

**ABUSE IN CARE ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY  
DISABILITY, DEAF AND MENTAL HEALTH INSTITUTIONAL CARE  
HEARING**

**Under** The Inquiries Act 2013

**In the matter of** The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Historical Abuse in State Care and in the Care of Faith-based Institutions

**Royal Commission:** Judge Coral Shaw (Chair)  
Paul Gibson  
Julia Steenson

**Counsel:** Mr Simon Mount QC, Ms Kerry Beaton QC, Ms Ruth Thomas, Ms Lucy Leadbetter, Mr Michael Thomas and Ms Kathy Basire for the Royal Commission  
  
Mr Gregor Allan, Ms Sandra Moore and Mr Vaughan Dodd for the Crown

**Venue:** Level 2  
Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry  
414 Khyber Pass Road  
AUCKLAND

**Date:** 15 July 2022

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**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

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1 **QUESTIONING BY MS KUKLINSKI:** Welcome, welcome to the Royal Commission, thank  
2 you for coming and sharing your story. Thank you. Do you solemnly and sincerely and  
3 truly declare and affirm that the evidence you will give before the Royal Commission will  
4 be the truth?

5 A. I do.

6 Q. Thank you.

7 (Background.)

8 Q. Tell me about yourself, where are you from, where were you born?

9 A. So, I was born [GRO-A]-- -but my parents are from the East Coast. And we moved back  
10 [GRO--A]-- -when- I was two and then I went to Kelston for seven years when I was about  
11 five.

12 Q. So, you lived [GRO-A]-- --how long were you there for?

13 A. Probably around two years. I can't remember exactly. I had three sisters and an older  
14 brother, so there's the five of us.

15 Q. So, are they Deaf or hearing?

16 A. They're all hearing, and so I'm the only Deaf in my family.

17 Q. And so, do you come from a Deaf family?

18 A. I have an uncle and cousins who are Deaf.

19 Q. How do you communicate with your family?

20 A. Probably more oral, I would turn my voice on, and with my sisters we sign a little bit but  
21 it's probably more signing the alphabet, but the majority of the time it would be oral.

22 Q. Could you tell me what you mean by "turning your voice on"?

23 A. Well, rather than using sign language I would use my voice.

24 Q. And do you lip read?

25 A. I do lip read, but when I'm amongst my Deaf friends I will speak orally without turning my  
26 voice on and if I'm with family then I will turn my voice on.

27 Q. So, when you talk to Deaf people, your voice is off?

28 A. Yes, that's correct. But there are a few Deaf people who their preference would be, you  
29 know, for my voice to be on.

30 Q. So what language do your parents speak?

31 A. Mostly in English, but they are fluent te reo speakers. And they were told that they must  
32 speak in English to me so that it would improve my prospects for the future. And of  
33 course, they were not to use sign language and the hope was that I that-- would benefit my  
34 education in the future. But nowadays things have changed dramatically.

1 **Q.** Who told your parents that they must speak English to you?

2 **A.** I believe that it was the principal of Kelston who advised my parents that they were not to  
3 speak te reo Māori to me, that they must converse with me in English and not sign  
4 language. And that the school would know if I were requiring te reo Māori and that they  
5 would then need to speak to my parents about that again, so there was a strong emphasis on  
6 using te reo Pākehā only.

7 **Q.** So, when you were growing up, were you involved in your marae at all?

8 **A.** Well, that was really difficult, because for Māori people who can hear who would be  
9 involved in hui and the like, it was much easier for them, and so I feel quite isolated  
10 because I wasn't able to access te reo Māori. And at that time there were no sign language  
11 interpreters and so I could only pick up bits and pieces, and so I missed out immensely on  
12 my culture.

13 **Q.** So, moving on, when you were around five, your parents were deciding which school to  
14 send you to?

15 **A.** Well, I found out that my parents -- what happened is my parents would call my name and  
16 I wouldn't respond and so they thought that something wasn't right with that, so they took  
17 me to the doctor and that's when I was -- when they were told that I was Deaf. So, there  
18 was a kōrero that took place, and it was determined that I would go to Kelston Deaf School  
19 to be amongst other Deaf children. But my parents didn't want to let me go, they wanted to  
20 keep me with them. So, they had arguments around that, but the final decision was that  
21 I should attend the Deaf school because it was the best decision for my future. But it was a  
22 very, very difficult thing for my parents to let go of me.

23 (Moving to Kelston.)

24 **Q.** So, can you tell me a little bit more about your arrival at Kelston Deaf School?

25 **A.** Well, as you can imagine, I didn't know what was going on, and we got to the airport, but  
26 my parents weren't with me and of course there was no communication because I was  
27 profoundly Deaf, and I was wondering where my parents were. And that's when it dawned  
28 on me when the door shut and I screamed and I screamed, and the air hostess tried to calm  
29 me down, and she couldn't, so I got kicked off the plane and my parents came and the  
30 decision was made that my father would actually drive me up to Auckland and so mum  
31 stayed home to look after my siblings. So, it was a very difficult time. I mean I just had no  
32 idea what was going on. Now I look back at that experience and of course I can understand  
33 it, and it was certainly not my mum and dad's fault. You know, it was just an entirely  
34 difficult situation.

1 **Q.** So, when you arrived at Kelston, what did you feel?

2 **A.** Well, I was really taken back, I felt like I was in a completely different world to what I had  
3 known. I cried a lot, I'd cry into my pillow. It was really distressing. But what I had in  
4 common with the other students is they were also crying in their pillows, and so that's how  
5 we established connections. And after a while, these Deaf children became my family and  
6 that's how life was for seven years.

7 It was a very difficult time. It's something that you can't erase from your memory.  
8 You can't just pretend that nothing happened. You can't remove that, it's the trauma. And I  
9 don't blame my parents, I know they did the best and they wanted the best for me.

10 **Q.** And that was how things were at that time in your life?

11 **A.** Well, now I can chalk that up to life experience and the fact that I have actually accessed  
12 two worlds.

13 (Day-to-day life.)

14 **Q.** So, when you were at Kelston Deaf School what was your day-to-day life like? What were  
15 your school and sports life like?

16 **A.** Really it was just a normal schooling experience, but really it was mainstream. We did  
17 have a Deaf unit, we were kind of in a Deaf special class, there were six of us. So, we  
18 would take the taxi, that was a 30-minute drive, and so we would go to Waterview every  
19 day for school, and I think that was the six of us for around five years.

20 **Q.** What about the weekends, what did you do in the weekends?

21 **A.** In the weekends we did different kinds of activities, sports, gymnastics, swimming, hockey,  
22 we had some fun activities, plenty of different activities to keep us, the Deaf students, busy  
23 and to make sure we were enjoying our lives. And I really enjoyed those weekends.

24 **Q.** So, you went to boarding school there, were you sleeping by yourself in a room?

25 **A.** Well, really altogether there was 12 beds, so there would be four beds and then a partition  
26 that you could look over and there would be another four beds with a partition and then  
27 another four beds. So altogether there were 12 beds in one room split into three lots of  
28 four, so that was quite big.

29 (Communication.)

30 **Q.** So how did you feel about the teachers there?

31 **A.** The teachers or the staff?

32 **Q.** Yes, the staff.

33 **A.** A few of the staff were good, but a few of them were quite horrific and were quite abusive  
34 to us. Some of the teachers were also good, but not all of them.

- 1 **Q.** How did you communicate with the staff?
- 2 **A.** Orally without using our voice.
- 3 **Q.** So, you would turn your voice off?
- 4 **A.** With Deaf people and if staff could see us we would turn our voice off. We would pretend  
5 to communicate orally, but that was quite hard, and so if our voices were turned on, some  
6 of the Deaf kids weren't able to understand me. And that's when I thought to start signing  
7 so that the other Deaf kids could get the full picture and communication became easier.
- 8 **Q.** So, you said that the staff told you no signing, why was that?
- 9 **A.** Because they were told by the higher ups if you see any students signing, punish them,  
10 they're not allowed to sign, they must communicate orally. And so, there were times where  
11 I would forget this, and I would be signing, and I'd get caught by a staff member. And  
12 every time I'd get caught they would tell me off, and I kind of got scared and felt  
13 disempowered. So, I kind of felt like I had to hide, hide my sign language, but, you know,  
14 that went on for so long and that was really frustrating. But yes, it was really quite hard.
- 15 **Q.** So, the staff told you off for signing, right, did they punish you?
- 16 **A.** We did get punished, either struck on our hands or a hit with a belt; or if I was horsing  
17 around or doing silly things like screaming, then I would get hit with the belt or smacked on  
18 the backside. And so, they would pull my pants down and smack me on the backside so  
19 that I could feel the pain. If my pants were up and I had my clothes on the pain was less.  
20 And so, when I would get hit, that would scare me more.
- 21 **Q.** So, when you were punished, did you understand what was happening?
- 22 **A.** I knew that I wasn't allowed to scream and that I wasn't allowed to sign.
- 23 **Q.** So, when you were signing with other Deaf students, how did you learn sign language?
- 24 **A.** Well, really it wasn't official sign language, but we used a lot of gestures and we made our  
25 own signs, and so we kind of developed our own sign language by copying each other. It  
26 wasn't until years later that I started getting involved in the Deaf community that I would  
27 see, for example, Deaf people that came over from England or had English skills, we would  
28 learn things like the alphabet. But back then it was kind of just more gestural signing,  
29 nothing official. It was kind of created on the fly.
- 30 **Q.** So how did you feel when you had to learn it later in life and not in your childhood?
- 31 **A.** You mean sign language, right?
- 32 **Q.** Yes, correct.
- 33 **A.** I felt better, I felt equal to others, because I was able to communicate more easily with  
34 others and we were able to understand each other, get the full picture. So, I kind of felt like

1 I was equal to my hearing counterparts in the hearing world. And then it kind of dawned  
2 on me that this is our language.

3 **Q.** So, when you were at Kelston Deaf School, were all the staff Deaf?

4 **A.** All of the staff were hearing, there was no Deaf staff there. In my time there was no Deaf,  
5 only hearing.

6 (Being Māori at Kelston.)

7 **Q.** What about the culture?

8 **A.** The majority of the staff were all Pākehā. There was one or two, a couple Māori staff  
9 members, two or three, I can't remember, but majority were Pākehā staff and they were  
10 mostly women. There were a few men.

11 **Q.** So, you've told me that you missed out on learning te reo, being immersed in Te Ao Māori;  
12 how did that make you feel?

13 **A.** I feel like I don't really have a connection to my Māori culture. I have a connection to my  
14 Deaf culture, but I don't have a connection to speaking te reo or the language itself. Really,  
15 I'm trying to play catchup, but most of the Māori Deaf we use sign language, there's no  
16 official Māori sign language, we use New Zealand Sign Language. But really missed out  
17 on that, and I've been trying to learn bits and pieces here and there, but it's quite a long  
18 process.

19 **Q.** So how did your parents feel that you couldn't access your Māori culture and your Māori  
20 world?

21 **A.** They knew that I was strongly connected to my Deaf world, and also, I would bring my  
22 Deaf friends back to my parents' place and they were able to see that I had these strong  
23 connections with my Deaf whānau. But I was really trying to juggle being involved in  
24 these two separate world, Te Ao Māori and Te Ao Turi.

25 (Physical abuse.)

26 **Q.** You've already told me about the punishments you received for turning your voice on or for  
27 signing, but was there any other punishments at school?

28 **A.** It was really just being smacked and strapped, but I did see some horrific abuse happen to  
29 some of my friends, not to me personally. For example, the staff member would tell my  
30 friends to brush their teeth with soap, and so I'd watch them and that was quite traumatic  
31 for me to watch, and I really felt sorry for my friends that that happened to. And I'm sure  
32 that there were more people that that happened to, but they were too scared to share their  
33 stories.





1 to help me clean it. But it felt like forever and I really didn't understand what he was trying  
2 to do to me because I was so young.

3 **Q.** When that happened, was it only once, or did it happen more times?

4 **A.** I know it happened more than once, but I didn't keep a record.

5 **Q.** When it was happening to you, did you understand what was happening to you? Did you  
6 know what abuse was back then?

7 **A.** No, I had no idea.

8 **Q.** Were you taught about sexual education back then?

9 **A.** No, never. Now I know and now I have an understanding, but back then I had no  
10 understanding whatsoever.

11 **Q.** So, when you were younger, was there a word or a sign for "abuse" that you understood?

12 **A.** No, there was no such word. If we're talking about abuse, and would I have understood at  
13 that time anyway what it meant? No, because I was too young.

14 **Q.** So, when that happened, did you tell a staff member, did you tell your parents or someone  
15 else?

16 **A.** No, I didn't. I don't know why I never spoke up. If I said something maybe I would be  
17 really embarrassed to be talking about it, but at the same time I had no concept of what it  
18 meant, so should I just say nothing? I just had no idea what I should do in that situation, so  
19 I left it. I left it for many years.

20 **Q.** Do you know if that happened to any of the other students?

21 **A.** Yes, I've met a few of those students and we've shared similar experiences; what happened  
22 to me happened to them. They'd share their experience and that's when it dawned on me.  
23 You know, well that student was a good-looking boy, so he'd be in bed and this same staff  
24 member, he'd finish his shift, I think it was around 9 o'clock, and then he was supposed to  
25 go home but he'd secretly go into the room, and he would play with these boys. I mean  
26 nothing left to the imagination. There was a Māori hearing staff member who heard  
27 something going on, and then so he actually hid underneath the bed and she came in to  
28 check that everything was okay, but this student was frozen with fear and, you know,  
29 couldn't indicate that, you know, there was untoward things going on.

30 So once the staff member left the room, the other staff member that was hiding then  
31 took off. The Māori staff member, the hearing one, actually saw the staff member running  
32 out of the room, but nothing but-- she did not say anything, and I actually met her a few  
33 years ago and so she had told me that she-- confirmed what she had seen.



1 **Q.** So, at that time you had no understanding of what was going on?

2 **A.** That's right, I had no understanding.

3 **Q.** Did you report that?

4 **A.** No, I didn't. Again, how do I report it, how do I report what happened? I had no idea of  
5 what was going on. I had no understanding that it wasn't, you know, the right that-- what  
6 happened to me was not right.

7 (Being called Deaf and dumb.)

8 **Q.** So now we will move on to a different topic. How did the teachers talk with the students?  
9 Some of the staff used to say some particular phrases to the Deaf children. Do you  
10 remember what they would say to you?

11 **A.** I suppose I don't hold any malice toward them, but there was a Deaf and dumb statement,  
12 phrase that was used, and I don't think the intention was that we were dumb, it was that we  
13 could not speak. So, I think that it is now a sensitivity for us to be called that, because of  
14 the connotations attached to it.

15 But we are Deaf, and we are not dumb, and I think I got really fed up with hearing  
16 this because I didn't think I was dumb. I was Deaf, but I wasn't stupid, I wasn't thick. And  
17 I know that the system has improved vastly. I do remember at that time I had some Deaf  
18 friends, and we'd walk from Kelston Deaf School, and I think this was probably a Saturday  
19 afternoon and this was on the way to the movies, and there was one hearing person who  
20 happened to see us and of course we were signing, and they were laughing at us.

21 I was like that's not nice and my friend caught wind of this and got very, very upset.  
22 And I was trying to just stop him from reacting, but he got his belt and he, you know, went  
23 to hit this person. And so, it was a lesson learned for that hearing person for, you know,  
24 making fun of us because we were signing, but I really had to try and calm him down  
25 somewhat.

26 (Going to hospital.)

27 **Q.** So, you've told the Commission about when you were in hospital for around three months.  
28 Can you tell me about that experience?

29 **A.** So, at Kelston Deaf School I was there, and I remember it would have been probably one  
30 o'clock in the morning, and I needed to go to the toilet, and before I got there my leg gave  
31 out and it was really, really sore. So, I was hobbling to the toilet on my left leg, and once I  
32 was in the loo my left leg gave out, I couldn't walk. And I was in a lot of pain, there was  
33 some pain in the joints there, so I let out this enormous scream and there was this beautiful

1 big Māori woman, she came racing to me asking if I was okay and I explained that  
2 I couldn't walk.

3 Anyway, she lifted me up, she was a very strong woman, she lifted me up, and so  
4 the nurse was involved, and these were the early hours of the morning. And she really felt  
5 like my aunty, she was very, very good to me, she was a favourite. But anyway, if I were  
6 to see her today I would just grab her, I haven't seen her for many years, and I'm not sure if  
7 she would still be alive.

8 But anyway, so I went to Greenlane [hospital] and I was there, I think, for one to  
9 two days, and that was really just to find out what was going on with my legs. And what  
10 they found out that there was no lubrication in my joints, the hip joints. So, then I was  
11 transferred to Middlemore Hospital where I remained for two and a half months. So, my  
12 legs were elevated and there was like a counterweight at the end of each leg to try and  
13 extend them from the hip joints. So that was two and a half months and then I was also fed  
14 antibiotics just to help my system.

15 And then eventually I came out of that elevated position and then it was on to rehab  
16 to try to walk again. And it felt like jelly the first time I got up, because I hadn't used my  
17 legs for so long, so I managed to make it to the toilet, hoping that no one would catch me.

18 And then from there on in I did make improvements and there was some extensive  
19 rehabilitation, and then I moved to Auckland Hospital for two weeks. And from there  
20 I went back to the Deaf School.

21 **Q.** So, when you were in the hospital, how did you communicate with the staff?

22 **A.** I turned my voice on. So again, there were no sign language interpreters then. And so, I  
23 was wearing hearing aids, but of course I was very, very little at the time, and there was  
24 like student --

25 **MS THOMAS:** Sorry, we just need to take a short break.

26 **CHAIR:** He's asked for a break, you just tell us when he's ready to resume.

27 **Adjournment from 3.22 pm to 3.31 pm**

28 **CHAIR:** Is Mr EX all right to resume?

29 **MS THOMAS:** Yes, thank you.

30 **CHAIR:** Thank you.

31 **[Video played]**

32 **A.** So there would be a team of doctors that would come to my bedside and it was just so  
33 difficult for me to communicate with them, I had no idea what they were saying to me, I  
34 would just sit there while this talking was happening over the top of me. I was only 10

1 years old. Then so I would switch off, but anyway, they would then give the report back to  
2 the Deaf School about my progress. So, I only knew bits and pieces of what was going on  
3 there.

4 **Q.** And your parents, did they tell your parents?

5 **A.** So, my parents knew what was going on, yes.

6 **Q.** Did you know what was going on?

7 **A.** No, no, I did not.

8 (Waterview Primary School.)

9 **Q.** So now we're going to talk about your time at Waterview Primary. So, you went to Kelston  
10 and you were a boarder there, but you also went to Waterview Primary. So, were there  
11 hearing people at that primary school?

12 **A.** So, in terms of the Deaf provision at Waterview, I think there were probably around five or  
13 six Deaf students.

14 **Q.** So, at that school, were you allowed to use sign language?

15 **A.** No, we were not. We were oral students and of course the teachers didn't sign as well.

16 **Q.** So, it was the same experience as Kelston?

17 **A.** Yes, that's correct.

18 **Q.** So, at Waterview would you have hearing aids, can you tell me about what did that look  
19 like?

20 **A.** They were horrible, it was this transistor that sat on the chest and there were a couple of  
21 things around that. I got really embarrassed because it was as if we were wearing a bra, so  
22 we got teased, "are you a girl? Are you wearing a bra?" It was just quite cheeky. And, you  
23 know, the other joke was that I was a robot because people, you know, would talk into the  
24 unit that was on our chest. They thought it was funny.

25 So, when the teachers weren't around, we would take these hearing devices off, and  
26 of course when the teachers came back, we would put them back on again. But I hated it.  
27 A hearing aid is much better, it just sits behind the ear, it's more discreet.

28 **Q.** How did you feel when you took that unit off?

29 **A.** I felt great, I felt relaxed, I felt free. And then when the teacher came, that's when the  
30 nervous energy took over and we took the units back on again.

31 **Q.** So when you had the units on your chest, could you hear better?

32 **A.** It would -- we could hear -- we could hear, yes, but it was really embarrassing to have, you  
33 know, the unit sitting on our chest, and so often when we would take it off it was just so  
34 freeing because we could converse in our own language, and we weren't having to

1 over-think different languages and grammar. And of course, we were forever being  
 2 improved about our output, so was that a B, was that a P. So, it was really, really difficult  
 3 to pick up on those speech patterns. You know, was it an S? What did that look like, how  
 4 did that sound? It was just very difficult, and we didn't like lip reading.

5 **Q.** So yourself and the other Deaf students had to wear these units?

6 **A.** That's correct.

7 **Q.** So at that school, when you were punished for something (-being electrocuted by  
 8 a -teacher) your-- teacher was teaching you about electricity, that was one of the subjects.  
 9 Can you tell us what happened?

10 **A.** So the teacher would pick a particular topic because we were learning about how a  
 11 telephone worked, we'd talk about the lines, and these were the old-fashioned telephones  
 12 where you would wind them. There was a group of students and we were kind of in a semi-  
 13 circle and we all had to hold hands and then the teacher would wind the telephone and we  
 14 could feel the circuit going through each of us, the electricity, it was like wow, this was a  
 15 learning point.

16 As students are, we get a little bit naughty and we may answer back to the teacher.  
 17 And that happened to me actually. And so, all the students left the classroom and the  
 18 teacher called me up to the front and he said "here, hold these things". And I remember the  
 19 semi--circle and I thought it was a similar thing but only it was me. But of course, then that  
 20 surge obviously just came directly to me. So, I was really brave, and I just tried to hold  
 21 what he gave me, and I just felt this electricity just kind of it-- was like a burning sensation,  
 22 and it just went through my body. And this went on for about a minute.

23 And so the teacher wound the telephone and the surge of electricity just went  
 24 through me, and that was my punishment. And I had to learn not to pick on this boy again.  
 25 And after that I was like jelly, I was just shaking. And it took about five or 10 minutes for  
 26 that feeling to subside. And obviously I didn't want that to happen again, I was frightened.

27 And, you know, it felt almost like, you know like a death penalty, you see that kind  
 28 of thing in the States, and yeah, I was just frightened with fear that that had happened to  
 29 me.

30 **Q.** So, when that happened to you, how did you feel about that teacher?

31 **A.** Well, I how do I put this? I suppose all of the teachers have a right to punish a student, you  
 32 know, if you're naughty, that kind of thing, that type of punishment, I think, students are  
 33 allowed to be punished in that time. And these days I think things are quite different, but  
 34 I wish that I could have said to the teacher "how would you feel? How would your

1 daughter, how would your son feel if that type of punishment was put on them?" You  
2 know, but at that time I said nothing. I'm still alive, I suppose. [GRO-A].

3 **Q.** So when that happened to you did you tell your friends or your parents?

4 **A.** No, I didn't. I did tell a few Deaf friends about it.

5 (Māori culture at Waterview Primary School.)

6 **Q.** So at Waterview Primary school, did you have better access to your Māori culture?

7 **A.** Oh no, it was a very strong Pākehā school. I think maybe there would have been a quarter  
8 of the students that may have been Māori but the rest were Pākehā. But there was no  
9 access to Te Ao Māori.

10 **Q.** And how did that make you feel?

11 **A.** Like I'm living in a Pākehā world, yeah, what more can I say?

12 **Q.** So why didn't you tell your parents about what had happened to you?

13 **A.** Well, it never occurred to me at the time. I don't know why I didn't tell my mum and dad,  
14 perhaps I was a bit whakamā to tell them what had happened. You know, and I suppose  
15 I felt like a bit of a tattletale of every single thing that had happened to me I was now telling  
16 mum and dad, so I just thought it was better not to say anything.

17 (Access to whānau.)

18 **Q.** How did you access your parents actually if you needed to speak with them?

19 **A.** We would meet and they would bring lunch, and there were a few times where they would  
20 stay in the home, but most of the time it would be at my sister's house that I would visit  
21 there and that's where we would have a kōrero with mum and dad. So that's really how we  
22 would stay in touch.

23 **Q.** So when you were at Kelston, how many times would you see your parents?

24 **A.** So every public holiday. So, for example, the end of term one I'd fly home and I'd stay  
25 there for the holidays and then would come back at the start of term two, and so that was  
26 the same for all of the terms. The most exciting part was when I knew we were getting  
27 closer to end of term, and I would actually cross off the tally of how many more sleeps it  
28 was going to be until I was heading home. I really, really looked forward to getting back  
29 home. It was almost like a, if you can imagine being in a prison and you're marking off the  
30 days until it's freedom.

31 (Leaving Kelston.)

32 **A.** I remember it was 1973 before Christmas and I knew it was the end of school. And so our  
33 principal Mr Young, wanted to talk to me and so I thought that I was in trouble, and so  
34 I didn't know what was going on. And so, he sat down, and he looked at me and he told



1 me, "I can see that you're - you've improved,- and you can speak well", which was news to  
2 me. And I was told "next year we don't need you to come back."

3 So that was a big shock, because I felt like I would never see my friends again and  
4 I told him "no, I want to stay." And the principal kind of looked and asked, "why do you  
5 want to stay?" So really my Deaf friends, they were like my Deaf family and I'd be lost  
6 without them. So, I went around, and I said my goodbyes to all my Deaf friends. And so,  
7 I moved back to [GRO-A] with ---my family, I was kind of lost from that Deaf world and  
8 carried on in the hearing world.

9 But so, this was from when I was 13 to 18, and then when I was 18, I finally moved  
10 back to Auckland living with one of my uncles. And I kind of got re-acquainted with my  
11 Deaf world and my Deaf friends, and I kind of lost my sign language and was using  
12 gestures to communicate. And it wasn't until I got more and more involved, and I started  
13 living my life and I moved to [GRO-A] ---that was that.

14 (Impacts.)

15 **Q.** So, when you were in Kelston School, did you feel emotionally different about Kelston  
16 after you left?

17 **A.** I think definitely there were big impacts because of the trauma and everything that had  
18 happened, but I tried to move on with my life. I still remember my friends and I still  
19 remember the good and the bad. And of course, there's a lot of trauma that happened there  
20 and a lot of abuse that happened there as well, but I've learned to live with it, I've tried to  
21 move on with my life, up until now.

22 **Q.** So what coping mechanisms do you use?

23 **A.** It's not easy, I've been through counselling, not here in New Zealand, but it was overseas,  
24 because I noticed that I was being affected. So, at that time I was with my wife, and  
25 something had happened, and all of this trauma just overwhelmed me, it just got too much,  
26 and I felt I-- was saying to myself that I wanted to end it and I wanted to commit suicide.

27 But now my coping mechanisms is keeping myself busy, being involved with  
28 sports, always trying to do something. But it's not a 100% cure. It has helped and  
29 counselling has helped, but, you know, I've tried to pretend that I'm fine and nothing's  
30 happened to me, you know, I tried to put on this facade that I'm fine. But deep down it's  
31 still there, and I'm still trying to deal with it. I've been trying my best to just deal with  
32 everything, keeping myself busy with my family, with work.

33 But it's during those quiet times that the trauma's always there. For example, my  
34 father is no longer with us, I'm grieving for him, and that's getting mixed up with my own

1 traumas. But I really believe that the best medicine is massage. Maybe one day I'd like to  
 2 buy my own massage chair so that I can just let go and get all the negativity out and bring  
 3 all the positivity back in. And that really helps me find peace. And, you know, maybe that  
 4 would be a nightly routine.

5 Also, I've been involved with the church and that's been a big help. That's made a  
 6 really big difference. Just trying to keep things settled and peaceful. But now I'm just, you  
 7 know, just trying to cope, just taking it a day at a time.

8 **Q.** How do you want Kelston Deaf School to change?

9 **A.** I would like Kelston to be more aware and maybe run workshops on what abuse actually  
 10 looks like for staff and teachers, so that what I went through never happens again. That's  
 11 just really raising awareness. But I think back in those days it was quite hard. But I think  
 12 it's important that we raise awareness now for our future tamariki Māori.

13 **Q.** So, once you left school, did you complain to the Police or to anyone?

14 **A.** About what happened during my schooling experience?

15 **Q.** Yes.

16 **A.** No, I didn't tell anyone. Like I say, you know, I didn't know how to report or what to report  
 17 and nobody told me how to.

18 (Experience with Police.)

19 **Q.** So, you've told us that you had an experience and was arrested by the Police. Can you tell  
 20 us more about that?

21 **A.** Yeah, so this happened when I was going to a party with some hearing friends, and quite  
 22 often it was the same group of us and we would go to these parties that happened. And so,  
 23 it happened a few times where we would run out of petrol. And so, because it was at night  
 24 time we would try and what- had happened was because it was night time-, my friends had  
 25 tried to siphon some petrol from another car. So, I would watch and kind of, you know, tell  
 26 myself that I wasn't getting involved in that, so this had happened a couple of times.

27 But this particular night I was sitting in the back, I was actually asleep and then the  
 28 car stopped because we ran out of petrol again. So, I kind of went back to sleep and so my  
 29 friends went to siphon the petrol from this house, but all of a sudden the light turned on at  
 30 this house and the home owner came out, and straight away I recognised that he was an off-  
 31 duty- policeman. Back then we were in [GRO-A]-- --it was a small community, everyone  
 32 knew everyone, and so my hearing friends escaped and I didn't know what to do so I kind  
 33 of tried to go back to sleep.

1           And then so I was shaken awake by this policeman and he was quite upset. And so  
2 he told me to come out but at the same time my hearing aids had fall en off. But he had  
3 already handcuffed my hands behind my back because I was- even- though I was only 16, I  
4 was quite big for my age, and, you know, all of my other friends were smaller compared to  
5 me. But because I was bigger, they decided to handcuff me I guess. I guess there was only  
6 one pair of handcuffs.

7           So I tried to tell this person that "I can't hear you, my hearing aids have fallen off, I  
8 can't communicate with you." And so this police officer thought I was bullshitting and  
9 started punching me. And of course, I couldn't defend myself. And so he rung a detective  
10 to come, so I had to go with them. And then luckily I had my hearing aids on at that time,  
11 so I went to the Police Station and got interviewed by the detective and I was able to  
12 communicate because my hearing aids were on.

13           And so the detective was asking me "who were your friends? If you don't tell me  
14 who they were, you'll go to prison." And so I kind of felt like I was stuck and I had to tell  
15 the truth, so I told them who they were and where they lived and I asked them if they could  
16 drop me off back home. But at the same time I felt relieved because I didn't want my  
17 parents to know what had happened.

18           So this had happened around three o'clock in the morning and I didn't end up going  
19 home until five am, so I had to sneak back into the house and went back to sleep. And then  
20 wasn't later until I caught up with my friends and they were kind of having a go at me  
21 because I blabbed. But, you know, I was really stuck in a rock and a hard place, it wasn't  
22 fair.

23 **Q.** So when you were at the Police Station, was there an interpreter for you?

24 **A.** No, there was no interpreters, I just had to communicate orally. You know, this was back  
25 in the 70s, 75, 76; back then, no interpreters.

26 **Q.** So when these things happened to you in Kelston, how did you feel about the Police at that  
27 time?

28 **A.** I suppose back then I knew that the Police were around, but I'd never been arrested, but  
29 I knew what the Police were. But I didn't really know, you know, I don't claim to say that  
30 I knew everything about the Police.

31 **Q.** How do you feel about the Police now? Would you report this?

32 **A.** Yes, I think definitely now if something did happen I would report it. I know now that I do  
33 have the right to make a report.

34 (Recommendations.)

- 1 **Q.** So why have you decided to talk about this to the Royal Commission?
- 2 **A.** Really I just want to speak up and I'd love to sue the school. But I know that that wouldn't  
3 give me true peace, but I hope that by speaking up it would encourage other Deaf people to  
4 do the same. Because the staff who have already been abusing, you know, they feel like  
5 they can get away with it and that's not fair. Why should they live a peaceful life? I want  
6 them to wake up to their actions.
- 7 **Q.** If you could give any advice or recommendations to the Commission, what would you tell  
8 them?
- 9 **A.** So I'd really like to see this information publicly available. I'm not sure of other scenarios  
10 out there but awareness. I've heard so many stories of suffering and hearing that the Royal  
11 Commission was visiting, and they visited the marae, and as I mentioned before, all of this  
12 accumulated trauma just came back to me, and I made that decision that it was time to  
13 speak up.
- 14 **Q.** What do you think about learning te reo Māori in sign language?
- 15 **A.** I think that that's very difficult because we have Māori concepts in New Zealand Sign  
16 Language, but this is a developing area, and so there's obviously a lot of work that would  
17 go into this. I have learned so much. I would love to learn te reo Māori. But te reo sign  
18 language hasn't developed. So, it's really hard.
- 19 If, for example, I mean if we talk about time, one day I would love to see te reo  
20 Māori speakers being able to impart their wisdoms to our rangatahi, you know, and whether  
21 that means the inclusion of sign language interpreters as well. But I think that it would be  
22 great that funding were made available for that to eventuate.
- 23 **Q.** What do you think, what would make your school experience at that time better? For  
24 example, having a Māori teacher, having sign language interpreters, what would make your  
25 personal school experience better at that time, what are your thoughts on this?
- 26 **A.** So, for me it's about access. So, interpreters that could give us access to Te Ao Māori so  
27 that we were then able to learn our Māoritanga. Trilingual interpreters, there are just a few  
28 in New Zealand and we need that number to increase. I know that there are some  
29 interpreters out there that can speak te reo Māori but they're not Māori themselves. So we  
30 need more Māori teachers and staff.
- 31 **Q.** Another question for you. What do you wish for Deaf people's schooling experience in the  
32 future?

1 A. That's a really difficult question. I think for a lot of Māori Deaf in our community, and I'm  
2 not sure how many of them would have, you know, tamariki out there, but I'm sure that  
3 number would be great, and so students would be accessing their services.

4 I think more Māori role models, more Māori staff, because you can kind of count  
5 them on one hand and the majority are Pākehā. And it's a Pākehā system. I feel like it's a  
6 really hard one, because we are the minority in that majority situation, and so it then  
7 becomes — you- become quite powerless to be able to tell that majority what you need.

8 But my wish is that there are more Māori teachers. That's a very tough one for me to  
9 answer.

10 **Q.** So what about teachers teaching Deaf children, do you think they should be hearing or  
11 Deaf?

12 A. I think a Deaf teacher is better, that's my perspective. Most of them are hearing teachers  
13 but they can sign. And actually, I talked to some of the Deaf students and said "what's your  
14 preference, who do you think's better?" "The Deaf teachers." So, I inquired further as to  
15 why they thought that, and they said, "because the communication, we use the same  
16 language, I identify with that person, we have the same culture."

17 And this is the response from all of the students, and I would say to that teacher,  
18 "hey you're in these kids' good books here", but brilliant teaching going on. I said, "what's  
19 wrong with the other teachers?" They said, "they can't culturally identify, they can't  
20 linguistically identify", and the signs were clumsy. And so, they were often having to  
21 clarify what was being said and it was just very difficult for these children to get their  
22 education in a language that they understood. Whereas with a Deaf teacher, there's this  
23 unwritten, unsigned or unspoken knowing that when a student doesn't understand, you then  
24 go back with another question and another until they get it. So, I'd love to see more Deaf  
25 teachers, I'd love to see that number grow.

26 **Q.** As well as Deaf culture, right?

27 A. Absolutely. It's that infinity that only we can experience because it's our lived experience;  
28 but it's not easy, right?

29 **Q.** So [Mr EX]-- --I think that concludes your statement, thank you so much for presenting  
30 your evidence. Thank you for trusting us here at the Royal Commission.

31 **CHAIR:** Would you like to take a break at this stage?

32 **MS THOMAS:** Just a brief adjournment and we will resume with questions.

33 **CHAIR:** Take a break and then we'll come back for final questions, okay.

**Adjournment from 4.01 pm to 4.12 pm**

1  
2 **MR COLTMAN:** Ma'am, just before we get underway, Dr Powell is on a flight back to Dunedin,  
3 the last today which leaves at 10 to 6, so she may have to leave early.

4 **CHAIR:** We would completely understand about that, there's nothing worse than being trapped  
5 far from home, so feel free to leave whenever it suits you, Dr Powell. But thank you very  
6 much for your attendance today.

7 **MR COLTMAN:** Thank you ma'am.

8 **MS KUKLINSKI:** Hello Mr EX, if you're happy now for the Commissioners to ask you some  
9 questions?

10 A. Yes, I am.

11 **CHAIR:** Thank you. Mr EX, thank you for sitting there listening to that evidence which we have  
12 been following very closely. I'm just going to ask the other Commissioners if they have  
13 any questions for you. We'll first of all start with Commissioner Gibson, with Paul Gibson.

14 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Thanks Mr EX. Over time I think you learned a bit more about  
15 Deaf culture and that seems to be an important part of keeping Deaf people, Deaf children  
16 safe, that not just Deaf people know and understand, but more people in the community,  
17 people who are involved in Deaf Education, other areas understand it. How can everybody  
18 in the community know and understand more about Deaf culture?

19 A. I think that it's very important that hearing people that are involved in a Deaf School or a  
20 boarding school that is Deaf go through Deaf awareness training to help them better  
21 understand our lives. This is a vital part of who we are as a people. Dribs and drabs is not  
22 good enough, it needs to be everything, and I think it's vital that it is taught.

23 **Q.** Thanks, and a final question. In particular, young parents, often hearing parents find out  
24 they may have a Deaf child through a screening process or something like that; what would  
25 you like to share with parents who find out that they have a Deaf child, a Hearing -Impaired  
26 child, what should those parents know and how to bring up that child, how to teach that  
27 child?

28 A. There's probably a few things that come to mind. In my opinion, I do not like to see babies  
29 given cochlear implants. I understand there's a reason for this and it helps that baby to hear,  
30 but I also think it's important too that perhaps that child can make their own decision  
31 around that. I think that that baby needs to grow into a child and that the older they get  
32 then they may be presented with that option of whether they want to be implanted or not.

33 Could you just repeat that question again for me?

- 1 **Q.** Yes, what do you think parents need to know about their Deaf child, Hearing Impaired  
2 child growing up and what do they need to know about their education, the child's  
3 education as well?
- 4 **A.** So I believe that -- I understand that's natural for hearing parents to be shocked and to  
5 grieve that they have a Deaf baby. But I think that this is a great opportunity for the family  
6 to learn sign language, for the parents to learn sign language, for their baby to learn sign  
7 language, because the worst thing to happen is for that Deaf baby to grow up and not to  
8 have sign language. We all need language to be able to communicate with each other, and  
9 it would certainly make that child's life much easier.
- 10 **Q.** Thanks Mr EX, thanks for your answers, thanks for your testimony.
- 11 **A.** Thank you.
- 12 **CHAIR:** Mr EX, I've got two questions that I'd like to ask you. The first one was about your  
13 family, especially your brothers and sisters. And you've told us that you led a happy life  
14 with your brothers and sisters before going off to Kelston. And from your evidence it  
15 seems that you didn't have a lot of contact with them apart from school holidays after that.  
16 Is that right?
- 17 **A.** That's correct.
- 18 **Q.** So what was that like for you to have really lost your brothers and sisters in that day -to-day  
19 way for all that time?
- 20 **A.** Yeah, so certainly it really wasn't easy. Obviously when you're growing up as a whānau  
21 unit and we were very, very close, and of course moving to a boarding school, there's a part  
22 of my identity which was gone. I was so excited to see my brothers and my sisters, and I  
23 was always happy to be around them. And then when I got back to the Deaf School I was  
24 sad, but at the same time I then had my Deaf brothers and sisters. And so, I suppose I grew  
25 up bi-culturally, having, you know, being in both worlds.
- 26 **Q.** Yes, I understand that, thank you. My second question comes from your evidence that you  
27 received some counselling overseas, and I wonder if you went overseas because there was  
28 no appropriate counselling for Deaf people in New Zealand, or was there any reason you  
29 went overseas for the counselling?
- 30 **A.** So, my wife is not a Kiwi and so that's why I moved abroad. At that time, I was going  
31 through some real trauma and so hence I just went to counselling services. And I found  
32 that it was really, really helpful. It was a huge help to be able to find another mechanism  
33 and to really kind of look at the anger that I had been holding on to all of these years. I  
34 think that some help is better than anything, it's kind of how I saw it.

- 1 **Q.** And was that counselling done in a way that was appropriate for a Deaf person? For  
2 example, was it a Deaf counsellor, or did you have interpreters, how was that managed?
- 3 **A.** Yes and no to that. I really did try to find a way forward and I just kind of thought this is  
4 better than nothing, and I had tried lots of different things. So that was just what I thought  
5 to myself, it was better than nothing, and of course it's not 100% going to be a match for me  
6 to have a hearing counsellor.
- 7 **Q.** Yes. Do you know if there are any Deaf counsellors in New Zealand?
- 8 **A.** So when I moved back to New Zealand it was a few years ago now, I did find out that there  
9 was a counsellor or two. I'm not really sure on the number, I actually haven't had that  
10 conversation with them, but yeah, who knows what the future might bring, maybe more  
11 Deaf counsellors.
- 12 **Q.** From everything you have told us today, it would seem to me that given the trauma that you  
13 suffered and the trauma that was suffered by your fellow students, that there would be quite  
14 a big need to have Deaf counsellors available who understood that culture as well as  
15 understanding your emotional, your psychological needs?
- 16 **A.** So I really think that -I think that if there were a lot of Deaf people - - I'm- just gathering my  
17 thoughts here.
- 18 **Q.** Take your time.
- 19 **A.** I think that a lot of our Deaf community have held their trauma in for such a long time and  
20 there's a lot of suicidal thoughts amongst the community, and I think that to be able to talk  
21 to a counsellor where that Deaf person feels comfortable, it's like a balloon popping, in that  
22 you're much able to better manage your future. So, I know that for me my personal belief  
23 is that counselling has worked for me. I think a Deaf counsellor would work better for me.  
24 And of course, if it is a hearing counsellor then we would need sign language interpreters,  
25 but I would prefer to have a Deaf counsellor.
- 26 I have a few Deaf friends who are depressed, and they'll come and have a bit of a  
27 kōrero with me. I'm not professionally trained as a counsellor, but I feel as if I can help  
28 them with something, and you know, if that way works as well then that's great. And some  
29 of my friends have in fact said, you know you should train and become a counsellor, but  
30 again, who knows what the future holds.
- 31 **Q.** That's quite a fine thought, isn't it, but that's a matter for you, but I think you have opened  
32 up a very interesting line of thinking for us about recommendations we might make in the  
33 future, and for that I'm very grateful, so thank you for that.



1                   So those are the only two questions I have and thank you very much for your  
2                   answers, Mr EX, I'm now going to hand you to Commissioner Steenson, that's Julia.

3 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Tēnā koe Mr EX. E mihi ana ki a koe i tō kōrero nui i tēnei  
4                   kaupapa whakahirahira i tēnei wā.

5 A.       Tēnā koe.

6 **Q.**     I just have a couple of questions for you. So, the first is how do you imagine your life  
7                   would have been different if you'd been given access to Te Ao Māori, the world of Māori  
8                   view in an early part of your life?

9 A.       Sorry, just to clarify, do you mean if I was hearing?

10 **Q.**     No, so while you were trying to cope with being put into a Pākehā environment and also  
11                   which was abusive, and, you know, coping with that, how do you see that being different if  
12                   you'd had a Te Ao Māori environment?

13 A.       I think it would have made a huge difference. I think maybe if it was a Māori Deaf  
14                   education centre, yeah.

15 **Q.**     Okay, thank you. I guess the rest of my questions are related to that. So you talked about  
16                   the barriers for Māori who are Deaf learning to be interpreters and you suggested that that  
17                   would be improved by having Turi Māori as teachers in this area.

18 A.       Sorry, Commissioner, just on the end of that first question was a Māori Deaf education  
19                   centre yes, but at the same time the hearing Māori staff would also need to be enculturated  
20                   Deaf. And we can't rule out hearing people in our lives and we know it's a part of life, but I  
21                   think that that is vital. It would be lovely to have been immersed in that type of  
22                   environment.

23 **Q.**     Right, yeah. Combination of both is really important, thank you. So, I'm just trying to  
24                   understand, do you think there'd be merit in a kaupapa Māori organisation that was run by  
25                   Turi Māori dedicated to teaching and looking after Turi Māori, or do you think that having  
26                   existing -- the existing organisations, having Māori in more executive levels, Turi Māori in  
27                   executive levels would make the difference?

28 A.       All right, so I'm just thinking about this question. If I think of particular organisations out  
29                   there, there is an organisation called Deaf Aotearoa, however by the Māori Deaf  
30                   community it's not really seen as an organisation that represents them. So it would really  
31                   be nice to have our own Māori Deaf organisation. I think that that would be the better way,  
32                   simply because we know our own people, we are Māori, we are Deaf, we share the same  
33                   language, we share the same culture, we have the same lived experience. I hope that that  
34                   may happen in the future.

1 **Q.** Thank you, thank you, that was my — those were my questions. And it's also my privilege  
2 to thank you on behalf of the Commission today. You've been — you've given us, the  
3 Commission here, such important information about the experiences that you've had, and  
4 on behalf of that abuse that's occurred for the Deaf community as well. -

5 So, I just want to acknowledge your bravery in telling us and pouring light on such  
6 sad, sad darkness. We're really grateful, we're grateful that you've come to represent  
7 whānau Turi and representing your whānau, hapū and iwi at our hearing today. Nō reira,  
8 tēnei te mihi, tēnei te mihi, tēnei te mihi ki a koe.

9 **A.** Kia ora.

10 **Q.** So, Mr EX, you can now relax knowing that you have done a great job, so thank you very  
11 much from all of us.

12 **CHAIR:** This brings to the end of this week, a most rich week. For us as Commissioners, we  
13 have been deeply engrossed, deeply moved and touched by the evidence that we've heard  
14 from survivors, and from those advocates and other people who have worked in the area of  
15 disability and of psychiatric care who have shared their experiences as well.

16 So, as we end this week, I just want to acknowledge two particular groups; first of  
17 all the survivors, of course, who are at the heart of everything we do and whose voices are  
18 vital to the work that we are doing and the work that we will be doing in producing our  
19 reports.

20 The second group I want to acknowledge with great gratitude are the well-being  
21 people who have sat beside those survivors all week. And I know the lawyers have been  
22 working closely with the survivors, but it's the well-being people who have held them  
23 emotionally, looked after them afterwards, and I want to acknowledge you because it's  
24 extraordinarily fine work that you do to support our survivors to go through this journey, so  
25 please know that your work is much appreciated.

26 And with that, I wish everybody a good evening and have a very restful and  
27 peaceful weekend before we resume again on Monday. Matua, kei a koe te karakia.

28 **KAUMATUA:** (Waiata Ka Waiata). (Karakia). By listening we know, by knowing we begin to  
29 understand. Therefore, we look for greater understanding. By understanding we seek  
30 resolve, by resolve we find life. May we find that life. Pōmārie ki a tātou katoa, ki a pai to  
31 wiki. Have a good weekend.

32 **Hearing adjourned at 4.36 pm to Monday, 18 July at 10 am**