

Witness Name: Ross Hamilton Clark

Statement No.: WITN0680001

Dated: 15 February 2022

ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

WITNESS STATEMENT OF ROSS HAMILTON CLARK

I, Ross Hamilton Clark, will say as follows:

1. Introduction

- 1.1. My full name is Ross Hamilton Clark. I was born on GRO-C 1937, and I live in an IHC home in Whanganui. I am European, have a learning disability and am legally blind. I had more vision when I was younger, but I am now 84 and cannot see because I have glaucoma. There is no cure for glaucoma. It is something I will live with for the rest of my life.

Early life

- 1.2. I lived in Whanganui with my family. I had a brother and two sisters. My sisters have both passed away now, but my brother is still alive and visits me with his family.

Events leading up to admission in care

- 1.3. When I was 19 years old, my mum took me to Kimberley Hospital and asked them if I could be admitted. I was lucky she was alive to take me down there. She did this because I did not have any friends to talk to and she worried I was lonely. The staff allowed me to be admitted. I wouldn't have gone to Kimberley if my mum hadn't taken me.
- 1.4. I did not see my mum again, because she died in 1959. They called me at the villa at Kimberley to tell me, so I could go to Whanganui and attend her funeral.

2. Abuse

Kimberley Hospital

- 2.1. I stayed at Kimberley for 16 years. Over that time, I lived in Villas 2, 6 and 8.

Day-to-day life in care

- 2.2. Every morning we would wake up at 7am, get dressed, and have breakfast in the mess hall. After breakfast, which was always porridge, we would return to our villas and just sit

down, listening to the radio. We slept in dormitories with other people, and we couldn't have our own radio. We had to listen to the radio they kept in the common day room.

- 2.3. Sometimes we would have work. I worked in the Male Staff Quarters, setting the table at mealtimes. At first, they didn't want me to work there because I was blind and they thought I couldn't do it, but I proved them wrong. There were six table to set up. We didn't have any other activities.
- 2.4. We had no privacy at Kimberley. In the dorm we only had a locker to keep our clothes. I was only afraid of living at Kimberley at the beginning. I became good friends with some of the other residents. I liked some of the staff, but others were bossy. One staff member threatened to split my head open, but I told him that I was at Kimberley to be treated properly and respected.

Physical abuse

- 2.5. One day I was going home from the Male Staff Quarters to my villa. Another resident, GRO-B-1 from Villa 2, pushed me into the swimming baths, near the bathing sheds. I told him to leave me alone, but he wouldn't. He took my pants down and pushed a hose from the shed up my bottom.
- 2.6. When the hose was taken out, my bottom was so sore. I've never been so sore in my life. It was the worst thing that ever happened to me. I told the Kimberley staff what happened. I told the staff that I was very sore. The staff thought I had had an accident but I told them that I had not.
- 2.7. I told the staff member that GRO-B-1 was the one who did it to me. The staff told me that I could do what I like, so I went to bed. They had to ring an emergency doctor from Levin who came and checked what had happened to me. He told me that he had never seen anything like it in his whole life. It looked like my bottom had been cracked open.
- 2.8. I had to go to the hospital in Palmerston North, because a big piece of metal from the hose had gotten stuck in me. It had caused an infection and the bleeding. They told me at the hospital that this piece would have killed me. I could not understand why this happened to me. I kept hurting for a long time.
- 2.9.

GRO-C
- 2.10. At breakfast they would also serve us lumpy porridge, which I didn't like. I couldn't see very well, and some of the other residents warned me not to eat the porridge because there were dead flies in it. I said it should be thrown away, and the cook, Mr GRO-B-2 threw the porridge at me. It got all over me and I had to go home to my villa and change.
- 2.11. Another time, a cook named Mr GRO-B-3 forced me to eat porridge which had soap powder mixed into it. He said, "eat it, eat it!" It made me quite sick. This was all because I said I didn't like lumpy porridge.
- 2.12. There were some good people, too. But they are all gone now, they are no longer alive.

Psychological abuse

- 2.13. Staff would also steal my gifts and lie to me about it. They would take the gifts away or would eat them. When my family sent gifts, especially chocolates, the staff would take them and give me the wrapping paper to taunt me. This happened while I was staying at Villa 2, and Mr GRO-B-4, Mr GRO-B-5, Mr GRO-B-6, Mr GRO-B-3 and Mr GRO-B-7 were some of the staff. My family complained, but the staff just called me a liar.

Leaving Kimberley

- 2.14. I left Kimberley after I had gone to Whanganui on a month-long holiday, and my brother asked if I wanted to stay permanently. I told him yes, because of how awful Kimberley was. I didn't want to be going back if people were going to be doing things to you that you don't want them to do. All the things that happened to me at Kimberley made me upset. The hose incident was the most terrible thing to happen to me in my life. When I found out I didn't have to go back I said hooray.
- 2.15. When you left Kimberley, you got a green bag with all your belongings. Because I didn't go back, they didn't give me belongings and they said my items went missing. I had a black raincoat and shoes, and two big boxes of View-Master reels. I never got any of them back. I wish someone could find out where they were and deliver them back to me.
- 2.16. After I left Kimberley I stayed at the Adult Home Units, run by IHC, and I had a lovely time because I got my own room and had privacy. I then lived at GRO-B, another IHC home, before moving to my current IHC home.

3. Redress

- 3.1. I haven't made any Police or ACC claims, or asked for any compensation from the government.

4. Looking forward

- 4.1. I think an apology from the Government is important.
- 4.2. I don't think or worry about my time at Kimberley too much because what happened is all in the past.

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.

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