

**Witness Name:** GRO-A Ms CU

**Statement No.:** WITN0422001

**Exhibits:** WITN0422002– WITN0422005

**Dated:** 10.06.2021

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**ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE**

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**WITNESS STATEMENT OF** GRO-A Ms CU

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I, GRO-A Ms CU, will say as follows: -

**INTRODUCTION**

1. My full name is GRO-A Ms CU. I am GRO-A years old and I am of Tongan descent.
2. I want to start by making it clear that this is my niece's story. I am here to tell my experience of trying to support my niece who was abused by a Catholic priest, and what has happened since coming forward about the abuse she suffered. My niece was 15 years old at the time.
3. I am also coming forward because while trying to support my niece, a number of people have shared with me experiences they had or things they heard about this priest. The people that shared stories with me are leaders in the Tongan Catholic community. I believe the Church failed in their duty of care to my niece and other young people. This issue is much bigger than the priest in this particular case; it's about the Catholic Church.

**FAMILY BACKGROUND**

4. I am a child of the Pacific migrant journey to New Zealand. In 1974, I moved to New Zealand from Tonga when I was three years old.
5. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, my family and I were back and forth from Tonga all the time. After 30 years of living here, my parents moved back to Tonga. Two of my siblings have also moved back and are settled there with their families. Although my family and I live in New Zealand, we are very much still connected to Tonga. We have never lost that time or that connection.
6. On the other hand, my niece and her immediate family live in Tonga. They rarely come to New Zealand and were only here for a family reunion during the summer holiday.
7. One of the motivating drivers in my immediate family migrating to New Zealand was for education, which in our household was non-negotiable.
8. I am university educated and have held a number of leadership roles within the public sector, Pacific communities and in the Church.

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*Involvement with the Catholic Church and the Tongan Community*

14. My family is part of the Tongan Catholic community. We have a long history with the Catholic Church. When we came to New Zealand, my parents were GRO-A GRO-A members of the Tongan Catholic community in Auckland. They were heavily involved with the Tongan community and the Tongan Chaplaincy in Auckland. Initially, it was a very small community but it has since grown. I think there are about 26 parishes now right across New Zealand that the Chaplaincy looks after.
15. Since moving to New Zealand, our whole life revolved around the Church. The Church became our new village. The families that we engaged with in our Church community became our brothers, our sisters, our aunts and our uncles. That's how we grew up.
16. The church is a place where Tongan people congregate and share culture and faith. So much of the cultural and social aspects of Tongan life are tied up in the church. The church is so intrinsic in the way it weaves through our lives.
17. We, as Tongans, have always been communal people. We have always been people who did things together. Christianity has wrapped it up in a package that almost that's the only way and there is no other way.
18. I went through Catholic education, as did my siblings. When I got married, I married in the Church. That is also how my husband and I have raised our kids. They have gone through sacraments in the Church and they too have gone through Catholic education.
19. Leading up to the incident, my family and I were very active in the Church. I held a leadership role GRO-A

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GRO-A My husband also held leadership roles. Our kids were involved in a lot of these things too.

20. We did a lot of it because of the cultural-social aspects, rather than strictly because of the Catholic Church aspect; however, they were very much intertwined with one another. In our connections with family, friends and the cultural things, even connections back to Tonga, that was how we did it – with the Tongan community at the Church.
21. Tonga, Tongan culture and the Church were very strong pillars of my life growing up. These pillars determined the decisions I made in life, my perception of things and the way I saw the world. Since the incident involving my niece, I'm now struggling with having to decide how my family and I can connect and remain whānau when we're having to pull ourselves out of something that has really been put there as part of the glue in the family.

#### *Standing of priests in Tongan culture*

22. Tongan society is very hierarchical. At the top are the Royals, followed by the nobles, and then the commoners. Royals are born royal; it is hereditary and in your blood. The nobility is a western thing that came about during the Constitution. Rather than having all the chiefs in warfare, the Royals selected a group that they could work with and made them nobles. The nobles are the holders of estates in Tonga and look after the lands on behalf of the Royal whānau. They get their power because they are estate land governors. The people who live on those lands in those villages are the commoners.
23. That hierarchy exists today. The difference now is that the commoners are getting to spaces in society where hierarchy is no longer just by birth, but by things such as education, achievement, business and being a minister, priest or nun. By doing these things, you can break out of societal hierarchy, your birth structures, your village structures, and you can elevate yourself and your whānau in the hierarchy and be treated accordingly. For example, if you are at an event and there are no Royals or nobles present, this person would be of the next highest ranking not necessarily by family but because of achievement.

24. Becoming a minister, priest or nun are some of those ways to become upwardly mobile and no longer a commoner among the rest of the commoners. However, they are slightly different from the other types that are elevated. The other types elevate in status but do not gain authority. Ministers, priests and nuns elevate in both status and authority because of the godly factor, and Tongan society elevates them because of their status.
25. At an event, a noble or even a Royal would acknowledge any minister that is present. They would not necessarily have to acknowledge anyone else, but they will acknowledge the minister because of the godly factor. They are a representation of God on Earth. They are here to administer God's word and be an example of godliness and righteousness for everyone else to follow. They have a spiritual aspect about them that is always acknowledged and so that is why they get both authority and status.

## THE ABUSE

### *Family reunion*

26. In late GRO-C my family held a reunion GRO-C in New Zealand.
27. My family is a big, strong, Catholic family. They have a long history in the Catholic Church and they're very proud of it.
28. As the reunion was being held in New Zealand, we had family travelling in from around the world for it. One of the families travelling in from Tonga was my cousin who has a daughter, my niece.
29. We had a programme for each day of the reunion. The reunion started with a Mass. Each day there would be a morning programme, we would go home in the afternoon, then come back for an evening programme.
30. Father Sateki Raass occupied the role of a priest for the duration of the reunion. I think he had another name, before Sateki, but I don't remember what it is. He is known in the Tongan community as Sateki Raass. He was the Parish Priest at St Mary's Parish in Mount Albert at the time.

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32. Sateki Raass was invited by members of my family to say the Mass for the reunion. He came to all of our programmes, both the day ones and the evening ones. Each time he sat up at the front table with the nanas and the papas, and was given all the respect and all that kind of stuff as priests do. He said the prayers and the blessings throughout the reunion. He played quite a big role. As a way of giving thanks and showing respect (*fatongia*) to Sateki, a representative of god in our midst, he would have received gifts from our family during the reunion. Gifts would often include food baskets and an envelope containing money. There is a long history behind this tradition.
33. In Tonga, before the end of each year, members of the Catholic Church have confession with their priest. My niece later confirmed she was expecting to have confession here in New Zealand, during the family reunion. This is how she and Sateki got talking.
34. She later explained to me that at one of the evening events during the family reunion, she was asked to carry Sateki's food to his car. As a *patele* (priest), he should not carry his own food; someone else should do it for him. As she carried his food to his car, my niece asked Sateki whether they were going to have confession during the reunion. He responded by asking her whether she wanted confession and she said "yes".
35. When they arrived at the car park, a lady who my niece didn't recognise, pulled up in a car that wasn't Sateki's car. My niece was told to put the food in the woman's boot which she did. She then walked off as Sateki and the woman got to talking. The woman drove off and Sateki caught up with my niece who was already walking back to the reunion. He carried on the conversation, asking again if she wanted confession, to which she replied "yes". He suggested that they have confession there and then.

### Confession

36. Sateki and my niece walked to a long deck where the hall was, to a part where it tucks away to the corner. They sat there and Sateki then invited my niece to tell him about her confession.
37. My niece later explained to me that she proceeded to give a full-on confession. She said she did the sign of the cross and she went into the formal prayer that you start with in confession. I asked her whether she had disclosed anything about an uncle or someone that was hurting her. She said no, there's no uncle, none of that. What she had told Sateki was about a boyfriend she had in Tonga. This was clearly a confession but I understand that Sateki later denied that it was a confession, instead telling the Chaplaincy that it was just a conversation.
38. Following the confession, Sateki started paying my niece attention at the reunion and messaging her on Facebook Messenger. He also took photos of her during the reunion on his mobile phone.

### Messages

39. The day after the reunion had ended, we held a family barbeque at our home, which my niece came to. Two days later, [GRO-B-1] told me she needed to talk to me and showed me her mobile phone. My niece had used [GRO-B-1] phone to log into her Facebook Messenger account but had forgotten to log out afterwards. I saw a long chain of messages between Sateki and my niece, who was 15 years old at the time. Just about all the messages were in Tongan.
40. I saw that Sateki had initiated contact with my niece at 12.28 am saying, "So nice meeting you beautiful – hope to see you next week". Throughout the messages he called her "beautiful" and told her she looked nice. He sent her some of the images he had taken of her at the reunion.
41. They talked about how my niece would drink alcohol with him and how he would take her to a pool to swim and to a hotel.
42. At one point, he asked her to send him a photo of herself. She sent him a nice little church photo of herself in a *kiekie*, (which is traditional Tongan wear for

church). He replied that he wanted a “sexy” photo. [REDACTED] GRO-C

[REDACTED] GRO-C He told her she looked “hot hot hot”. [REDACTED] GRO-C

[REDACTED] GRO-C

He kept asking until it got to a point where my niece just went offline.

43. The messages also showed that Sateki had promised to get my niece a mobile phone. They showed how he had planned to pick her up and get the mobile phone to her. He was going to visit the home where my niece was staying with a bag of lollies to take back to Tonga, and hide the phone in there. That way she would have a way to contact him, because she was using all sorts of devices.
44. She was going to say to her grandmother that Sateki was taking her out because she needed some spiritual help following the confession she had with him at the reunion.
45. He also suggested that he take a mutual niece to dinner and offer to pick her up to join them, so that afterwards he could drop off the other niece and be alone with my niece.
46. Those plans were foiled when my niece was unable to explain where exactly she was staying, and the phone number of a family member she had given Sateki to contact to find out the address was incorrect – which he discovered after calling the number.
47. Sateki eventually got through to the grandmother to tell her of the plans but she told him not to waste his time, that my niece didn’t need anything and not to worry about her.
48. Sateki contacted my niece saying they had to think of another way. He later asked her to get someone to drop her off at a meeting place.
49. Another time, Sateki sent my niece a picture of himself holding a can of alcohol at a barbeque, wearing the family reunion t-shirt.
50. Several times throughout the messages he asked her to come over.



51. He was very persistent in his attempts to meet with my niece and to get a mobile phone to her.
52. I think Sateki's behaviour was clearly grooming. GRO-C
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53. Not long after I saw the messages, I wrote Sateki a message from my niece's page letting him know that it was me and that I had copies of all his messages with my niece. I told him that I would be submitting a formal complaint to the Diocese and was seriously considering further actions. I told him not to contact my niece again.
54. Shortly after that, he messaged me privately about four times across two days. He said things like my niece was disclosing that a family member was molesting her. He said that my niece was the one that had been contacting him, that he was only trying to help her and avoid potentially embarrassing everyone in the family. He said my niece asked for his help and that he was helping her in a "confidential dignified way". He apologised several times but said he was only doing the best he could. He said he only wanted her to have a better life and at the same time, protect the reputation of the family.
55. I didn't respond to any of his messages.
56. No names were ever disclosed by either the Police or Sateki about the person that was supposedly abusing my niece. This is the story that was later spun around in the community.

### **CONTACTING MY FAMILY**

57. As soon as I saw the messages, I knew I was going to do something about it. There was no doubt in my mind that I was going to the Police; it was the first thing that came to my mind. However, I had to figure out a way to deal with this that would maintain the cultural dignity of my niece and her father (my cousin).
58. That evening, I went to the house where my niece was staying and brought her

back to my home. I told her it was for a sleepover. I didn't know what might happen and how the family would react to the messages. I was afraid for her so I wanted to make sure she was safe. She didn't know at that point that anyone had seen the messages with Sateki Raass.

59. In Tongan culture, male and female cousins are akin to brothers and sisters. Anything to do with sex or this kind of thing is taboo between brothers and sisters; they do not speak about it. So I couldn't talk directly to my cousin about what had happened with his daughter. Instead, I spoke to my uncle.
60. It's different with an uncle because an uncle is like a father, so we can talk about these things. I had to get my uncle to a place where he could explain to my cousin what had happened. While I needed to communicate all of this information to my cousin, through my uncle, I also needed to do it in a way that would not breach my cousin's cultural dignity.
61. When I talked to my uncle about it, he did not want me to go to the Police. He wanted the issue to be left to the Church to resolve. I think he was embarrassed of what others would say and think of us as a family. He thought we should tell the Bishop and Church leaders, and then leave them to do their work; in other words, that our role is to tell the leaders and then step away.
62. I told my uncle that reporting it to the Police was non-negotiable for me. I told him that I would write to the Diocese and the Tongan Chaplaincy to let them know I had this information and what my intentions were. My mum thought I was crazy.
63. Around the same time, I had a chat with my niece. She was very sorry and very afraid. She didn't want her family to know what she had done. I was also worried about what might happen to her when she got back to Tonga. GRO-B-2 was going back to Tonga so would make sure our niece had support and counselling when she got back there.
64. When Sateki's family found out about what happened, he told them that he was trying to help my niece deal with an uncle that was molesting her. These rumours started going around in the community. There were also rumours that it was her father that molested her. The rumours were so ugly. The rumours would make

their way through the community and then my niece's mum would ring us from Tonga and say now we've heard this and that; this is what people are saying. Our family had to deal with all the rumours that were going around.

65. GRO-C, a big fallout happened in our family. Members of our family were angry that I had gone to the Police when Sateki was only trying to help. They thought that I should have got advice and only gone to the Chaplaincy. They thought that by reporting the matter to the Police, I disrespected my niece and our family. They thought, how could I have done this to them? Family members told my niece's father to change her name so that she didn't carry a family name – they told him “*to'o hingoa*” (which means to remove the family name).
66. This directive brought *whakamā/fakamā* on our family. They cut ties with me and disowned me as family. By the time I heard about what these family members were saying, I had already been to the Chaplaincy, the Diocese and the Police.

### **CULTURAL BARRIERS TO REPORTING**

67. I know that a lot of people find their support in family. Pacific communities remain linked via family and village ties. How families practise their ties varies but I think we initially seek support from our family members. The Tongan way is that when your aunty, particularly your paternal aunty, is telling you something, you listen. This works when everyone has similar views and understanding. It is different if your family is not of the same thinking as you; family members can also be your worst critics. If you have a different view from your family, then you'll crumble, unless you are able to find your own strength and resilience in other ways. Even then, it's a lot to weigh up and why would you disrupt that family dynamic? I can understand why a Tongan wouldn't.
68. Another huge barrier in reporting the abuse was the difficulty in maintaining the cultural dignity of my niece's father throughout the process. The brother and sister relationship in Tongan culture encompasses *faka'apa'apa* which means respect. It also encompasses *ngeia* which is the grace between brother and sister; the grace you show each other when you honour and respect each other. There's another thing in Tongan culture where I honour his children and he

honours my children. That's the collective nature of this relationship.

69. Reporting the abuse of my niece meant threatening all of this. It threatened the *vā* or the cultural relationship I have with my niece's father. The concept of *tauhi vā*, or *vā* for short, is one of the four golden pillars (*kavei koula*) of the Tongan culture. *Tauhi vā* essentially means to maintain relationships. Tongans seek to maintain relationships with their family, *kāinga*, community and as a nation. As well as *vā*, there is also a concept in Tongan culture referred to as "*nofo 'a kāinga*". This is the intrinsic rules and ways of being that hold us together as *kāinga* or family. These connections were at risk and have since been damaged with some. It is a major thing to consider when moving forward in this space.
70. It also threatened damaging the name of the family, especially because we are such a big Catholic family. All these things are disrupted when you make these calls around reporting the abuse of my niece by a priest.
71. The thing that people will see are my niece's actions. They will see her role in having a conversation with the priest, in wanting a phone and sending the images. On the other hand, Sateki is the Priest – what people see and have said is that he's got so much work, so much honour, and he's only human. They wouldn't see that he is an adult male and she is 15 years old. They wouldn't see that he groomed her and asked for images of her. All of this really disrupts the *vā* and breaks down all the complexities in the relationship I have with my niece's father.
72. Despite this, I feel that we did the best we could to keep our relationship intact while we were working through this stuff. I would like to say that my niece's father and I are still very close.
73. My niece was only 15 years old and Sateki was a grown man that held a significant, powerful role. Nothing anyone can say to me can make what he did better, or lessen it, or excuse it. It was and is wrong. My niece was a victim and continues to be a victim, and that is what motivates me, above everything else, to speak out about this.

## **CONTACTING THE DIOCESE**

74. On 10 January 2018, I sent an email to the Diocese as an official complaint regarding the actions of Father Sateki Raass. I gave a brief description of the complaint but did not include details of the messages or the images. I urged the Church to stand him down from duties while an investigation was undertaken. I let them know that I intended to refer the incident to the Police and the Board of Trustees and Principals for Marist College and Marist Primary, so that they were aware and could put plans in place. [WITN0422002; WITN0422003]
75. The following day, on 11 January 2018, I received an email response from Nicola Timms, Professional Standards Officer of the National Office for Professional Standards (NOPS). She said that she manages the New Zealand Catholic Church's process for responding to complaints of sexual abuse by clergy and religious. She said she would like to discuss my complaint with me. I agreed to go to her offices in Albany.

## **MEETING WITH THE NATIONAL OFFICE FOR PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS (NOPS)**

76. On 16 January 2018, [GRO-B-2] and I went to the NOPS' office in Albany. When we got there, we were met by Ms Timms.
77. She wanted to see the messages with Sateki. We had a printed copy of the messages with us and showed them to Ms Timms. I had translated the messages into English for her. I had also sent her copies of the messages and translations the day before.
78. She told us we needed to take it to the Police as it is a criminal matter. She said that NOPS investigates priest behaviour against their sacraments, so after the Police investigation, they will investigate Sateki's behaviour as a priest.
79. Ms Timms was also very interested to know whether it was confession or not. I continued telling her that my niece always believed it was and talks about it like it was confession. The meeting lasted about an hour.
80. Going up against the Church felt like going up against Goliath. There have been

bigger people with more resources that went up against the Catholic Church and they did not get anywhere. I knew what I was up against, but I had to do it.

81. From there, I went straight to the Police station.

**[WITN0422004]**

#### **POLICE COMPLAINT AND PROSECUTION**

82. The same day, on 16 January 2018, I made a complaint with the Police.

83. I understand that following my complaint to the Police, Sateki was arrested and they took his computers for inspection.

84. The Police told me that they had retrieved images and sent them off for classification. I can't remember specifically what the classification came back as, but based on that, the Police decided to charge Sateki.

85. After my niece had gone back to Tonga, I acted as the middle person between my niece and her family, and the Police. I gave the Police the information they needed for the prosecution.

86. Although Sateki resigned from the priesthood during the Court process, the Catholic Church still paid for a Queen's Counsel ("QC") to defend him throughout the prosecution and later, his sentencing.

87. I can't specifically remember what the charge against Sateki was, but I remember that he initially pleaded not guilty and attempted to reduce the charge.

88. The Police officer dealing with the case told me that it is a common occurrence for someone to attempt to reduce the charge and then plead guilty to the lesser charge. The officer told me that his sergeant did not want to reduce the charge.

89. There continued to be a lot of back and forth between the QC and the Police, with the QC asking for a reclassification of the images. This carried on for a whole year.

90. I thought the Police were really good throughout the process. They were very supportive, answered any questions I had and were clear about what they could and could not do.
91. A trial date was set and then the Judge sent the matter to the Crown Prosecutor's Office. This meant it was no longer a Police matter. Once the matter was with the Crown, we had no relationship with the Crown Prosecutor. He never made an effort to communicate directly with me and explain what was happening.
92. Despite the Police being firm in their view that the charge should not be lessened, the Crown Prosecutor agreed with the QC to lessen the charge.
93. Sateki then pleaded guilty to the lesser charge and the matter was set down for sentencing.
94. I understand that during this period while Sateki was on bail, he was bailed to an address on school grounds. I think the Ministry of Education came back and said no, that he had to be off school grounds.
95. Some time after Sateki pleaded guilty and before he was sentenced, I received a phone call from a lady who I believe was from the Court. She asked whether we would like a restorative justice meeting with Sateki. She said that Sateki had a letter that he wanted an opportunity to read out to my niece and our family. I did not want to speak with him, and after checking with my niece and her parents, neither did they. I told the lady that none of us wanted the opportunity because the opportunity was his, not ours. We did not want to talk to him and did not want to hear what he had to say. I told her that I did, however, want to meet with the Diocese because I had a lot to say to them.

#### **MEETING WITH THE TONGAN CHAPLAIN IN AUCKLAND**

96. Around this time, I think it was in early 2018, I met with the Tongan Chaplain at the time, Father Line Folaumoeloa. I had previously met Father Line after Mass one day and he asked to meet with me to talk about Sateki. I met him at the Tongan Catholic Chaplaincy in Wiri, Auckland. I went by myself.
97. I understand that Sateki had rung Father Line when he was arrested, to tell him

what happened. So by the time I met with Father Line, he had already spoken with Sateki.

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99. Father Line was very free and frank in my meeting with him.

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101. Father Line wanted me to meet with the Tongan Niue Cardinal, Cardinal Mafi. He was coming to Auckland and Father Line suggested that I meet with him and tell him what happened. I told Father Line that I didn't want to meet with Cardinal Mafi. I said to him, "I think you can tell him this".

102. I felt that I had to be really careful about who I was meeting with because I had to test out whether they were trying to get me to stop with my complaint or trying to persuade me not to do anything. At the same time, the Cardinal was part of the Tongan Niuean Diocese, not the Auckland Diocese that I was dealing with – they are different.

103. After my meeting with Father Line, the Church never contacted me at all. I had no contact from the Diocese, nor from the NOPS. The Church never reached out to my niece to offer any support or counselling, or to see how she was doing. When she went back to Tonga, that was it.

#### **PREVIOUS INCIDENTS & MOVING AROUND**

104. When people started hearing about what happened with Sateki and my niece,



they began approaching me. I was approached by Tongan Church and community leaders, relatives of young women previously involved with Sateki, relatives of Sateki and other members of the Tongan Catholic community.

105. They told me that before moving to New Zealand from Tonga, Sateki had been working in a village called *Houma* when he had an incident there with a girl from the local youth club. The Catholic Church in Tonga then moved him from that village to a second village in *Vava'u* where the same thing happened. The Church then moved him to a third village, *Lapaha*. Whilst the Parish Priest in *Lapaha*, he got a young girl pregnant. This pregnancy was widely known among the families in the village. She was about 20 years old at the time. Sateki was then moved from this third village to Auckland, to lead the Tongan Catholic Chaplaincy.
106. While serving as the Tongan Chaplain in Auckland, another young girl became pregnant to Sateki. This was common knowledge among the Tongan Catholic community in Auckland. She might have been in her late teens or early twenties when she had the baby. Sateki cared for this boy at the presbytery (Sateki's house) as his nephew. I understand this same woman has recently had a second child with Sateki and they are now living together.
107. When Sateki finished his time as the Tongan Chaplain in Auckland, instead of returning to Tonga, he stayed and took up another role in the Auckland Diocese working under Bishop Patrick Dunn.
108. In this role, Sateki did a lot of the Masses at Marist College. Although he wasn't the Pastoral Priest for the Church, he was in and out of the school in his role as a priest. He attended all the Pacific fono. He did the opening prayers and the closing prayers. He went to the assemblies and prizegivings. Each time he was there as a priest, representing the Church. Events for the student's Tongan Club and things like Polyfest practises were all held at the presbytery.
109. A prominent Tongan leader told me that he had received a complaint about Sateki while he was working in Auckland. This leader took the complaint to a senior Tongan priest, who told him to take it to the GRO-C. He told me that he did that but nothing was done about it. It was about another young girl.

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111. What is also clear to me is that families do not pursue complaints and if they do bring it to the attention of the priest or bishop of the time – it is not followed up by the family or the Church.

### CONTACTING THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

112. Given the way the Church continued to support Sateki by paying for his QC to protect the Church and in doing so, protect his sin, I couldn't trust that the Diocese would do anything, so I reported it directly to the Ministry of Education ("Ministry") on 16 January 2018. I wanted to make sure that Sateki wasn't anywhere near kids. Therefore, I do not understand how the Principals of Marist Primary and Marist College later claimed they were kept in the dark about Sateki's behaviour.

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114. After I reported it to the Ministry, they put in place something where Sateki wasn't allowed to be anywhere near kids on his own, including near schools. The Church then moved Sateki from St Mary's Mount Albert to Good Shepherd in Balmoral, which is a primary school as well as a parish. The Ministry intervened and told the Church that he couldn't work at Balmoral because it was on a school site and it breached the 'protection order'.

115. I understand this is around the time that Sateki left the priesthood and moved in with the woman in Auckland with whom he now has two kids.

### SENTENCING

116. Sateki's sentencing was held in March 2019. I didn't know who to go with. My husband was in Tonga and I didn't trust anybody, so I went with

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The woman that Sateki has children with in Auckland was also there.

117. In the lead up to the sentencing, the Crown Prosecutor wanted my niece to read her victim impact statement and have it pre-recorded (since she was in Tonga). At that time, my niece's mother was doing her best to keep my niece going because she had withdrawn and wasn't eating. She was really upset about the whole thing [REDACTED] GRO-C [REDACTED] So our family's focus was on my niece's wellbeing. We all decided that it would be best if my niece did not give a victim impact statement. Instead, I offered to write one on our family's behalf, which I told the Crown Prosecutor. I prepared a statement but he told me that I couldn't read it at the sentencing because I was not the victim.
118. At the sentencing hearing, you could see that the QC had done his work. There was a whole conversation about Sateki's service, his leadership, how he was bettering himself and his education, how he was a stand-up citizen. The Judge talked about his good character, how unfortunate it was that this had happened, that he had recognised his mistake and his failure. The Judge said that Sateki had reached out to the family through the Court's restorative justice process and that although they had denied the opportunity, he made an effort and took positive steps. It felt like he was the victim.
119. It looked as though the Crown Prosecutor didn't prepare anything. I felt like there was a real injustice because the QC's submissions were not properly countered by the Crown Prosecutor. After what felt like being held ransom for a year, this was really disappointing.
120. Sateki ended up with 100 hours of community service. His sentence showed me that the system had recognised that he is a good man and that he made a mistake. For the Tongan community, Sateki was the victim.
121. I later understood that because he didn't get a prison sentence, his name was not placed on the Child Sex Offender Register.
122. I felt really deflated from the whole court process. It's not that I had a vendetta against him or that I was on a witch hunt for him to go to jail. I felt that the whole justice system was bullshit. I felt that the focus of what we were really in court

for, my niece, was lost and we were now in court for Sateki. It felt like we were not really there for what happened to my niece, we were there to protect Sateki while he made up a story to make what he did seem okay.

123. This process asks victims to tell their story and relive the experiences which have victimised them. Someone will then take that to a process and it will be challenged. I think they continue being victimised.
124. It was also a kick in the guts knowing that the Church paid for a QC to defend a guilty guy who committed the crime. I understand that the Church would want to protect its reputation, but it is shocking to me that it is willing to protect its reputation GRO-B
125. The constant delays with him pleading not guilty took its toll on my niece and family because rumours and lies were circulating in the community. We waited for a whole year to get to court, only for him to plead guilty to a lesser charge. It was a farce. There was no justice in what happened. Justice delayed is justice denied.
126. I was told that after the sentencing, Sateki's family went to the Bishop's house in Ponsonby did a big apology.
127. Following the sentencing, Sateki's name suppression was lifted. There were stories on Stuff and social media about him.
128. Parishioners from St Mary's, including Marist Primary and Marist College, saw the stories in the media and were outraged that they weren't informed about what was happening with Sateki. They felt they had been kept in the dark that all of this was happening up until the point that his name was made public. After they complained to the Bishop of Auckland, Patrick Dunn, he apologised to them.

## **CONTACTING THE DIOCESE**

129. Nearly a year later, on 2 February 2020, I emailed the Diocese to express my disappointment in the lack of empathy towards my niece and my family during and after Sateki's sentencing. I told them I was alarmed at the lack of interest the church had in our wellbeing and that they paid for his lawyer. I let them know

that we were struggling, especially with all the news articles that were coming out in the public. I asked them, "Can you tell me where to from here?" and told them that journalists were seeking our side of the story.

130. All of a sudden, two days later on 4 February 2020, I received an email from [GRO-C-1] of the Diocese. She gave me a day and time to come and meet the Bishop.

### MEETING WITH THE BISHOP OF AUCKLAND

131. On 8 February 2020, I went to the Pompallier Diocesan Centre in Ponsonby to meet the Bishop of Auckland, Patrick Dunn. It looks like a big, haunted house. When I arrived, the person that greeted me at the door was [GRO-C-1] [GRO-C] [GRO-C]. She was being overly nice and overly friendly, [GRO-C]. [GRO-C] She stayed in the meeting and sort of facilitated it.
132. I asked the Bishop if he knew about all the incidents in Tonga involving Sateki, before he came to Auckland. He denied that he knew anything about them. My response was, "How could you not know? Do you not do due diligence like every other employer?". I think that was a load of bullshit.
133. He told me that someone had told him about Sateki having a son in Auckland. He said he asked Sateki about it, Sateki denied it, so he left it at that; he believed him.
134. The Bishop asked me what news outlet had contacted me. He warned me about being careful with news outlets. I felt like he was trying to persuade me not to engage with them. I told the Bishop that there was an attack on our family in social media because people had come out to support Sateki.
135. The place and the way in which the meeting was held made me feel like I just needed to get out of there. I did not feel safe to ask the questions I really wanted to ask of the Bishop. If I had known the meeting was going to be like this, I would have taken some people with me for support.

136. I felt that there was no purpose for the meeting; it was a waste of time. I came out of it thinking it was really more for them than anything else.

## **REFLECTION ON CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLAINTS PROCESS AND PROSECUTION**

137. I think my background education and experience helped me go through the complaints process after the incident. It helped me understand the Police process around care and protection. It also helped me understand the Diocese and the Chaplaincy, and the way they work. So it was a matter of methodically stepping my way through each process. It also helped me to have a critical mind and come to some conclusions myself in my own way.

138. **GRO-B** helped too. She has experience with crisis and care and protection. Together we worked a way forward that kept everyone safe but also still maintained a cultural dignity in our relationship with my cousin, my niece's father.

139. If I didn't have that education and experience, I think I would have been scared and afraid about going through all the processes. I think it would have been very confusing and I may have got lost in the process. I don't think I would have understood what was happening and may not have asked the right questions. It gave me the confidence to ask questions or seek clarification when I was unclear about anything. That really helped me go through the process, keep sane and continue with it. However, it was a long, sad and hurtful process. I felt that it was unfair and unjust right to the very end.

140. When the Church became aware of my complaint, I would have expected the Church to make a clear directive, of their own volition, that he be removed from active ministry. **[WITN0422005]**

141. As I said earlier, justice delayed is justice denied. Throughout the process, I felt that we had lost sight of what we were there for. We were not there for what happened to my niece. Instead, we were there to protect this guy or make up some story to make what he did okay.

142. I felt that although we were all supposed to be going through this together, the Diocese took a step back, watched the show and funded the show. It felt like we

were all the players – Sateki, me, my niece, my family, the lawyers, and the Police – and we were all on stage. The Diocese just sat back and watched, but made sure that they were funding the show to run the way they wanted it to. The QC that the Diocese paid for had that much influence. There was no way Sateki could afford that QC on his own.

143. The Church lost sight of what the actual sin was. I feel that the Church failed in its duty of care in every shape and form to help my niece, me and our families restore and recover. Rather, we are all left to just do it on our own and in our own way.

144. The Church knew exactly what they were doing. I feel that the Diocese has sinned against my niece, sinned against her family and sinned against the parishioners that have been part of their Church for all their lives. The Church backed the devil on this one. I think that the Church has a lot to answer for.

## **IMPACT**

145. The full impact on my niece, our wider family and community is very complex.

### *Impact on my niece*

146. My niece was a victim of both Sateki and the Church.

147. I think what Sateki did to my niece, and what happened afterwards, was soul destroying for her. She felt that she had been very sinful.

148. After the abuse, my niece withdrew and stopped eating. She would not come out of her room. She did not want to go to school. GRO-C

GRO-C At the same time, the rumours were going around the community and people were talking. It was so ugly.

149. My family and I have tried to support my niece to carry on being a young teenager. However, I think she will carry this with her for the rest of her life and so will her family.

150. When you have been raised to believe in the godly nature of the priest and how church and faith impact your life, I think it would be unfathomable for a young

person to work out that the priest was wrong and that whatever her actions and thoughts were at the time, that she was taken advantage of and she was a victim. It is hard enough being 15 years old and then having to take on the shame of her own actions and the shame the wider family feel and blame her for – the impact is dangerous, traumatic and harmful.

151. The impact of these feelings and of shame is massive and complex to unpack and rebuild so that she can carry on. The impact on my niece's life and those closest to her cannot be underestimated.

*Impact on* [GRO-B-1]

152. My niece is the victim in this whole incident but at the same time, me and my family, as well as my niece's family, are also victims in all of this. Things have been rocked in our worlds that we are still trying to piece together and we're not really sure how to do that – and actually the uncertainty is unnerving.

153. [GRO-B-1] was attending a Catholic high school at the time. She has had more contact with Sateki than any of us as he [GRO-C] [GRO-C] was at many of the school events. She saw him and treated him as a priest on more occasions than we did as a family.

154. Sometime during the first term of 2019, I met with the Principal. I told her about what had happened with my niece, that [GRO-B-1] had seen the messages, and that she needed to contact the Diocese to let them know, which I understand she later did. I also asked her to ensure that there was a place for my [GRO-B-1] to go to, or a teacher for her to talk to, if anything came up during school. The Principal was great and a plan was put in place for my [GRO-B-1 Relative's] which was good because things did happen.

155. One time [GRO-B-1] was approached at school by another student who asked whether she was the one who sent the photos to the priest or had an affair with the priest. She has had a couple of fall outs with friends because people have made up these stories and thought it was her. This is because the wider community will have heard that I was the one who complained about Sateki and of course rumours will start about things surrounding my complaint. People



wrongly assumed it was one of GRO-B-1, which made them upset and angry.

156. The incident caused them to question Sateki and all that he stood for, including his morals, his character and that of the Church that continued to protect him. They have not settled on how they feel about the Church and the ugliness that came into their lives.

*Involvement with the Church and spirituality*

157. It has absolutely affected the degree to which my family and I are involved with the Church now. We just don't do it anymore. My husband and I no longer take up leadership roles within the Church. I've pulled away from the Tongan community and those events.

158. When you pull away from that, you pull away from so much of the cultural stuff, so much of the support village stuff. It's almost like being ostracised from your whānau. Because of what's happened, we don't do any of those events any more. There are also events that we do not get invited to anymore.

159. My family and I went to church once since the incident. It was good to meet our mates and see the other women and mums whose kids grew up with my kids; that was precious. But because we are not part of that anymore, we have lost that; it was almost as if we were visitors. We have not been back to church since that day.

160. We have lost a lot of connections as a result – people that I had been a first-time mum with, that have watched my children grow up. We don't see them anymore because we saw them at church and did our socialising at church and church events.

161. Despite all the disruptions in 2020 with Covid-19, one of the positive things for me was the fact that I could just stay home and not have to see anyone. I didn't have to think about massive events going on that my kids would have been part of but aren't because of what's happened.

162. It is hard trying to explain to our kids why we are not part of these things anymore and why we don't do church anymore. It's hard trying to get them into a place

where they are okay with their own spirituality and their own faith; trying to get them to that place where they are not throwing out everything, but keeping what is precious to them and nurturing that, in the absence of a church community.

163. Without the church, my family is left to figure out our own faith and spirituality. All the things that we were brought up with and understood, is no longer. Now we have to rebuild in way that we understand it ourselves.
164. We are trying to teach our children to keep their faith, whatever that looks like now, because that is what they have to draw from when they are trying to rebuild their spirituality, whatever that is going to look like.
165. I have now come to a place where it's not so much about church anymore, it's about faith. I have faith, but it is not tied up in the church; it is a personal thing. I always thought that what I believed in was tied to the church and part of the Tongan culture. But I now realise it is actually not tied together. It is not tied to my Tonganess and it is not tied to the church; it is actually just me as a person and what I understand and how I choose to live. My culture and my faith is reflected in my actions – regardless of church or no church.
166. My GRO-B-1 finishes school this year and I cannot, and will not, pay any more money to the Catholic Church through the school. I will pay the attendance dues and subject fees but will not support any more Catholic Church activity contributions or donations. I feel as though after all these years and all our commitment via donations, time and resources, they could not spend any of that on us. While the books are probably kept separately, I still see it as the Catholic Church collecting from its parishioners to do the work of God and build the Kingdom of God on Earth, while members of the Kingdom are suffering. I don't want to have anything to do with that infrastructure and I refuse to build on and invest in it anymore. Future decisions about Catholic education will be very different.

### *Tongan Community*

167. Since reporting the abuse, a lot of people came forward in support. I mentioned earlier that this included Tongan Church and community leaders, relatives of

young women involved with Sateki, relatives of Sateki and other members of the Tongan Catholic community. I received a lot of supportive messages and a lot of people asked to have coffee with me. This is often when I heard stories about other things that Sateki had done. Even then, not everyone who supported me did it publicly.

168. Then there was a whole other group, a bigger group, who think I made the wrong decision. I should have kept it to myself. I should have prayed about it. I should have asked for more guidance. I should have let the Church deal with it and not go to the Police.
169. When Sateki's name came out on Facebook it seemed that the majority of the comments by Tongan people were in support of him. They talked about how he is only human, everybody makes mistakes. They also made nasty, offensive comments about my niece and our family.
170. In Tongan culture, you become almost cursed for going up against the church. If you go up against the church and do something against what everyone believes in, anything wrong that later happens in your life or any problems that arise are considered to be a result of you speaking up against the church. There is a very powerful sense of being observed and judged by the Tongan community. Some of these things come back to me and I feel hurt about it. I know some of it goes back to my mum and that is very hurtful for her.
171. These are all things that people would weigh up before they would every enter into anything like this. You have to have a strength about yourself.
172. When I'm moving in the community I know that there are people out there who are not supportive and have a different opinion to me. I used to be in and out of things quite easily and freely, but now I'm really cautious about who I'm talking to and how people are feeling.

*My wider family*

173. I mentioned earlier that there was a big fallout in my family. I think my wider family feel whakamā/*fakamā* about this. They feel like I've exposed the family to this attack. One family member said to me that I should never have done this,

that it is a family matter and should have been sorted in the family.

174. I know some members of my family are angry at me – how dare I put the good name of the family at risk, how dare I take it upon myself to do that and not leave it up to the leaders or elders in the family, how dare I not leave it up to the Church to sort this out; that it is not for me to do.

175. There are so many connections among my family to Sateki and the church so relationships have been shaken – they have been tested. Some of my own family members have sided with the priest, others very quiet in their support but the majority quiet and withdrawn about it all. I sense it and understand it.

#### *Tending to the vā*

176. Navigating in and between the vā has been a moving feast.

177. The concept of *tauhi vā* was especially important for my mum back in Tonga

GRO-C

GRO-C

178. There was a lot of vā to be considered by my mum because it was her daughter that had taken this further. I had to talk her through it, and she was very quiet. She did not show support for me, nor did she tell me not to do it. I think it was her way of trying to figure out what she was going to do to try to protect the vā between the families, what she will say when she meets Sateki's aunties, or when she is face to face with his family in the village or at church.

179. I told my mum that I am happy to meet with anyone she wanted me to talk with. I told her that if she felt that she could not explain herself, where she felt uncomfortable, or needed more support to explain something, then I would come and do it. I know that she has been confronted, but she rarely brings it up with me.

180. I know that she apologises to family members on my behalf because that makes her feel better. In her apology, she is hoping that they will forgive me. That is her way of tending to the vā and the relationships between the families. So I know that she is working through her own thing.

181. I am not the free, “in and out” person that I used to be. I used to do my own thing and move in and out of things freely. Now I’m really cautious about who I talk to because I know Sateki has a story going around out there and that people who believe his story will be looking at me through that lens.
182. When I went into this, I understood what I was walking into, but the layers and the depth of it has been more painful than I expected. In another way, it has been quite freeing.
183. The impact on so many is huge and that is why I think a lot of people don’t come forward, because of these ripples.
184. Although the main part of this is over, the impacts will continue for many years to come. This will be something that follows our family, especially the next time they have a reunion. I think it will also follow me, as the woman that took that priest to court. But of course that is all mindless noise – the most important and central thing that should not be forgotten, at the very least, is *‘the priest that took advantage of a child and the church that paid to defend his actions’*. Everything else is just noise.

## **REPORTING THE ABUSE**

185. If I did not come forward and Sateki was still a practising priest, I would have felt guilty that I didn’t say something. I would have felt horrible that it has happened to another young girl, sick to my stomach that he remains a public predator, that I knew about it and did nothing. I had to report the abuse, I just had to be careful of how I did it so that the dignity or *vā* was still approachable and that I didn’t completely destroy it, because that would be painful for me.
186. I believe, hand on heart, that if this did not happen to my niece or I had not come forward, he would still be a parish priest to this day, with this woman, his partner, and continuing to groom other young women.
187. If I could do it again, I would have paid for a QC for my niece, if I could afford it. I feel that the Crown Prosecutor really let us down. I feel like the Catholic Church really know what to do in these situations, who to appoint, and how to read and respond to the ‘in’ justice system. They fully know how to take advantage of their

deep pockets and that's exactly what they did.

188. Other than that, I don't think I would have done anything differently, because the driver was always my 15 year old niece and getting that man away from young women.

## REDRESS, TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE & PREVENTION

### *Acknowledgement and support for the victim & family*

189. I would have wanted the Church to do something they couldn't – to admit that there was a wrong and take ownership of it. They should have acknowledged the victim by supporting the victim and her family.
190. We went through a whole year of legal jigsaw, came out the other end, and I have not heard a word from the Church. At no time did the Diocese ever reach out to me or my niece. I was only invited to meet with the Bishop after I contacted the Diocese and told them that media were asking me for comment. Prior to that, no help or support was offered, but they continued to help and support Sateki.
191. I did not, and do not, want lip service. I wanted to see the Church's support for the victim by having him put in jail – that is how you say, "Are you okay?".

192. GRO-C  
GRO-C  
GRO-C  
GRO-C Instead, they should have checked if my niece and her family were okay, properly investigated Sateki's behaviour, had some kind of action or reprisal that is connected to his behaviour and actions, and acknowledged the pain and harm caused to my niece and her family.

193. The Church could have made things easier for my niece, me and our family by communicating honestly from the beginning, also by acknowledging my niece's parents and offering them support. My niece was beside herself, GRO-C  
GRO-C as a result of the rumours and attacks from family

members, villagers and Church members. In this case, the Church did nothing for the victim.

194. I later became aware that the Catholic Church has a redress process called 'A Path To Healing'. I don't ever remember being told about this by the Church. My niece, her family and I were never involved in anything like that with the Church.
195. The complaints process and prosecution of Sateki would have been easier to navigate if the Church had supported my niece by paying for a QC for her to support the conviction of the GRO-B not defend him by spending parishioner's monetary donations. The Church, and many others, were enablers of the abuse of my niece.
196. There is no way the Church can fix what they have done – we are beyond that. We are left to work it out ourselves. All different parts of the whānau have got to walk this journey and see where we fall, then pick ourselves up again. But I would like to see the Church acknowledge what they have done, because they put in a lot of effort to say that he didn't do what he did, even though he finally pleaded guilty to the lesser charge. What a joke right?
197. There is a lot of work to do in this space and the Church needs courage to reflect on and own its wrongdoings, and change its behaviour. In this case – what is sin? What is harm? Who is sinning? Who is harmful? What is the QC's role? What is he there to do or defend? Who is or are the victims? Where is the Good Shepherd? These are all questions for the Church and its leaders.

*Response from the Catholic Church*

198. When I met with the Bishop, I would have just liked the opportunity to ask the questions to his face and have him answer to me directly, without any external pressures or distractions. The questions I would have asked were: Why did the Church support him? Why did the Church defend him when they knew he was guilty? They knew very well and had the evidence in front of them. He was guilty of the whole charge, not of a lesser charge. The Church should have let him do his time. But instead, they kept supporting him and paying for a QC.
199. We spent a whole year playing legal jigsaw, with the Church via the QC

condoning the efforts to lessen the charge. The Church put in its resources and efforts to pay a QC to get him off, but did the Church see his sin? Did the Church see the innocence of a 15 year old girl?

200. How can one part of your Church be saying this is criminal, go to the Police, and then another part of your Church is paying for the QC to get him off?

201. At the time of sentencing, I was told that Sateki's name would be added to the Child Sex Offender Register so that if he ever applied for a job and a Police vet was done, his name would come up. But I now understand he is not on the Register.

202. I would like to see the Church to answer to all of this.

*Public apologies to victims & families*

203. The Church should publicly apologise to victims and their families. This will go a long way towards showing other people that my niece, and others like my niece, are innocent and suffered due to the Church's actions and inactions. This should be done immediately.

204. I also know that if they do this, they are admitting to the wrong and a myriad of fall outs will occur, like parishioners who will question the Church's actions and intentions, and question the priests and the spiritual realm they move in. It means that even this realm is not intouchable. It means they are admitting that they failed in their duty of care, and policies and measures in place to support victims and deal with wayward, harmful clergy.

205. You would think an apology is simple when considered under the word of God, but I know this is too much for the Church – they cannot admit or apologise because the consequence for them is what we as a family are going through now. It's better for my family to suffer than the whole institution, right?

*Change needed to Catholic Church redress process & systems*

206. To adequately address the harm caused to victims of abuse, the Church needs to release power so that any reconciliation is co-designed independently with the



victim's families. Any redress process should not be led by the Church, as they will try to control it.

207. The redress process needs to be meaningful for the victims and those harmed in the course of supporting the victim. This process should be about them, and their healing, not for the Church or for the perpetrator. In this case, the Court's restorative justice process was used against us during sentencing. No one wanted to talk to him – he was the predator. To this day I still gag when I hear his name – I have a physical visceral reaction at the mention of him. However, the QC minimised our denial of entering into a restorative justice process and the Judge commended him for reaching out to the victim's family to make amends.
208. In order to prevent this type of abuse happening again in the future, the Church and its systems need reviewing. This should include a review of whether single men can properly undertake the role of a priest in this day and age. If we take history into account, they haven't been doing it well at any time in history.

#### *Culture & family*

209. In terms of Pacific culture, cultural layers of western religious ideals need to be unpacked by indigenous cultures. That is complex work because it is about faith and higher power – mere humans are not meant to challenge this, and so Pacific culture is intertwined with religion. To prevent this sort of abuse in future, there needs to be a lot of unpacking, healing and reconstruction.
210. As for family, I think they need to prioritise the victim in this situation and stop protecting the perpetrator. Members of my family were the most brutal and hateful. They felt we shamed the family name and challenged divine authority, hence we will be cursed. How do you come back from that?
211. With regards to culture and my family – like I said earlier, we are left to work that out and that will continue in our whānau. Regarding the wider family, I have to accept the reactions of others as something about them rather than about me and us. With my niece and her family, I can only imagine how they are working through their pain. The complexity of the cultural connections makes it hard for us to have open, free and frank talanoa. But for now, we are still talking with

respect, making sure they understand support is available and showing love in the many ways we can without really digging deeper into the trauma and harm.

212. I have to live with the consequences of coming forward. I can understand why people would not come forward or that they would just leave it with the Church to deal with their complaints. Although I understand it, I can't do that – I think we are all responsible to tell the truth, especially when it comes to the harm and/or protection of children. That's my driver in the end but the consequences are huge.

213. A copy of my written consent to use my statement is **annexed** to 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-A

Dated:

10/06/2021

### Consent to use my statement

**Not relevant to Natural Justice process**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

GRO-A

Date: .....

10/06/2021