have panic attacks, nightmares and flashbacks about the abuse I suffered. I do not like being in big crowds, or driving. For no reason, I often get panicky, my mind starts racing, and I feel like I cannot control my thoughts. Other times, I feel completely numb and blank.
221. I have been trying to get counselling, but there is a six month wait for ACC counsellors in my area.
222. In the past, I have abused alcohol to stop feeling so panicked. I also briefly used marijuana to numb my pain. At the moment, having my cats helps me the most with managing my pain and with feeling anxious.
223. I find it difficult to hold down a job because of how anxious and panicky I get.
224. I struggle with feeling insecure in my relationships, and most of my relationships have not been good. My current relationship is volatile,

and we argue a lot. I get very anxious about partners leaving me, like others have left me before, and I do not want to be disappointed.

225. It feels more natural to me not to trust people, and I find it hard to open up. I feel like I need to control everything that happens in my life. I do not like people in positions of authority, like the police, and I hate going into social situations like customer service, where I feel like I am forced into acting a certain way.
226. I have little to no connection to my culture, and I have not been able to form much of a connection in my adulthood. It is hard trying to learn a new language and way of being, when you are an adult.

RECOMMENDATIONS

227. My siblings and I suffered in State care because we had no one to turn to or talk to about what was happening to us. I know that it can be hard to predict when children are being abused, but a good start would be listening to them.
228. I think the care system would be improved by assigning a mentor or a support person, to children in care. They should be independent, because they need to want to help the child, not just do their job like a social worker does. This person can then be the person that a child would go to when they are in trouble or when they needed someone to talk to.
229. I also think that more support should be given to parents to care for their own children in better ways, and to help them break cycles within families.
230. There should be more intensive investigations of potential caregivers, especially where there has been abuse within the whānau and they are whānau caregivers. Social workers should visit children in care regularly and talk to the children by themselves, away from their

caregivers. I believe that our situation may have been different if our social worker had taken those simple steps.

231. If allegations of abuse are made, that child should be immediately uplifted from those caregivers while the allegations are investigated, not just left there.

REDRESS

232. In terms of redress, I definitely want a meaningful apology about what happened to me and my siblings. I also think a process that we can engage with as a whānau would be best, because we can support each other.
233. I have made this statement because I do not want what happened to us to happen to other tamariki. I think the redress process should show that work is being done to ensure that things that happened to us don't happen to tamariki in future.

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

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