

**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'imuumua 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:** 11 March 2022

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**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

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1 [9.50 am]

2 **KAUMATUA WYLLIS:** Good morning everyone and to all who have Zoomed in  
3 and everybody here in person. Tuatahi, ka waiata te hīmene, He hōnore. Ā he karakia, he  
4 mihi poto, kātahi ka tīmata te Kōmihana, ngā uiuinga, ngā kōrero o te rā. Nō reira, tēnā  
5 koutou, tēnā tātou, huri noa tēnā tātou katoa.

6 [English: Firstly we'd like to sing the hymn He Hōnore followed by a short prayer.  
7 Then the Commission will begin its proceedings today, therefore greetings everyone.]

8 (Waiata: He hōnore, he korōria, maungārongo ki te whenua, whakaaro pai e ki ngā  
9 tangata katoa. Ake ake, ake ake, Āmine. Te Atua, te piringa, tōku orange.

10 [English: Honour and glory to God and peace on earth. Goodwill to all people.

11 Forever and forever, amen. God, my companion, my forever, my salvation. Amen.)

12 He hōnore, he kororia ki te Atua, he maungārongo te whenua, he whakaaro pai ki ngā

13 tāngata katoa. Kī kī te rangi me te whenua i tōna kororiatanga. Nō reira, e te Atua, e te

14 Tama, te Wairua tapu. Tō mai tō wairua tapu, hei āwhina, hei tohutohu mātou i tēnei rā.

15 Otirā, rātou e tū ana. E tū mai ana ki te kōrero ērā kōrero kei roto i te ngākau.

16 Whakakahangia i a rātou, otirā, te whānau katoa e tautoko ana. Otirā, mātou hoki ngā

17 kaimahi e mahi ana te mahi ki te whakatika, ki te whakarongo ki raro i te manaakitanga o

18 tēnei whare o Tumutumuhenua.

19 [English: Honour and glory to God, peace and goodwill to all mankind. I pay homage to

20 God above, the father, the son and the Holy Spirit. Bestow upon us your power to everyone

21 who is standing today, give them strength, give everyone here strength. Also, to the

22 workers and to the Commission. Give us the strength to listen to the proceedings under the

23 protections of this ancestral house, Tumutumuhenua.]

24 Tēnei te īnoi atu nei ki a koe. Ka tuku ngā whakawhetai, ngā whakamoemiti mō ngā

25 manaakitanga i ūhia mai i runga i a mātou i ēnei rā e rima, ā, ko tātou tērā, ko mātou tērā e

26 tuku te aroha ki te hunga tē taea te haere mai. Koutou ngā purapura ora. Nā te mate urutā

27 tēnā, ka karo atu tō koutou taenga mai. Ahakoa tērā, ka tuku atu i ngā karakia ki te Runga

28 Rawa. Mā te Atua, koutou e manaaki, e tiaki. Nā reira, i runga i tēnā, ka mihi, ka mihi, ka

29 mihi aroha atu ki a tātou katoa. Tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa.

30 The prayers we beseech to you for protecting us over the last five days that have just

31 gone, therefore we give our love to all those who couldn't attend, to the survivors who

32 couldn't attend because of Covid-19. Regardless of that, we still pay homage to you, God,

33 and may God protect you all and therefore I greet you all in love. Greetings everyone.]

1 (Waiata: Mā wai rā e taurima te marae i waho nei. Mā te tika, mā te pono me te  
2 aroha e).

3 [English: who will care for the house outside, I tell you it will be protected by the  
4 righteous, by the people with faith, and people with love.]

5 Kia tau, kia tātou katoa te atawhai o tō tātou Ariki a Ihu Karaiti. Me te aroha o te  
6 Atua. Me te whiwhi ngātahitanga ki te wairua tapu, ake, ake, ake āmine. Kia pai te rā.

7 [English: Let us be blessed by the blessings of God and Jesus Christ forever and  
8 ever, amen. Have a good day.]

9 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, ngā mihi mahana ki a koutou  
10 (greetings all, warm greetings to everyone). Hello everyone and welcome to day 5 of our  
11 Māori hearing here at Tumutumuhenua. I just want to remind everyone that a priority for  
12 the Royal Commission is to ensure that we have an accessible hearing, and we have sign  
13 language interpreters, we also have te reo Māori interpreters who are helping to interpret  
14 into English for the sign language interpreters and for the stenographer who is writing the  
15 closed captions and for the transcript of the hearing.

16 Ms Spelman, ngā mihi o te wā (greetings today Ms Spelman). Can you please  
17 provide us with an overview today?

18 **MS SPELMAN:** Mauri ora e te whare. Ata mārie e te Kōmihana, otirā, ki a koutou katoa. Tuatahi  
19 e mihi ana ki tō tātou pou whakawairua o te rā, ki a koe matua Wyllis, otirā, ki a koutou o  
20 Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei. Tēnā tātou katoa.

21 [English: Greetings to everyone within this house to the Commission and to everyone in  
22 attendance. Firstly, I would like to acknowledge our minister who opened proceedings  
23 with a prayer and of course to the mana whenua Ngāti Whātua ki Ōrākei.]

24 Tēnā tātou katoa. Good morning, Madam Chair, Commissioners, everyone who is  
25 watching and thank you again to Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei for opening us up this morning. Ko  
26 te whakatauki o te rā nei (the proverb of today is), "he taonga te tamaiti", "every child is a  
27 taonga". Every child a treasure, an imprint of their tūpuna. Bound through whakapapa to  
28 tūpuna, to atua, to generations that came before and to the mokopuna that will follow. This  
29 whakatauki demonstrates the highly treasured place of the child in Te Ao Māori. We will  
30 hold that whakaaro throughout the day as we hear from survivors around the motu.

31 I tēnei rā ngā wahanga e toru e whai ake nei. Today we will have three sessions.  
32 We open this morning with Hōhepa Taiaroa who will be joining from Te Whanganui a Tara  
33 where he will be assisted by Winston McCarthy, Counsel Assisting, and Evander Dawson.  
34 Matua Taiaroa will speak about the abuse he experienced at various residences and how his

1 time in those settings set him on certain pathways in his life. He will also discuss the  
2 racism that led to the deprivation and loss of his language, his culture, his identity.

3 In terms of timing, our session this morning will begin very shortly at 10 o'clock  
4 and will go for about an hour and a half. Around 11.30 there will be a break for about  
5 15 minutes. After the morning break we will move to Whakatū where Te Aroha Knox will  
6 join us. She is being supported there by Indiana Sherwin and also from Wellington by  
7 Evander Dawson.

8 Te Aroha's evidence will be pre-recorded evidence which is one hour and 20  
9 minutes long. In that she will share her experiences of abuse in foster homes and in several  
10 institutions, including girls' homes. She will also speak to her experience of healing  
11 through embracing her taha Māori as part of that journey. All going to plan, this means we  
12 will have the lunch break today around 1.30.

13 This afternoon, Madam Chair, we will be aiming to start back at 2.15 pm for our  
14 third session of the day.

15 Ka huri atu tātou ki te kōrero a whaea Kuini Karanui. E mihi aroha ana ki te whaea  
16 kua whetūrangitia. Kei konei tonu tōna whānau hei tuku tonu tōna kōrero ki a mātou. A  
17 taua wā, ka whakamārama atu a Wiremu Rikihana rāua ko Kahukiwi Piripi.

18 [English: Then we will turn to the evidence given by Whaea Kuini. Her family is in  
19 attendance and then Wiremu Rikihana and Kahu Piripi will present.]

20 After the lunch break for our third session, we will hear from Whaea Kuini Karanui  
21 who sadly passed away last year. Her whānau will be here to share her story with us. They  
22 will be joining by video link, and we will also hear through a pre-recorded video. This  
23 afternoon Wiremu Rikihana will be outlining for us how that session will go. But it's  
24 important to acknowledge now Whaea Kuini who wanted her story shared in the hope that  
25 it helps the Government better understand how to properly look after tamariki today.

26 (Te reo Māori therefore, to all those presenting evidence today, I greet you all and  
27 thank you all). Madam Chair, if we could turn now for our first session to Winston  
28 McCarthy who is ready on the video link from te Whanganui a Tara with Matua Taiaroa.

29 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Tēnā koe, we'll get straight to our first witness please.

30 **MR McCARTHY:** Tēnā koe e te heamana. Tēnei te mihi ki a Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei mō tō koutou  
31 manaakitanga me te whakamanuhiri ki te whānau Hohepa. Tēnā koutou mō tō koutou  
32 tautoko. Kia Hohepa, tēnā koe e te rangatira. Ko taku hōnore ki te mahi ki a koe. Nō reira,  
33 tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

1 [English: I greet Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei for welcoming us warmly and also to the family of  
2 Hōhepa. Thank you for your support. To Hōhepa, thank you, it is an honour working with  
3 you. Therefore, greetings to everyone).

4 Madam Chair, I'm just going to do a quick whip around the room to let you know  
5 who's in here with us. We have myself and Hōhepa. We have a number of members of  
6 Hōhepa's family who are off screen, then (inaudible) on the camera, and I just want to  
7 briefly acknowledge Evander Dawson and Kat Arona who have worked with Hōhepa  
8 during this time.

9 Hōhepa, just to begin, would you like to introduce yourself?

10 **MR TAIAROA:** Kei te mihi, ngā mōrehu o Aotearoa. I te taha o matua. Ko Tongariro te maunga,  
11 Taupo-nui-a-Tia te moana, ko Te Arawa te waka, ko Tūwharetoa te iwi, ko Ngāti  
12 Rongomai te hapū, Ko Ngāti Rongomai te marae. I te taha o tōku whaea. Ko Puketapu te  
13 maunga, ko Ngaruroa te moana, ko Takitimu te waka, ko Ngāti Hinemau te hapū, ko Ngāti  
14 Kahungunu te iwi, ko Ōmaahu te marae. Ko Matiaha Taiaroa tōku pāpā, ko Dianne Te  
15 Tīmatanga Matiu tōku māmā, ko Hohepa Taiaroa ahau.

16 [English: I would like to extend my acknowledgments to all the nation. On my father's  
17 side, Tongariro is the mountain. -Taupo -nui -a Tia is the lake. Te- Arawa is the canoe.  
18 Tūwharetoa is the tribe. Ngāti Rongomai is the hapū. Ngāti Rongomai is also the marae.  
19 On my mother's side Puketapu is the mountain. Ngaruroa is the sea. Takitimu is the canoe.  
20 Ngāti Hinemanu is the hapū. Ngāti Kahungunu is the tribe. Ōmahu is the marae.  
21 Matiaha Taiaroa was my father, Dianne te Tīmatanga Matiu is my mother. My name is  
22 Hōhepa Taiaroa).

23 I'd like to sing a waiata that I made up four years ago as part of my pepeha. It's a  
24 poem actually that I wrote back then and the waiata goes like this.

25 (Waiata: Ka kite au i a koe e pikopiko, e huna piri i te tōmairangi e. Mahue e  
26 pikopiko i e kore e, ka puta i tō whānau hoki e. I whānau, tohia mai i a rātou, i mua i  
27 mamae rā i tōku oranga. E pūhoi te tipu, auē. Whakarongo mai ki taku karanga. E ārahi mai  
28 kia kore au e hinga, te tō atu ki te katoa e. Kia kite te tangi anei au e, e ara ko koe, e ara ko  
29 au e.

30 [English: I see you hiding away under the dew, alas you were weak, bowing over  
31 and hiding also from your family. You were taken away from them and it hurt me so much.  
32 It affected my upbringing. Please listen to my call. I beseech you to help me so that people  
33 may see the beast arise from within.] Kia ora.

34 **MR McCARTHY:** Madam Chair, if I could throw back to you for the affirmation.

1 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Tēnā koe Mr McCarthy. Tēnā koe Mr Taiaroa i to waiata  
 2 (thank you Mr Taiaroa for your song this morning). Before we – are you happy for me to  
 3 address you as Hōhepa or Mr Taiaroa, how would you like to be addressed Matua?

4 A. Hōhepa.

5 **Q.** Kapai. So just before we start, I would like to let you know who is in the room here with us  
 6 at Tumutumuwheua. So obviously myself, I'm here, Commissioner Steenson. We have  
 7 haukainga, our technical team, who is running all of the tech side of things; the Māori  
 8 investigation team, our sign language interpreters and our te reo Māori interpreters who are  
 9 remotely at the marae. And joining us by video link are the other Commissioners.  
 10 Commissioner Alofivae and Commissioner Erueti are in Tāmaki but not at the marae.  
 11 Commissioner Shaw is online from the Waikato, and Commissioner Gibson is streaming in  
 12 from Wellington. We also have our panel who will be present on the last day, and we have  
 13 our members of Sage and Te Taumata. We also have our core participant, which is the  
 14 Crown, and the rest of Aotearoa and elsewhere streaming in. That's not, of course, to put  
 15 you off at all, Hōhepa, just so that you're aware.

16 So, I'd now like you to take the affirmation and I understand you're happy to take  
 17 this in English.

18 **HÔHEPA TAIAROA (Affirmed)**

19 **QUESTIONING BY MR McCARTHY:** Hōhepa, I thought we'd start at the beginning and with  
 20 your earlier years. So where did you grow up?

21 A. I grew up in – I was born in I think Whangaehu just out of Whanganui.

22 **Q.** Who did you live with growing up?

23 A. Was with my mum and dad and I had two whāngai brothers who lived with us at the time.

24 **Q.** In your statement you talk about the role your aunties and uncles and extended whānau  
 25 played in your life growing up. What role did they play?

26 A. One of – when mum and dad were working, they would look after me. If they were away  
 27 then I would go to their place and play with my cousins and stay there, yeah.

28 **Q.** From your statement you mentioned growing up around the Rātana pa as well. What was  
 29 the level of te reo Māori around you at that point?

30 A. That was quite a lot actually, (inaudible) mostly we talked Māori kōrero. My family were  
 31 Māori orientated, so yeah, it was in our blood, so to speak.

32 **Q.** I'm just going to briefly go over your parents.

33 A. Yeah.

34 **Q.** So, what did your parents do for a living?

1 A. Mum was a rousey and dad was a shearer. Later on, dad went into the freezing works with  
2 his uncle – with his brother and worked in Whanganui at Imlay.

3 Q. And I understand at some point your parents split up?

4 A. Yeah, when I was about 5 years I think, mum moved out of the house, and it was just me  
5 and dad.

6 Q. So where did you stay after the initial split?

7 A. After dad, he couldn't look after me because he had to go to work, so I'd go down the road  
8 to one of my aunties' places and stay down there, yeah. It was, yeah, it was good, it was  
9 okay there but at first, I didn't know what was going on.

10 Q. What type of schooling did you get at this point?

11 A. I point to Whangaehu Primary School at that time and then over to Rātana when we moved  
12 over there. I think my aunty couldn't look after me, so that dad was working in Whanganui  
13 then at the freezing works, so he had to get a job closer to – so they had to look after me.  
14 So, I went over to Rātana and stayed by his brother's place, my uncle's. They both worked  
15 together in the freezing works, so it was pretty convenient for them too – yeah.

16 Q. So, moving over to Rātana I imagine that you were still surrounded by te reo?

17 A. Yeah, yeah, no, it was all around us. I mean apart from the music, because we had to go to  
18 music, you know, Māori language was the thing in Rātana, Whakamoemiti (thanksgiving)  
19 on Sundays, we used to go to choir practice, to the youth group; Māori was spoken all the  
20 time.

21 Q. When you were nine you say in your statement that your mother came back. Where did  
22 you move to from there?

23 A. Okay, when I was about nine mum came and visited me at Rātana and she said, "You want  
24 to come back to Wellington with me?" I said, "Oh I'd love to", thinking at that time that it  
25 was just me and mum, but yeah. But she offered and I jumped at the chance. I actually  
26 couldn't wait to get back down, get to Wellington. When we got down there, though, it was  
27 a bit of a different story. It was good for a while. When I came to Wellington, I found out  
28 that I had three new brothers and another father.

29           Yeah, I sort of enjoyed it for a while and thought this is exciting and then, after we –  
30 I moved in, mum adopted one of our cousins and we wanted a sister, so we adopted her,  
31 mum adopted her. And it was still okay for a while there, but then I started to feel a bit left  
32 out, because the mamae – (the hurt) was in there still inside me, you know, why did you  
33 leave and stuff like that. So as a young boy for me I didn't know what splitting up was or  
34 one parent families were back then, you know. As whānau we always looked after each



1 other and that's how I grew up, so yeah, it was very daunting for me when I found out that I  
2 had so many brothers and sisters, and another family.

3 **Q.** Okay. So, you've described your new family situation. In terms of moving to Wellington,  
4 what type of school did you attend when you moved to Wellington?

5 **A.** I first went to Strathmore Park Primary School and then moved into Evans Bay  
6 Intermediate. School for me was hard because I was still fighting – I was still trying to find  
7 my identity, I was still trying to figure out what was going on in life, why things were like  
8 they were. So primary school was okay, but I remember going there and they couldn't spell  
9 my name properly, so they asked me what it was in English, and I said Joseph, so Joseph  
10 was what they called me. So, anything to do with primary school or anything else in the  
11 community, my name was Joseph, because Pākehā couldn't say my name properly.

12 **Q.** So, you've moved to the big city, people aren't pronouncing your name, your mum had a  
13 different sort of living situation?

14 **A.** Yeah.

15 **Q.** You described how you were feeling. What did you end up doing?

16 **A.** In the end I rebelled, I couldn't cope with any of this. Yeah, I rebelled by pinching money  
17 from milk money trying to get mum's attention by being angry and doing stuff that kids do  
18 to try and get your attention. That was me. I think all I wanted to do was just get mum's  
19 attention and say, "Hey look I'm here, why does it have to be like this?" Why, you know,  
20 the questions I had were why, how come, stuff like that. There was no understanding as a  
21 child, you had no understanding because you were seen not heard, that's how we grew up as  
22 children. Yeah.

23 **Q.** Where did you end up living?

24 **A.** Well, I couldn't live at home, so I went on the streets. I lived – I had a paper run, so that's  
25 how I lived off my paper run. I got sick of pinching. Pinching was just there for attention,  
26 to get mum's attention. So, it wasn't really me. So, I got a job (inaudible) and started  
27 working down at James Smiths corner. And I'd lived in Roxy theatre, picture theatre, it was  
28 a 24hour picture theatre, the Roxy on the corner of Willis and Manners. And there was  
29 another picture theatre called The Princess and they used to open 24/7 too. So that's where  
30 I'd sleep as a child in the picture theatre. During the summer I'd go up on the roofs of the  
31 buildings and sleep up there on the streets.

32 Yeah, so one time I slept underneath our house at home, and I could hear mum and  
33 them talking as a family and that sort of, yeah, it was a bit gutting for me because I felt left  
34 out, I felt not wanted so I went back out on to the streets and lived on the streets.

1 **Q.** I understand that Social Welfare became involved at some point. How old were you when  
2 Social Welfare became involved?

3 **A.** About nine and a half, 10. By then I'd had enough. I think I got the attention of mum, but  
4 at the wrong end of it. I also got the attention of Social Welfare because of the things that I  
5 was doing, petty criminal stuff. And so, by then I'd had enough, I didn't want anyone, you  
6 know, by then I was – my wall had started building on top of me and I didn't want to let  
7 anybody in. So, anything to do with mum or Social Welfare I would rebel against because  
8 of not understanding, you know. And so, one day we were at a meeting, mum picked me  
9 up, took me to Social Welfare and Cubewell House in Kent Terrace and I'd had enough of  
10 my social worker, and I'd had enough of mum, so I jumped out the window on the first  
11 floor and ran away, which brought the attention of the Police by then.

12 **Q.** If I can stop you there briefly, I just wanted to go back to what you said about a wall, and  
13 I noted in your evidence that you speak about the wall throughout it. Can you explain to  
14 the Commission what you mean by the "wall"?

15 **A.** Okay. For me, and I guess many like me, the wall is you've had enough of – how can I say  
16 this? You've exhausted all your resources in finding answers, so the first thing you do is  
17 you find your own answers, and then when you can't find those answers, you start building  
18 a wall around yourself. It's like a self-protection. If nobody's going to help you and you  
19 can't explain yourself to them, you start building a wall around you so that nobody can get  
20 inside, get into your mind, get inside you. It's like a protective wall. Some use drugs, some  
21 use alcohol, some just sit in their room and build this wall up around them, and that's where  
22 the loneliness and the mamae and everything starts coming and building in.

23 And it's pretty hard that wall because once you start building that wall, nobody can  
24 touch you, nobody can get inside you, nobody can talk to you, anything they say you've got  
25 to process it so that it's processable, so that you can understand it, so that, you know, you  
26 can feel comfortable on the inside. Whereas before you were trying to find answers and  
27 you couldn't. You know, a wall is just – it's your protective area.

28 **Q.** Just going back before when you were talking about the wall – thank you for that kōrero –  
29 you mentioned that the wall started going up because you're fed up. How did Social  
30 Welfare treat you when you were interacting with them?

31 **A.** Like a number. I was processed like everybody else. There was no grey area, it was black  
32 and white, you were just part of what everybody else was, you were a number and that was  
33 it. We weren't treated as a family member or a whānau, you were treated as a number and  
34 that was it.

- 1 **Q.** Were you given counselling or any other type of support at that point?
- 2 **A.** No, I did it myself. The only counselling, I ever did was through self, through eagles, what  
3 I call the eagles. Eagles are your closest friends, your whānau that are there to support you.  
4 Not the ones than put you down but the ones that actually stand there and support you when  
5 nobody else will. Eagles are whānau whanui (the wider family), people outside of your  
6 family, that have understanding, those were my eagles. I relied on them only because  
7 I couldn't trust anybody else, and I had very few eagles.
- 8 **Q.** Because I did notice that it was a theme throughout your evidence. At one point you say  
9 Social Welfare was always there when you got into trouble, but no one showed up when  
10 you needed help. I just wondered if you could explain that a bit more?
- 11 **A.** Yeah. I think for me I think because of the era that I was living in and the year in the 70s  
12 and 80s, no matter what you said as a child or no matter what you said, they never listened  
13 to you. You were never listened to. The only thing that the Social Welfare would listen to  
14 was the sheet that was in front of them with your name and number on it pertaining to what  
15 you had done. And it didn't tell them how you felt, it didn't tell them what you were going  
16 through in life. So, all the information that they had was written and put in front of them by  
17 others on their assumptions, but not by your own.
- 18 **Q.** And just briefly to wrap up this sort of line of questioning, eventually you started going to  
19 the court system and then you moved to your uncle's in Hawke's Bay?
- 20 **A.** Yeah.
- 21 **Q.** How old were you at this point?
- 22 **A.** I think I was about 12, I think I was about 12 years old. Social Welfare had had enough.  
23 Mum had had enough. And then mum suggested that I go by my uncle, which was I think a  
24 really good thing at that time, because when I went to Hastings, I enjoyed it there. My  
25 uncle taught me, he taught me how to work, he taught me how to be a Māori entrepreneur  
26 in a Pākehā environment. My uncle, he taught me how to be pono (truthful) with yourself,  
27 how to be family orientated without the hassles. So, it was enjoyable in Hastings, I went to  
28 Hastings Boys' High there and enjoyed it. But I guess the mamae followed me there too,  
29 because I got into trouble as well, so yeah.
- 30 **Q.** I understand eventually you were sent to Kohitere?
- 31 **A.** Yeah.
- 32 **Q.** Did your uncle want you to go?
- 33 **A.** No, he didn't actually, he thought that he could do something with me, and I believed that  
34 he would have if he'd have had the chance to, being in a whānau environment with family,

1           you know, Uncle Waru was a hard man, my uncle was a hard man, but he was very fair,  
2           and I liked that. I think if I had to take anything away from that experience it would be my  
3           work ethics and – see my uncle taught me how to live in a Pākehā environment while still  
4           being a Māori. And that I will never forget, yeah.

5   **Q.**    We're now going to turn to your time in care. I understand you don't want to spend too  
6           much time on this section, so I'm just going to ask some general questions. How old were  
7           you when you were sent to Kohitere?

8   **A.**    I was 14, 14 years old when I went to Kohitere.

9   **Q.**    What were your first impressions of the campus?

10 **A.**    I first went there I thought this was exciting, there's a whole lot of guys my age, it was an  
11          experience that I was looking forward to, but, you know, very apprehensive about because  
12          I'd never been institutionalised before, fresh off the farm, so you know.

13 **Q.**    In your evidence you talk about an initiation, we won't go through that, but it's in your  
14          evidence, the Commissioners have read it.

15 **A.**    Yeah.

16 **Q.**    I was just going to ask one question about that. How frequently did those initiations occur?  
17          Did it happen to every boy who came through?

18 **A.**    Yeah, it happened to every new boy that came into the institution. Some frequently more  
19          than others. Some fought it, some didn't. Yeah.

20 **Q.**    I also wanted to ask some questions about the staff. You mention that there were  
21          tradesmen and that there were house parents?

22 **A.**    Yeah.

23 **Q.**    What were the tradesmen like?

24 **A.**    I actually liked them to be honest. If it wasn't for them, I wouldn't know how to paint a  
25          house today. I didn't like carpentry because I had a Māori boss there who was really –  
26          yeah, he came across like a army sergeant. He wasn't a very good educator. But the  
27          painting boss was cool, he taught me everything I knew. I tried a few things inside while I  
28          was incarcerated, forestry, farm work, but I found painting to be good. But for me it was a  
29          steppingstone for my future, and I enjoyed the work bosses, but I didn't like the house  
30          parents. No, they were shocking actually.

31 **Q.**    You do talk in your evidence about the house parents, and you say that the tradesmen  
32          would awahi you but then they'd get into trouble with the house parents. So, what were the  
33          house parents like?

- 1 A. Yeah no, they were terrible. I would rather have gone to the Army actually to be honest.  
2 They were the ones that were supposed to look after you but never did. They were the ones  
3 that were supposed to stand between you and the violence and the bullshit that went on in  
4 those little places, but they never did. To the point where sometimes they would use others  
5 for their own advantage to try and calm you down, so they stop you from being aggressive  
6 in places like that. So yeah, I didn't like them much.
- 7 Q. You mention the relationship with other boys, and you've covered that in your evidence, so  
8 we'll take that as read. In your statement you talk about running away from Kohitere. Why  
9 would you run away?
- 10 A. First night I was there I ran away. Only because of the shock of the violence and what  
11 I expected in a place like that, I never expected the abuse that went on, the stand over  
12 tactics, you know. I'm talking daily, 24/7, not just we'll go next week and do it, this was  
13 24/7. The verbal abuse, the trauma that went with it, just watching the ones that were weak  
14 trying to get through the situations they were in. You know, you made friendships there.  
15 For me in situations like that, that's where you learn kotahitanga (unity), kaitiakitanga  
16 (guardianship), all of that stuff. We didn't know the words back then, you know, we learnt  
17 it without the words. This is the stuff you learned when you were in situations like that,  
18 you know. Yeah, it's a very hard environment. You might think it's just a boys' home, but  
19 to be honest that was the beginning of my criminal career.
- 20 Q. You say it was the beginning of your criminal career. Could you explain why it was the  
21 beginning of your criminal career?
- 22 A. Well, because instead of learning Māori and other stuff we were supposed to learn, we  
23 learned how to steal, how to gamble, how to get ahead of everybody else in the system.  
24 You know, that was how our time was spent because it wasn't spent in positive stuff. So,  
25 we made our own stuff up. Unfortunately, that was it.
- 26 Q. You spoke to us before about running away. What would happen when you returned?
- 27 A. You go to the block. I ran away about several times at Kohitere. It was only because of the  
28 violence that was there and everything else. But when you came back into custody you  
29 were in the block for three months and a very harsh place the block. Very Army orientated.  
30 Yeah nah, used to get up at five in the morning, pack your bed roll up, put it into a room  
31 and you'd sit on a concrete block until about seven, eight, otherwise you'd be up doing PT  
32 until seven or eight, then you'd have a shower and then that's you, 23-hour lockdown. For  
33 three months.
- 34 Q. How long did you think you spent in secure in total?

- 1 A. Two years on and off, because of the amount of times that I ran away and the trouble that  
2 I got into when I was there.
- 3 Q. What effect do you think this had on you?
- 4 A. Yeah, to this day the effect has been phenomenal. The loneliness. I couldn't even go to a  
5 birthday party or a barbecue or a tangi because of the amount of people that were around  
6 me, crowds, I didn't like crowds. I had to force myself to go to a band just to watch a band  
7 at a normal gig. You know, I don't – I self-isolated, yeah. Yeah, very traumatic. And  
8 I still do it, today sometimes. My family knows. When there's (inaudible). sometimes I'll  
9 go, it depends on the mood that I'm in. These are the things that place has caused me, the  
10 trauma and that. I can't make proper decisions sometimes because of – I can't hold down a  
11 job. So yeah. And that's only because of those situations that I was in when I was younger,  
12 in those places.
- 13 Q. Okay. I'm going to ask you some questions now about the treatment of Māori culture, te  
14 reo at Kohitere. Growing up you'd been surrounded by te reo Māori. Were you allowed to  
15 speak it at Kohitere?
- 16 A. Heck no. I tried once, I actually spoke to one of the staff there, "kia ora bro" and I was  
17 reprimanded pretty badly actually. I couldn't understand why. Most of the staff there were  
18 Māori, but they were in a Pākehā environment, and you sort of couldn't communicate when  
19 they're like that, you know, so you shut up. That's part of your wall building up, you just  
20 shut up. The wall that surrounds you, it was around me, it was above my head by then, ha.  
21 So, I'd never let anybody into my little circle, you know, and it was only because of that.  
22 Trying to figure out all the bullshit, trying to figure out what was going on, why things  
23 were like they were.
- 24 Q. Was there any education in Te Ao Māori or tikanga?
- 25 A. The only education that was there was when we talked to each other, like I said, when  
26 you're in situations in places like that, that's where you learn kaitiakitangaship and stuff like  
27 that, but you don't know what they are, you only live it and part of that was when we were  
28 together we'd stick together, you know, you'd find your core mates and you'd stick together  
29 and help each other out.
- 30 Q. You mention in your evidence that later in life you got more in touch with your taha Māori.  
31 How did these experiences, when you were learning about your identity, how did these  
32 experiences make you feel in contrast?
- 33 A. Look, I had to learn, my children were speaking Māori and they were speaking fluently.  
34 They were coming home with school things in Māori, and I couldn't understand them, you

1 know? So, it was like it was catching up with me, and I needed to learn so that I could  
2 understand and kōrero with my kids, kōrero with my whānau. So – but it's hard because for  
3 me personally there's a block, you know, I don't know why, but I'm learning bit by bit  
4 through my niece who teaches, through whānau that helped me learn Māori, even though  
5 the Wananga, just learning through them. So yeah, I'm starting to get it back, but it was a  
6 hard journey and I know some out there will find it even harder because it's been longer for  
7 them to pick it up. But I encourage you, you know, go for it. That's your language. And  
8 I encourage my children the same thing, it's where you're from.

9 **Q.** Going back to Kohitere, in terms of general education, what did that look like at Kohitere,  
10 did you go to school or...

11 **A.** Education was based on an English curriculum or mainstream, it wasn't based – and there  
12 was no Māori, so we never learned Māori until one of the carvers that came from Shannon  
13 who used to teach there, he brought Māori into Kohitere to be honest, and taught some of  
14 the boys while they were carving. So that's the only Māori that we ever got was when he  
15 came and that was after I'd left. And my brother was in there then, my youngest brother,  
16 and he taught my youngest brother carving. So, Māori wasn't there when I was there, but  
17 when I left, they had just started to pick it up.

18 **Q.** In terms of support, did you see your whānau often while you were at Kohitere?

19 **A.** Mum came and my youngest brother James. They came, they were the only ones that came  
20 to visit me. Noone else came.

21 **Q.** Did you have support from a social worker?

22 **A.** No, there was no support. As far as the social worker was concerned, the last support I got  
23 from them was at the courthouse before I went to Kohitere. [audio cut so to be redacted?]

24 **Q.** Did you receive any counselling, or did you visit with a psychologist while you were at  
25 Kohitere?

26 **A.** Yeah nah, I self-counselled in the block.

27 **Q.** I'm now going to turn to your time at borstal. Again, we're going to be quite brief in this  
28 sort of section because I know you want to get to redress and moving forward, the positive  
29 things. After you left Kohitere you were out for about a year and then ended up at borstal.  
30 How old were you at this point?

31 **A.** When I went to borstal, I was 18 years old.

32 **Q.** And –

33 **A.** Oh, nah actually about between 16 and 18 years old, yeah.

- 1 **Q.** Before you spoke about Kohitere being the beginning of your criminal career, where does  
2 the borstal fit in terms of learning new skills that are relevant to that career?
- 3 **A.** For Kohitere I got into trouble when I was there only because of I couldn't handle the way  
4 things were, because I had no support coming out of prison from the Government or even  
5 whānau, it was pretty hard to adjust to that system that was out there at that time. So,  
6 I couldn't adjust, so I just started to steal, do stuff, silly stuff, you know, I was angry all the  
7 time, still carrying all this baggage with me. Yeah, just anger that led me to borstal, that  
8 and silly stuff, petty crimes, you know.
- 9 **Q.** Did you see your whānau when you were at borstal?
- 10 **A.** No, no, I wouldn't – I didn't – I was ashamed to actually let my whānau know, but some of  
11 my close cousins, they knew, I let them know.
- 12 **Q.** We spoke before about social workers at Kohitere, did you see a social worker while you  
13 were at borstal?
- 14 **A.** No.
- 15 **Q.** And again, did you receive any counselling or psychological support?
- 16 **A.** No, there was none there, none given, none taken.
- 17 **Q.** And when you left borstal, was any support provided to help you transition into society?
- 18 **A.** There was a probation officer but that didn't help me much at all to be honest. There was  
19 no counselling or whānau support at that time.
- 20 **Q.** Overall, what impact do you think your time in care, your time at Kohitere and your time at  
21 borstal, what impact do you think it's had on your life?
- 22 **A.** It just prepared me for prison really to be honest. What I didn't learn in borstal or in  
23 Kohitere I enhanced in prison to the point where my wall was so high now above my head,  
24 I would let nobody in. My anger was so strong because of the trauma that I had gone  
25 through as a child and my senses were geared up for learning how to rip people off and do  
26 things better in a criminal point of view. Only because I had no other option of doing  
27 anything else. There was no other avenue.
- 28 **Q.** We're now going to continue on with the impacts of abuse. We've talked about that wall,  
29 the metaphor you use. How would you say the wall and your anger from your time in care,  
30 how has it affected your relationships with your whānau?
- 31 **A.** Oh, look I stipulated four years ago, I've gone through three relationships, three beautiful  
32 relationships, and that's with the whānau too. And I ruined it with my anger, with all the  
33 mamae and the baggage that I had carried with me as a child to adulthood, from adulthood



1 to the first relationship to the second relationship to the third relationship. By the time I got  
2 to the third relationship I'd had enough. I needed answers.

3 **Q.** In terms of your identity and connection to your culture, overall, what effect would you say  
4 your time in care had on your connection to your Māoritanga?

5 **A.** I think it had a big effect to the point where it was either non-existent or going out very  
6 slowly. And it was only because of my attitude towards others and my anger towards them  
7 as well, you know, I never thought of it. I still needed answers from all the other questions  
8 that I was asking about my life and about everything that goes with it. But in saying that,  
9 after years I've – how do I say it? Even though I wasn't or I didn't learn Māori, I lived  
10 Māori and I think that's what made it harder for me. As a Māori you tend to – in this day  
11 and age you tend to have two choices and both choices they don't match. In one choice you  
12 have the law LAW, which is the Government, in another you have LORE which is the lore,  
13 Māori. So, to try and fit in both of them and still try and be a person at the same time and  
14 go through life is pretty hard bro, pretty hard. So, you have to make a balance, you have to  
15 make a balance to try and bring back what you lost and let go of what you have.

16 **Q.** We spoke before about your children going to school and the start of your own te reo Māori  
17 journey. How did you feel when they were coming home, and you weren't able to  
18 communicate with them in te reo?

19 **A.** Frustrated as, you know. Even in situations where I'd ask – my daughter or my son would  
20 ask me a question in Māori, it's always the youngest ones, and I'd go to the oldest ones and  
21 say what does this mean? And then I'd answer them. Very frustrating. So yeah.

22 **Q.** All right. In your statement you talk about your experience with three of your children.  
23 They were either adopted or uplifted. We're going to talk about your eldest daughter first.

24 **A.** Okay.

25 **Q.** What were the circumstances leading to her adoption?

26 **A.** I was in Mount Crawford, I had three months to go before I was released, but one day a  
27 social worker came up and visited me, after all those years they visited me in prison and  
28 they said "Mr Taiaroa, we have your daughter in foster care and we have a family that  
29 would like to adopt your daughter", and I said well hello she's got a father, he's coming out  
30 soon and be ready to pick her up. And they said oh no, they put it down to because I was  
31 incarcerated, it wouldn't be advisable, apparently, I wouldn't be a good parent to my  
32 daughter because of the situation that I was in at the moment.

33 **Q.** So, did you feel any pressure from Social Welfare in terms of adoption?

- 1 A. Oh yeah, they gave me an ultimatum, either I sign the papers now or they're going to take  
2 me to court and they're going to do it anyway.
- 3 **Q.** Did you give any conditions to Social Welfare?
- 4 A. Yes, I did. After some consideration and frustration, I said yes, I will sign the papers on the  
5 condition that my daughter learns Māori, that my daughter understands Māori or goes to a  
6 Māori school. I was so glad that my daughter had parents that were willing, and I must say  
7 Pākehā parents, that were willing to let her go to learn Māori. So, my baby, she went to  
8 St Joseph's and then she went to Hoani Waititi to learn Māori. But I signed those papers  
9 under duress, that was a condition that I asked for hoping that she would learn Māori and I  
10 was so grateful that she did. To the point where when her oldest brother passed away, my  
11 baby stood up and that was awesome to see, that was awesome to see.
- 12 **Q.** Are you okay?
- 13 A. Yeah, sweet. So yeah, those were the conditions, and I signed those papers. But I'm so  
14 blessed because I found my daughter when she was 13, I think, 12, 13, I found my baby and  
15 she's with me here today.
- 16 **Q.** In your evidence you also talk about a younger daughter, and she was uplifted. Do you  
17 know what the circumstances were that led to her uplift?
- 18 A. Yeah. At that time, I think I'd just got out, this was during that time that I signed papers for  
19 my daughter, I just got out and found out that my other daughter, my youngest daughter  
20 was – at that time she was in foster care in Wellington, and I'd had enough of that, I thought  
21 bugger this, so I toned for her. For six months I went up and visited every day and after  
22 six months they said I could have my baby back. And I've been with my baby ever since,  
23 who's here today.
- 24 **Q.** Do you know in both situations with your older daughter and your younger daughter, do  
25 you know if either daughter was – if Social Welfare took efforts to place them with  
26 whānau?
- 27 A. No, there was no efforts to place them with whānau. As far as they were concerned it was a  
28 black and white story. With Juanita I was just so lucky, with my baby I was so lucky that  
29 her parents were good parents. With Coralee I didn't want her to go through any of those  
30 stages. As a baby she was only 16 months old with my younger one. I didn't want her to  
31 go through that, so that's why I fought for her, and I wanted her to have a normal life.
- 32 **Q.** I wanted to briefly talk about your healing. You say in your statement at one point you  
33 realise you needed help. What led you to that realisation?

1 A. For a while now the whānau was saying I need help, I need help. One day I met my son's  
2 friend, and he knew somebody who does that sort of thing, who does counselling and  
3 Christian whānau. I said, "Oh yeah, no sweet as, I'll go see what's going on". And when  
4 I went there, I experienced a lot of good stuff coming out of this place that I went to. As far  
5 as healing was concerned it was both, yeah, physical and mental. So, it was a good  
6 journey.

7 I spent six months at this place and called Shiloh Retreat & Renewal Centre in  
8 Cheltenham, and after six months I ran the male release unit that was in Palmerston North  
9 for this organisation. I also worked with a group called Palmerston North Street Vans. At  
10 that time, they were called Drug Arm Palmerston North and I still work with them today as  
11 a volunteer. My job was to run around and to help people by going out Friday, Saturday  
12 nights and dishing out coffee and cakes and pies to those that were in need of a feed or a  
13 coffee. Also, during the week, we would deliver bread to those that needed bread from the  
14 supermarkets, pies and stuff like that, and the guy there that I worked with who helped me,  
15 he was one of my eagles. And yeah, he helped me a lot to the point where my anger  
16 disappeared, eh, it just went away. And this was in 2001 so it's been a long journey since  
17 then. But as I say, it's an ongoing one.

18 **Q.** You spoke about eagles before.

19 A. Yeah.

20 **Q.** Did you have any eagles in State care at all?

21 A. Yeah, I did actually. A couple of mates. We used to stick together. One from Whanganui,  
22 another mate of mine who passed away. But we were more mates than eagles. Māori and  
23 Pākehā, you know, but, yeah, there was a couple of pastors that used to come to Kohitere,  
24 Pastor Eddie and Pastor Vic and they were my eagles too, they were the ones that sort of  
25 steered me on a course of there's another way out. There's another avenue, yeah. So, it was  
26 good. I did have my eagles inside. You know, it's good.

27 **Q.** What is your relationship like now with your whānau?

28 A. Like any other whānau now. We get on, we don't get on. But we move forward together,  
29 yeah. It's been awesome actually. There was a point there where I had thought I'd lost my  
30 whānau because of my anger and my violence and there was a point where I did actually  
31 lose them. But I guess through karakia and blood and guts and just staying with it, keep  
32 going, we have a relationship, we have a good relationship, a strong one.

33 **Q.** I'm going to move to talking about redress now. That's sort of related to whānau. In your  
34 evidence you say that you've never made a claim for the abuse you suffered in State care.

- 1 A. No.
- 2 **Q.** Why is that?
- 3 A. Because money didn't mean anything to me at that time, all I wanted was answers. I never  
4 really thought about it. I just wanted answers. Answers would satisfy me. But then when  
5 I look at the bigger picture, the trauma, the things that I went through, my family went  
6 through, you know, there has to be a redress.
- 7 **Q.** If you did make a claim, what would you want from the Government?
- 8 A. I want my name cleared. I want my record, my criminal record scratched. I want my name  
9 back, I'm not a number. You know, you offered me \$20,000, between 1993 and 1995, a  
10 17 -year-old was had up for murder, 21 years later he was discharged and innocent. You  
11 offered that man \$2.5 million. I've been waiting 48 years and you offer me 20,000?  
12 Really? That young man had the same trauma through prisons, same trauma that I go  
13 through, same trauma that everybody else that stands before me speaking to you now goes  
14 through. And if I ever have that money, any money that you give me it would go towards  
15 the people that I hurt. My whānau, my friends, the ones that I hurt the most. It would go  
16 towards helping them. But for me, I want my name back, Taiaroa, I'm not a number.
- 17 **Q.** Just focusing in on the name part of that. We spoke earlier about your name changing  
18 when you moved to Wellington. What is the importance of a good name, the mana of a  
19 name to you?
- 20 A. It means a lot to me. You know, when I was younger, I used to go yeah, okay, okay, you  
21 can't say my name Hōhepa, so I'll use Joseph, because that's what the Police used, that's  
22 what the education system used because they couldn't say my name properly. And yet now  
23 I work with Pākehā now today, today, you call me Hōhepa. Why couldn't you do that? It  
24 took them a couple of minutes to say it, to learn it. You know, you thump it in us through  
25 education to learn English, why can't you say my name in Māori properly?
- 26 **Q.** Picking up on the second point about redress being for whānau. Could you explain a little  
27 more about what you mean by that?
- 28 A. I'm not the only one who suffered there. You know they say, there's an old saying back in  
29 the days, "when I do the lag, you do the lag". They've been doing the lag ever since, my  
30 whānau, the people that I hurt, they do the same lag I do. That's why the redress should go  
31 to them. This is a whānau thing, it's not an individual thing. Yet you say that it's an  
32 individual thing. That's why we have problems today with our whānau and our, you know,  
33 we're whanau. When one hurts, we all hurt.

1 **Q.** Looking back at your life what do you think could have been done differently to keep you  
2 out of State care?

3 **A.** Well, my first answer was a better social worker would have been a thing. Somebody that  
4 would have understood where I came from in the beginning, and we could have stopped  
5 this way back then. Redress, you know, it's pretty hard being a Māori in a Pākehā  
6 environment especially with Pākehā laws, you know, it goes back to that same thing when  
7 you talk about LAW and LORE. All my life I've been using those two things without even  
8 thinking about. Fighting for my family while they're in Social Welfare custody, fighting  
9 just to stay out and to be a family under the Social Welfare system. But fighting to get a  
10 better education or hoping for a better education under that system.

11 **Q.** What do you think could have been done differently while you were in State care?

12 **A.** You know the one thing I like about State care – what's to like about it – was the fact that  
13 I learned a trade and that sort of – that took my mind away from where I was, what  
14 situation I was in. Facilitators, you know, there were some there that were good. They  
15 were more house parents than tutors, or house parents, you know, they were more parents,  
16 your whānau.

17 If we had people to come in. We have whānau that are incarcerated, we have  
18 whānau that are on the streets, we talk about it all the time as whānau and yet we don't  
19 stand up. You know, I awhi our churches but I disagree with the fact that they give  
20 handouts instead of hand ups, because the only thing my people look forward to is that  
21 handout when they should be out of there and helping someone else.

22 So, for me, if we had iwi involvement in these situations and if we had whānau  
23 involvement in these situations, that would help to bring that person up and to make them  
24 have better choices as opposed to what choice they have inside and learning stuff from  
25 inside. For me a hand up is that iwi going into that environment that they're in and sussing  
26 it out. Our people need to come home. You know where you're from. We go down to  
27 Wellington and I see people from Ngāti Kahungunu, I see people from Ngāi Tūhoe, Ngāi  
28 Tahu on the streets. Iwi must come back and get them. Your iwi must come back and awhi  
29 your prisoners, and then you give it to our hapū and you let our hapū awhi the whānau. But  
30 that's how it should be, not through the churches to get a handout, we need a hand up so  
31 that people can stand up and say "hey, we're here, we're here to help you".

32 **Q.** You've mentioned the role you see for iwi and hapū. Do you have any other  
33 recommendations that you think would be helpful, whether it be the role of Māori or just  
34 general recommendations?

1 A. Yeah, look what we're doing is we're doing it by ourselves, we need involvement with the  
2 Government. We need our government to help us as an iwi, we need that Treaty partner  
3 stuff to go, you know, Māori should help Māori. That's the only way I can see it. We need  
4 our people there to help us, we need Māori to help Māori, we need you to be there, to be  
5 involved with our people; incarcerated or not.

6 Q. To finish with, we heard karakia whakatauki this morning while you were introducing  
7 yourself. And I know you wanted to finish with the poem, the English translation. Could  
8 you tell the Commission about the context of what lead to you writing this poem and maybe  
9 you can share it?

10 A. Yeah. It wasn't until I went to Auckland with three other guys and realised how big this  
11 journey was. When you do it alone you only think about yourself, but when you stand with  
12 others there's thousands of us out there that need help. One of the things I learned inside  
13 was poetry and so I wrote a poem about the situation that we were in, and from that poem  
14 came my whakatauki which was I karakia'd this morning, what I did this morning.

15 And this poem tells about a person who has a taniwha (a demon) on his back, and it  
16 goes like this. "Pikopiko I see you hiding there amongst the dew. Oh, so fragile pikopiko  
17 surrounded by your whānau too. Taken from them long ago, scarred for life and slow to  
18 grow. Oh, e hoa hear my call, guide me so that I won't fall. Reaching out for all to see, this  
19 taniwha, it's not you or me."

20 And I wrote this because I thought about my whānau and how this taniwha had me,  
21 been with me all those years, and I know there's a taniwha there with you too and we need  
22 to get rid of it. So that's why I wrote that poem to remind myself that I can let it go.

23 Q. Kia ora Hōhepa. Those are my questions Madam Chair. I'm not sure if the Commission  
24 has any?

25 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Tēnā koe Mr McCarthy, thank you so much, Hōhepa. Thank  
26 you for your kōrero today. I don't have any pātai for you, but I will ask my fellow  
27 Commissioners if they have pātai if that's all right with you? Just checking you're  
28 comfortable to take questions, Hōhepa?

29 A. Kia ora.

30 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Commissioner Alofivae, do you have any pātai for Hōhepa?

31 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** I do, I do. Talofa lava rangatira Hōhepa.

32 A. Kia ora.

33 Q. What a privilege to be able to hear your kōrero this morning. I was really moved by the  
34 metaphors that you used, the eagle, the eagle that has the acuity of vision to be able to see

1 so far into the future and to fly so high, and the span of the wings in terms of being able to  
2 awhi you. That was really powerful. And also, the wall that you spoke of, I think many  
3 people would build walls and you spoke so beautifully to that about why you would build  
4 that as a protective factor.

5 In your kōrero you talk about some transition phases and how difficult it was for  
6 you to transition successfully from custody back out into life, and I think this is something  
7 that many a whānau, many a survivor actually experience. Could I ask you now from your  
8 lived experiences, if you could offer us some advice about how could we be doing that  
9 better for our young people, for our tamariki that are in care still? What would you say to  
10 us?

11 A. Whaea, I think this is where our iwi should be involved, our hapū. You know, some of us  
12 don't have whānau, some of us go in there, we come out and we come out so strong, but  
13 that strength is for all the wrong reasons. That's why I ask our iwi be involved, our whānau  
14 be involved. You know, for those that don't have whānau that have that strong support  
15 when they come out, you know, the first thing you do when you come out you think about  
16 the beer, burger, wāhine, you know, whatever you think about, but when you get outside  
17 and the reality hits you and that cold air hits you, that's when you're most vulnerable.  
18 That's where anybody can say "Bro come with me" and you'll follow. That's where we  
19 need our whānau there, or our iwi, our hapū. We know what time they come out, you  
20 know, through whānau conversations, through kōrero, through, you know, even through our  
21 probation service. That's where our service providers, our Māori service providers should  
22 be, not underneath the cliff waiting for them with the ambulance.

23 Q. Thank you for that. Thank you for that expansion. The analogy that you used with Teina  
24 Pora with the young man and the pain for you and what I was hearing clearly was the  
25 disproportionate, the disproportionality of what you have to carry in terms of your name  
26 and clearing your name. It seems quite simple, doesn't it?

27 A. Yes.

28 Q. You know, at one level, because of all of the things that you lose because you've amounted  
29 a number of marks against your name. Things like limiting travel, things like being able to  
30 access certain services and what not?

31 A. Yeah.

32 Q. So, I'm hearing you say that that is something that we should be thinking very clearly and  
33 hard about?

34 A. Yeah.

- 1 **Q.** Yeah.
- 2 **A.** Yeah. No, that's right too whaea. Like I said, it's not one of us involved, we're all  
3 involved, whether there's one family member or 50 family members, everyone's affected.
- 4 **Q.** Yeah. So, there's a rebalancing that has to happen there for us as a system but also as a  
5 nation?
- 6 **A.** Yeah. For us it's a cleansing, for Māori it's a cleansing, it's a new beginning. This is our  
7 time to stand up and say hey we have people in the right places now that can help us,  
8 service providers, counsellors, we have the people, we have leaders, like my brother said  
9 four years ago, we're captains of industries, we're leaders.
- 10 **Q.** Absolutely. And the last thing I just wanted to say to you, it's probably more of a comment  
11 than a question was, you know what, you sound to me, rangatira Hōhepa, to be an awesome  
12 dad. That actually in spite of it all, all of the challenges and everything that you were up  
13 against when you were talking about your daughters, when you were talking about your  
14 pepe, I really sensed just the aroha, and you can't put a price on that. Your tenacity and  
15 how you hung in there, and you're reaping the fruits of that today. Yeah.
- 16 **A.** Yeah.
- 17 **Q.** Thank you for sharing with us your vision and how we can make this place a better place.  
18 Thank you for standing with us in our words, for bringing your kupu. Malie lava.
- 19 **A.** Kia ora, thank you.
- 20 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Thank you Commissioner Alofivae. Commissioner Gibson,  
21 do you have any pātai for Hōhepa?
- 22 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Yes. Tēnā koe Matua, tēnā koe Tūwharetoa, tēnā koe Te  
23 Kahungunu te maunga. (Greetings you elder Statesman and to you, your tribe Tūwharetoa  
24 who you represent). You talked about almost dismissing the old form of redress and  
25 moving on to puretumu (redress), something different from what's happening now, and I  
26 want to reinforce your call for a wiping of some degree of records, people who have gone  
27 through the system and then have a criminal record which limits their participation to travel  
28 in some way. Also, you talked about the need for puretumu (redress) across extended  
29 whanau, not just yourself. Apart from money, what do you think's required, how could that  
30 be done better? How could iwi be involved in a new extended puretumu scheme.
- 31 **A.** Well, we have – iwi from my point of view, and really from my notes, iwi could be our  
32 governance, our leaders. We have the Government, yeah, okay, our government is there to  
33 manaaki us, to manaaki our iwi. Our iwi is there to be our kaitiaki, to look after – to be our  
34 voice for the Government. Between Whanau Ora and Te Puni Kōkiri per se, we could do



1 things like that at and have the iwi working to do that system and we've got the hapū  
2 underneath that. Well, our hapū could be – they could help us by helping to work with the  
3 people. And that's how I saw it, for what I say a Māori model, for helping us. The only  
4 way to utilise our iwi is if they can guide us or guide the hapū to help us as a people, you  
5 know what I mean?

6 **Q.** I think so, there's something about the restoration of mana.

7 **A.** Yeah.

8 **Q.** Removing the taniwha off the back of whānau as well as of survivors.

9 **A.** Yeah, basically.

10 **Q.** Kia ora, thank you Matua.

11 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Thank you Commissioner Gibson. I understand  
12 Commissioner Shaw has no questions, so I'm going to ask Commissioner Erueti to thank  
13 you on behalf of the Commission.

14 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI** 🙄 (would like to acknowledge you and your evidence presented.  
15 As we know, it's very hard to return our memories back to such traumatising events. And  
16 know that we of the Commission are very grateful.)

17 On behalf of the Commission, Matua, I want to extend our gratitude and  
18 appreciation to you for sharing your experience with the Inquiry today and your insights  
19 and advice about reforms for the future. It is so critical that the Inquiry learn directly from  
20 the purapura ora such as yourself who have been in the care system and for us to recognise,  
21 for example, the effects of State care, in particular as today we've heard about your time in  
22 the residences, such as Kohitere. To learn about the widespread violence, culture of fear  
23 and the shock that it had for you. How residences like Kohitere and later the borstal and  
24 Waikeria were really places where you learned about crime, gambling, preparation really  
25 for, as you say, life in prison, experiences in prison afterwards.

26 And I want to pay respects to you and your whānau, recognising you as a father and  
27 the mahi that you have done, keeping your family together and raising your baby girl.  
28 I know that's been hard work for you, and the mahi that you've been doing with your  
29 friends in Palmerston North, to tautoko others who are in need of care, and we pay close  
30 attention to your recommendations about the need for redress. It's not just for one person,  
31 as you say, but it's for the whānau. That's so important for us to realise and acknowledge  
32 and take on board as we look at further recommendations in the field of redress.

1                   But to close your comments on Māori helping Māori resonates with us and we've  
2 heard this over and over again about by Māori for Māori. And so, in closing on behalf of  
3 all our fellow Commissioners here, ngā manaakitanga ki runga i a koe me to whanau.  
4 (Blessings to you and your family). Thank you for your time today. Nga mihi, I hope you  
5 go in peace, settle with your whānau. Ngā mihi mahana ki a koutou (warm blessings to you  
6 all).

7 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Thank you Commissioner Erueti. He mihi ana ki a koe ano  
8 Matua Hōhepa. (I would like to continue the acknowledgments to you for your  
9 presentation). I understand you have a waiata you'd like to share with us now.

10 A. I've gone a bit shy.

11 **Q.** Totally up to you.

12 A. Kei te pai (it's okay).

13 **Q.** Would you like us to do a waiata on your behalf? We can waiata for you?

14 **MR McCARTHY:** A lot of nodding heads here.

15 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Okay, let's do that.

16 A. Kia ora.

17                   (Waiata Purea Nei the wind washes me; the rain cleanses me. The sun shines  
18 through. All the troubles and burdens are lifted. And all the ties that bind me are loosened.  
19 Fly on oh spirit. Through the worlds and the skies above. Shine on the sun comes through.  
20 All the burdens are loosened and all the ties that bound me are released).

21 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Hopefully we did you justice there Matua Hōhepa.

22 A. Thank you.

23 **Q.** I think now we're going to take a 15minute break, so I'll ask for the livestream to be stopped  
24 and we will be back here in 15 minutes to resume the hearing. Thank you.

25                   **Adjournment from 11.32 am to 12.13 pm**

26