

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

Under The Inquiries Act 2013

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

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

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

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

Date: 18 July 2022

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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Hearing opens with waiata Te Aroha and karakia by Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei

[10.06 am]

COMMISSIONER GIBSON: Nau mai, piki mai, haere mai ki te kaupapa Ūhia te Māramatanga.

Welcome, everybody, to week 2. Just a reminder about mask wearing, the government has put in some new guidelines and because we care about you and your families and your loved ones, we encourage you to wear them within the hearing space, and if you're exempt from mask wearing just let one of the staff members know quietly. Kia ora, thank you.

Ms Basire.

MS BASIRE: The next witness is Whiti Ronaki. Matua Whiti is going to start proceedings today with his karakia. And we can all stand with him.

A. Tuatahi, ka mihi au ki tēnei whare ki to tātou rangatira e whakapuaki i to tātou hui. Nō reira, e te Atua tēnei hau e inoi atu ki a koe kia ūhia tō mana akitanga ki runga, ki tēnā, ki tēnā o tātou i roto i tēnei whare, otirā i roto i tēnei motu, mō tēnei kaupapa whakahirahira. Nō reira, tēnei au e mihi atu ki a koutou ngā Kaikōmihana.

I roto i te aroha o tō tātou Matua nui i te rangi, kia rongo pai i ngā kōrero mai i ngā Tāngata Turi, o rātou hītori, o rātou wheako. Ahakoa ngā taumahatanga me ngā pēhitanga e pā ana ki a mātou, otirā ki a tātou. Kia wātea tēnei wāhi, hei wāhi whakahaumarū i a tātou. Nō reira i roto i tō ingoa tapu, āmine.

Nō reira, kei ahau taku pepeha? E noho koutou. Ko Rangiuri [Rangiuru] taku maunga, ko Kaituna taku awa, ko Te Arawa taku waka, ko Tapuika taku iwi, ko Moko-tangata-kotahi taku marae. Āhua roa tērā ingoa, nō reira ko tērā te marae or taku mama. Ko Whiti Ronaki ahau.

Tēnei au e mihi atu ki a tātou katoa otirā ki a koutou anō ngā Kaikōmihana, tēnā koutou. Otirā ki a koutou katoa kua tae mai ki te whakarongo ki ngā kōrero i tēnei rā, tēnā koutou. Āe, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou koutou. Ka waiata tātou i te waiata Te Aroha anō. (Waiata Te Aroha).

QUESTIONING BY MS BASIRE: Tēnā koe Matua Whiti. You've just told us your name is Whiti Ronaki and you're 68 years old.

A. Yes.

Q. And Commissioner Shaw has just pointed out I skipped a step.

Commissioner Gibson, we need to start with the affirmation.

COMMISSIONER GIBSON: My apologies.

WHITI RONAKI (Affirmed)

QUESTIONING BY MS BASIRE CONTINUED: Matua Whiti, you were born hearing but you

- 1 lost your hearing about the age of three to meningitis, is that right?
- 2 A. Yes, yeah.
- 3 Q. What were the names of the parents who brought you up?
- 4 A. The last name is Reha, yes.
- 5 Q. And I understand you knew them as [GRO-B]?
- 6 A. Yes, that's correct.
- 7 Q. But it was only at about the age of 20 that you found out that in fact they were adoptive
- 8 parents?
- 9 A. Yeah, I never knew that, I never knew at all, they never told me, no -one taught me that at
- 10 all, I didn't know who my real parents were, didn't know. They didn't tell me anything.
- 11 I thought my real parents -- they were my real parents, but when I found out, I was really
- 12 shocked. It was a massive impact on me. I was like, what? What does this mean,
- 13 "adopted"? What does adopted mean? I never understood that sign, you know, I was fully
- 14 Deaf so I didn't understand what that meant, the word "adopting".
- 15 Q. Just some technical issues, matua, we just have to move that screen so people can see your
- 16 signing better. And all this is getting typed up, so we have to go a little bit slower if we
- 17 can.
- 18 A. Okay, no problem, I understand. Sorry about that.
- 19 Q. That's okay. So as you said, this had a massive impact on you, because one of the issues
- 20 for being Deaf is translating concepts such as "adoptive" or "stepparent" or different sorts
- 21 of parenting?
- 22 A. Yeah, I didn't understand at all what that meant, "adopted"? What does that mean? Yeah,
- 23 I didn't understand at all.
- 24 Q. And [GRO-B] was your [GRO-B/C] that you later found out?
- 25 A. Yes. Yes.
- 26 Q. And your birth family is Ronaki, which is the name you go by today?
- 27 A. Yes, that's correct.
- 28 Q. When you lost your hearing, [GRO-B] and [GRO-B] didn't understand that you had lost
- 29 your hearing, did they?
- 30 A. Yes, yeah, that's true.
- 31 Q. And they thought you were being cheeky for not answering them back?
- 32 A. Yes, yeah, that's true.
- 33 Q. And it took a while until the doctor explained to them that you'd lost your hearing?
- 34 A. Yes, that's right, that's right.

- 1 **Q.** The doctor said to your parents, "He's Deaf but not dumb"?
- 2 **A.** Yes.
- 3 **Q.** Because you were a very bright child, very creative?
- 4 **A.** Yes.
- 5 **Q.** But you had to learn everything with your eyes because your family couldn't communicate
6 with you?
- 7 **A.** I was lucky. Why? Because I had special eyes, I can see everything, you know, I saw the
8 abuse coming, so I could read -- you know, I'm Deaf yes, but, you know, all the abuse that
9 was coming towards me, I was really lucky, I had really good eyes, I could see what was
10 going on, I could get away from the abuse, I could run away and get away from all of that.
11 So yeah, my eyes are very valuable to me.
- 12 **Q.** Tell us about the abuse, who was abusing you when you were a little boy?
- 13 **A.** I only know the faces, names I don't know, but faces I know. I didn't really know people's
14 names, what their names were, but the faces I knew, I knew them by their face, I knew
15 straight away, "Ooh, that one, yes, stay away from that one", and I'd run away from them.
16 So yeah.
- 17 Some other people were nice, I knew who they were, they would beckon me to
18 come towards them but other people I was a bit suspicious, you know, how could
19 I communicate with people, you know, if they told me to come to them, I was like, "Ooh,
20 I'm not too sure", very suspicious of people, but I felt lost inside my family, it was really
21 hard, it was a hard time.
- 22 **Q.** Your father [GRO-B], did he abuse you?
- 23 **A.** Oh, yes, I hate him, I really hate him. He was cruel all the time to me. And I tried to, you
24 know, stay away from him and I don't want to be close with him at all. He'd always get the
25 broomstick and beat me with a broomstick and that's why I always try and stay away from
26 him.
- 27 **Q.** Tell me more about the things that he used to do to you?
- 28 **A.** Oh, I was in the kitchen, I was hungry, always hungry, wanted to eat something. But my
29 father was in the kitchen as well, at the same time, and I can't go in there when he's in there.
30 I had to wait for him to leave or go to sleep, then I can go into the kitchen, and find some
31 food. But mostly it would be bread and butter, that's all really, that's what I would take
32 most of the time. And I'd always be on the look-out looking to see if someone was coming,
33 I was always watching, and then once he came I'd always disappear and run away, I'd
34 straight away run away, keep myself safe all the time, to protect myself against my father.

1 But I don't know why they never used to give me food all the time. You know the
2 beef fat on the meat? That beef fat, they'd cut it up and it used to make me sick, they'd feed
3 me that and it used to make me sick. They'd say, "No, eat it now, eat it now." And I'm
4 like, "Oh, I don't like it", you know, that's the fatty food. And it used to make me sick all
5 the time. They'd say, "No, you've got to eat it."

6 My father only had one leg, he was an amputee, and I used to sign this -- mother,
7 because she had one eye and my father had one leg, so my father lost one of his legs, so
8 I used to sign -- his sign name was "one leg off" and "one eye off" for mother and father.
9 But yeah, I used to always -- I never liked staying with them. But mum, she was good
10 sometimes, like they loved alcohol all the time, they'd always leave me on the street or at
11 home all day, just sitting there on the street, on the curb sitting there by myself, cars would
12 go past, it was cold.

13 It was hard for me, really hard. I'll never forget that.

14 **Q.** I understand that to start with you lived on a farm and then you moved into town?

15 **A.** Yes.

16 **Q.** When you were on the farm, where would you go to try and escape from your father Bill?

17 **A.** My grandfather, I used to visit his house, he was alone, he's a very old grandfather. He was
18 amazing, he was beautiful, he used to help me, he knew I was Deaf and he would try to
19 explain things to me, you know, he used to teach me about the cows, and how to milk the
20 cows, I'd watch him with my eyes, I'd learn with my eyes, and I'd learn that way. So he
21 would teach me. And I was really happy with my grandfather because he would teach me
22 stuff. All my other whānau, they didn't teach me anything. I can't stand it with my other
23 whānau.

24 **Q.** When you moved to town, to Te Puke, that's when mum and dad would leave you on the
25 street outside the pub?

26 **A.** Yes, yes.

27 **Q.** How did that make you feel?

28 **A.** Oh horrible, it was cold, you know, people would look at me, walking by on the streets,
29 they'd look at me, I was always afraid of them, sitting on the curb on the side of the street,
30 cars would park in front of me and people would walk around, I would make sure I was
31 watching them, yeah, it was horrible. Yeah, I had a hard life, I know I did, it was wrong.
32 Why did my parents just treat me like that? It was wrong.

1 You know, they'd stay at the pub, get drunk and then come home and then be
2 abusive and, but yeah, I'd always escape the house all the time to get away from it, yeah,
3 because they were always drinking.

4 **Q.** Did anyone try and help you during that time when you were sitting outside the pub?

5 **A.** So, yeah, outside, I was there all day when I was really, really young, three, four, five years
6 old, at that time staying outside on the street by myself. That's all, yeah, just stayed there.

7 **Q.** When you were on the farm, you had a dog, didn't you?

8 **A.** Yes, yes, yeah. That dog really helped me all the time, he'd be always with me. The dog
9 can hear, so I would watch the dog and if the dog looked around I would look as well and
10 see what was going on, so the dog helped me, helped me to stay away from the abuse. So
11 I'd look at the dog and would run away. But really the dog supported me so much.

12 **Q.** When you moved into town, did the dog come into town with you?

13 **A.** Yes, always with my dog, always.

14 **Q.** When you were six years old, you went to Kelston School for the Deaf, didn't you?

15 **A.** Yes.

16 **Q.** And you later learned that it was your birth father who went to see [GRO -B] and told him
17 about the school?

18 **A.** Yes.

19 **Q.** When you went to Kelston, you were there as a boarder, which meant that you were there
20 all the time?

21 **A.** Yes.

22 **Q.** Did [GRO-B] and [GRO-B] explain to you what was happening, why you were going to
23 Kelston?

24 **A.** Never, no, never, nothing, no explanation at all. Nothing. I didn't know anything that was
25 going on, they never explained anything to me.

26 **Q.** How did they communicate with you at that age?

27 **A.** Nothing really, no communication with me at all. Oh, sometimes I'd try and lip read them,
28 they would yell at me and I'd try and lip read what they were saying, but it never worked,
29 yeah.

30 I never understood lip reading. I prefer sign, but yeah, at that time there was no sign
31 language at all. You know, I used to get so frustrated inside, you know, sign would help
32 me a lot, you know, help me to learn, but no, there was none of that, it was -- there was just
33 none of that at all, from a very young age.

34 **Q.** Had you developed your own signs before you went to Kelston?

1 A. No. So in Kelston School we got together as a group of Deaf kids, we'd get together and
2 we made up our own sign, but yeah, there was no home signs at all, yeah. But yeah, I was
3 just by myself at home, walking around, no-one was talking to me, you know, there's other
4 children there that were playing but I wasn't allowed to play with them and I was, like,
5 "Why? Why can't I play with them?" But their parents are like "No, no, no, go away, go
6 away." So I'd just be by myself while the kids were playing as a group. I never knew why,
7 yep, I never knew why.

8 Q. I want to take you to that first day or the first few days you went into Kelston School, what
9 were your first impressions of this new place?

10 A. Oh, there were so many Deaf children around, the first time -- I'd never seen this many
11 Deaf children around before, from about five, yeah, I started Kelston at five, roughly, so
12 had a group of five -year -olds and six -year -olds, seven -year olds, and then they got
13 bigger and bigger and bigger. But yeah, it was really scary. Because they'd just look at me,
14 the Deaf kids would look at me with their faces and I'm like, "Ooh, okay. Am I wrong?
15 What am I doing wrong?" I'd just read their facial expressions. But yeah, I never
16 understood what they were signing, I was really slow- to try and pick it up, you know, I'd
17 be like, "What's that? What does that mean?" But yeah, we were in our group of five -year
18 old-s, and we just followed our age group from there.

19 Q. You said that it was scary. Can you tell us about that first dinner that you had at Kelston?

20 A. Yeah. The first time the staff told us, when we were five years old, to line up, we had to be
21 in our lines from smallest to tallest and I was in the last because I was five, I was one of the
22 smallest. And then we'd go and sit at the table, at big long rows of tables, all sitting next to
23 each other, and all us group of five -year olds would be sitting together. And then I
24 can't -remember - I think we were ready for a -feed - anyway, everyone had these knives
25 and forks and I was like, "What is that?" I used my hands to eat, you know, that's my habit,
26 that's my family habit from home, we eat with our hands. So - I started picking up my food
27 and started eating and then I got a knife on the back of my hand, whacked on the back of
28 my hand, "No, no, you can't do that, you have to use your knife and fork." And I was like,
29 "Huh? What is this? I don't know how to do that."

30 You know, they never taught the children how to do that, they would cry, all the
31 Māori kids would cry, and they'd get whacked on the back of the hands, and I was like,
32 "Why?" You know, they should have taught us like, "No, look, this is a fork, this is a knife,
33 but they never taught us at all." They just growled us. It was really sore, really sore on the
34 back of our hands. And I just knew every time I came, I was like, "Oh, I better pick up this

1 knife and fork and use that, I don't want to get hurt", you know, trying to manoeuvre these
 2 knives and forks around, but I've never used them before, most of the time I was always
 3 using my hands, you know, with corn or meat or whatever, eat with my hands, you know,
 4 follow the family how they did it, eat with my hands.

5 But yeah, it was really hard for me, with a knife and fork, you know, having to eat
 6 like that. Yeah. But, really, they used to whack us on the back of hands. No explanation.
 7 They never gave us an explanation at all. So yeah, yeah it's true.

8 All the children used to cry because they used to get whacked on the back of their
 9 hands and I used to be "oh", trying to hold that pain, rubbing it better. But it was sore, oh,
 10 man that pain, but the staff there, yeah, that's how they raised us.

11 **Q.** And you said it was more the Māori kids who were getting hit about their table manners
 12 than the Pākehā kids?

13 **A.** Yes, yeah.

14 **Q.** There was a routine at Kelston, wasn't there, every morning you had to get up, have
 15 breakfast, go to school, come home, have your dinner, bath or shower, and then bed?

16 **A.** In the morning we'd go for breakfast and after breakfast we'd go to the bathroom to brush
 17 our teeth. We had to brush our teeth, we'd line up again, and the staff had, you know, put
 18 the toothpaste on the toothbrush but for me they got the soap, they grabbed the soap bar and
 19 said, "Come here, put your toothbrush on this." And I was like, "Huh?" So yeah, we had to
 20 rub our -- it tasted so disgusting with the soap on the toothbrush, but all the Māori kids had
 21 soap on their toothbrushes, we used to say, "It tastes disgusting" and all the other kids were
 22 like, "Yeah, it's gross. Why?" But all the Pākehā kids got toothpaste but the Māori kids got
 23 soap. And I was just little at that time. It was terrible.

24 I don't brush my teeth, I still don't brush my teeth, it's -- yeah, I still got that locked
 25 memory in my brain about that soap on the toothbrush.

26 **Q.** Do you know why it was that the Māori kids had to use soap but the Pākehā kids had
 27 toothpaste?

28 **A.** Don't know. I don't know. I really don't know. I saw the other kids crying but yeah, I don't
 29 know.

30 Am I signing okay? I just want to check. Am I too fast? You know, sorry if I'm
 31 too fast, I'm really frustrated, I've got a lot of stuff to get out, I just want to try and keep
 32 calm at the same time. So sorry about that if I'm signing too fast, sorry.

33 **Q.** I think everybody understands, Matua Whiti, that there's a lot that you want to tell us.

1 So that was a form of racism, you were treated differently because you were Māori.

2 Was there other racism that you experienced at Kelston?

3 A. I can't remember, there's so many, but yeah, racism, like which one, a Deaf person or -- like
4 Māori Deaf support me a lot. They helped me a lot, so much. (Interpreter
5 correcting) -- only a few of them supported me.

6 **Q.** Because most of the staff at Kelston were Pākehā, is that right?

7 A. Yes. Yeah, no Māori staff.

8 **Q.** There was some Māori staff who worked at the hostel, a particular woman who was a
9 cook?

10 A. In the kitchen, in the kitchen.

11 **Q.** Yes.

12 A. Yes, she worked there. She was lovely. She knew, she saw what happened, she saw we
13 were starving, we were hungry, and she'd say, "Shh, come here", and we'd go in a little
14 group to the kitchen and make sure no-one saw, and she was so lovely, oh. But, you know,
15 the first time I saw her, she supported us, she gave us ice cream, a heap of ice cream,
16 heaping bowl of ice cream, and then said, "Go around the back to your bedrooms, go the
17 back way." She was so lovely. And then one day she wasn't there, she was just gone. And
18 we all talked about her and how lovely she was. She was amazing.

19 **Q.** The hostel had different staff to the school, didn't they?

20 A. Oh yeah, they were hopeless, hopeless. You'd see them, the teachers, oh, you know, lazy,
21 not supporting us, everything was the same on the board, the same thing over and over
22 again, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, same thing, day after day. Then
23 they'd just sit down, write in their books. They knew we were all Deaf, we'd get sick of
24 doing the same thing all the time, we wanted something different, maths or English or
25 whatever, but no, it was the same thing, copy it down, copy it down. I was sick of it. It
26 made me not clever.

27 **Q.** Because at that time at Kelston, you were banned from using sign language, is that right?

28 A. Yes, yes, that's true.

29 **Q.** What would happen if you or the other children tried to sign to each other?

30 A. They'd get a ruler and slap us on the hand, or the leather, thick leather, big long thick
31 leather like this, and then they'd hit you three times on each hand, you had to have your
32 hands out. That was really sore. Ooh. And the staff were big man, tall, and he'd go wh ack,
33 you knew it was coming, and you'd stand there and wait for it, really painful,
34 meaning -- you hadn't been naughty but they were picking on you, they picked me on with

1 that strap. It was like, "Why me? Why am I getting strapped?" I wouldn't even know what
2 it was for sometimes, they were just picking on me because they thought I was cheeky.
3 "Oh, he's been naughty, good, give him a strap." I was so sore. You couldn't write
4 afterwards, your hand would swell up.

5 **Q.** So sometimes you were given the strap for signing, but sometimes you were given the strap
6 for no reason at all?

7 **A.** That's right.

8 **Q.** How did the teachers expect you to learn how to communicate if they didn't let you sign?

9 **A.** Yeah, that's it, I don't know. I mean, they didn't teach us sign, so... there were a few other
10 teachers who were pretty good, I liked -- there was one old lady and she'd gesture and that
11 was great because then you could learn. But, you know, the other teachers, they didn't take
12 any notice of you. "Oh, they're too Deaf." They just had an easy job there. You know, but
13 how were we supposed to improve? Yeah.

14 **Q.** The teachers, did they expect you to learn to lip read?

15 **A.** Yes, but it was impossible, it was impossible. I'll show you. You think about like a
16 feather, and you can hear, when you hear you'll say "S" and you can hear "S", but we
17 couldn't hear that because we were too Deaf to hear it. So they'd put the feather closer and
18 closer to your mouth and if you didn't say the sound properly they'd get the ruler and hit
19 you on the mouth. "No, 'Sss'." And so we'd be crying because they'd hit us on the mouth
20 and give you a shock when they hit you on the mouth, hurt your lips, flick it, and it would
21 go whack on your lips. You know, why would they do that?

22 So I wasn't good, I had -- I had no experience with speech and it just didn't work,
23 I prefer signing, you know, on the hands. It's so easy when you sign. Much easier than lip
24 reading.

25 **Q.** So they wanted you to learn how to talk and then how to watch other people talking?

26 **A.** That's right, yes.

27 **Q.** And they also wanted --

28 **A.** They wanted me to watch, "You watch me, watch my lips, watch me." Didn't work.

29 **Q.** They also wanted you to learn to read and write English?

30 **A.** Yes. Yeah true, everything entirely in English, right throughout school, no Te reo Māori at
31 all, kapa haka, never. They said, "Who am I?" And it wasn't - it was all English, and very
32 easy basic English, so you'd just copy it down by wrote and the next day copy more down.
33 So- you were trying to learn it yourself, like learning language yourself, but that didn't
34 work, you just didn't understand what was happening. It was terrible.

- 1 **Q.** You were frustrated because they just gave you the same words over and over again, didn't
2 they?
- 3 **A.** Yes, yeah, we were all frustrated, we were all the same.
- 4 **Q.** So in fact, during the day, you couldn't wait to get out of the classroom and into the
5 playground?
- 6 **A.** Yes, that's right.
- 7 **Q.** Because what was good about being in the playground?
- 8 **A.** Because there was no teachers there, nobody was around so we'd mix together and it was
9 great, "Hey, hey, did you get smacked?" "Yeah, I got hit. You did too? Oh really?"
10 I started to realise that I was the same, it wasn't just me, everyone was getting it. And, "Oh,
11 it hurts, eh?" "Yeah, yeah." It was good to hear that, you know, because then you'd
12 understand, they'd sign about getting hit so then you could understand they were saying
13 about getting hit. But if they didn't sign or didn't talk then I wouldn't understand.
- 14 **Q.** When you went back home, mum and dad also wanted you to learn to talk, didn't they?
- 15 **A.** Yes.
- 16 **Q.** So they didn't support you with any signing at all?
- 17 **A.** No, nothing at all. They didn't even teach me to speak, nothing. I was very, very isolated
18 there.
- 19 **Q.** Because when you went home for the holidays, the physical abuse that you were telling us
20 about continued, didn't it?
- 21 **A.** Yes, I was back and forth and it was always the same, yeah, back and forth school to home,
22 school to home, and it was always the same. And I'd arrive at Te Puke to my home, get off
23 the train, they dropped me off from the train, "Bye, everybody," wait and wait and wait,
24 mum and dad were meant to pick me up, but they didn't come and I'd be there until dark.
25 And one Māori woman knew who I was, she was like, "Hey you," and I took off, not
26 knowing who she was. But leaving me there at the train station until the night and all the
27 other Deaf kids would go home one by one, I'd say good bye until I was the last one left
28 there waiting and waiting and mum wouldn't come. And that was it. And then eventually
29 Police came and got me, they knew who I was and that I was Deaf, and took me to my
30 grandmother's house and dropped me off there.
- 31 **Q.** So you weren't safe at home, were you?
- 32 **A.** No, I was sick of it, really sick of it at home. They were always, if I came then I was scared
33 straight away, I'd be like, "Oh, no, no, I don't want to come." "Come in, come in." But in
34 my mind it was just so awful, dad was always like there was something to hit me with, so

- 1 I'd be running away, running away, you know, I would try to have a good time with my
2 family, but it just couldn't happen, I was so frightened all the time of going home.
- 3 **Q.** It was also frightening being at Kelston, wasn't it?
- 4 **A.** Yeah, sometimes. When you're with the Deaf group that was great because you could mix
5 with those other kids, but the older Deaf kids, the bigger ones, they were no good. So yeah.
6 Sometimes okay, sometimes bad, it was worse at home.
- 7 **Q.** You talk about the older Deaf kids. Was there bullying by the older kids at Kelston?
- 8 **A.** Yes, of course, yes, all the time, a lot. Much bigger and we were afraid of them, there was
9 nothing we could do, what could we do? We wouldn't know what to do, we'd get lollies
10 and they'd take them off us, "Good kid, off you go," and take our lollies. And it happened
11 to other little Deaf kids too, they were scared, but how could we stop them? We'd say, "Oh,
12 they've taken our lollies off us, they took our lollies," and the staff would say, "No. No,
13 they didn't," and wouldn't believe us, the staff didn't believe me, and the other children as
14 well, they were the same.
- 15 **Q.** The big boys would take your lunch sometimes, wouldn't they?
- 16 **A.** Yes, yes.
- 17 **Q.** And the teachers knew, but they didn't care?
- 18 **A.** Yeah, really, that's right. I'd say, "I haven't got any lunch." "Oh well, it's gone." It's
19 terrible. They should, you know, hold on to the lunches and be responsible, "Hey, that's not
20 your name." And, "Hello you, this is your lunch." You know, but they just put them out
21 and you'd see people grabbing lunches and that was it. And you knew, "Oh look, that big
22 boy's got my lunch." "Yeah he's got mine too." It was obvious. It wasn't right. We'd go so
23 hungry, that's the main thing I remember, just being hungry all the time.
- 24 **Q.** Sometimes the girls who were at day school, who came from their own homes would try
25 and give you kids lunch, wouldn't they?
- 26 **A.** Yeah, lovely, lovely. They knew, "You poor things," and they'd try and give us food.
27 Yeah, they were really good, really good. It was lovely.
- 28 **Q.** But the teachers, if they caught them doing it would stop them, wouldn't they?
- 29 **A.** That's right, "Don't give it." Not allowed to give us their lunch.
- 30 **Q.** You've talked about being hit with this leather strap. Did sometimes you get hit with the
31 leather strap on your behind as well as your hand?
- 32 **A.** Yes, it was worse on the hand. On your bum it wasn't much, so, you know, we knew to put
33 a book down your pants and they'd whack you and the staff would know, they'd see the
34 book and they'd take it out. But with your bum it's sort of like a shock, like bang, but it's

1 easy and it just hurts and then you can't sit down, you know, to eat your dinner, you have to
 2 stand up, stand up because it's sore and walk around and couldn't sit down, couldn't sleep,
 3 you'd have to sleep on your side on your left or your right side because your bum was all
 4 red. Yeah, really sore.

5 **Q.** I want to talk about when you were really little at Kelston and you were at the hostel and
 6 the boys were getting bathed together.

7 **A.** Yes.

8 **Q.** You've told us that they would bathe about four boys together in the bath?

9 **A.** That's right, like four or five boys in the bath together, and, you know, they were all
 10 playing, touching each other, touch my penis, pull on it, you know, "Ooh," but we didn't
 11 know what was going on and the others would laugh and -- so it was, like, you know,
 12 grabbing you and playing with your bum and some of the Pākehā kids were in with that too,
 13 because they were big and they'd tease you and grab hold of you and I'll never forget it, that
 14 was really awful. We'd all get upset and cry. And then the next time when you go back to
 15 the bath you'd go, "I don't want to go with that staff member, I don't want that one, I want
 16 another staff member, the good ones."

17 So there were two to a room, and if there were two in a room that would be good,
 18 but these four or five, that was terrible, but the staff made the decisions.

19 **Q.** So there were two male staff in particular that were bad, weren't there?

20 **A.** Yeah, they didn't care, you'd see their faces, "Come on, in you get," and just throw them all
 21 in the bath. Not "Come on, it's bath time now, and here's the soap." "Come on, come on."
 22 Just hand the soap to you, you had to learn how to wash yourself, but we were all the same,
 23 the boys didn't know how to bath, they should have had only two to a bath, it would have
 24 been safer, you know, if you had somebody there with you, but four, oh no, you know,
 25 everything was going on in the bath, pulling on each other's penis and real bullying.

26 **Q.** So the children would bully each other, but these two male staff members, they were doing
 27 wrong things in the bath to you, weren't they?

28 **A.** Yeah, they didn't care, they watched it all. I remember seeing their eyes. Oh yeah. They
 29 didn't care, they took no notice, they wouldn't help, and then when it was time to get out,
 30 "All right, out you get." And you'd see everybody quickly get out and run to their
 31 bedrooms, because they wanted to keep away from the staff.

32 **Q.** When the male staff members washed your body, would they sometimes put their hands up
 33 your bottom?

- 1 A. That's right, yeah. Same as the other kids too. They'd say, "Those staff members put their
2 hand right up there." "Yeah, me too," they'd tell me. Yeah, that's right. Yeah, I was really
3 upset, I didn't want them to touch me, I wanted to go home and, yeah. But, you know, you
4 saw them doing that.
- 5 Q. Did you feel that you could tell any of the other staff what was going on in the bath?
- 6 A. Ooh -- not really, I wasn't -- I'd keep my mouth shut. Other Deaf kids would tell you what
7 was happening for them but nobody talked to the staff. You couldn't tell the staff. You'd
8 keep your mouth shut.
- 9 Q. You've told us that some of the staff at the hostel treated the Māori children differently. Do
10 you want to tell us anything else you remember about that?
- 11 A. Yeah, so for the Pākehā staff, there was lots of staff but not very many -- no Māori staff, no
12 Māori staff at all. So the staff were entirely Pākehā. And I'd look and if you'd have seen a
13 Māori staff member you would have thought, "Yes," and go and hug them. But no, you
14 just had to keep yourself to yourself.
- 15 Q. When you were at school, did you understand your own identity as being Māori?
- 16 A. No, no idea at all. Deaf kids would say, "Ehf, off." "Why?" "Your colour, nah, nah, we
17 don't want you. White, we want white." I didn't understand that, what they were saying.
18 And they'd say, "You know who you are?" And I'd go, "Who am I, who am I, where am
19 I from?" They thought I was an Islander, Tongan, Niuean, Cook Islander, I didn't know.
20 Didn't know where my colour came from, my family hadn't told me. I found out really late.
- 21 Q. Because your parents couldn't communicate with you, you're saying that you didn't even
22 understand what the difference between Māori and Pākehā or Tongan or Samoan, etc, was?
- 23 A. Yeah, they never asked me or taught me anything. They never taught me anything, I didn't
24 even know who I was, like, "Who am I?" I didn't know. If someone said, "You're Māori."
25 I went, "Oh, really? How? How come? Why am I Māori? What is that?" And I'd learn
26 and have them explain it to me, but I never had that, I had no idea.
- 27 Q. You've told us when we were speaking earlier that you knew that there was a beautiful
28 house on the farm where you lived, but it was many, many years later that you came to
29 understand that that was a marae?
- 30 A. Yes, yes, you're right, yes, that time I think I was 18 and we went to a marae and I was like,
31 "Oh, wait, that's the same as the one that I have growing up." You know, different colours,
32 different paintings. I was like "Oh." So I asked, "What is this?" They said, "That's a
33 marae." I'm like, "What? A marae? I don't know what that is. What's a marae?" So they
34 said, "Come with me." And, you know, when a person passes away, there's a body there.

1 "Oh, this person in here has passed away?" They said, "Yes, this is a marae." So they
 2 taught me all about the marae, but before that I had no idea, no -one had ever taught me that
 3 concept before.

4 I've got a strong Deaf identity, no-one took me to a marae or a tangi, I'd never been
 5 to one before, you know, I was just always left at home, but yeah, the first time I went to a
 6 marae I was like, "Wow, it's similar to the one that's at home," but I didn't realise that was a
 7 marae at home. So yeah, I suddenly realised, I was shocked, I was never explained what it
 8 was before, when I was young, yeah.

9 **Q.** You've told us that at school, because you were boarding and you didn't go home at night to
 10 supportive parents, your schooling fell way behind the day pupils, is that right?

11 **A.** Yeah, yes, I was always behind, always behind, yeah, always, always behind. I was always
 12 late, you know, other ones would be catching up, you know, same age as me, but why am
 13 I behind? I was like, "They're cleverer than me, why am I so behind?" You know, how did
 14 I -- I needed to catch up but no-one was teaching me.

15 **Q.** Because the day pupils, if they had supportive parents, when they went home at night, mum
 16 and dad would help them with their homework?

17 **A.** Yes, yeah, my parents at home helping me, no, no way. They had lovely parents who could
 18 teach them, their son or their daughter, or whatever, they could teach them, but yeah, I had
 19 nothing like that, nothing like that at all. It was different for me, yeah, and I realise that
 20 yeah, I had a hard time.

21 And, you know, I want to be a good father and teach my children and be a good
 22 parent, you know, being at home and teaching my children, but yeah, when I was younger I
 23 was behind, I missed out on a lot.

24 **Q.** And the staff at the hostel, they didn't play the role of a parent by helping you with
 25 homework, did they?

26 **A.** No, no. Not at all.

27 **Q.** So when you were at Kelston, you got the impression that you were not intelligent because
 28 you were behind the other kids?

29 **A.** Well, I'm not really thinking about, you know, being behind, I kind of, like, didn't really
 30 know I was behind, but that's called, you know, at the bottom of the class, if you've heard
 31 that saying, you know, being dumb, this is the sign here, "bottom of the class". And we all
 32 go to one side of the room and the clever ones will go to another side of the room and do
 33 their work. But yeah, they got homework and they got communication but we didn't really,

1 was quite complicated and I was confused. So I wasn't really clear about what was actually
2 going on.

3 Just recently, at 30/40 years old I've got the full story and had it all explained to me.
4 You know, so the brain works, but at the time as a young man it didn't work, I had no
5 background on it, so it wasn't until later that I got the true story and I'd had to try and lip
6 read it and really not gotten what was going on. So it wasn't until I was 30 or 40 years old
7 that, you know, I really understood the entire picture of the whānau and asked some
8 questions and said, "How come I was adopted?" And they said, "Your mother didn't want a
9 baby." "Really?"

10 So I asked if I was given away and they didn't -- I asked my stepmother if I was
11 given away and she said, "Yeah, they didn't want you." And I said, "How come?" I asked,
12 "How come?" She didn't want to talk about it. It wasn't fair for me, I wanted to know, I
13 wanted to hear, I was interested in what had happened to me. I wanted to ask mum.
14 I know she was frightened of me by then because I'd get angry, and she saw that I was
15 angry, saying, "Why?"

16 I couldn't blame her by then, she'd gotten old and I did respect her, and understood
17 but, you know, it was in my heart to ask and I knew she'd been naughty but, you know,
18 I said, "You know, you looked after me, you were drinking a lot." She said, "Yeah, I
19 know." But it was good, we did talk, and I said, "You were a naughty mum, eh?" I wasn't
20 grumpy about it or angry asking her, because she was old by that stage and she'd realised.

21 It was good to be able to talk about that with her. She was happy, I know she cried
22 over the suffering that I experienced because, you know, she said to me, you suffered really
23 hard and I worried so much about you and that you couldn't communicate, and you
24 wouldn't hear your father and he'd hit you a lot, to see her explain that it was, you know,
25 quite gratifying. I didn't say anything more.

26 **Q.** So she eventually acknowledged what had happened when you were growing up?

27 **A.** Yeah, that's right.

28 **Q.** And you eventually learned that you had lots of siblings, brothers and sisters?

29 **A.** Yes, I didn't realise.

30 **Q.** Yes.

31 **A.** I thought I was the only child, because I was with mum and dad, no other siblings there,
32 and then -- it wasn't until then that I realised because I'd been adopted away from my other
33 brothers and sisters. So I wasn't allowed to be close to them, I wasn't allowed to go with
34 them, they were told to keep away from me because I was adopted. It just doesn't seem

1 right, that -- you could say, "Hello." You could see me and say, "Hello," you know, say
 2 you're my brother, and I could say, "How come" and ask questions. There are twins in the
 3 family.

4 (Interpreter correcting) -- I have a sibling in the whānau who can sign and we were
 5 able to communicate and we remember each other. That sibling was older than me. And
 6 they remember me when I was small and they said, "Oh, you know, what are you doing
 7 here?" And I said, "My father's passed away." They said, "Your real father?" I said, "No,
 8 it's my real father." I was really shocked. But that was really good, I was really happy to
 9 see that sibling and be able to say "hi". But we didn't really talk again, they lived in
 10 Auckland and I lived in Te Puke, so we were quite a long way apart, and I was still isolated.

11 **Q.** If I take you back to when you were a young man of about 20 when you're starting to learn
 12 all this new information about your identity, you would describe yourself as quite an angry
 13 young man at that time?

14 **A.** Yes, yeah definitely. Frustrated.

15 **Q.** Because the abuse from your-- from [GRO-B] your adoptive dad was so bad that you
 16 would often sleep in the chook house?

17 **A.** Yeah, the chicken house, the dog house, and underneath the actual house itself, our home.
 18 Never in my bed, never ever in my bed because I knew that I'd get hit, you know, go to bed
 19 and I had to wake up and keep an eye, one eye open, you know, sleep with one eye open
 20 because my dad would be coming, so regularly slept under the house with the dog and with
 21 the chickens and sometimes way down by the river, sleep in the trees down there by the
 22 river. But never ever in the home. Not at all.

23 Once I left for school, that was the first time I slept in a bed.

24 **Q.** You've told us in your statement that in your early 20s, or around 20 you became involved
 25 in gangs. Can you tell us about how that happened?

26 **A.** Yeah, I was young and I was big, I had become a big man with long hair and, you know,
 27 looked really tough and so they showed me motorbikes and I had a look over these
 28 motorbikes and I thought, "Oh, I'd like to join these guys," but I couldn't really
 29 communicate with them, I didn't understand anything they were saying, they said, "Do you
 30 want to ride a motorbike?" "I don't know, I don't know." So they said they'd teach me how
 31 to ride a motorbike. I didn't realise that became a gang, what the name was, "gang", and
 32 I just thought, "Oh, that's lovely, a nice group riding motorbikes, Harley Davidson Club,
 33 you know, visiting pubs and drinking together, and nobody sort of said it is a gang, and it
 34 wasn't until I later found out it was a gang. And they said, "It looks like you've joined

1 another gang, you're fighting." I was like, "Oh, I'm fighting, I'm not allowed to do that, I'm
2 Deaf." "Come on, come with me."

3 So I followed them and that was the president of the gang and I went him, and he
4 said, "You come with me." And he tricked me into fighting and I was stupid, I thought it
5 was fun, you know, I was a big guy and I could do this. And then later on I realised that I
6 was hurting people and I was, like, "Hey, why are we doing this to them?" And they said,
7 "Oh, they're no good," and the name of their gang, and then I thought, "I need to stop this,
8 this is wrong, you know, I'm not managing myself" and I could see what was really going
9 on with my eyes, these people are bleeding, you know, there's knives involved. I hadn't
10 used a knife, I only used my hands.

11 And then afterwards they were like, "Come on, again." I said, "Nah, nah, I think
12 I'm done", because I was thinking about the importance of children in the future and being
13 the kind of person I wanted to be for my children, I didn't want to pass on my name and the
14 history from my stepfather on to my own children of that violence.

15 So I wanted to be good and teach my children and my children are hearing but they
16 know how to sign from me and I think that that's, you know, a real taonga for me to be able
17 to communicate with my children, they're fantastic, and they can sign and that's wonderful
18 that they do that with me.

19 So I taught them that, and then I realised -- well, at the time when I was in the gangs
20 I realised I don't want this for my future and I've been arrested a lot of times by the Police
21 and I didn't understand why I was being arrested, and it wasn't until then that I started to
22 realise what was going on and I said to the president, "I'm sorry, I have to finish. It's pretty
23 hard for me, it's really difficult being Deaf, it's really risky, I can't hear if someone's got a
24 gun, I'd just be taken out without any idea, I'd never know. You know, if someone's
25 running up behind me they could stab me, I wouldn't hear them coming, or a car, you never
26 know." So the president said, "All right, okay, yeah, I understand if you want to leave."
27 And I said, "Yes, I do, definitely," and I want to be safe, I wanted to keep safe, you know,
28 I wanted to have children.

29 That was important for me, children are beautiful.

30 **Q.** Why do you think it is that you were attracted to this group of men, the gang?

31 **A.** Well, I mean, they had these awesome motorbikes, you know, they looked cool and what
32 they were wearing and I thought, "I want to look like that. Why not? Who cares if I'm
33 Deaf? I can join them." And they were all hearing, I was the only Deaf who had joined,
34 and they were like, "Ooh." They were scared of me because I was a good fighter and so

1 I had become the bully, from being young and getting stronger and stronger and then they
 2 were like, "Oh, nah, nah, nah." And I didn't realise until I took a good look at myself, you
 3 know, that this was a mistake for me.

4 And I visited people and apologised, and said, "I'm really sorry, nobody taught me,
 5 nobody, my parents didn't teach me." And their response was, you know, and I said, "I hit
 6 you for nothing, I didn't realise what I was doing" and explained to them. And they said,
 7 "It's okay." They said, "It's okay." And they even asked me in for dinner, we had a nice
 8 talk, and looking at them I realised, "Hey, this is a family and they're peaceful, I was the
 9 rough one." So I wanted to become like them. So I did. I became sensible, was able to
 10 communicate better, Pākehā, Māori, Pacific Islander, whoever you are, you could talk to
 11 me, we talk about where you're from and, you know, make those connections.

12 But back then, at the time things were really hard. I just feel so bad for these Deaf
 13 children who have these problems and even now, you know, I visited a month ago in
 14 Matamata, and they were nervous and frightened, they said, "Can you please come and visit
 15 at Matamata school." They had a girl there who was Māori and frightened, so I supported
 16 her and visited. And you could see that she -- she said, "Oh, are you Deaf?" And I said,
 17 "Yes, I'm Deaf." And, "Are you Māori?" I said, "Yeah, just like you." And you could see
 18 the realisation come across her face. "Really?" And they said, "See, he's Māori," and she
 19 was being naughty and I just briefly said to her, "Hey, no more of this shouting," and she
 20 straight away changed. The teacher was stunned. She said, "Wow, how did you do that so
 21 effectively?" And it was the Signing. Your hands are important. I taught her and she
 22 understood. Talking doesn't work.

23 The teacher was absolutely shocked and over the moon, the girl was happy with me,
 24 "I want to show you my classroom." So off we went. "The next time you start shouting,
 25 don't shout at your teacher." "Yes, yes, yes, I know, I will, I will." And she promised, and
 26 became a good girl. I think she was 12. And still wants me around. "I miss Whiti, I want
 27 to see him again." But I'm busy now with all of this Royal Commission stuff. I told her
 28 when I have some free time I'll go see her again.

29 **Q.** So, Whiti, what you're telling us is that it's so important for young Deaf people, but
 30 particularly young Māori Deaf people to feel heard and connected?

31 **A.** Yeah, Deaf children are just marvellous, you know, they're just so visual, their eyes are
 32 always on. You know, you used to play that game with the five little rocks and you'd put
 33 them over your hands and toss them up and down, you'd teach them that game, they get it.
 34 You know, you draw with them, you teach them with your Signing. If you use oralism it's

1 real difficult for them. You come to classroom, "Do you remember anything that
 2 happened?" "No, can't remember anything." "I'm not putting you down, it's not your fault,
 3 we'll try again, we'll try again." And encourage them. I want children to be able to
 4 improve, I don't want them to be put down. I never want to see that. There are so many
 5 hearing teachers out there in Deaf Education, how many Deaf teachers? And hearing
 6 people go, "It's all right, I know what I'm doing," hearing teachers, but they need to follow
 7 what Deaf people need and that's Signing. They have to.

8 I've done so much work working with Deaf children, teaching them, you know, with
 9 the boys at the village and they'd have problems, and I'd say, "All right, you come with me
 10 over to the marae, what's the problem?" And we'd talk it out. I'd say, "Are you okay? Are
 11 you going to remember?" But the communication was clear, I give them the information,
 12 we'd sort out the problem, resolve it. And they'd go, "Oh, right, thank you, Whiti, I
 13 understand." "All right, so don't come back again and if it happens again we'll be at
 14 Rūaumoko marae, my office is here." But they're comfortable there see, because of the
 15 wairua, the Deaf wairua, it's a warm feeling there for them.

16 And I think that's really important for them it's not for me. It's for them. And
 17 I stand strong for those Deaf tamariki, and the Deaf community as well.

18 **Q.** I want to talk to you about that work that you did at Ke Iston village, but just before we
 19 leave the issue of the gangs, I understand that you left the gang when you were 25?

20 **A.** Yes, 25 I left.

21 **Q.** So it was only a short period of your life?

22 **A.** Yeah, I just felt yeah, it was too much, it didn't suit me being in the gang. You know, it
 23 was hard to communicate as well. But I've got to think positive, you know, so that's why
 24 I left. And I realise now -- but, you know, I still do visit the club for drinks and say hello
 25 and see how everyone is, but that's all.

26 **Q.** When you were part of the two gangs that you were involved with, there were other young
 27 men, hearing men who had sad stories too, weren't there?

28 **A.** Yes. They were not really in the gang but they helped me, like, how to, you know, teach
 29 me how to make friends and how to relate with other people based on their experiences as
 30 well. But yeah, they were lovely, they were really, really lovely.

31 They invited me to their home and I met their children and I was like, "Oh, wow,
 32 I'm in a gang, I'm rough, oh, how do I learn to think positively?" So anyway, I visited
 33 them, went ahead and visited their houses and they introduced me to their wives and I said,
 34 you know, "I'm Deaf." They're like, "That's fine." And they would gesture with me, "Oh,

1 you're beating." "Why?" And they would tell me that it wasn't good to do this kind of
 2 stuff. So I'm like, "What?" They'd say, "Yeah, you're beating, why? Why are you beating
 3 people, you know, why, what for?"

4 But communication was really important, I've now realised. When they explained
 5 that to me, they were really clear. You know, "I know you, you've got a grumpy look on
 6 your face." They would say, you know, like, if I didn't understand, they'd want to hit and
 7 fight, because I didn't understand what they were saying, you know, because they were
 8 talking and I just didn't have a clue what they were saying. But that's wrong for me, really,
 9 to just lash out like that. I should just check, "Oh, are you okay? You're saying hello? Oh,
 10 you're just saying hello? Right, okay, this is hello? Okay." So it was hard to learn to
 11 communicate like that.

12 So yeah, he was a lovely man, he passed away, I think two years ago, I was really
 13 upset about that because he was so beautiful, he taught me the right way. And yeah, I want
 14 to learn more from him. But yeah, his wife she was lovely too.

15 **Q.** Matua Whiti, you've talked about the Police arresting you. What was it like for you to be
 16 arrested by the Police?

17 **A.** Oh, the Police themselves used to catch me because they thought I was rough, you know,
 18 rough looking, but really, I'd just finished work and I was going back to the pub, I had my
 19 full jug ready at the pub and the Police came in and to check on the pub and check on
 20 everybody and here I am with my beer and they caught me and I was like, "Hang on a
 21 minute, what's going on? What, what, what? I'm Deaf, I'm Deaf." And I was like, "Hang
 22 on, wait a second, just wait," and I pushed them, you know, I was like, "Hang on, I haven't
 23 finished my jug yet, I've got to finish my jug first," trying to sign to them "I'm trying to
 24 finish my jug," and I tried to call the manager over to communicate with them, but no, they
 25 didn't care about the manager and they took me in the van and locked me up. And I'm like,
 26 "Huh? What did I do wrong? What was I doing wrong? Why?" Like why, they always
 27 used to catch me all the time. And the Police would say, you know, ask me different
 28 questions and -- or write it down and write down and keep it in my file but I didn't know
 29 how to write back to communicate, I didn't know English, I had no idea what they were
 30 writing, what they were saying, that's how they used to -- they would make up a story on
 31 the bit of paper, write a made-up story, but I didn't know what the English was, I couldn't
 32 read. And I'm like, "Why do you catch me?" It used to happen all the time. The Police
 33 sergeant, he knew me, you know, because I was always there, always picking on me, I hate
 34 him.

1 You know, there's a lot of Police around and then they'd always come and pick on
2 me and lock me up at the Auckland Police station, all the time I had to go to the Auckland
3 Police station, locked up there, but yeah, there was -- no-one explained to me what was
4 going on.

5 **Q.** Did you have an interpreter?

6 **A.** No, nothing, no interpreter, nothing whatsoever.

7 **Q.** What about when you went to court?

8 **A.** No, no interpreter, nothing at all. I think later on, and then -- now we get interpreters,
9 they're amazing, interpreters are beautiful, they help us with the Police or whatever we need
10 but at that time, no interpreters at all. I just sat there in court, they asked me questions: Are
11 you guilty or not guilty? And I'm like, "What does that mean? What does guilty/not guilty
12 mean? I have no idea. No idea what they're talking about, guilty or not guilty." I said,
13 "Huh?" No idea. And the lawyer just kind of "You'll be right, shh," you know, "just go
14 home."

15 And then I got a letter in the mail, plenty of letters before in the mail, fines, had to
16 pay fines, fine after fine. But why? I had no idea. Those Police were cheeky. You know,
17 they should see: Oh, this person's Deaf, we will try and help him, you know. But no, they
18 just grabbed me, locked me up. I'd try and fight with them back because I didn't know what
19 was going on, I'd fight with them back and they would grab each other, more Police would
20 come, I'd be like, "Leave me alone, what's the problem?" I'm signing, "What's the
21 problem? Leave me alone." But yeah, so yeah, they'd lock me up. Fed up, all the time in
22 the Police station again, blah, blah, blah, what's your name? You know. But yeah, I just
23 stopped asking questions, I just keep quiet.

24 **Q.** So you think that you've probably got some criminal convictions that aren't right because
25 nobody gave you proper interpreted legal advice?

26 **A.** Yeah, yeah.

27 **Q.** But you've told us that you left behind the gangs and you left behind the Police
28 involvement, and one of the reasons for that is because you joined Deaf Club and so now
29 I want you to talk to me about joining Deaf Club and reconnecting with your Deaf culture?

30 **A.** Oh wonderful, amazing Deaf Club, it's amazing, ooh, man, it's a big impact, like, "Oh, who
31 are you, who are you? You've got long hair now." "Yeah, yeah, that's me." "Oh, yes,
32 I know you, I know you and you and you and you, wait, hang on." We'd meet all our
33 friends and we would hug, you know, big bear hugs, and I was so happy, just so happy
34 being together. You know, I had big long hair and a moustache, and I'm like, "I'm Whiti."

1 "Oh, you're Whiti? You? Oh, you're Whiti?" "Yes, I'm Whiti." "Oh, you were mischief,
2 right?" You know. "No, no, no, not anymore, I want to -- now I can sign, I want to learn to
3 sign more" and I started changing and I started learning and changing and, you know,
4 self-reflection and realised everything I'd done I was wrong in the past and needed to
5 change to become better.

6 But, amazing, I was so happy at Deaf Club, I used to -- you chat away with
7 everybody, you know, we wouldn't go to the pub because the Police are there, but yeah, no
8 Police at Deaf Club, you know, you can just have fun. It was amazing, wonderful, just
9 chat, chat, chat all night, every time, you know, just go and visit each other and because
10 that's -- I learned from them other Deaf, I'm really grateful for the Deaf community, really
11 grateful, Māori Deaf as well, thank you they support me, you know, we're always there for
12 each other.

13 So yeah, they're in my heart, it's beautiful. Deaf people, yeah, I love them. Thank
14 you.

15 **Q.** You've used your experiences as a gang member to talk to young Māori Deaf and you take
16 your gang patch and talk to them about your stories?

17 **A.** Yes, yes. Because, you know, I'm so just dedicated to improving these kids and the staff at
18 Kelston, at Ko Taku Reo, you know, they saw that and it was working really well. You
19 know, I didn't graduate as a teacher at all but, you know, I'm just a natural teacher really
20 and I use that experience and sign with them to teach them. Not like "I'm a teacher, I'm a
21 teacher, look at me." No, not at all, you know, with the children, Deaf children it's really
22 hard for people to communicate with them but I could do that, practical with my hands,
23 visual, signing gesturing. Because, you know, the teacher was always, blah, blah, blah, talk
24 to them, "watch me, watch me, watch me," but no, it doesn't work that way.

25 You should just tap them, make sure they face you, "Hey, look, watch me. Ready?
26 Watch me." And they're like, "Yeah, okay, okay, all right." And then you start signing.
27 Then they understand.

28 **Q.** Before I talk about your work at Kelston village, I just want to briefly mention that for most
29 of your life you've worked very hard in paid employment, haven't you?

30 **A.** Yes, yes.

31 **Q.** And so you worked at the freezing works?

32 **A.** Yeah, long time ago when I was younger, yeah, I changed jobs after that, different jobs,
33 you know, had a look here and there, something I didn't know really well, I would try
34 something to get some new experience, I don't really like that, I'll try something else,

1 maybe a digger, driving a digger. And they're, "Oh, you're Deaf?" "No, I'll be right, I use
2 my eyes." Away I go, picking up dirt here and there. "Oh, good, wow."

3 So yeah, I use my eyes all the time, you know, who cares about their ears? I can use
4 my eyes, I can see what's going on, I can look around the digger, eyes visual really, and
5 even Deaf children, when they sign, their eyes are looking around here and there. So it's
6 easy. It is, it's easy. Sometimes hearing people when they communicate you're like, "Wait,
7 what?" They want to try and write it down with us, but it's better if they write it brief, you
8 know, not big long, huge paragraphs, we're like, "Er, don't know what you're talking about.
9 Sorry, don't understand that. Can you just make it brief and explain just the, you know,
10 main points?" "Oh, okay got it, awesome. That's how you communicate, I understand
11 now."

12 So there's different -- that's the difference.

13 **Q.** So after working for many years in lots of different paid jobs, you started working at
14 Kelston village and I want you to describe that for us. Firstly, was that in the school or in
15 the hostel? How is Kelston run?

16 **A.** I think maybe about 30 years old, around 30 years old, and the staff there asked me to come
17 and work in the village, so I was like, "Oh, well, you know", they knew I'd been naughty in
18 my past, so really -- so I was more experienced with the students there in the village.
19 I learned from the other Deaf staff -- Patrick, he's passed away now, he is Māori Deaf, he's
20 passed away, he asked me to go and learn with the kids and how to have them improve,
21 how to teach them to improve and observe them and so I asked, I was like, "Oh, do these
22 kids have problems?" "Yeah, yeah, yeah." I can see by their facial expressions, you know.
23 And Patrick was like, "Good, you're picking up on that. Wow. Good on you."

24 So all the staff didn't know how to identify that. Patrick was amazing, but yeah,
25 over time, you know, you wouldn't rush with them, you'd be like, "Are you okay? Do you
26 want to talk with me later?" "Yeah, yeah, I'll talk with you later." "Okay, no worries, all
27 good, up to you, your time." And then, you know, I would learn each individually -- about
28 each kid individually and then yeah, I was asked to do a workshop, I was like, "Oh, okay,"
29 and the students were really happy, you know. And yeah, they felt safe with me and then
30 yeah, the students -- I've left now and the students still miss me. I retired a month ago from
31 Ko Taku Reo and yeah, they really miss me, but I still do visit there. I have to because
32 I know the boys really well and they can get upset so I visit and check that they're okay.
33 They're like, "Yes, Whiti's coming, yeah." So yeah, that's really cool.

1 **Q.** I understand that when you first started working there you decided to get your tattoos
2 removed because your tattoos scared the children?

3 **A.** Yeah, the children, yeah, that's right, yes, thank you for reminding me. That's good, yes.
4 So Michael Wi who is a Deaf man that worked there at that time, he's also passed away, he
5 was just a wonderful man, and he came and said to me, "Hey, I want you to come and teach
6 with the Māori Deaf children and do some Māori arts." Okay, so I came along and the kids
7 all stared at me, "Who's that man? Who's that man?" "Don't worry, he's Deaf, he's Deaf."
8 And they were like, "Oh, he's got lots of tattoos." I saw their faces and realised that they
9 were frightened of me with all these tattoos. And I said, "You know what am I going to
10 do?" And I went to the doctor and so they had special free laser removal that you could
11 have your tattoos removed and they said, "Yes, yes," and it was really cheap, I think I paid
12 \$20, and so I said, "Yeah, I want to do that now," and I was really keen.

13 And so they all went away and all the kids were really cute, when I came back
14 they said, "Oh, you're back?" "Yes, I'm back." And they said, "Where's those, all those
15 tattoos?" And I said, "Yeah, they're gone. Look, look," and showed them my arms. "How
16 come?" I said, "The butterflies took them," I was cheeky with the kids, "the butterflies took
17 all the tattoos and flew away." And all these kids laughed and laughed. But it was really
18 cute and that was good for them, you know, it was exciting for them to learn and
19 understand, you know, through signing that really, you know, I'm a bit sort of sad now at
20 the moment because I think about, you know, the government saying, you know, the
21 Ministry saying that Ko Taku Reo owns Rūaumoko marae School and so I've got this
22 picture from that now, and I've had to accept that and it's not something I can fight against,
23 but the Ministry of Education is powerful and so I understand now that Ko Taku
24 Reo -- Rūaumoko Marae is part of Ko Taku Reo, but I spoke to James and I understand
25 that.

26 **Q.** So the marae is part of Kelston village?

27 **A.** What do you mean the village? I worked at the village and taught children there at the
28 marae, we did kapa haka and we did weaving, whaikōrero, that sort of thing and the
29 teachers would teach, I learned from Michael Wi, who passed away, and he tautokoed me
30 how to teach the children, and the children were very sad when he passed away, and I told
31 them I was his brother, "yeah, yeah, I'm his brother, don't worry", they're happy to think I'm
32 his brother.

33 **Q.** But you're saying that that's all owned by the government, that's how they see it?

1 A. That's right, yeah, so I've realised that now. At the time, it would have been it was Kelston
 2 School for the Deaf, way back, and then they changed to KDEC (Kelston Deaf Education
 3 Centre), so that was okay, all the children were excited to be there, they liked it being called
 4 KDEC, then they called it Ko Taku Reo, they changed the name, and I don't really
 5 understand that. We've had meetings about it, and I've brought up how I feel, it's still a
 6 government school, so I understand that, you know, and I'm happy to support them.

7 **Q.** Do you feel by changing the name to Ko Taku Reo that the school is inclusive of Māori
 8 concepts, or it's just a name change?

9 A. They haven't got the word "Deaf" in there, Ko Taku Reo doesn't mention Deafness. So it
 10 feels hearing, it feels like they're teaching hearing children. They should mention "Deaf"
 11 because it's our school, you know, that's where we play, that's where we sign, Ko Taku Reo
 12 sounds like speech and hearing. They still have signing but -- I get it, I get it why they've
 13 called it that, I accept it, and I still support Ko Taku Reo, because it's what the
 14 Government's sort of decreed, I can't blame them, and I'm happy with that, I want to
 15 encourage them and hope that in the future things can improve and then I'll be happy.

16 **Q.** I just want to talk to you about how it was for you growing up learning to be a Māori male.
 17 You've told us that you had no language for it. Is it still a barrier today for you when you
 18 go on to the marae, the lack of language?

19 A. Yes. Because when you speak te reo you have to learn how the words go together. That's
 20 really tough for someone like me, you know, you have hearing people here like in this
 21 room, you can learn to speak spoken languages, but I need to be able to sign my Māori
 22 concepts and language, the equivalent in sign language. It's still the same concepts, but
 23 I know that, you know, to speak te reo Māori as fluently is really tough.

24 The interpreters are able to hear and sign and do all of that at the same time, but it's
 25 even harder for the interpreters when it's going on for too long. I don't want to be able to
 26 speak te reo fluently but I want my interpreters to know te reo Māori and then for that
 27 communication between different groups of people to go really smoothly. So if we go into
 28 the marae or Te Ao Māori it's different, you know, and people will do a long whaikōrero
 29 and then someone else will take a turn, and someone else will take a turn, you have
 30 different systems but, you know, for me, you know, there's only -- I only ever had two, our
 31 side and your side, you know, because in the Deaf School we didn't have a lot of
 32 understanding of how to speak te reo Māori, it was all signed.

1 So that supported Māori Deaf. But, you know, I know that you can sign for Māori
2 concepts and it's something, you know, like when I'm gone, then what happens? Who's
3 next? Who teaches? I worry about that.

4 **Q.** Do you feel that there are enough people trained to be able to interpret te reo into
5 New Zealand Sign Language and back again?

6 **A.** No, not enough, definitely not enough interpreters. I think there are about four or five who
7 can interpret. We need way more, I'd like way more. The problem is that AUT
8 isn't -- they're not learning to sign. First of all, they learn English, once they've learned
9 English they move on to te reo Māori, they have to go on and do more training, but they
10 still fail and it's -- the Pākehā students seem to get through all right but the Māori students
11 don't. Why do they fail? We need them to get through because they need to do te reo
12 Māori and sign with the children. It's difficult.

13 Because it's easy if you're learning in English and you're learning to sign but you
14 don't have the Māori and the Māori signs. When people come to work with me they don't
15 understand the way I sign and what the concepts are and I really miss having those Māori
16 interpreters, we need more. It's really hard to find.

17 Just recently we were talking about Te Roopu Waiora Trust, we were talking about
18 moving to a new office for Māori sign language. And, you know, because AUT teaches the
19 Pākehā interpreters in English but we need to have something for Māori and that's
20 potentially a future area, because there's heaps of Māori all over New Zealand, but we face
21 those barriers, we're stuck.

22 You know, if you go up north it's worse, there's even less access up there. I visit
23 people I know up there and they say, "You know, I'm poor, I can't go to the doctor." And
24 you say, "How do you get an interpreter to go to the doctor?" And there's lots of Deaf
25 children up there, the situation's dire up there. I want to support them in the far north.
26 There's some lovely kids up there. But how do they access education? There's just not
27 enough services up there, not enough interpreters in Northland, I think they've only got two
28 interpreters altogether. They need far more, and a lot of them are Māori. And that's the
29 problem.

30 **Q.** How important is it for parents of Deaf children to learn to sign with their children?

31 **A.** I mean, you just don't see it, I don't see it. I want to bring them into Ko Taku Reo village or
32 the marae and have the parents there and check out their signing and see how they're going
33 and if they're not signing then, you know, they're going to have problems in their family
34 because the Deaf children are stuck then. They have no access.

- 1 **Q.** Have you noticed that there are particularly young Māori Deaf who don't have access to
2 support groups like Deaf Club?
- 3 **A.** That's right, yes. Sometimes, you know, they might just have a few fun dramas for children
4 at Deaf Club. For example, I work with hāngī and bring the children for a kai and support
5 them, having that, and then get the parents, you know, to come, bring them in, don't be
6 embarrassed, you know, there's nothing wrong, us Deaf aren't going to be mean to you or
7 anything, come in, everybody, enjoy it, everybody's welcome. You see how excited the
8 children are that you're Deaf and you're signing there. "Oh, they're Deaf." Yeah, wow,
9 really.
- 10 **Q.** So are you saying that you think for many hearing parents they're a little bit nervous about
11 going into a room where the predominant culture is Deaf culture?
- 12 **A.** Yes, because the parents haven't come before and, you know, you tell them to come, you
13 say, "Hey, your children are here, you come too," but they don't come.
- 14 There's one massive, massive problem and that's alcohol. Why are they drinking?
15 Think of your children. You know, drunk, smacking kids, what's that going to achieve?
16 Children haven't done anything wrong. They're frightened, and you see that going on
17 generation after generation. I just want to say: Please, stop.
- 18 **Q.** And you're talking about hearing parents, aren't you?
- 19 **A.** Yes.
- 20 **Q.** What do you think needs to change to support both Deaf children and their families but also
21 Māori Deaf children and their families? What does the government need to do?
- 22 **A.** I know that the Government, you know, they stay there in their offices, sat on their seats,
23 they don't go out there and see what Deaf people are doing. I want them to come out, come
24 out and see with your own eyes what's really going on, that's your job, Government, I want
25 to bring them out of their offices and witness and see what's going on for Deaf children out
26 there. Don't stay there in your offices going blah, blah, blah all day. What about me?
27 Come and see me. It's important to see what Deaf children are doing and what it's really
28 like out there. That's important and then they'd get it, then they'd know.
- 29 **Q.** Before we finish, is there anything else that you would like to tell the Commissioners, or
30 the government?
- 31 **A.** Oh, yes. Really I just want to thank everybody for being here and watching and listening to
32 my story, you know, for me it's really, you know, to be honest, it was very a hard life for
33 me growing up, you know, my parents were really bad, I was always very, very scared and
34 it never got better. But I'm really happy with my children, they support me, they sign,

1 they're fantastic. I'm getting old now and, you know, that might be less, but I just want to
 2 say tēnā koutou katoa, thank you for listening and please remember what happens to Māori
 3 Deaf children and that's important and that's what comes first, they're children first and
 4 they're important.

5 It's not about me, you know, it's too late for me, we already know, but for those
 6 children who are still stuck out there now, we need to find them in the world. So please,
 7 take care of our children.

8 **Q.** Okay, I think what we're going to do now is turn to questions from the Commissioners, and
 9 we've had a wee discussion, and it's matua Whiti's preference that the interpreters stay here
 10 and they will indicate who's asking the question so he can keep looking in the one place.

11 So, Commissioner Paul, I'll hand over to you.

12 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Kia ora, thank you, Matua Whiti. I'll ask a couple of questions
 13 first.

14 What needs to change to get more Deaf teachers around the country?

15 **A.** So there were plenty of Deaf teachers before, plenty, but at the moment they've all pulled
 16 out, they're just over the hearing -- they're over the hearing teachers, they don't feel
 17 comfortable. So yeah, they've told me, it's now getting less and less and less. So I want
 18 them to come back and to teach again because, you know, sign language is important,
 19 teaching in sign language is important.

20 But yeah, there were a lot of Deaf teachers, and then they kept leaving and leaving
 21 and leaving, so yeah, that's what I think. It hurts, it hurts, the children especially.

22 **Q.** Thank you. And one last question from me, you mentioned "Deaf wairua". Would you
 23 like to talk some more about that, what does that mean to you?

24 **A.** So wairua means plenty of, like, plenty of Māori Deaf Māori people in the community,
 25 they've got rich history that dates back, people have passed away, how to teach Māori
 26 concepts or how to cook in the Māori way. Because, you know, I didn't know about Deaf
 27 history. So really, the wairua is tapu and we've got to thank the, you know, thank the
 28 people who have passed on for their support.

29 And if we talk about the community, Māori Deaf community when they explain
 30 their stories about their wairua, it's sad sometimes to hear their history about bullying and
 31 abuse in their history about their parents, and food issues. So their wairua is starving, but
 32 now we've got plenty of food, we've got TV, we've got phones, but previously we didn't
 33 have that kind of stuff, so it's just different from then and now.

1 We need to care for each other and so always keep our wairua close and its value to
2 us. So yes, that's wairua.

3 **Q.** Thank you, Matua Whiti. It's great to connect with you again. I'll now ask Commissioner
4 Steenson if she has any questions.

5 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Yes, I have a couple. Ngā mihi, Matua Whiti, mō ō karakia
6 mō ō kōrero nui i tēnei rā, tēnā koe. Thank you for your karakia this morning and your
7 statement today. My questions are, firstly, what do you think would be a good way for
8 Deaf children to make complaints about, say, in their -- about their school? Something
9 online? Or a place they could go? What are your thoughts?

10 **A.** Good question. Right. So, for me, I didn't know that there was such a way we can do it.
11 You know, the staff knew yes, but I didn't know, you know. It was hard. Yeah, good
12 question, good question. I'm a bit stuck on that one. Yeah, I don't know.

13 **Q.** We can come back to it if you'd like --

14 **A.** Okay.

15 **Q.** -- to mull over it. My second question is, do you think there's enough being taught about
16 Māori culture today at Deaf schools, or could there be more done?

17 **A.** Oh, it should just keep going, it needs to keep going, it's not enough, it needs to keep going
18 so the kids can grow up and know and they understand, that's all, you know, have a full
19 understanding about Māori culture, that's what I really want. But yeah, I'm not too sure
20 now if that's at that level, but yes, there is some, but it needs to keep on going to make sure
21 that they have a full understanding about Deaf Māori culture and Deaf culture.

22 **Q.** Do you think a Deaf kaupapa Māori school would be a great start?

23 **A.** They're all full mainstream now, schools are more mainstream now, there's no classes at Ko
24 Taku Reo for that, I think just transition classes, that's all. But yeah, there's plenty of
25 mainstream classes out there, but yeah, I haven't seen that, kids are all in mainstream at the
26 moment, so...

27 **Q.** Okay. And then what about governance, Deaf Māori representation in governance of these
28 schools and organisations that represent Deaf services and things like that?

29 **A.** No, you mean Deaf Māori in high positions you mean?

30 **Q.** Yeah.

31 **A.** No, we don't have one, no.

32 **Q.** Okay. Thank you. And then finally, before we come back to that first question, you talked
33 a lot about the parents benefitting from learning sign language. So I'm just thinking, would

1 a whānau-centred approach to Deaf Education improve things for Deaf children and the
2 Deaf community?

3 A. Yes, of course.

4 Q. That's what you're saying?

5 A. Of course, yes. Yeah, it would help them totally. You know, because hearing can learn
6 sign, you know, they're like, "Please teach us." So that would be great, yeah. It would be
7 really, really good. That would be really good if they can learn, it doesn't matter if they
8 make a mistake, it doesn't matter, they can just keep on going and keep teaching and
9 improve, yeah.

10 Q. And now we've had a bit of time, have you had any more thoughts on a complaint process
11 for children at a Deaf School?

12 A. Complaints? Maybe they can tell the teacher if they have any complaints, because they
13 work with them, right? Like, "Oh, what's wrong?" They can make their complaint and the
14 teacher should be responsible to go forth. It's not the kids' responsibility, it should be the
15 teacher's responsibility after that. So, yeah, they can complain, "They thieved my ball," or
16 whatever it is, you know, the teacher can then intervene and sort out what's going wrong,
17 yeah.

18 Q. Thank you, thank you so much, tēnā koe.

19 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Thanks, Commissioner Steenson. I'll now hand over to
20 Commissioner Shaw for any final questions and a final thanks kaumatua ki te kaumatua.

21 **CHAIR:** I will be addressing him in Māori at some stage, so a Māori interpreter is available. But
22 before I do that, I have a couple of questions for you, matua. The first one is about the
23 standard of education that Deaf children are receiving. From your experience in
24 classrooms, and engaging with young people, do you think that young Deaf people are
25 getting the same quality education as hearing children?

26 A. Different, no, different, different level.

27 Q. How different?

28 A. Deaf, they're more hands on, you know, hearing are more -- they speak, they speak, it
29 doesn't match, it's different. They miss too much, yeah, it's not clear for them, you know,
30 Deaf prefer someone signing to them to teach them, but if they're with spoken it's difficult
31 for them. So yeah, it's definitely separate.

32 If they're playing outside in the playground and mixing around with each other, you
33 know, they can sign with each and mix, but if it's in the classroom, it's different. So yeah,
34 definitely more strong signing.

1 **Q.** Can I ask you, are Deaf children getting the opportunity to get academic qualifications, go
2 to university, etc?

3 **A.** I don't know really, I'm not -- yeah, I don't know.

4 **Q.** Okay.

5 **A.** I guess you'll have to ask a teacher possibly? Or the transition unit, but I'm not probably
6 the best one to answer that question.

7 **Q.** Thank you, and I appreciate that.

8 My second question relates to the sort of support that is available for Deaf children
9 and Deaf people in general for their emotional and their psychological well-being.

10 **A.** Yes.

11 **Q.** Are you able to comment on that?

12 **A.** Deaf Club, Deaf Club, I feel. There's Deaf Club.

13 **Q.** So the support and the help is coming from the Deaf community?

14 **A.** Yes, Deaf community will support each other.

15 **Q.** Yes. What, say, a member of the Deaf community becomes seriously emotionally upset,
16 disturbed, are there any Deaf professionals or professionals who can communicate properly
17 to provide help?

18 **A.** There's Deaf Aotearoa. If they have any problems you can go to Deaf Aotearoa and they
19 can support as well.

20 **Q.** Right. Good. Kia ora. Engari, kua tae te wā ki te mihi atu ki a koe, Matua. Nāu e hara mai
21 i tō hītori, tō hītori pōuri, te mea taumaha. Nāu e hara mai i tō mōhiotanga me tō
22 mātauranga ki a mātou. Tēnei te mihi, tēnei te mihi, tēnei te mihi ki a koe e Matua. Kei a
23 koe te karakia whakakapi?

24 **A.** E te Atua, tēnei ahau e inoi atu ki a koe kia Ūhia tō Māramatanga ki runga ki tēnā, ki tēnā o
25 tātou, otirā ki tō tātou whānau Turi Māori ... e mihi ana ki a tātou katoa i roto i tēnei whare.
26 Ki a koutou ngā Kaikōmihana, tēnā koutou, otirā ki a koutou katoa kua tae mai ki te mātaki
27 i tēnei, kia ora pai koutou katoa. Nō reira, āmine. He aha taku waiata? Te Aroha anō.
28 (Waiata Te Aroha).

29 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Tēnā koe te Matua Whiti, thank you so much for the karakia, the
30 beautiful karakia. It's our lunchtime and are we resuming at...

31 **MS BASIRE:** We are five minutes early but I think we could take that extra five minutes and
32 come back at 1.45.

33 **CHAIR:** 1.45, sure.

34 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Thank you.

1 **Lunch adjournment from 12.24 pm to 1.50 pm**

2 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Thank you, Ms Kuklinski.

3
4 **MR EV**

5 **MS KUKLINSKI:** Good afternoon Commissioners. Today we have another witness, Mr EV.
6 He's going to give evidence via video.

7 So Mr EV, welcome today. We will begin your video now.

8 **[Video played]**

9 "Mr EV is of Pākehā descent and Deaf. Mr EV was a boarding student at Kelston
10 School for the Deaf in Auckland between the ages of about five and 18 years old,
11 1969-1982.

12 In this video two people are speaking New Zealand Sign Language. They are
13 sitting on couches opposite one another. The witness is blurred out so he cannot be
14 identified, but his outline is visible. The person interviewing the witness has blonde hair
15 which is clipped up in a half up half down style."

16 (Introduction.)

17 **QUESTIONING BY MS KUKLINSKI:** "So today you'll be giving evidence and I have to ask
18 you if you solemnly, sincerely and truly declare and affirm that the evidence you give to the
19 Royal Commission will be the truth.

20 We'll start with your early life. Where were you born and what year was that?

21 **A.** I was born in 1964 in Takapuna.

22 **Q.** So do you have brothers and sisters?

23 **A.** I have a stepbrother, I was adopted. My mother gave me away at birth. So I was adopted
24 by my adoptive parents. So I was adopted by them and lived in Te Atatū. My grandmother
25 dropped me off at Kelston Deaf School, that was when I met the principal, Mr Young. He
26 spoke to me and of course I understand what he was saying, but he took me by the hand and
27 led me into the school and I stayed there as a boarder for many years.

28 **Q.** Does your family have -- are they Deaf or hearing?

29 **A.** They're all hearing. I'm the only Deaf person in the family.

30 **Q.** So how did you communicate?

31 **A.** We wrote notes and my father could finger spell, but they never signed, we really just wrote
32 notes.

33 **Q.** So you visited Kelston Deaf School, can you tell us what that school is?

- 1 A. When I left school? Kelston Deaf School has Deaf students, yes. It was a boarding school
2 as well.
- 3 Q. So you went there as a boarder?
- 4 A. Yes, I did.
- 5 Q. How did you communicate with the teachers and the principal?
- 6 A. So the teachers really spoke, there wasn't a lot of sign being used. Some of the teachers had
7 a bit of sign but they weren't fluent.
- 8 Q. So the other Deaf students, how did you communicate with them?
- 9 A. We were five years old and we started signing. I actually can't remember the signs, but I
10 think over time we developed sign language. And then at high school there was a man who
11 was teaching us sign and he led(?) the school, and as we moved through with this model of
12 language we passed the language on to others.
- 13 Q. So you were five when you started?
- 14 A. Yes, I was five.
- 15 Q. Did you understand what was happening to you at the time, what the school was?
- 16 A. I was to be a boarder, I was in a Deaf group, the teacher sort of took us into a class and I
17 was like oh, so this is a class. We were in age groups, five to I think about seven and then
18 the others were separated seven to 13. And as you became older you moved into the
19 different sections of the school.
- 20 (The abusive teacher.)
- 21 Q. So you've told the Commission about the teacher that was abusive. If it's okay with you
22 we'll talk about that now. How old were you when you first met that teacher, what class
23 were you in?
- 24 A. I'd have to look at my year book which I've left at home. There were two women that
25 worked with the younger children, they were good teachers. Now the abusive teacher
26 started in 1978, I think he was there until 1979. He was abusive.
- 27 Q. So you were in his class, for how long?
- 28 A. For two years. Yes, I was abused by that teacher for two years. There was one Māori Deaf
29 person who had a fight with him, with that teacher in the dining hall. It was a really big
30 fight and I think that was in 1975 and all the boys and girls watched this fight take place,
31 wow. And it kind of started there and continued.
- 32 Q. Do you know why they were fighting?
- 33 A. Over nothing really I think, so we got the dining table and maybe food was dropped and the
34 teacher said "clean it up" and the Deaf man said "no, no, that's -- the women who work in

1 the kitchen will come out and clean that", and he was quite insistent that it be cleaned up
2 there and then, and that's how the fight started.

3 **Q.** So when you were in the class with that abusive teacher, how do you think he felt about the
4 students, the children?

5 **A.** Some of the girls were frightened of him, of the abusive teacher and some of the boys too
6 were frightened of this teacher. He was a hard man. He had an attitude, he had no
7 patience, he was very angry himself. I think prior to him becoming a teacher he might have
8 been fine, but afterwards; and I'd never seen anything like this before. I think all the other
9 teachers were talking about him, about the abuse.

10 **Q.** So when this teacher communicated with you and you couldn't understand him, what was
11 he trying to teach you?

12 **A.** Sometimes he was oral and so he would speak to us and he had a little bit of sign. He
13 would write on the board and say the words with a little bit of sign, we'd copy it, that was
14 about it. Back in the day I was using what I'd call old sign and now use new sign, there's
15 been a transition of the language. Sometimes the teacher signed really well and other times
16 not so good, so there was a variety of ability.

17 **Q.** So that teacher, that abusive teacher, what did he tell you about his experience of being in
18 the Army prior to becoming a teacher?

19 **A.** He said he was ex-Army. He was quite adamant about it, "I'm ex-Army, I'm a hard man"
20 and had a really grumpy look on his face. In maths he would tell us we were wrong and
21 then point at everybody and say "you're all dumb." We felt really put down by him. He
22 was very aggressive. He did this to all the boys, just put us down. The girls? So one year
23 we had boys and girls in the class and in the second year it was all boys.

24 **Q.** So he said you were dumb, how often did he say that to you?

25 **A.** He never took the time to explain anything, he'd just say you're dumb, "come on, think",
26 Monday to Friday, every day we were put down, every day. On the weekends we felt free
27 and then it was Monday again and it would continue. He had no patience. He'd just go
28 around telling us we were all wrong. We were trying, and he also had a black and orange
29 stick which he used to whack us across the hands with and point to his brain and go "come
30 on". We all lost confidence.

31 That teacher, he was such a hard man, he never thought to explain things to us. We
32 were deeply frustrated. One of the boys, I think prior to us all going on holiday, so there's
33 one Deaf boy who spoke up and said "stop, leave them alone." And he said "you're dumb"
34 and it continued. We got really depressed with this. We felt better once we got outside,

1 and, you know, we talked about it amongst ourselves, we knew how horrible he was. Then
 2 it was time to go back to class and on and on it would go. He would pick on the same
 3 person repeatedly. And I'd say "look, leave him alone." I'd be told to shut up. Shut up?
 4 The teacher said shut up to me? I'd never been exposed to that before. It was very
 5 upsetting, you could see this child was upset and depressed. And then it was holiday time
 6 and we all went home to our respective families. But it was difficult to communicate with
 7 our parents.

8 "(Narrator) around September 1978 a student from Kelston was hit by a train and
 9 died during the school holidays. Teachers went to the funeral and students found out when
 10 they went back to school."

11 I think in 1978, in September of the year when I was 14 was when that accident
 12 happened.

13 **Q.** So when that happened how did you find out, how did you hear about it?

14 **A.** I saw it in the paper and a Deaf friend of mine cut the notice out. We went back to school,
 15 back to Deaf School, and I was approached and shown the Deaf notice. I didn't know what
 16 to say. The next morning, and it was a really stupid thing that was said there, that teacher
 17 was like, "it was my friend not yours", but Mr Bury didn't say anything at the time. So that
 18 was some 42 years ago. I miss him, he was such a good boy, he was funny, he could sign
 19 really well. But that teacher, that abusive teacher used to pick on him and put him down.

20 **Q.** What did you think of that accident?

21 **A.** Well, it was actually really depressing. That teacher had been picking on that student for
 22 some time. When we eventually got back to class, and I was really sad about what had
 23 happened; so it was a table, it was kind of in a horseshoe shape and he took his desk and he
 24 removed it to the corner of the room and he said "just don't worry about that anymore."

25 **Q.** What did you think of that?

26 **A.** I just thought it was really silly. Why would you say such a thing like to disregard the
 27 student in that way? I mean we were really emotional over what had happened. After bell
 28 time had gone we actually moved the desk back into position again, and then when we
 29 came back to class it was removed all over again. Yeah, no words really.

30 **Q.** So at that student's funeral, did all the other classmates go?

31 **A.** No, they didn't, it was the school holidays at that time so none of us knew what had
 32 happened.

33 (Subjects at Kelston.)

- 1 **Q.** Can you tell me a bit about what happened to the male student in that class? I'm talking to
2 you about the climbing frame.
- 3 **A.** There was a male Deaf student who climbed up the frame and up and then down, and then
4 this time he was climbing up the frame and the frame was shaken and he fell off the frame.
- 5 **Q.** So who was shaking the frame?
- 6 **A.** It was that abusive teacher. So the male student had fallen down, he'd got up, a fight almost
7 broke out, but the teacher backed off and the student walked off and the other teachers that
8 were there were very cowardly and didn't involve themselves in the incident.
- 9 Then moving on to female students, there was one on the frame and it was shaken, a
10 little bit worse than the male students shake of the frame. She fell off, she screamed out,
11 she broke her arm, she walked off and again, the other teachers that witnessed that didn't do
12 anything, just observed her leaving the hall. She went to see the nurse, she had a sore arm,
13 they took her to hospital, and she definitely had a broken arm. They plastered it, then she
14 got back to the school that night and the next morning she yelled out to everybody that "the
15 teacher had abused me" and that teacher just went "so what?" He just didn't care.
- 16 **Q.** Oh, so he didn't care?
- 17 **A.** No, he didn't care.
- 18 **Q.** So those four teachers that didn't do anything, how did you feel about that?
- 19 **A.** They should have known better, they should have told him to stop it, he was being a bully.
20 I don't know if they couldn't, they stayed still and they said nothing and they didn't act on it.
21 I mean it was like they didn't care that that teacher was abusing us. We had gym every
22 Friday. We weren't taught anything as a class. We just had gym every Friday. To what
23 point I have no idea.
- 24 **Q.** So the day the girl broke her arm, how many teachers witnessed that?
- 25 **A.** Four of them.
- 26 **Q.** What were they doing there at that time?
- 27 **A.** I have no idea. They were very cowardly, they said nothing. We were all upset and walked
28 off.
- 29 **Q.** How did you feel about that?
- 30 **A.** I felt really sorry for the Deaf students, particularly the one with the broken arm. I couldn't
31 understand where that abusive teacher was coming from and why he was hell-bent on
32 making our lives a misery. He abused both boys and girls. So I think that the girl who
33 broke her arm, I identify that as abuse. You know, what happened to that girl was probably
34 one of the worst incidences of cruelty and then, of course, at the end of the day everyone

1 went home and it was talked about, the event that day and how we hated him so mu ch.
 2 And we would just discuss amongst ourselves, you know, about the bullying that he was
 3 doing to us.

4 So the girls were in the upstairs dorm and so the conversation was around the
 5 climbing wall and how that was shaken, and around was that, you know, di d this teacher
 6 intend malice by that action? But to this day. it scarred us, we have never forgotten it and
 7 we've never forgotten the actions or the inaction of those four teachers.

8 And the amount of bullying that went on, I suppose how did it make us feel? We
 9 were depressed, we were upset; the actions of one person and how that has affected us all.

10 **Q.** So I'd like to ask you about another incident and this was in the gym class around a game of
 11 softball. Can you explain what happened?

12 **A.** Right, so we all came into play softball and part way through the game the abusive teacher
 13 threw the softball real hard and it hit me in the face, and again, those teachers, the four
 14 teachers were just watching, they did absolutely nothing. Or else he would throw the ball at
 15 distance purposely so we would just have to go and chase the ball and pick it up for him
 16 and he'd laugh. So he'd throw the ball and we would just have to run after it and pick it up.
 17 And if you didn't want to play softball you were forced to. And again, these teachers just
 18 stood by and did nothing. It was the same response. So when that incident happened in the
 19 softball game, I was so annoyed. Anyway, I was really, really, you know, grumpy by this
 20 but he didn't care at all, he just laughed it off. There was no apology, there was no sincerity
 21 at all from him. Anyway, so we went back to class.

22 **Q.** So at the time of the softball incident when the abusive teacher threw the softball at you,
 23 what was the reason for that?

24 **A.** Well there was no reason for it. He was intent on hurting me.

25 **Q.** Was there an accident or was there malice involved?

26 **A.** No, I think it was maliciously done and then I was placed out of the game after that.

27 (Physical abuse.)

28 **Q.** If we just go back to discuss the physical abuse, and why was the cane used, what happened
 29 to make the teacher use that on the children?

30 **A.** Well, he'd come around with his cane in the class and he'd be holding it and if anyone did
 31 something wrong, they got hit. He'd leave it on the table, we'd progress through the class,
 32 and he would hit us on the knuckles and whack us really, really hard. Oh it was painful.
 33 And of course we were really angry by this and one of the kids actually broke the cane.
 34 And he came in "what happened to my cane?" We were like "I don't know, I don't know."

1 So he came back with another one. He just replaced it. And it was kind of like a black and
2 orange striped cane that he would have under his arm and the slightest mistake we made he
3 would use it on us.

4 **Q.** So the students weren't naughty as such, they may have just made a mistake with their
5 work; is that what happened?

6 **A.** Well yes, we were doing maths at that time, you know, so division, multiplication and we
7 were trying our best and it was really tough going for me. You know, I just couldn't work it
8 out, I couldn't work out the sums, and he'd come and say "that's wrong, you do it again."
9 So back we'd go, through the times table again, but it happened to all of us, he'd say "you're
10 all dumb." One of the Deaf Māori students actually stood up to him and said "hey, I'll give
11 you this", and he showed him his fist. He sat back down, he was quite staunch.

12 The next morning it was art class. And we were at our tables and I was gluing
13 something. And once I had done that he came along and he just whacked me on the back of
14 the head, he kneed me in the leg. I was black and blue from that, I had a bruise, I was
15 limping from that. So Mr Bury inquired, he said "what happened?" And I told him what
16 this abusive teacher did. And he went up to him and said "hey, you leave them alone, stop
17 bullying these kids." So what did that abusive teacher do? Just ignored it.

18 I had this really big bruise on the side of my leg. Another Deaf boy said the same
19 thing to me, he asked what had happened and was there an explanation as to why? Well,
20 anyway, so this was seeing this big bruise on the side of my leg, and I just said "well, it was
21 that teacher again."

22 Anyway, there was Deaf Māori student there and a fight broke out between himself
23 and that teacher, and I just sat there in the background encouraging it. And he says, "you
24 know what? I'm going to get my whānau on to you." He had some whānau that were in a
25 gang, so he threatened the teacher. He said "yeah, I've got a friend who's in Black Power."
26 And so he ushered him along, he said "see this fella waiting out there? This is what will
27 happen." And he took off, he took off. I saw it, I witnessed it myself. It was Black Power.
28 You know, and it was a great support for us to try and stop what that teacher was doing.

29 **Q.** So the teacher was abusing yourself and the other students. How long did this go on for
30 and how often, was it just one time or a couple of times?

31 **A.** It was continual. There was one Deaf Māori student who wasn't doing well at their sums,
32 he'd say "you're dumb, you're thick, you can't get this." He was very oppressive to each and
33 every student. We had to persevere. One year went by, another year went by, and then
34 finally we got into the class of Mr Thompson. He was fantastic. And perhaps

1 Mr Thompson heard these rumours that were going around. I'm not clear about that, but we
2 had to persevere through those years until we got into different classes.

3 I know another student who endured four years of the abuse, four years. And there
4 was a Māori girl who was really, really upset. Anyway, she walked by, I saw her and said
5 hello, and we had a bit of a chat. I said "what happened? What happened with the
6 bullying?" So -- and she'd say "you know what? We'd do just the smallest thing wrong and
7 we'd be slapped." "Was it the teacher?" "Yeah, it was the teacher, right on the face they'd
8 slap us."

9 So it didn't just happen to me. I said "how long were you in that class for?" "I was
10 in there for four years." We shared stories, my abuse of two years, hers of four years. And
11 that's what this teacher was like, he just didn't care about the students and at any
12 opportunity to put them down, he would.

13 **Q.** So the student that was slapped on the face, why were you shocked about that?

14 **A.** Because it was a very small thing that had been done, some minor incursion, she got a slap
15 across the face. I've never forgotten it. It really happened. There was another student who
16 said yes, they were being abused like I was. It seemed he started with our class and then
17 carried on. I mean, I was an older student by now, I had left, but there was four years of
18 continual abuse after I'd left school, it went on and on and on, from one class to the next
19 class, from one year to the next year. It just repeated.

20 **Q.** So he was abusing both boys and girls?

21 **A.** Yes, he was.

22 **Q.** So how old were the students, 13, 14?

23 **A.** I was -- I think when I started with that abusive teacher I was -- let me just think; I was 14
24 years old. Right. 1980, when I was nearly 15 and I was in Mr Thompson's class, which
25 was great, there were other students, boys and girls who were being abused. I heard about
26 this, there was talk at the school that the teacher was abusing them, and I was like "yes, that
27 happened to me" and we all hated him, he was really cruel on an ongoing basis. Monday to
28 Friday, every single day, it never stopped. We were very upset and depressed by this
29 behaviour.

30 **Q.** I just want to go back to one of your friends that passed away in the year 2000. Your friend
31 **[GRO-B]**, if you could briefly tell me about that?

32 **A.** So as I said, we had boys and girls in the class, we were in a bit of a horseshoe set-up
33 and **[GRO-B]** was called up to the front of the class and laid into by this teacher. I couldn't
34 think what the reason was for this, he put the knee in and he punched him. And then he

1 went back to his seat and sat down, and the teacher said to us "he's my friend, you aren't my
2 friend." And we're like, are you mental? It was abuse.

3 I can't understand why parents are paying taxes to have their children educated and
4 all the kids are getting is abused. [GRO-B] was a good man. He was really quite a tough
5 guy. But I remember at play time he came out after being hit by the teacher and he was
6 really sore, but he, you know, he didn't give it back. We were like "tell your father", he was
7 like "no, no I'm fine." I'm fine? He was tough. He was a tough guy, he was a good man.
8 [GRO-B] was drinking. I think he had -- and riding a motorbike and it ended in an
9 untimely death.

10 **Q.** Was this after school?

11 **A.** After he left Kelston. He'd done nothing wrong, he was fine and he was abused.

12 **Q.** Did you go to his funeral?

13 **A.** Yes, went to his funeral, it was quite a crowd actually. And I can't believe that teacher that
14 abused us was there. He tried to say hello to us. I couldn't be bothered speaking to him, I
15 was quite grumpy by the fact that he was there actually.

16 **Q.** After the funeral did you talk with your friends about the abusive teacher?

17 **A.** Yeah, we said nothing to him though, we couldn't be bothered with him. I think he felt a
18 little bit out of place, he didn't stay for long and left, which was good.

19 **Q.** Did he use his hands on you?

20 **A.** No, the stick, oh and his hands actually. Yes, he punched us and he used the cane, hit us
21 with that, or slapped us. Yeah, physically abused us with either his hands or his cane.

22 **Q.** Did he kick you?

23 **A.** Sometimes.

24 **Q.** I want to ask you about the school bus. What happened there?

25 **A.** Right, at 3 o'clock when we finished there was a Deaf man, a really big guy that I would
26 chat with. He would look after the children. Sometimes the bus was late to arrive, we were
27 all just milling around waiting for it. Now that teacher that was abusive used to get very
28 frustrated with us milling around, so you know the stapler, he would use it to hit a
29 five -year old child on the -head -- oh sorry, the clipboard. The child would cry and be
30 upset, and then go and complain and say "look I was hit, hit me on the head and it's sore."

31 So he wanted us to line up like we were in the Army and not move. As I said
32 before, he used that cane on us. So this child had told the adult that he had a sore
33 head -- she had a sore head, and the child was dismissed, told to go. And then this big
34 person went over to the abusive teacher, took him by the collar and said "don't smack the

1 kids", and invited him to fight with him. We were all very pleased to see that, but he wasn't
 2 keen to fight with this guy. He showed him his fist and said "don't do it." We were all very
 3 grateful, that little child was very grateful.

4 And he, from that point on, looked after us, lined us up while we waited for the bus
 5 to come. The abusive teacher said nothing, he just walked off. You know, hitting a five
 6 year old on the head with a clipboard? What the heck for? All we were doing was
 7 mucking around waiting for the bus which was late. He had no patience. Go figure.

8 **Q.** Did the other teachers see this or was it just the students?

9 **A.** We witnessed it and that big guy, he witnessed it as well. He saw him hit the child with the
 10 clipboard because the child came to him crying, it was a blonde child, I'm sorry I don't
 11 know the name of the child. But he was very helpful. Then he went over to that teacher
 12 and said "why did you hit the kid on the head with the clipboard?" He was told to stop in
 13 no uncertain terms and then I think it was later he was replaced by another teacher because
 14 he was abusing little kids. I mean we're talking children from the age of 18 down to five.
 15 Why was he hitting a five year old? This is just a little girl, a five year old, hit her on the
 16 head, not good. She could get brain damage, you just don't know, but I know she had a
 17 sore head.

18 (Not being able to communicate about the abuse.)

19 **A.** And then, of course, school holidays you'd go home, your parents would ask you if you
 20 were all right and you'd say "yeah, I'm all right, nothing to report", you know, we had
 21 problems communicating with our folks. So really we just bottled it. We couldn't speak
 22 up. We'd come back to school after the holidays and we'd say "did you tell your parents?"
 23 I couldn't communicate with them, so we just bottled it. And we'd try to console each other
 24 and pretend that we really didn't care about the way this guy was treating us.

25 **Q.** So you told me or told the Commission, you said that you told your brother and your father
 26 about -- did you show them photos of the abusive teacher?

27 **A.** Yes.

28 **Q.** So when did you talk to them about that, what did you say to them?

29 **A.** I told my brother and my father that I'd been kneed in the leg and I'd been slapped across
 30 the head and hit with this cane and it really hurt. I guess I used body language with my
 31 brother to explain myself and I think he then spoke to my father about it. My father, I
 32 think, decided he would talk to the principal and try and sort it out. My brother explained
 33 this to me, so it was through my brother that things were explained. I had a bit of
 34 understanding of the situation.

- 1 good at educating me, but that teacher that was abusive, no, he really affected my
2 confidence. I wasn't confident with him at all, which was a big problem.
- 3 **Q.** So let's go back to when you were talking to your brother and father. Where were you, was
4 this when you were still at school or after you'd left?
- 5 **A.** I think it was during the school holidays when we'd go home, I think I explained the
6 situation then, then I'd go back to school and school life would carry on.
- 7 **Q.** So you said you lost confidence, so how do you think that affected your future learning,
8 your study, opportunity to study?
- 9 **A.** Okay, you know, the word "abuse" and "physical" and stuff, I didn't even know what they
10 meant, but I do now. So I've done some Deaf life skills, a course of study and a bit of
11 English learning and my English has improved as a result, because I was being educated by
12 a Deaf teacher, taught some vocab which built up my confidence. But I have to ask why
13 teachers, you know, didn't bother to teach us difficult English words. You know, when
14 I write things down, people now sort of, well, they think that Deaf children from that era
15 don't have great English and they don't blame us, but, you know, they were being paid to
16 educate us, and where was the education? I mean now the Deaf Education Centre has
17 improved, it's much better than it was in the old days, it's quite different.
- 18 **Q.** Can I ask you, that word "abuse", you said you didn't know what that word was, so when
19 did you learn about that?
- 20 **A.** I'd left school, it was a few years later I think. I might have been at Deaf Club, mixing and
21 mingling and bullying and abuse was raised, and then "abuse" was signed to me and finger-
22 spelt to me ABUSE, and I'd never seen that word before. I knew about "bully", but then I
23 was told about physical abuse and other details that go hand and hand with that. That was
24 at Deaf Club in the Deaf community. We were quite good at sharing communication there,
25 because we weren't educated at school, and I have no idea why they left all those words out.
26 But they weren't taught to us, we didn't get enough education, it was a very poor education.
- 27 **Q.** So you said you learned to drive and work, do you think you missed out on learning?
- 28 **A.** Yes, I've shared within the Deaf community, well that's how we've learned from each other
29 really. And I've been involved in sports, Deaf sports. It was in situations like that that we
30 shared and learned from each other, because the teachers didn't teach us, we didn't get
31 enough education.
- 32 **Q.** Were there any teachers there that you felt did teach you, that were good teachers?
- 33 **A.** Well, there was just the one teacher that was abusive. Prior to him getting the job, I don't
34 think there was abuse and as I've mentioned, Les Bury and Mr Thompson, great teachers.

1 (Going to the Police in 2008 with other ex--Kelston students.)

- 2 **Q.** So when you left Kelston Deaf School and you met other Deaf people, did you talk about
3 what had happened to you?
- 4 **A.** We didn't really talk about it then. No, nothing was said. Time went by and the Deaf
5 community, I suppose they talked. And then one person raised the issue of abuse and I
6 think that got us talking. We decided to speak up and go to the Henderson Police Station.
7 As I said, a number of us went there and told our story to them. But there has , to date, been
8 no action. We're still waiting in 2022 and I have no idea, you know, they have a file.
- 9 **Q.** So that time that you went to the Police in 2008, did you know what was happen ing when
10 you went? Did you have any idea what was going to happen when you reported it?
- 11 **A.** Well, I thought we were reporting our abuse and there'd be a file generated. It was five of
12 us, five people who reported, who, you know, we all took a turn tellin g our story, there
13 were five of us. We all took a turn, we had the interpreter with us, and each of us had our
14 own perspective. They were similar, but each of us had our own perspective.
- 15 **Q.** What did you think would happen when you reported it?
- 16 **A.** I thought the Police would investigate, but nothing happened. They went quiet on us and I
17 have no idea why. Just recently I've been to the Police again and explained myself to them.
18 The Police said they will soon be investigating but I don't know when they' ll be ready to do
19 so.
- 20 **Q.** So in 2008 when you went to the police station, who did you go with, was it your friends?
- 21 **A.** Yes.
- 22 **Q.** How many of you?
- 23 **A.** There were five of us.
- 24 **Q.** And you make six, do you?
- 25 **A.** Yeah, I think five and me would make six.
- 26 **Q.** So when you went into that room, who was in the room with you?
- 27 **A.** We had an interpreter, a policewoman called Debs who could sign herself. I'm not sure if
28 there was a senior Police person there, and the five of us told our story to the Police. The
29 interpreter did a great job and the Police took note. We each had a turn. And we were just
30 talking about the one teacher who'd been abusive. So five plus three, two Police and one
31 interpreter.
- 32 **Q.** So who made the decision to go to the Police? Did you all decide?
- 33 **A.** Yeah, all of us did. So after that report, after providing the Police with the information we
34 had, we wanted him arrested, that teacher that had abused us, we wanted him to be arrested.

1 We wanted the Police to investigate. We thought it was on hold until they had done, but
2 apparently they had to do some historical investigation. And goodness knows when they'll
3 be ready to pick that up and continue with their investigation; we're still waiting. We hoped
4 he'd be charged and arrested, but apparently they have to gather information first and talk to
5 people who have similar stories to tell.

6 **Q.** So in that meeting room, with all the people in there, what did your school mates have to
7 say?

8 **A.** It was the same story, very similar, about the abuse, about the teacher, about what happened
9 in class, to me, and the others that had been in his class. I mean others had had a different
10 teacher and I think they might have been involved as well; they had different stories which
11 were separate to ours. But the teacher was abusing half of the people there. But we had
12 stories that were different and stories that were similar. Basically our focus was the teacher
13 that was being abusive.

14 **Q.** There was a woman student, your friend who explained about the showers. Can you
15 explain what happened there, **[GRO-B]**?

16 **A.** Yeah, so the abusive teacher didn't respect privacy at all and just would barge in. And of
17 course the girls were just in their undergarments and would try and cover themselves, and
18 there was a real panic that went on with this, so -- or else they would -- and obviously they
19 would then go for a shower and after the shower they would put a towel around themselves,
20 and of course the teacher came in. And they're like "go away, get out of here", the students
21 were really, really angry. And of course he would come in and just say "time, time, come
22 on, be punctual."

23 But there was absolutely no respect for the dignity of the girls, just didn't care at all,
24 just went straight in there. And then, of course, would go into the boys changing room and
25 do the same thing. So just go had no respect for the privacy of the children at all. I have no
26 idea what possessed him to do that.

27 **Q.** So just going back to the visit to the Police in 2008, at that time you've told us that there
28 were around eight people in the room. Did you have a private conversation with the Police
29 at that time?

30 **A.** Well, I was actually asked by that group of five if I wanted to go with them, so that's how
31 that happened. And again, we all had very similar experiences of abuse.

32 **Q.** So when you were in the interview room, was it just one at a time with the police officer, or
33 was it all five of you?

34 **A.** So it was all of us in the room and we all took a turn to tell our story.

- 1 **Q.** And when you finished explaining your story, what did the Police do?
- 2 **A.** So they heard our stories, and they accepted our reports and there was a voice recording,
3 and of course we had a sign language interpreter present. And so once that process was
4 done, we all went home, and then it's as if the process had stalled. There was no further
5 action, we hadn't heard from the Police. And my five friends, we started talking about the
6 visit to the police station and we were just enquiring amongst ourselves what was
7 happening or why nothing was happening, and so no action had been taken. I don't know
8 why.
- 9 **Q.** So when you visited the police station, did you think that you were just having a general
10 conversation, or that it was a complaint?
- 11 **A.** Oh no, we were very clear that the five of us, my five friends and I were making a
12 complaint against the abusive teacher. We were very clear about that. And of course there
13 were slight differences to our stories, but it was recorded at the police station and again, we
14 didn't hear anything after that.
- 15 **Q.** So when you all left to go home, what did you think was going to happen next? Was it
16 explained to you?
- 17 **A.** No, again, we were waiting to hear back, we expected to receive a letter at least and we
18 didn't get that. There was just no action taken.
- 19 **Q.** Do you remember telling the Police, Deb Leahy, the constable at that time, was there any
20 conversation around, "oh don't worry, you don't need to complain", or would they be
21 arrested?
- 22 **A.** Yes, I remember the comment that came back that, no, because we were saying "would you
23 please arrest him", and we were told "no, he won't be arrested." And so there were about
24 70 students, obviously now had moved all around the world, and so there were just those
25 few that came forward to speak up in Auckland.
- 26 And so we got together and had that conversation and just tried to nut it out. And
27 then there were some students who just didn't want a bar of it, they just didn't want to be
28 involved in the process whatsoever. So I think that, you know, for that teacher they really
29 got away with it. And the fact that, you know, no arrests were made.
- 30 **Q.** So Deb Leahy, the constable, do you remember telling her, "don't worry about arresting
31 him, just let it go, we'll just bin the report", or did she ask you if you wanted to carry on?
- 32 **A.** Well we wanted to carry on. But there was no action, we couldn't move on, nothing
33 happened. We were left hanging waiting to hear from Deb Leahy, the constable. And I
34 have no idea what was going on and why there was no action on behalf of the Police. I

1 don't know why. We wanted him to go to court, we wanted to be able to move on for et it,
2 but I don't know why the Police didn't pursue it. That's their job after all. You know, that's
3 the police's job.

4 **Q.** So when you heard nothing from the Police, how did that make you feel?

5 **A.** We were still traumatised, but we decided we had to continue the fight, we didn't want to
6 give up. We thought we'd need to report it again to the Police, so that they would
7 investigate or carry on with an investigation, because nothing had happened from 2008. So
8 recently when I had my discussion with the Police, they said they would investigate quite
9 soon but I have no idea when.

10 (Making a historical claim through Cooper Legal.)

11 **Q.** Right, I'd like to talk to you about Cooper Legal, your lawyer. Can you explain what
12 happened there please?

13 **A.** I talked to her about the abuse.

14 **Q.** Do you remember what year it was?

15 **A.** I'd forgotten but you're saying it's 2012?

16 **Q.** Yes, 2012. So when you had that meeting, did you think you were going to hire yourself a
17 lawyer or...

18 **A.** There was me with an interpreter and Cooper Legal, two lawyers. They listened to my
19 story and wrote it all down. I had an interpreter there voicing for me. They recorded it all.
20 They posted me that documentation which I looked at and said yes, it was right. Some of
21 the words were quite difficult for me to understand, but I do have a copy of that at home,
22 which I got some time ago, but then that process stopped. They did provide me with quite a
23 bit of information. The police station, Debbie Leahy, I never got any information back
24 from her. So my experience with Cooper Legal was quite different than my experience
25 with the New Zealand Police.

26 **Q.** So Cooper Legal, what happened after you'd, with the Ministry of Education after you'd
27 contacted Cooper Legal?

28 **A.** I told them the same story about the teacher who was abusive, it was recorded.

29 **Q.** Was that the end of it or did you receive something as a result?

30 **A.** I believe it came to an end at that point, I had been receiving correspondence at that point,
31 but at that point I believe it had stopped.

32 **Q.** I wanted to ask you, did they give you any compensation?

33 **A.** Yes, they did.

34 **Q.** You knew about that?

- 1 A. Yes, they gave me \$5,000, that's all.
- 2 Q. How did that make you feel, \$5,000?
- 3 A. It wasn't enough.
- 4 Q. So there was another time when you spoke about your story with CLAS, Confidential
5 Listening Service, with Judge Henwood. You've put that in your statement to the
6 Commission. That was in 2010, you went to the Confidential Listening --
- 7 A. Oh, yes that's right, I remember that, yes.
- 8 Q. Tell us what happened there.
- 9 A. Well, I explained again about the abuse, everything really, got it all off my chest. But
10 I didn't receive anything back from them, I didn't receive a report. I'm not sure where that
11 information went. Cooper Legal was great, told them my story and they provided me
12 with" --
- 13 **MS THOMAS:** Sorry, can we just pause very briefly, just a short break.
- 14 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Five minutes?
- 15 **MS THOMAS:** Thank you.
- 16 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Thanks, we'll take a break.
- 17 **Adjournment from 2.54 pm to 3.08 pm**
- 18 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Ms Kuklinski.
- 19 **MS KUKLINSKI:** We'll just carry on.
- 20 **[Video played]**
- 21 A. "I believe it came to an end at that point, I had been receiving correspondence before that,
22 but at that point I believe it stopped.
- 23 Q. I wanted to ask you, did they give you any compensation?
- 24 A. Yes, they did.
- 25 Q. You knew about that?
- 26 A. Yes, they gave me \$5,000, that's all.
- 27 Q. How did that make you feel, \$5,000?
- 28 A. It wasn't enough.
- 29 Q. So there was another time when you spoke about your story with CLAS, Confidential
30 Listening Service, with Judge Henwood. You've put that in your statement to the
31 Commission. That was in 2010, you went to the Confidential Listening --
- 32 A. Oh, yes, that's right, I remember that, yes.
- 33 Q. Tell us what happened there.

1 A. Well, I explained again about the abuse, everything really, got it all off my chest. But
2 I didn't receive anything back from them, I didn't receive a report. I'm not sure where that
3 information went. I mean Cooper Legal was great, I told them my story and they provided
4 me with paperwork. They wrote everything down and posted me quite a few documents for
5 me to check.

6 But when I went to the Police in 2008, when we went to the Police in 2008, we
7 received nothing to say we'd even been there, and there was no action on behalf of the
8 Police. Cooper Legal did give me documentation of my story, the Police did not.

9 (Recommendations.)

10 Q. Just thinking of the future, what do you think about who should be teaching Deaf children,
11 what sort of qualification should they have? Teachers that teach Deaf children, what sort of
12 a qualification or study do you think they should have to become a teacher of the Deaf?

13 A. Well, educating hearing children is quite different than educating Deaf children. We learn
14 visually, and we need to be -- so the teacher needs to be qualified in a communication style
15 that suits us. I think a hearing teacher, or especially the one that abused us, would be quite
16 different than a Deaf teacher. I think we could share with a Deaf teacher and communicate
17 with a Deaf teacher. I mean we were yelled at, that teacher had a really bad attitude, there
18 was nothing gentle about his approach, it wasn't appropriate. Things were not explained to
19 us, we were yelled at, which really affected our confidence. I guess I'm trying to make a
20 comparison between what I think or see a Deaf teacher would do and what I see that
21 hearing teacher do.

22 Q. What do you hope would happen to that abusive teacher?

23 A. What I want to see happen is that he's arrested and has to go before a judge and court. And
24 I'd like the jury in that court, if it was to be a jury trial, to be Deaf. And they'd definitely
25 put him in jail. That's what I want, I think that's what the Deaf community want too, that's
26 what they've said they want. I mean other people in other schools that have abused children
27 get arrested, so I'd like to see a bit of equity here for Deaf kids out of the Deaf School, to be
28 fair.

29 Q. So if that person was to go to prison, how would that make you feel?

30 A. I'd feel free, I think I'd be able to dispense with the trauma. It would open up my life to be
31 able to travel, go overseas, kickback, have a drink, have a smoke, take it easy.

32 Q. Because that abusive teacher has not been arrested as yet, how does that make you feel
33 right now?

1 A. I'm waiting. The Police, they've had the report. We've been told by Deb Leahy not to
2 worry, it's an ongoing investigation. I want equity for us Deaf kids. Others get arrested, I
3 don't want him to be able to hide behind Deaf Education. That teacher should have been
4 dismissed rather than it just kind of brushed under the carpet and the abuse continue. It
5 needed to stop.

6 Q. In terms of the future, what would you like to see different for Deaf people?

7 A. I think just as my five friends got together to have that discussion, I'd really like it to be
8 more of an open conversation with the Deaf community as well. If in the event that person
9 is arrested, I think that it should be put on TV so that the Deaf community know that this
10 has occurred. After all, we are a visual people.

11 Q. So after you left Kelston School, did you hear about an award that was given to the abusive
12 teacher?

13 A. Right, so yes, of course I'd left school at that time and I'd heard talk that he had been
14 commended. And of course this was shocking to hear given the abuse that we had all
15 suffered at his hands. And so -- and the principal had been fooled and wasn't aware of that
16 teacher's background and he was given a commendation.

17 Q. Right, so that was after you'd left Kelston that teacher was given that award?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. And how did that make you feel?

20 A. Look it wasn't fair, it just wasn't fair because I thought back to our childhood and what had
21 happened to us, and I don't think he should have been given that award, I think it should be
22 taken from him. Why, why would you award someone for behaviour like that?"

23 "(Narrator) When Mr EV engaged with the Royal Commission he was supported to
24 make a referral to the Police to complain about this teacher. The Police have contacted
25 Mr EV. At the time of Mr EV's pre-recorded evidence being filmed in June 2022, the
26 Police were arranging to meet with Mr EV face-to-face with an interpreter. The
27 investigation into this teacher is ongoing."

28 **MS KUKLINSKI:** We're going to have a little break to set up the AVL so that you can ask
29 Mr EV questions.

30 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Thank you, back in five minutes, thanks.

31 **Adjournment from 3.16 pm to 3.22 pm**

32 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Ms Kuklinski.

33 **MS KUKLINSKI:** Mr EV, we're ready now for the Commissioners to ask you some questions, if
34 you're happy to do that. Thank you.

1 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Yes, Commissioner Shaw, do you have any questions?

2 **CHAIR:** Hello Mr EV. I don't have any questions for you, but I've listened very carefully to the
3 evidence that you have given and thank you very much for the time and trouble you've
4 taken to give it to us, so thank you.

5 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** I've got a couple of questions, Mr EV. First, you talked about the
6 possibility of an open conversation amongst the Deaf community about the specific
7 instance of abuse, but I also think there's probably something, is there a need for a wider
8 open conversation about abuse in the Deaf community, what's known, how the Deaf
9 community can better have processes to support itself and better processes to complain?

10 A. Okay, yes. Just having a think. This has been such a valuable experience for me and has
11 given me so much confidence, seeing my story summarised the way it has been here at the
12 Commission. And I'm hoping that New Zealand has been watching. I think this has been a
13 really great opportunity.

14 **Q.** To your knowledge, is it starting up more conversations in the Deaf community about
15 abuse?

16 A. Yes, Paul, I believe that we have started to have that conversation, and I'm hoping that in
17 the not too distant future that with the help of my friends, actually with a bit of support,
18 we'll be able to get these people together, educate them and get more informati on from
19 them. Perhaps I can even convince people to come into the Royal Commission and tell
20 their future in the story -- sorry, tell their story in the future, excuse me. Over to you Paul.

21 **Q.** Yes, we welcome hearing more -- the stories, experiences of Deaf people.

22 A final question about the quality of education for Deaf people. Apart from ideas
23 like more Deaf teachers, do Deaf people have enough say about the future of Deaf
24 Education at the moment?

25 A. Just thinking about our response. Me, I'm unsure if people are working in the sector that
26 are unqualified, and who's to say that qualified people might not be better people to work
27 with us. Kelston Deaf Education Centre, I'm not sure how robust their interview process
28 has been when they recruit teachers to teach Deaf people, I'm really unsure, so that could be
29 looked at.

30 **Q.** Yeah, thanks. Commissioner Steenson, do you have any questions for Mr EV?

31 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Hello Mr EV, it's nice to meet you.

32 A. Same to you.

33 **Q.** I don't have any questions, it's just left to me to thank you. But before I do, I just want to
34 let you know, it's good that this process has been good for you. So while the Royal

1 Commission doesn't have any power to put anyone in jail, please be assured that we have
2 heard your statement and we'll absolutely take it on board in formulating our
3 recommendations to the government. And that's the case for all the survivors who come
4 forward, regardless of whether it's done publicly through this kind of process or through our
5 private session process.

6 But it's been so important for us to learn about your experiences as a Deaf student
7 and being bullied, Mr EV. You've helped us understand the massive impact that one
8 teacher can have by physically and mentally abusing children. And as you've said, the
9 inaction of other teachers to do something about it also weighs on those who are receiving
10 that abuse. I imagine it must have been so difficult given your limited ability to
11 communicate with your parents to tell them, which we know is hard enough for children
12 without a hearing or a disability, let alone a child with Deaf communication.

13 So you've told us about the devastating impacts on you and your friends and those
14 children who didn't survive the abuse, so thank you so much for speaking out today, for
15 yourself and for those children who can't speak and who didn't make it. So again, on behalf
16 of the Royal Commission, thank you so much, Mr EV, all the best, and take care.

17 A. Thank you very much.

18 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Thank you, and now we'll take another short break as we change
19 between witnesses?

20 **MS THOMAS:** If we take the afternoon tea break for 15 minutes to resume at 3.45pm.

21 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Thank you.

22 **Adjournment from 3.29 pm to 3.48 pm**

23 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Mr Thomas.

24 **MR THOMAS:** Thank you Commissioners. We've got a brief scene setting video for Homai
25 before we start with the next witness, Jonathan Mosen. Thank you.

26 **[Video played]**

27 **MR THOMAS:** Thank you Commissioners.

28 Jonathan, first of all, can you hear me okay?

29 A. Yes, I can.

30 **Q.** Great. Perhaps if we have the affirmation now from Commissioner Gibson.

31 **JONATHAN MOSEN (Affirmed)**

32 **MR THOMAS:** Thank you. Just to let the Commissioners know, Jonathan's very happy to take
33 questions during his evidence.

1 I also wanted to acknowledge that he's supported today by his daughter, Heidi,
2 who's here in the public gallery, and she's travelled here to support him, so I just wanted to
3 acknowledge that.

4 **QUESTIONING BY MR THOMAS:** Jonathan, can you start off by telling us a bit about
5 yourself and your background?

6 A. Yes, tēnā koutou katoa, my name is Jonathan Mosen, I'm 53 years old, currently I'm the
7 Chief Executive of Workbridge, one of the few disabled chief executives at all let alone in
8 our sector.

9 I went to Homai College from 1974. I'm married to Bonnie, I have four children,
10 and I do want to acknowledge the Commission for its compassion and the care that it's
11 taken throughout this process, it feels good to finally be heard.

12 I also want to acknowledge my family, and finally, I want to acknowledge the
13 caring, teaching profession, many of whom set me up for success as a blind person. It's
14 such a shame that a few bad apples spoil the legacy, but it doesn't change the fact that you
15 made a difference and I'm sure that this evidence is as difficult to hear as it is for me to
16 deliver.

17 **Q.** Thanks Jonathan. Do you want to tell us about what early home life was like for you?

18 A. I'm the youngest of five siblings and I have an older brother who's blind, so the
19 combination of being the second blind child and number five meant that my parents really
20 allowed me to be a kid. So I would zoom around on my scooter outside and I used a
21 technique called echolocation so that I could whizz down this pathway in the house. If you
22 went too far you smashed into the rose bushes, and if you didn't go far enough you hit the
23 side of the house; you had to turn the corner at just the right time. And I got really good at
24 echolocation, it's an amazing skill.

25 So I was well -loved, well protected and I think what was really amazing about my
26 parents, who were not wealthy people, was that they bought a house close to the school for
27 the blind so that I could go to school at night and come -home - go- to school during the
28 day and go home at night just like my other siblings.

29 **Q.** Thanks Jonathan. I take it your parents, you acknowledge in your statement that they made
30 a big sacrifice in order for you to be able to live near the school?

31 A. Yes, it was a huge deal for them to have done that, and I often wonder really what would
32 have become of me if they had not done that, if I'd ended up boarding at Homai, I think the
33 whole trajectory of my life would have been completely different.

34 **Q.** Are you able to tell us a bit about how blind children are mainstreamed these days?

1 A. Yes, these days blind children go to their local school, and in principle I think that's a very
2 positive thing. Family relationships are so important, and if you're living at the other end of
3 the country and you leave your parents and your family at the age of five and head off to
4 Auckland, it's a huge wrench and I know that it caused all sorts of dysfunction among
5 families, and so it's a big deal.

6 The challenge of course, and it really, I think, is quite similar, in some ways, from
7 what Deaf survivors have been talking about; is that when you're a blind child, you're
8 dealing in an alternative form of literacy, that is to say braille. And so your average
9 classroom teacher is not braille literate. So if you're going to give blind children the same
10 opportunities as sighted children, you've got to invest a lot to make sure that there are
11 sufficient braille literate teachers getting sufficient access to those blind students.

12 And I often feel like, certainly in past years at least, braille has been rationed so that
13 it's only available to the most capable, or the most blind of students and there's not been a
14 lot of consideration of prognosis. In other words, a kid may have very good vision at the
15 moment, but if the medical prognosis is clearly that they're not going to have that vision
16 when they're adults, you're setting them up to fail, not teaching them the skills of blindness
17 at the earliest possible opportunity.

18 Q. Thanks Jonathan, I'll just remind you just to try and keep your pace a little bit slower for the
19 stenographers.

20 A. My apologies.

21 Q. That's okay, thank you. And thank you for that explanation. Can you tell us a bit more
22 about Homai, how it was funded and what the classrooms were like there when you
23 attended?

24 A. My understanding is that Homai was funded by the Department of Education, as I believe it
25 was called then, and operated by the Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind, as it
26 was when I was at Homai. The classrooms were small groups of blind people. There were
27 probably usually six, seven, eight students to a class. And one of the reasons for that was,
28 well, we're a low incidence population, but also the Perkins Braille machines that we used
29 to use in those days were very noisy. So you don't want 20 or 30 blind kids brailleing away,
30 the decibel level would have been through the roof. So the class sizes were small, and in
31 that respect that may have been an advantage in terms of the quality of education that blind
32 children received, if they were being taught by capable, safe teachers.

1 **Q.** Thank you. Although you weren't boarding at Homai yourself, other children, a lot of other
2 children were. And you had friends who were boarding and so you have some
3 understanding of what it was like for them. Do you want to mention that?

4 **A.** It was difficult, I think. We used to have some kids that I was friendly with home for a
5 home cooked meal, and I know those students appreciated that. It was a difficult
6 environment for many, and particularly as they got older. There were incidents that
7 I became aware of as a child, and subsequently when people talk about the subject, perhaps
8 in a safe place among one another, there were examples of rape, student against student;
9 there was sexual abuse of the same gender at nights when the lights went out. And
10 sometimes students, I have been told, sought to raise those issues and were not given
11 adequate redress and they were not investigated appropriately.

12 **Q.** Yes, and we'll come to some of those a bit further on in your statement again. Before we
13 do, for kids that boarded at Homai, you talk about letters they received from their families.
14 Can you tell us about that?

15 **A.** Yes, it was an extraordinary thing. Some parents or extended family members would write
16 letters to the children who were boarding and they would be read out in the classroom in
17 front of all the other kids. And it was actually something that some of us really looked
18 forward to, because it was almost like a soap opera, we got to know all the machinations of
19 various families. And I can still remember the nicknames that certain kids at the school
20 gave their grandparents and little details like that. I can remember all the siblings of a
21 number of the kids at school that I went to school with, because those letters were read in
22 front of the whole classroom, so again six to eight children. And I'm not aware that there
23 was any seeking of permission to read those letters or anything like that. I do wonder why
24 some of those letters weren't read in private by the hostel staff and maybe sometimes that
25 happened. But in many cases it did not.

26 **Q.** Yes, so as far as you're aware, children weren't asked whether they'd like this to happen, it
27 just happened?

28 **A.** Yes, I'm not aware of any permission being sought.

29 **Q.** You talk about deaths occurring at Homai. Are you happy to talk about that?

30 **A.** I'm willing to talk about it.

31 **Q.** Thank you.

32 **A.** We have a number of medical conditions that cause blindness that can sometimes also
33 cause other medical complication, Retinol Blastoma is one, but there are a number of

1 others. And I can by name several people who died while I was at Homai, including my
2 first best friend.

3 And it may have been that there were some sort of counselling offered to the
4 students who were boarding, because the children who died, I remember, were all, I think,
5 boarders. But as a, certainly as a day student I was not given any kind of consideration,
6 even though teachers were well aware that this child I'm thinking of in particular and I used
7 to hang out in the playground, do a lot of things together. I would go over to the hostel,
8 sometimes the junior boys hostel where he was, he would come over to our house.

9 So we were very good friends and everybody knew it. But when he died there was
10 just nothing for me. And it was just mysterious to me; sometimes kids take a while to
11 understand what death actually is. One minute he was there, and then he was away sick,
12 and then he died. And I missed him and there was just nothing, nothing at all in terms of
13 helping to deal with that.

14 **Q.** Just to place this, how old would you have been around that time?

15 **A.** Maybe seven or eight.

16 **Q.** And there was no sort of recognition in the classroom or marking of the death?

17 **A.** He was in a different class from me, but there was certainly no wider school recognition
18 that I recall.

19 **Q.** You talk about the attitude of teachers at Homai to echolocation, which you've already
20 mentioned. Can you tell us what the attitudes were to that?

21 **A.** It wasn't customary in those days for children to be given a white cane early. And so a lot
22 of us used to wander around the junior playground without any kind of cane and just play
23 around, and I used echolocation because I've always used echolocation. And I remember
24 being reprimanded severely for using echolocation, even though it was helping me
25 understand my environment and my surroundings.

26 And I think what happened was that teachers believed echolocation to be a form of
27 a blindism, in other words some people rock, some people stim. I guess you get so famous
28 like Stevie Wonder they let you get away with anything, but not kids at Homai. They were
29 trying to say "you can't do those things because if you want to succeed in the sighted world,
30 people will think you're odd if you rock and stim", and I get that, but they included
31 echolocation in that category.

32 And when we were reprimanded for using it, I felt like it was depriving me of
33 legitimate access to information; because I could tell how close walls were, I could tell
34 when I was coming to an open door, just by clicking my tongue and making little sounds or

1 clicking my fingers. And so it really felt like part of my cultural identity and functionality
2 was being denied.

3 And what was extraordinary to me was that a couple of years after I recall being
4 reprimanded for that, we had the Chairman of the board of the Foundation come out to
5 Homai who was blind and he was using echolocation. And I kind of thought well, what's
6 up with this? So it validated my view that echolocation was a legitimate tool. And sadly, I
7 have heard so many people who have watched documentaries on TV about this amazing
8 blind man in America who rides bikes and does all sorts of things with echolocation and
9 "isn't that incredible". And I have to tell people yeah, that's the thing that we were punished
10 for doing as a kid.

11 **CHAIR:** Could I just ask a question, Jonathan, you've used the word "stim".

12 A. Yes.

13 **Q.** I suspect that stands for something, I think I know what it means, but I think you should
14 perhaps explain to the rest of us.

15 A. Stimulating, so you would, for example, people put their fingers in their eyes; rocking is
16 also a form of stimming. They think because your visual cortex isn't very busy if you can't
17 see, you create other sensations by doing these things, rocking, poking your eyes, that sort
18 of thing.

19 **Q.** So it's short for "stimulation"?

20 A. Yes, my apologies, into the jargon.

21 **Q.** That's fine, thanks for explaining it.

22 **QUESTIONING BY MR THOMAS CONTINUED:** Thank you Madam Chair.

23 Jonathan, thanks for explaining that. I was going to move to the next part of your
24 statement now, which is physical abuse you suffered at Homai, primarily by one of your
25 teachers, Mrs Buist. Can you start by telling us about punishment for spelling?

26 A. I don't think that that was particularly extraordinary for the time, but it did make me fearful
27 of her. When I started at Homai we had a wonderful teacher who was so kind and she
28 would make up all kinds of songs, and just going to school was a joy and she taught us so
29 much, and we would go on little trips and all sorts of things. And I loved school.

30 And then in 1977 I was moved from the junior classes to the senior classes and
31 Mrs Buist was my teacher. And the first spelling test we had, it was clear that things were
32 very different. We would be given a list of words, she would give the list of words, we
33 would braille them down. She would then come and mark the list of words, and she would
34 have a ruler, or if she didn't have a ruler there would be her bare hand. And if you got an

1 answer wrong, she would smack your hand at least once and often three times. I remember
2 so clearly her saying "no, no, no", and a whack with every "no" for getting a spelling word
3 wrong.

4 Some of us got on to the idea that maybe we could sort of sit on our hands or keep
5 our hands under our desks when the spelling marking was going on, but if we did that she
6 would actively seek to retrieve them and smack your hands anyway.

7 **Q.** What sort of impact did that have on you, I guess in relation to spelling first?

8 **A.** Well, I was just frightened witless of her really, in every respect. She was just -- it
9 was -- school became a frightening experience. I'm not sure what's achieved by punishing
10 somebody for not understanding how to spell a word.

11 **Q.** An incident happened following that in relation to swimming; are you able to talk to us
12 about that?

13 **A.** Homai had a wonderful indoor swimming pool facility, and it was heated so you could use
14 it a lot longer than most swimming pools. And our class would go swimming on a Monday
15 and Friday, and we'd go in there. I was quite happy to do backstroke and things like that.
16 But one thing that I really was fearful of, for some reason, was reluctant to do, was put my
17 head completely under the water. And I've often wondered why and I think it might have
18 been that my congenital blindness also comes with a built-in hearing impairment,
19 absolutely free -- I'm waiting for the steak knives now. And I think that when I put my
20 head underwater it probably was more difficult to clear my ears than for most people, so
21 that may have been it. But whatever the reason, I was genuinely frightened of putting my
22 head under the water.

23 And I was left alone really, and I enjoyed swimming as long as I didn't have to put
24 my head under, and nobody seems to mind. Increasingly there was this gentle, I say,
25 pressure to put my head under, "why won't you do it?" I just said "I'm frightened of doing
26 it" and they kind of left me alone.

27 But one day Mrs Buist came into the swimming pool. That was unusual because
28 she didn't usually, they had a teacher who would go into the pool, but she would usually sit
29 on the side and observe, and I guess she would be in a position to leap in if there was any
30 sort of difficulty. But at the beginning of the lesson she came in and spent a lot of time
31 with me. And because of the way I felt about her yelling and abusing people, hitting all the
32 time, I was really frightened by this. And then she started trying to persuade me to put my
33 head under the water. Because it was her doing this, I really started to panic, and just got
34 more and more upset.

1 And finally I guess something must have snapped because she said "if you don't put
2 your head under the water, I'm going to throw you in", which I thought was a weird thing to
3 say. But it's definitely what she said, because I was in and so was she; but that made me
4 even more panicky. And then she grabbed my head in both hands and repeatedly
5 submersed it in water for, you know, it felt like a long time, it may have been only been one
6 to two seconds, when you are in a panic it's hard to know what time is.

7 But what I do remember is that that really sent me into a state of hyperventilating.
8 You don't want your head being ducked into water repeatedly when you are
9 hyperventilating, it's really frightening, and as a young kid I thought she was going to
10 drown me. I knew that the way to try and stop it was to say "I'll try", but I couldn't get the
11 words out for the first five or six because I was so upset and hyperventilating that I couldn't
12 speak.

13 Finally I managed to blurt out "I'll try, I'll try" and she said "that's better", and she
14 stopped at that point. And I don't remember much about the rest of that lesson, or the day,
15 or what happened. But I still remember that swishing sound of having my head repeatedly
16 submerged into water while I was rapidly breathing.

17 **Q.** What impact did that have on you, Jonathan, in terms of your next swimming classes?

18 **A.** That happened on a Friday. And on the Monday I woke up and I was having a major
19 anxiety attack, I was shaking all over, I was having difficulty breathing in an even way.
20 And I hadn't mentioned this to my parents, or anybody, and my mother, my dad had already
21 gone to work, but my mum could see that I was clearly in a state of considerable distress,
22 and finally managed to coax out of me what had happened. So she marched along with me
23 to the Deputy Principal's office and confronted him about this. And they agreed that
24 I wouldn't have to go swimming while they investigated this.

25 I believe that her response was that it didn't happen. And of course when you're in a
26 swimming pool full of blind kids, who's going to vindicate your story? And I don't know
27 whether the other teacher saw, she was probably tending to other children, I just don't
28 know.

29 And so eventually they decided that I needed to go swimming again. I remember
30 really clearly that Mrs Buist used to read to us in the afternoons just before swimming time.
31 She was reading us the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, and it was the part of the book
32 where Aslan dies, the lion. And she finished the story, that chapter, and it was time for
33 swimming, and I was sobbing. And she thought I was sobbing because Aslan the lion had

1 died. And I tried to explain that I was sobbing because I was scared of drowning and
2 I didn't want to go swimming, but I couldn't bear to get the words out.

3 I think I went swimming that day, they -- the next time swimming was -- I can't
4 remember whether that was a Monday or a Friday, but the next swimming time I was back
5 to the way I was, panicking, having a major anxiety attack. My mother went down to the
6 Deputy Principal's office again and said "we're back to square one again." And so they
7 reinstated the exemption from me to go to swimming.

8 After that, it was quite sophisticated I suppose, in a way; she decided to use peer
9 pressure and psychological abuse on top of the physical; and the next time she said to the
10 whole class at swimming time, "it's swimming now but Jonathan doesn't have to go with us,
11 but wouldn't it be wonderful if Jonathan could go with us, let's all plead with Jonathan
12 to get him to go with us." And she led the class in this kind of child-like "please, Jonathan,
13 come to swimming with us", and the whole class joined in.

14 Right in the class I had another anxiety attack and let out some sort of noise of
15 distress which she said "is that a yes, is that a yes?" She was very excited, and I just sobbed
16 even more. In the end she kind of gave up in disgust and the rest of the class went
17 swimming, but several times after that she would say "it's time for swimming now but
18 Jonathan doesn't have to do swimming because Jonathan's special." And I was teased
19 mercilessly by some children for being a wimp and for not going swimming. And so it was
20 a whole bunch of things piled up.

21 The other thing that happened too, was I didn't know that this had happened until
22 I discussed it with my mother when I was an adult, but apparently they sent me to a child
23 psychologist to find out why I was making up stories. And I don't remember much about
24 that. I do remember being interviewed by a man I hadn't met before, and he asked me some
25 peculiar questions, but in my mother's words he basically went back and said "there's
26 absolutely nothing wrong with this kid."

27 So it made me a very unhappy child, because it felt like I had been subjected to this
28 abuse by someone in authority and then everybody else in authority who was supposed to
29 protect me was covering it up and protecting her, and it just -- I guess it sowed an
30 incredible seed of injustice for me.

31 **Q.** Jonathan, just to be clear; Mrs Buist, she denied the original incident of ducking your head
32 underwater and there were no consequences for her that you're aware of?

33 **A.** That is my understanding.

1 **Q.** Can you tell us about some other incidents involving Mrs Buist that you talk about in your
2 statement, such as you mention an incident in relation to a TV advertisement?

3 **A.** Yeah. The Foundation used to use children quite a bit in what they then called the braille
4 week advertisements. I was friends with a kid who was in one one year and he was -- he
5 was on a skateboard, he was a really capable, you know, just getting around the place,
6 doing things. And he was on a skateboard and the line at the end of it was "I did it,
7 granddad." It was a pretty good ad, actually, because it wasn't a tug at the heart strings ad,
8 it was this blind kid's being a blind kid thanks to your donations, kind of thing, one of the
9 better ones.

10 This child also had issues with his bowels and I believe there had been surgery,
11 various things attempted to deal with that. But one day he lost control of his bowels, and
12 I remember she mentioned his name and said "your hands are filthy and you smell" and she
13 yelled it at the top of her voice. And she berated this child in front of the whole class and
14 then she said "I did it granddad, I messed my pants" in this most kind of sarcastic way.

15 And one of the children actually spoke up and said "he can't help this, Mrs Buist,
16 he's got this problem" and she claimed "it's all been fixed now" and "don't interrupt" and
17 she just humiliated him in front of the entire class. It was just extraordinary.

18 **Q.** How old would that child have been?

19 **A.** Eight, nine.

20 **Q.** You decided to write a letter to Mrs Buist following that. Can you tell us about that?

21 **A.** We were all pretty unhappy, well, many of us were pretty unhappy. There were some
22 people who thought she was a good teacher to be fair, but many of us were unhappy. And
23 so -- I guess not much has changed -- I suggested we write a letter. And when I look back
24 on it, I think it was quite a mature approach for -- I think we were 10 by this stage, because
25 I had Mrs Buist for three consecutive years, and I suggested why don't we write a letter
26 respectfully requesting a different approach. I don't think I would have used that language
27 but that's what I was after.

28 And so I believe that someone else wrote the letter, but I presented it to her on
29 behalf of those who wrote it, including me. And although she was a fluent braille reader,
30 she asked me to read it and I read it in front of the whole class, and her response was to tear
31 it up in front of the class. I remember that she got me one on one, she took me into another
32 classroom that wasn't occupied and said something about "why are you doing this, why are
33 you behaving like that?" I said, my little 10 year old self said "I guess we were all just

1 feeling depressed" and she laughed and said "depressed? I'm the one who should be
2 depressed having to teach a brat like you."

3 **Q.** Did writing that letter have any effect on her behaviour?

4 **A.** No, none whatsoever.

5 **Q.** How did you feel about, I guess, trust in authority figures at the school at this point?

6 **A.** I had absolutely none. No-one was protecting us.

7 **Q.** Your mother, I understand, went to the principal and asked for you to be assigned to a new
8 teacher; is that right?

9 **A.** Yes, I have so much to thank my mum for, my parents for. And I realise I'm very
10 privileged in that regard because I was a day student and because I had parents who were so
11 engaged. They respect authority and, you know, if you -- they're the kind of people if you
12 get a diagnosis from a doctor, it may as well be written on a stone tablet, for her to go up
13 and say "if Jonathan isn't assigned to a different teacher next year I am going to take this
14 further, I am going to the Department of Education," that took a lot of guts.

15 **Q.** What happened following that?

16 **A.** I did get a new teacher and he was fantastic. He was a teacher who taught in New Zealand
17 for another 40 odd years. We would go camping, he reinstated my faith in authority, he
18 was kind, he would still obviously discipline you because, you know, I was no angel, but he
19 was a great teacher, a truly great teacher.

20 **Q.** You mentioned your parents had been very supportive and you wonder what would have
21 happened if they hadn't been?

22 **A.** Yeah. You know, if I had had those panic attacks in the hostel, I don't know -- I simply
23 don't know whether there would have been staff there who would have said this is
24 appalling, we have to do something about this. Maybe they would have said you know, this
25 kid is mentally unstable, and really terrible things could have happened. Because there was
26 just such trust in authority, and there was no independent redress, nothing that my family
27 was aware of in terms of seeking some sort of external investigation. So if I didn't have my
28 parents, and I was relying on those who were also part of the system, I just don't know what
29 would have happened, and I don't know whether things would have worked out for me like
30 they have.

31 **Q.** Jonathan, moving to the next part of your statement, you talk about educational neglect and
32 can you tell us about, I guess, how your thinking on education for low vision children has
33 changed over time?

1 A. Yeah, there've been lots of theories about how you best educate children with low vision,
2 and I'm really grateful that I squarely have a foot in the blindness camp. But for those who
3 have low vision, there was a theory for a long time during the period that the Commission
4 is investigating where they had these sight savers classes, where essentially they said if you
5 didn't use your sight you might lose it, it was kind of like a muscle. And medical theories
6 change over time, that's fine, I guess. But there are people who perhaps have had their
7 vocational opportunities limited as adults, because the prognosis was clearly that they
8 would lose further vision and they weren't taught the skills of blindness. So that affects
9 everything from just getting about safely and confidently in the world, to reading a bedtime
10 story to your kids, to being able to use the technology that will allow you to succeed in the
11 workplace, so it has enormous ramifications.

12 Q. And did that thinking at the time around sight savers, did that have specific impacts on
13 those children?

14 A. Yes, I don't know whether the sight savers concept was alive and well by the time I was at
15 school. It's interesting that we had blind people and we had partials, meaning partially
16 sighted, and sometimes there wasn't a lot of mixing between the blind people and the
17 partials. So it would be good for those who have low vision and have that lived experience
18 to come forward and share their stories. But I have seen over time people who really have
19 struggled because they weren't given access to those tools of blindness.

20 Q. You also did take some positives out of your time at Homai. Do you want to touch on that
21 before we move to the next section?

22 A. Yeah, it wasn't all hell. I got a great grounding in braille. Braille is so important.
23 I wouldn't have been able to do a lot of the things I've done in broadcasting, just giving a
24 public speech, processing information, without that grounding that I got in braille, various
25 other skills of blindness.

26 So that's why I wanted to start my statement by expressing genuine gratitude and
27 thanks for those professionals who did set me up. I had two wonderful teachers during my
28 time at Homai and one for three years who made my life a living hell.

29 Q. You, through friends or people you knew at Homai, you became aware of some sexual
30 abuse that happened which you've touched on earlier in your evidence. Can you talk a bit
31 about that?

32 A. Obviously this is second hand knowledge, but over the years, you know, it's interesting,
33 sometimes if you go to these blindness conferences and people have a beer or two or wine
34 or two these stories of abuse come out; but also over the years people have confided in me

1 because of different roles that I've held. And I know that in the hostels there was abuse
2 going on of a same sex nature during the evening and night hours, which has had a
3 profound effect on those on whom it was perpetrated.

4 There was also one particular child who was totally out of control and totally unruly
5 who raped at least one student. My understanding was that that student sought to complain
6 about that behaviour and was told by the staff that she should make sure that she wasn't
7 putting herself in any kind of situation where that could happen and to tell him no ,
8 essentially, almost as if she was somehow responsible for the rape by not saying the right
9 things or doing the right things.

10 **Q.** I'm going to move on to the next topic now, Jonathan, your time at Manurewa Intermediate
11 School. You were mainstreamed at intermediate, and you talk about classmates of yours
12 who would volunteer to read to you, and there's a particular incident you mention; if you're
13 able to talk about that?

14 **A.** Yeah, it's the first time I really became aware of being denied an accommodation, although
15 I didn't have the vocabulary to articulate it that way. I have really fond memories of some
16 of the kids who kindly agreed to sit next to me and read the blackboard, kind of an early
17 form of audio description, or maybe read some other printed material to me, and I formed
18 some great friendships with those kids who kindly agreed to do that.

19 But one time we'd obviously pushed too many buttons for the teacher, the classroom
20 teacher, this was in Form One. And the next time we had to go into the class, we had to
21 line up outside and go into the class without talking. And I did that with everybody else.
22 When I got to my desk, there was a piece of printed paper. So to explain that, in those
23 days, blind children would use a standard typewriter to type out work that they would give
24 to the mainstream classroom teacher to mark. It was an interesting practice, because as a
25 blind child you couldn't read what you were writing. So you'd touch type. Sometimes
26 you'd write the great magnum opus and find out later that the ribbon had run out, various
27 things like that, but you would do your best to type out your work and hand it to the teacher
28 so that the teacher could mark it, because the teacher wasn't braille literate. So when I got
29 this piece of paper back, I didn't know what it was, it was just a blank piece of paper as far
30 as a blind kid was concerned.

31 So I thought that it was appropriate, so I could put it in the right folder, was it
32 science, was it English, what was it? And I simply asked my friend next to me "what is
33 this?" And he said "it's your English work" or whatever it was. The teacher then said
34 "were you talking?" And I tried to explain I was just trying to find out what this paper was,

1 and she sent me off to the principal for a strapping, which I did not get, I think they backed
2 down from the strapping bit. But it was a reprimand and it struck me as fundamentally
3 unfair that I wasn't kind of passing the time of day with this kid, I was simply trying to
4 identify what this piece of paper was. And he was there to be my eyes, essentially, and I
5 was being punished for seeking an accommodation.

6 **Q.** Do you feel that you were being discriminated against in that situation because of your
7 blindness?

8 **A.** Absolutely.

9 **Q.** Why is that?

10 **A.** Because if I had been able to see the piece of paper, I would have glanced at it, put it in the
11 right folder, and moved on. The only way that I could find out what the piece of paper was
12 to ask the question, so it is a very specific act of blindness discrimination.

13 **Q.** You then went on to attend Manurewa High School. What support did you have there?

14 **A.** A lot of support, because this was also the high school that the children, or the young
15 people from Homai went to. It happened to be my local high school anyway, because my
16 parents chose to buy the house by the school for the blind. So if I was mainstreamed that
17 would have been my high school anyway.

18 But because the blind children from Homai were going there, there was a resource
19 room that had two staff members in it, it was a place you could store books, they might do a
20 bit of transcribing for you, and it was a kind of homing point, if you like, for the blind kids,
21 many of whom had known each other overall their lives since school anyway to go and meet and
22 socialise and congregate.

23 **Q.** At that high school there were some distressing incidents that you talk about in your
24 statement. Can you tell us about what some other children did there?

25 **A.** Yeah. We went through a phase where there were kids who decided that it was fun to
26 touch the genitals of the blind kids and run away, knowing full well that the blind kids
27 didn't know who was doing it. I sought to raise my concern and distress about this and was
28 basically told "just ignore them, they'll get bored and stop soon." They didn't actually, so in
29 the end I did a bit of vigilante blind justice, you might call it, and I worked out that if I was
30 quick enough with my reflexes I could whack them with my white cane before they had a
31 chance to disappear, and that actually did stop it.

32 **Q.** You talk about accommodation issues at the high school, in 4th Form in particular there
33 was an incident relating to maths?

1 A. Mmm, so this was an interesting accommodation. To put this in perspective, hard copy
2 braille is a very bulky medium. The Pocket Oxford Dictionary is in about, I don't know,
3 26, 36 braille volumes; you'd have to have a pretty big pocket. And the encyclopaedia, we
4 used to have a world book encyclopaedia at the library at Homai and that took up a whole
5 room.

6 So we had a maths teacher in 4th Form who would move about the maths book, as
7 many teachers will, so they would not do it in sequence. And so chapter one, I think, in
8 those books is always set, it seems to be set. So we did that, and then I think the teacher
9 went, say, from chapter one to chapter 10, or something like that.

10 So I did the only thing I could think of to do, which was to bring the next volume of
11 the book, which had chapter two, because I had no advanced knowledge of where the
12 teacher was going. And it turned out I had brought the wrong volume, because the teacher
13 had gone somewhere that I wasn't expecting. And so I explained I just need to nip back to
14 the resource room and get the volume you're working with.

15 The teacher then told me I had to write 100 lines that said "I must remember to
16 bring the right textbook to class." And I said that I had brought the right textbook but I just
17 brought the wrong volume because I did the best I could. But the teacher was insistent that
18 I had to write these 100 lines.

19 So I went to the resource room teachers, who I was sure understood the
20 predicament, that I was genuinely trying to do the right thing and that I would be let off
21 these 100 lines, that someone would intervene on my behalf and explain how braille
22 worked. But again, you know, for me it was like a pattern repeating itself. Those in
23 authority stuck together and I was told I had to write the 100 lines even though I had not
24 done a thing wrong.

25 **Q.** There was another incident in relation to a music examination. Can you tell us about that?

26 A. Yes, I was a music student, and we were doing an oral comprehension exam. So the way
27 that works is that somebody will play something on the piano and you have to write it
28 down. The way that we typically did this was separately, separately from the other
29 students, and the reason for that is that again, the Perkins Braille machines that we were
30 using then are noisy, and if somebody -- if a group of sighted children are trying to
31 concentrate on writing down a piece of music and you are hammering away on your
32 Perkins Braille machine, it's not exactly a recipe for how to win friends and influence
33 people.

1 So I explained to a resource room teacher, who had been away parenting but had
2 come back, that that's how we do it. The teacher insisted that I had to do it in front of the
3 classroom with everybody else, and I would not do it, and I said "how about we ask the
4 music teacher at Homai?" -- who was a great music teacher by the way. And for the first
5 time that I can recall I actually had one authority figure overrule another, and that music
6 teacher at Homai said "Jonathan's absolutely right, there's no way you can expect him to do
7 this in the classroom with all the other students", and the resource room teacher had to back
8 down.

9 But again, you know, it was such a lottery, if that teacher hadn't chosen to do the
10 right thing, and side with authority, it would have been another example where proper
11 accommodations were not provided.

12 **Q.** And you had to advocate for that solution, what do you think about that?

13 **A.** I think I've had an instinct for advocacy since I was very young, as is exemplified by the
14 letter that we bravely wrote for and about Mrs Buist. So I kind of think it's par for the
15 course. But the thing that troubles me is that not everybody has those instincts. Some
16 people find it very daunting, and it shouldn't have to be that way, you know, you shouldn't
17 have to have that kind of tenacity and willingness to stand up to authority just to get a
18 decent education.

19 **Q.** You talk about the othering of Homai pupils at Manurewa High. Can you tell us what you
20 mean by that?

21 **A.** Whenever the blind kids were referred to at assembly or generally by high school staff, they
22 were called the "Homai pupils", which struck me as very strange, because, you know, I was
23 a Manurewa High School pupil and I would have been regardless, this is the school I was
24 zoned in. And so I don't know whether they were just afraid to use the dreaded "blind"
25 word or whatever, but we were referred to as "Homai pupils". Of course, when I topped the
26 country in school certificate history and got in the paper, I was a Manurewa High School
27 student then. But it was a strange thing just to be called a "Homai pupil" all the time, very
28 peculiar.

29 **Q.** What did you take from that, I guess, as to why it was happening?

30 **A.** I felt like I was not truly one of the high school students, that somehow I was different.
31 And being different matters, especially at that age. You know, there's a lot going on.
32 When you're a teenager, for a lot of disabled kids it's a big deal, because kids are doing
33 things that maybe your impairment precludes you from doing. It could be, like in my case,
34 driving a car; it could be that, for you, having a relationship is more difficult than for

1 others. You start to think about what career might I have, what will become of me in the
 2 world, all those things. And then so to have this constantly being referred to as "Homai
 3 pupils", like we were somehow lesser, was difficult.

4 **Q.** You also were required to do coaching at high school and you resented that. Can you talk
 5 to us about that?

6 **A.** I think this was an attempt to be helpful. I think this might have been organised by the
 7 resource room, but I'm not sure. But in each subject you were given this so called - option
 8 to do coaching where you would have an hour of time on that subject per week,
 9 one -on -one, with a teacher. And sometimes that teacher was the same teacher that you
 10 had teaching the subject at Manurewa High, not always though. And I did feel that it was
 11 an encroachment into our need to get a balance in life, our chance to just be a kid. You
 12 know, you're at school all day, suddenly you've got these coaching sessions that were held
 13 at Homai in the classrooms that the kids were doing during the day for an hour, and, you
 14 know, often I kind of found it - I- found it difficult to stay awake, focus, because I had been
 15 in school and my mind wasn't really on it.

16 So it was difficult and also I was one of the few children, maybe the only one that
 17 I know of, who got an after school job. I was working as a DJ in a skating rink, I wanted to
 18 earn some money and just do things that kids were ordinarily doing, but there was a strong
 19 expectation that you would do that coaching.

20 **Q.** And that was regardless of your academic ability in a particular subject?

21 **A.** Yes.

22 **Q.** You had to do the coaching?

23 **A.** Yes, and when I was in what we called 6th Form then, I was doing six subjects because I
 24 was reasonably academic, so that meant six additional hours of schooling essentially a
 25 week.

26 **CHAIR:** Could I ask a question there, Jonathan. Was that requirement, the pressure on you to do
 27 the coaching, was that something just for blind students, was it just you, did other people
 28 get the joy of having coaching as well?

29 **A.** It was the blind students, I believe it was instigated by the resource room for the blind at
 30 Manurewa High.

31 **Q.** So if you were blind you got extra coaching whether you needed it or not; is that what
 32 you're saying?

33 **A.** Yes, that's right.

34 **Q.** Okay, thank you.

1 **QUESTIONING BY MR THOMAS CONTINUED:** Why did they have that coaching
2 requirement, Jonathan?

3 A. I think because they just wanted to make sure that blind kids were succeeding and that it
4 was an extra opportunity to explain concepts perhaps. There was a feeling that maybe we
5 were missing some of the nuances that might be being put up on the blackboard or various
6 other things. I'm sure that the intention was absolutely honourable, but I just found it really
7 onerous. And I think it is important for young people to have that balance in their lives,
8 you know, obviously work hard at school, but have some balance. And let's not forget that
9 in addition to that six hours of coaching that I had in 6th Form, I still had all my homework
10 to do.

11 **Q.** You talk about cultural neglect in terms of blind culture at high school, teachers trying to
12 split up blind children. Can you explain that?

13 A. The resource room at Manurewa High was in C block and just outside C block was this sort
14 of retaining wall, and a lot of blind people liked to sit out on that wall at interval and
15 lunchtime and hang out together; because we'd been friends a long time, but also because I
16 think there are blind culture elements that we're only really starting to come to terms with.
17 You get a bunch of blind people together, you will find many are interested in the sounds
18 that things make, or they can tell you the pitch of things that other people don't think about.
19 There are some cultural things I believe about blindness that are now being increasingly
20 understood.

21 So we liked hanging out with each other, because we always have, you know, it was
22 our peer group. But there was a phase when I was in maybe 3rd Form, 3rd or 4th Form,
23 where they were encouraging the blind students not to sit with each other. And not all did,
24 and so some of the blind students would be held out as these great role models, and the
25 resource room teachers would say "look at so and so, he's got sighted friends, why haven't
26 you got sighted friends?" It almost sent the signal that having a sighted person as a friend
27 was superior to having a blind person as a friend. It almost -- it made me feel like as a
28 blind person you are lesser and you will -- maybe if you befriend some more sighted people
29 that will rub off on you and you will have more mystique.

30 **Q.** You spoke out against that, what did you say?

31 A. I was a stropky teenager by then, so I just said "look this is my interval, my lunchtime and
32 I'll hang out with who I like."

33 **Q.** If it's possible to summarise, Jonathan, what impact all of these experiences have had on
34 you, can you do so?

1 A. Some of it's been positive. I have been very privileged to have been elected to various roles
2 where I have spoken on behalf of blind people. I was President of Blind Citizens
3 New Zealand for two terms. I don't give anything to bullying. But, you know, there are
4 times when I -- I had an incident -- if you'd have told me two or three years ago that I had
5 somehow got scars from this I would have said no, I absolutely haven't. You know, I've
6 done things, talking to people, like writing a letter to my younger self and all those sorts of
7 things, it's been very helpful. So it doesn't haunt me every day.

8 But I had an experience, you know, and I've got on fine in my working life for the
9 most part, but I had an experience in my current role where I was bullied by a public
10 servant, senior enough to be writing advice to a Minister of the Crown. And I took on that
11 bullying, including writing a letter to the Chief Executive of the Ministry concerned and
12 taking other action, including potentially seeking redress for defamation.

13 Now I got wonderful support from our Board Chair and Deputy Chair for taking
14 that action, but there was a little bit of pushback in two respects. One, that, you know,
15 maybe somehow I was to blame because other people had worked with this person and they
16 hadn't had any problem, it was kind of like "oh well, we think Mrs Buist is a great teacher
17 because she's never done anything to us." And the other thing was, you know, if you rock
18 the boat too much, maybe funding will be in jeopardy.

19 And so what I found, that was deeply hurtful. And at the time I couldn't really get
20 to the bottom of why it was so hurtful, why it was so important to be believed, and why it
21 was so important to get redress for that bullying. And I suspect that there are a lot of
22 non-governmental organisations whose chief executives suffer the same thing, that there's a
23 power imbalance there.

24 And so if somebody goes rogue in a funding ministry and bullies you, do you call it
25 out, because you could be risking the valuable work that your organisation does? And
26 because of what happened to me, I chose to call it out. I'm proud that I chose to call it out.
27 But one thing that it did was cause a lot of mental distress, because when I wasn't believed
28 or when I was doubted by one or two people who I thought should believe me and should
29 be supporting me, it was incredibly triggering.

30 And I realised, and I thank the Commission so much for this process, because it's
31 helped me to make it all fall into place. I realised that the reason for that was that inside
32 this Chief Executive is a little blind kid who still needs to be believed.

33 Q. You wanted to talk --

1 **CHAIR:** And you need to breathe, Jonathan, and you need to breathe as well as be believed. Take
2 a moment.

3 **QUESTIONING BY MR THOMAS CONTINUED:** Thanks for sharing that, Jonathan. Do you
4 need a moment, do you want to take a little break?

5 A. I'm fine if you'd like to keep going, I'm happy to do that.

6 **Q.** Thank you. I wanted to talk now about your time as Chairman of the board of the Blind
7 Foundation and what you wanted to achieve in that role.

8 A. I was very fortunate to become the Chair of the Blind Foundation during an amazing time.
9 We have been -- blind people have been advocating for many years for, well, essentially
10 tino rangatiratanga, greater control over our own destinies. And that took place in various,
11 I guess I'd call them skirmishes over many years. Ultimately we got to the point where the
12 entire constitutional structure of the Blind Foundation was altered, and blind people now
13 elect the board of the Blind Foundation. That was an incredibly complex business to get
14 done and it took about seven or eight years of complex work.

15 So I was the last Chair of the old structure and the first Chair of the new one. And
16 having become the Chair and in this moment of such significant and positive change, I felt
17 that the time had come for the foundation to come to terms with and acknowledge that
18 while it had done enormous good work over the years, it has also left some people with
19 significant psychological scars. And for some who didn't have the family support that I
20 had, or the tenacity that I had, the ramifications are lifelong.

21 And I really felt that I wanted to get up at the AGM and apologise for the abuse, for
22 the neglect. And when I raised this, I was really disappointed by the response, which was
23 essentially that there are a number of facets to it. One was that we don't know what we're
24 opening ourselves up for. There could be significant financial repercussions for the
25 organisation. One was that you can't judge yesterday's practises by today's standards, and
26 that we've all moved on.

27 And it was almost -- in some ways I wish I hadn't done it because it made me feel
28 like I was in the wrong for feeling the way I do about the abuse that people have suffered
29 and it was almost the classic "I was strapped as a kid and it never did me any harm" kind of
30 thing.

31 So in the end all I really was able to do was to make some sort of really ridiculous
32 "mistakes were made" kind of thing in this address to the AGM. I don't have it, and that's
33 curious to me, but I -- it was just some mealy-mouthed thing about some things that
34 happened in the past would not be considered acceptable by today's standards or something

1 like that. And there was a little bit of me that thought, you know, I'm up here now, who's
2 going to stop me. But for whatever reason I read what was agreed.

3 I deeply regret that, because over the years I've made some significant change as an
4 advocate, I've looked after government relations for about six years and we've got a lot of
5 things done. And I think that when I became Chair there were people who thought yay, it's
6 great that Jonathan's in the Chair, he'll get things moving, and I think we did in some
7 respects.

8 But not making progress on getting the redress that so many people need, the
9 acknowledgment, the being heard, the apology; it is the greatest single regret, not just of my
10 professional life, but of my life, and I'm sorry that I couldn't get it done.

11 **Q.** Jonathan, you read about some more recent abuse of a blind child. How did you feel about
12 that?

13 **A.** Well, it made me feel even worse. I had to resign the chairmanship pretty early on in the
14 new structure because I got a job where I was doing a lot of international travel, but also
15 there could potentially be a little bit of conflict of interest there. So I think that was at
16 about June or July of 2003 that I resigned, and then towards the end of that year there was
17 an article in The Herald about a child who had been abused at Homai, physically abused.
18 And it made me realise that this is not -- at least then, at least then, it was not a historic
19 thing, that this thing was still going on.

20 And because I hadn't been able to take the board along with me on the idea of some
21 sort of apology, I felt that the least I could do was -- I had no obligations other than to me at
22 that point. So I wrote a blog post chronicling some of the abuse that I had experienced, and
23 I shared that with a journalist at The Herald who wrote the original piece to say, you know,
24 there's something systemic here that for all the good that the organisation does, it really
25 needs to be addressed, it needs to be acknowledged and it needs to be apologised for.

26 **Q.** And that's still something you'd like to see, is that right?

27 **A.** Yes. We are temporary custodians of a legacy. When we lead an organisation we're the
28 temporary custodians of the legacy, good and bad; but we are also the makers of the
29 ongoing legacy. So I know that there's a school of thought that says these people are long
30 gone from the organisation now, what possible good can it serve?

31 The good that it can serve is that the entity that is the Royal New Zealand
32 Foundation of the Blind needs to own up and apologise for the harm that it has done. And
33 it just so happens that the people there now are those temporary custodians, they're
34 inherited it for now, they own it and they need to apologise for it.

1 **Q.** You've also got some thoughts in the final part of your statement, Jonathan, about what
2 you'd like to see in terms of funding and technology. Can you discuss those?

3 **A.** Yes, I think in terms of where to from here, there are a couple of things. One thing
4 I haven't commented on that I believe I did also in my statement is that I think that access to
5 blind adult mentors is absolutely critical. I understand the terrible social damage that a
6 single school for the blind has done. I acknowledge that. But there were some benefits,
7 including access to peers and also, to some degree, access to blind adult role models.

8 There was one blind teacher for a short time in the school for the blind, he had a
9 tremendous impact on those that he taught. Just parents who - every parent wants the -so
10 called- perfect child, whatever that is; and to be able to network with blind adults and be
11 told it's going to be okay; with the right support, if you give them the right opportunity, if
12 you just let them be a kid, it will be okay.

13 And similarly, the technology access is so important now, because technology is not
14 just a nice thing to have. I mean for me it's the difference between being able to read my
15 bank statement independently and not, it's being able to shop by myself or not, it's access to
16 information, being able to read a newspaper for myself. I can't tell you how often I used to
17 pester my older sighted siblings to read newspapers to me when I was a kid, and now I have
18 access to all this information. Also because offices are largely paperless now.

19 If we can get technology in the hands of blind people, even before there is a
20 vocational aspiration, then we can equip them for success. Because the trouble we've got
21 with the current system is that there is funding available if you land a job to get the
22 technology that you need to get the job done, but the trouble is, it's hard to land the job
23 because you can't get the technology in advance to learn the skills that make you
24 employable. So the current public policy framework sets blind people up to fail.

25 **Q.** You talk about the unemployment rate or estimations of that amongst the blind community.
26 Can you touch on that?

27 **A.** There are estimates of 70% unemployment in the blind community. That's a figure that's
28 been bandied about for a long time. I think it is fair to say that there are a lot of surveys
29 that have been done over the years where employers have been asked what impairment
30 type, or what medical condition would you least be inclined to employ. Blindness is right
31 up there.

32 There are also surveys that indicate that, for some, blindness is more feared than
33 AIDS or even cancer. So, you know, people can't imagine how it's possible to succeed if

1 you don't have sight. So in my own life, one of the biggest barriers that I have faced is
2 other people's perceptions, not so much my abilities, but other people's perceptions of them.

3 **Q.** Thank you so much for your evidence, Jonathan. Is there anything you wanted to say in
4 closing before I pass you to the Commissioners for questions?

5 **A.** If I could just reiterate my thanks for the opportunity to be heard. Many of us, I think, have
6 buried a lot of the stuff away and in some ways it's been a difficult process, but in others it's
7 really given me faith that eventually if you can just hang on long enough, justice wins out
8 in the end and you will get a hearing. And I am incredibly grateful. This Commission isn't
9 just an entity, it's made up of individuals who are having to sift through some very serious
10 things, and I thank you for what you're doing, for your mahi, for the personal toll it must
11 take. I'm just incredibly grateful, so thank you for the opportunity.

12 **Q.** Thank you Jonathan. Madam Chair, Commissioners.

13 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Thank you, Jonathan, so much of what you say resonates with me
14 and I'll have some questions after; but first I'll go to Commissioner Steenson, do you have
15 any questions?

16 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Thank you, I don't have any questions for you, Jonathan, I just
17 wanted to say ngā mihi nui ki a koe, thank you for your statement today, your honesty and
18 your bravery and speaking to us.

19 **A.** Kia ora, thank you.

20 **Q.** Tēnā koe.

21 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Commissioner Shaw, do you have any questions?

22 **CHAIR:** Jonathan, it's getting late in the day and I hope I'm not going to exercise you too much,
23 but you started really at the beginning by saying that how incredibly grateful you are for the
24 education you received, for what you got, the positives that came out of Homai, and that
25 there were lots of good things, but there were some bad apples and some bad things that
26 happened, and that you didn't think that it was systemic. And my question mark went up at
27 that point.

28 **A.** Mmm-hmm.

29 **Q.** And I was going to then slightly interrogate you, but in the nicest possible way, about that
30 concept of what constitutes systemic abuse rather than individual unrelated people. But at
31 the end you then turned around and started to talk about the systematic things that you
32 recognise have gone -- that haven't been right, that have led to some of the abuses that have
33 occurred.

1 So it's a long statement. I suppose I'm just going to ask you to think about the awful
2 treatment you received at the hands of Mrs Buist. And I know she was a single individual
3 and I know she was followed by a really good teacher, but what was going on that allowed
4 a person like that to create what was a terrible anti-learning environment, at least for you, if
5 not for other children. There must have been something that allowed that to happen and for
6 you to be unable to get any redress or relief from this.

7 A. Yes, you're right. Yes. I think what I was seeking to do was to acknowledge the gift, the
8 taonga that a number of people I've engaged with at Homai gave me, especially with music
9 and other things. But you're right the use of the term, it wasn't systemic, is perhaps not the
10 best choice. Because I see what you're saying; if the system was working appropriately
11 then somebody would have intervened and she should have been removed immediately
12 really.

13 Q. Yes, and you shouldn't have had to be the advocate of course that you're cutting your teeth
14 on, your profession, but, you know, for a small child in that very vulnerable position, you
15 shouldn't have had to do your own fighting, should you, and your mother as well?

16 A. You're right, you're absolutely right.

17 Q. I don't want to be told I'm right, but I just wanted to feel that -- because I think at the end in
18 a way you redeemed yourself by recognising the systemic nature of some of this stuff, that
19 the organisations allow it to happen.

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Let's say we are agreed that probably your most recent statement was probably realistic.

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. The only other point that you made in your, if I might say, courageous acknowledgment of
24 the inadequacy of an apology, a lost opportunity that you, for good reason, didn't do; you
25 said that entities need to own up and apologise for what's happened in the past, because
26 that's the legacy of the organisation. So that's for the good of the organisation. Would you
27 also accept that from your own personal experience that doing such a thing is also really
28 important for survivors?

29 A. Oh, yes, yes.

30 Q. A healing process, validation?

31 A. Yes. And I think that's one of the things that I have struggled with with the bullying
32 episode I referred to in recent times from government, that it really -- it is important that
33 you are -- that the bullying, that the abuse is actually acknowledged and apologised for. So
34 this is the first step for me, actually being given the opportunity to tell what happened to

1 me. It's a very important first step. But there won't -- I really dislike the word "closure", it
2 sounds very cliché, but I can't think of a better one right now. There won't be closure until
3 we have an apology.

4 **Q.** Well, it's been a very rich experience to sit and listen carefully to your evidence, and I'm
5 grateful to you. I'm now going to hand you over to somebody who I think you already
6 know.

7 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Yes, thank you. Kia ora Jonathan. I'll start with some general
8 questions. The phrase "survivor", I'll say our community, the disability community, the
9 blind community, it's not a word which is used very often. We see much of what happens
10 ourselves and I think, to some extent, accept it. What's your experience about your journey,
11 if you like? And I think you've used that word "survivor" yourself.

12 **A.** I have never been called a survivor before until I engaged with the Commission. And when
13 it first happened, I did a double-take and I thought, who me? Then I thought, you know
14 what? God I am, I have survived this. It's affected me in some interesting ways that
15 I hadn't realised until recently, but I have survived. And so that in itself was, oh, validating,
16 really validating.

17 **Q.** Many disabled people have specific needs, specific rights because of their impairment.
18 You talked about echolocation and linked to the culture of blindness, but also more
19 generally on mobility issues, whether it's orientation mobility, guide dogs. Is there a
20 neglect of people's mobility needs? If so, who's responsible? Is it a provider responsibility,
21 government funding responsibility?

22 **A.** Well, I think we need to have a kōrero in this country about how we fund disability services
23 and why we fund them. Because what's happened over a long period is that the disability
24 sector is this incredible mishmash, spaghetti labyrinth that has emerged through no logic
25 but basically some people got in early and had philanthropic organisations set up for them.
26 Some people got government funding because there was no such organisation. It's a mess,
27 and there's no consistency about what receives government funding and what receives
28 charitable funding.

29 So guide dogs get charitable funding because dogs are cute and it's easy to get
30 charitable funding, but there's no discussion about well, what are the core services that
31 government ought to be funding? Because there is some indignity that comes with being
32 the target of fund-raising. I think we can all remember some pretty awful demeaning ads
33 that the Foundation has run over the years, and I've been very vocal about those, probably
34 the epitome of them was the "daddy's eyes are dying" ad which was just awful.

1 So yeah, I think that those fundamental tasks, getting an education, getting about, in
2 the case of blind people, getting access to information, they should be fully Government
3 funded; and to me that would include access to any assistance dog for any impairment, if
4 that's considered a way of levelling the playing field.

5 **Q.** You're a passionate advocate for braille, and I've been the beneficiary of that, there's some
6 sheets of braille behind me and they've aided me on my professional journey, because I was
7 one of those low vision people that otherwise would have missed out if it wasn't for the
8 connection with people such as yourself.

9 What else can we do to increase that pool of people who have access to braille, to
10 other technologies, and to the understanding of the potential -- talked about things like the
11 70% unemployment rate, which has been set for quite a while; how can we combine some
12 of that knowledge that we have in the community to make a difference?

13 **A.** Well, we need a public education campaign on employing disabled people, we've been
14 calling for it for years. I noted the discussion that was on Q&A two or three weeks ago,
15 although if we are talking about systemic things, I do note that we had a non-disabled
16 interviewer talking to a non-disabled minister about disabled people without a single
17 disabled person in sight. And I actually wrote to Q&A to say I thought that was
18 extraordinary and it wouldn't happen with any other group. But public education is
19 important.

20 I also think it's important that we modify the built environment. If we have braille
21 in more places, if we have more braille signage, if you can get your bill in braille, if braille
22 is a norm, then it will incentivise more people to use it; we're kind of in this catch 22
23 situation at the moment.

24 And a lot of people believe that electronic technology has made braille obsolete. In
25 fact what has happened such as with the device in front of me here, electronic devices that
26 circumvent the problem of braille being a bulky medium have caused a braille renaissance.
27 So I think we really need to advocate for braille. You know, if I go to the United States, for
28 example, in most hotels I can walk independently from reception to get to my room because
29 every hotel door has braille in most hotels. We don't have that here.

30 **Q.** A final question, and I'm sure you could write a book on this, but we'll go for the high point
31 of it. We're about half a kilometre from the place where the temporary custodians of the
32 legacy, the people that have made the decisions over the years which have governed yours
33 and my life. You are critical in that journey towards the quest for equity, self
34 determination, tino rangatiratanga, rights.

1 What are the high level lessons from the blind community you think about that
2 journey towards self determination and how can they be applied more broadly across the
3 disability community, particularly around the elimination of abuse and neglect?

4 A. I think we mustn't settle for anything less than disabled people truly controlling our own
5 destinies. You know, maybe they are about to rectify things in a positive way, but let's not
6 forget, that after a process where several capable, disabled people applied, they appointed a
7 non-disabled, establishment director of the Ministry and fobbed disabled people off on to a
8 steering group.

9 Let's not forget that despite capable, acting CEs potentially being available, they
10 appointed a nondisabled acting CE (Chief Executive) while the new one gets ready to take
11 office. Let's not forget that we have no disabled members of parliament, we have a non
12 disabled Minister For Disability Issues, and at this point it seems unlikely to change any
13 time soon. We have very few disabled people at CE level; it's a pretty lonely place.

14 So we're not going to get the tino rangatiratanga until we stand up and say no, we're
15 not going to be fobbed off with just being put on a steering group, we're not going to have
16 non-disabled people determining how we run our own lives, and we want the mechanisms
17 that will put disabled people in what I call those institutions of change. We need disabled
18 MPs, we also need disabled people in the media, on our TV screens and radio to, quote,
19 "normalise", unquote, disability.

20 If you have more disabled people on our screens, on our radios, that will make an
21 immense difference. You look at the difference even one, very wonderful, capable disabled
22 reporter at Stuff is making, particularly with respect to coverage of this hearing. We need
23 more of that. We should be done with being in the shadows and we're not going to get that
24 change unless we're all determined to advocate for it and say what we have now, where
25 we're kind of on the side lines giving advice, often free advice, is not good enough.

26 Q. Thanks so much, Jonathan. It's up to me to thank you and first thanks for the -- there's a
27 generosity and an intelligence to your staunchness. There's such a courage which comes in
28 coming forward for every survivor, but also for those in positions of authority as well who
29 have to go and negotiate with governments as well.

30 Thank you for your instinct for advocacy and your tenacity over many issues over
31 the years; and recognising, I think in yourself and in many of us, that there is that little
32 blind kid that still needs to be believed. And thank you again for recognising and fighting
33 towards, and I hope we've got everybody with us, that justice will win, will prevail in the
34 end. Thanks so much.

1 A. Kia ora, thank you Paul.

2 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** I think that brings us to the end of today. Now time for
3 kaikarakia.

4 **KAUMATUA:** Kia ora, we'll finish our session with He Hōnore, He Korōria. (Karakia).

5 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Tēnā koe, thank you matua, and we start again at 10 o'clock
6 tomorrow?

7 **MR THOMAS:** 10 o'clock tomorrow, thank you Commissioners.

8 **Hearing adjourned at 5.21 pm to Tuesday, 19 July 2022**

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