

**Witness Name:** Frances Eileen Tagaloa

**Statement No.:** WITN0020001

**Exhibits:** WITN0020002 - WITN0020003

**Dated:** 02-10-2020

## ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

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### WITNESS STATEMENT OF FRANCES EILEEN TAGALOA

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I, Frances Eileen Tagaloa, state: -

#### INTRODUCTION

1. My full name is Frances Eileen Tagaloa. I was born on the GRO-B 1968 and I am 52 years old.
2. I work with Tandem Ministries, a Christian organisation and have just been assigned to work with our global organisation, Campus Crusade for Christ, as Chief of Staff, based in the United States.
3. I was sexually and emotionally abused by Brother Bede at Marist Brothers in Ponsonby, Auckland, while I was attending a separate, but closely situated,

Catholic primary school. The abuse occurred between 1973 and 1974 when I was aged between five and seven years old.

## **FAMILY BACKGROUND AND EARLY LIFE**

4. My Dad, **GRO-B** is Samoan and my mother is of Irish descent. My Dad originally studied to be a priest but did not finish the final step into the priesthood and my mother was once a nun.
5. Dad had significant pressures around his life as our household provider. As a boy he attended boarding school at St Patrick's, Silverstream and later in the United States and he had some expectations on him to excel. Straight out of high school he went into the priesthood and this included periods overseas including Italy. He could speak Latin, and Italian. Mass was conducted in Latin and they spoke Latin as a common language together. In the end, he didn't complete the rite of ordination, he did not become a priest. I am not sure why he didn't, he never said. He came to Auckland and studied law at Auckland University. He became a legal clerk and began his career from there.
6. Mum was a novice Catholic nun with the Sisters of Mercy in Boulcott Street in Wellington around 1956 for two years. She did not become a professed Sister. She has never said, and has refused since when asked, to explain why she left the convent, aside from to say she had a very bad nervous breakdown where she required a period of convalescence with my grandmother in Christchurch. She suffered weight loss and depression.
7. Mum and Dad met in their mid-twenties at St Pats Auckland City Youth Group. My Dad met my Aunt **GRO-B** my Mum's sister, first, as she sung in the choir and

shortly thereafter met my mother. They were married in 1968, the same year I was born.

8. Dad also had pressure due to his inter-racial marriage with my mother. My Dad's siblings were very supportive though and I have a strong relationship with my Aunts and Uncles on that side. We were always close with the cousins and spent lots of time with them.
9. My mother's family live in the South Island so we didn't spend as much time with them growing up.
10. I am the eldest of five children. I have two brothers and two sisters. We grew up in Grey Lynn in the 1970s. My household was very busy with my immediate family and lots of relations around.
11. We went to mass every week, that was not questioned. We had first holy communion, confirmation, we would go to confession regularly. Earlier we attended at Sacred Heart and later at St Mary's in Mt Albert. My mother's brother, Father GRO-B would visit regularly. Mum and Dad at different times would have been involved at Parish Council, especially in Mt Albert. Mum did the Eucharist Minister role too. My brothers were altar boys.
12. For my early childhood, Dad was a lawyer. He was also involved with the Polynesian Panthers, due to the Dawn Raids. We had the Police coming to our door – I remember being there and seeing my Dad yelling “I'm a New Zealand citizen, you can't come in, you have no right to be here, you cannot enter”. It was scary at the time, waking up and hearing Dad going off at them. I might have been around 6 years old, maybe 1974. They never came back so I figure what Dad did must have been good. Dad spent a lot of time helping and advising people about their immigration rights, and he also helped with the “Pig Patrols” trying to help deter Police from targeting Pacific people. There

was a lot of stress and pressure on him, he was seeing what was going on and doing his best to help people get their immigration papers.

13. Dad was also involved in the Bastion Point protest as well. I remember as a little kid going to the marae and playing with the kids, I didn't realise they were planning for a protest. Oliver Sutherland was a neighbour of ours and my Dad and him used to go along to the Bastion Point hui.

14. Dad was also a chronic alcoholic, although he later gave up drinking when I was 14 years old. My memories of him before that time was that he wasn't home, if he was home he'd be getting over a hangover. He wasn't engaged as a father. As a result of his alcoholism, he ended up committing fraud and later went to prison. He went into detox due to his Court case, and I remember at the time that he felt he would die from the effects of detox, that's how deep his addiction had been. In feeling that he might die, he made a recommitment to the Lord.

15. I remember he was in prison for about a year, which was very hard. People ostracised us, and the worst was Church. We still went to Church but no one would talk to us. We found out who our real friends were too during that time.

16. When Dad got out of prison, he decided to help others with alcohol issues initially with Salvation Army and then with a drug and alcohol rehabilitation unit in the Taranaki region. He managed that centre which was out of town, alongside being a peer support counsellor for the guys coming through that unit, often from Court referrals. We were all a part of that including my mother who as a nurse assisted with the health of the residents.

17. I went to a mainstream kindergarten when I was either 3 or 4. I went to Sacred Heart Primary from age 5 to 11 so primer 1 to Form 1. I left partway through Form 1 and went to Marist Sister College in Mt Albert. I stayed until the end of

fifth form and then my family moved. I ended up finishing my school certificate in Auckland while living with a family friend and shortly thereafter while living with an Auntie **GRO-B** and Uncle **GRO-B** from my Dad's side.

18. Sister **GRO-B** was known at Sacred Heart as being a disciplinarian, I remember her taking off her thick, high heeled shoe to hit the back of the legs or backside and in front of school assemblies while we were all lined up to watch. She was never my teacher, and she was the only one at Sacred Heart that I recall having used severe physical discipline.
19. I experienced institutional racism where the classes at Marist were streamed based on ability and the Pacific girls were all in the middle or lower stream. After the end of Form 1, I was moved into the higher stream, but there was only myself and one Cook Island girl in that stream. We were both part-Palagi and her surname was European. The middle-streamed Pacific girls were mostly part-Palangi.
20. My **GRO-B** went to Sacred Heart with me then to Marist Brothers next door from Standard 4 and came across to Marcellin College from Form 1 onwards. He was taught at Marist Brothers by Brother Bede in Std 4. He remembers him as being older, at least 60 years old. At Marcellin, he remembers there was a "psycho Brother" who would speak about his hand as being a mechanical hand, robotic. This was a method of justification as this Brother would use strong physical discipline, including frightening grabs to the neck, which was used on **GRO-B** on one occasion. **GRO-B** remembered two boys who bought into the robotic hand story and disseminated it around the schoolyard, he recalls them telling everyone at school that they had seen the skin lifted off the robotic hand. He was told later by these boys that they were sexually abused by that Brother at his home.

21. **GRO-B** started Sacred Heart Primary as well and went to Marist Primary when I went to Marist Sisters and started there at Marist Sisters in Form 1 as well, and went to Stratford High when my family moved in her Form 3. She later returned to Auckland and finished her schooling at Marcellin, for her Form 7.
22. **GRO-B** went to both Owairaka and Marist Primary, and then on to Stratford at Ngaere Primary and St Joseph's School. She also came back to Auckland later and was at Marcellin and finished her schooling at Selwyn before studying at Auckland University.
23. **GRO-B** is harder to remember for me because of our 9-year age difference. He went to St Joseph's School in Ngaere as well, and when we returned to Auckland, was at Marcellin College for Forms 1-3 before going to Mt Albert Grammar and St Pats Silverstream, and left school in Form 6. **GRO-B** tells me he experienced some physical discipline at school, at St Joseph's there was regular discipline with the ruler and the strap and at St Pats Silverstream the discipline was worse, he got the cane a few times about 3-6 strikes each time. He said, "It hurt a lot afterwards and had big welts for days after and drew blood."

## MY ABUSE

24. My parents were both Catholic and my schooling was at Sacred Heart Primary, a Catholic school. Our school went to Form 2, but the boy's school next door went from Standard 4 to Form 2.
25. **GRO-B** a Māori girl, was a friend from next door who also attended Sacred Heart. She was 11 or 12 years old when I started school. She had issues in her

family, we heard a lot of things going on, such as loud partying and alcoholism and violence. She was one of many children.

26. Sometimes I would go to and from school with [GRO-B] and other times I went to and from by myself as well.

27. One time, [GRO-B] invited me to come to meet Brother Bede after school one day. I understood this to be a fun thing to do after school.

28. This was at the Marist Brothers intermediate next door [GRO-B] brought me along and we drew on the blackboard, talked and spent time, which was fine. This was in the company of Brother Bede.

29. Initially I thought it was fun to play and get to draw on blackboard and learn something different. I did like that I got some individual attention.

30. After a while I would visit Brother Bede by myself and that is when the abuse would occur.

31. Brother Bede would be fondling me or would want me to take my pants off and stand me up on a table and get me to read books. I was not sure what else he was doing because I was reading the book.

32. Another time I was on his knee he was fondling around my private parts.

33. This occurred regularly between ages 5 and 7.

34. I never saw Brother Bede at any other time apart from these sessions because the two schools were run separately.

35. I never noticed any other adults or children at the Marist Brothers school grounds when I would visit there. It was immediately after school so presumably other adults were around, however none ever approached me or made their presence known to me.

36. The abuse stopped when I stopped going to the classroom after school.

37. I just stopped going, just decided I didn't have to keep going.

38. Also when I was 7, I had a really great teacher and she gave me individual attention with learnings and sport, I didn't need any other special attention for anything.

39. I didn't tell anyone at the time about the visits or the abuse. My parents did not know I was going to see Brother Bede. I didn't spend very long there during a visit so I am not sure if they were aware I wasn't coming home directly after school. My mum likely would not have noticed if I was coming home later because she was very busy with my younger siblings. And my father was never at home.

## THE ABUSE OF OTHERS

40. On one occasion, when both myself and GRO-B were there, Brother Bede was behind her and doing similar things, he had his arms around her. This was the only time I saw another child there being abused.

41. I do not know if anyone else was being regularly abused by Brother Bede.

## LATER LIFE

42. I grew up to be a teenager with very low confidence, I was quiet and reserved and also very angry. I actually hated who I was, my family and where I had come from.

43. I did not like to be around men, I didn't like any male attention.

44. My father stopped drinking when I was 14 years old, and attempted to be a present father in our home, I found that very difficult.



45. We moved as a family to Taranaki with his work for six years. Being involved in the recovery efforts for those deep in their alcohol addiction was a different kind of life.
46. As a part of the AA programme that my father led, he took the men recovering from addictions to various churches to discover their higher power. At one of the churches, I heard a pastor talk about how much God loved me. He said that no matter what my past, what had happened or who I was the God loved me. This was a revelation to me that God could love me so much as I didn't love me. In fact, I hated everything about me. But God loved me. So I decided I wanted to know this God who loved me so much and so I accepted Christ into my life. When I accepted that God love me then I could accept myself. But coming to know Jesus in a personal way didn't mean everything was perfect.
47. I then went to university in Auckland where I studied and graduated with a Bachelor of Laws and a Bachelor of Arts in Maori Studies. I also have a Graduate Diploma in Theology from the Bible College of New Zealand.
48. I had blocked out a lot of stuff and wasn't actually aware of my abuse at this stage.
49. I started to have flashbacks and nightmares when I was around 17 years old, and had an awareness that something happened at school. When it popped up I would push it aside. I had blocked it out for a long time and suddenly remembering these horrific experiences as an adult was traumatic.

## DISCLOSURE OF ABUSE

50. At university, as my relationship with God was developing, some things occurred where I began to acknowledge the abuse. I told a friend at my bible study group about the abuse I suffered. Shortly thereafter at a conference I listened to a speaker talk about sexual abuse and realised it happened to me. The conference hosts encouraged us to come forward if this had happened. I wrote my name on a comment card and as a result of that, this was feedback to the Christian organisation that I was a part of and they instigated me getting counselling. This and the mentoring from my friend were a great support to me. They closely mentored me and encouraged me to get help.

51. I also had an awareness that I needed to deal with this before marriage. I had met and was dating my future husband [GRO-B] at the time. When I was to get married, I told my husband [GRO-B] because I was unsure what would happen in my married life, what the impact might be.

52. All the guys we knew in the Ministry were scared of me because I was still at that time carrying my anger; I was very angry and strong, a feminist. I can't recall how I approached it with [GRO-B] but it is possibly during a marriage preparation course called A Weekend to Remember, where we were learning to develop a strong foundation for a healthy marriage and encouraged to talk through tough topics. It could be that's where we spoke about it. We did some other preparation for marriage courses as well and it could be related with that too.

53. When it came to telling [GRO-B] he was completely supportive of me from the very beginning.

54. I eventually told my parents in 2001-2002. So the period between my first recollections of the abuse at 17 years old, and later disclosure to my parents, was very long.

55. It is difficult to overstate the barriers to disclosure to one's parents and family.

The following reasons are the main barriers I encountered:

1. Shame was very relevant, as it was quite shameful that I had gone through that terrible trauma and experience, and that it was related to sex which is a taboo. Although I've had a blended culture, in our family we don't talk about sex, full-stop. The taboo around sex is very strong. When we were kids, if we were watching TV and the actors in the show were kissing, the channel would suddenly get changed – that was considered racy in our culture and in our household. Because this was sexual abuse, there was an additional barrier of talking about it, all related to the shame associated with the taboo of sex. Finally, to discuss with my father, as a female, also was a taboo. I was worried from a cultural perspective about telling my father of the sexual nature of the abuse. I feel that I would have been able to tell Mum much sooner but knew I would need to tell them both.
2. The fear of not being believed. I didn't know if I would be believed or, I was worried that I might get my parents' support but not be totally believed. If I would be able to answer questions if I had been asked for specific details. At the forefront of my mind was my Dad's experience working with rehabilitating offenders and that he always saw the good in them, I was concerned he may try to explain the abuse.
3. Faith and my parents' strength of faith in the Catholic Church was significant. Catholicism, for my family, is a cultural way of life. That

Brother Bede had access to and offended against me using his position within the Catholic Church was another barrier, compared to if I was disclosing abuse from someone who was not a clergyman, as I would be calling into question my parents' faith.

4. I was worried about the trauma and emotional impact on my parents, I didn't want to be a source of pain for them. I also didn't want them to feel like their parenting or parenting choices had caused this to happen to me. The respect one feels for their parents is very strong in my culture, so it would cause me emotional turmoil to think about how they might take it.

56. The pressures involved when thinking about disclosing historic sexual abuse to one's family are significant. I was going into this decision knowing that I was putting how we did life at risk. The abuse meant our core beliefs, our faith, how our family raised our children, the people we trusted and let into our homes, would all be questioned. These were questions GRO-B and I had been able to handle together but the thought of putting that burden on my parents weighed heavily with me.

57. It is hard to explain how I was able to tell my father given the barriers within our culture. By the time I told my parents, I had been able to see my father really pursue a personal relationship with me both as his daughter and as an adult woman living my life in Auckland, although even then, it was many years later before I could bring myself to tell him.

58. I did know Dad knew something of the consequences of sexual offending from his time counselling offenders recovering from their addiction.

59. I am lucky in some ways that Dad was the man he was and his life took the course it did because when I think of my female cousins, if this had happened to them, they likely could not bring themselves to tell their fathers, my uncles.
60. We invited them over and sat them down for dinner and I said that I had something really important to tell them. They believed me and they were so supportive. As they are both strong Catholics and they were very upset and quite angry that this had happened. I was so relieved that my father responded the way that he did.
61. Later in life I told my sons, and at the time of writing this statement, in July-September 2020, I am now going through the process of telling my other family members. This was important to me because as a Samoan woman if I am to go on the record as a witness for this Commission, or if I speak out about the abuse in order to encourage others to come forward, I will be representing my family. There has been a range of emotions but I am thankful that everyone has been supportive of me so far.

## **EFFECTS OF ABUSE**

62. The abuse I suffered has affected my entire life. I have found it difficult to trust others and to maintain good friendships. I have suffered from depression and sleeping problems at times and I've wondered if my health problems with fibromyalgia, which crippled me for years, might have been triggered by the trauma.
63. Due to my anger towards men, I had to work on that anger and a deep mistrust of men. It is surprising to me that I could have married my husband GRO-B and that he could work with that.

64. I am no longer a Catholic, I am a born again Christian. There is a lot that I like about the Catholic church, but I do not attend a Catholic Church.

65. While I accessed counselling when I needed it, it is clear that the abuse still hangs over me and my family and a public disclosure may affect my family widely.

## **REDRESS – COMPLAINT PROCESS**

81. My mother began the complaint, she was so angry when I told her about the abuse that she called up the church and spoke to someone that she knew, Lindsay Freer. Mum knew her quite well. Later I found out that she was the Spokesperson for the Catholic Church.

82. Lindsay suggested I could talk to someone in the Church and document what happened. From my records received from NOPS in July 2020, the Church records my complaint beginning on 16 July 2002 when I phoned the Helpline of the Society of Mary.

### **Refer WITN0020002 – Notes of Brother Peter Horide**

83. I attended a meeting with a woman from the Marist Brothers Protocol Committee. I attended with my husband. I remember the woman had a list of columns with names. She pointed out my name on the list and I saw it next to Brother Bede's section. I believe this was a fulsome list of perpetrators and the victims who had made complaints. The list was arranged by perpetrator. The list was many pages and the section on Brother Bede was long, many names. I couldn't say if it was longer than one page.

84. I wasn't too impressed with the outcome, I don't recall an apology, I don't recall them trying to explain what happened. I got a letter and I threw it out because I was so upset. I don't recall what the letter said.

85. Following my complaint, I was offered compensation. I did not want it. I said to give a donation to my Ministry if they wanted to. In 2002, Brother Henry Spinks, donated \$6,000.00 in mine and my husband's name to our Ministry.

**Refer WITN0020003 – Letter from Brother Henry Spinks**

86. I have since made a Privacy Act request for my file at the beginning of 2020. The NOPS office provided me two documents, one was a typed list of notes and one was a letter, stating that a donation had been made in my name.

87. The letter states my complaint was upheld. I understand now that this was their way of saying they believed me but it did not feel like this at the time.

88. I was quite upset that there wasn't more that the Church did, I wanted to know how could this have happened, how was there so very little supervision of Brother Bede. They just did that one counselling session and that was it. I did not speak to or hear from anyone more senior. No one told me what happened to Brother Bede or if he was still working with children.

89. It was never suggested that we might go to the Police, by anyone including my family.

90. As a result of my Privacy Act request, I have since been offered the opportunity to begin a dialogue with the Marist Brothers to discuss my questions. Over an exchange of emails, I have been told that I was one of four or five complaints about Brother Bede, and that Brother Bede is now deceased.

**Refer WITN0020004 – Email from Brother Horide dated 15 September 2020**





## IDEAS FOR TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE

91. My lived experiences and knowledge from my studies and career has led me to hold the following opinions:

1. I believe the exclusion of lay people particularly women in the leadership of the Catholic Church could have contributed to abuse of children. I feel like if laypeople and women were in the leadership and the priesthood it might balance out some of the risks.
2. I would like to know if the Catholic Church has changed processes of supervising brothers and clergy, how was he allowed to be in classes by himself just with children? Has the Church changed anything in that regard? There should be more training to promote child safety – just knowing that there's been so many abuse cases makes me wonder what the church are doing to promote child safety. Do they talk about child sex abuse being an offence?

92. I have read the Australian Commission of Inquiry and agree with some of their recommendations:

1. Canon law should be changed so that offences of sex abuse are reframed as crimes against the child rather than breaches of celibacy or obligations. It's horrific to me that they have not recognised child sexual abuse as a crime.
2. Canon law be amended so the pontifical secret doesn't apply to child sex abuse. The emphasis on the pastoral approach to treat withdrawal from ministry as a last resort has contributed to feeling that this is a forgivable moral failing rather than a crime.

3. If a complaint of child sex abuse is substantiated that the perpetrator be permanently removed from ministry and dismissed from religious life or the priesthood, not just moved on.

93. Regarding confessional aspects of Canon law, I don't think there should be that protection of the seal of confession when there has been such a crime as child sex abuse. There shouldn't be secrecy, it should be allowed to be spoken about and reported. I would like to see the NZ Catholic Church request of the Holy See to have any such confessions excluded from the seal of Confession, where if a crime such as child sexual abuse is reported that they must report it to the police.

94. The vow of chastity has also contributed to this problem, the Catholic Church should consider introducing voluntary celibacy. While the vow of chastity remains priests should be trained and screened and monitored, as the lifestyle attracts some cynical offenders.

95. I also think it should be an offence to fail to report. There needs to be a duty to report. Mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse needs to apply to the Catholic church in the same way that they apply to government organisations, some non-profit organisations, hospitals and children's institutions.

96. I do not want to be anonymous. I am happy for my identity to be disclosed publicly in this statement.

#### 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:

2<sup>nd</sup> October 2020