

Witness Name: GRO-A Ms AK

Statement No: WITN0703001

Exhibits: WITN0703002 - WITN0703006

Dated:

ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

WITNESS STATEMENT OF GRO-A Ms AK

IN RESPECT OF THE MĀORI INVESTIGATION

I, GRO-A Ms AK, state: -

INTRODUCTION

1. My full name is GRO-A Ms AK I was born on GRO-C 1987.
2. My parents are GRO-B and GRO-B I am the oldest of five siblings. Their names are GRO-A Ms AH, GRO-A Mr AI, GRO-A Ms AG, GRO-A Ms AJ and GRO-B-1 My iwi is Tainui.
3. My parents did not speak te reo Māori while I was growing up because they got hidings for speaking reo at school, and they said that our grandparents also got hidings for speaking reo at school. I also did not have any education around tikanga growing up with my parents. As I understood it, it was not something we were supposed to talk about.

## EARLY FAMILY LIFE

4. I grew up in Pukekohe and Hamilton with my family. Dad lived in Pukekohe, while mum moved to Hamilton. Dad could be violent towards mum, but was not violent towards us. Both of my parents were involved in Black Power, but especially my dad.

## NOTICE OF CYFS

5. I first came to the notice of CYFS in April 1995, when a girl at a school nearby to mine lied to her teachers that she saw my dad abusing me. There was a brief investigation into her allegations between April and August 1995, but my case was eventually closed because CYFS and the police could not substantiate the allegations after they interviewed me. The only action they took was that they had got our whānau involved with an organisation called Homebuilders, who were supporting us.
6. Around February 1996, dad told CYFS that I was in his care now because I had refused to go home to mum after a holiday with him. He said that I told him I got a hard time from the people in the Women's Refuge where I had been living with my siblings and mum, and I wanted to stay with him.
7. Dad told CYFS that he had no electricity, and he could not afford to get it reconnected. He could not send me to school because he did not have any clothes for me, and he was having trouble feeding me because food went off quickly without power to run the fridge.
8. The social worker was also concerned because dad was caring for my Uncle GRO-B who was living on the property in a caravan. Dad said that he could not leave Uncle GRO-B alone, because he would break things or set things on fire.

9. The social worker asked dad if he thought it was a good idea for him to care for me and Uncle [GRO-B] at the same time, and dad said that he did not know what to do.
10. The social worker suggested that dad should contact the Pukekohe ISS (Income Support Services) about his money problems. He said he had tried, but he could not go to the office because he could not leave my Uncle [GRO-B] alone, and no one from the ISS had returned his calls.
11. The social worker then rang Jenny Newlove at the Pukekohe ISS, who said she was aware of dad and Uncle [GRO-B]. Ms Newlove said that dad had an entitlement for an advance of money, but that it would have to be approved by a manager, as he had recently requested \$800.00 for a bed. Ms Newlove also said that dad's benefit could be increased to allow me to stay with him if it was "appropriate" but she said that the costs of caring for me were currently included in my mum's benefit. Ms Newlove then called dad and arranged for him to go to an appointment with the ISS that day.
12. At the end of the file note, the social worker said that their concerns for me were: how safe I would be with dad, given the "previous history" and the "uncertainty" of my Uncle [GRO-B] whether I was staying with dad because I wanted to or because he wanted me to; and dad saying he was unable to take me to school, which meant my school could not also monitor my welfare.

#### **1996 CYFS INVOLVEMENT**

13. Sometime in early February 1996, dad took me down to Hamilton so we could reunite with my mum and siblings.

14. On 5 February 1996, a social worker named Jody Wendon visited my mum, my siblings and me. Mum told Ms Wendon that dad and I were there so we could pick up my brother, because dad would look after him and me so she could cope better with looking after my other siblings. Ms Wendon said she would get mum in contact with a service called Maatua Whangai, who could help her with looking after my siblings.
15. Later that day, a neighbour told Ms Wendon that there was a lot of noise coming from our house and that the neighbour 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.

#### UPLIFT

16. 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 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 dad had rolled the car the night before while me and my brother were in it with him.
17. I remember the car crash. Dad had had a few drinks, but was not drunk. I told GRO-A  
Mr AI to wake me up if anything happened and went to sleep in the car. I woke up to GRO-A  
Mr AI shouting "Dad!" and the car slid off the motorway into the ditch. The car did not roll, and we were all fine. I got GRO-A  
Mr AI and dad out of the car and one of dad's friends came and picked us up.
18. That same day, Ms Wendon rang Ngaruawahia Police to ask about the car accident, but the police said that the officer who was on the scene was on leave.

19. A different neighbour then told Ms Wendon that 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.
20. Ms Wendon then rang a different neighbour, who said that dad had been verbally abusing everyone on the street, but she had not seen him for an hour.
21. Ms Wendon then visited us, but dad was not home. Mum said that she and 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.
22. Ms Wendon asked mum if she and us kids were safe with our dad. She said that he was good with us and had never hit us, which was true.
23. 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.
24. 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 dad arrive home while she was talking to the neighbour.
25. After Ms Wendon and Mr Clarke left, they went to the local police station to say that the police needed to respond urgently if they got a call about us.
26. After discussing our case with their manager and the CYFS lawyers, Ms Wendon and Mr Clarke decided that we should be uplifted under Place of Safety Warrants because of the abuse and neglect from both of our parents.

27. Ms Wendon, three other social workers and three police officers came to our house and uplifted my siblings while dad was sleeping inside. They offered for mum to come with them, so she did.
28. They had to drive around to find me, because I was at the shops with my cousin. When they found me, Ms Wendon said she and another social worker had to pick me up by my arms and legs to carry me to the car, but I fought them the entire time. She said that they tried to get me into the car with mum, but that this did not seem to calm me down, because mum said that I lived with my dad and was "extremely loyal to him" and did not listen. Ms Wendon said that she saw me pinch, kick, bite and headbutt the social worker who was in the back of the car with me, who was restraining me.
29. I remember being uplifted. I struggled while the social worker who tried to get me into the car, and while she was restraining me, I bit her on her finger. She ended up throwing me into the car, and I knocked my head against the window. I do not remember my mum being there at all.
30. I remember being really upset, terrified, and confused, because I just wanted to stay with my parents, and I did not understand why we were being taken.
31. When we got to the Women's Refuge, the social workers physically removed me from the car to get me inside, and also restrained me while we were inside. After a certain point, they decided to let me go because they were causing too much distress and would have to use too much force to get me to stay there.
32. I remember that I got around the corner before they picked me up again and took me back. My records do not say how or when they got me back.

33. On 12 February 1996, our whānau member Mrs [GRO-B] asked CYFS lawyer Zoe Griffiths about us children and when the next court date would be. Mrs [GRO-B] asked why me and my brother were uplifted when we had only just arrived into mum's care, and were actually in the care of dad. Ms Griffiths said that misunderstandings could happen when people were in tense situations. Mrs [GRO-B] then said that dad kept a clean house and cared for my brother and me very well. Ms Griffiths noted, in her file note about the conversation, that Mrs [GRO-B] "failed to mention" any instances where dad had abused us.
34. I do not remember my dad ever hitting me as a child.
35. That same day, 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.

#### **FRANKTON FOSTER HOME**

36. After we were taken from mum, I was separated from my siblings and placed in a foster home in Frankton, Hamilton. The caregiver was a young pākehā woman, who I think, from what I can see on my records, was called [GRO-B]. I remember her two daughters were also in the house with me.

#### *Verbal Abuse*

37. While I was with this caregiver, she would verbally abuse me and tell me that I was a "worthless piece of shit"
38. I do not remember a social worker ever visiting me at this placement and I do not know how long I was there.

*Records*

39. On 15 February 1996, our dad rang social worker Angela Morey to tell her that Uncle [GRO-B] was no longer living with him, and to ask her why we had been uplifted. He said he did not understand why my brother and I had been taken, when he had been caring for us, not our mum.
40. He then said that there was meant to be an FGC that day in Hamilton, and he "hoped like mad" he was able to bring my siblings and me home with him. He said he would ring Ms Moray the next day to give her an update.
41. When he hung up, Ms Morey noted that she could not see anything on my file that verified what our dad was saying or that we had been uplifted.
42. Our parents, several aunties and uncles, and four social workers attended the whānau meeting held that day to explain why we had been uplifted. The social workers said that we had been uplifted because mum had 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 [GRO-A  
Mr Al] and I were in the car with him.
43. Dad said that mum had planned with him for all of us to move to Pukekohe on the day we were uplifted. She had then rung him from the 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. He also said that he was thinking about getting a legal opinion on how CYFS used the warrant to uplift me and [GRO-A  
Mr Al] considering we were in his care, not mum's.



44. Our wider whānau said that they wanted us to go into our dad's care, but CYFS said that was not possible. My records do not show the reason they gave about why it 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.
45. That same day, GRO-B took me to the local CYFS offices so I could visit mum and dad. Ms Wendon supervised the visit. She said dad seemed very emotional, and she was not sure if he was going to uplift me from the visit, but he ended up leaving after the visit without me.
46. On 16 February 1996, Ms Wendon told CYFS lawyer Zoe Griffiths that our whole whānau had questioned why GRO-A and me had been included in the uplift when we had been living with dad. Ms Griffiths said that dad could get a legal opinion if he wanted to, but that the action had been taken based on the information CYFS had at the time. Ms Griffiths asked Ms Wendon if she thought we would be safe with our parents, considering their history. Ms Wendon said she did not think so.
47. 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.
48. That same day, another social worker told Ms Wendon that our whānau had been in contact saying that they were sad about it, but 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.

49. On 27 February 1996, dad told Ms Morey that the CYFS social worker who was meant to visit him the previous day had never shown up, and that he was upset that my siblings and me had not been able to go to our first cousin's unveiling that day.
50. He then said that my siblings and I would be coming to Auckland, where he and mum were. He said that he did not want CYFS to place us with any of our extended whānau, because he had been placed with whānau and "look what it did to him". He said that he wanted my siblings and me to come home because he could look after us. He said he had never "been unkind" to us, only to mum because she "was useless" with us.
51. Ms Morey then rang Mr Clarke, who said that he was negotiating with someone named Carl to see if my siblings and I could be placed in Auckland considering our parents were there, and whether there was a placement where we could be kept together, as we had been separated. Mr Clarke said that he had not heard anything about our cousin's unveiling, because if he had, he would have tried to get us there.
52. Ms Morey rang dad back. He was still upset, and told her that whānau were blaming him for my siblings and me being in care. He said that someone was meant to organise getting us to the unveiling. He then said that CYFS had made this very difficult, and he did not know whether it was worth the effort to get us back into his care.
53. 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.
54. 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.

55. On 25 March 1996, Ms Wendon sent a risk assessment to Mr Morris.
56. That same day, me and GRO-A  
Ms AG had an access visit with our parents.
57. On 28 March 1996, dad told Ms Wendon that he was now happy for other whānau members to care for us.
58. 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.
59. Around 10 May 1996, my siblings and I were placed into a Huakina Development Trust Family Home in Mangere, Auckland.

#### **MANGERE FAMILY HOME**

60. I remember there were a lot of caregivers at this placement who seemed to work in shifts. The main ones I remember, who looked after us, were called GRO-B and GRO-B

#### *Verbal Abuse*

61. One of the caregivers was GRO-B who I think was named GRO-B
62. GRO-B would also swear at us a lot, especially when he was telling us to do our chores.
63. The other children in the Family Home would also threaten that they would beat us up or they would call us names if we told on them for sneaking out or anything bad they would do. They made me feel like they were running the Family Home.

*Physical abuse*

64. One day, me and his daughter were playing with a frisbee. I accidentally threw it too high, and it landed on the roof of the two-story home. His daughter started crying because of it, and blamed me, even though I had not done it intentionally.
65. GRO-B saw, and came over. He twisted my ears, and slapped me across my face. He then dragged me by my ears to my room. He locked me in there for the whole night.
66. The other kids would also follow through on their threats to beat us up about every week. They would punch me all over my body. I think they knew not to hit me in the head because someone would see the bruising.
67. I do not remember a social worker ever visiting me or my siblings at that placement.

*Records*

68. On 16 May 1996, an FGC was held about us and it was decided that GRO-A Ms AJ and me should be placed with whanau member Mrs 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.
69. From my records, I think this placement either fell through or we were not placed with her for very long. I do not remember it.
70. On 11 June 1996, psychologist Marion Kirker indicated that she and Georgina Wilkinson would be doing the counselling for me, GRO-A Ms AH GRO-A Mr AI and GRO-A Ms AG. My other siblings were too young for counselling.

71. On 31 July 1996, the psychologists and social workers had a meeting about me and my siblings. They agreed that we needed to have safe and regular access with mum, but that we still needed frequent therapy to deal with the past abuse from our parents. They said that our extended whānau would need a lot more explanations around how much support we would need if they were going to care for us, and how much progress mum would need to make before we would be transitioned out of their care and into hers.
72. On 16 August 1996, Ms GRO-B had a meeting with mum. She said mum was attending a course with Homebuilders, and her parenting skills were improving with the support she was receiving from different services.
73. On 19 August 1996, Ms GRO-B said it was important that mum continue to receive support, especially if she was to have us back in her care in the future.
74. 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 mum. 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.
75. I do not remember mum ever hitting me, because I know that dad got upset when she did hit us.

76. Mum 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 youngest siblings in the supervised environment at Barnados, which everyone was happy with. The move to Barnados went ahead on 24 September 1996.
77. On 9 December 1996, Ms Kirker sent her final report about the therapy me and my siblings had received between September and December 1997. She had had 14 therapy sessions with me. She noted that she was particularly concerned about me and GRO-A Mr AI because she had heard that we had been sent back to the Huakina Family Home while our other siblings were staying with mum.
78. She said that the decision to return some of my siblings to mum had been done by Huakina, not CYFS, without a proper assessment into her ability to care for them or into how that would emotionally affect me and GRO-A Mr AI. She also said that CYFS did not reverse the decision, despite the concerns and lack of proper approval.
79. Ms Kirker said that me and my siblings had a very strong sense of family, but we also argued and were violent with each other. She said that I was most interested in having the whānau back together, and was the only one who seemed interested in having dad involved in our lives.
80. In individual therapy sessions, Ms Kirker said that GRO-A Ms AH and I had been able to describe in detail a traumatic incident where dad had beat up mum, and stabbed her with a fork, while she was pregnant with GRO-B-1 GRO-A Ms AH had rung the police while I tried to protect our younger siblings and stop dad assaulting mum.
81. Dad was charged for that assault, and I was meant to have testified but I was too scared to do it, because I did not want dad to get in trouble and I was scared I would have to go to court again.

82. Ms Kirker also said I described in detail the car crash that dad, GRO-A  
Mr AI and me had been in. She said I also told her how I had heard dad tell mum that he was going to harm all of us and himself, and that he had specifically told me about how he wanted to take his own life and me because he could not bear to live without me. Ms Kirker said that I had learnt about passing  
away at an unusually young age from this, and that I had told my caregiver that I wanted to harm myself and my baby sibling, who was living with me. She said that I told her that I usually thought about taking my  
own life when dad would beat up mum.
83. I do not remember dad talking to me about suicide or talking about taking my own life myself.
84. I told Ms Kirker that dad had previously hit me with a belt, and that he and mum had slapped me and kicked me over my body, but not on my head. I also told her that mum and dad encouraged us to give each other hidings, and she said that caregivers had seen us hit our younger siblings.
85. I do not remember dad physically abusing me, nor do I remember our parents telling us to hit each other, or me and my siblings hitting each other.
86. Ms Kirker thought that dad and I had been particularly close, and that I had complicated feelings about him and mum. I was mad at mum for testifying against dad, because I missed him, but I also was afraid of him and I knew that mum and my siblings did not want him to come back into our lives.
87. I do not remember being afraid of dad, and I know I wanted to be back in his care.

88. Ms Kirker had explained to me that mum was doing parenting courses so that we could be safe in her care, and I said that I did not think dad was able to do the work to be safe for us. She thought this was very realistic of me.
89. My caregivers said I had been difficult to look after at first, because I did not care what they thought of me, did not want to please them, and encouraged my siblings to behave badly or lie that the caregivers were hitting us. However, after therapy it seemed like I had settled down and I had told Ms Kirker that I was happy with my caregivers.
90. The caregivers, specifically, GRO-B were hitting us, and I disagree with how the social workers handled my allegations. I also do not think I encouraged my siblings to behave badly or lie, because that might have gotten them in trouble, which I would not have wanted.  
**[WITN0703002]**
91. Ms Kirker recommended that CYFS social workers and my caregiver keep monitoring me and asking me how I was, because I was less likely to talk about my problems with adults.
92. She then recommended that mum think carefully about whether she wanted dad involved in her and our lives, because he negatively affected all of us but especially me. She also said that all of our issues and behavioural problems might become worse at first if we were returned to our mum, and that we would all need lots of support.



93. On 16 May 1997, Barnados employee Trish Robinson told Ms Waru that our mum had been visiting our dad recently, and that had caused her behaviour to deteriorate. She had been aggressive towards my siblings and other families at the residence she was staying in, she was breaking the rules of the residence, and the employees 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.

94. On 2 August 1997, social worker Grace Matiu said that while GRO-A Ms AH GRO-A Ms AG GRO-A Mr AI and me were still at the Huakina Family Home, mum had taken us to see our dad in prison during her access with us. Ms Matiu thought GRO-A Ms AH and me were "emotionally affected" by these visits, because we had both gone back 10 steps in our progress.

95. On 17 September 1998, my siblings and me were placed with GRO-B-2 and GRO-B-3. They were the cousins of our grandfather on our dad's side.

GRO-B-2 AND GRO-B-3

96. This placement was initially good, but a bit cramped when we were in their three-bedroom townhouse. There was the six of us, and the GRO-B-2 GRO-B-3 kids and grandkids, which meant there were well over 10 of us in a house that could not hold all of us.

97. I have never understood why CYFS placed us there when it was too small, but my records say that they were having difficulty placing us because there were six of us.

98. For about a month, GRO-B-2 and GRO-B-3 were nice and loving, but then their demeanours changed, and they became abusive.

*Work*

99. GRO-B-2 and GRO-B-3 made us do a lot of chores. We would be forced to cook for everyone, clean the entire house, wash all the dishes, wash all the clothes and do the gardening.
100. We were never taught exactly how to do any of the chores, like the cooking or the cleaning. They would just tell us to do them, and we would have to figure out how to do it, otherwise we would get hit.
101. I remember that GRO-B-2 would often wake us up in the middle of the night to do chores like handwash the clothes. When this happened, I tried to take on more work for my siblings so that they could sleep, but it was a lot to take on. It was hard, because I still had to watch them suffer a lot.
102. It felt like we were their slaves, especially because they did not make their own children do a lot of work. We were blamed and punished whenever one of their own kids did something wrong, like break the washing machine or use too much soap powder.

*Physical Abuse*

103. Whenever we did do something wrong, or when she thought we were not working hard enough, GRO-B-2 would hit us. That was pretty much every day.
104. She would punch me, slap me, backhand me, or hit me with any objects she could get her hands on. This included the jug cord and a broomstick. She would hit me on my head, and across my body almost every day. I also saw her constantly hit my siblings in similar ways. We were all constantly bruised from these beatings.
105. GRO-B-3 and their adult sons would also hit us, but not as frequently.

106. When GRO-B-3 would hit us, he would either slap us or hit us with his tokutoku stick every so often. These hits would generally be to the head, and back, though mainly wherever he could reach.
107. Their sons would usually slap us or punch us in the face.
108. I remember feeling absolutely helpless and terrified when one of the GRO-B-2 GRO-B-3 sons threw a knife at GRO-A Mr Al after he had not brought him the correct utensil that he had asked for. The knife hit GRO-A Mr Al in the chest, but thankfully not the pointy end. It only left a little mark, and bled a little bit. I felt awful that I could not protect him.

#### *Neglect*

109. Sometimes GRO-B-2 would also punish us by not feeding us, or locking us in our rooms.

#### *Education*

110. While we were at the townhouse, I do not remember ever going to school and I do not think GRO-B-2 and GRO-B-3 enrolled me or GRO-A Ms AH in school. We were kept home to do chores.

#### *Verbal Abuse*

111. GRO-B-2 and GRO-B-3 kids and grandkids made us feel like we were nothing, or that they were better than us because they were not made to do the chores that we were. They would tell us that our parents did not want us, and that was why we were there and being made to work.
112. We would also be called “useless dog” “fucking animal”, “mongrel bastard” and “worthless” daily by either GRO-B-3 and GRO-B-2 or their children and grandchildren.

*Move*

113. On 6 October 2000, GRO-B-2 told Ms GRO-B that we had moved out to their farm near GRO-A Marae.
114. The physical and verbal abuse was still constant at the farm.

*Work*

115. The chores we were made to do got worse when we moved out to the farm, because there was more to do on top of the chores I have already listed.
116. There was a marae nearby that the GRO-B-2 GRO-B-3 had a connection to, and we would be made to clean that, mow the lawns, build fences and generally maintain it. GRO-B-2 would often send us to clean the marae when we had done all our other chores.
117. We would be sent out into the fields on the farm on hot days to get rid of the thistles. GRO-B-2 would not give us any water, so I would get my younger siblings to sit in the shade while I tried to do the whole job. They would also make us fix the fences on the farm.

*Neglect*

118. To punish us on the farm, GRO-B-2 would send us to stand outside in the cold.

*Education*

119. GRO-B-2 and GRO-B-3 did eventually enrol me in school after a few months, but I did not go very often. I had to get up at 6 to get myself ready, get my siblings ready, make breakfast for everyone, make lunches for everyone and send them off to school first. Sometimes, by the time I had done all of that, GRO-B-2 kept me home so I could do more chores for her.

*Sexual Abuse*

120. I remember that while we were on the farm, GRO-B-3 stayed in a bach that was on the property, not in the main house. Sometimes, me and his daughter would be made to sleep out there. I do not know why I was sent out there.

121. Twice, when his daughter was not in the bach with us, GRO-B-3 came into my room and groped me. He fondled my breasts under my clothes, and he penetrated me with his fingers.

122. I felt helpless when he did this because I could not tell anyone about it. I knew that GRO-B-2 would not believe me, and by that point I knew that adults did not generally believe kids anyway.

123. Their son also sexually abused me. He came into my room a couple of times, sat on the end of my bed, and would touch me all over my body. I was really scared every time he did this.

124. Another time, I had used the toilet next to the wash house. When I got out, he was there. He pushed me against the wall, pressed himself against me so I could feel his genitals, and fondled my breasts. I screamed and ran, and thankfully he did not follow me.

*Records*

125. In May 1998, Ms Kirker made her final report about the therapy me and my siblings had received in the previous years. She noted that she was concerned that we were not still receiving therapy.
126. 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.
127. [GRO-B-2] was lying. Dad only visited us at the farm twice. The first time, she told him to wait outside on the porch for us while we finished up our chores. But she kept giving us chores so we could not see him. It seemed like he waited on the porch all day. The second time, he brought our koro with him to the marae. We were also not allowed to see them then, because we were doing chores. I did overhear [GRO-B-2] abusing dad and koro about not being able to look after us and that was why [GRO-B-2] and [GRO-B-3] had to look after us, which upset me.
128. 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. [WITN0703003]
129. I am really upset that CYFS decided to let us be abused as children instead of helping us.
130. On 13 November 2000, Ms [GRO-B] said CYFS had investigated the concerns about us being hit, and offered support to [GRO-B-2] but that she thought this was not necessary.
131. On 14 June 2001 [GRO-B-2] 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. [WITN0703004]

132. 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 [GRO-B-3]
133. Around this time, I remember going to the counsellor on one of the days I was allowed to go to school, and I told her about everything that was happening to me and my siblings. I think she contacted CYFS, because social workers visited us unannounced one day at the farm and saw what it was like.
134. On 10 October 2001, CYFS social workers Cheryl Rangi-Butler and Claudia Ratu-Brown came to my school to talk to the guidance counsellor, Betsy Johnstone, about me. Ms Johnstone said that I had told her that [GRO-B-2] was hitting us, but that I was scared to tell anyone because she would bash me. I also told her that [GRO-B-2] had threatened to take me out of school whenever I did not behave how she wanted me to. Ms Johnstone then said that she thought I was being sexually abused as well, because one of my friends had told her about what I had told them.
135. Ms Johnstone also said that [GRO-B-2] and [GRO-B-3] had almost no contact with my school, except for when [GRO-B-2] came into a meeting about me getting caught smoking, and when my Māori teacher was concerned because I wanted to pull out of Māori studies, even though I was top of the class. Ms Johnstone said that I wanted to pull out of Māori studies because I thought my Māori teacher had said something to [GRO-B-2] and she had given me the bash because of what had been said.
136. Ms Johnstone also said that I had lost faith in anyone helping us, especially CYFS, because [GRO-B-2] had told the social workers about how she was hitting us, and they had done nothing [GRO-B-2] said she would just keep hitting us. She had also threatened that if social workers took me away, I would never see any of my siblings again.

[WITN0703005]

137. I remember the social workers talking to me at school, and telling them about the abuse that was happening. They told me that they would come visit us, and I should pretend that I had never seen or talked to them before.

138. On 2 November 2001, me and my siblings were removed from GRO-B-2 and GRO-B-3 and placed with GRO-B-4

GRO-B-4

139. I do not remember much about this placement, because I was not there for long. Ms GRO-B-4 had a whangai daughter who also lived at the house.

#### *Education*

140. While I was with Ms GRO-B-4 I do not remember going to school, but I was not there for long.

#### *Records*

141. My records show that I ran away from this placement within a few days of arriving, after GRO-A Ms AH and I had an argument.

142. I do not remember the argument.

143. I still hate myself for running away, because I felt like I was abandoning my siblings, but after the GRO-B-2 GRO-B-3 I could not handle being in foster care. I went to stay with my koro in GRO-A where dad was also staying at the time, though I did not know that until I got there.



**KORO AND DAD**

144. There was no abuse at this placement, but my dad was worried that I would get him into trouble because I had run away and had not been officially placed with him. He did not turn me away though.

145. My dad enrolled me in GRO-A College.

146. I liked school, but I was still dealing with my poor mental health and suicidal feelings after what happened to me and my siblings with the

GRO-B-2

GRO-B-3

*Offending*

147. I was involved in stealing cars, and attempting to steal cars at this point, but I never got caught.

*Drug Use*

148. To deal with my emotions, I began smoking P, marijuana, cigarettes and drinking alcohol. My koro really hated that I was doing that, because he did not like to see his mokopuna doing drugs and drinking.

149. Once, at school, I was caught smoking cigarettes and got stood down for a few days, but not expelled. When I got back home, dad was angry with me for getting stood down, because he wanted me to stay in school.

150. After that, I ran away from my dad, to my Aunty GRO-B

*Records*

151. My records show that CYFS was worried about me staying with my dad, because it may not have been suitable. Social workers said that I had maintained a close bond with my dad, and I had refused to stay anywhere else.
152. I do not understand why they did not support and help me to stay with my dad, when that was what I wanted, and the other "suitable" placements they had put me in had people who abused me.
153. CYFS thought this placement lasted about a week before dad, his new partner, and my koro decided that I could not stay there. The social worker involved said that CYFS had found placements for [GRO-A Ms AH] and me, who had by then run away from [GRO-B-4] but that we had not "been willing to follow through" with them, and that we had "limited realisation of actions and subsequent consequences of those actions". A social worker said that me and [GRO-A Ms AH] "remain[ed] unsettled" but were living with dad.
154. The report also said that I had been attending [GRO-A] College in 2001, and had been a "top student" in Māori studies, and very good at Kapahaka and athletics.
155. I was enrolled in [GRO-A] College, where I again was enthusiastic about kapahaka, but had not really properly attended school in 2002.
156. Overall, the social worker said that I was "respectful, thoughtful and charming" at times but could be "untrusting" and they thought I "wore the brunt of [GRO-B-2] negativity" when I was staying there. I "voiced anger and mistrust towards CYF interference". They were also concerned because I was sexually active, despite making agreements with my social worker and caregiver not to be.

157. They concluded that [GRO-A Ms AH] and me had “adopted a negative attitude towards authority” and that they could not place us anywhere long-term because of that. [WITN0703006]
158. These comments upset me. The only experiences we had had in care were negative, and we had been horribly abused by [GRO-B-2] and [GRO-B-3] while CYFS had done nothing for years. The social workers had never properly explained anything to us about why we were in care or why we could not be with our parents. I do not understand how we were meant to trust CYFS or social workers in that situation.
159. On 21 March 2002, a revised Care or Protection Plan was made for me. The plan said I had been and was meant to be living with CYFS caregiver [GRO-B]

[GRO-B]

160. I do not remember much about this placement, and from my records it looks like I ran away on 2 March 2002, shortly after being placed there.
161. One time, while I was staying there, I walked into the bedroom of Ms [GRO-B] daughter, and found that they were growing marijuana plants in it.

#### *Records*

162. The Care and Protection report said that I was staying with my whānau in Pukekohe, though I had told some of my whānau that I wanted to go back to my caregiver, but I did not think I could. The social worker had told them that I could and that they should pass that on to me. My aunty [GRO-B] had also offered to look after me.

163. The plan said that they wanted me to have positive contact with mum and dad, get me into counselling so they could do a psychological assessment, and keep me going to school. They also said that I should be responsible for my own sexual safety.

GRO-B

## AND OTHER WHANAU PLACEMENTS

### *Neglect by CYFS*

164. I do not remember CYFS being much involved in my life from this point. I think I may have only been around 14 or 15 when I ran away from my dad. No social workers ever visited me when I was with Aunty GRO-B. My records do not have much information about my movements around this time.
165. I liked staying with my Aunty GRO-B because she made me feel like I belonged. It was what I really needed, after all my years and experiences in care.
166. I was still going to school while I was with Aunty GRO-B but I was also still doing drugs and drinking.
167. I also stayed with an aunty in Te Puke around this time.
168. When I was 15, I got pregnant with my first son. During this pregnancy was the last time I remember seeing a social worker. That social worker, whose name I do not remember, came and helped me pick out baby clothes for my son. After she helped me with that, I never saw her or another social worker again.

### *Records*

169. On 19 November 2002, lawyer Hana Ellis, who I think is our Lawyer for Child, said that she had difficulties locating me and my siblings, but that she was trying and wanted our case to be put on the Judge's list in December so she could file a report.
170. On 12 December 2002, Ms Ratu-Browne created a new Care or Protection Plan for me. She said the objectives were to get GRO-A Ms AH and me into a long-term placement that would be conducive to our needs, preferably with whānau. CYFS also wanted us to have regular access with our younger siblings. CYFS wanted me to be with a caregiver who could support me with my pregnancy and help me develop parenting skills. Ms Ratu-Browne said CYFS would intervene with my baby if social workers could not find a good placement for me or I resisted their involvement with my baby.
171. On 29 May 2003, Judge Malosi directed that the order placing me in the custody of CYFS would continue until April 2004. She also noted that our Lawyer for Child, Mr Litchfield, had been trying to contact me about a new plan for me but had not been able to.
172. On 23 September 2003, me, GRO-A Mr AI and GRO-B-1 went to a meeting with our social worker Claudia Ratu-Brown and GRO-B-2 and GRO-B-3 at the local CYFS offices. GRO-B-2 and GRO-B-3 had been trying to get custody of us since we had been uplifted, and the meeting was to get our views on that.
173. Ms Ratu-Brown said that she spoke for us first, but that GRO-B-2 was not happy with that and wanted us to speak for ourselves. Both GRO-A Mr AI and I did. We said that while there had been some good times on the farm, we did not want to go back to being in their care.
174. This meeting meant that GRO-B-2 and GRO-B-3 stopped trying to get legal custody of us.

175. I remember being absolutely terrified to go to this meeting, and I did not understand why the social workers were doing that to us. I felt like we had already suffered enough.
176. On 21 May 2004, the CYFS lawyer applied to have my court file closed because I had turned 17.
177. On 24 May 2004, Mr Litchfield noted that I had turned 17 in April that year, which meant that any custody orders no longer applied to me and there was no further action that anyone was required to take.
178. On GRO-A 2004, Judge Clarkson issued a minute for the Papakura Family Court noting that the custody order over me had expired because I had turned 17 years old. This seems to be the end of my records.

## **EFFECTS**

179. During my time in care, I felt like, as the oldest, I had to protect my siblings from the treatment we were facing. I felt like a failure when I could not protect them, and I still struggle with that feeling today.
180. I really struggle with wondering why the abuse happened to us, and what we could have done wrong as vulnerable children to go through that. It has never made sense to me. I wish it had never happened to us, and I know that we all deserved a normal upbringing.
181. I have been engaging with counselling, but I was frustrated at first because I had never talked to anyone properly about what had happened to me and my siblings. I had never felt like I had a voice before now.

182. I have been diagnosed with PTSD and anxiety because of what happened to me in care. I am scared and have panic attacks about going out in public, or being around people. I have to get my sons or my other whānau to help me do simple tasks like shopping or other daily tasks.
183. I have struggled with addiction to drugs in the past, which I started using from the age of 14 to help me manage the pain I was feeling from my experiences in care. I am still dealing with my problems with alcohol.
184. I struggle to make friends, and I have a hard time trusting people. I sometimes feel like I put up a wall when people try to get close to me, because I do not want to be vulnerable or unsafe. I struggle with trusting men, and I have been a solo mum for a long time because I cannot trust my partners.
185. For a time, I blamed both our parents for what we went through, and for not being able to care for us. But I realised that they had their own difficulties that they were going through, and I was able to forgive them for what happened.
186. My relationship with my mum is something I am still building, but it is hard because she keeps pushing me away for her own reasons. We talk most days, though, and I know she loves me.
187. Dad and I keep in touch. He was there to support me when I got out of care, and is an awesome koro to my children.
188. I know that my dad also suffered when he was in care as well, and that he is still dealing with the effects of how he was abused. It feels like our family is stuck in a cycle.
189. I do not have connections to my culture, I think, because of the lack of education I received on it growing up. I would like to have a better connection, but I am finding it hard.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

190. I think the current care system could be improved by social workers making consistent and frequent visits to children in care, and talking to them away from their caregivers. I always felt like caregivers were obsessively watching us when we would talk to social workers or even to our parents. That made me too nervous to say anything about the abuse that was happening to us, because they were right there and able to hurt us more if we said anything. I feel like it also damaged my relationship with my parents because I could not talk to them openly.
191. I think my whānau could have benefitted from more support when we were all together. However, I think a better explanation around why we were being uplifted and why we were being taken away from our parents would have helped a lot, if it was necessary to uplift us. I was terrified and confused when we were uplifted, and people would just keep telling us that it was because our parents did not want us, which upset me even more as a young child.
192. Me and my siblings should have received more counselling, especially as we got older because we were able to understand more, and could better process our feelings.
193. I think the Te Tiriti o Waitangi could be better incorporated into the care system by having Pākehā actually listen to Māori about their experience in care, and make sure that the experience is equal between Māori and Pākehā. I feel like Pākehā are holding te Tiriti to ransom, and that Māori are not being treated equally in the care system.

## REDRESS

194. In some ways, I do not think an apology is enough, but I do not know what else there is.



195. I think survivors should be given the opportunity to talk through what they have experienced, so that those in charge can understand what its like and prevent it happening again.
196. I think counselling should be offered to people as soon as they engage with the redress process. Even just with making this statement, and thinking back more on what happened to me in care, I have been having flashbacks about the abuse, which has been hard. I have also had trouble accessing counselling so far.
197. I also think group counselling would be good for whānau like mine. We were separated from each other and our parents, which affected our relationships with each other and with them. It has been hard reconnecting on our own, when we still have trauma from the past.
198. Help with reconnecting to our culture and understanding our whakapapa links would be good as well, especially since I feel like my knowledge is so basic. I would love to know more, but I do not know where to start.

### **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.

GRO-C

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