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EVIDENCE OF BEVERLEY WARDLE-JACKSON

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5 **CHAIR:** Ms Cooper, good morning, the Commissioners

6 welcome you and invite you to read the evidence.

7 **MS COOPER:** Thank you. If I can just start by

8 introducing that Beverley is actually unwell, that

9 is the reason why I'm reading this in her place and

10.06 10 I feel very privileged to be able to do it for her.

11 She is a published author and her brief of evidence

12 comes mainly from her book, in the Hands of Strangers.

13 I was born on 26 December 1952. My father's name

14 was Edward, my mother's name was Shirley. Both of my

15 parents had been State wards as children. Although my

16 knowledge of our family history is sketchy, I understand

17 that both my mother and my father were put in the care of

18 the State because their families were poor.

19 Although my father tried hard, we lived in extreme

10.07 20 poverty and didn't have a lot of food. Despite this, the

21 children kept coming. It was one of my jobs, as one of

22 the older children, to look after the youngest ones.

23 My family first came to the notice of Child Welfare

24 in October 1959 when I was almost 7 years old. We were

25 living in a house on the property of Wadestown School.

26 The headmaster contacted Child Welfare because of

27 concerns about our family. Child Welfare was contacted

28 again in May 1960 by other people who were concerned.

29 I am not surprised by this. Sometimes there was no

10.08 30 food in the house at all and my mother would go out all

31 night. I would have to go begging the neighbours for

32 milk for the babies. Our house was also very dirty.

33 On 1 June 1960, I am aware that my whole family was

34 placed under the preventive supervision of Child Welfare.

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1 During that time, I was sent away for the first time.

2 If I can have the first photo, please. This is Bev
3 first placement at Florence Booth Salvation Army in
4 Newtown. This shows the girls in the dormitory doing
5 their prayers at night.

6 I was about 7 when I was sent to the Florence Booth
7 Salvation Army Home in Newtown, Wellington. I was taken
8 there with my sisters, Jenny and Judy. When we got
9 there, we were met by Major Christopher. She introduced
10.09 10 us to other staff members and showed us our beds. I was
11 in a different dormitory from my sisters.

12 We were taken to a play room to wait for the other
13 children to get home from school. I couldn't enjoy the
14 toys there. I was extremely frightened and upset. I
15 could not stop thinking about what was going to happen to
16 our family.

17 Some of the staff, those who saw me as the confused
18 and scared little girl that I was, treated me with
19 kindness but there was an underlying violent culture to
10.09 20 the home. Most of this came from Major Christopher and
21 Lieutenant Barker.

22 I was badly thrashed at Florence Booth for biting my
23 nails. If staff saw that I had bitten them, I got a
24 thrashing. One day I was so scared about getting a
25 thrashing that I peed in the bath. I got hauled out of
26 the bath by Lieutenant Barker and she thrashed me all
27 over my body. I had bright red welts on my upper legs
28 and thighs and white hand marks over the rest of my body.
29 This was the worst hiding she had given me.

10.10 30 Another time, I lost one of the three handkerchiefs
31 we were issued with. A staff member called Barbara found
32 me in the locker room, slapped me across my face and sent
33 me off to Major Christopher.

34 Major Christopher hit me across my palms with a

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1 piece of pipe that she called the Rod. The pain was
2 ~~exerueiating~~excruciating, and my fingers and knuckles
3 swelled. This sort of
4 punishment was the norm at the home.

5 That Christmas, all my sisters went somewhere else
6 and I was left at Florence Booth. I remember being
7 excited because for the first time in my life I woke up
8 to a Christmas present at the foot of my bed. Other
9 visitors came during the day bringing gifts and sweets.
10.11 10 These were all taken off us at the end of the day by the
11 staff. They said we would get them when we left but I
12 never saw those lovely gifts again.

13 I was allowed to keep two sweets and one book.

14 The next day was my birthday, which falls on Boxing
15 Day. Normally, the birthday of someone in the home was
16 celebrated. However, they forgot about me that day.

17 There are some happy memories from my time at
18 Florence Booth, including events that were put on by
19 charities. However, any happy memories are overshadowed
10.12 20 by the fear and dread that filled so much of my life
21 during my stay.

22 After about a year at Florence Booth, we were taken
23 back home to our parents. They had a house in Porirua.
24 Even though the house was new, we had no furniture and
25 money was tight as always. There were several kids to
26 each bed and sometimes our power was cutoff because of
27 the unpaid bills. We stayed under the preventive
28 supervision of Child Welfare between May 1961 and May
29 1962. I am aware of records in my file that talk about
10.12 30 my father having a violent temper.

31 In mid 1962, my parents were prosecuted by the
32 Education Board because my brothers, sisters and I were
33 not going to school. Sometimes I would be home helping
34 to care for the younger ones, or because I was sick.
Sometimes I stayed home because I had no clean clothes or

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1 because there was a school trip on that we could not pay
2 for.

3 During the time we were under the preventive
4 supervision of Child Welfare, my father went to prison.
5 We were never visited by Child Welfare. We had a can of
6 spaghetti to eat on Christmas day between all of us kids.
7 Child Welfare only turned up when Dad was due to be
8 released from prison.

9 It was only when I saw my records that I could see
10.13 10 that the preventive supervision continued for some years.
11 It was renewed in 1963, 1964 and 24 May 1965. I'm amazed
12 by this. I had no idea that we actually had status with
13 Child Welfare after returning from Florence Booth. Life
14 did not change during that time.

15 In May 1965, my mother left my father and moved in
16 with a man called Don. Don was a horrible man and, as I
17 was to later discover, a child abuser. Child welfare
18 also recorded how unsuitable my mother's new home was.

19 Miramar Girls' Home. On 11 June 1965, I got home
10.14 20 from school to find Child Welfare Officers there. They
21 told me that Judy, Susan and Brenda and I were all being
22 taken into Child Welfare care. I remember the social
23 worker who took us to Miramar Girls' Home. She never
24 once asked me or my siblings anything about my feelings
25 or my home life.

26 Just like last time, I was separated from my
27 siblings when we got to the Girls' Home. They got sent
28 away to a different part of the home. A couple of days
29 later, I was enrolled in yet another school. I was
10.15 30 introduced as Beverley from the Miramar Welfare Home. I
31 couldn't concentrate at school and every night since I
32 got to the home I had cried myself to sleep. The
33 bullying got so bad that I wagged school.

34 I was found out and I had my first bad experience

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1 with Ms Tucker. She called me wicked, stupid, selfish
2 and ungrateful and slapped me across the face. I was
3 sent to bed without any dinner.

4 The second time I wagged school, I was taken to the
5 seclusion room by Ms Johanson. When we got to the
6 seclusion room she thrashed my bare legs with a hearth
7 brush until I cried. She hit me until she was exhausted.
8 I had to spend the night in the seclusion room.

9 In September 1965, I was made a State Ward along
10.16 10 with my siblings. I was 12 years old.

11 The only good thing about being a State Ward was
12 that I got taken shopping for new clothes. Everything
13 else was pretty bad. I couldn't keep up at school, so
14 I'd wag every now and then and get into trouble each
15 time. I also ran away from the Miramar Girls' Home.
16 After that, I was taken down to the seclusion room again.

17 I was sitting on a mattress in a seclusion room when
18 a social worker came in and said that I was going to
19 Christchurch. I was kept in the seclusion room until it
10.17 20 was time to leave. I cried and begged to be able to stay
21 in Wellington but it was no use.

22 Stratmore Girls' Receiving Home. When I got to the
23 Receiving Home, I was taken to a room that had no windows
24 and a mattress on the floor. A female staff member gave
25 me a night gown and took all my clothes. There was a pot
26 in the room for me to use as a toilet. The staff forgot
27 to turn the heater off and it got incredibly hot in the
28 room. I banged and begged to be let out but nobody came.
29 In the morning, I was taken out by another staff member
10.17 30 and was made to scrub out my room with a bucket of water
31 and a scrubbing brush. I was given a tray with some
32 breakfast but had to sit on the wet floor to eat it. I
33 was told that I would get the mattress back at bedtime.

34 I sat on the floor all day. I was given my lunch on

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1 a tray and nobody would talk to me. I got my mattress
2 back that night. Someone turned all my lights on in the
3 middle of the night and I couldn't help but think it was
4 done deliberately. I spent 3 nights in that room.

5 Most of the girls at the Receiving Home were older
6 than me. They were surprised that a 12 year old had been
7 sent there. Girls ran away a lot and would be put in
8 seclusion when they returned. We all had to put our
9 pyjamas on every day at about 3.30 p.m. when all our
10.18 10 clothing was locked away until the next morning. I was
11 enrolled in yet another school. I just got settled in
12 when my social worker turned up and told me I was being
13 moved to another home.

14 Riccarton Family Home. I was taken to a family home
15 which was run by a husband and wife. They had their own
16 children but looked after welfare children as well. The
17 woman who ran it was Mrs Hume. I shared a room with
18 three other girls who were all older than me. Mrs Hume
19 was impatient and would tell me off for minor things.
10.19 20 She also treated the welfare kids much differently to her
21 own children.

22 Over Christmas, I spent time with my mother and her
23 boyfriend Don. They were living in Christchurch by then.
24 I was sexually abused by Don during that time. I know
25 now that my father had asked if four of us could live
26 with him but Child Welfare had said no. It just wasn't a
27 done thing for a father to be a solo parent in those
28 days. I was angry and sad when I found out.

29 I went back to the care of Mrs Hume after Christmas.
10.20 30 I was enrolled in college. I got a uniform which was
31 bits and pieces from other people. It was tatty and did
32 not fit. I was so far behind in my school work that I
33 did not understand what was going on and kept getting
34 into trouble. I did a mountain of work around the house

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1 every day. I ironed all the family's clothes and those
2 of the other welfare children cleaned shoes, washed
3 dishes and cleaned the bathrooms and toilets.

4 While I was at this family home, I told another girl
5 that I had been touched by Don. The girl reported it to
6 Mrs Hume. I was made to give a statement to Police and
7 was examined by a male doctor. Mrs Hume told me that I'd
8 got myself into a fine mess. A few weeks later, Mrs Hume
9 told me that the Police had done an investigation and
10.21 10 found my complaint to be untrue. I couldn't believe it.
11 I told Mrs Hume it was true. She told me it was not
12 important what she believed, it was what the Police and
13 welfare believed. I was told that this was the end of
14 the matter. I burned with anger and resentment towards
15 everyone for saying I was lying.

16 Because of my unhappiness, I managed to return to
17 Wellington by stowing away on the boat between Lyttleton
18 and Wellington. Unfortunately, I was found and returned
19 to Mrs Hume.

10.21 20 Mrs Hume didn't allow anyone to speak to me. I had
21 to do work around the home and in the garden.

22 Back to Stratmore Girls' Receiving Home. It was not
23 long after this, that I ran away again. Mrs Hume would
24 not take me back, so I was taken to the Girls' Home.
25 There I was ordered to strip naked and I was locked in a
26 seclusion room. I was given a night gown to put on. For
27 the next 2 weeks I remained locked in seclusion.
28 Eventually, I was let out and was allowed to spend time
29 with the older girls. I only felt safe to cry locked
10.22 30 alone in my room at nights. I felt like I was in a
31 hopeless situation.

32 A few months later, I was told that Child Welfare
33 was moving me to a new home in the Wairarapa called
34 Fareham House. I was told it was a bit like a boarding

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1 school for girls.

2 And there is the photo of the outside of Fareham
3 House. One of the first things that struck me about
4 Fareham House, was that most of the other girls were
5 Maori. I'd never lived with Maori girls before. I was
6 put in a dorm with five other girls. Over the next few
7 days, I learned the routine. We were woken at 6.00 a.m.
8 daily, made to get dressed and then we would be put
9 through an hour of exercise by Mr Bell, the Principal.

10.23 10 There were 28 girls at Fareham House then, 6 Pakeha
11 and the rest Maori. It didn't take me long to understand
12 that the Maori girls were just like me and that they too
13 had been taken away from their families.

14 Like the other places I had been, the rules were
15 strict. We had to do a lot of cleaning around the home.
16 Some of the cleaning was domestic duties and quite a bit
17 more was punishment for breaking rules. We were not
18 allowed to leave the grounds of Fareham House for any
19 reason, unless we had a staff escort. To deter runaways
10.24 20 our clothing was taken from us each night and locked away
21 in the clothing room downstairs. We had to wear a
22 uniform.

23 There was a school at Fareham House. The school had
24 two teachers. My teacher was a Ms Weir. On my first day
25 of school, she had us on the mat singing nursery rhymes
26 which resulted in multiple complaints. She didn't handle
27 the pressure very well and left the classroom.

28 I ended up in trouble with staff on a number of
29 occasions, mostly for answering back and giving cheek - I
10.25 30 guess like any teenager does.

31 One of the punishments was to be locked in a
32 seclusion room. I remember that the room had a brown gym
33 mat on the floor in the corner. There was nothing else
34 in the room. I had to stay in that room, sometimes for a

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1 few days at a time.

2 One time, I took off during a Fareham House trip
3 into Wellington. I made my way to Miramar Girls' Home
4 where my older sister Judy was. The staff at Miramar
5 were very kind to me and let me spend the night with my
6 sister. It was the first time I had seen her for a
7 while. The next day, Mr Bell came and picked me up. One
8 of the things I still remember to this day, is that he
9 tied me up like animal before I was placed in the back of
10.25 10 the van. Once we got back to Fareham House, he took me
11 to the seclusion room. I had to get into pyjamas. I was
12 locked in the seclusion room for three days.

13 I was put in seclusion on another occasion after
14 Mr Bell tipped up a plate of porridge on my head. This
15 was because I refused to eat it after being told by the
16 girls that another girl had spat in it. When Mr Bell
17 tipped the porridge over my head I called him a filthy
18 pig and swore at him. I was told to stand up. When I
19 did so, Mr Bell grabbed my arm and twisted it hard up my
10.26 20 back. He pushed me and forced me up the main room, into
21 the seclusion room on the second floor.

22 I was not allowed to shower to get the porridge out
23 of my hair. I was locked in the room for a day without
24 any food. I was not allowed any books. I stayed locked
25 in that room for a couple of days.

26 Another punishment for me at Fareham House was to be
27 locked in an even smaller room in the attic. The whole
28 room was bare. There was a small window with a metal
29 grate across it. The room had nothing but a mattress and
10.27 30 a potty. On one occasion I was locked in the attic for 5
31 nightmarish days. I was only allowed out in the morning
32 to go downstairs for a shower. I had nothing to do. I
33 was sent to the attic on a second time after three of us
34 ran away from Fareham House. I was in the attic on the

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1 second occasion for about 9 days.

2 As I talk about further on in my narrative, I was
3 sent into the psychiatric hospital system by Mr Bell
4 where I spent many years. I had a short second admission
5 to Fareham House after I had been in Porirua Hospital for
6 some months but this did not last long because I was
7 blamed for doing something I hadn't done and was returned
8 to Porirua Hospital after spending yet another short time
9 in seclusion.

10.28 10 It is fair to say that I had a mostly miserable time
11 at Fareham House. I made some friends there, at least
12 one of whom has been a lifelong friend. But my
13 overwhelming impression of the place is that it was
14 cruel, unfair and dehumanising.

15 While I was at Fareham House, staff decided I was to
16 be confirmed into the Anglican Church. I had no real
17 interest in church. I only attended because the Fareham
18 House girls were required to. Another Fareham House girl
19 and I started attending confirmation classes with the
10.29 20 vicar. One day I went on my own to the confirmation
21 class. I realised that the vicar had been drinking. The
22 vicar started to ask me if I'd been letting men do things
23 with my body. He lifted up his robe and was holding his
24 erect penis in one hand. He asked me if I wanted to
25 touch it. He rubbed my hand up and down on his penis.
26 He also touched my genitals. I remember that my face was
27 burning hot with shame and I felt revolting and
28 despairing.

29 The vicar told me it wouldn't be wise to mention
10.29 30 what had happened to anyone because it could get us both
31 into a lot of trouble. I thought the vicar had liked me,
32 really he just thought I was some girl he was allowed to
33 do rude things to. Once again, I felt ashamed and
34 guilty. In particular, I felt really bad that I had done

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1 nothing to stop it.

2 Like a lot of girls at Fareham House, I ended up in
3 psychiatric hospital care.

4 I was first taken to Ward 27 at Wellington Hospital
5 where I was seen by a young doctor. I was shown to a bed
6 in the ward and told to put on a night gown.

7 I wondered what sort of place it was. Everybody
8 looked so miserable and one woman was doing strange
9 things.

10.30 10 I was not long at Ward 27 before I was taken to
11 Porirua Hospital where I was to remain on and off between
12 June 1967 and 1973. In-between admissions, I went back
13 to Fareham House to a sister's foster placement and back
14 to Miramar Girls' Home. I was also briefly placed with
15 an older sister where I was sexually abused by her
16 husband. It was also during this timeframe I met a man
17 and fell pregnant at age 16.

18 Each time I returned to Porirua Hospital when my -
19 each time I was returned to Porirua Hospital when my
10.31 20 behaviour was perceived to be difficult. I was just a
21 lonely, isolated teenage girl.

22 I remember being taken to Porirua Hospital in an
23 ambulance. When I saw the sign to Porirua Hospital, I
24 was frightened. We had referred to places like Porirua
25 as nut houses, funny farms or looney bins. I wondered
26 what I had done to deserve being sent here. I was only
27 14 years old. I remember the tears flowing again.
28 Nobody cared about me or wanted to help me.

29 Porirua Hospital was another hell for me. When I
10.32 30 was first admitted, two nurses told me to take off all of
31 my clothes. The only clothing I was wearing was a night
32 gown and my dressing gown. I refused. Five nurses all
33 descended on me and I could feel numerous pairs of hands
34 ripping the clothing from my body, leaving me naked. I

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1 was told to put on a night gown.

2 It was not long before a nurse came into the room,
3 telling me she had come to give me an injection. When I
4 told everyone to get away from me, the group of nurses
5 descended on me again. Two of them sat on me, pinning me
6 with their weight. A number of hands held me down while
7 the one with the huge syringe thrust a needle into the
8 top of my thigh. I remember that within a few minutes
9 everything went black and I lost consciousness.

10.33 10 I spent the first couple of days at Porirua Hospital
11 locked up in my room. Mostly I slept.

12 I was threatened constantly by staff about what
13 would happen if I stepped out of line.

14 I soon found out that I had been placed in the
15 admission ward of the hospital. I met another teenager
16 there, Wendy, who also became a lifelong friend, who told
17 me that most of the people in the ward were mad but there
18 were a few younger people like us.

19 Following my first few days at Porirua Hospital, I
10.33 20 was often put in seclusion. This meant I was locked by
21 myself in a dirty, dark and cold cell for between one and
22 a few days. This often happened when I ran away.
23 Sometimes when I was locked in my cell, I was left in
24 there with just a nightie and a stitch blanket to cover
25 me. I was regularly attacked and punched by nursing
26 staff. One time when I was being dragged to seclusion by
27 a female staff member, that staff member deliberately
28 punched me on my body.

29 One of the most frightening things was being
10.34 30 attacked by other patients. I vividly remember one time
31 being attacked by a female patient for sitting on an
32 empty chair. I had handfuls of my hair pulled out.

33 On another occasion, I was beaten up by a female
34 patient. On yet another occasion, a patient threw a

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1 chair at me which hit me in the head.

2 I clearly remember that every little thing about
3 Porirua Hospital seemed to reinforce the feeling of being
4 trapped and powerless. Even when I asked permission to
5 wear some of my own clothing, I was told that my suitcase
6 had been lost somewhere. I had to wear ugly, shapeless
7 dresses that hung down to my ankles. I also had to wear
8 underpants that were big, bagging bloomers that had
9 obviously been made to fit huge women. Knowing that many
10.35 10 other patients had worn them before me, made me feel
11 disgusting.

12 Every day violent incidents would occur somewhere,
13 usually ending with the nurses assaulting patients and
14 dragging them off to their rooms, kicking them and
15 punching them along the way. It was all wrong, so wrong,
16 but there was no-one to tell, no-one to complain to.

17 Although some patients needed to be removed for
18 everybody's protection, I still hated seeing the nurses
19 pulling their hair and punching and kicking them as they
10.36 20 lay on the ground. The continual screaming, banging and
21 swearing day and night was overwhelmingly depressing. I
22 remember I was on edge the whole time, wary of everyone,
23 anxious that I might end up in the thick of it.

24 I learned and saw many things in Porirua Hospital
25 that were so far outside my previous experiences that I
26 didn't know what to think. One day a woman came rushing
27 out of her room holding her arm towards me. I felt sick
28 when I saw a long gaping cut running down the inside of
29 her wrist. This was the first time I had encountered
10.36 30 people who harmed themselves. I would witness many more
31 acts of self-harm and many acts of violence towards
32 others.

33 I also started to smoke at Porirua Hospital as all
34 the patients, even us teenagers, were given smokes. It

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1 was a way of keeping us calm. This was a habit I was
2 later to strongly regret.

3 It took a long time for me to discover that there
4 was a school on the grounds of the hospital. I was not
5 there for long because one of the older boys tried to put
6 his hand down my pants every time he came near me. I had
7 no schooling from the age of 14. I hadn't learnt
8 anything in school since the age of 11. My education was
9 far behind others of my age because I had not attended
10.37 10 school for such a long time.

11 After my brief return to Fareham House, I was
12 admitted back into villa 9 where I was locked up. I
13 remember being utterly distraught. For the first few
14 days, I was filled with deep despair and I could hardly
15 bring myself to speak to anyone. I felt more alone in
16 the world than ever before. Deep down, I knew I wasn't
17 mad. I also knew that Child Welfare had nowhere for me
18 to live. They had never once offered me a foster home.
19 As each year passed, it became less and less likely to I
10.38 20 would ever have a home or someone who cared about me. I
21 was getting too old for people to care about me.

22 During this admission, nothing had changed for the
23 better. In fact, conditions were even worse than the
24 first time I had been there. The violence was
25 unbearable, as was the constant noise of patients
26 screaming and fighting ~~among~~ themselves and with the
27 staff. Even though there was some new staff, most were
28 as cold and uncaring towards the patients as those who
29 had gone before them.

10.39 30 Whenever staff wanted the ward cleaning done, the
31 welfare kids were singled out and we were bullied and
32 shouted at like animals until the job was done.

33 I remember complaining to the matron one day as she
34 was passing through the corridor while I was down on my

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1 hands and knees scrubbing. She told me that I got
2 everything I needed for nothing. She told me to stop my
3 whinging.

4 It was a simple choice really, we had to do every
5 dirty job we were given or we would be locked up in our
6 rooms and we would get a hiding on our way there.

7 On top of that, our basic human treatment was low on
8 the list of priorities. It was humiliating when we had
9 to use the ward toilet. There were no doors and no
10.40 10 privacy whatsoever. Being on public display was bad
11 enough but cleaning the urine reeking toilets was one of
12 the worse jobs of all. There were always faeces smeared
13 everywhere and the stench clung to you long after you
14 left. No matter how hard I scrubbed those toilets, they
15 always smelt just as bad as when I started.

16 I remember that on every second day selected
17 patients would receive electric shock treatment. Those
18 who were not were herded from the wing to the dayroom
19 where we were locked up until the shock treatments were
10.40 20 over. We often heard wailing and moaning noises coming
21 from the ECT rooms.

22 There were significantly more young people in villa
23 9 the second time around than there were during my first
24 stay. Many of the new arrivals were also State wards and
25 supposedly under the care of Child Welfare. Three
26 Fareham House girls, who I knew quite well, were admitted
27 within weeks of each other. Then a few months later, two
28 more State wards from Fareham House were admitted. Even
29 at my age, I could see the injustice of dumping us girls
10.41 30 into mental institutions simply because there was nowhere
31 else for us to go. It seemed as though we were some kind
32 of social experiment.

33 To this day, I remember when one of the new
34 arrivals, a girl called Jennifer, aged 15, died. Late

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1 one evening, Jennifer had a severe asthma attack and
2 collapsed on the floor inside the toilet. I was
3 horrified to see her face turning blue as ~~s~~they gasped
4 for breath. Although someone rang the emergency bell
5 immediately, by the time help turned up Jennifer was
6 unconscious. We waited anxiously for nearly a day before
7 we found out that Jennifer had died. Those of us who
8 knew her were terribly upset but we were warned by staff
9 not to talk about it. We did talk about it constantly.
10.42 10 We all believed that Jennifer might not have died had the
11 staff responded to the bell immediately.

12 I also vividly remember that after one escape, I was
13 given electric shock treatment. A few days later, I
14 found out that my friend, Wendy, who had escaped with me,
15 had also received ECT the same day as me. It was clear
16 that this was a punishment for trying to escape from that
17 hideous place, although the medical reason given was that
18 I was suffering from depression.

19 As I became more hopeless, thinking that my life was
10.43 20 to be locked in a mental institution, I thought about
21 harming myself and wondered what it would be like to be
22 dead. I began hurting myself by making scratches across
23 my wrists using the sharp end of a hair clip. I didn't
24 know why I was doing it. It wasn't until much later in
25 life that I learned self-harm was often a cry for help.

26 I don't remember making a conscious decision to harm
27 myself. It just happened one weekend. It was visiting
28 day and once again nobody had come to visit me. I picked
29 up the hair clip, bent it and cut my wrists. I told
10.43 30 myself that I deserved this pain and that I deserved
31 everything that had happened to me.

32 Eventually, I was transferred to villa 6. There, my
33 friend Wendy and I were the only teenagers. Many of the
34 adult patients had been there for years. Some of the

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1 women had vacant expressions and just sat hardly ever
2 speaking. Others spoke continually but only to the
3 voices in their heads.

4 I was given a bed in a shabby dormitory with 12
5 others. Most of the other patients in the dormitory
6 appeared to be over 40, some were as old as 70.

7 There was very little for us to do, other than spend
8 each day with the other patients inside the dayroom.
9 After a few months, I got used to living in the hospital
10.44 10 and used to the people I was forced to live with. I no
11 longer allowed myself to think about my future. I knew
12 that I had to accept this mad house as my home. Boredom
13 was one of our main problems. It was hard to find
14 activities every day.

15 After taking myself into Porirua township one day
16 for something to do, I was promptly moved to F Ward. And
17 that's a photo of the inside of F Ward that's just come
18 up.

19 This was the forensic ward of the hospital where the
10.45 20 criminally insane and severely mad people were locked
21 away. I was immediately put into seclusion. All I could
22 hear were dreadful wailing and moaning coming from the
23 ward. I had never heard such frightening sounds coming
24 from humanbeings.

25 I was left alone in a cell like room which had
26 wooden walls and peeling cream paint smeared with dry
27 faeces. It stank, as did the mattress on the floor which
28 was the only item in the room. I was then moved into the
29 dormitory, which was an orchestra of moaning, wailing and
10.46 30 screaming, punctuated by hysterical howling. I was
31 terrified. I was heavily medicated and once again,
32 forced to clean.

33 We will just bring up the next photo which is the
34 outside of F Ward.

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1 The sights in F Ward were appalling. Patients with
2 all sorts of physical deformities and crazed behaviour
3 were sitting in Rows of chairs or stumbling backwards and
4 forwards across the room. All were making loud ghastly
5 noises. Some were rocking violently back and forth
6 chanting incomprehensively. Screeches and groans filled
7 the room. I had seen some very strange people in villa 9
8 but I had never seen people quite like this and I was
9 frightened. The instant I sat down, one of the patients
10.47 10 lunged towards me. Before I could do anything, she
11 grabbed hold of my hair and tried to rip it from my head.
12 She pulled me off the chair to the floor where she let go
13 of my hair, clenched her fists and started punching me in
14 the face before she was eventually restrained by nursing
15 staff.

16 I was returned to villa 6 early that evening.

17 As referred to above, during the period of trial
18 leave with an older sister and her husband, I fell
19 pregnant to a man I met briefly at age 16. Nobody had
10.47 20 explained to me how you became pregnant or how babies
21 were born. I didn't want a baby. I thought of killing
22 myself so I wouldn't have to face what lay ahead of me.
23 There was nobody I trusted enough to confide in. This
24 was one of the occasions when Child Welfare arranged for
25 me to be forcefully taken back to Porirua Hospital. A
26 few days after I was taken back, I overheard two nurses
27 talking about me and the fact that I was pregnant. I
28 heard them say that I would probably stay in Porirua
29 Hospital until after the birth of the baby. They said
10.48 30 that Child Welfare would probably take the baby and adopt
31 it out. I spent days and days crying in my room. I
32 begged to be let out of the hospital but my pleas were
33 ignored.

34 After a few months, I discovered that one of my

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1 friends was back in villa 9. She and I devised my latest
2 escape plan. We managed to hitchhike to Auckland.
3 Unfortunately, we were found by Police. My friend was
4 taken straight to Oakley Hospital. I was held in the
5 Police cells overnight and was then taken to appear in
6 the Court the next day. I was remanded in custody for
7 one month.

8 At first, I was taken to Mt Eden Prison. I was then
9 transferred straight to Oakley Hospital where my friend
10.49 10 was.

11 Oakley Hospital. I remained in Oakley Hospital for
12 a month where I lived in a constant state of terror and
13 anxiety. I was terrified by the screaming and fighting
14 among the patients in the ward I had been put in. The
15 hospital was built like an old prison and every single
16 door was locked tight.

17 I tried to avoid the dayroom and keep to myself in
18 my room but every day seemed like a year.

19 I ended up staying there for a couple of weeks
10.49 20 longer because my case was adjourned by the Court.

21 When I eventually appeared in Court, the Magistrate
22 said to the prosecutor that he failed to see any reason
23 why I, as a pregnant young woman, was being held in a
24 mental institution. He released me immediately.

25 My childhood, such as it was, had ended. I now
26 faced adulthood alone.

27 I was scared and relieved at the same time. I knew
28 I was ill-prepared but at least my life was in my own
29 hands now, not in the hands of strangers.

10.50 30 My life after psychiatric care. I returned to
31 Wellington but I was still not free from Child Welfare.
32 When I returned to Wellington, I was dropped off at a
33 Salvation Army Home for unmarried mothers. Four months
34 later, frightened and alone, I gave birth to my daughter.

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1 I was 17.

2 Within minutes of her birth, the staff took my baby
3 from me and refused to let me see her. In the days
4 following, Child Welfare Officers turned up at the ward
5 with documents for me to sign releasing my daughter to
6 them for adoption. I refused.

7 I was told by Child Welfare that I would have to
8 find work or they would take my daughter from my care. I
9 was determined that would not happen. I had to work long
10.51 10 days, leaving my baby with a caregiver Child Welfare had
11 found for me.

12 6 months after my daughter was born, I accidentally
13 bumped into her father. He soon realised my baby was his
14 child. We married, although in my heart I knew it was
15 the wrong thing to do.

16 We had a son. It could have been a happy time but
17 my husband realised he was homosexual.

18 Over the next 5 years, I struggled desperately
19 trying to cope with my life and with being a mother.
10.52 20 During this period, I struggled with many episodes of
21 depression. I became pregnant with my third child to my
22 husband. I made the decision during that time to leave
23 Wellington.

24 Without informing Mental Health Services or my
25 doctor, I packed up my two children and our few
26 belongings and travelled on the overnight boat to
27 Christchurch. I chose Christchurch not only because it
28 was the only other place I knew well enough to find my
29 way around but also because I wanted a fresh start.

10.52 30 Shortly after I arrived in Christchurch, I was given
31 a State house to live in. My husband came to live with
32 the family in Christchurch. We had a fourth child who
33 was born in October 1977.

34 When that fourth child was 2 months old, my husband

1 packed up his belongings and left. Although I was
2 devastated, I struggled through. My main concern was my
3 four children. Even though I was on a benefit and had no
4 savings, I made having a real home my focus. Through
5 perseverance, I managed to buy my first house. By that
6 stage, I was 25, alone with four children.

7 Despite my determination to do better for my own
8 children, the impact of my childhood was profound. No
9 matter how I tried to forget the things I had been
10.53 10 through, they haunted me. Many times over the next few
11 years I would sink into a deep, dark depression and feel
12 like taking my life. Although I was angry with everybody
13 who had been involved in my care, it was myself that I
14 took the anger out on. More than once I slashed into my
15 wrists with razor blades causing severe injuries.

16 Looking back, I don't know why I did it but somehow
17 I did get by from day-to-day, drawing on some unexplained
18 strength within me. I reconnected with two of my sisters
19 but being split up as children stood in the way of a
10.54 20 close sibling relationship with any of the others.

21 It's funny, for so long all I had wanted was for us
22 to be together again but it all became too hard in the
23 end, too much damage had been done.

24 I have remained in Christchurch. My children have
25 grown up and left home. Sadly, a rough start in life
26 means I have no connection with my oldest daughter but I
27 have good relationships with the others. Against all
28 odds, I did make a new life for myself. The years were
29 never easy but somehow I must have been blessed with a
10.54 30 mental fortitude that made me want to get through.

31 In 1996, aged 43, I met Ian and fell in love
32 properly for the first time. Ian was a successful
33 businessman and I couldn't have been more surprised when
34 he fell in love with me too. Not only did he love me but

1 he treated me like a princess. I don't think anyone had
2 ever really loved me before and I hadn't known there was
3 such good men in the world.

4 Ian enrolled me in extension study courses at the
5 University of Canterbury where I was taught and
6 encouraged to write my book In the Hands of Strangers. I
7 was unprepared for the dark depths I was plunged into at
8 times writing my book. One of the worst episodes
9 occurred when I requested and received a copy of my files
10.55 10 from my days as a State ward and in the care of Child
11 Welfare. As I read the notes that were recorded about
12 me, I wept. Shock, anger and those old feelings of
13 worthlessness weld up inside me. I could hardly believe
14 the cover ups, Chinese whispers and lies that people had
15 written to justify their treatment of me.

16 I'm very aware that mine is just one of the many
17 stories of the lost children, the State wards of my
18 generation. We were children who did not have mental
19 illnesses when we entered mental institutions. We were
10.56 20 all mentally scared by our time there.

21 At the most basic level, most State wards were
22 unwanted by their own families. Many of them, like me,
23 remained unwanted as we entered into our teenage years, a
24 time when love and boundaries are desperately needed
25 because foster parents weren't prepared to take on older
26 children.

27 I can only share my own story but I know what
28 happened to many of them. Some ended up in Borstals and
29 went to prison. Others still wander, lost and forlorn
10.57 30 through life.

31 Some days I cannot believe I survived but I did. I
32 don't deny the physical and emotional scars that I still
33 carry but the very things I was missing throughout my
34 childhood, love and a sense of belonging eventually found

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1 me.

2 The legal process. I instructed Cooper Legal to act
3 for me in relation to my abusive experiences in care in
4 December 2003. I am aware that my legal claim was filed
5 in the Wellington High Court as part of a claim with
6 three other women who had been in similar placements as
7 me, including one of my lifelong friends, in April 2004.

8 I understand that Sonja Cooper and Amanda Hill have
9 given evidence about the legal steps taken by the Crown
10.58 10 to delay and bar or stop the legal claims from proceeding
11 up until at least 2009.

12 In the meantime, my lawyers took individual claims
13 on my behalf against the Salvation Army in respect of the
14 abuse I had suffered at the Florence Booth Receiving Home
15 and against the Anglican Church in respect of the sexual
16 abuse by the Anglican vicar in Masterton.

17 I met with the Salvation Army representative, Murray
18 Houston, in the later part of 2004, from memory. I met
19 Mr Houston with my husband Ian. I found Mr Houston to be
10.58 20 respectful and he listened to my story. We negotiated a
21 settlement of \$15,000. Mr Houston also paid my legal
22 costs direct to Cooper Legal.

23 The Anglican Church took a different approach,
24 instructing lawyers. I remember that my lawyers were
25 dismayed at the very legal approach taken by the Anglican
26 Church, particularly given what had happened to me. As
27 part of the Anglican Church process, I met with two women
28 who were setup as an investigation team in Wellington. I
29 was again accompanied by my husband Ian. The two women
10.59 30 were very reassuring and again listened to me
31 respectfully. I later met with the Bishop who made a
32 personal apology to me. After that meeting, I wrote to
33 the Bishop thanking him and saying I had found him to be
34 very genuine. I have no memory of that letter now.

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1 Ultimately, the Anglican Church did not offer me any
2 compensation, although I did get a letter of apology from
3 Bishop Brown and it did pay a small amount towards my
4 legal fees. While I acknowledge it was helpful to speak
5 with the church people, this is still something that
6 feels somewhat unresolved for me.

7 It was many years later before the first of my State
8 claims, my psychiatric hospital claim, was settled in
9 April 2012.

11.00 10 Even though I spent many years in and out of
11 psychiatric hospitals where I suffered physical assaults,
12 prolonged periods in seclusion, as well as cruel and
13 inhumane treatment, I received just \$12,000 in settlement
14 of my claim, along with an apology letter from the then
15 defendant, the Crown Health Financing Agency. Again, my
16 legal fees were paid for as part of this settlement at a
17 reduced rate.

18 My claim against the Ministry of Social Development,
19 whose predecessor had taken me into its care as a child,
11.00 20 did not settle for another 4 years. It was not until
21 mid-2016 that I received an offer of \$12,000 to settle my
22 claim, along with payment of my legal fees and a letter
23 of apology.

24 In making that offer, MSD accepted very little of
25 what had happened to me in care, only accepting that
26 Child Welfare Officers failed to investigate reports of
27 concern when I was living at home, as a result of which I
28 was exposed to neglect and physical abuse.

29 Child Welfare Officers did not visit me in
11.01 30 accordance with policy when I was living at home. Child
31 Welfare Officers failed to visit me according to policy
32 while I was at Porirua Hospital, and Child Welfare
33 Officers failed to investigate my complaint that I was
34 sexually assaulted by my mother's husband. Everything

1 else was rejected, mainly on the grounds that there was
2 either nothing on my records to support the allegations
3 or the actions were not practice failures or breaches of
4 duty.

5 By the time this offer was made to me, I just wanted
6 to put this part of my life behind me. After all, I had
7 started taking legal steps at the end of 2003 and it was
8 now already mid-2016, nearly 13 years later.

9 It was not until early 2017, however, that the final
11.02 10 terms of settlement were agreed and I signed a full and
11 final settlement with the Ministry of Social Development.
12 That was the end of my involvement with the legal
13 process.

14 My book was published in 2015 while I was still
15 waiting to resolve my claim against those who had taken
16 me into care in the first place and who had put me in
17 many placements where I spent many harrowing years being
18 beaten, locked up, neglected and betrayed.

19 I was one of many children caught up in a welfare
11.03 20 system that was meant to protect us but ultimately served
21 only to damage us.

22 While this was a different time, many of the things
23 that happened to me and those I went through care with,
24 would not be acceptable in any era.

25 This is my story. I hope that, by telling it,
26 lessons will be learned. I would certainly never want
27 anyone to experience what I did.

28 **MR MOUNT:** Thank you, Ms Cooper. Mr Chair, if we may
29 have a short adjournment now to prepare for the
11.03 30 next witness.

31 **CHAIR:** Thank you. I think that is appropriate, Madam
32 Registrar, could you please adjourn the sitting?
33

34 **Hearing adjourned from 11.04 a.m. until 11.20 a.m.**