

**Witness Name:** Darrin Timpson

**Statement No.:** [WITN0076001]

**Exhibits:** [WITN0076002 – WITN0076006]

**Dated:** 24.09.2020

## ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

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WITNESS STATEMENT OF **DARRIN TIMPSON**

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I, Darrin Timpson, say as follows: -

### INTRODUCTION

1. My name is Darrin Timpson. I was born on **GRO-C** 1966, and I am 54 years old.
2. In this statement, I set out my experience of being in the care of The Salvation Army at the Bramwell Booth Home in Temuka. I was at Bramwell Booth for most of my childhood, from 1971 to 1982.
3. I also outline my experience of seeking redress for this abuse through The Salvation Army's redress programme from 2003 to 2009.

## ABOUT ME

4. I was born in the Chatham Islands. I identify as Moriori.
5. I currently live in Christchurch.

## MY EXPERIENCE OF BEING IN CARE

6. Before going into care, I lived with my parents, brothers and sisters in Timaru. I am the youngest. I have 2 sisters and 3 brothers.
7. I don't have a lot of memories of my early life with my parents. I had a medical condition as an infant, 'water on the brain', and was flown from the Chatham Islands straight after birth to Christchurch for treatment. We later moved to Timaru. My father was a fisherman.
8. From what I have been told, my parents were both chronic alcoholics. They had very violent fights. I remember a couple of fights. One with my brothers holding on to me when they were having an argument.
9. I only know how I came to be in the care of The Salvation Army from second-hand information. Mostly from reading my file. My brothers and sisters were already at Bramwell Booth and had been there for various lengths of time. My parents wanted to drop me there as well but were told they weren't allowed to. I would have been about 4 and a half. Apparently, they went to visit my siblings for the weekend and left me there. Then they disappeared.
10. I became a state ward sometime after this. The Salvation Army couldn't find my parents to get money out of them. They made an application for my siblings and I to become state wards, so they could receive money for us from the state.
11. My parents never came back to visit. The only visitor we had was my grandma in the early years. She would visit once a fortnight on weekends. This continued for a few years.

12. A lot of different staff came through the home while I lived there. Officers were rotated through Bramwell Booth around every 3 or 4 years.
13. The Salvation Army had a handwritten ledger where they recorded when kids arrived and left the home. Before I left the home at the age of 16, I asked to look at the ledger, so I could work out how long I had been in there. I was at Bramwell Booth for 11 years, 5 months, and 27 and a half days.

## **ABUSE**

14. The first couple of years at the home were the worst. This was when Captain Gainsford and his wife were in charge, along with Envoy Bezzant and his wife. It changed my attitude towards people, I wouldn't let anyone near me. I lost trust in people.

### *Physical and Psychological abuse*

15. Envoy Bezzant was quite a big fellow. He was very violent.
16. I remember many occasions I was whacked on the back of the head for stupid things like having my feet up on a chair, or not doing my chores on time. This was always with a piece of wood, the inside wooden rail of a towel roller. He would walk around the dining room at dinner holding the stick.
17. On one occasion this rendered me unconscious, and I had to be taken to the doctor. I was taken to the local doctor in town.
18. I was also beaten when I was caught in bed with my sister. I used to creep into her bed at night when I had a nightmare, but if I was caught, I was given the strap or slapped around the ears.
19. I often saw other kids getting beaten. On one occasion, Bezzant hit a kid so badly in the bath that he nearly drowned.

20. I have a memory of being forced to wear nappies around the home and to school because I had wet my pants. I would have been about 7.

21. I had 3 older brothers in the home. None of them looked after me. We weren't encouraged to look out for each other. GRO-B

GRO-B

GRO-B. I would have been around 7 years old.

22. GRO-B. Fighting between the boys was an encouraged thing. Captain Hobbs was a good one for this. He seemed to enjoy seeing the boys fight and let them go for it.

23. I spent a couple of weeks in hospital in Christchurch after Hobbs burnt me with a barbecue. I don't think it was intentional, he was just careless. I was standing around the barbecue with one of the boys from the home and Hobbs put more methylated spirits on it when he couldn't see the flame. It just went woof. I got burnt around the neck. It's under my beard, you can't really see anything now. The other boy got it a bit worse. He was burnt quite badly on the legs. They didn't take him to the burn's unit in Christchurch, just to Timaru. He ended up with quite bad scarring on his legs.

24. Staff would also give some of us alcohol. I remember Envoy GRO-B-99 giving my brother and some of his friends a couple of dozen bottles of alcohol and letting them get blind drunk. Some of the staff would give some of the girl's alcohol.

25. Punishment was often excessive. One of the favourites of the staff was to put us in the pit. There was a big hole outside, in the garage for fixing cars. The staff would put us in it and drive a car over it, so we couldn't get out. Sometimes they left us there all day. It happened to me 4 or 5 times. One time it was because another boy and I wouldn't eat our porridge for breakfast. They saved it and gave it to us for tea, but we still wouldn't eat it. As punishment, we were put in the pit.

*Sexual abuse*

26. I didn't talk to the other kids about the sexual abuse at the time. We all knew it was going on.
27. I was aware of what was happening to the other children, way before anything happened to me. I remember lying in bed at night and staff coming in and taking kids out. I may not have known exactly what was going on being at that age, but I had some idea.
28. Most of the sexual abuse I saw happen to the other kids was from Gainsford. He didn't physically abuse us. In fact, he was quite lovely towards the kids following sexual encounters. He gave us treats; we'd all end up with lollies.
29. The earliest memory I have of seeing anything happen was in the back field where there was a play hut. That's where Gainsford used to take the girls.
30. We were outside in the tree next to the play hut. It was me and another boy from the home. We were playing in the tree, and we peeked in through the side of the hut. Gainsford was in there with one of the girls from the home. She would have been maybe 10 or 11. At the time, I didn't know what I was looking at. I was too young to understand what sex was. Now I know he was having sex with her.
31. GRO-B was sexually abused by Gainsford. She was a witness at his trial.
32. The sexual abuse by Gainsford led to a culture among the older kids that this was normal practice, and it did continue after he left. Between us kids. It was the older kids doing it with the younger. The older male residents would rape the smaller, younger residents. They became the abusers.
33. I didn't sexually abuse the other kids, but I did bully them. It would get physical on occasion.

34. The sexual abuse that happened to me was later in my time at the home. I think I would have been about 8 or 9. I haven't told many people about this.
35. The main offender for me was Captain Hobbs. It first happened when he offered to change my room. He told me I could move out of the dorms into a double room by myself. The room had access from the inside and the outside, through the fire escape.
36. The first time something happened with him was the day he moved me to the room. He told me that I knew the price of it. He forced me to give him a blow job, then he had sex with me.
37. I never told anyone. I just shut my mouth. I'd known it was going on with the other children. It felt like more of a case of it was now my turn. I didn't feel like I was offended against as much as some of the other kids at the time. I didn't like it. But I think I had become a bit immune.
38. In later years, I knew what happened wasn't right. I kind of knew at the time that it wasn't correct behaviour. Some of the girls in the home had told people earlier on about the sexual abuse at Bramwell Booth. They just got shut down. So, I wasn't going to tell anyone at school or anything like that.
39. The sexual abuse from Hobbs went on for about a year or so. You couldn't predict when or how it was going to happen. It varied – an average of about once a month. Sometimes you would be by yourself, other times in a group. A couple of times, there would be two or three of us together.
40. Hobbs liked to dress us up. He gave us clothing to put on, that was his kink. Sometimes he'd dress the males in females clothing and get us to have simulated sex (including with guys). He would be sitting there watching and masturbating himself.

41. One of the staff members found women's underclothes stuffed in my pillowcase. Hobbs had given them to me. He got them from the laundry. They must have belonged to one of the residents. I was questioned, and it went on record that I was having psych issues.
42. Hobbs didn't want me speaking to a psychologist. Who knows what I might have told them? So instead of getting professional help, they decided I was lonely and gave me a stuffed toy. It was an easy way out for Hobbs.
43. Some of the other kids were sexually abused by another one of the staff members around this time. His name was Ray Vince. I walked in on Vince with one of the girls from the home having sex, but he never offended against me personally.
44. I was 15 or 16 at the time. They were in his lounge room. They were both naked. I was old enough to know what they were doing.
45. Sometime around 2008, I read that they had arrested Vince and that he was charged with historic sex offences. I went to Nelson police station and I gave a statement to the police about what I had seen Vince do [WITN0076002].
46. I would have gone to trial to give evidence, but Vince pleaded guilty to all the charges and there was no trial.
47. I ran away from the home a couple of times. The later years at the home weren't that bad. But the damage had already been done. I didn't trust any of the staff members. I wouldn't let any of them get close to me.

*Neglect*

48. I was made a state ward sometime after arriving at Bramwell Booth, but the Department of Social Welfare didn't play much of a role in my life. They used to come once a month to Bramwell Booth and see the children that were state wards. I don't have a lot of memories about it. Apparently, they talked to me or maybe they talked to the staff about me because I don't remember seeing them that often. I only know that they came monthly from reading my file, there were notes about their visits.

49. At 16 I left Bramwell Booth. I was sent to live with my uncle and aunt in Christchurch. I had never met them before. I had no choice in this.

50. They were both alcoholics with a <sup>five</sup> couple of kids of their own. They were obligated to take me as I was expected to leave Bramwell Booth at that age.

51. I was there for about a year. I didn't go to school.

52. There was no physical or sexual abuse. More than anything, they were neglectful. The house was a hovel. I think I was there to be an extra kid to clean up. I was only taken in for the extra money they would receive, from the state.

53. I started to get in with some of the wrong people. I didn't want to be at home. My uncle and aunt were always drunk.

54. I had a couple of encounters with the Department of Social Welfare after I left Bramwell Booth. One time they gave me some clothing. The next time I remember seeing them, I was signed off.

#### **IMPACT OF THE ABUSE ON ME**

55. Looking back, I can sit here and say that I would have liked a lot of things to be different. My time in the home, and the abuse I experienced, shaped my entire life.



56. It still affects me today. I don't go out. I stay at home. I feel a need to control my environment. I don't go where people gather – to theatres, or swimming pools or pubs. I hate having anyone standing behind me. I struggle to form relationships with people. I don't trust anyone.

### *Family*

57. I don't have any contact with my parents. I don't know if they are still alive.

58. I have limited contact with my brothers and sisters. Even today, I don't have a close, loving relationship with them. I know where most of them live, but don't have their phone numbers. I wouldn't just pick up the phone and give them a call.

59. GRO-B  
GRO-B.

60. I don't trust anyone. Especially people in authority. I keep everyone at arm's length.

61. I haven't had any lasting relationships. The longest relationship I have had was 3 weeks.

### *Prison*

62. I'm 54 now, and I first went to prison at the age of 17 or 18. I have spent much of my adult life in prison.

63. My time at Bramwell Booth prepared me to go to jail. I learnt to be quiet, not to trust people, not to go into a dark room alone. Prison was like the home, but without the abuse. I got told when to go to bed, when to wake up, and my meals were provided. It was easy. I got told what to do.

64. I was mostly sent to prison for fraud and dishonesty offences, and some theft. I got told that I came into the top 1% of New Zealand's criminals because I had amassed over 500 convictions for dishonesty offences. It's not really a distinction I'm proud of.

65. I was never a violent offender. I didn't want to repeat on anyone else what had happened to me. I knew how it made me feel at the time, how it screwed me up.

66. I think early on my re-offending was related to a desire to return to prison. I felt unsafe outside of prison. It wasn't until late 2000, after I received some counselling, that I decided to move forward and try and stay out of prison.

67. I don't think I would have gone to prison at all if I'd had a different upbringing. It was an easy place to hide.

### *Employment*

68. I have struggled to get full time employment. People see my conviction record and don't want to hire me. I have had jobs off and on, like truck driving. But it has been difficult for me to find stable full-time employment.

69. I have also found it hard to deal with government departments. Things like going and getting a benefit were difficult for me. My time at Bramwell Booth left me with no trust of anyone in authority.

### *Health*

70. I started having panic attacks at 8 years old.

71. I first received counselling in prison. Some of it was mandated counselling. Most of the counselling in prison, I'd just gone along with to appease the system.

72. The first effective counselling I had, that really made a difference, was with Paul Oxnam. It was only really with Paul that the counselling really impacted me. I wanted to make a change and to try and get my life sorted. It was a pivotal moment in my life. Since then, I've only been back to jail one other time on one charge. I learnt to cope with it all a lot better and began to understand that jail wasn't the answer. It was the first time I had told anyone about the sexual abuse, but even then, I didn't talk about everything that happened to me. [WITN0076003]

73. The first attempt I made to take my own life was in my twenties. I fell through the cracks in the system. There were a couple more suicide attempts over the years. I was in jail, and a lot of what happened in my past was sitting in the back of my head. I felt like there was no real outlet. That no one was really listening to me.

74. One was a serious attempt. The other two not so much. They were all related to my time in care, or the effects that had on my life. I felt that my life was a waste of time, I started to ask what the point of it all was.

75. I don't drink alcohol at all. I've taken a few drugs over the years, but I've never been a user. Bramwell Booth taught me one thing. To control my own environment. Don't let people get close. Being under the influence, didn't let me do that, so I don't drink.

76. I'm not getting any help now. There is no help anyone can give me. I've talked it all out to a degree. I'm now in a position with my life that I've accepted what happened. I can't change it.

## **REDRESS PROCESS**

### *The Salvation Army*

77. In 2003, while I was in prison, I met with Murray Houston from The Salvation Army.

78. I didn't tell him about all the abuse. For years I had been told that nothing would happen to those that abused us because of the uniform they wear. It wasn't until the Gainsford trials in 2003/2004 that I felt that I would be believed. Or even that some of my memories were real. That it did actually happen.
79. When I was released from prison in 2003, I was put up in a Salvation Army home for around 2 weeks. They eventually rented a flat for me and helped me with furniture, the bond, and some rent.
80. We never had a written agreement. The Salvation Army assistance was cut off after a time.
81. In 2006, I contacted Cooper Legal. I heard about them through word of mouth. I heard that Sonja Cooper was doing a whole lot of legal stuff with abuse in care.
82. I didn't tell Cooper Legal everything about the sexual abuse by Hobbs at Bramwell Booth. In my opinion, I didn't see the need to go into details. And Hobbs was dead. I didn't see the point. I've gone into details in this statement now, as I hope that The Royal Commission could possibly help someone in the future to not be in my position.
83. I was frustrated by how long the redress process took.
84. In 2009 I had an interview with Murray Houston and someone else from The Salvation Army in Wellington. I think he was a retired member of the Army.
85. I didn't tell them everything about the abuse. Murray didn't seem too interested [WITN0076004]. My impression was that they just wanted to get it over and done with. Don't get me wrong, I wasn't forthcoming. I was a bit hostile. I didn't, and still don't, have any faith in The Salvation Army.
86. I wanted compensation, and to see photos of the home, and get copies. I had already been through counselling, and I didn't want any more.

87. I was offered around \$20,000 and The Salvation Army were not willing to negotiate. In the letter of offer from Murray Houston to Cooper Legal it was made clear that this was not a negotiation [WITN0076005].

88. I knew others had got more. I ended up with around \$16,000 after legal fees. [WITN0076006]

89. At the time I needed the money. It was made clear that it was take this or get nothing. I had spent most of my adult life in and out of prison and I owned very little. I also had a few debts.

90. I don't remember getting an apology. I wasn't too fussed about getting an apology. I wouldn't have believed it even if they came up to me to say sorry. More than an apology, I want an acknowledgement by The Salvation Army of the abuse that happened while children were in their care.

91. Looking back now. I wish I had taken them to court. I want people to see what they had done and were doing. I want them to pay.

#### *Accident Compensation Corporation*

92. Another lawyer did my ACC claim. Every couple of months I get some money from them.

#### *Department of Social Welfare*

93. I was also a state ward. I never got any compensation from the Department of Social Welfare.

94. My initial understanding, when I signed with Cooper Legal was that my claim was against the Department of Social Welfare.

95. They didn't follow through with that because there was a case that went to trial and didn't succeed. It was two brothers. They were in a different institution. I heard back that apparently that couldn't proceed against the Department of Social Welfare because of some legal reason. As far as I remember, the claim with them didn't go ahead.

#### **OTHER ISSUES**

96. So many of the kids I knew from The Salvation Army are dead, from suicide or drug abuse. A lot of them are doing life lags in prison.

97. I've been through a lot. I can't change what happened to me. It screwed me up. But maybe telling my story will help some of the kids coming through the system now.

98. I think part of it, with The Salvation Army, was their focus on the financial aspect of having children in their care. They spent more time chasing money than taking care of me. There needs to be more oversight.

99. I don't know what the answer is.

#### **Statement of Truth**

This statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and was made by me knowing that it may be used as evidence by the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care.

Signed 

GRO-C
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Dated: 25.9.2020.

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