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MR G - AFFIRMED
EXAMINED BY MS GLOVER

CHAIR: I will call you Mr G, is that suitable to you?

A. Yes. (Witness affirmed).

MS GLOVER:

Q. Thank you, Mr G, which clearly is a pseudonym that we are using for you today. Thank you for coming to share your evidence with us today and we should also acknowledge your wife GRO-B who has travelled with you to support you today.

You have prepared a written statement for the Royal Commission of Inquiry dated 9 September 2020. Do you have a copy of that statement with you?

A. Yes, I do.

Q. Thank you. I'd like to now ask you some questions about that.

A. Yes.

Q. First, I'd like to ask you about your early life, what was that like?

A. I was born in Wellington and when I was younger our family moved to Whanganui when I was about 6 months old, I was brought up there in a strong Catholic family which comprised of my mother, my father, my older brother and two younger sisters. My mother was a staunch Catholic and we attended Mass every Sunday at our local parish, St Joseph's, Aramoho. Although my father was not Catholic through my childhood, he attended Mass along with the rest of the family and was supportive of my mother's activities supporting the Marist Brothers. He later converted to Catholicism.

1 I began my schooling at the Holy Infancy Convent in
2 Aramoho, which was a co-education school that was run by
3 the Sisters of Joseph. My time at this school was quite
4 good, although the nuns were firm disciplinarians, I was
5 never personally disciplined. Discipline consisted of a
6 strap or ruler across the knuckles. This was administered
7 for infringements like talking in class or answering back.
8 I attended the school for about four years.

9 When I was 8 or 9 years old, I made my First Holy
10 Communion at St Joseph's parish. My confirmation was held
11 at St Mary's, the main Catholic church in Whanganui when I
12 was 12 or 13.

13 As a child and throughout my school life, I would
14 describe myself as meek, mild, timid and compliant. I
15 never got into any trouble at school and was only ever
16 caned once, despite corporal punishment being the norm at
17 the time. I always attempted to be a good student and to
18 please my teachers, parents and others. Some of my school
19 colleagues probably regarded me as a goody-two-shoes.

20 Q. And then you went to the Marist Brothers school in
21 Whanganui for standard 3 to form 2?

22 A. That's correct, yes.

23 Q. What was that school like?

24 A. We had four teachers, generally speaking, at any one time,
25 teaching at the school. One of whom was the Principal.
26 When I started at the school, Br Benedict was the
27 Principal, but he transferred away and Br Fabian took over
28 as Principal. Other teachers that I remember from my time
29 at Marist Brothers school were Br Claudius, Br Francis, Br
30 Ephram and Br Marcelleno. At one point, Br Francis stayed
31 with our family as he was quite sick and needed
32 convalescence.

33 Marist Brothers Whanganui was a fairly sports -oriented
34 school. Students were required to participate in a sport,
35 usually rugby in the winter and cricket in the summer.

1 Discipline was a daily event. Boys were caned if they
2 were judged to be out of line. This consisted of being hit
3 over the hand or backside with a bamboo cane between one
4 and six times at any one time, depending on the severity of
5 the infraction. I was only ever caned once in my time at
6 the school and that was when my entire class was caned for
7 talking.

8 Q. In your written statement, you describe abuse that you
9 suffered at the hands of the school Principal, Br Fabian
10 O'Driscoll?

11 A. That's correct.

12 Q. Can you tell us about that?

13 A. Yep. Br Fabian taught my form 2 class and coached my
14 cricket team. For many years, Marist Brothers taught
15 boxing and organised an annual competition in the local
16 opera house. In my last year at that school, with
17 encouragement from my father, I took up boxing and entered
18 the competition. Br Fabian was one of the boxing coaches,
19 although he seemed to have no boxing knowledge or ability.

20 Nearing the competition date, which was from memory in
21 the latter part of that year, I was at practice with other
22 boys after school when Br Fabian called me aside and asked
23 me to go to his office. I had no idea why he singled me
24 out because I had done nothing wrong.

25 When I got to his office, he called me in, closed the
26 door and said words to the effect, "I am going to give you
27 a massage". I had a vague idea what a massage was but had
28 no idea how it related to boxing. Br Fabian sat on an
29 armless chair and told me to lay across his knees. I was
30 wearing white sports shorts and a white singlet.

31 As soon as I lay down, he put one of his hands down the
32 back of his shorts under my underpants and started rubbing
33 my buttocks with his hand and putting his fingers in and
34 around my anus. This seemed to go on for an eternity
35 although it probably only continued a few minutes. He then

1 pulled his hand out of my shorts and told me to go back to
2 training. He said nothing further.

3 Q. I understood that you've recently discovered that your
4 brother was also abused at the Marist Brothers' School in
5 Whanganui?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Before we move to that, I would like to ask you about
8 whether you told anybody about your abuse at the time?

9 A. I told nobody about the abuse at all, no.

10 Q. Why was that?

11 A. Because I suspected that I may not be believed, yep.

12 Q. And looking then at paragraph 2.6 of your brief.

13 A. Yes. Just to clarify a bit further, at that time, I did
14 not tell my parents or anyone else what had happened.
15 There were two reasons. Firstly, I thought my father might
16 physically harm Br Fabian, although he was not a violent
17 man. Secondly, my mother was heavily involved in school
18 activities and I thought that perhaps my parents would not
19 believe me. I was not prone to telling lies but at the
20 time it was probably unthinkable that a Marist Brother
21 would be capable of such behaviour.

22 Q. Thank you. So then moving on to this discovery that your
23 brother was also abused at the Marist Brothers' School in
24 Whanganui, can you talk about that discovery?

25 A. Yes. Until recently, I did not know or hear of any other
26 boys being abused at the Marist Brothers Whanganui.
27 However, two or three years ago I spoke to my brother for
28 the first time about Br Fabian, what Br Fabian did to me
29 and expressed my intention to register with the Commission.
30 During this discussion, he mentioned for the first time
31 that he had been abused by Br Benedict when he was
32 Principal of the school. He told me that when he was
33 called to give a presentation or talk in front of the
34 class, Br Benedict would abuse him while he was standing
35 behind the lectern and out of view of other boys. Br

1 Benedict would put his hand into the boys' shorts and
2 underwear and fiddle with their genitals. He said that
3 other boys had told him that the same thing had happened to
4 them but he did not tell me the names of any other boys. I
5 visited him in Whanganui and convinced my brother to
6 register with the Royal Commission despite his attitude
7 that it was better to let bygones be bygones.

8 Can I go back to Br Fabian for a moment?

9 Q. Yes, of course.

10 A. I think after, just to clarify, after I had had that
11 meeting with Br Fabian and when he had indecently assaulted
12 me, the next day I went back to Br Fabian's class, he
13 continued to teach me on a daily basis, continued to teach
14 me boxing and continued to teach or coach my cricket team.
15 He never, ever mentioned what he'd done to me, it was like
16 it never happened. I started to question whether the
17 incident had taken place, although it definitely had, and
18 hoped my memory of what occurred would go away.

19 Q. Thank you. And later, you found out some information about
20 another teacher at the school, Br Claudius, I think his
21 civil name is Malcolm Thomas Pettit?

22 A. Yes. Brother Claudius taught in form 1. I had no concerns
23 about him while I was at school and nor did I hear of any
24 concerns from others. I was awarded a prize for diligence
25 the year he taught me.

26 In the 1980s, when I was working for a government
27 department, Br Claudius was interviewed by a Police Officer
28 for indecent assault on a pupil at Saint Bernard's College
29 in Lower Hutt. From memory, he was not charged with any
30 offence at the time. However, in 1992 Br Claudius pleaded
31 guilty to an indecent assault on a boy at Saint Bernard's
32 College and was stepped to 6 months imprisonment. I have a
33 copy of convictions to confirm that from the Lower Hutt
34 District Court.

1 Q. Thank you. Leaving aside those particular matters, do you
2 have any general thoughts or observations about the Marist
3 Brothers' School in Whanganui in the 1950s and 1960s?

4 A. Yep. At Marist Brothers both Principals, being Br Claudius
5 and Benedict and Fabian, were paedophiles. Both the third
6 brother as I mentioned before, Br Claudius, was convicted
7 of indecent assault and it's likely he may have offended
8 whilst in Whanganui as his conviction related to Lower
9 Hutt. It concerned me that out of a teaching staff of four
10 at any one time, the ratio of paedophiles at that school
11 was high. This is an appalling state of affairs.

12 I will just comment a wee bit further, if I may. I
13 spent a total of 8 years at Marist Brothers Whanganui or
14 Saint Augustine's in Whanganui. For 6 of those years, my
15 Principals were paedophiles, being Br Fabian, Br Benedict
16 and Fr Roberts, Fr Phil Roberts who I will talk about
17 shortly, were paedophiles. My classmates and I didn't
18 deserve, nor did the Whanganui Catholic community who sent
19 their children or boys to those schools to have paedophile
20 priests or brothers as Principals. To me as a young person
21 at those schools, those Principals were God-like figures.

22 I mentioned Fr Phil Roberts. I was informed not so long
23 ago that he was a Principal at St Augustine's College when
24 I was there. He indecently assaulted at least one pupil.
25 He picked on a particular pupil, made him come back to
26 school after hours for disciplinary reasons and indecently
27 assaulted him on more than one occasion. That victim is
28 now dead and I don't think any complaint was ever made.

29 Q. Coincidentally, separate from the people that you've
30 mentioned, for many years you and your family have known Br
31 Patrick Bignell?

32 A. That's correct.

33 Q. Who was convicted for the sexual abuse of children. Are
34 there any comments you'd like to make about Br Patrick
35 Bignell?

1 A. Yeah. Br Patrick Bignell is related to me. We have never
2 been close relations but still he is a relation. To put it
3 mildly, I am embarrassed and ashamed by Br Patrick's
4 behaviour. Whilst I cannot apologise to his victims for
5 his behaviour, I want it known that I have unwavering
6 support and empathy for them and for what he has put them
7 through. My thoughts are with each and every one of them.
8 To know that one of my relatives is a convicted paedophile
9 shook me to the core. Having said that though, and
10 following Br Patrick's sentencing, I made a spontaneous
11 decision in the spirit of Christian love to call upon him
12 unannounced at his residence when I was in Auckland. He
13 raised the subject of his being on home detention and his
14 convictions. He went into limited detail about them. Br
15 Patrick has not contacted me since my visit.

16 To add insult to injury, Br Patrick wrote the official
17 obituary for Br Fabian which rubbed salt into my wound. To
18 be fair to Br Patrick, he would not have known that I was a
19 victim of Br Fabian. I was astounded to learn that prior
20 to and subsequent to his convictions, Br Patrick was
21 working in the Marist Archives in Auckland. I believe that
22 it is or was totally inappropriate and irresponsible of the
23 Marist Order to allow Br Patrick to work in their archives,
24 based on his past predatory behaviour which has vast
25 similarities to the behaviours of some other Marist
26 Brothers. In his role there, he is highly likely to have
27 unfettered access to all files relating to Marist Brothers
28 including other convicted/suspected Marist paedophiles. He
29 would have known many of these brothers personally as he
30 has been in the Marist Order for 50 plus years.

31 Q. Thank you. You've already mentioned Fr Phil Roberts?

32 A. Yes.

33 Q. Is there anything else you would like to add on that topic?

34 A. About Phil Roberts, not at this stage.

1 Q. When you left Marist Brothers' School, as you said, after
2 form 2, and attended St Augustine's College, which is now
3 Cullinane College?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. And you were there for 4 years?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. And then what happened then, what happened after you left
8 college, perhaps looking at paragraph 3.2?

9 A. Before I left school, and that would have been in the 6th
10 form, I applied for a job with a government organisation
11 and was accepted but I thought I was too young and needed
12 to mature, so I declined the invitation and went to work
13 for New Zealand Railways for 12 months. I then reapplied
14 to the organisation again and was accepted.

15 I spent 21-22 years working for this government
16 organisation. The last 10 years of my service were as a
17 manager, responding to all manner of matters that arose at
18 the time or on a daily basis.

19 I resigned from that government organisation in GRO-A due
20 to an issue with my voice which I'll address further on. I
21 then joined the then Department of Social Welfare, now the
22 Ministry of Social Development, where I initially worked as
23 a general government employee.

24 For the last 12 years of my service there, I managed a
25 team and, yeah, we worked for that Ministry.

26 Q. Thank you. In fact, I think you might have been too modest
27 to say but, in fact, you were one of the individuals in the
28 Public Service who received a certificate from the State
29 Services Commissioner recognising your outstanding
30 contribution to the New Zealand Public Service at that
31 time?

32 A. That's correct, yes.

33 Q. And you're now retired?

34 A. Yes, I am.

1 Q. Moving then to a slightly different topic, and I know this
2 is a big question but what impact do you think the abuse
3 had on your life?

4 A. In hindsight, I think that Br Fabian's actions had a bigger
5 impact on me than I realised at the time and in later
6 years. At primary school, I was one of the top three or
7 four students in my class. However, following the assault,
8 I found it significantly more difficult to learn and study.
9 I just scraped through my School Certificate exams and did
10 not achieve University Entrance, although I should have
11 achieved high marks in both but I continued to struggle
12 studying for exams and had to work much harder than my
13 colleagues.

14 In the 1980s, my voice began to deteriorate and change,
15 to the extent that I decided to leave that government
16 organisation, a career that I really enjoyed. I left
17 because I feared that my voice might fail me at a vital
18 time and place my life or the life of a colleague or member
19 of the public in danger. I cannot say categorically that
20 the actions of Br Fabian caused these issues to my voice
21 but I now believe that his assault contributed at the very
22 least. I have seen numerous specialists, attended voice
23 therapy and had had operations but nothing has been able to
24 fix the issue. A recent operation was only 30% successful.
25 I have now struggled with these voice issues for more than
26 33 years and spent a considerable amount of money
27 attempting to restore the voice to what it was but it was
28 unsuccessful, to be honest.

29 I dealt with several paedophiles over the years. Each
30 time I dealt with such a case, the memory of my encounter
31 with Br Fabian read its ugly head. I certainly did not
32 back down from doing my duty; I got on with my job in a
33 professional manner and performed to the best of my ability
34 but the abuse by Br Fabian was in the back of my mind.

1 The abuse may also have affected my first marriage,
2 particularly my ability to express myself.

3 I was a staunch Catholic for all my life until about
4 five years ago. In the last few years, I have backed away
5 from the Catholic Church, partly because of what happened
6 to me and others and the lack of response from the Church.
7 I had been thinking about Br Fabian and all the Marist
8 Brothers and priests that abused people. Since the Royal
9 Commission started, I began to wonder which priests could
10 be trusted. There are certainly some fine men among them,
11 don't get me wrong, but I have done a lot of research and
12 this is a global problem. I lost faith and confidence in
13 the Catholic Church. It was difficult to step away but I
14 still retain my own personal faith, just not in a formal
15 way with the Church.

16 Q. I'd like to ask you about how you eventually came to
17 disclose the abuse and your experiences with seeking
18 redress. Can you tell us about that?

19 A. Right. The first time I mentioned what Br Fabian did to me
20 was during an individual counselling session in the 1990s
21 for unrelated issues. I only mentioned it briefly and did
22 not go into it in any depth. The counsellor asked me if I
23 had ever indecently assaulted anyone myself and I was taken
24 aback and affronted by this response. I understand why he
25 asked but it has always stuck in my throat. I later
26 briefly mentioned the abuse to my first wife.

27 In 2002, Br Fabian's actions had been playing on my mind
28 for some time and I began to wonder if what occurred had
29 contributed to issues with my voice. I wanted to talk to
30 someone off the record, so I mentioned Br Fabian's actions
31 to a trusted former colleague. He made some initial
32 inquiries and found that Br Fabian was still alive and in
33 care in a rest home. I decided at that point not to pursue
34 the issue. I wondered whether I had been the only one this
35 had happened to or whether I had imagined what occurred. I

1 was also very concerned that I would not be believed. In
2 2006, Br Fabian passed away.

3 When the Royal Commission was announced, I took an
4 interest in the Terms of Reference. When abuse in
5 faith-based care was added to the scope of the Inquiry, I
6 decided now was the time to put up my hand. I registered
7 with the Commission and encouraged my brother to do the
8 same.

9 On November the 22nd 2019 I attended a private session
10 Commissioner Andrew and told my story. I provided a
11 written statement and gave it to the Commissioner who also
12 had some questions for me. I thought it was a good process
13 and the Commissioner was very laid back, understanding and
14 gentle. I came away feeling a big load had been lifted off
15 my shoulders for the first time. It felt a bit surreal.

16 After that private session, I felt like I had got my
17 story out in the open and that I should also report it to
18 the Catholic Church. I wanted to ensure that the Marist
19 Brothers fully understood what had been going on. Not just
20 with Br Fabian but the others who had not been good Marist
21 Brothers. I thought that someone needed to connect the
22 dots.

23 I vaguely heard of A Path to Healing process but did not
24 know much about the procedures.

25 On 25 November 2019, I sent an email to the National
26 Office for Professional Standards stating that I had been
27 abused by a Marist Brother in 1960 and asked to be advised
28 of the correct procedure to report the matter. It was
29 around this time that I saw an Otago Daily Times article by
30 Chris Morris and became aware for the first time that
31 Br Fabian was a serial offender who had been the subject of
32 multiple complaints to the Marist Brothers.

33 Four complaints had been upheld on Marist Brothers but
34 there had been no prosecutions.

1 It appeared from what I read that these indecent
2 assaults had occurred prior to Br Fabian indecently
3 assaulting me in Whanganui. That made me angrier. I felt
4 had he been dealt with appropriately at the time, my case
5 and the case of many other young boys would have been
6 prevented and I wouldn't be sitting here today.

7 The following day, the 26th of November 2019, I received
8 a response from the Professional Standards Officer
9 outlining the complaint process and asking me to complete a
10 notification form providing further details of my
11 complaint. I completed the notification form and returned
12 it to the National Office of Professional Standards. On
13 2nd December 2019 I received an email from an investigation
14 officer informing me that an investigator would be
15 appointed to investigate my complaint.

16 On 13 February 2020, I received a letter from the
17 professional standards officer informing me that a Pat
18 Coady, a licensed private investigator with the Corporate
19 Risks firm had been appointed to investigate my complaint.
20 A document summarising the investigation was enclosed.

21 Q. Thank you. We might just bring that document up which is
22 Exhibit 3. It's dated 13 February 2020. It is a very
23 brief letter recording that the information you had
24 provided was considered to be a complaint under A Path to
25 Healing which was the Church's response to dealing with
26 complaints of abuse and that in accordance with A Path to
27 Healing an investigator had been appointed to investigate
28 your complaint?

29 A. Yes, that's correct.

30 Q. What happened next?

31 A. After a couple of phone conversations with Pat Coady, he
32 realised that Br Fabian had taught him at school and that
33 our career paths had crossed as well. He therefore decided
34 that that was a conflict of interest, which I totally
35 agreed with, so he stood down from that investigation.

1 On the 12th of March 2020, I received a letter from the
2 Professional Standards Officer informing me that a new
3 investigator from the same firm, Al Lester, had been
4 appointed to investigate my complaint.

5 Q. All right. Then we have Mr Lester appointed. What
6 happened there?

7 A. I was scheduled to meet with Al Lester in March of this
8 year but due to the Covid-19 lockdown, this meeting was
9 rescheduled.

10 On 8 July this year, Al visited me at my home to discuss
11 my complaint. He asked a series of questions about what
12 occurred and I provided him with a copy of the written
13 statement that I provided to the Royal Commission. He
14 asked me what outcomes I wanted from the redress process
15 and I outlined three. Firstly, a written apology from the
16 Marist Brothers acknowledging the conduct of Br Fabian,
17 even though he is now dead. Number two was an
18 acknowledgment of the wider issue of abuse within the
19 Marist Order. I personally know of four Marist Brothers
20 who abused children. And three, an ex gratia payment.

21 In regard to the ex gratia payment, my intention is not
22 to make money out of Br Fabian's conduct but if what
23 occurred contributed to the issues with my voice, and I
24 think it has, then it has cost me a lot of money over the
25 years to seek treatment.

26 Following the interview, Al provided me with a written
27 transcript documenting our discussions. He has now
28 finished his inquiries or investigation, including speaking
29 to two individuals that I asked him to speak to, and he has
30 written his report.

31 Q. Thank you. We might just bring up Exhibit 5, please. In
32 particular, an email dated 17 November 2020 which is on
33 page 2, at least it starts on page 2. And then if we go to
34 page 3, and perhaps pull out the paragraph that begins "You
35 mentioned in one of your recent emails".

1 So, this is you sending an email to Jacinda Stopforth at
2 NOPS, the National Office of Professional Standards?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. And you're asking whether the report received by NOPS had
5 been sent to the Complaints Assessment Committee?

6 A. Yes, that's the email, yes.

7 Q. And I believe that separately from this email, you also
8 asked about who was on the Complaints Assessment Committee?

9 A. Yes, I'm sure I did, yes.

10 Q. And what response did you receive?

11 A. None.

12 Q. Did you receive a response and they said they couldn't tell
13 you or there was just no response at all?

14 A. No, my mistake. I think it came back that, yeah, no, I
15 think it came back that they couldn't tell me but I'm not
16 100% sure on that just now.

17 Q. And then if we have a look at the email dated 20 November,
18 it's Exhibit 5, page 1, we've got here an email from
19 Jacinta Stopforth advising you that the Complaints
20 Assessment Committee had sent their recommendation to the
21 Marist Brothers?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. And you have now asked for a copy of that recommendation, I
24 believe?

25 A. That's correct, yes.

26 Q. Have you received it?

27 A. No, I haven't.

28 Q. What communication have you had in relation to that? What
29 response to your request, if any?

30 A. None, as far as I am aware, none that I can recall.

31 Q. Overall, how do you feel about the communication you've
32 received about this recent complaint?

33 A. I think it has been slowed down by Covid obviously but I
34 think the wheels have turned, the wheels of justice, for

1 want of a better word, have turned quite slowly, to be
2 honest.

3 Q. Looking forward in broader terms, what do you think the
4 Catholic Church needs to do better, in terms of responding
5 to abuse?

6 A. I think, in my opinion, the hierarchy of the Catholic
7 Church has not been outspoken about the abuse that has
8 occurred within the Church. They need to be more vocal
9 about what has happened and supportive of people who have
10 suffered. The National Office of Professional Standards
11 seems to be working pretty well - albeit slowly. The
12 National Office of Professional Standards should continue
13 to refer investigations to an independent body for
14 investigation, such as they have done in my case, and there
15 should be no interference from clergy protecting other
16 religious. In the old days, as we know, they would shunt
17 them sideways and allow them to continue their behaviour
18 unfettered.

19 Q. So, what would you like to see come out of this Royal
20 Commission?

21 A. In the future, and following the completion of this
22 Commission of Inquiry, I would like to see a recommendation
23 and the implementation of an independent and impartial
24 Agency set up to deal with the issues that involve state or
25 religious based organisations having abused people within
26 their care. Having such an Agency would ensure all persons
27 are dealt with in an equitable manner. This would
28 eliminate victims of such abuse being treated differently
29 in many ways, based on which organisation was responsible
30 for the abuse. That would also allow benchmarks to be set
31 and eliminate the necessity for victims having to negotiate
32 and having ongoing dealings with the organisations
33 ultimately responsible for their abuse.

34 Such an approach would be a win-win situation for both
35 the organisation and the victim. It would remove any such

1 responsibility from the organisation concerned, probably
2 something that they would like as well, and would make it
3 more user-friendly for the victim.

4 I have had experience in setting up a similar process on
5 a much smaller scale in a large government Ministry. This
6 independent and impartial approach definitely does work
7 and, just to go back a step, in setting up this process was
8 the reason why the Commission gave me the award it did give
9 me. I would be happy to discuss this situation and my
10 experience further if requested.

11 Q. Thank you. Is there anything else you would like to add,
12 Mr G?

13 A. Yes. First, I would like to thank the Commission for
14 inviting and giving me the opportunity to give evidence
15 today. I would also like to thank all the staff behind the
16 scenes who made this possible.

17 I would also like to congratulate you, Commissioner
18 Shaw, on the stance you recently took in not allowing the
19 suppression of the perpetrator's name as sought by the
20 Catholic Church, I really appreciate that, thank you.

21 You will never know what this decision meant to other
22 survivors and myself, and again I thank you.

23 I would just like to take an opportunity to explain why
24 I opted to give evidence today, having already given
25 evidence in a private hearing 12 months ago.

26 I am a very small cog in this Royal Commission. It is
27 quite daunting putting myself out here in public and
28 although I am using a pseudonym, a number of people know
29 who I am and that doesn't bother me, to be quite frank with
30 you. I just don't particularly want to be on national TV.

31 Today you have heard my story but today is not about me
32 and this is the main reason I am here and opted to give
33 evidence today. I had to do it for the survivors and the
34 victims and there is a distinction in my view between the
35 survivors and the victims. A number of survivors have not

1 felt confident to give evidence or even register with the
2 Commission and their stories may never be heard. Kia kaha
3 to all those who haven't yet come forward but would like to
4 do so.

5 Then there are the victims and these are not survivors
6 because these victims have died prior to having the
7 opportunity to give evidence here today, prior to having
8 the opportunity to register and give evidence. There are
9 also those victims who passed on many years prior to any
10 Commission having ever been considered.

11 And lastly, those victims who were affected directly or
12 indirectly and who, for whatever reason, have taken their
13 own lives because of the abuse they suffered. May they
14 rest in peace. That is why I'm here today.

15 Q. Thank you, Mr G. The Commissioners may have some questions
16 for you.

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MR G

QUESTIONED BY COMMISSIONERS

CHAIR: Mr G, I just have a couple of questions and then I'll ask my colleagues.

The first is the extraordinary observation you made, that the number of priests, brothers, the proportion of them who were abusing children seems to have been remarkably high.

A. Yes. That's just in Whanganui that I know of.

CHAIR: Just at one school?

A. Yep.

CHAIR: And yet, it was going on behind the scenes, it just struck me there's just this feeling of secrecy, of things being hidden all the time; would you agree with that?

A. I still believe that there are a number of people in Whanganui who could assist this Inquiry, I honestly believe that. But for a variety of reasons they don't or won't come forward.

CHAIR: And some of those will be linked to matters we've heard about today, the shame?

A. Sure, yes.

CHAIR: Embarrassment?

A. Yes.

CHAIR: Possibly thinking that they were responsible in some way?

A. Yes, and also a small town.

CHAIR: Small town?

A. Yep.

CHAIR: Reputation?

A. Yes, all of the above, yes.

CHAIR: So, all of the above makes us grateful to you for sharing today.

1 The other question that I have relates to the redress
2 system.

3 A. Yes.

4 **CHAIR:** And so, as I understand it, you go and you make
5 your complaint to NOPS?

6 A. Yes.

7 **CHAIR:** They pass it on for recommendations from CAC and
8 then it gets put back to the Marist Brothers to contact
9 you?

10 A. Correct, yes.

11 **CHAIR:** I just wonder what you think about that because I
12 know you're advocating for an independent. I take it, you
13 don't like the idea of it coming back through the Marist
14 Brothers, is that right?

15 A. I can deal with it and I can handle it, that doesn't bother
16 me, but I don't think it is the right process. I think
17 there are a lot of people out there who may be not as
18 confident as myself to, sort of, ask the hard questions and
19 I think for them it may be a lot more difficult than it
20 will be for me because I am not afraid to ask the hard
21 questions but I believe there are some people who are a bit
22 sort of fragile and have to deal direct with the Marist
23 Brothers, whatever Order it might be, themselves because
24 they are going back to the exact organisation that caused
25 the problem in the first place.

26 **CHAIR:** And that I think is where I was going. It seems to
27 be a common pattern that people, particularly the ones more
28 fragile, don't want to face the people who, even the
29 organisation who employed or engaged the people who did
30 abuse them?

31 A. Yes, I believe so, yes.

32 **CHAIR:** Hence your call for independence?

33 A. Yes, yes, yep. I have that if that would be of any use to
34 you.

1 **CHAIR:** Thank you for that and keep your ears and eyes open
2 because, as you heard this morning, we will be having round
3 tables, we will be out for public consultation looking for
4 ideas, so more offers of help are gratefully received.

5 I will ask my colleagues if they would like to ask any
6 questions.

7 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Tēnā koe Matua. Good to see you
8 again. Just following on from the chair's question because
9 you make the point that the first investigator had to
10 recuse/leave the position because of a conflict of
11 interest, so he himself was a member of the Catholic
12 community in Whanganui?

13 A. No, Wellington.

14 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** In Wellington, okay.

15 A. Not in my school, no.

16 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Okay. To your mind, these
17 investigators, you see them as being independent of the
18 Catholic Church? Is that your understanding?

19 A. I think they absolutely are. I think because of their
20 backgrounds and what you need in these cases is someone
21 with, I guess, a fairly extensive knowledge of
22 investigating processes and procedures. Yep, I think
23 that - yeah, I think the people are quite competent, don't
24 get me wrong, the people working for NOPS are seconded to
25 or contracted to do the job, I have no doubts about their
26 ability to do the job and also I believe that they are
27 impartial.

28 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** You feel they are impartial?

29 A. Absolutely.

30 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** And the fact that Pat Coady was
31 himself Catholic or formerly Catholic, that didn't give you
32 cause for concern?

33 A. No, not at all.

34 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** More generally, I was just curious
35 about your experience of this redress process and about

1 what could be done better. You've already talked about, in
2 particular, the wheels of justice turning slowly, it could
3 be more timely. Were there any other factors that caused
4 some concern for you too? It seemed like access to
5 information, like you mentioned that, for example, The Path
6 to Healing document was, you'd vaguely heard of it but
7 didn't know much about it or the procedures?

8 A. I think, to give the names of for example, the people on
9 the Panel that made the final decision that goes to others,
10 I'm sure I requested that and that hasn't been forthcoming.
11 I think that it could be these people are concerned about
12 having their names put out there, like in public if I ask
13 for it somebody else might ask for it, I think that's a
14 shallow argument. I am only assuming and if that argument
15 was put forward, Judges and Magistrates and everybody else
16 who work in that field, their details are out there and
17 people know who they are and they would be, I think, at far
18 greater risk than would be the people dealing with matters
19 of indecency involving an organisation. I am not saying
20 there couldn't be a risk but I'm saying it's a much lesser
21 risk, would be my view.

22 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Okay. Did you have any - do you
23 recall from our private session we had counsellors?

24 A. That's right, yes.

25 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Is that a process that - did you find
26 a sort of offer of counselling supports as you went through
27 this process too?

28 A. Yes, the office made on a number of occasions, thank you,
29 by yourself and others and I didn't follow-up that, I
30 didn't feel the need to, but I think the fact that the
31 offer has been there has been great and I would just like
32 to also comment on the fact that with today's session, with
33 all the support that's been wrapped around me today and
34 other people, that's absolutely first class, I couldn't
35 fault it. On that basis, you've got that all spot on.

1 From the lady who organised my tickets and all that to my
2 friend sitting here in the corner behind me supporting me,
3 yeah, it's just great, so you're spot on with what you're
4 doing there.

5 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Thank you, we appreciate that. I
6 wonder to what extent are you getting that experience when
7 you go to NOPS, to the redress scheme offered by the
8 Catholic Church?

9 A. Not to that extent. I did get messages to come back if you
10 have any questions or I can help you further, which is fine
11 but I guess this one here today, where I'm actually sitting
12 before you people, which is a bit daunting, to be honest,
13 and other people more so than me, I guess, so people are at
14 different stages but I think what you've done today and
15 looking at how you've done it and all the support here,
16 it's great, I couldn't fault it.

17 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Okay. I have wondered about having
18 to repeat your story, repeat it to the Commission. You
19 come to the Commission in a private session and you your
20 soul.

21 A. Yes.

22 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** And then not long after you approach
23 the redress scheme offered by the Catholic Church and then
24 you have to repeat it again. I see you had a transcription
25 from the private session that you took with you.

26 A. Yes.

27 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** I wonder whether that helped, so that
28 means you're not forced to repeat every detail?

29 A. Sure. I think the Commission comes from one perspective,
30 the National Office of Professional Standards comes from a
31 slightly different perspective, and what's parallel, they
32 haven't both quite got the same focus and I will see how it
33 goes once the Marist Brothers contact me but I suspect that
34 might be a bit of a drawn out process and I don't want to
35 judge anything at all but that needs to be dealt with as

1 well. From my perspective, I'm quite comfortable how it's
2 gone but some people may not be and in the first instance,
3 you've got to be bold enough to put yourself out there,
4 approach the Commission and then you've got to have a chat
5 yourself. You have to be bold enough to put yourself up to
6 National Office of Professional Standards and then deal
7 with the Marist Brothers, so it's quite a long process and
8 I suspect some people may give up on it, put it in the too
9 emotional difficult basket. And probably if you had a
10 one-stop shop, it would be a lot better. I am not talking
11 about disbanding this Commission for one moment. I am just
12 saying after the Commission has done things, there could be
13 an Agency responsible for all those things and then it
14 would maybe be a one-stop shop we are talking about, rather
15 than repeating and going through etc.

16 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Thank you, I really appreciate that
17 and thank you for your courage and strength and humility,
18 kia ora.

19 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Good afternoon, Mr G, thank you, I
20 echo those sentiments about your courage. Can I just ask
21 you to expand on this notion on the independent authority
22 that you've been referring to. We've come to understand
23 that there is no actual one entity that is called the
24 Catholic Church but rather, it's a myriad of six dioceses
25 and all of these Catholic communities and what not.

26 A. Sure.

27 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** How long do you think, what's the
28 appetite for change? Do you have a sense of that, in terms
29 of the accountability? Clearly, we're hearing lots of
30 things that happened that need to be put right.

31 A. Sure.

32 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** But the accountability question?

33 A. I don't know, too many victims, that's my problem. But the
34 vibes you pick up on, you see some stuff on Facebook from
35 time to time and different organisations along those lines.

1 I think everybody that I have seen comment would like to
2 have some sort of independent body, that seems to be a
3 theme coming through more strongly as time goes on. Not to
4 do with the Commission but looking down the track, an
5 Agency that dealt with these things and I think that's a
6 pretty strong argument and that would also save a lot of
7 people a lot of heartache and distress and would probably
8 bring more people forward, I believe, if they knew that you
9 had a system setup whereby they could come to you once or
10 come to the Agency once and then it was fired out and they
11 only told the story once. Whereas, other people like
12 myself have been three times now and it's not finished yet.

13 So, I think, yes, if there could be something, sort of,
14 there seems to be quite a strong theme coming through that
15 I noted. I follow what's happening and I am interested in
16 it obviously, so I'll still be interested to see how it
17 continues down the path but yeah I have an interest in it.

18 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Thank you for giving voice to the
19 voiceless.

20 A. Thank you.

21 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Tēnā koe. I really just had one
22 thing I wanted to clarify around the age that the abuse
23 occurred. I saw it was form 2, so were you around 12?

24 A. Around 12-13, about 12.

25 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Okay. That was really all I wanted
26 to clarify. On behalf of the Commissioners, I just want to
27 reiterate thank you so much for coming in and opening up
28 and, as you say, putting yourself out there. It really
29 does take a lot of courage. So, yeah, particularly given
30 the complications with your voice as well.

31 A. Thank you.

32 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Thank you very much.

33 A. Okay, thank you very much, thank you.

34 **CHAIR:** Does that bring us to the end of the proceedings.

1 **MS ANDERSON:** Thank you, Ma'am, that concludes the evidence
2 and the day.

3 **CHAIR:** If you would like to stand-down, we now have the
4 final ritual for the day which we look forward to very
5 much.

6

7

8

(Closing mihi and waiata)

9

10

Hearing concluded at 4.45 p.m.