

**ABUSE IN CARE ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY
FOSTER CARE INQUIRY 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)
Ali'imua Sandra Alofivae
Dr Anaru Erueti

Counsel: Mr Simon Mount QC, Ms Kerryn Beaton QC, Dr Allan Cooke
and Ms Aroha Fletcher for the Royal Commission
Ms Rachael Schmidt-McCleave, Ms Julia White and
Mr Max Clarke-Parker for the Crown

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

Date: 16 June 2022

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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1 **Hearing opens with waiata Purea Nei and karakia tīmatanga by Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei**

2 **[Waiata Pure Nei]**

3 **KAUMATUA:** Me inoi tātou. He hōnore, he kororia ki te Atua, he maungārongo ki te whenua, he
4 whakaaro pai ki ngā tangata katoa. Aroha mai i waenganui i a tātou o tēnei kaupapa kia
5 kaha mai ko tātou te kōrero. Āwhina mai ko tātou te kōrero o te aroha, o te tikanga, o te
6 wairua kia piki te ora, piki te māramatanga, kia tau te rangimārie.

7 I would ask for this special day that we come together to discuss issues that are before us.

8 Give blessings to those who do appear and have their peace of mind, give them the love and
9 celebration of goodness and life. We ask all these things in your name, āke tonu ake, āmine.

10 Ka mihi atu ki a koe, ki a koutou. Ka whakamaua kia tina, tina, haumi e, taiki e.

11 **[9.43 am]**

12 **CHAIR:** May I give a special greeting to this wonderful choir that swells by the day. Thank you
13 for coming and supporting us, it's just a wonderful thing to see, many thanks from the
14 Commissioners.

15 Tēnā rā tātou katoa. Good morning to everybody. I'm just making an
16 announcement before we start our evidence today, that this morning's session is open, good
17 morning to you Ms EJ, and the evidence will be given in open, but from about – we take a
18 break about 10.30 and from that time on the hearing will be closed for reasons of
19 anonymity and the protection of survivors. So, the hearing room won't be open and nor
20 will they be live streamed. But we will be back in front of the public, open to the public
21 and live streaming again from two o'clock this afternoon. So, I hope we have the
22 understanding of our public for those matters.

23 Anyway, welcome to you Ms EJ, sorry to have held you up for a moment. Are you
24 all right?

25 A. **[Nods].**

26 **Q.** Best as you can be. I'm just going to ask you if you'll take the affirmation and then I'll
27 leave with you Ms Fletcher.

28 **MS EJ (Affirmed)**

29 **QUESTIONING BY MS FLETCHER:** Thank you Ms EJ for coming, I know it's not the nicest
30 thing to talk about, so we really appreciate you coming forward today and sharing your
31 experience. Just a few housekeeping matters before we begin. There's someone that's
32 signing in the corner there, so you and I have to be quite careful when we speak and not get
33 too fast.

34 A. Okay.

- 1 **Q.** If there's at any point you feel like you don't want to answer a question or you want to have
2 a break, that's fine, you just let us know as well.
- 3 **A.** Okay.
- 4 **Q.** If we don't get through your whole statement that's okay too because Commissioners have
5 got your full statement already.
- 6 **A.** Okay.
- 7 **Q.** Before we look at your time in care, we just want to know a little bit more about you and
8 what your life was like with your family, is that okay?
- 9 **A.** Yeah.
- 10 **Q.** So, Ms EJ, you were born in 1984?
- 11 **A.** Yeah.
- 12 **Q.** You're about 37 years old now?
- 13 **A.** Yes.
- 14 **Q.** You've been diagnosed as autistic?
- 15 **A.** Yeah.
- 16 **Q.** This wasn't picked up when you were a kid?
- 17 **A.** No, it wasn't.
- 18 **Q.** In your statement you state that life might have been a bit different if someone had picked
19 up that you had autism. Can you elaborate more on that?
- 20 **A.** So, I guess that I've like struggled like socially and emotionally. I mean I actually always
21 thought there was something wrong with me, you know, like I thought that people just
22 didn't like me and that maybe I was like weird and that, but it's not actually that at all. You
23 know, when I got diagnosed with being like autistic, you know, I actually looked into all of
24 those things, it actually really made sense. And now it's actually made my life easier as
25 well, because, you know, I understand what's wrong with me now, there's nothing wrong
26 with me.
- 27 **CHAIR:** No.
- 28 **A.** No, there's nothing wrong with me at all. Yeah.
- 29 **Q.** But you can adjust your life to suit?
- 30 **A.** Yeah, I can, and I can also tell people that I am actually autistic and that I don't always
31 understand what you are actually trying to tell me, but yeah, it's made a really big
32 difference. For an example I said to my employer "they think that I'm autistic", and he said
33 to me "that does not surprise me." And he's also said to me when I said that, you know,
34 "I actually am autistic", he's just like "oh, okay, that really does make sense." And I was

1 like "yeah, it does." And so, you know, it's helped me, you know, like with my employer
2 and stuff, you know, like he's like worked with me and, you know, now I can do my job
3 without, you know, worrying about the rest of the stuff, yeah.

4 **QUESTIONING BY MS FLETCHER CONTINUED:** In your statement you describe being a
5 member of a blended family, so that's where your parents have children from different
6 partners. How many siblings do you have?

7 A. So, I have two older sisters, an older brother, and a younger brother. Yeah, so my older
8 two older sisters and my older brother are from my mum's first marriage and then me, then
9 there's me and my little brother from my mum and dad.

10 **Q.** What was mum like as a parent?

11 A. So, my mum, you know, like she worked like, you know, hard. You know, like to support
12 us kids, you know, she worked quite a few jobs.

13 **Q.** What about dad, what was dad like?

14 A. So, my dad, my dad was like a freezing worker and yeah, he was like quite abusive to us,
15 like all of us, you know, like he used to call my older sister like names, yeah, and like, you
16 know, he was like physically like abusive to me and my brother as well, yeah.

17 **Q.** Your parents, you describe them having quite a dysfunctional relationship. Did you
18 witness abuse between the two of them when you were a kid?

19 A. Yeah, I did, yeah, and that – so yeah, physical like abuse, so my dad was like chucking
20 stuff at my mum and, you know, one time he like threw like bags of potatoes at her, he used
21 to abuse her like all the time.

22 **Q.** In your statement you describe how your parents separated. Mum ended up being
23 responsible for all the kids at home. Did dad move out at that time?

24 A. Yes, he did, yeah.

25 **Q.** You say that dad would stalk your family too when he moved out?

26 A. Yeah, he did, he used to drive past like our house at all hours of the day and night, yeah.

27 **Q.** Did he try and tell you and the other kids that your mum was keeping you guys from him?

28 A. Yeah, he did say that, he said that he always wanted to like see us, but that's actually not the
29 truth, because he actually had the choice whether he wanted to see us or not, but he chose
30 not to, yeah.

31 **Q.** It sounds like quite a chaotic family life that you grew up in, and in your statement, you say
32 that you started attending many Family Group Conferences over the years, is that right?

33 A. Yeah.

34 **Q.** But you weren't quite sure when you were made a ward of the State?

- 1 A. No.
- 2 Q. At one point you describe seeing your social worker Bob Aitcheson one day after school.
3 Can you tell us a bit about that?
- 4 A. So yeah, pretty much I came home one day after school and, you know, I just got told that I
5 was going to go like into care, you know, like came back like quite late at night and picked
6 me up and like took me there.
- 7 Q. Around about this time, this is when mum and dad had separated?
- 8 A. Yeah, they had.
- 9 Q. And mum wasn't doing too well with that separation, eh?
- 10 A. No, and my mum's mental health was like declining as well.
- 11 Q. You refer to what you're saying is a tantrum, but maybe now that you're autistic it might
12 have been just trying to comprehend the situation, that there was a big event and your mum
13 reacted to you. Did you want to tell us a bit about that?
- 14 A. No.
- 15 Q. That's okay, we'll move on to the next one. You've kind of spoken to the Commissioners
16 about it before. Your journey into care sounded quite traumatic. In your statement you
17 refer to being taken in the middle of the night and you didn't really know what was
18 happening at the time. Did you want to talk about that?
- 19 A. [Shakes head].
- 20 CHAIR: No, we've got it the written down here, we understand.
- 21 MS FLETCHER: That's okay.
- 22 CHAIR: Can I just ask a question, when you were taken away, were you about 11 or 12 at that
23 stage?
- 24 A. Yeah, I was about 11 or 12, yeah.
- 25 Q. You were at intermediate school?
- 26 A. Yeah, I was, yeah. I think I might have been about 11 because I was in like maybe form 1.
- 27 Q. Right.
- 28 A. Yeah.
- 29 Q. The reason I'm asking that is that would have meant it was about 1995, something like that?
- 30 A. Yeah.
- 31 Q. Yeah. Just a question about how much was known about autism at that stage, it's
32 interesting to me.
- 33 A. There was actually nothing known about that at that stage, because they did not diagnose
34 girls with autism.

- 1 Q. Is that right?
- 2 A. They actually diagnosed me with being Attention-deficit/ hyperactivity disorder (ADHD),
3 yeah, instead of being autistic, because back in those days it was just like a boy thing.
- 4 Q. A boy thing?
- 5 A. A boy thing that played – like boys played with like planes, trains and were like, you know,
6 obsessed with all those sorts of things, yeah.
- 7 Q. So, you were diagnosed with ADHD, do you remember who did that and when they did
8 that?
- 9 A. They diagnosed me with ADHD when I was probably about 11 or 12, so they medicated
10 me with like Ritalin and that was terrible, that was a terrible experience, yeah.
- 11 Q. Sorry to interrupt.
- 12 **QUESTIONING BY MS FLETCHER CONTINUED:** That's all right. There's a couple of
13 placements that first happened when you went into care and we'll get into those later in the
14 day, but we, if you don't mind, will turn to what you've called in your statement the house
15 of horrors, and we're going to call these people Mr and Mrs M, is that all right?
- 16 A. Yeah.
- 17 Q. How old were you when you went into the house of horrors?
- 18 A. Approximately 13.
- 19 Q. Can you recall how long you were there for?
- 20 A. I was there for quite some time. I don't actually know the time period. It was like in 1998,
21 that's all I remember, yeah, it was about 1998.
- 22 Q. Mr and Mrs M, they had two adopted kids and two biological kids?
- 23 A. Yeah.
- 24 Q. Is it correct that you didn't really get along with the biological kids, but you got on with one
25 of the adopted kids?
- 26 A. Yeah.
- 27 Q. In your statement you say that Mrs M was from a Care and Protection team?
- 28 A. Yes, she was.
- 29 Q. What was she like as a person?
- 30 A. They were like – she was really manipulating eh.
- 31 Q. In your statement you say that she had this front where she was tidy and took pride in her
32 appearance and cooked good meals, but it was all for a show, is that right?
- 33 A. Yeah, it was, most definitely.
- 34 Q. There was also Mr M, did you want to tell us a bit about him?

- 1 A. He was the same as well, like, you know, they were held like, you know, like quite high up
2 in the community because they had looked after children for a long period of time.
- 3 Q. So, they presented themselves out to be real community people, people of standing that
4 wouldn't dare be abusive to any children?
- 5 A. Yeah, correct. You know, there was no way that other people would have even realised
6 what was actually going on there in that house, like seriously you would think that they
7 were just good community people who were looking after children, you know, that needed
8 like a home to stay in, but really what they were doing was just taking advantage of it, and
9 just using us kids pretty much to abuse like so we could get like abuse from them.
- 10 Q. You say in your statement you suffered every single abusive action you could actually
11 imagine, whether it was emotional, sexual, spiritual, physical abuse; is that right?
- 12 A. Yeah.
- 13 Q. One thing that was a bit concerning when reading the statement is that Mrs and Mr M did
14 never provide you with a safe space to share or express your concerns, you were always
15 judged. Did you want to talk about that? It's okay. When they got there – just at any point
16 if you want to have a break, we'll have a break as well?
- 17 A. It's all right.
- 18 Q. When you first got there, they did an unusual thing where they tried to grill you about your
19 sex life?
- 20 A. Yeah, so they like pretty much like sat me down and asked me, you know, I'm like a kid,
21 asking me if I'd had like sex, I was like 13, asking me if I was like a virgin, but it didn't
22 actually matter what I said, they still didn't believe me.
- 23 Q. There was a child that was also staying there that said that Mr and Mrs M would try and do
24 this to try and see what they could get away with and how they could manipulate you?
- 25 A. Yeah, correct. They used to do that to like all of the girls that like arrived there.
- 26 Q. In your statement you describe it was quite in a controlling environment, so there were
27 times where you were made to work on the farm for free labour?
- 28 A. Yeah.
- 29 Q. You weren't allowed to go to school even though you wanted to?
- 30 A. No, wasn't allowed to go to school with the other kids.
- 31 Q. You were only allowed to eat at meal times, there's no snacking?
- 32 A. No, because if you like snack like in between so you like make a sandwich or something
33 that was like stealing.

- 1 **Q.** And you mentioned this in your statement, you'd get hungry and resort to stealing, but
2 you'd be told off for stealing like a biscuit or trying to make a honey sandwich?
- 3 **A.** Yeah, correct. All us kids lived there it happened to us, like, you know, that it was stealing.
- 4 **Q.** If a visitor came to the house you were told to be silent, you could only be seen not heard?
- 5 **A.** Correct.
- 6 **Q.** There's a strange one, they only allowed you to wear white underwear?
- 7 **A.** Yeah.
- 8 **Q.** And you and the adopted daughter were told you weren't allowed to wear underwear to
9 bed?
- 10 **A.** Correct.
- 11 **Q.** You also weren't allowed to call your mum?
- 12 **A.** Yeah.
- 13 **Q.** And you weren't allowed to have friends?
- 14 **A.** Yeah.
- 15 **Q.** So, it's a very controlling environment for a young girl to be in, eh?
- 16 **A.** Yeah.
- 17 **Q.** There were also some pretty horrific physical abuse. Can we talk about that, or did you
18 want to go over it?
- 19 **A.** No, we can talk about that.
- 20 **Q.** Okay, there's a time in your statement where you refer to Mr M losing his temper and he
21 would hit you with whatever he could get his hands on?
- 22 **A.** Yeah.
- 23 **Q.** What would he hit you with?
- 24 **A.** So alkathene pipe, brooms, his hand, walking – this like really, like the worst thing was this
25 like really like thin like walking stick that he would like hit you with that. One time he hit
26 me like with a fibreglass like deer fence standard like around the back of my legs.
- 27 **Q.** There was also one time when Mr M punched you so hard in the mouth that it broke your
28 front tooth?
- 29 **A.** Yeah, and I had like ongoing issues like with that for since forever, yeah.
- 30 **Q.** He also dragged you off a bike and put his foot on your face?
- 31 **A.** Yeah.
- 32 **Q.** He also held you by your hair and pinned you to a wall and tried to force feed you?
- 33 **A.** Yeah.
- 34 **Q.** What was – Mrs M was present at the time, wasn't she?

- 1 A. Yeah, she was.
- 2 Q. And what was her reaction to that?
- 3 A. She just thought it was funny.
- 4 Q. There were also times that you were psychologically abused as well, or saw other children
5 being psychologically abused too. In your statement you say that Mrs M called a girl a
6 dirty rotten tart because she was on the pill?
- 7 A. Yeah.
- 8 Q. Mrs M would also tell people that you were a prostitute?
- 9 A. Yeah, she did.
- 10 Q. But at the time you didn't even know what a prostitute was?
- 11 A. No, I didn't know what that was.
- 12 Q. Did you have to look it up to find out what that was?
- 13 A. Yeah.
- 14 Q. Mr M would also belittle you?
- 15 A. Yeah.
- 16 Q. There was one time we just alluded to before where he pulled you off the bike and said
17 something horrible to you while his foot was on your face. Can you tell us what he said?
18 That's okay, we'll go to the next one. They also made you watch other children being
19 abused, is that correct?
- 20 A. Yeah.
- 21 Q. There was an incident where the adopted daughter told Mr M to get fucked at the dinner
22 table. Can you recall that?
- 23 A. Yeah, I do.
- 24 Q. Everyone was eating around the table; everyone was present at the time?
- 25 A. Yeah.
- 26 Q. Do you want to tell us what Mr M did next, or did you want me to tell?
- 27 A. You can say.
- 28 Q. In your statement you describe how Mr M got the adopted daughter out in front of
29 everyone, pulled down her pants and showed everyone that she had her period and started
30 hitting her with a plastic spoon. Is that correct?
- 31 A. Yeah.
- 32 Q. How did that make you feel watching that?
- 33 A. Disgusting.

1 **Q.** There was another horrible time for you as well. In your statement you recall a time where
2 the neighbour's child had died in a car accident, does that seem right?

3 **A.** Yeah.

4 **Q.** Mr and Mrs M made you go over to the neighbour's house?

5 **A.** Yeah, I didn't even really know that girl.

6 **Q.** Did you want to say what Mr M did or do you want me to speak to it?

7 **A.** You can say please.

8 **Q.** Mr M forced you to go to the dead girl and hold her hand?

9 **A.** Yeah.

10 **Q.** And he tried to say to make sure that you don't do drink driving again?

11 **A.** Yeah.

12 **Q.** That scared you so much?

13 **A.** Yeah.

14 **Q.** It was quite traumatising?

15 **A.** Yeah, that was traumatising. Like trying to get that like image of that girl out of my head
16 like still even to this day, that like haunts me that they did that eh, like, you know, it's – I
17 didn't even really know her that well and it's just like doesn't make sense why someone
18 would do that.

19 **Q.** We're going to go into the sexual abuse.

20 **A.** Can we just take a break for a bit?

21 **Q.** Sure.

22 **CHAIR:** Yes of course. You let us know when you're ready to come back, we'll come back.

23 **Adjournment from 10.05 am to 10.38 am**

24 **CHAIR:** Mrs Fletcher.

25 **MS FLETCHER:** Thank you, we're just going to help Mrs EJ and continue the rest of her
26 statement.

27 **CHAIR:** Yes.

28 **MS FLETCHER:** There's a few more things she wanted you to know about Mr and Mrs M and
29 the house of horrors.

30 **CHAIR:** Where are you up on the –

31 **MS FLETCHER:** So, we're – if you've got the statement in front of you, that will be page 11
32 we're going into the sexual abuse.

33 Unfortunately, Mrs EJ suffered quite a lot of sexual abuse. She was sexually abused
34 by Mr M's biological son. The first time this happened Mr M's biological son followed her

1 into a room where she was watching TV by herself. He forced himself on to her while she
2 was watching TV. He was in his 20s at the time, she was 13. There was another time when
3 Mr M's biological son found her while she was working on the farm. He would approach
4 her and tell her to suck his dick. There was a hut outside that her –

5 **CHAIR:** Sorry, just slow down a little bit please.

6 **MS FLETCHER:** Sorry. There was a hut outside of the house of horrors that was often used for
7 the two girls where they would sometimes sleep. When it was Mrs EJ's turn to use the hut,
8 Mr M's biological son would time it so that at night time he would come in and grope her
9 when she was by herself.

10 Mr M's biological son also had his own hut to sleep in. It was Mrs EJ's job to
11 change the sheets for him when he was in this hut. When she would go and try and change
12 his sheets, Mr M's biological son would try and have sex with her.

13 The abuse happened so often that Mrs EJ started to pick up a tell or notice when he
14 was about to do it. Mr M would start to shake, and his demeanour would change before he
15 would abuse her. Mr M would also sexually abuse Mrs EJ and his adopted daughter.
16 Mr and Mrs M took the lock off their bathroom door in their house. Mr M would try and
17 look at Mrs EJ and the adopted daughter when they were getting changed or undressed.
18 Sometimes he would be able to go in and comment on her when she was naked. He would
19 say such things as 'look at you, your breasts are so nice.' She was only a child.

20 There was a time where the adopted daughter confided in Mrs EJ that Mr M had
21 gone into her room and touched himself and her. She tried to tell the adopted daughter to
22 tell him to fuck off. The adopted daughter got the courage to tell Mrs M about Mr M's
23 abuse. Mrs M's response was "you're dreaming, do you like having fantasies about this
24 when you sleep?"

25 It got worse. Whenever any of the girls tried to tell them about the abuse they
26 suffered, Mr M and Mrs M would say 'don't come back and try and say these things about
27 us because we are looking after you out of the kindness of our heart.' It got to a point
28 where Mrs EJ felt defeated, and she had no hope in being believed.

29 There was also another unfortunate time that Mrs EJ's already shared with the
30 Commission, where she was trying to help with some hay bales and unfortunately, she got
31 into a bit of an accident where she fell down with those hay bales. Rather than help Mrs EJ
32 and attend to her needs, Mr M went down to her, lifted up her top and said your tits look
33 fine.

1 Mr M would also try and take Mrs EJ's underwear. There was a small slot in the
2 house where they would put their dirty clothes and you could see through it to where the
3 dirty laundry was. One time Mrs EJ saw Mr M on the other side sniffing her underwear.
4 The worst time was when Mrs M left the house of horror and left Mr M and Ms EJ by
5 themselves. Mr M asked Mrs EJ if she would like to come to his bedroom. Mrs EJ said no.
6 Mr M then proceeded to drag Mrs EJ into the room. He then tied her up and used sex toys
7 on her. She was helpless.

8 The only time Mrs EJ wasn't abused was when she was on her period. The abuse got
9 so bad that Mrs EJ learned to disconnect from herself, from her mind, from her body to try
10 and deal with the abuse. The only other ways she tried to cope with it was to drink and to
11 smoke. If she didn't use these mechanisms, Mrs EJ has said that she wouldn't have been
12 with us today.

13 I want to make it clear that Mrs EJ bravely confronted Mr M about his abuse. She
14 asked him whether he would do this to his own biological daughter. Mr M's response was
15 'no, dads don't do this to their daughters.' Mrs EJ was still courageous. She still tried to
16 find – tried to tell a few people about the abuses. She tried to tell her neighbour, the social
17 worker, Bob Aitcheson, the social worker, Joan Harrison, her dad, the Police.

18 **CHAIR:** Would you like a break? Do you know I think this is so painful, I don't think we should
19 endure, have you endure it or anybody else. It's getting to me; it's getting to me now.

20 **MS FLETCHER:** I think it's important, though, Mrs EJ wants to be heard.

21 **CHAIR:** Yes, it's important to be heard, so the question is how can we do this without inflicting
22 anymore damage on anybody.

23 **MS FLETCHER:** We're nearly there.

24 **CHAIR:** Are you up to doing this? I'm sure your colleague would be prepared to take over if you
25 would like.

26 **MS FLETCHER:** I'll be all right.

27 **CHAIR:** You're going to do it?

28 **MS FLETCHER:** Yeah, I'll be all right. Sorry team.

29 **CHAIR:** Kia kaha, kia manawanui. You're fine. Take your time.

30 **MS FLETCHER:** So, we're just continuing on where Mrs EJ tried to tell someone about the
31 abuse. She continued to try and do this even when she went on to other placements. That
32 was at a secure unit in Dunedin. There was no outcome in any of these complaints. Again,
33 she was only a child.

1 There was a few other placements after that that Mrs EJ had to go to. She went to a
2 secure unit in Dunedin. That's where her social worker, Bob Aitcheson, took her after an
3 argument with Mrs M. She was still only quite young. The stay was quite brief, but it was
4 still very abusive. Mrs EJ was strip-searched, she was segregated into a cell, and she was
5 isolated, she was asked many questions about her time with Mrs and Mr M. She didn't
6 know what to do, she was lost.

7 She went to a family home run by Mr and Mrs F. It wasn't that bad. But there was
8 still some shocking details out of that one too. As Mrs EJ alluded to earlier, she was on
9 medication for ADHD. Mrs F took her medication from her and gave it to another boy.
10 She didn't ask anything about this. Mrs EJ wasn't consulted about this, Mrs EJ's
11 paediatrician didn't know about this. Again, she was only young. Briefly she had a bit of
12 respite from the ill-treatment.

13 She went to her seventh placement, that was with Mr and Mrs K. They were
14 actually nice people. They took Mrs EJ for a haircut and tried to give her sometime before
15 she was shipped up to Auckland by herself. The eighth placement for Mrs EJ was
16 Youthlink, Felix Donnelly College. She was about 14 and 15 at the time.

17 Mrs EJ describes this as being a horrific time. She was placed with children who
18 had done a range of crimes that she had never done in her life. These people were doing
19 assaults, aggravated robberies, pretty serious stuff and Mrs EJ had not come across that in
20 her time. Mrs EJ wasn't given any opportunity to talk to anyone about what she was seeing
21 and what she was hearing. She didn't get to ask any questions. At this point I don't think
22 she even saw any of her family and sisters in what we're seeing in the statement.

23 When she was at Youthlink Felix Donnelly College, she was what they called
24 blanket bashed where all the children would gang up on her. She started to self-harm to try
25 and cope and deal with the process. It all got a bit overwhelming, and Mrs EJ started to
26 withdraw. When she was withdrawing, she started to learn how to be street-wise and how
27 to be a runaway, she was taught how to be independent and deal with it because there were
28 no other adults around.

29 One of the key impacts of what Mrs EJ went through is that she now suffers in
30 silence. It wasn't until recently she learned how to have a voice and be heard. She is now
31 an adult.

32 The abuse that she suffered taught her to be silent and to stay out of the way. If you
33 did things, things won't be so bad, it was like a defence mechanism. It also impacted her
34 ability to be a parent and CYFS were also unfortunately involved with her oldest child.

1 That comes to an end with her public information. There is some more information
2 but that should be held in a private setting.

3 **CHAIR:** Yes, thank you for seeing to us the end of that. Do we need a break before we go into
4 the private session? We do, all right, a recovery break.

5 Just a message to Ms EJ who's watching, thank you for what we've heard so far, and
6 we understand completely that it's very difficult for you to be out here and thank you to
7 Ms Fletcher for taking up the reins. So, we'll take a short break now and the hearing room
8 will be closed, and we will resume again in public about two o'clock. Thank you.

9 **Adjournment from 10.51 am to 2 pm**

10 **[Private session]**