ABUSE IN CARE ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY
MĀORI 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:	Ms Julia Steenson Dr Anaru Erueti Mr Paul Gibson Judge Coral Shaw Ali'imuamua Sandra Alofivae
Counsel:	Ms Julia Spelman, Mr Kingi Snelgar, Mr Wiremu Rikihana, Mr Luke Claasen, Ms Maia Wikaira, Ms Alisha Castle, Ms Tracey Norton, Ms Season-Mary Downs, Ms Alana Thomas, Mr Winston McCarthy, Mr Simon Mount QC, Ms Kerryn Beaton QC for the Royal Commission Ms Melanie Baker, Ms Julia White and Mr Max Clarke-Parker for the Crown Mr James Meagher for the Catholic Church Ms Fiona Guy Kidd for the Anglican Church Ms Sonya Cooper, Ms Amanda Hill as other counsel attending
Venue:	Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei Tumutumuwhenua Marae 59b Kitemoana Road Ōrākei AUCKLAND
Date:	9 March 2022

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

COMMISSIONER STEENSON: Tēnā koutou katoa, welcome back from lunch, I hope you enjoyed your kai. We have our Counsel Assisting the Royal Commission, Ms Norton, joining us this afternoon with Ms AE by AVL from central Tāmaki. Tēnā koe (greetings to you). Tēnā kōrua (greetings to you both). Can you hear us? Can I check that we have connection and that the anonymity is on before we do that? Just checking with our tech team. Can I just get a check from our tech team that we have the anonymity -- okay, I think what we'll do is we'll pause again, pause the livestream and return shortly while we fix this issue. Can we please pause the livestream? Can I get a signal-?

Adjournment from 2.23 pm to 2.29 pm

COMMISSIONER STEENSON: Kia ora anō tātou, aroha atu, (greetings again, apologies) we had a small issue, technical issue at the other end which they have now sorted out. So, we'll start again.

Ms Norton, can you hear us?

MS NORTON: I can Madam Chair, tēnā koe.

COMMISSIONER STEENSON: Tēnā koe. Tēnā koe Ms AE (greetings Ms AE).

A. Tēnā koe.

Q. Thank you for joining us via online. Nau mai ki tēnei nohoanga (welcome to this hearing). But before we start, I just want to let you know so you know who is here with us in the wharenui: myself, Commissioner Gibson, we have haukāinga (local iwi) our tech team, the Māori investigation team, our sign language interpreters, and remotely but not in the wharenui are our Māori interpreters, Te Reo Māori interpreters. Also joining us online, just so you're aware, are the other Commissioners, the panel who are presenting on the last day, members of our Sage group, our Taumata, the core participant, the Crown, and of course other members of the public who are watching our livestream today.

Just before we do, I just want to also stop before we move on to check with our tech people that the anonymous is working. I see that we have it up on our screen. They've given me the thumbs up, so just making sure that that is on before we move on.

Ms Norton, would you like to introduce yourself and then allow Ms AE to introduce herself please?

MS NORTON: Tēnā koutou Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei te mutunga kē mai o te manaakitanga (inaudible). Tēnā koutou ki ngā Kaikōmihana, tēnā koutou ki ngā kaimahi katoa i te marae, tēnā tātou katoa. Nau mai, whakatau mai ki tēnei wāhi. E mihi ana ki a koe Ms AE, kua whai wāhi mātou te whakarongo ki āu kōrero i te rangi nei, ki tāu karanga, kia whai hua te whakapapa me te tuakiri ki roto ki ngā mahi atawhai tamariki.

[English: Acknowledgements to Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei and your wonderful hospitality. Greetings to the Commissioners, to the staff at the marae, greetings to everyone. Welcome to this place. I want to acknowledge you, Ms AE, as we have an opportunity to listen to your evidence today, to your call, so that whakapapa and identity may be an asset in the area of caring for children.]

We are livestreaming today from a destination in Tāmaki Makaurau. Madam Chair, if I could get you to affirm Ms AE's evidence.

COMMISSIONER STEENSON: Ka pai. Ms AE, would you like the affirmation in Te Reo or in English?

A. English please.

Q. Ka pai.

MS AE (Affirmed)

QUESTIONING BY MS NORTON: For the benefit of those listening today, Ms AE's evidence is being given anonymously, and most of it has been pre-recorded because of the uncertainty associated with Covid, and we will listen to her pre-recording shortly. However, for now I would like to hand the rākau over to Ms AE to introduce herself and make some opening comments.

A. Kia ora. I am Ms AE. I was born in 1961 at Fairleigh Home, a maternity hospital run by the Motherhood of Man for unwed mothers to give birth to their children in Tāmaki. I'm of Māori and Samoan descent and for much of my life, I have lived in Auckland raising my tamariki and our mokopuna who all live with me. I was adopted from the age of 3 months old, was voluntarily placed in State care by my adoptive parents at the age of 13 and have also been placed in foster homes in between stints of living in State care institutions.

I wish to share my adoption experience with the Commission as to the abuse in this care that I experienced as a child while entrusted by the State to my adoptive parents and how oblivious the State was to my well-being once the adoption order was made. My evidence is about the abuse I suffered under the adoption and the traumas and hurdles that I have faced as an unwanted child under the various facets of care that the State committed me to.

I've also had to and still do suffer from the trauma of having a fractured identity or rather, an identity that is shaped by adoption and foster care. I don't know what my true whakapapa or cultural identity is - --

COMMISSIONER STEENSON: Aroha atu, Ms AE, would you just mind slowing down just a tiny bit for our interpreters, that would be appreciated.

A. Sorry, I talk fast when I'm nervous.

Q. That's okay, totally understandable. Haere tonu (please continue).

A. The various facets of care that the State committed me to. I've also had to and still do suffer from the trauma of having a fractured identity, or rather an identity that is shaped by adoption and foster care. I don't know what my true whakapapa or cultural identity is and have suffered pain and heartache in searching for links and connections. It has been a lifelong search for self. Kia ora.

QUESTIONING BY MS NORTON CONTINUED: Tēnā koe Ms AE. The prerecording starts with an overview of the evidence that will be provided. Once the prerecording is finished, we will be back and Ms AE will kōrero more about closed adoptions, what redress could look like, and her recommendations for change. If we could play the prerecording now, please.

(Video played).

Q. "Now your kōrero today will be divided into four parts. We are going to talk about the adoption that you alluded to. Then we will move to your time in care. From there, we will talk about your search for your cultural identity and then we will finish off today with your kōrero about the State's responsibility in terms of making things right.

So, let's start with the adoption. You talk about that at paragraphs 9 to 43 of your statement. Can you tell us about the adoption?

A. So, I was adopted from birth pretty much, or as a baby, by a South African man and his English wife who had recently immigrated to New Zealand. They had two sons of their own, biological sons. They adopted me, then they had a daughter of their own who's about 8 months younger than me, and then they adopted two other Māori children. And we were treated differently to their children. Being the oldest of the adopted trio, I guess, I bore the brunt of much of the demands for working on their farm. They had a sort of lifestyle block in Waitākere.

We weren't children, we were labelled and distinctly different as adopted, and we were distinctly different being Māori as well because their children were Pākehā and we were Māori. So, I don't ever remember feeling loved or cared for. So basically, we -- well, I was adopted to work on their farm. I don't believe I was ever considered a child in the sense that a parent has a child. I can remember trying so very hard to please and meet approval, but that never worked. -

I was always in trouble for something, whether it was something I did or not. I'd get blamed for, I don't know, things like leaving the gate open or not putting equipment

away properly. And often it wasn't me, but I would get blamed so, you know, it didn't matter, because - my name was GRO-A then, GRO-A would get the blame. And the constant hidings, the constant smacks and verbal abuse about how useless I was, how, you know, I sulked too much, or if I said anything it was a lie, I was a liar, and things that I couldn't control, like I grew too fast. You know, my older brothers were smaller than me, you know, I was Polynesian, I had -- because I'm- Māori and Samoan, I -"-

COMMISSIONER STEENSON: Sorry, can we please pause the recording on livestream, there's some technical issues.

A. "My feet were bigger, you know, there was all these things that I constantly got told off for, yet they weren't things that I deliberately did or made choices in necessarily."

Adjournment from 2.40 pm to 2.48 pm

COMMISSIONER STEENSON: Kia ora anō tātou (welcome back). Ms AE, just so that everyone is aware, we just had to pause the livestream because at the other end, where Ms AE is, she couldn't hear the recording of her statement and so we wanted to sort that out pretty quickly, which my tech people have assured us that they have. Just so you understand, it is a little bit complicated because we want to make sure that our witness is kept anonymous, and so we're being extra careful.

Ms AE, can you hear me?

A. Āe, I can hear you.

Q. Wonderful, okay. So now we're going to restart your evidence recording and you should be able to hear and see, but it should not go out on the livestream otherwise, just so that you're assured of that. Ka pai?

A. Thank you. Āe ka pai.

Q. Okay. Let's go. Thank you.

QUESTIONING BY MS NORTON CONTINUED: "Now, your kōrero today will be divided into four parts, we are going to talk about the adoption that you alluded to, then we will move to your time in care. From there, we will talk about your search for your cultural identity and then we will finish off today with your kōrero about the State's responsibility in terms of making things right.

So, let's start with the adoption. You talk about that at paragraphs 9 to 43 of your statement. Can you tell us about the adoption?

A. So, I was adopted from birth, pretty much, or as a baby, by a South African man and his English wife who had recently immigrated to New Zealand. They had two sons of their own, biological sons. They adopted me, then they had a daughter of their own, who's about

eight months younger than me, and then they adopted two other Māori children, and we were treated differently to their children. Being the oldest of the adopted trio, I guess, I bore the brunt of much of the demands for working on their farm. They had a sort of lifestyle block in Waitākere. We weren't children, we were labelled, and distinctly different, as adopted and we were distinctly different being Māori as well because their children were Pākehā and we were Māori. So, I don't ever remember feeling loved or cared for.

So basically, we -- well, I was adopted to work on their farm. I don't believe I was ever considered a child in the sense that a parent has a child. I can remember trying so very hard to please and meet approval, but that never worked. I was always in trouble for something, whether it was something I did or not. -I'd get blamed for, I don't know, things like leaving the gate open or not putting equipment away properly, and often it wasn't me, but I would get blamed so, you know, it didn't matter, because -- my name was GRO-A then, -GRO-A --would get the blame, and the constant hidings, the constant smacks and verbal abuse about how useless I was, how, you know, I sulked too much, or if I said anything it was a lie, I was a liar, and things that I couldn't control, like I grew too fast, you know, their -- my older brothers were smaller than me, you know, I was Polynesian, I -had -- because- I'm Māori and Samoan by birth, you know, I was taller, stronger, my feet were bigger, you know, there was all these things that I constantly got told off for, yet they weren't things that I deliberately did or made choices in necessarily.

And yeah, I was never good enough. I always felt that I was unworthy, and I was told that I should be grateful for having been adopted, but really it wasn't the life of a child. I didn't really have a childhood I don't think, when I look at how I've raised my children and now my mokopuna. I've made sure that none of those experiences have been replicated. I mean, you don't have a child to make them work and hit them and say nasty things. You're supposed to love them, right?

Q. So, you talk about growing up with your adopted family feeling unwanted and unloved, what impact did that have on you?

A. Well, I suppose I never -- I don't know, how do you know what to feel like as a child when you're not treated as a child? I guess I yearned for love in a way that just, I didn't know about necessarily, but I saw it with their children, how they treated their children, they didn't treat them like that. And you know, things like hugs and kisses, it's like that never existed. So yeah, I felt unwanted, unhappy. I never understood why they adopted me. They didn't want me, why did they adopt me-?

Q. You talk at paragraph 19 about being a good student and receiving excellent school reports. What was it like being a student in that home?

A. Well, that was my escape, I guess. I loved school, the teachers were often kind to me, I have some really good memories of teachers that took the time to actually tell me I was doing okay. I could read before I went to school. I had -- I loved school. I hated weekends and school holidays because it meant I'd be at home. And it was my escape. I worked really hard to try and meet their approval by excelling at school, I thought that was a way to meet their approval. I remember starting high school and I was told I couldn't go into the academic stream, I had to go into the commercial stream because if I was lucky, I might get a job as a secretary. That has other connotations, I guess. But I was streamed into the second group of, I think there- were 20-something streams. I remember going to the Dean and asking after the second term, or first term, and asking if I could move up to the first stream simply because I thought that might meet their approval. And they did, they let me move because the first and second stream were largely taught together anyway. But it didn't- make any difference.

And I remember when my older brother came home in his first year at college and he got a - -so you'd get an academic grade, an alpha grade- and a numeric grade and then -- one was for content, one was for attendance and other things - and then if you were super good you would get a credit on top of that. So, an A1 credit was the top grade you could get for a subject. And he got an A1 credit for, I think it was technical drawing, because he did become a surveyor. -But the fuss they made over this first report and him getting this A1 credit was -- they went on and on and on about it. -So, I was in high school the following -- I was two years behind him, but I remember that. And so, with my first report I remember trying really hard to get the top grades possible, because I thought well, if they made that much fuss over one grade, surely they might approve something. In my first college report, I had A1 credits in everything but one subject, I think it was an A1 but I didn't get a credit, I can't- remember which subject,- probably maths because that wasn't my strong subject. -And it was just -- I remember racing home on my bike to show them my report and no - it just wasn't important. "Oh, okay", and chuck it on the desk because it wasn't- -- those were the, you know, it just didn't matter what I did-.

Q. I want to take you to paragraph 20 of your statement. You talk about biking to school one day and falling off your bike. Can you speak to us about that?

A. I was in primary school, and we lived in - GRO-B--2 -and- it was quite a ride from, or quite a hilly ride I guess to GRO-B-3 --and I'd- forgotten my -- I'd forgotten something,

and I went back to the house to get it, so I was kind of late getting to school on time. -So, I took a shortcut down - -I don't know if you know the area, but in those days, it was a metal road and it was very steep, and I lost control of my bike and fell off, broke my collar bone and grazed all up and down one of my legs. But I was too frightened to go back home because I knew I'd- get into trouble for going down GRO-B-4 --because you're- not allowed to bike down there because -- for obvious reasons. So, I carried on to school-.

And, of course, they took one look at me and saw my leg was bleeding and put me in the sick bay and rang my adoptive mother, who then took me to hospital but she was really annoyed that I had interrupted her day, because, while she didn't work, she had this craft thing that she used to do and she had guild meetings and other things that were very important, and I'd interrupted that day. Never mind that I was hurt, and I had a broken collar bone and couldn't obviously ride my bike particularly well. So, she came down to the school, picked me up and took me to the hospital, and yeah, they fixed me up but she was annoyed, really, really annoyed, and peeved that I'd disrupted her day.

Q. And that speaks to you feeling unwanted and unloved?

A. Yeah, I was --- I'd annoyed her by interrupting her day, having to go and care for one of your children, you know...

Q. I want to take you to a section of your statement, it's headed "abuse from adoptive parents" and it starts at paragraph 21 and carries on through to paragraph 32. Can you talk to us about that abuse as much as you feel comfortable to do so?

A. So -- and bearing in mind my adoptive father was, I don't know, 6' 2", he was a big, tall, strong man. He would come into the room at night, and this was a room that I shared with my two sisters, but at one point he built an internal divider so there was a bunk bed where my two younger sisters slept and the bed on its own. -I was -- I never really understood if I was so unwanted, why did I have a bed of my own? I didn't have to share the bunk bed, but I don't know, maybe I'm over thinking it. But he built a divider in this small room so that the bunk bed was separate from the other bed, with the reasoning that it provided a dresser on either side for us. -But he -- it gave him access, I guess, that wasn't visible-.

And I can remember those visits, I was about 8 or 9, or I was in primary school and the touching, even the smacks, the hiding, you know, the way he -- there were other actions that weren't appropriate, I guess. -He would -- I'd be working on the farm and often - because it was, I don't know, it was about 150 acres I guess, no, 15 acres I think, I'm thinking of the other farm. Often, I'd be at the end, you know, the back end of the farm

where you're way away from the house, and he would appear and find a reason to be doing other work, you know. I would have been tasked with something like grubbing the gorse- in the second--to-back paddock and it was quite hilly. So, I'd be there with a grubber, grubbing the gorse and he'd- come down on the tractor and there would be some excuse as to why he was down there, and he would expose himself, he would do all sorts of things that were -- it was abuse in a way that while I guess, you know, he would say, well, he -didn't -- I don't know how you can lessen any form of abuse really-.

Q. At paragraph 29 you talk about being brave enough to speak up about what was happening to you. Can you tell us about that?

A. Yeah, I was getting a hiding from him, and I called him a dirty, old man. I don't know why I used that term, but it just made things worse. I tried to explain to my adoptive mother why I'd said that, because, you know, she was adamant that I was just -- it was just another lie, I was just lying again, and why would I say that? And I tried to tell her, but she wouldn't listen to me, she wouldn't have a bar of it. So, I didn't try again, it wasn't worthwhile. -

Q. And at paragraph 32 you talk about "The sexual abuse has had a significant impact on me growing up." Can you tell us about that?

A. Yeah, there were times when I was petrified by what he was doing, because I didn't understand what he was doing, and I can remember one incident where I wet myself because I was petrified of him and what he was doing and getting into trouble for wetting myself of course. But I suppose it was that fear. I can remember as a young - you know, being in college later when I wasn't in their care and teachers, you know, especially older Pākehā males that were tall as well, I would sort of freeze and that fear of what he was going to do, I don't know, somehow it morphed into this sort of, I don't know what you call it, phobia. I couldn't have a conversation in a room alone with an older white male easily, often. And that got difficult sometimes with teachers

Or, you know, I remember one of the family homes I was at and the woman that ran the family home, she did a lot of volunteer work for the Labour Party, and the candidate came to the house to talk to her about something that she'd been doing, and I'd been helping her with things like flyers and typing up address lists for distribution. In those days, there wasn't the internet. And I remember just totally freaking out and not being able to talk, and she was getting annoyed with me because I couldn't tell him what I'd done in terms of the mail out, it was a simple thing, but he would -- this tall, dominating sort of figure just freaked me out and it was, I think, because of those incidents with my adoptive father where the fear just

consumed me-.

I don't have that problem so much now, but I've had to deal with that as an adult, as a young woman. And also job interviews, yeah.

Q. During your time in with your adopted family, did you ever get visited by social workers?

A. No.

Q. There was an occasion where you were visited by a Sister Bridget from the Salvation Army. Do you want to tell us about that visit, that's at paragraph 34 of your statement?

A. Yeah. I don't know why, I think -- I don't know, we weren't from the Salvation Army, I don't know where that even came from, but she used to come and talk to me and I think I- was supposed,- she was supposed to be some sort of counsellor, but, I don't know, anything I told her seemed to go back to my adoptive parents. So, I think I just ended up telling her what I thought she wanted to know, rather -than -- I wasn't- brave enough to tell her the truth.

Q. Has that impacted on you today?

A. Well, yeah, I suppose no one's- ever believed me, so until this came about I've never really - -this is the first time I've actually said it out loud- in terms of --- I mean, everything else has been -- it's been unusual, I guess, writing about it, but I've started to have counselling through the Commission, which is the first time ever, so I'm like in my 60s now, but I guess it's never too late to find some sort of release in other ways, yeah-.

Q. I just want you to know, for the record, that we believe you in the Commission.

A. Thank you.

Q. I'm going to move to paragraph 35 of your statement and it's headed "the abduction and attack", but before we move on to that, is there anything else that you want to say about life with your adoptive parents?

A. Just that it wasn't a childhood and why the State was able to, or thought it was fitting to give a Māori child to, you know, this supposedly respectful, respectful pillar of the community, family. They did it once, but they did it three times, and that should never have been allowed. They weren't a family, they weren't caring, they weren't parents.

Q. I'm going to turn now to paragraph 35 of your statement, and this is very much the catalyst of you leaving the home of your adoptive parents. Can you talk to us about that incident now, please?

A. While it was the escape, I guess, it was a pretty hard price to pay. So, I was riding home on my bike from school to GRO-B-5 --in my uniform and, yeah, I was abducted, beaten,

raped. And I don't have a lot of memory of, you know, the period there, it's kind of hazy- in terms of that --- I remember being in the hospital but not a lot more.

Q. You were 13 years old?

A. Mmm. And I don't know whether they told me that or whether it was thought at the time, but I actually thought I couldn't have children when I got married many years later, I don't know, someone must have told me that, because of the injuries I couldn't have children, but of course that's not true, I've had children, but there was, yeah, damage that possibly could have affected that. And I had a broken jaw. So, it was wired shut -- in those days, I don't know if they still do that, but they used to wire your jaw shut, your mouth shut, so that you couldn't move your jaw while it healed. So, you had to eat through a straw most of the time, because you couldn't chew, and it was difficult to talk because you couldn't move. -So -- and I suppose that was evident when the court case appeared, because I couldn't- speak.

Q. I just want to take you back to that time in hospital. Did your adoptive parents visit you while you were in hospital?

A. I don't believe so.

Q. Do you remember how long you were in hospital?

A. Not really.

Q. From hospital you talk about going straight to Allendale Girls' Home. Can you talk to us about that?

A. Yeah, it was actually nicer being there than at home, even though, you know, they locked you up for a while. But the staff were kind, and I can remember being cared for by the staff because I was still quite injured, and not understanding what they were doing, because no one had ever bothered before.

Q. Did you wonder why you didn't go home?

A. I don't know. Well, it was obvious once I went to court what was going to happen, but I don't know about prior to that. I just remember time in the secure unit, that was hard. But meeting other girls later and as I said, the staff, their care was nice, it was nice to be looked after or, you know, wounds and things actually -- yeah-, looking after, being looked after.

Q. You make reference to a particular dress at paragraph 37. Do you want to tell me about that?

A. Yeah, so they told me one day that I had to get dressed and I was going to court. I didn't know what court was, to be honest, really. And there were these long dresses that you only wore when you went to court, at the girls' home. And I remember thinking I'd never had a

long dress, a pretty dress like that. Because at home, I don't know if you remember what gym slips were like, I used to -- that's what I had to wear for school was a gym slip. -No one else had a uniform but I did for some reason. And yeah, it was the first sort of floral, pretty dress that I'd ever worn. I'd- never -- and it kind of felt, I don't know, it felt good to wear a pretty dress. But then they took me to court, and yeah-.

Q. What happened when you went to court?

A. Well, it was scary to say the least and I was alone, like there was no one- --- there wasn't a social worker or anyone from the girls' home with me, I was by myself, only the driver, sort of, I don't know, took me there and then I must have found my --- there must have been someone who must have helped me. I don't remember. But I remember standing in the sort of dock--like thing, I guess it's called a dock, but --by myself and then my adoptive father was standing sort of parallel or alongside, so he wasn't --- we were both facing the judge and there were lots of other people there, I guess, court people, and he never talked to me once or even looked at me, but he told the judge how I was a delinquent and I was uncontrollable and they couldn't care for me any longer and that they were committing me to, voluntarily committing me to State care.

Q. Did you understand what that meant?

A. Not at the time. Oh, and they were so ashamed of my behaviour. So, I'd done this to myself, I guess. But I remember --- I was,- I suppose I was hurt that they were rejecting me again, you know, someone else was rejecting me. My mother, my birth mother didn't want me, now they didn't want me, so I can remember feeling discarded like a piece of rubbish. But in the car going back to the girls' home, I realised- that I wasn't going back to the house, I was going back to the girls' home, and I remember feeling so relieved. But...

Q. GRO-A, can I just get you to read out paragraph 40 of your statement, please?

A. "It was difficult to hear that they did not give a damn about what had happened to me, in fact, they seemed to blame it all on me. They wanted to throw me out like I was a piece of rubbish. They did not have a single ounce of pity or empathy for me. I desperately wanted to speak up and defend myself, but my jaw was wired shut and I couldn’t utter a single word."

Q. And then you talk about the judge making what was then called a Section 11 custody order. Did anyone explain to you what that was?

A. No. But in researching about the various Acts, I realised much later that that's what had happened. I just thought I was a State ward like everyone else that was at the home, you know, they didn't refer to Section 11s or voluntary anything, we were all State wards.

Q. And further on in your statement, you talk about your last thought of your adoptive parents. Can you share that with us?

A. Yeah well, like I said, I was, I guess, hurt and angry that they were rejecting me, they didn't want me, well, I knew they didn't want me, but I was --- because that was the only family I'd ever known and here they were saying oh, you know, and to blame me for something that I didn't do, that I couldn't --- it was out of my control, I didn't beat myself up, but they were blaming me for this happening and they were so ashamed, it was like, well, okay then, see you later. Fine, if you don't want me. I was a kid, you know, I was angry at them, but there wasn't anything I could do about it.

Q. And you've talked about it a little earlier, but you talk about the ride back to Allendale Girls' Home. Can you share with us again how you were feeling?

A. Well, I suppose I was angry when I got in the car because I didn't really understand what was happening and, you know, they had just told me -- pretty much told the court lies and they had believed him again, and I couldn't defend myself. And feeling quite hurt and angry, but then when I realised the driver sort of said where he was taking me, I suppose he could see I was upset, and actually feeling a little bit relieved that I wasn't going back there-.

Q. Going on in your statement, you talk about the next two years, and you describe going between Allendale Girls' Home and Bollard Girls' Home. Can you talk to us about that?

A. Yeah, well, in fairness, you know, I was quite happy at Allendale, but, you know, we were kids, we -- I just followed others or, you know, they decided to abscond, so I tagged along. Because I didn't know, I didn't know. Yeah. -I just kept running away because -- I don't know why. In hindsight, I should have just stayed put, because things weren't- so bad really.

Q. Specifically at paragraph 45, if I can get you to have a look at that now, you talk about what it was like when you arrived back at Allendale?

A. So, I think that's referring to when I first came there from the hospital, and you're in the secure unit and they give you a full medical examination and an internal, which -- I didn't know what they were doing and they sort of explained what was going to happen, but I didn't really understand why. -But that was something they did to all,- everyone that came in, you'd have a medical and an internal. It was a venereal disease check I think, more so than anything. -And then you had to have this kerosene--type stuff in your hair for headlice, whether you had it or not, you just, everyone got those checks done.

Q. Was there anything else?

A. So, every time you absconded and you came back, you'd go to the secure unit and the same thing would happen each time.

Q. Tell us about the secure unit.

A. Yeah well, it was a cellblock,- a cell, it had big, metal doors and concrete walls and a bed. I -think,- I don't- think there was a -- I don't think there was a toilet, I think we had to go outside to go to the toilet, outside the cell that is. And you just sort of pass- the time by -- they gave you some books sometimes because, you know, I read a lot if I could read anything, so there wasn't a lot to do. It was kind of boring-.

Q. Were you allowed out of the secure block, or did you spend your entire time there?

A. Pretty much. I don't remember ever having like exercise or anything, or we didn't have to do any duties while you're in secure and you couldn't go to school, so you'd sort of -- you'd talk to each other through the walls or when the girls came past to go to and from school, they'd call out and -you'd -- that was the only sort of contact- you had, other than the staff who came by.

Q. And at paragraph 47 of your statement, you talk about your time in Allendale and you give us some detail about that. Can you just talk through that with us? What was Allendale like?

A. Well, unlike Bollard it was an old house that had been converted into a girls' home, so it had, you know, a villa-type setting and it had a garden, and yeah, it wasn't that bad, in fairness. We had like- shared rooms that -- the biggest room had like ten girls, and then there were other rooms of twos and threes, or fours in some cases, and they were all down a long corridor. And we seemed to largely get- along, and there were fights, but --- there was a trampoline which --- I'd never had a trampoline, and there was -- they'd have a movie night on Friday night and those big old reels of film, and yeah, you went to school if you could go to school. I don't- know what else to say.--

Q. How many other girls were there at that time?

A. I suppose it varied. I've said up to 30, that would be about right. And most of us were Māori. There weren't -- I don't remember there being any other Pasifika girls. -And most of the staff were Pākehā, but there were a few Māori women, and there was a Samoan woman who tried to sort of foster me, but she wasn't allowed, that was much later, but yeah. But Bollard, in contrast, was built to be a state facility and it was very prison-like looking, you know. -But I remember this kuia used to come and talk to us about our culture and some of the girls were -- they had no patience for her, but I can remember just hanging off everything she told us and learning waiata that, you know, I'd never had any sort of

contact like that before. But yeah-.

Q. I want to pick up on your comment about schooling, because you make reference to that, you reference a principal at the school you were at. Do you want to share that experience with us now?

A. Yeah. So, his name was Mr Woods and he came to Allendale at one point, like he wasn't there in the earlier days, but somehow, I can't remember when, he became the principal. He was quite different in his approach to how the home was run. He was more, not friendly but more informal, I suppose, in his interaction with the girls, and he was particularly, I don't know, he cared, you know, he wasn't just a process sort of person that would say this is what's going to happen, he would actually consider things a little differently. And I'd run away, came back, absconded, and I came back to Bollard, they always used to send me back to Bollard, I don't know why. And I was in the dining room and he came through, he'd come as a visit and saw me there and stopped to chat with me, and, you know, asked, "What are you doing", you know, "What did you run away again for?" And sort of, I remember saying to him, "Can I come back to Allendale?" And he somehow managed to let me transfer back to Allendale. That was the last time I was there.

And in that time, he could see that I was -- because by then I was 5th form, I had, you know, the schooling that they had at the home was very limited and most of the girls were younger than me by that stage, and so he got me -to -- he let me, or somehow managed to allow me to go to Avondale College as a day student. I mean, it was a girls' home, you were supposed to be locked up, but here he was letting me go to school. And yeah, that was, I suppose, pivotal. And he believed enough to let me go to a school and try and sit School Cert, even though I didn't do that well. I was sort of midway through the year and I missed most of my 4th form year and 3rd form year. But yeah. And then he also got me a holiday job at Woolworths at St Lukes. -Again, I was supposed to be locked up, but...

Q. In those two years, did your adoptive parents remain in contact with you?

A. No, and from what I've been told by my siblings, he refused to go and see me, and he wouldn't -- supposedly she wanted to, but he said to them that, you know, she wasn't allowed to go and see me. -The only visits I ever got were from social workers --- a social worker.

Q. Did you contact them?

A. Yeah, because on --- there would be a weekly exercise of letter writing, so after dinner that would be one of the activities you'd --- everyone would -- I think it was Thursday night,

actually, you'd sit down and you'd write home to your family, because in those days that was the sort of main- communication was a letter and I can remember -- I did write but they never wrote back and I can remember calling, phoning and it was just awkward, they didn't want to talk to me. They didn't ask how I was, they didn't- seem interested in anything.

Q. Why did you feel the need to stay in contact with them?

A. Well, everyone else had a family, I didn't have anybody, only them, so I don't know, I can remember thinking, sitting there in the letter writing and everyone else was writing and I remember a couple of times I even wrote to myself just because I didn't have anything to say to them.

Q. At paragraph 56 you talk about a social worker visit. Can you tell us about that, please?

A. Yeah, he was -- the social workers used to be in sort of regions and he was the western, because I'd lived in Waiatarua, he was the western, sort of, one of the western social workers, and he used to come and see me at the home and then later, when I was fostered, he visited me as well. But I don't ever remember feeling particularly comfortable with him. He would come and talk and I'd listen, and not say anything really. -Because -- he reminded me of Abraham Lincoln because he had this long beard and he was tall. He didn't- have the same sort of stature that -- I suppose I wasn't afraid of him in the same way that other men, but I never felt particularly comfortable with him. -I mean, social workers are supposed to check in on your wellbeing and other things, aren't they? But I don't know how that was ever possible. -And plus, he told me that- I knew his daughter, we went to school together, and when he told me that, he -was GRO-B-6 --father, it kind of felt really, I don't- know, invasive.

Q. So, did you feel supported by the social workers that did see you over those two years?

A. No, not really. I mean, in working in later life I have come to understand the role of a social worker and when their heart is in what they're doing, it's quite different to how -- I always felt like a client, I didn't- feel like a -- I felt like a number, I didn't- feel like a person.

Q. From Allendale Girls' Home, you were placed with a foster family. At that stage you were aged 15 years of age. Can you tell us about that experience?

A. They've been my family, my whānau since then, forever. While I'm not legally adopted, or I don't have any blood connection to them, they're my, and I refer to them as my whānau manawa, because they're the only whānau I've ever had. They've been parents to me, they've been grandparents to my children, and I miss them dearly. They gave me the only

family environment that I have ever known, other than well the family I've built, I suppose, and having my own children. But they didn't just love me, they taught me how to be loved, because I was this angry, lonely child. I didn't know what a real family was like, and they did that, they didn't have to, they didn't have to. They loved me and that was a new experience.

Q. What ethnicity were they?

A. Māori.

Q. And who was in the home?

A. So, Mum and Dad. I have -- my younger sister was 8 when I came to live with them. See they'd lost their oldest child, our brother, to leukaemia -and he was a year older than my sister and they thought they had room to adopt, well they called it to whāngai, and they came to the girls' home looking for possibly another sister to their girl who was 8. And they ended up talking to me. I don't -- I can't remember quite how it happened, because, you know, people would come into the home and it was a bit like, you know, you had to be on your best behaviour- because you might get adopted or you might get fostered and it was always --- they always went for the younger children and I can remember being -- it was in the schoolhouse because there was lots of room in there and I'd been typing songs, I don't know why, and Mum came and talked to me, and she asked me what I was doing and I told her, and it just sort of happened. So, they'd gone there looking for someone more the age of my -sister GRO-B-7 --and ended up with a teenager. It was just the way it happened, I guess-.

Q. And you talk about being with them for approximately a year. Why did that end?

A. So I was going to school, Dad was GRO-B-8 --before it was a shopping mall, and being in the Army they don't pay you a lot even though they give you Army housing, they don't- pay you a lot, and he always had second, you know, part--time jobs and he used to work at the pub in GRO-B-9 ---and I used to go with him to -- and I used to just clear glasses and do the dishes. -But in those days, you had to be 20 to be in the pub and the fact that -- I don't think I ever really went into the pub area, it was mostly washing the glasses and out the back. -But somehow social -- I don't know how they were told or how they found out, but they deemed that as being inappropriate care of a child, which broke my heart. They took me away and I was not allowed to go back permanently, so they put me in a hostel to finish my schooling. But yeah. Despite that, they've- still,-- we're still - you know,-- I used to still go home for school holidays, Christmas, go home.

Q. That's a period in time where you left your foster parents' home and you were placed at Naumai Māori Girls' Hostel. Can you speak to us a little bit about your time there? You were 16 years old when you arrived?

A. By then, yeah.

Q. Can you tell us a little bit about the hostel?

A. I suppose in comparison with my adoptive home it wasn't too bad. But it was -- I was terribly homesick and didn't really want to be there, I guess, in that regard. -But um - --

Q. When you say homesick, do you mean homesick for your foster parents?

A. Āe. And I can remember I was, you know, going to school and I'd wag and go and see Mum, because Mum was --- my baby sister had just been born, so Mum was at home and I used to catch the bus over to - -so from Penrose to Mt Wellington and go and see Mum and she'd tell me off, "Go back to school." But yeah, it was an unusual place, it was run by the Brethren Church and the two old ladies when I first went there that ran it were, I don't know, they were these religious, sort of like nuns, but they weren't nuns, I suppose. And then they retired and this other couple took over. But yeah, it was very religious-, they would -- we had bible class every week and then on Sundays you went to church morning and afternoon. But there was a mix of girls, some that were working, there were some that had disabilities that went to the IHC workshops each day and then there was- us three schoolgirls, we all went to school.

Q. You finished school there; is that correct?

A. Yeah.

Q. And then you got a job?

A. Yeah, I got a job on the toll exchange, I was a toll operator. That was another life, but yeah, I remember --- and I wasn't allowed to go, because I was still under the Section 11, I hadn't been released until I turned 18, so I sort of finished school, got a job, started working and I was boarding with a school friend who lived across the road from the school, with her and her mum and her sister, and yeah, and they came, I don't know how they -- I must have had to keep in touch with a social worker then, who wasn't Mr- Pickers, it was someone else, I can't remember her name, and she came to visit me and more or less said, "Okay, you're 18, you're released, your Section 11 is finished, that's it."

Q. Did the social workers offer you anything in terms of being able to process your time in care or to set you up to go out into the world and live your life?

A. No. Well, I was already working and living a life outside the hostel, away from the hostel, I don't know how, I must have just left, because if they didn't release me until afterwards,

I'm not quite sure how that worked, but it must have been tika, because I was working and earning money, paying my way.

Q. I'm going to ask you to go to paragraph 74 of your statement. You talk about the historical claims process. That's a process that you opted out of. Can you explain why you chose not to file a claim?

A. I don't know that I opted out of it, I just never really considered it as being an avenue for anything. I mean, I didn't -- I probably wouldn't have wanted to deal with MSD in any form anyway, the experiences I'd had didn't ever make it feel like that was something that was supported, something that could be done easily. And I'd heard horror stories from other adoptees who'd been put through a terrible ordeal and been grilled over their cases, and they weren't pleasant experiences with MSD, and I couldn't see the point in putting yourself into that sort of position. I mean, they're supposed to be there to help you, but I don't believe that's- necessarily the case.

Q. And you talked about counselling earlier, and that you'd recently engaged in counselling. How important has that been for you in terms of processing what you went through?

A. Well, I'd never had counselling before. I don't know, well, it's never really been something, I mean -- go talk to a stranger? It's kind of, well, it was hard enough talking to anybody about shit, so why would you go and talk to a stranger? But the Royal Commission sort of suggested- it as part of the wellbeing package and I thought yeah, maybe, you know, I'm getting on, maybe it's not something to be dismissed so readily, and let's give it a go. -And they also asked me if there was someone particularly that I wanted to have counselling with, and in talking to other adoptees, Māori adoptees, they recommended a woman in Wellington who sort of specialises in adoption, and while she's Pākehā, adoption is often quite misunderstood, and she's got a background in psych and other things around adoption, and it's actually been --- it's been quite a pleasant journey talking, we've become, I suppose, good friends and you can't talk about that sort of stuff without forming a relationship, and yeah.

Q. Okay, thank you for that. I want to turn now to your search for cultural identity. You talk about that at paragraph 76 to 102 of your statement. Can you tell us how old you were when you undertook this search and why the search for whakapapa was so important to you?

A. Well, being Māori and always, you know, that's the first thing you get asked, where are you from? And not being able to answer those questions wholly, I suppose, has always been a particular mamae, not --- while certainly my GRO-B-10 --have always embraced me in

terms of being, know, they always call me their daughter, they never call me their foster child or their adoptive child or anything that distinguished me from my sisters. But, you know, when you're- in a forum that requires or needs whakapapa, because it is all about whakapapa in terms of things Māori. You can't go to a hui and not give some sort of grounding as to who you are and where you're from and who your tīpuna are and I've never had that.

So, there were two things that kind of came into synch at the same time when not just seeking --- so they changed the law in 1985 where you were allowed to access your original adoption,-- sorry, your original birth certificate and your adoption file, and -- what was the question? The quest for finding my birth mother in the first instance was the beginning of that journey, and I suppose when my daughter was born in 1984, I can remember feeling this overwhelming desire to find others that were actually related to me. Because, you know, I'd grown up always looking different to my family, you know, certainly the adoptive family but then even my foster family, you know, my dad's poto, I'm tall, my dad's mangu, I'm pale, and people say things like, "Oh, you look like your aunty so and so." And I go, well yeah okay. I know that's not true but they're not insincere comments-.

But --- so when they changed the law, you know, having finally -- my daughter was actually related to me, she might actually look like me because I'd always grown up not looking like anybody and that was, I suppose, the beginning of that journey. I wanted to find more. And then my mum, she was so kind in that regard and, you know, she encouraged me to look, because she understood, I guess. But it was hard because in me finding those connections through the process, it still hurt her, because I think she thought, oh I've found you, I wouldn't need them anymore, and I can remember saying to her, "You'll always be my mum", and I remember feeling regret that I'd done it because it hurt, and I didn't want to hurt her or my dad. -But it was a quest to try and find others that looked like me, others that --- because it is important to be connected to whakapapa.

Q. You actually went to extraordinary steps to locate your birth parents. Can you tell us now what were the steps that you took to find your mother?

A. So in those days, bearing in mind there was no internet and you had to write away and request your,-- when they changed the law, request your original birth certificate and then they would ring you and the social worker --- I never actually met her, but she rang, we talked on the phone a lot, she sent me --- she rang me and told me everything that was in the file, which wasn't a lot really, and they sent me a copy of my original birth certificate

which had my mother's name on it, it had a name of my father which turned out it wasn't my father but that's another story. So I then took that name and I wrote --- I did searches, because you had to do a search to the Births, Deaths and Marriages and you write a letter asking for this information and sometimes you didn't know the year, so things like whether there were other siblings, whether there were, you know, grandparents, whether there were marriages, because some of those names change with marriage, in trying to find her, and I eventually got a copy of her first marriage, her marriage certificate, and she was married firstly to a Māori man from GRO-B-11 ---who's now in GRO-B-12 - --never met him, but it would provide links here and there and you'd follow those up and sometimes they would be dead ends- or you'd just get no response.

And this went on for some time, I would go down to the library in Auckland to the microfiche files to try and find more information. Because often, I know it sounds gruesome, but death notices give information about whānau that sometimes isn't easy to find in other ways. There were, in those days, directories that used to list people by address, so like in a phone book, you remember phone books. But there were Wises books and you'd look up the street and the number and it would tell you who lived there, sort of like a reverse phone book, but -- and that was an avenue to find information. So, I found where they lived, where my mother had lived at one point, I think. But there were lots of false alarms. Like, I found someone who lived in Whangaparaoa who had the exact same name as her maiden name, and exact same first names, and I remember ringing and talking to them, and I didn't actually speak to her but I spoke to a man who flatly denied, no, no, you've got the wrong person-.

And I remember the build-ups to thinking that I'd found her because the name was the same and then, you know, realising that actually it was a false alarm. So just hunting, hunting, writing away and you'd send a cheque because in those days there was no EFTPOS. You'd write, send a letter with a cheque saying, can you search these years, and they'd charge you so much per year, and sometimes you'd get a result with a birth certificate or marriage certificate or some information,- or nothing. And yeah-.

Q. I want to go back to the whānau that you mentioned earlier. It was through that whānau that you actually were given a photo of your birth mother?

A. Āe, yeah.

Q. Tell us about that.

A. So I made contact with her first husband, I think his name -- GRO-B-13 -- gosh, can't

remember, but he --and I --- I don't know how I found his number, but I somehow --- I think actually it was my husband, he talked to someone who talked to someone who found this contact and I remember ringing and talking to him, and in those days, you know, it was expensive to ring Australia, I know, you wouldn't think so now, but back then, you know, to make a toll call, so ringing and talking to him and he connected me to his GRO-B-14 ---and so I wrote to her, because I didn't have a phone, she didn't have a phone, I wrote to her and she wrote back and said, yes, and here's a photo. And she gave me a photo of her -- of my mother, my birth mother with her -brother GRO-B15 --I think was his name, and there was a little baby in the photo, and I thought at first it was me,- but she wrote back and said no, it was a niece, but it was in 1963, so it would have been two years after I was born. And here was this pretty little Pākehā woman who was my --- it's the first image I ever saw of her, and I had to copy the photo and send it back. It was an all-black-and-white photo, you know those ones with the white border, I don’t know if you're as old as me, but yeah. And yeah, I sent it back to her and … --

Q. And you describe it as a strange but wonderful feeling?

A. Yeah, it was kind of surreal, looking at this image, a bit like, you know, when my daughter was born, and saying well, she's actually my blood, she's actually related, first time ever. And so yeah. Similar, I suppose, when I saw photos of my father. And you kind of look to see, do I look like them? I don't think I look like them. But other people say, oh yeah, you do. But I don't know. It's, I suppose, in the eyes of the beholder, you know, who perceives what.

Q. You eventually found your mother and your grandmother living in the States. How did that happen?

A. So, I'd made contact with -- I had their names through the searches for births and marriage certificates, I'd- managed to get copies of those and found my grandmother's name and had managed,- you know, through those Wises directories I'd found that they lived in Mt Albert until a certain time and then there was just nothing. And I couldn't figure out why everything sort of ended. You know, I didn't realise at the time that they'd gone overseas. And I remember thinking that my grandmother had died because, you know, it just ended, there was nothing further on, other than she had a different name and I'd tried to find other connections through that name. But there was just nothing, and I remember talking to the social worker who had given me my original birth certificate and she's, "Well, hang on a minute, she might have got a pension, been receiving a pension." I don't- know if this was

legal or not, but she had a look, she looked it up and she said yes, and she gave me the address of -- her last address which was different to the one that I had in Mt Albert, it was of her --- of my great aunt and uncle in Mt Roskill, and I looked, you know, found their details and because their name was GRO-B-16 --and I knew that was my grandmother's maiden name so it had to be the -right -- it wasn't a false alarm-.

And I sort of had this spiel prepared to ring them, because in those days you looked everyone up in the phone book, to say to her, oh, I was trying to find my birth mother because we were having a school reunion or something from Auckland Girls Grammar and, blah, blah, blah, blah, and of course she answered the phone and I just blurted it all out like you do when you don't know what to say. And she said to me, oh, I didn't know she had a daughter, sort of thing, and she said, oh okay, and asked for more details, so I gave her my birth date, my name, my phone number, and she said, "Oh I'll be in touch." And I later found out, because I waited for several months before I heard anything, I later found out that she wrote a letter, sent it by normal post, which is sea mail not airmail, to the US to my grandmother to tell her that I'd made contact and, you know, she could have just picked up the phone but I suppose in those days you didn't do that, you wrote a letter. So, when that happened my grandmother immediately rang another sister-in-law who lives in -Rānui, who's a lot more approachable --- I understand why, I understood why later -- than the one in Mt Roskill, because she's a bit of a stick in the mud, I guess, who immediately- rang me and said come over for -- come meet us. So, we went out that following weekend and met her and her family and that was sort of the first connection-.

But, yeah, I remember when looking for my grandmother the thing ending thinking, you know, I remember sort of --- I suppose it was, it was grief, I was grieving for someone that -- I thought I would never find her, this grandmother, because I'd- never had a grandmother until my GRO-B-17 --you know, growing up as adopted children of immigrants, these people that they had photos of were all in England or in South Africa. We didn't have any connection to grandparents in real life-.

Q. And from there, you've been able to have a relationship with your mother and your grandmother?

A. My grandfather.

Q. Can you tell us about that?

A. Yeah, well, sadly, my grandparents are both passed away now but I did get to spend some time with them when they came back to New Zealand. So, they'd been living in there and -

my grandparents had split and remarried other people, but that's a whole other story, because they did actually get back together again and remarried some 60 years later. Sorry, what was the question? Well, with my grandparents certainly and spending time with them when they were here and then when my grandmother came home later in the 90s, she came home to New Zealand to try to get medical care and sadly didn't, she passed away.

But my relationship with my birth mother has been difficult, I guess. She's, you know, we've known each other now for some 20, 30 years and it's hard work, you know, I have a duty of care, I'm always trying to make contact with her, but she's very reserved, I think she's lived alone most of her life and she doesn't know how to be a mother, and I know when we first made contact she kind of wanted to take over and become this instant mother and grandmother and she'd spoil the children and she's made several trips out. You know, she'd buy them lots of things which, you know, is great but there's other forms of relationship that were kind of missing, and I guess because she didn't know how to be a mother, how to be a parent.

Q. Did she have other children?

A. No.

Q. Just you?

A. Mmm.

Q. I want to turn now to the search for your father. That was a completely different journey that you undertook. Can you tell us about that?

A. So, in pursuing the details on my birth,- my original birth certificate and that, there was a name on there who I thought was my father, and while I was looking for my birth mother, I also tried to find this man that was listed on my birth record. And I did actually make connection with his family but then realised he wasn't my father. -But that was only -- that only became apparent, so I'd sort of made contact with him and his family and it was, I suppose, quite awkward, because they didn't- know anything about me, and then my mother came for -- my birth mother came for a visit that same year and said, "Oh no, no, that's not your father, we only put him down because your birth father was married, because he was married to other people", other, well, another lady. -She said, "That was his cousin, we just put that down to fill the gap."

So, I'd disrupted this poor man's life by telling him I was his child, and I wasn't his child, so that was difficult. But then she gave me a different name and, as you do, I think this was sort of the late 80s by then, earlier 90s, I rang the only number with that surname in the book and spoke to a young woman about the same age as me. She said, "Oh, yes,

that's my father-in-law." And from there, I met some of my siblings from his first marriage. -So, there's --- he's -- I'm one of many illegitimate children from my father. -He had a -- he was married to a woman in New Lynn and there were eight children, he also had another family in Mangere, and then there was us all scattered around, you know, I'm forever finding new siblings. There's so many of us. I recently met one, I did the DNA thing and recently met another brother who lives in Brisbane and it's- like no one knew about you, but it's like it's another one. Because you know, DNA doesn't lie, I guess. -And then he went, I think, to evade -- what do you call it, the maintenance that men had to pay in those days-? - Went to live in Hawai'i and had another family there, and those children are considerably younger than us-.

So, there's, like, I'm in the middle of some of my siblings, like I've got a brother that's three months older than me and a sister that's seven months younger. You know, you can tell he was busy during those years. But the family in Hawai'i, many of them have the same names as the ones in New Lynn, the only difference is they have a different surname, so I have two sisters called GRO-B-18 ---two brothers called GRO-B-19 ---two sisters called GRO-B-20-. It's confusing but, I don't know, but I never got to meet him. But I've met many of my siblings along the way-.

Q. At this stage in your life, are you content with what you've been able to find?

A. Well, I haven't been able to find connection to my grandmother on my father's side because the Samoan side of it is all very, I don't know, very confined - the uncles and the family from that generation, I don't know, I guess it's an embarrassment that he had so many children, you know, and while his mother was Māori, it's almost like they've closed that, you know, they've -- they disregard her as being important. When they talk about their family tree, their whakapapa in terms of the Samoan side of things, it's all about the Samoan side. There's- no mention of -- there's also German blood in there as well, there's no mention of it, it's all about the Samoan stuff and, you know, when I've asked, they perhaps -haven't -- I haven't been particularly well received, being illegitimate and being one of these many lost children. -But also asking about the Māori side, it's almost like it's racially excluded from that story.

So, I don't know my grandmother's -- I don't know where she's from, I don't- even know her name and that kind of -- I don't understand that. But who's left from my father's generation that's still alive, there's only one sister. -The uncle -- there was an uncle but he passed away last year, and he wouldn't even meet with me. -So, my siblings that have been

raised by their Pākehā mothers often, they don't know either and we don't know how to find out that information.

Q. So, you may never find closure?

A. Āe, in that sense.

Q. And what's the impact of that on you?

A. Well, I can't give my tamariki firm grounding in terms of their whakapapa, because I don't know it. And I'm reminded, well, it's not that I don't have whakapapa, I just don't know it. So - -and that doesn't- feel fair, because how can you be Māori if you don't know where you're from?

Q. Okay. I want to talk a little bit more about your academic career. You pursued tertiary studies as a mature student. Can you tell us about that?

A. Yeah, well, I was working in tertiary at that stage and while I did okay at school, I didn't actually get UE or School Cert fully because I'd been to so many different schools, it just never quite worked out in that sense. But in those days, if you had three years' secondary school that was often enough to get a reasonable job, and so I worked for the old New Zealand Post Office and then they corporatised and sold off all the assets back in the 80s and so I got made redundant. So, I had lots of parttime jobs for a while because I was a young mum by then. Me and my husband lived in Otahuhu.

And then I got a job at GRO-B-21 --or- GRO-B-22 --in those days and worked in different roles, in IT, and other things, and then I moved to what -was GRO-B-23 --and -then GRO-B-24-. So, I'd sort of built a career in a sense by working in tertiary but in different roles. -And this old Pākehā koroua he came to see me, and he was saying, "Why don't you do this graduate diploma in Māori development? You should come and do it." I said, "No, I don't have any quals", I, you know, I never felt that that was something --- you know, I had a job and that was all that really mattered in terms of supporting my kids, my whānau, and yeah it wasn't a bad job. He said, "Nah, you know this stuff, you should come and do it." You know, and -so I did. And it was, I suppose, I don't- know, I was quite surprised that I enjoyed it and, you know, I was quite --- I did all right, you know, and so when I finished that, I went on and did other studies in education, and then I landed -- ended up doing a master's degree -with GRO-B-25 --by distance, but it was a master's in indigenous studies and I thoroughly enjoyed that, it was the best thing ever. And from there, even though I didn't write about adoption in that work, they sort of gave me a scholarship and said, "Come and do a PhD", and I thought, "Oh my God", you know, I'd

never imagined that from a girls' home I'd end up doing a PhD. But it seemed to all fit and sometimes things just fall into place-.

And so I began, part-time, in 2015, and I'm nearly finished. -But I got to choose what I wanted to write about, and it had to be --- if I was going to do something that big, it had to be something that was close to my heart. So, writing about those identity journeys of Māori that were adopted, has been the core subject. And I guess I was particularly surprised at how, in doing the work and actually talking and reading about the subject, which had always been quite secret and taboo, gave some sort of healing in a way that I didn't expect. And then meeting other Māori adoptees just like me that were - you know, we connected in our own way in terms of whānau, that connection that you make when you are whānau in other ways, not necessarily by toto.

Q. I think you've been quite humble in terms of your academic achievements. You actually went on and did your master's in indigenous studies with distinction; isn't that right?

A. Āe. (Yes).

Q. And you are also the recipient of a Fulbright scholarship?

A. Yes, which - yeah-- that's, I mean, like I said, things happen for a reason, and things have evolved, whether, you know - Covid is quite scary in that sense, but I've embarked in doing some further work aside from the PhD with a social organisation in Seattle that was formed by a black woman who was transracially adopted as well and they've got this big project where the law in the State of Washington is being changed and they've got some 3,500 adoption files that contain things like mementoes, letters from birth parents, you know, and they're trying to match them to people that are still alive.

These things that -- you may not have anything from your childhood, but there's these things in this file that maybe you do want and other things. -And then I was supposed to be going to Minneapolis to do some work with the Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, but unfortunately that hasn't quite evolved, and I know they've got a lot on their plate with the recent State inquiry. So, I've shifted and I'm going to do some work with the University of Hawai'i with their social work, their Kupuna project, so all about elders and that trans -- passing of knowledge on to the next generation, and their practice of -hānai, like our whāngai.

Q. We will talk about whāngai actually, but I want to go back to your topic of choice in terms of your PhD, "A study into the intergenerational effects of closed adoption on whakapapa." What was your rationale for choosing that as a topic to research?

A. Well, that inability of not being able to give my tamariki and my mokopuna whakapapa.

So, my children, as with many adopted people's children, you inherit an adoption if that disconnection is still there. It doesn't just go away. I know the State thought with it making adoptions that people would go off and be adopted by a new family, a new name, new whakapapa, new everything and you would forget about what was left behind. You know, there would be a clean break. That child wouldn't inherit mannerisms or bad things from the naughty mother that had given birth to you out of wedlock. You would go to this new family, and you would be as if "born unto them" was the wording they used.

So, I've always felt incomplete in my commitment to my whānau in grounding them in their wellbeing, in their whakapapa. -So -- and I wanted to write about it. So, while the identity journeys certainly are there as well, there's that intergenerational effect that our tamariki- of adopted people, of adopted Māori, of Māori adoptees, face because they inherit that disconnection. "Oh, I don't know where my mum's from." "My dad's from here" - -because my children can clearly articulate where they're from in terms of my husband's side, you know. He's from Niue, and they know they're from this village, they're- from that village, they know who their tīpuna are, they know everything there is to know about, and they can pepeha that beautifully, and then they say, "Ah and my mum, yeah, it's complicated. My mum's from Aotearoa." Full stop. Because, yeah, and then you're -- or they're trying to describe, "Oh, there's Samoan in there" but there's disconnect there as well because, yeah-.

So, I suppose it was in trying to give back to my tamariki by trying to -- and because my story's in the work, in the PhD as well, and I've- interviewed them as well in terms of their thoughts on that, on being the children of an adoptee, a Māori adoptee.

Q. In your studies you reference the term "indigenous identity development." Can you tell us a little bit about that, please?

A. So, when you're indigenous to somewhere, and you've grown up away from that culture, you have to develop and create and find a cultural connection to your indigeneity somehow, and often it's difficult, often that doesn't exist. So, you have to --- I know I was drawn to Māori events on campus in my work. So, things like, you know, the whānau, the Māori networks at my job would be --- they would give me some essence of identity and being Māori I suppose, even though it wasn't quite the same as being Māori in terms of knowing your own whakapapa. You have to develop that identity as an indigenous person to somewhere when you don't have it. So as an adult, you're suddenly trying to find a cultural connection to a culture that you know nothing about. So, you've grown up with a Pākehā family that haven't told you anything about tikanga, anything about Te Reo, anything about

the whenua, anything about things that are important to us as indigenous people of somewhere. So, whether you're indigenous to Samoa, whether you are indigenous to Niue, whether -- wherever you're indigenous to, if you haven't got that identity, where do you find it, how do you develop it? -So, the steps of developing that as an adult, I guess, getting to know a culture, learning about a culture as a grown up."

COMMISSIONER STEENSON: Thank you so much for that, Ms AE. I understand you'd like a 15-minute break and we will absolutely do that. So, we'll take a 15-minute adjournment. We'll pause the livestream and return shortly.

Adjournment from 4.25 pm to 4.41 pm

COMMISSIONER STEENSON: Nau mai hoki mai tātou (welcome back everyone). I just want to check with our tech people that we are ready to return to Ms AE. Yes, I've had the thumbs up. Can you hear us, Ms Norton and Ms AE?

MS NORTON: Āe.

COMMISSIONER STEENSON: Wonderful, over to you, kei a koe, Ms Norton.

(Video played)

QUESTIONING BY MS NORTON CONTINUED: "Tēnā tātou katoa. Nau mai hoki mai anō. (Greetings to all. Welcome back again.) Welcome back to this next/last session of our evidence from Ms AE today. I will start our kōrero with a discussion about closed adoption. When we reference the kupu (word) 'whānau,' we include our Pasifika whānau in that as well.

Ms AE, when a couple adopts a child, it is an adoption for life. This was not your experience and in your own words: "I was thrown out like a piece of rubbish and handed back to the state" when you were 13 years old. In terms of the research you have done, was your experience unique or was it something more widespread?

A. In terms of research, I've certainly spoken to other Māori and Pacific adoptees that have varying experiences. There were certainly others who were treated really badly by their adopted families and others that actually were okay, that were loved and cared for, but were still seeking that cultural connection later in life. So, I don't know, I haven't spoken to all adoptees across the motu, but there was a common thread of certainly cultural disconnection post-adoption for them.

Q. And I want to move on to that. You've shared that the biggest impact of your adoption was your complete severance from culture, whānau and whakapapa. In your view, is the damage done to you irreversible?

A. The cultural disconnection probably, because how do you fill all those missing years with

something retrospectively? You can always learn your language, you can always learn about tikanga, you can learn essences of your culture in some way later in life, but it doesn't replace the years of growing up as a child learning from your elders, learning from your parents how to be, how to act, how to speak, how to be culturally appropriate in all things. So, in terms of the abuse, in terms of the mis-care, that also I don't think you can ever wash it all away and say, well, it happened and that's all good, we'll just move on, because I don't think it will ever disappear. But I've certainly managed to navigate my years as an adult and certainly as a parent and now a grandparent to ensure that those things don't happen to any of my children. Yeah, irreplaceable? I don't know whether that's the right term, to be honest.

Q. Kia ora. In terms of the research you've undertaken, would this likely be the case for our Māori and Pasifika adoptees?

A. Well, that's the strongest cry that comes from that work, is the yearning for a connection to their culture and that - those attempts to try and find a cultural connection or find a whānau connection when you're meeting strangers, you're trying to learn a culture as an adult and you've got no shared memories, no raising within whānau, no nurturing and learning those things growing up.

Q. Tēnā koe. Could redress include the State taking accountability for how widespread the disconnect is?

A. I don't know, I don't know. I don't know whether the State is the right body to try and fix something so severe. But I think the way we do things needs to be reshaped. The way adoptions are made,- needs to be reshaped. Surely there isn't a need for closed adoptions in the future, and if open adoptions were to be inclusive in all ways, then that's- that reshaping. So, when an adoption is made, it's- not just a family -- a set of parents adopting a child, the child is adopting the parents too, and that whole embracing of perhaps different cultures needs to be shared across both parent and child, not just the child. You know, you're adopted into a family, and you're- meant to assimilate and join that family's whānau, that family's whakapapa, everything about that family is supposedly now yours, even though you are not connected by blood. Why can't our adoptions be done the other way where the child is considered as being not just adopted but they're adopting the new whānau, so it's both ways, if that makes sense?

Q. That makes sense, kia ora. You went to great lengths to find your birth parents. Would redress include the State making this process easier for adoptees?

A. Given that when I tried to find, you know, it was quite different then. We didn't have the

technology that you have today and, you know, these programmes, missing pieces and others, they make it seem so easy because they've got those resources. But I've never really understood why, you know, when you're looking for information about yourself, why you're not entitled to that information. There's often age limits, there's restrictions on - you have to be careful of -- you have to be mindful of the privacy of others, but never mind your privacy, you know, it doesn't- matter that this is - --this is about you, why can't we be owners of our own information as whānau? Why do we have to go to strangers and beg and ask and look and hunt and search for information about ourselves? That information should belong to us, I think.

Q. The 1985 adoption reforms provided a partial lifting of that veil of secrecy around closed adoptions. But is it time that all adoptions became open and, if it is, what would that look like?

A. Well, I don't know whether I'm the right person to comment on that, because adoption is a Pākehā thing and if we're not Pākehā, why do we have to use something that's not meant for us? And while I also don't agree that whāngai perhaps should be made legal to fit Pākehā law, I feel that the practice of whāngai, at the moment it's, you know, it's illegal, it's disregarded, I'm raising mokopuna and I have no rights as their Nan to make decisions on education, religion, medical, anything. I couldn't even open a bank account for the two youngest ones recently because whāngai isn't recognised. But it should be, why can't our systems embrace it as a practice that is best for our whānau? You know, Oranga Tamariki, they talk about being whānau-centric and the child is the centre of it all, but they don't embrace the act of whāngai as an inclusive whānau process.

Q. Kia ora for that answer. I appreciate that's a difficult question to put to you and I'm really grateful for your answer. In your statement, you make recommendations, from paragraph 121. I'd like to go through those recommendations now. Can you talk to us, please, about what you mean by wider whānau involvement in the decision-making process?

A. The immediate choice of uplift or removal can't be the first choice, there has to be --- often whānau aren't sought out to find alternative care for tamariki. I mean, who's to say there's not another aunty or uncle or Nan or Koro somewhere within the wider whānau that can -- I'm not saying that all our families, all our parents are perfect by any means. -But if --- there also needs to be a change in how we view our whānau. I mean, we are often not --- we're often poor, we're often struggling with health, with drug addictions, with all these things that impact on lives, and our whānau are disregarded as being appropriate caregivers because we're poor, because we're old, because we might not have the flash

house or the flash car that is supposedly needed to be able to get --- you know, it often isn't investigated whether there's Aroha in the home to begin with, and often you can be poor as, but if there's Aroha in a home your child is safe, your child is happy, your child is well cared for.

I mean, this, I don't know, this judgment that's made on our kaumātua around caring for mokopuna because they're poor and old, or they live in a rural area that's not in the heart of the city or they don't have a large income, why are those seen as criteria? Yet, you can give children to monsters that will -- that- have standing in a Pākehā community, that have a church background, that have all those other ticks and things that are looked for, and the old people are often just disregarded. I don't know if I've answered that question, sorry.

Q. Kia ora, he kōrero pono (Thank you, that is a truthful statement). Do you feel up to speaking about the recommendations that you made in terms of social work practice? And I only want to go there if you feel able to do so.

A. Sure, I feel a bit, I don't know, who am I to comment on social workers? The only real experiences I've had have been as a child in care with social workers. And while I acknowledge there's a role for them to play, there needs to be -- the- way I see it, a social worker is part of that whānau. So rather than someone showing up that doesn't know anything about the family, makes decisions based on what they see in front of them on face value, that removes the child perhaps or makes a decision that affects that child's life drastically, if the social worker was someone perhaps that was Māori or from the same Pacific nation, that was even iwi connected that, you know, knows the mechanisms of that whānau, that understands how that whānau works. Because we are all different.

But, I mean, if there's a connection already there then the child isn't dealing with a stranger and that relationship is formed and is embedded with tikanga and it's not a once --- it's not a one/two-visit thing, it's an ongoing relationship that continues. I mean, where adoptions take place, there should be ongoing progress checks, not just this tick the box at three months old and then see you later-.

Q. And I guess to be absolutely fair to you, I wanted to provide context on that question, and it was simply that what we've heard in evidence is that the social worker was involved at the beginning of the adoption, and then disappeared. So, my question was, can you share your whakaaro (thoughts) on what you think a social worker's role could be after the adoption order is made? Because in your statement you touch on a number of things: the relationship between the social worker and the child. And the other matter that you touch

on is actually an important one: cultural capabilities. Do you want to add any more to that or would you prefer to leave it there?

A. You've kind of summed it up in a way. I mean, I see it in my day job with education, how more --- how our students respond more if there's a Māori or Pacific lecturer in their classroom, you know, I don't know if you've --- there's been a lot written lately about, you know, why isn't my professor Māori, why isn't my professor Pasifika, why isn't there someone interacting with me in this environment that looks like me, that actually understands me culturally and isn't just going to stomp all over me and treat me like a faceless nothing? Social workers are just as responsible for that relationship, for that relationship with not just the child but with the whānau as well, whether they're the birth whānau or the adopting whānau, it's whanaungatanga, it's not disconnected.

Q. And you talked about the legal age for obtaining information about your file being 20. Do you want to make a comment around that?

A. Well again, why can't our information belong to us? Why do we have to wait until we reach a certain age, by law, to know about ourselves? You know, it's about us, so where's our privacy in not being able to find out about ourselves? I mean, there may be cases where -- I'm not saying that that would apply to everyone. But, you know, if I'm 16 and I've- got no one, why can't I find out about my family? Why can't I own my own information? It's about me, isn't it-?

Q. Kia ora. I'm mindful of the time now. And I don't have any further questions for you myself. I am aware, though, you do have some closing comments to make. So, I'd like you to -- well-, I invite you to make those comments now.

A. Thank you for letting me tell my story, for believing me and hearing my truth, that I haven't said out loud before. While I've written about the complexities of my life and being an adopted State care foster child, it has always been on paper. This is the first time I have said these words out loud, and I am deeply appreciative of having the space to finally do this and release some of the weight I've carried for so many years. I'm deeply appreciative of being able to do this, knowing that I won't be dismissed this time and the trauma that I faced trivialised or disregarded. I want to thank Tracey Norton and Waimirirangi for your patience and care in all that you have done for me. I doubt I would have made it to today without your manaaki. Ngā mihi aroha kōrua (thank you very much).

I also want to acknowledge Ngāti Whātua for supporting this mahi and by extending their long arms of manaaki (care) to wrap around all survivors. Even though we're not there in person, your Aroha is felt from afar. -I particularly want to thank Taiaha

Hawke for his kōrero and description of the displacement and deep loss that is made when we as a people become disconnected from whakapapa. These words resonated clearly with me, and the loss faced when our cultural identity is stolen from us.

There is no simple answer to fix -- or fix to this all, but I found some form of healing in being heard for once in my life and for the first real time. For me it's- always -- it has always been about mokopuna and I will always strive to safeguard my tamariki and mokopuna, to keep them safe and help them navigate their place in the world alongside the complexities of life. It is my duty to ensure that they are able to continue to thrive and be the amazing rangatahi that they are, with or without whakapapa and that my Aroha can protect them always from the mamae that comes from disconnection and the dysfunction caused by the practices of closed adoption and decisions made by the State-.

The pain and suffering caused by the removal of us from our cultural heritage, it's immeasurable and quite unfixable where these connections have been erased. As a survivor, I can't fix this fully, but I believe that we all have a duty of care to ensure that these cruelties never ever occur again and that our tamariki are always safe and protected. Kia ora."

MS NORTON: Tēnā koe (thank you). Before I pass the rākau over to our Kaikōmihana for pātai, I want to mihi to you on behalf of Wai and I. Ngā mihi nui ki a koe, Ms AE, (thank you very much, Ms AE) for having the strength and the courage to share your most intimate and personal closed adoption experiences with us. I share your hope for our whānau, that their search for culture, whānau and whakapapa can be made easier.

I want to mihi to that kōtiro in the girls' home all those years ago. While your connection to culture has been a lifelong struggle to date, your culture hears you, we see you, we feel you, we stand with you. Thank you for shining your light on this issue. Nō reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa (So thank you, thank you). And I now hand it over to the Commissioners.

COMMISSIONER STEENSON: Tēnā koe, tēnā koe, Ms Norton (thank you, Ms Norton). And tēnā koe Ms AE, I can only absolutely agree with Ms Norton's mihi to you. Ngā mihi nui ki a koe (thank you very much) for speaking your truth today and having the bravery to do so. I don't have any pātai for you, I can just say that what is lingering in my mind, your golden, many golden comments and one in particular around having aroha in the home for the child is the number one thing that should be thought about.

But now I will pass over to the other Commissioners to see if they have any pātai. Commissioner Gibson, do you have any pātai for Ms AE?

COMMISSIONER GIBSON: No thanks, Ms AE, thank you for such a full evidence to us, kia ora.

COMMISSIONER STEENSON: Commissioner Erueti, do you have any pātai for Ms AE?

COMMISSIONER ERUETI: Kei te mihi atu ki a koe mō tōu kōrero. Ngā mihi mahana ki a koe (I want to thank you for your evidence, warm acknowledgments to you). I just wanted to -- so much rich information, my sense from your evidence, particularly the questions raised by Ms Norton at the end of your evidence, is that we've still got mahi to do to address the question of vetting of caregivers or adopting parents, but also oversight, ensuring that tamariki who have been adopted are safe, are in safe hands, they're being loved and that their whakapapa has been recognised and respected. So, although there have been some reforms, there's still mahi to do. Would that be right-?

A. Āe.

Q. Āe. And I suppose the other element to this too is that what is still needed is proper redress for those who have been adopted and have experienced abuse and neglect, and I took from your evidence too that you were uncomfortable about approaching MSD because you didn't feel that their processes were robust, that you didn't want to approach MSD because you felt, I think you put it, you didn't want to go to MSD in any form.

A. I've not had any good experiences with them. Are you talking about the previous call for redress that was made some years ago?

Q. I'm talking about seeking compensation, redress for the harm you experienced while in care.

A. I've never applied for it, it didn't seem -- I don't know, how do you put a dollar sign on something that's immeasurable-?

Q. Yeah, ka pai, ka pai. Ngā mihi mahana ki a koe whaea (thank you once again). No more pātai from me, I'll pass it over to fellow Commissioners, tēnā koe.

COMMISSIONER STEENSON: Tēnā koe, Commissioner Erueti. Commissioner Alofivae, do you have any pātai for Ms AE?

COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE: I do. But can I just start with a mihi. [Malo le soifua lagi maua ma le lagi e mama I lou tagata Ms AE. Faatalofa atu paia I lou tagata o Aloalii, faatalofa atu I lou aiga pele, faapei si lou toalua ma ou fanau.]. Greetings to you MS AE, I am Aloalii, I extend my greetings to your precious family, your husband and children. Ms AE, I just want to extend my respect and my gratitude and acknowledging that you are a tangata of the Moana, you are of Samoan heritage, I am of Samoan heritage, and I want to just be able to honour those particular roots of yours.

I know also from your evidence and what you've shared is that actually your husband hails from this very, very little motu of Niue, which people would say are the savage islands but of course they would refer to them as they are the rock. So can I just extend a greeting to you also in your husband's language because I know that that's the whakapapa of your children. Thank you for your courage and strength in sharing your experiences.

Ms AE, I couldn't help but be so moved by what you were saying in your kōrero around closed adoptions. We know that it creates a legal fiction in terms of fictitious relationships, and it creates, you know, new whānau and everything that you've explained.

The disconnect that you spoke of in terms of your Samoan aiga, your cultural roots, and I don't doubt that you actually probably hail from a significant family. The reason I say that is because all Samoans say they belong to royal households, so no doubt you come from a royal household as well. And the fact that there are cultural attitudes within our people that are sometimes misguided. So, the level of how entrenched it is, the whakamā (the shame) to not want to speak about children that are borne out of wedlock.

For all of the other young Pasifika adoptees that might be listening and will be listening and will bear witness to your testimony, in terms of recommendations, what are your thoughts about organisations who might be advocates to actually help bridge the gap between an adoptee like yourself, a survivor like yourself, and the aiga lautele, you know, the wider family, because sometimes it's actually ignorance eh, where they don't understand that the level and how entrenched their whakamā is, but the cost to you and your bloodlines, because this is going to be intergenerational, right?

Do you have any thoughts around that, any comments about whether or not organisations Pasifika, Māori, should actually be funded to actually help bridge those conversations so that wāhine toa like you and the generations that will come from you, the greatness that comes from you, can actually begin to find some groundedness in cultural roots?

A. I wish there were such people that you could go to for help with navigating that space, because when you make contact with birth families, no one helps you, you're- supposed to navigate this space and, you know, rock up to their door and introduce yourself, "oh, I'm your daughter, I'm your son, I'm your long-lost Nan or something." -It's - you know,- they make it sound real Hollywood on TV with those programmes that, you know, reunite people, but actually it's much more than that. -There's -- once you get to that stage, you've actually made contact, but what happens afterwards? What happens when those cameras

go home, and you're left to try and create relationships with people who are strangers? But to get to that, there needs to be, yeah - I wish there was people that could help you with that. Because it's a very lonely journey. I mean iwi often don't know about us, necessarily, so I mean, how would they know to look for us if they didn't know about us? If they weren't told - you know, if that connection isn't there from birth, how would they know-?

Q. I think you coming forward, Ms AE, will begin a discourse in communities that is probably happening and if they aren't that are actually long overdue about how do we actually reconnect probably where we're able to, you know, where the state can actually play a useful part in terms of trying to re-introduce and re-establish cultural connections.

That was my only pātai for you, but can I just thank you, again, in the Samoan language, Ms AE (Samoan). So, thank you once again for being courageous and shedding the light on what actually happened to you in your journey through this closed adoption process. Malo lava.

COMMISSIONER STEENSON: Tēnā koe, Commissioner Alofivae. Now finally I'm going to pass to Commissioner Shaw, if you have any pātai and if you could also please thank Ms AE on behalf of the Commission.

COMMISSIONER SHAW: Ms AE, I'm not going to prolong the agony any more than I have to. I recognise the strain of what you've been through today, it's plainly been an ordeal. But I want you to know how incredibly valuable it's been. Just so that you know that we've been listening, just from my own personal point of view, some very powerful messages came out. First of all -- and they're tragic messages. First of all, that- the State is oblivious to the wellbeing of adopted children once they've been adopted. That is a tragedy. -And you are a victim of that tragedy.

Secondly, that you are then given the indignity of being denied the information that should properly be yours, kept from it on grounds of privacy of other people. So, there's another loss to you that in trying to build your picture of yourself you've lost that as well.

Then, finally and probably the most important point, is of your fractured identity, and that, the tragedy of that is that your identity, those are your words, but that has been done by the State, by the State's systems of adoption and of foster care done badly.

And so just to let you know that we have heard and we've also, and again to reassure you, read every word of the long statement that you provided in writing and that is going to be an incredibly important part of the work that we use as we go on. So, I just want to honour your courage in sharing this publicly. It's extraordinary that this is the first time you have spoken about it publicly and it just shows your bravery. So ngā mihi, ngā mihi, ngā

mihi atu ki a koe e te māreikura. Tēnā koe. (Thank you, thank you very much to a highly esteemed woman).

COMMISSIONER STEENSON: Thank you, Commissioner Shaw. E mihi ana ki a koe anō Ms AE, i tō kōrero i tēnei rā. (I want to thank you for your evidence today) Ms AE, thank you very much. I understand, Ms Norton and Ms AE, you would like to share a waiata now.

MS NORTON: Āe. Waiata: Ka titiro atu au ki te reme me he kapua hei whakamāharahara i ēnei rā. He kūaka mārangaranga kotahi te manu i tau, tau atu ki te tāhuna. Tau atu tau atu e. Keria he waikeri kia puta ki te rēinga, he waikeri rerenga roimata e. He tangata kē koutou, he tangata kē mātou i roto i tēnei whare. Tātou, tātou e.

[English: Waiata I gaze upon the lambs that looks like clouds. Today remembering bygone days. A solitary Godwit bird settles, settles upon the sandy shore. Dig a ditch which will emerge at the place where the spirits depart this world, a narrow channel where the tears flow. You are only human as we too are only human in this house, together as one).

COMMISSIONER STEENSON: Rawe, thank you. That was beautiful. Ms Spelman. Kei a koe (it's over to you now Ms Spelman).

MS SPELMAN: E tāpiri ana āku mihi ki ngā kaiwhakaatu ki ngā wāhine toa o te rā. (Additionally, I wanted to acknowledge once again a champion woman who gave evidence today). I want to acknowledge our powerful witnesses that we have had today. That does bring us, Madam Chair, to the end of the day. Tomorrow our first witness will be on from 10 o'clock but starting at 9.45 with karakia.

COMMISSIONER STEENSON: Ngā mihi, Ms Spelman. Just a reminder again that for those of us joining us with the livestream, that as Ms Spelman has just pointed out, the hearing will recommence tomorrow at 9.45 am. Can I please ask Matua Wyllis to close our proceedings today with karakia and waiata.

KAUMĀTUA CLAY: Tēnā koutou katoa e ngā rangatira, e ngā kaiwhakawā, e ngā kaiwhiriwhiri, e ngā kaimahi kua rauika mai nei i raro i te tuanui me te korowai manaaki o Tumutumuwhenua me Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei. Ngā whakamiha ki a koutou i tō taenga mai nā runga i te whakaaro, ki te whakapai, ki te whakatikatika ēnei mahi tūkino i whakapāngia ki runga i ētahi tamariki i ngā whare noho, puta noa i te motu. Nō reira, ko tēnei te mihi ki a koutou katoa. Ka mihi anō ki a rātou ngā kaikōrero i te rā nei, e kōrero ana mō ngā mahi tūkino, ngā mamae, ngā taumahatanga kei runga i a rātou. Ka aroha ki a rātou. Kia kaha, kia māia, kia manawanui. Ko te tūmanako mā tēnei momo hui, ka whai oranga, ka whai rongoā, ka whai ētahi āhuatanga kia wetewete tērā mamae, tērā taumahatanga kei runga i a

koutou. Nō reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā rā tātou katoa.

[English: Greetings to the leaders, the Commissioners, the staff, and everyone who is here underneath the care of our ancestral house Tumutumuwhenua and Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei. I wish to acknowledge your arrival here to address and remedy these abuses that happened to some of our children in care facilities across the country. And so, I acknowledge you all. I also wish to acknowledge the witnesses today who spoke of the abuses and the pain and the heaviness that they experienced and I sympathise with them. Be strong, be courageous and be determined. And it is hoped that through this type of gathering we will find a remedy and find ways to remove that pain and heaviness upon you. And so, thank you, thank you everyone.]

Tama ngākau mārie. Tama a te Atua. Tēnei tonu mātou, arohaina mai. Murua rā ngā hara, wetekina mai ēnei here kino whakararu nei. Tama ngākau mārie. Tama a te Atua. Tēnei tonu mātou, arohaina mai. Āmine.

[English: Waiata Tama Ngākau. Son of peace, son of God, here we remain, show compassion to us. Wipe away our sins, unshackle them, these evil ties that bind us. Son of peace, Son of God, here we are always, show love and compassion to us. Amen.]

Maiea, maiea te tipua. Maiea, maiea te tawhito. Maiea, maiea te kāhui o ngā ariki. Maiea tāwhiwhi ki ngā atua. Ōi ka tākina te mauri, ko te mauri i takea mai i a Rongo. Ko Rongo-marae-roa, ko Rongo-rō-whare, ko Rongo-taketake, ko Rongo-pūmau, ko Rongo-mā-Tāne. Ka tau te mauri ki runga ki ēnei taura. Ka tau te mauri ki runga ki ēnei tauira. Kia tīaho i roto, kia mārama i roto, kia wānanga i roto, kia tau ko te rongo, ko te āio nō Rongo-tatau-pounamu. Hou te rongo, tū te ranga wātea. Horahia mai te kura, kia tū tārewa ki te rangi. Whano, whano, haramai te toki. Haumi e, hui e, tāiki e. Kia ora tātou.

(The speaker recites a karakia to close the hui for the day. Thank you all)

Hearing adjourned at 5.26 pm to Thursday, 10 March 2022 at 9.45 am