

Witness Name: Maryann Rangī

Statement No: WITN0412001

Exhibits: WITN00412002 – WITN00412013

Dated: 13/04/2021

ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

WITNESS STATEMENT OF MARYANN RANGI

I, Maryann Rangī, will say as follows:

Introduction

1. My full name is Maryann Rangī. My father's name was GRO-B and my mother's name was GRO-B (nee GRO-B). My birth certificate did not have my surname on it.
2. I was born on GRO-B 1962. I am now 58 years old.
3. My evidence is about the abuse I experienced prior to entering and while in state care and Bollard Girls Home.

Early life

4. According to my birth certificate I was born in Mangere, Auckland. Prior to my birth my parents and older siblings were living in Mercer, in the Waikato.
5. I am the eighth child out of ten.
6. I was raised by my parents until they both died in 1968. According to my mother's death certificate, she died from a brain tumour and also had tuberculosis. My father passed away a few months later. My older siblings later told me that he got a reality

shock after finding himself alone with all of his children. My mother had done all of the child-rearing work around the house. I believe he died from a broken heart, but he also struggled with his asthma.

7. The first six years of my life were good. At that time we lived in Otara. I felt safe and I remember being happy.
8. I don't remember speaking te reo with my parents when I was growing up. I don't remember having tangi for my grandparents when I was growing up. They all died young as well.
9. My father was from Mangamuka in the Far North. His iwi was Ngāpuhi. My mother was also from Northland and her iwi was Te Rarawa.
10. After my father died, we took him back up north. My father was the tuakana, being the oldest of 14 siblings. His tangi was big.
11. We briefly returned to Otara after the tangi but the house had been emptied.
12. Our grandfathers' brother, we called him Koro Dan, came to pick us up from Otara. We went up to Mangamuka to live with him on the homestead up there.
13. Only seven of us went up to Mangamuka. The other three stayed with my aunties, dad's sisters, because they were older.
14. Our Koro Dan tried hard to look after all of us. At the time we didn't think he had any kids, but we found out later that he had a son who grew up elsewhere. He didn't have a wife. I know people called him crazy after the wars but we didn't think he was crazy.
15. Our older siblings helped with looking after us. My sister GRO-B-1 did a lot for us. She was the third oldest. I think she was about 12 when we went up to Mangamuka.
16. GRO-B-1 took on the 'mother' role until our oldest sister GRO-B-2 came up north to look after us. I remember she must have come up around Easter because I remember having chocolate for the first time after she arrived.
17. We went to school in Mangamuka. I liked school. I remember going down to the school house and getting to have lunch with the teacher. She spoilt us.
18. We hadn't been there very long when our Koro passed away on us. I think I was 7 going on 8. He died in the night.

19. My father's brother then took over looking after us. He was the next oldest after my father. His name was Bill Karanga.
20. Our youngest brother GRO-B-4 was adopted out to one of our dad's sisters. He wasn't even one when our parents died.
21. We kept living in the homestead after our Koro died. Our uncle Bill lived in the house just around the corner and he stayed there but would come around to check on us. He would come and see us every day. I remember his big shadow and him coming on the horse.
22. Uncle Bill was a cruel man. Our older sister GRO-B-1 would make my younger sister GRO-B-5 and I hide under the house when she saw him coming over. He would beat her and our other older siblings.
23. We saw him beating them. I remember him throwing them across the room. I remember GRO-B-1 running at him and throwing herself at him to try and defend herself. Our uncle got a hold of her and my brother GRO-B-6 ended up pointing a gun at him, telling him that he would blow him out of this world if he didn't put her down.
24. It was awful watching his violence towards my older siblings. I also remember him beating them with a horse whip. I didn't get any hidings.
25. I remember Uncle Bill chasing my older sister GRO-B-2 after she came back to live with us. After that all I recall is people getting involved and all of us kids getting separated.
26. Social welfare became involved after this incident. It is recorded in a May 1970 child welfare report that a District Child Welfare Officer had been called to a disturbance in the household. Uncle Bill had hit GRO-B-1 with a stock whip in order to find out whether she had stolen a neighbour's purse. GRO-B-2 had intervened and also subsequently been hit with the whip. The report notes that we were removed from his care the following day. **[WITN0412002]**
27. I believe that the Principal at our school got in touch with Social Welfare. We ended up going into care when I was eight, less than a year after Uncle Bill had started looking after us.

Social Welfare and residential care

28. I was eight when I went into social welfare care. [GRO-B-7] was the head of Social Welfare in Northland at that time. I remember him taking us away. He took us to his house and I remember his wife telling him off for bringing us kids into their home with him.
29. According to my file, I was committed to the care of social welfare in May 1970 with six of my siblings following a complaint that we were not under proper control. **[WITN0412003]**
30. We looked like little refugees. We were probably quite unkempt and had a few sores. We weren't well looked after at all.
31. Our older sisters had done their best to look after us but they weren't very old themselves.
32. A court report written by a social worker following a complaint that we were not under proper control acknowledged these issues. The social worker commented that our health was sometimes "a source of worry". It was also noted that "concern is felt that because of their family situation these children are not receiving the most satisfactory care and supervision possible". **[WITN0412004]**
33. We were flown to Auckland the day after we went to [GRO-B-7] house. [GRO-B-5] and I ended up with our Kuia, Aunty [GRO-B-8]. She was our grand-aunty. My brother [GRO-B-9] was taken away and put in a boy's home. I know he had epilepsy and he was taken to a home near Timaru or Oamaru.
34. Kuia was my grandfather's first cousin. She lived in Otara in a Housing Corporation home. We didn't stay there for long.
35. My file states that we went to into the temporary care of Mr and Mrs [GRO-B-10] in Otara on 20 March 1970. This was the house of my Aunty [GRO-B-8] and my Uncle [GRO-B-28]. **[WITN0412005]**
36. We then went to Preston Road, where we stayed with one of my uncles. He was my father's brother. According to my file, I went there on 25 April 1970. **[WITN0412005]**

37. We only stayed there for a short time because my sister got bitten by the neighbours' dog. Our aunty would go out to housie and leave us home alone and that was when my sister got bitten.
38. After Preston Road we were taken back up north to Broadwood, which is just north of the Hokianga. [GRO-B-9] came with [GRO-B-5] and I to Broadwood and it was great to have the three of us together again.
39. We went to stay with the [GRO-B-12] family in Broadwood. It wasn't a 'family home', they were relations of ours. My file states that we went there on 27 May 1970. **[WITN0412005]**
40. The [GRO-B-12]'s were a Māori family. I remember thinking I wanted to go to a pākeha family because all the Māori families I knew were abusive to us.
41. I started running away when we moved to Broadwood. If I didn't like something after that I would just run away.
42. I remember I was about eight when I first ran away. The first time I ran away I made sure my sister [GRO-B-5] and brother [GRO-B-9] came with me.
43. Mrs [GRO-B-13] was physically abusive. I remember asking her about her club foot. I think any child would have been curious about what a club foot was. She slapped me so hard she sent me flying for asking about her foot. Or if we played up she would make us grab the electric fence.
44. Our older brothers, [GRO-B-6], [GRO-B-14] and [GRO-B-15] lived around the corner from the [GRO-B-12]'s. We went and stayed with them. They lived in a farm house adjoining a big four-bedroom house. We went to stay in the four-bedroom house.
45. My social welfare identifies this family as the [GRO-B-16]'s. They lived in Manukau and my file states that I went there on 26 November 1971. **[WITN0412005]**
46. Social welfare believed that placing us all together with the [GRO-B-16]'s was beneficial for us. [GRO-B-7] wrote a recommendation letter that we all be placed together there in August 1971. He noted that all of the Karanga orphans had experienced "severe deprivation" and "ill treatment" before being made wards of the state. **[WITN0412006]**
47. Even though there was plenty of bedrooms my sister and I had to sleep in sleeping bags on the sitting room floor.

48. The lady who looked after us there was called [GRO-B-17]. She was pretty crazy. There were some good moments but also a lot of abuse. When I say she was crazy it was because she would make us do things like get up at 4.30am in the morning to weed the garden.
49. Often if one person did something wrong then we were all punished. Sometimes it was her husband [GRO-B-18] who would get the naughty one to boot the rest of us. Occasionally she would also use the black hose to whip us but she mostly she used her hands to pinch or pull our ears and cheeks.
50. We also had to work on the farm, milking the cows and things. The family we stayed with would always eat well. I remember them eating roasts. We would never get to eat the food they ate though and instead would have to eat liver or slops, and sometimes water with marmite in it. We would have to eat it at the same table as them while they ate their roasts and other meals.
51. Even though it was hard living there I never ran away. I didn't feel the need to run away because I was near to my brothers and living with my sister.
52. [GRO-B-17] died and then my siblings and I were all separated again.
53. After that I think my sister and I went to the [GRO-B-19] and [GRO-B-20]'s house in Ahipara, near Kaitaia. My file states that I went there on 30 November 1973. [WITN0412005] [GRO-B-19] was probably related to me in some way but I'm not sure where the connection was.
54. We then went into the care of [GRO-B-19] and [GRO-B-20] in Ahipara. I think I was with them for three years. It felt like forever.
55. Both [GRO-B-19] and [GRO-B-20] were Māori but there was no Māori culture in the house. I reflect back now and think that the stripping of her culture had an impact on them.
56. Looking back, I know that alcohol was probably part of the reason for their dysfunctional behaviour and was partially responsible for the abuse in the household.
57. I remember that sometimes when [GRO-B-20] was drunk and they had an argument that [GRO-B-9] would pick on us kids.
58. I look back at [GRO-B-19] and [GRO-B-20] and I remember they never talked about Māori culture. They never spoke te reo, there was nothing Māori in the house. There was no tikanga at all.

59. I remember their children were always allowed to do their homework. She was very strict on this. But we didn't do any homework. However, we had to do the housework, gardening and cleaning.
60. I remember being at intermediate and having to take a note to school saying I had the flu but really I had been beaten with the cord of the jug or vacuum cleaner. I had welts all over my back that bled.
61. My younger sister [GRO-B-5] lived in Ahipara with me but I don't recall her being abused as badly as me. She would still get hidings but not to the same degree.
62. [GRO-B-19] was related to [GRO-B-17], the other cruel lady who looked after us.
63. She was the one who told me that having my period meant that I was a dirty person. I started getting my periods when I was living with [GRO-B-19] and [GRO-B-20]. I didn't understand that everyone else got them as well.
64. They had their own children as well. They treated them very differently to how they treated us. [GRO-B-5] and I were basically slaves there. And the children basically told us what to do also. We had to do so many chores there. I don't remember their children having to do any cleaning.
65. The house had to be spotless and completely clean before we were allowed to catch our bus to school. I hated staying home and not going to school because we were made to work. School was much better.
66. There is a note on my file that shows that social welfare were aware of how demanding and strict Mrs [GRO-B-19] could be. The note records that I wasn't allowed to go on a school volleyball trip, in October 1977. The reasons Mrs [GRO-B-19] gave for not letting me go were seen to be unsatisfactory by the social welfare department. She said that I couldn't go because there was a family unveiling coming up later in the month so the house had to be prepared for relatives to come and stay, and the floor in the master bedroom needed staining. The file note records that [GRO-B-7] attempted to persuade Mrs [GRO-B-19] to let me go but was given a 'firm no'.

[WITN0412007]

67. Further communication about the trip and the ongoing arrangements for my sister [GRO-B-5] and I to live in the [GRO-B-19,20] house continued after that. It is recorded that Mrs [GRO-B-19] remained adamant that I would not be going on the trip. Discussions were had about me returning to my older sister [GRO-B-2], which resulted in Mrs [GRO-B-19] becoming

'very uptight and difficult'. Eventually Mrs ^{GRO-B}₋₁₉ issued an ultimatum that if I was to go on the trip then I would also have to leave the house. Social welfare were aware that Mrs ^{GRO-B}₋₁₉ could be very unreasonable and only concerned about my sister and I being in the house to do household work. **[WITN0412007]**

68. I remember being scared to sleep in that house because sometimes I would regularly wake up to a punch in the face.

69. We did at least get to eat the same food as they did.

70. I used to think that I would come back when I was older and blow her off the earth.

71. Social welfare were also aware that my sister ^{GRO-B-5} and I had complained about how 'firm' Mrs ^{GRO-B}₋₁₉ was.

^{GRO-C} ^{GRO-C}

72. My file states that ^{GRO-C} my younger sister ^{GRO-B-5} and I went into the care of my older sister ^{GRO-B-2} for a period of several months, and then I was placed back into the care of social welfare. According to my file I briefly went into a family home in Kaitaia but absconded from there. Bollard was recommended for me. **[WITN0412009]**

73. I ran away from that house. The longest period I ran away from there was for three days. I went to the marae down the road. I had just started high school at Kaitaia College so must have been about thirteen.

74. My file shows that I was prescribed glasses for long sightedness on 1 February 1977, but I never got them. **[WITN0412010]**

75. I stayed at the marae for three days. My best friend lived over the road and she would come and stay with me. I didn't get caught at the marae, but I went to stay at another friend's house. She was pākeha and lived on a farm. Her parents said that I couldn't stay there with them. It was said in a nice way.

76. My friend's family dropped me off at the social welfare office. After they left the head of the social welfare office in Kaitaia, ^{GRO-B-7} took me into his office and gave me a big slap across the face.

77. My brother ^{GRO-B}₆ was living with him at the time which I didn't realise. They were pretty close.

78. GRO-B-6 found out that he had given me a hiding and told him not to ever touch me again.
79. After that, there must have been some sort of official meeting. I was allowed to go and stay with my oldest sister GRO-B-2 at 90 Mile Beach. I stayed with her until the fourth form. I was still at Kaitaia College.
80. My friends at Kaitaia College called me Mere.

Bollard

81. In 1976, when I was in the fourth form I was involved in an incident at school. I was defending another student who was being bullied by a prefect. I confronted the prefect and told her to pick on someone her own size and to leave the other girl alone. She then came at me and so I punched her back, but it was in self-defence. I didn't go for her.
82. She complained about it pretty quickly and I was pulled out of class and told to follow one of the teachers.
83. No one ever asked me what had happened or for my version of events.
84. An hour after I was pulled out of class social welfare turned up. I had my period at the time but wasn't allowed to go and get my bag with my sanitary products in it.
85. I desperately wanted to go to the toilet to sort myself out but the school staff didn't let me leave my seat.
86. Social welfare turned up maybe an hour later. I asked the social worker if I could get my bag but she didn't let me either. She told me that I wouldn't need my bag where I was going.
87. The next thing I knew I was heading to the airport with the social worker. No one told me where I was going. I also wasn't allowed to say goodbye to my sister, whom I was living with at that time.
88. I remember crying and wanting to know what was happening.
89. I got on the plane by myself. I didn't know where the plane was going. I remember the social worker asking a man on the plane to keep an eye on me.
90. I started to really freak out in the plane because I had no idea where I was going.

91. We arrived in Auckland and the man who the social worker had asked to keep an eye on me followed me out. Another man then picked me up. He didn't even say hello, he just told me to follow him and to get in the car. I asked him where we were going as well but he didn't tell me either, he just told me that there was no use telling me if I didn't already know.
92. He took me to Bollard and dropped me off around the back. I remember going up the drive and thinking to myself, what is this place? What the hell is going on?
93. My file states I was admitted to Bollard on 7 August 1978, went briefly to a family home on Church Road in Kaitaia on 24 October 1978, and returned to Bollard on 25 October 1978. **[WITN0412005]**
94. A progress report from September 1978 indicates that I was admitted to the Girls' Home following a breakdown in my foster placement, and that I was upset for having to leave Kaitaia. **[WITN0412011]**
95. When I first arrived at Bollard I was bloody and gross by then from my period. I felt really yuck. I didn't have my bags with my rags, which were my sanitary products at that time.
96. I asked the staff at Bollard for some sanitary products and they gave me pads. After that I stood in the shower for ages and just cried.
97. I saw the bars over the windows at Bollard and thought I must be in jail. The only place I had seen bars over windows before was in jails on TV.
98. After the shower I was taken into a small room and told to lie on a bench.
99. I remember feeling very confused. They told me that they were going to see whether I had any diseases. All I could think of was that I had my period so all these strangers were going to see that I was dirty.
100. A lady examined me, but I don't know whether she was a doctor. The other two women in the room held my legs down.
101. The examination was very painful. They used metal tongs. They kept poking and prodding me even though it hurt so much. All I wanted to do was cover my face while I waited for it to end.
102. After the examination I was thrown into a cell. There were rules about our behaviour in the cells. We had to stand at the foot of our bed every time a staff

- member came to the window to look in. I refused to stand up or engage for three days.
103. When we refused to stand up they would come in and leave us food but wouldn't engage with us.
104. I felt angry and ready to retaliate and attack.
105. The cell had a little silver toilet, a bed and there may also have been a sink. That was all we had. It had a light but no window except for the internal one that the staff used. I don't remember being given any books or any entertainment.
106. I was 14 and placed in this little cell with no explanation as to where I was or why I was there.
107. After the third day they came in and made me stand up. They tried to pull me up and I pulled back. They grabbed me and shunted me into the shower block area and then threw me in the shower fully clothed.
108. I had still had my period for the three days I spent in the cell. I didn't change my sanitary items, my clothes, or wash. After that first shower I was put back into the cell.
109. I remember being yelled at by staff a lot of the time. I could hear them clearly but I wasn't interested in listening. I refused to eat for a further two days while I stayed in the cells.
110. Mrs Campbell, who was a Māori woman, was sent in to explain things to me. She told me that she needed to find out why I was in Bollard in the first place because she didn't know. She said that the lady in charge was going to find out.
111. Before she came down to my cell I thought I was going to die in secure. I thought it was going to be the end for me.
112. I didn't understand that behaving well would have helped me to get out of there sooner.
113. Mrs Campbell took me up to the top house where all of the other girls lived and let me have a shower. I was pretty weak by then from not eating. I think she took me up on a Friday because I remember the other girls eating burgers and chips, which they normally had on a Friday.

114. There was a bottom block for the new girls and then if you were well behaved you got moved into the top dorms. If we were good enough then we got given our own room. Because I hadn't been exposed to nice things during my childhood it was a change to have them at Bollard. I remember having a dressing gown and some pyjamas.
115. At Bollard I felt I could go to sleep without fear of being woken up with a slap or punch to the face.
116. I was 14 when I got to Bollard. I was never told why I was there. I was the oldest girl there. The next oldest girl was 12 I think.
117. I didn't stay at Bollard for too long but I don't know the exact length of time. I remember turning 15 while I was in there though.
118. I've blocked a lot of my time in Bollard out of my memory.
119. Some of the girls were there because they had gotten into trouble. Other girls may have been there for other reasons but I don't know what they were.
120. There was a top dog at Bollard. She tried her stand over tactics on me. I couldn't believe it; I'd had people try to bully me my whole life. It felt like a continuation of the outside world. I told her to go away and she gave me a shove. I got up and punched her and ended up back in the cells for defending myself again. I went back down for a week after only getting one night up top.
121. The Bollard progress report notes that to begin with I was very quiet and kept to myself. It also records that after a few days, some of the girls gave me a hard time which resulted in me becoming involved in a few fights. I was required to spend time in "time out" as a result. **[WITN0412011]**
122. The hierarchy of the top dog was important to how the girls interacted at Bollard. The use of stand-over tactics was very common.
123. The second time in the cells I got a bit more time out. I was allowed to exercise and shower. I don't remember being given any books or entertainment.
124. I still thought I was going to die in the cells. I wasn't suicidal but had resigned myself to the fact that I could die in there.
125. I started to eat and stand up when the staff members came in.

126. I was obsessed with wondering how I was going to get that bitch, the top dog, back. I don't remember reflecting on how I felt in there.
127. I got out of the cells and went and gave the top dog a hiding. I was then immediately placed back in the cells.
128. While at Bollard I spent a lot of time in the cells. Over the time I was there I did spend increasingly less time in the cells though. I think this was because I'd become the top dog without realising it, so no one fought me and I didn't have to defend myself.
129. The September 1978 progress report notes that following the report being written, I absconded from the home in the company of another girl. It is recorded that I absconded during a period of "homesickness and frustration". The recommendation was that I should return north to Ahipara. **[WITN0412011]**
130. I don't remember much about the staff at Bollard. I remember them watching when we had showers and making sure we did our washing. I remember there being one male staff member. I never thought about them watching us bathe as a threat. I was more concerned by the medical examination I had had.
131. I don't remember there being a lot of physical discipline from the staff.
132. We were commanded to do things at Bollard, not asked. We weren't encouraged to do anything except do as we were told.
133. A lot of the girls at Bollard were brown. I don't know if they were Māori or Pacific but I would've said there were more Māori girls in there. The staff were mainly pākeha apart from Mrs Campbell.
134. Some of the girls went to school but I didn't have to because I said I didn't want to. I wasn't made to go to school.
135. There were no cultural activities or any acknowledgement of culture at Bollard.
136. There was a gym and we used to play sports sometimes. I also remember going on an outing to Waiwera. We were all embarrassed to get out of the van in our Bollard uniforms. I remember we asked the staff member who took us to park miles away so that no one would see us.

137. We had duties to do. There was a hierarchy amongst the chores. To be allowed to clean the kitchen and staff room you had to be trusted. I got to go to the laundry and I liked it there.
138. GRO-B-19 had been hard on me but she had taught me how to work.
139. I don't remember a social worker ever coming to visit me at Bollard.
140. I was close with another girl at Bollard and we planned to run away together. Because all of our clothes got taken off us when we went into Bollard, we had to break into the laundry to steal them back. It was too obvious for us to run away in our Bollard issued clothes, because we all wore the same thing.
141. My friend picked the locks on the lockers and we stole some clothes and ran away.
142. We took off from the second floor. Both of us had been given the privilege of sleeping up there because we had behaved well.
143. We ran and started living on the streets. My friend said she knew where we were going and that we needed to get to Mangere. I never returned to Bollard after that.

Living on the streets

144. We did a bit of clothes line shopping and I don't remember eating but we must have.
145. We would go to the Blue Light discos that the police ran in central Auckland for showers. All the street kids would go there. I lived on the streets with my friend from Bollard.
146. I think I lived on the streets for about two months. I got pretty tired of it by the end. The street kids used to live in empty houses and we used to meet up at the Blue Light discos. There were distinct groups amongst the street kids because there were so many of us. I think we would've easily filled a couple of buses.
147. We would live in abandoned or empty housing and drag mattresses in to sleep on.

148. The groups were all very organised. We would go out together and commit small scale crime. If we participated, then we got fed. We each had our task or job to do with each theft or other crime.
149. One time I caught a bus with some of the other kids to go to the North Shore from central Auckland. The top dog or leader of the group would tell us the plan. I acted as the spotter for this group and was told to make out like I was looking for someone or waiting for someone. If I saw anyone coming then I had to signal it. The other kids were breaking into houses. I didn't realise that they were stealing at the time. Then they caught the bus back to Auckland central holding a whole bunch of extra bags though.
150. The street kids were my family for a few months.
151. Some of the street kids would drink alcohol, but I wasn't interested. There weren't really drugs around except for glue, which some of them would also sniff. I remember wondering what they were doing with the bags. They used to call me "dumb dumb" because I wasn't on to it with that sort of thing.
152. The police were involved with us from time to time. One of the empty houses the kids were living in got raided and a few got caught, including one of the top dogs. We went down to the police station to look for our friends and found them there.
153. I wasn't involved criminally so I was excited to go down to the police station. I didn't understand the bigger picture.

Return to care

154. After some time on the street I ended up bumping into one of my friends from Kaitaia. She was the one who lived across the road from the marae when I ran away from the GRO-B-19, 20 s. I saw her on the street in Ponsonby and she asked me where I had gone, because no one up north knew. She asked me who I was with and I said that I didn't know. I ended up staying with one of her older sisters in Auckland during the holidays.
155. On the last Sunday of the holidays she said she was going back home up north and so I went with her. I went and saw my sister GRO-B-2.

156. My friend left to go home and I walked to my sister's house but she wasn't home. I then went to the primary school because I thought my niece would be there. She was and I remember speaking to her.
157. I then went and waited on the beach. The police came and found me and asked me why I wasn't at school. I hadn't even got to see my sister.
158. I think it didn't help that I looked younger than I was, because I was 15 at the time.
159. The police officer asked me my name and I initially gave him my first name but a different Maryann's surname. I eventually gave in and told him who I was and that I was waiting for my sister. I told him I was under the control of social welfare and I was then taken to the social welfare office.
160. [GRO-B-7] spoke to me there. He told me that I couldn't go back with my sister's because I was still underage. He said that he had a nice place to put me and if I behaved then in 3 months he could put me on a training course in Kaitaia.
161. He then got another social worker to take me shopping and get me some clothes before he took me out to a family who lived in the wops in Pangaru. I remember thinking it was a long way to run when he took me there.
162. The family in Pangaru were lovely. They were still having their own children when they took me in. The father, [GRO-B-21], was Māori and the mother, [GRO-B-22], was Rarotongan.
163. The family I went to were the [GRO-B-21, 22]s, and I went there on 17 November 1978 according to my file. **[WITN0412005]**
164. I wasn't treated like a slave or given any beatings. I was also allowed to smoke.
165. I finished school there, at Pangaru College. It was a waste of time. I told [GRO-B-21] that I hadn't been through much schooling.
166. I ended up staying with them until the end of the year. [GRO-B-22] wanted me to stay for longer so she could keep looking after me.
167. A file note from my social worker records that after some time in the care of the [GRO-B-21,22]'s I became "a totally different lass" to what I was 12 months previously and seemed much more stable. **[WITN0412008]**

168. I reflect on my time with them in Pangaru and how lovely it was. I felt safe there. The only negative thing I remember from there is that they used to speak te reo to each other to exclude me. It was so traumatising that I ended up shutting the language out for a long time.
169. I went to Kaitaia and did a short hospitality training course. I stayed in social welfare housing while I was there. I can't remember how long the course was. My file notes that I completed the course in October 1979. **[WITN0412012]**
170. I finished the course and then **GRO-B-7** asked me whether I wanted to go and stay with my brother and sister-in-law in Mission Bay. My file states I went into their care on 15 October 1979 **[WITN0412005]**. I got a job while I was living there.
171. My brother worked as a carpenter in Devonport and his wife also worked. Her mother looked after the kids.

Life after care

172. I managed to save a bit of money and then lost my job after I didn't turn up to work. I made some friends who started going to nightclubs and parties. They weren't a great influence.
173. I was discharged from the Director General's care on 14 January 1980, and advised of it on 20 February 1980. **[WITN0412013]**
174. Since then I have been a few places and done a few things. I worked on a job that focused on veneers. I then met my ex-husband, **GRO-B-23**. I was only 16 when we got together and we ended up getting married when I was 19, in 1981. I was underage so my dad's brother, Uncle Bill, came around and gave me away because he was still the closest thing to my father.
175. I met **GRO-B-2₃** in Otago. He was involved with the Storm Troopers gang at the time.
176. He worked as a crane operator.
177. My relationship with **GRO-B-23** was horrible. He was a drinker and he also used drugs. I didn't know how to leave him. People would ask me why I stayed with him, or why I stayed with him for so long. I stayed with him for 13 or 14 years but because we were so young when we got together I wasn't very old when I left him.

178. We had four kids together; GRO-B-24, GRO-B-25, GRO-B-26 and GRO-B-27 who was adopted out.
179. At times I have felt like I wasn't a very good mother to my kids. I didn't know how to hug my children or offer them love because I hadn't had it myself. I kind of lost that part of being a mother. I used to run away from my relationship with GRO-B-23 and while I would always go back I did go away for two or three days at a time.
180. I would always go back to GRO-B-23; he didn't have to come looking for me.
181. I was always ashamed that I had left. I didn't want my kids to have no parents, because I had been through that and it was very hard. I wanted my children to have both a mother and a father.
182. GRO-B-23 would say I could leave and take the babies but leave the older two children. I could never have done that.
183. GRO-B-23 was really hard to live with. At the time I didn't know what an alcoholic or a drug addict was. My relationship with GRO-B-23 was my first ever relationship so I didn't really understand what was good or bad.
184. I remember telling him on at least one occasion that I was sick of the life I was living with him, sick of him and that he was just an embarrassment.
185. He could go to any pub in Auckland and then come back in the early hours of the morning and abuse me. He existed on a cycle of drinking and beating.
186. We moved to Taranaki for a bit. I had GRO-B-27 there and gave him away because GRO-B-23 and I were not in a healthy relationship. I gave him to GRO-B-23's brother and his wife. I had made a promise to give GRO-B-27 to them. They both had children from previous relationships but they couldn't have children together. It was an easy adoption because it meant GRO-B-27 got to keep his last name and stay within the family.
187. My choice to adopt GRO-B-27 out was partially a way for me to get back at GRO-B-23.
188. GRO-B-23 was from Taranaki. He was from the Taranaki iwi and Ngāti Pīkīhāo.
189. His mother was physically abusive to him for hitting me. She would hit him with the broom or vacuum pipe.
190. He was from her second family. GRO-B-23 was one of seven and his father died when he was 12. His mother then had a third relationship and had five further children.

191. GRO-B-23 was physically abusive to me. He used to hit me frequently.
192. He would come home drunk, throw accusations around that I was cheating or doing other things and then be physically abusive.
193. He was also sexually abusive towards me. He would come home, smash me up and then help himself. By that I mean that he would have sex with me, even if I did not want it.
194. The sexual abuse happened throughout my whole marriage. This was a big driver in me leaving the house for several days at a time.
195. His sister would sometimes come to stay and I used to hide it when she was there. She offered me some protection from him.
196. His siblings always supported me. They looked after me and helped me out when I needed it. To be honest, that was probably part of the reason I stayed with him for so long.
197. I regularly ended up with a black eye or a split lip. The last time he hit me he was sober and punched me in the side of the face. I had a knife in my hand at the time because I was buttering bread and I stabbed him in the arm.
198. The police turned up but he didn't make a complaint to them because my brother had threatened him. My brother knew he had been abusing me.
199. Eventually I left GRO-B-2₃. I walked out of the house and up the road. On the way out I told him that he was a pathetic excuse for life and that I was getting out of there. I also told him that he could look after the kids for once.
200. The house we were living in at the time belonged to GRO-B-2₃'s step-father. He only let us live there because of me and the children. I knew he wouldn't be allowed to stay there by himself, so I left him and just walked out.
201. I ended up having a conversation with a neighbour up the road about renting his house. He was out there cleaning it when I walked past after leaving GRO-B-23. He and his wife ended up renting me the house and helped me out with some furniture and things. I never returned to GRO-B-2₃.
202. I went to the house we had lived in with his mother and got the kids though. They came to live with me. His mother fully supported me.

203. On reflection my teens to 30s were not the best years of my life. My 40s upwards were much better.

Re-connecting with culture

204. I re-engaged with my Māori culture after I turned 50. There was no culture in the house with GRO-B-23. My sister in law really helped me to re-connect and acted as a role model for me. She was an amazing woman.

205. She often said that you had to be clever in the white house as well as our own house.

206. She encouraged me to further my education later in life. Thanks to her I went on to gain more qualifications. I got my level six in social service work for suicide prevention when I was in my 50s.

207. I looked after her for the last three years of her life. She passed away recently. Her name was Tui Josephine Mareroa.

208. As a child I didn't know what being Māori was. I was exposed to a small amount with the family in Panguarua but them speaking Māori to exclude me was very traumatising.

209. Even now when people speak te reo on my marae I find myself chopping them down.

210. I would say I became deeply involved with my marae and culture about five years ago.

211. As an adult, the first time we visited Mangamuka marae was when my brother GRO-B-9 passed away in 1981. GRO-B-7 told us to stop and go see our Uncle GRO-B-3. Out of respect and part of Tikanga we had to ask our Elders if we could bring our brother home and be buried next to our dad.

212. I didn't know anything about the Treaty of Waitangi until I was 50 plus. Before that I was always like "what is that" because I just didn't have an interest. I was working at Telford (Now SIT) and we had to do communication training. The Treaty was part of the training but I knew nothing about it. It took me a long time to see the bigger picture.

213. I am a beneficiary on my marae, Mangamuka Marae.
214. I am a potiki (younger) that sits with the taumata and help run the kitchen.
215. I believe I am listened to on the marae and have people coming to me and asking for help.
216. I'm on a campaign to make marae drug and alcohol free. I believe that a marae should be a safe space for tamariki to be. A marae is a place that we have to respect and be taught to respect.
217. Marae weren't built for getting drunk or having parties. Our children need to be safe. A family member told me that she was raped on the marae, showing how unsafe it can be.
218. I raised the incident with the elders on the marae. They were more interested in knowing who the perpetrator was than on planning ahead to stop it from happening again. Some of our trustees don't want the marae to be alcohol and drug free.
219. Something changed for me in my 50s and I re-connected with my spiritual side, my wairua. I had to go home and re-connect.
220. I didn't know how to share these changes with [GRO-B-34] at the time. So I went home to be with my family, my children and my mokopuna.
221. I needed to develop an understanding of why things had gone so wrong for my people. At the end of the day we are the only ones that are in control of our own destinies. I don't think we can solely blame others.

Whanau

222. I have worked in a number of different jobs throughout my life. I was working in pest control when I first met [GRO-B-34]. I also worked at the Telford campus now the Southern Institute of Technology in Balclutha. I was there for eight years, working as a supervisor for the hostel there.
223. My relationship with [GRO-B-34] didn't start till well after I left [GRO-B-2]
3. I was in my 40s when I met him down south. I was with [GRO-B-34] for thirteen years the first time around but then I moved back up north and we separated.

224. We have since gotten back together. [GRO-B-34] is my soul mate. I can be ugly if I need to be ugly with him. By this I mean, I can be myself with him. He is very patient, understanding and caring.
225. My children are all adults now. [GRO-B-24] lives in Kaikohe. Her tane, the father of her four children, is a farmer. He works on a farm in Kaikohe.
226. [GRO-B-24]'s oldest is called [GRO-B-28]. She had her quite young. We adopted her out. [GRO-B-24] told me that the father of her baby was her half-brother. This was not actually the case.
227. The family that adopted [GRO-B-28] were pākeha.
228. [GRO-B-28] has just had a child, she is 23 now. I still keep in touch with her and know what's going on with these children even though they were adopted out.
229. [GRO-B-25] was living in Auckland, but he took his father back to Taranaki to look after him. [GRO-B-23] has signs of Alzheimers.
230. [GRO-B-26] is in Kaitaia and has two children but she has been caught up with P. She's addicted. [GRO-B-26] still has her daughter but she is living with one of her cousins who is keeping an eye on things. She doesn't have a job at this stage.
231. [GRO-B-27] is living in Whakatane. He is a solo dad, his partner left him, and he is the primary caregiver for their child. [GRO-B-27] is our son who we adopted out.
232. Both of my daughters have struggled with methamphetamine addictions.
233. Overall I would say that I have maintained a good relationship with my children and mostly a good one with my brothers and sisters.
234. One of my sisters passed away in a car accident earlier this year. She drove off the road, maybe as a result of falling asleep.
235. My brother [GRO-B-14] moved to Australia 40 years ago. He struggles with his mental health.
236. None of my other siblings ended up in boys or girls homes, except for [GRO-B-9]. My younger sister [GRO-B-5] managed to stay out of them. I don't think any of them went to borstal or prison either.

Impact

237. We basically got passed around our whole lives. My whanau gave up on me. I get it because they were young themselves. My dad still had siblings who were going to school. None of my aunties took us in because they young themselves.

238. My file noted that I “had a number of related and unrelated foster homes during a period of eight years” after which I was admitted to Bollard due to a period of unsettled behaviour. The social worker commented that my behaviour “gradually stabilised” during my time at Bollard and while in foster care with the GRO-B-21,22s.
[WITN0412003]

239. A lot of my life was just about surviving and there was no time to reflect. Now I have had time to reflect. I believe that life is what you make of it. I attribute a lot of my wellbeing and growth to my sister-in-law Tui Josephine Mareroa. If it hadn't been for her, my life would have been on a completely different path. She guided me, both in my spiritual and physical world. She had absolute mana and was able to mentor me to do what was right.

240. A month after she past several family members, including myself got their moko done as a tribute to Tui.

241. I've realised that as a child I felt like no one properly spoke to me or gave me a chance to think. No one ever asked me questions, listened to me or seemed to care what I thought. Nothing was explained to me and I wasn't ever told anything clearly.

242. I realise children develop at different rates but I should've been given an explanation for lots of things that happened during my childhood.

243. Another one of the sad impacts on my life was my separation from sister GRO-B-5. We had been incredibly close because we had had to rely on each other while in various family homes and placements. For such a long time we only had each other. I remember I used to take hidings for her so she didn't receive them. When I was taken away to Bollard, I never got to see her again until I was an adult.

Redress

244. I have never dealt with ACC or the Ministry of Social Development. I have since had dealings with ACC for a work related injury.

245. Apart from the medical procedure, I was not subject to sexual abuse during my childhood. My ex-husband sexually abused me as an adult.

Looking forward

246. Children go into care for a whole range of reasons.

247. For my daughters, struggling with their addictions, I tried my best to never give up on them and show them that I love them.

248. I felt that no one cared. As a child it would have made a real difference if people had actually shown love and shown that they cared. Saying that you love someone isn't the same thing as showing it. We have to give unconditionally to our young people without expecting anything back.

249. I also think it is never too late to fix things. We get caught up in thinking that we know everything and we can't ask for help even though it would be for the gain of everybody.

250. I think learning about Māori culture and how it was taken from our people is critical in helping us move forward. The stripping away of culture has led to a lot of damage and addiction and understanding this is one way we can move forward as people.

251. Kohanga reo is part of our marae. They have been trying to shut it down on my marae. They aren't thinking of the wellbeing of the children, they are thinking of themselves.

252. We need to make things better for the next generation by focusing on the future. We can't change the past and or fix what has already happened. I don't want to waste my energy on adults. I want to focus on children. I think looking after things like kohanga reo is a good place to start.

253. As communities we should identify what people are good at and what people need to work on. We used to have tohunga who could see what people would be good at. We should look at this now and allocate people jobs based on what they are good at, including child care. We still have tohunga today. They just need nurturing.

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

Dated: 13 April 2021