

Witness Name:

Statement No:

Exhibits:  --

DATED: 21 October 2020

**ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE**

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**FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF**

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**FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF** GRO-A Ms B

I, GRO-A Ms B, will say as follows:

1. I was born on GRO-A 1944. I am 76 years old.

**Introduction**

2. My father was Norwegian. Prior to meeting my mother, who was a New Zealander of European heritage, my father was in the Resistance in Norway, and I am told he was a marine engineer.
3. At the time my father met my mother, he believed he was a widower; his wife and daughter in Narvik, where they had lived, were thought dead after the city was bombed during World War 2. His wife was later found alive, living in an asylum, not knowing who she was.
4. My father, when he learned that his wife was alive, became very concerned about having committed bigamy, as by then he had married my mother. With my mother's blessing (as she told me later, his first wife needed him more than we did), he returned to Norway when I was two years old.

**How I came to be housed by the Salvation Army**

5. I object to using the word "care" because in no way was I cared for by the Salvation Army.

6. After my father left when I was a young child, my mother had to maintain employment to support us. I was her only child. We were very close.
7. She placed me with a caregiver, to enable her to work, as was the way things were done at the time, in the absence of sole parent support from the government.
8. I have fond memories of the home I stayed in, with a doting elderly lady who treated me like a little princess.
9. I had my own bed and bedroom in her house. She and her husband loved and protected me, cuddled me, bathed me and fed me well. I remember waking up one Christmas in her home, to find a big doll's house. I remember she would sing to me while she dressed me. I adored her and I was cherished.
10. I attended St Kevin's school then, just down the road, because my caregiver was Catholic.
11. Unfortunately, my caregiver broke her arm, and my mother had to find a more permanent means of my being looked after. I couldn't stay with her; she lived in a boarding house and worked two jobs.
12. She happened to encounter an acquaintance who was the sister in law of Captain Hanning, of the Salvation Army Nest. She told my mother of a beautiful place called the Grange, where she wouldn't have to worry about me. My mother went to enquire about this beautiful place.
13. I attach at WITN0117002 the correspondence between my mother and the Grange, leading up to my admission.

14. An application was made – attached at WITN0117003.
15. Further correspondence followed – attached at WITN0117004.
16. A contract was signed between the Grange and my mother. This set out the sums my mother would pay, and her agreement to sign over control of me, her daughter to the Salvation Army. This is attached at WITN0117005.
17. A further exchange signed by a "Mrs Colonel" and a Major Harris at the Grange, reinforced the need for my mother to sign over the family benefit to the Salvation army (attached at WITN0117006).
18. A letter was sent to my mother on the same date, attached at WITN0117007 - another reminder about money.
19. So it came to be that on GRO-A 1951, aged 7 years GRO-A GRO-A once all the finances were secured, I moved into my placement at the Grange, a Salvation Army orphanage in Herne Bay.
20. I don't remember much about my first day, other than being in shock at the size of the house, and being surrounded by people and feeling empty and alone. I don't remember anyone talking to me. I remember having a dreadful fear of doing something wrong. I remember not eating for some time.
21. The change in environment for me was an enormous, wretched shock. The food was abysmal, and I was immediately put to work.

22. I suddenly had no access to the outside world, other than attending school (Bayfield Primary). Nobody bathed me or cherished me. There was no physical contact or hugging.
23. I was seven and for the first time, I felt very alone. I hardly spoke. Before long, I learned what isolation and fear was.
24. My mother lived in a boarding house in Ponsonby. She was to pay the Salvation Army for my maintenance, and I was to see her on Saturdays with a visit at the premises, and she was to take me out once a month on a Saturday from 1pm to 6pm.
25. She later expressed to me her lifelong regret at making this decision as to my care.
26. But to my mother in 1951, as a member of the general population, the Salvation Army was synonymous with good Christian values, charity for the needy and vulnerable, and the home looked beautiful.

#### **Six and a half years of abject fear**

27. I was to live at the Grange at Clifton House in Herne Bay from 1951 to 1956, then when it relocated to Remuera Road from 1956 to December 1957, when I left at the age of 13.
28. There is one single A4 page comprising the entirety of the records held of those six and a half years of my childhood under the Salvation Army's roof. This is attached at

WITN0117008

29. My lasting memories of the six and a half years I spent under the roof of the Salvation Army are of utter terror, from the moment I awoke at 6am, until I fell asleep at night.

30. The fear I felt for those years has remained with me all my life, and the impact is ongoing. I will set that out in this statement.

### **This statement**

31. This testimony is for the little girl of seven, and now the woman of 76, who need to see the silence shattered.

32. It is challenging for me to speak again about my abuse. Even talking about this now I am shaking, with the feelings of injustice and rage.

33. I do not want my testimony sanitized in any form. It is important to me that the Inquiry does not put the hurt and the harm behind words.

34. The Grange was not a home. I refer to it as an orphanage, although many of the girls had single parents, as I did. It was not care that the children at the Grange received.

35. This evidence is about the abuse I suffered during the time my mother trusted the Salvation Army to provide for me when she could not.

36. I also speak to the lengthy involvement I have had in seeking an acknowledgement, an apology, redress and the taking of responsibility for the failings of this organization to care for the vulnerable children under its roof.

37. In giving this statement, I speak not only for myself. I speak for the hundreds, possibly thousands, of little girls who were also abused in what I refer to as the "gulag" of Salvation Army-run homes around New Zealand.
38. Those little girls are no longer here to speak. They are standing behind me as I give this evidence.
39. I want to break the silence. I want that suffering brought out into the open and acknowledged.
40. I want recognition of all the little lives which were ruined or even ended.
41. I believe the Salvation Army orphanages were like a beacon to the abusers and paedophiles. I refer to this as a holocaust, and there needs to be understanding of what it is to be a survivor of this abuse.
42. I refer to some of the clippings I have collected – others who have come forward. These are attached at WITN0117009.
43. The effects ripple into the community – I refer to the case of GRO-B-112, who is a survivor of the Hodderville orphanage and later committed murder.
44. I also speak for the 45 members of the survivor group "SAAS" – Salvation Army Abuse Survivors" formed in the early 2000s. We were a lively, and cohesive group. I attach a letter sent to members, undated but at an early stage, at WITN0117010.

45. Of those 45 members, I believe there are only two of us alive today, myself and Jan Lowe. Some died [GRO-C], some [died] by alcohol or other drugs.

46. I attach at [WITN0117011] summaries of the abuse suffered by some of these survivors, no longer here, with their names redacted. I have obtained these from the lawyer who assisted us with our group claim in the early 2000s.

47. The 43 who have passed, are also standing alongside me as I give this evidence.

### **The Grange – a Salvation Army orphanage for children**

48. The Grange in Herne Bay was a large Edwardian villa at 14 Clifton Road. It had expansive gardens and a sweeping driveway, approached through wooden gates. The property had been gifted to the Salvation Army in 1916. I attach a photograph of the property as it was at the time [WITN0117012].

49. To me at seven, the building seemed immense. The grounds were large, about 2 acres. We children were not allowed to play in the gardens. Not long after my arrival the gardener left, and we children were made to do the gardening, digging and weeding.

50. There was a tennis court, but nobody was allowed to play on it. A common thread of my experience with the Salvation Army is the presentation of an image which did not match the experience of those within.



51. I can still smell and feel that place, 70 years later. There was orange linoleum on the bathroom floors.
52. The Grange took in little girls, like me, whose mothers or fathers were single or otherwise unable to care for them. It housed up to 33 girls.
53. The premises to which the Grange moved in 1956, in Remuera, were similar. A large Edwardian or Victorian villa with large, wooden floors, they were both expansive homes with verandahs. I remember these because I scrubbed them often.
54. The Salvation Army was well reimbursed for providing a home for children. As shown by the contract signed by my mother, and the correspondence I have attached, they received monthly payments from parents and from the government.
55. The Salvation Army also received a capitation fee for every child in orphanage care from the government.
56. I believe the sums received for me, a single child, were over five pounds a month:
- a. 2 pounds, 3 shillings monthly from the family benefit,
  - b. 3 pounds, five shillings monthly from my mother's wages (which were about 7 pounds a month), and
  - c. around 15 shillings a week a from the capitation benefit.
57. This was no charitable act. It was a business.
58. My mother was required to send her payments to the Salvation Army headquarters in Wellington. I am aware that this was the case with the other orphanages such as Whatman

Home: the money went to the Salvation Army headquarters. In August 1952, Brigadeer Allison wrote to my mother telling her the charges had gone up, without explanation.

59. At times due to illness my mother struggled to meet the payments, and I have copies of the numerous letters sent to her by Brigadeer Allison in Wellington, requesting she meet her arrears. I **attach** the correspondence I have obtained between my mother and Brigadeer Allison ( WITN0117013 ).

60. From my experience, and from reading and hearing about the experiences of others in orphanages, I believe the bare minimum in funds was directed to the care and maintenance of the children in the Salvation Army's care. Certainly they were not reflected in our food, clothing, or other provisions.

61. I believe the Salvation Army instead embarked on an ambitious and aggressive scheme of acquiring property and accumulating wealth.

62. To this day, the average person still equates the Salvation Army with charity and support for the oppressed, poor and downtrodden. My experience in the care of the Salvation Army was the antithesis of this.

63. I reiterate, this was not charity. The Salvation Army was well reimbursed by the New Zealand taxpayer for every child under its roof.

64. I find it very difficult when I see the Salvation Army campaigns for funds every April. I feel rage and injustice all over again, seeing the Salvation Army relying on this perception of doing good to extract more money from the public.

65. It was this perception that led mothers like mine, with few options and wanting the best for their children, to place their trust in the Salvation Army's "control" (the term used in the contract I have attached).

66. I want people to be aware that they are donating to an organization which has grown wealth on the back of children's suffering.

### **Theft of my possessions**

67. Once a month, on the first Saturday of the month, if the visit was not cancelled, my mother would be allowed to take me out and buy my going out clothes, and shoes. The Grange provided only a standard, plain pinafore in the way of clothing.

68. My mother lived upstairs from a dressmaker, who she had make me lovely dresses. The new clothes my mother bought would usually be confiscated – I would return to the orphanage wearing them, and they would be taken from me.

69. I looked forward so much to those visits with my mother. Major Maisie Harris of the Grange frequently cancelled my visits, on the basis of an alleged misdemeanour, and also after particularly brutal beatings which had left marks on my body.

70. I will address Harris' physical abuse of me further in this statement. But she also abused me psychologically, in the theft of my belongings and in depriving me of my visits with my mother.

71. At times when my visit had been cancelled, I would watch another child, one of the girls Harris favoured, going out the gate in my new clothes and shoes.
72. My dolls were also taken from me. My mother had always given me dolls at Christmas, from an early age. I would spend Christmas Day with my mother and as soon as I returned to the Grange, my doll would be taken from me, and placed in the nursery.
73. The nursery was a room at the Grange filled with beautiful toys – such as rocking horses and dolls - which we children were never allowed to touch. Prospective parents were shown the nursery, which gave an impression of plentifulness, happiness and care.
74. After a while my mother used to take photographs of my dolls, so I would at least have a visual record of the gift. She began having her dressmaker make me two dresses at a time.
75. She also began buying me two dolls at Christmas, knowing that if one was taken from me when I returned to the Grange, I would have another at her home. I attach photographs of me on one visit with my mother, at WITN0117014.
76. Anything I had which was my own, was taken from me by the Salvation Army.
77. The only thing I knew could not be taken, was what was inside my head. School became my refuge, and the school holidays turned into long periods of fear as I had no means of escape from Harris.

78. That is not to say there was no stigma attached to being a student from the Grange – I remember people saying “don’t lend your rubber to a homie” or a “grangie”. Teachers did not intervene as they might today; there was also, I expect, the perception that we were fortunate to be receiving the charity of the Salvation Army.

### **The abuse**

79. Major Maisie Harris was my abuser and sole assailant at the Grange. She was a vicious woman of, I believe, Maori and Chinese descent. I later learned that Harris herself lived at the Grange as a child.

80. She was probably in her mid-40’s, and not very tall. She was of solid build, not overweight. She had black hair which was parted on the side and rolled in the old-fashioned way.

81. The other staff did not abuse me, but neither did they intervene. Some were kind after Harris had assaulted me.

82. I recall Captain [GRO-B] who seemed terrified of Harris, Captain [GRO-B], and a Lieutenant whose name I don’t recall, who I think now, recalling her demeanour, was terrorized by Harris.

83. I believe the other staff were aware of Harris’ brutality. However, they were single women in the 1950s, employed, fed, housed and clothed by the Salvation Army. They had a lot to lose and Harris was their boss and above them in Salvation Army rank.

84. Major Harris abused me physically, psychologically and verbally throughout the years the Salvation Army was responsible for my care, from the ages of seven to 13. She was present through the entire period I was in the Salvation Army's "control".
85. To this day seeing someone wearing a greenstone (as she did) triggers a surge of rage in me. So does seeing people in Salvation Army uniform, which I liken to the Nazi uniform in its appearance.
86. I don't know why Harris targeted me. I am certain I was singled out. I was a 7 year old with blonde plaits. I recall that children with widowed fathers were less stigmatised than children of single mothers. But that does not explain why it was me.
87. I have considered two lines in records made about me, on entry to the Grange – it noted I had been attending a Catholic school, and *"had no time for religion yet seems to know quite a few bible stories"*.
88. I believe I was marked from there on, at the age of seven, the Salvation Army being steeped in its own doctrines. I can still hear the ravings from the Salvation Army pulpit about the scarlet woman of Rome.
89. Harris' abuse was systematic, and occurred several times a week. She used anything at hand to assault me; she broke several brooms across my back.
90. I refused to cry, and she could not break my spirit. I believe this made her more vicious. She would be sweating with the

effort of hitting me and would end her beatings only when she was exhausted by the physical exertion.

91. To this day, nearly 70 years later, I still wake in the night shouting, sweating and soaked in perspiration. Her abuse has impacted on me throughout my life. Memories of trauma will suddenly come back to me, when I least expect them. There has never been an end to my suffering.

92. Throughout the six and a half years I was at the Grange, I was beaten frequently by Harris with a broom, pieces of wood, rope, a razor strop, a brush. She also used her bare hands.

93. Harris would abuse me in areas where other people were not present, for example, in an office away from the main areas such as the kitchen. This, along with her actions in cancelling visits to my mother after I had suffered a particularly brutal beating, tells me she knew what she was doing was wrong.

94. If Harris had time on her hands, she would give me the special treatment, which entailed rubbing along the edge of the razor strop with a half onion before hitting me with it, to make it hurt more.

95. Harris was careful where she assaulted me – always around the buttocks, legs, back or head, but never the legs in summer, so no marks could be seen. She would always check to ensure there was nothing stuffed in my pants to cushion her blows.

96. Harris at times engaged a few of the older children in my abuse. I recall being held down in the bath by the older girls, and Harris turning the cold tap on and over my mouth, trying to make me admit whatever she claimed I had done.

97. Looking back, I was waterboarded at the age of eight.
98. When I was either 8 or 9 years old, Harris ran boiling water over my hands and held them down in the sink. Consequently, both my hands were covered in blisters, which became badly infected and took at least six weeks to heal. I was not taken to a doctor, and the outing with my mother which would have occurred in those six weeks was cancelled.
99. This incident is an example of the sadistic nature of Harris' abuse, and the fact it was kept hidden by the Salvation Army's staff.
100. Harris would occasionally yank me out of bed at 1 or 2am, waking me from a deep sleep and accusing me of talking. I was dragged by my plaits, down the stairs – I can still count them to this day, eleven stairs. There was then a landing and a further thirteen stairs. I remember counting the stairs, I knew if I counted 13 stairs I had reached the bottom and I would survive. I was then made to polish floors through the night, then start my usual chores at 6am.
101. I was constantly on high alert for a physical attack. I believe my adrenaline levels would have been consistently very high as a child.
102. I never knew when an assault could come. One minute I would be standing upright, the next I would be flat on my back with my head spinning and my face, ears and head ringing from the blows. I couldn't hear, but could see Harris leaning over me and her lips moving and covered in spittle, which sprayed onto my face. I would be so stunned by the blow, I could not understand the words she was screaming at me.



103. I recall one occasion when I was about 12, when Harris stood on the stair above me , to give her sufficient height (as I was taller by then) and smacked me with force across the face and head repeatedly. I could not go to school for a week after this particular assault as my face was so swollen.
104. As a result of the physical abuse, I suffered significant hearing loss in both ears. Due to the unpredictability of the abuse, and not knowing when it would occur, I became extremely anxious, which has continued through my life, along with suffering panic attacks.
105. I can honestly state that 90% of the abuse which Harris perpetrated against me was not meted out on account of any actual serious misbehaviour – it was what Harris perceived I was thinking or giving the appearance of intending to do.
106. I did not have to do anything wrong to warrant punishment – I just had to look as though I was going to do something. Even if I kept my eyes down (like Margaret Atwood's handmaidens) I could still be knocked to the ground without warning. I learned to cultivate a blank face.
107. I must have been the only 8 year old to recognize the semantic difference between the words "only" and "just" – if I said I "only" did something, I would be beaten with a long handled brush in the office. If I said I "just" did something, then it was the razor strop with the onion.
108. I stress that this was not just Harris having the occasional bad day or overdoing discipline now and then. It was the calculated and brutal beating of a young child, over and over again.

109. I recall no joy or laughter in the Grange. Harris had her favourites, but I do not remember any lightness.

### **Excessive workload**

110. In addition to the physical abuse, my workload, along with the other children's, was heavy. I would often not be able to complete all my tasks in time and would be deprived meals as a result. Failure to be lined up in the hallway at a specific time meant a child was not allowed into the dining room to eat.
111. We worked in what would today be called "workhouse conditions." As a young child I was put to work in the laundry, using the iron and the mangle, which terrified me as we all heard the rumours of girls catching their hair, or losing an arm.
112. We children cleaned the dormitories, the bathrooms, the floors, the kitchen, the pots and pans, and maintained the garden. We polished shoes. We prepared meals, we peeled potatoes.
113. The forced labour of thirty little girls – along with the regular payments from their parents and the government - kept the Grange in operation. Again, this was no charity.
114. Similarly, I am aware that at Hodderville, a boys home, the children worked the farm growing produce which was then sold.
115. I would be made to polish the dining room floor – a room which seemed huge and daunting to me at the age of eight. After finishing polishing the floor, I then had to do my rostered

housework before running up the road to school. I had no breakfast, and I remember struggling to stay awake to learn.

116. One of the jobs I had was preparing fruit for bottling – well-meaning members of the public would donate fruit to the Grange. Although the cupboards were lined with jars of these preserves which we children had made, we never got to eat them.

### **Lack of adequate provisions**

117. Presumably the people donating food to the Salvation Army thought they were helping feed the children; they were in fact feeding Harris and her staff. We children subsisted on basic, cheap food stretched as far as it could go.
118. The food which the children were given was foul. Morning porridge was watery and thin, and we ate a lot of bread and dripping. One day I happened to look in the storage jar for the rolled oats and it was heaving with weevils; I couldn't face the porridge after that.
119. We had mashed potato with baking soda added to make it go further, and silverbeet got the same treatment until it was a lurid bright green colour. I know this because when rostered on kitchen duties, we children had to add the baking soda. The only meat I remember being given was mutton flaps.
120. If it was your birthday, you would get one egg on the Saturday of that week. I recall being given no other eggs.
121. As stated the Salvation Army was receiving more than five pounds a month per child, not much less than my mother was

making as an adult working two jobs. I believe the bare minimum was spent on the children's food.

122. The only good memory of food I have from my time at the Grange was being able to suck on the stones of the bottled donated peaches.
123. There was a lovely cook, Queenie, who would slip us food from the staff table if we were rostered on kitchen duty. The staff had silver toast racks, little diagonally cut pieces of toast, and pots of jam and marmalade, which we girls would prepare. We had to cut up and roll the staff's butter into delicately presented little pats.
124. When on kitchen duty, we children would gain dangerous excitement from surreptitiously spitting into the pats as we prepared them. We of course were never allowed butter.
125. I recall being at Remuera Intermediate, towards the end of my time at the Grange, and taking the remnants of other children's lunches from the rubbish bins. We girls from the Grange would covet the greaseproof paper the other children's sandwiches were wrapped in. We would take it back to the Grange, sleep on it, and transfer our bread and dripping sandwiches into it the next day, so we could feel like the other children.
126. My mother was a chef. I'd never known hunger until I entered the Grange.

**Lack of basic care**

127. I reiterate that the Salvation Army was paid by our parents and the government to provide for us and failed in its duty to do so.
128. We did not have toothbrushes; we rubbed our teeth with baking soda or salt from a saucer. I suffered extensive gum disease as a teenager.
129. I don't recall having any baths, I remember having to sponge myself before bed and scrubbing my feet on the stone basins in the washroom.
130. There was a small nursery for the very young children, five or six beds, and a huge dormitory upstairs. Once a girl began menstruating, she was moved to another large dormitory downstairs (it had once been the ballroom of this grand home).
131. Captain Powell slept in a room upstairs, with the door closed, but there were no patrols or checks on us at night.
132. Within the upstairs dormitory there was a windowless cupboard room where the linen was stored, and I would frequently be locked in there by Harris, for the night, from 7pm until 6am. The room was dark, airless and terrifying. I was told to sleep on the cold lino floor, but I realized I could use the linen as a makeshift bed, as long as it was tidied away before 6am so Harris did not catch me.
133. Harris also at times made me sleep on the floor in the locked bathroom in the West wing, far from the bedrooms. This was as far away from everyone else as possible, right at the other end of the house past the laundry. That isolation was

particularly terrifying. It was dark, there was no light, and I was alone. I sat there on the floor in the dark sometimes and just cried and cried and cried. Nobody would ever have heard me.

134. There was no toilet in there, and on one occasion I had to relieve myself in the bath, leading to a thrashing from Harris and an extension of my time sleeping on the bathroom floor to another week.

135. The only upside of being locked in the linen room or the bathroom overnight was that I did not have to go into GRO-B-114's bed, where I was repeatedly sexually abused.

### **Sexual abuse**

136. I do not want to go into details of the sexual abuse, but most nights GRO-B-114 (an older girl, by about four years) would make me go into her bed, where she forced me to perform indignities on her, and performed them on me. I did not want to participate but GRO-B-114 would threaten to report me to Harris for some fabricated misdeed, knowing that Harris would punish me severely.

137. I was left with a very deeply ingrained sense of sordidness and sleaziness regarding sex.

138. Harris' favoured girls, of which GRO-B-114 was one, knew that I was without protection and easily silenced by the threat of Harris.

139. As a wolf goes for the weakest deer in the herd, I was separated from the others by Harris' loathing of me.

140. To defend me against Harris – or one of Harris' favoured girls - would be to risk one's own safety. Nobody spoke up. They were all as vulnerable as I was.

### **Abuse of other children**

141. I witnessed abuse of other children in the Salvation Army's keep. I feel great sorrow that when another child beside you was being beaten, you watched with a sense of relief that it wasn't you.
142. I witnessed Harris physically beating one other child, GRO-B-115, with a broom. Because she always beat me out of sight of others, I do not know if other children suffered to the extent I did.
143. I remember Harris coming around the dormitory in the middle of the night pulling off the blankets to check on us. Sometimes little girls would be curled up in a foetal position with their hands between their legs. If Harris caught anyone doing this they would be punished.
144. Because the toilets were locked at night, the children could not only not use the toilet, but the older girls were also prevented from accessing any toilet paper if they had their period. We used to stuff our knickers with toilet paper before going to bed, because wetting the bed meant punishment.
145. One child, GRO-B-116 sometimes wet her bed, and as punishment Harris would make her wear her wet knickers on her head, while the other younger children formed a circle

around her and chanted that she was a stinky, dirty little girl. She would then have to wear the wet sheet wrapped around her, for the whole day, if it was the weekend, including on cold days in winter.

146. On one occasion, just before we moved to Remuera, I recall an unpleasant, smelly and dishevelled old man brought two boxes of plums to donate. He lifted GRO-B-116 up and put his hand underneath her bottom where her knickers were. Her knickers were old and had a large rip in them, as most of our knickers did. I saw his hand go up towards the hole in her knickers. I remember her look of anxiety and her struggling to get down as he kept his hand under her bottom.
147. Nobody intervened to help her. The Salvation Army failed in its duty of care to GRO-B-116.
148. Another child, GRO-B-117, had a bowel problem and would frequently soil her pants. As with the rest of us, GRO-B-117 did not have access to the toilets at night. She would be made to wash her own underwear and sheets, and I remember distinctly Harris leaning over GRO-B-117, threatening to rub her face in it, and then doing exactly that. I was present in the laundry when this occurred, as was Lieutenant GRO-B who did not intervene, and appeared terrified of Harris as well.
149. I never got close to the other girls, though I remember many of their names. In that environment, friendship was risky. I do clearly remember a lot of the other girls. I remember Harris carefully curling the hair of one girl she favoured.
150. This was in contrast to Harris viciously plaiting my hair, angry that my mother did not let her cut it off. She would do this each morning, calling me vain and a pest, and pulling at it so hard



that there would be clumps of hair on the floor by the time she finished.

### **Shaming**

151. Harris would regularly tell us we were dirty and filthy girls. Menstruation became a source of shame and something to hide. We were not given sanitary products, but used ripped up rags, or whatever we could get our hands on.
152. I recall at the age of 12 my mother bought me a bra (the Salvation Army did not provide these), and Harris caught me when I returned to the Grange, looking at myself in the mirror. Harris whacked me across the head, hitting my ear and knocking me to the ground, screaming at me that I was a brazen, wanton hussy.
153. From then on I was always careful to knot the back straps of my bra to flatten any visible sign of breasts. I walked with my shoulders hunched to further hide my shame. We were always made to feel ashamed of our growing bodies.

### **Lack of medical care**

154. In my time at the Grange, six and a half years, I was not once taken to a doctor or a dentist by any Salvation Army staff.
155. With hindsight attending a health appointment would have meant an opportunity to disclose the abuse, or bruises or welts might have been noticed.

156. On one occasion I was out with my mother on a Saturday, and she took me to a doctor (Dr Satyanand, in Ponsonby) as I had a bleeding nose which would not stop.
157. Dr Satyanand treated my nose and I stayed the night with my mother and missed Salvation Army church on Sunday. When I returned to the Grange, Harris beat me with a broom handle. She assaulted me so viciously that she broke this across my back. Harris screamed at me that I had made up the nosebleed to get out of going to church.
158. I remember this incident vividly, as the sensation of crying and trying to breathe with my nose stuffed full of gauze and taped up, was terrifying. I thought I was suffocating and going to die. This was one of the occasions when Harris broke a broom across my back during her assault of me.

#### **Failure to inform guardians**

159. My mother was living on Ponsonby Road, which seemed an immense distance from Herne Bay to a small child. There was a telephone where she lived, but I later learned that Harris would only ever telephone her to tell her my visit with her was cancelled and not to come.
160. I should have had 12 outings a year with my mother, but a great many were cancelled by Harris. Of the other Saturdays when my mother was to have visited at the Grange, on many occasions I am aware Harris told her not to visit.
161. My mother received no other reports as to my care. As attached, one single page comprises the records kept by the Salvation Army over six and a half years of my childhood. It

was updated once a year in December and I query whether that is because government funding was renewed at the start of each year.

162. On three occasions when my mother was in hospital, my uncle telephoned the Grange to ask them to let me know. On none of those occasions was the message ever passed on to me. I sat waiting for her to arrive, and nobody let me know she wasn't coming.

163. I deeply resent the lack of access my mother had to me.

#### **Isolation and religious indoctrination**

164. Apart from school, we children were kept in isolation by the Salvation Army and indoctrinated with their teachings. I liken it to a religious cult.

165. We children would walk as a closely supervised group to and from the Salvation Army Citadel in Newton, or Mayoral Drive.

166. We were required to study religious texts every morning before breakfast. We were indoctrinated in the church teachings which took up almost all day on Sundays. We were subjected to ranting and raving in the church for several hours. Then we would walk back, and Harris would gather us in the dining room and rant and rave at us for another few hours.

167. The teachings were delivered with much shouting and spittle. We were told we were dirty, menstruation was God's curse of women, and that we as women were responsible for the original sin, which led to Adam being cast out. All male sins could be traced back to Eve accepting the apple from the

- serpent. The pain of childbirth was women's punishment from God, for men's carnal knowledge.
168. Powerful messages were constantly given to us as little girls about woman's fault for man's sins. What the Salvation Army preached was a source of great confusion to me.
169. At Christmas , the men from the Air Force base at Hobsonville used to come and visit, which was a great highlight, although the annual gift I was given by them was always taken from me. We would then attend a Christmas party at the RNZAF Station. I was able to keep one of the gifts – a necklace I was given. It had been taken from me by Harris, but my mother asked after it, and it was returned. I will be donating it to the Air Force Museum.
170. I attach, marked WITN0117015 , a photograph of the necklace, along with a photograph which was published in the New Zealand Herald. GRO-A The kindness of the Air Force men brought my smile back at Christmas.
171. I recall the men used to also provide a wonderful spread of food which we were too afraid to eat – fairy bread and cupcakes.
172. Brigadeer Allison (the author of the letters to my mother) visited once from Wellington, swanning through as an esteemed guest of the staff. But I remember no other visitors, apart from parents collecting their children for visits on Saturdays.
173. We children were very isolated from the outside world. That made the Air Force Christmas party such a highlight.

174. Three times I ran away from the Grange. I ran all the way along Jervois Road and Ponsonby Road to find my mother. And three times my mother did not believe me and took me back, where I was thrashed after she left.
175. My own mother wouldn't believe the Salvation Army were capable of abuse. If my own mother did not comprehend it, I thought, why would anyone else.
176. Later, once she did understand, my mother would express her lifelong regret at leaving me in what she termed "that hell-hole."
177. As stated, our opportunities to talk with persons outside of the Salvation Army was extremely limited, and I was very afraid of the punishment which would follow if I spoke up and was not believed. The Salvation Army's image would always be stronger than a child's word.
178. In early 1957, when I was in form 2, I had a very good teacher, Mrs White. She noticed the large bruises all over my arms and legs and the welts on my back, when I was trying out for swimming. She was very suspicious of this.
179. She took every opportunity to keep me after school, under the pretext of cleaning the blackboard, athletics, swimming practice, even recorder practice. She was not teaching me after school. She was keeping me there to keep me safe and I appreciated it. It gave me an extra hour or so before I returned to the Grange. As young as I was, I realised Mrs White was trying to keep me safe.
180. It was the first year that the children of the Grange had attended Remuera Intermediate, and we were treated well

there. The Remuera ladies took us into their hearts. It was at the end of this year that I left the Grange. I believe Harris had come to realise she would not get away with the abuse for much longer.

181. I will never know if Mrs White spoke up about her concerns, but a few months afterwards my mother was told to come and collect me from the orphanage, on the basis they could no longer care for me. Harris had told me many times by now that she would send me back to the gutter where I belonged.
182. Towards the end, Harris had become unwell, and took to her bed for some time, and we children had fallen to Captain Powell to manage. Powell would read us a story at bedtime, which we had never had before. She was the only one who did so.
183. I attach marked WITN0117016 the "discharge" note by Harris, advising of the transfer and stating that I had always been a problem.

#### **My return to my mother**

184. I went back to my mother at the age of 13 ½ .
185. We shared a room in the boarding house where she lived. I felt immense relief. It was the happiest time of my life.
186. However, the abuse of the past six and a half years had left enormous emotional harm.
187. I did not go out. My mother was working two or three jobs, and if not at school I would stay in the room. I attended Auckland

Girls' Grammar. Although I had great mistrust and was always alert to danger, the teachers were kind and encouraging. I excelled at school. It had always been my refuge.

### **Harris**

188. Harris was some time later transferred out of Auckland to work in a Salvation Army nursery in Hamilton.
189. I am aware now, through my work with other survivors of abuse in Salvation Army homes, that geographically relocating abusers was often the action taken by the Salvation Army after complaints were made.
190. To my knowledge, very few abusers were dismissed. They were simply moved on within the Salvation Army.
191. I query what training the Salvation Army staff received before being placed in positions of authority over vulnerable children.
192. As stated, I believe Harris herself had been in the Grange as a child. Perhaps she brought the Dickensian methods which she endured into her own treatment of children. I see a chilling thread of abuse continuing unchecked with these transfers within the Salvation Army.
193. Later, a year or two after I left, I happened to visit the Grange in Remuera. I suppose I felt curiosity. I came in to find Captain Wilma Powell, in the lounge with a warm fire going, and the girls sitting on the floor watching television (a real luxury at that time). The environment felt warm, friendly and family-like. Harris was gone.

**Impact of the abuse**

194. The abuse I suffered while under the control of the Salvation Army has had a severe and lasting impact on me.
195. The hearing loss from the assaults to my head was permanent.
196. I have suffered panic attacks throughout my life, and have been diagnosed with anxiety and depression, and post traumatic stress disorder.
197. I have had a number of breakdowns and depressive episodes throughout my life. I have attempted suicide a number of times, most recently just over a year ago.
198. As a teenager I was frequently suicidal. For most of my life I have been trying to function under a huge shadow. I have never trusted people. That has kept me safe.
199. I have at times sought psychological and psychiatric therapy – I have been advised by various specialists that I need extensive, ongoing therapy for post traumatic stress.
200. I didn't tell others what I had experienced. From the moment I started at Auckland Girls Grammar, I said I was born in Norway. I blanked out my years under the shadow of the Salvation Army. I did not think I would be believed. After all, the public knew Salvation Army as a charitable organization, caring for the disadvantaged.



201. Later, I told my own children I grew up in Norway, and denied the existence of my own childhood and adolescence.
202. Only in 2004 did I feel able to tell my elder daughter what I had endured as a child: her response was "Mum, that explains everything." The impact of the abuse I suffered while in the care of the Salvation Army ripples out into the next generation and the next.
203. We were not cared for by the Salvation Army. We had no sense of family, and no love. If we hurt ourselves, nobody comforted us. We were told we were dirty, sinful little females. We had no identity, no sense of self, or self esteem. The Salvation Army failed in its duty to us "in loco parentis" and failed to provide for us as the government was paying it to do.
204. I have suffered from agoraphobia since I was at the Grange. I struggle immensely with trust.
205. Because everything I had was taken from me by Harris I have a bit of a siege mentality, for example, I still tend to hoard food, or old clothing. When I first returned to live with my mother, I was stealing food and hiding it under my pillow. While at the Grange I became accustomed to going without. Having everything taken from me as a child left me feeling that any possessions, gifts or items I acquired could not be enjoyed or treasured because they were only temporary. The feeling that what I love is under threat of being stolen from me has persisted.
206. I wish to clearly dispel any illusion that I am better off due to my academic achievements. I went on to attain a double Masters degree in German and in English, and am fluent in several languages.

207. In a way the agoraphobia I developed was in part responsible for my academic success at Auckland Girls' Grammar – I would shut myself away and study rather than mix with other people. I was socially and emotionally crippled by my experiences at the Grange. I was a good student who never received the strap at school. Yet I was being beaten regularly at the Grange.
208. Books became my friends, because they could not harm me. I believe my intellectual ability saved me from the path of many of my fellow survivors – those who turned to alcohol and other drugs, and sinking into mental health disintegration.
209. I initially taught after completing my Masters degrees, but after two years of teaching, the effects of the abuse caught up with me and I suffered my first major breakdown. I never returned to teaching in a classroom. My life has continued to be marred with depressive episodes, to the present day.
210. I am furious that because of Harris' abuse, I have not been able to realise my full potential, academically and socially, and emotionally.
211. I stayed in an abusive marriage for 24 years because I had no concept of a normal, healthy family life. I did not have other relationships before I married.
212. Later, when Women's Refuges were more known about, I was far too afraid to leave my husband, lest my children end up in a Salvation Army orphanage.
213. For years I could not tolerate any physical contact, such as shaking hands, or hugging. I could not bear to even hug my

mother, who I may have subconsciously blamed for placing me at the Grange. To this day I am not comfortable with any physical contact with strangers.

214. The only people I can have been able to tolerate physical contact with are my children and my grandchildren. I am proud of the fact that I never laid a finger on my own children growing up.
215. Because of the sexual abuse I suffered, I was never able to have a healthy or well balanced attitude to sex or my sexuality. I felt shame, and that I was only there to be used and that non-consensual, forced sex was the norm.

#### **Attempts to obtain redress from the Salvation Army**

216. In 2003, a group of survivors of abuse in Salvation Army residences was formed (SAAS). With the assistance of a Christchurch law firm, Cameron and Co, about thirty of us commenced a group claim against the Salvation Army.
217. This was the first time I spoke out about the abuse I suffered. I spoke and hoped I would be believed.
218. In the Grange, I was told nobody wanted me, nobody would care for me, except the Salvation Army, and I should feel grateful. I was told if it wasn't for the Salvation Army, I would be dead in the gutter, that I was a nobody and would count for nothing.
219. We (the SAAS group) wanted, in bringing this action, acknowledgement of the abuse and compensation from the

Salvation Army. I could not afford the years of therapy I had been told I would need to reclaim my life and start again. I felt I owed it to myself and my children to do this work, and I wanted the Salvation Army to meet the cost.

220. The process was lengthy. I attach marked WITN0117017 correspondence from the lawyers, which I received from time to time. The correspondence shows that the Salvation Army approached people directly although they knew the lawyers were acting (17<sup>th</sup> June 2004) and refused to discuss the terms of offers they had made to other survivors outside the group (7<sup>th</sup> December 2004).
221. I recall the Salvation Army at the time gave media interviews saying 36 complaints had been received and all but two were settled, yet our group alone was 30 and that was not the case.
222. In addition, I am aware of a number of individuals not in our group who made complaints, and recall one of them saying she was told by the then Territorial Commander that *"if she wanted money from the Salvation Army, she could go and stand on a street corner and rattle a tin like everyone else."*
223. On 30<sup>th</sup> November 2005 as requested by the Salvation Army, I sat down for an interview with Murray Houston (of the Salvation Army). I have the audio recording. Although I was assured I would receive a transcript, I never received this, despite numerous requests from me and the lawyers.
224. I raised with Murray Houston that I had been told that some survivors were paid not to speak to media. He denied this categorically, and in fact returned to the subject at the end of the interview to convince me of this. That contradicted what

I was told by a survivor who had been visited at her home by Mr Houston.

225. In February 2006 I received an offer of settlement. I was given 14 days to accept or decline. By the time I received it in the post, I had only a few days left. I attach marked **WITN0117018** the contract I signed.
226. To me, this was blood money. It was not a great sum but the lawyers advised me to take it. I will never touch it, and it is set aside for my daughters. No money will ever make up for what I suffered under the roof of the Salvation Army.
227. Many of us felt unhappy at how the Salvation Army had dealt with our claim – I refer to the newspaper article attached at **WITN0117019**. This article is dated June 2007, more than three years since our lawyer had approached the Salvation Army.
228. The promised apology was unsatisfactory when it finally came in 2008. A politician intervened on our behalf in October 2007 (attached at **WITN0117020**). A letter followed five months later (**WITN0117021**). It was a Clayton's apology, and I found it self-serving, speaking of a few people overwhelming the good work of the Salvation Army, and wishing me closure.
229. Again, a request for the interview transcript wasn't responded to.
230. The "public apology" which was promised came, I believe, in the form of an announcement at 10pm on a Sunday night on a minor radio station. I, presumably like most of the population, didn't hear it.

231. I am aware that some people did receive transcripts, but those had been redacted by the Salvation Army to delete the names of the abusers and all incidents of abuse. Another man was visited by the Salvation Army representatives and the meeting taped without his being forewarned – he asked for the transcript and when he later received it, there were words in it he did not know.
232. I never got mine at all.
233. The Salvation Army would have been aware that those survivors who had the greatest harm done to them – those who had struggled in education, or resorted to alcohol or other drugs as a result of their abuse - would take what they were offered.
234. I was also told by survivors that they were offered money for things they desperately needed, like whiteware, or installing a disabled shower.
235. I am aware that the Salvation Army at the end of the claims process did not meet the costs which our lawyers understood would be met. I attach marked WITN0117022 an extract from a letter I was sent. I do not attach the complete letter, as it was relating to a confidential matter involving a third party.

## **Redress**

236. I give my testimony to the Commission because I believe that the Salvation Army have never been called to account. I believe the negotiations with the lawyers allowed the Salvation Army to close the book without the world knowing their crimes against children.

237. By settling out of court the Salvation Army managed to shut it down. I am afraid that, with only two of the SAAS group, myself and Jan Lowe, still alive to speak about the abuse of many in the Salvation Army institutions, our voices are yet to be heard. The public is yet to know.
238. My purpose in reporting is to be a voice for all those abused in the Salvation Army's keep, especially for those now deceased, to ensure the abuse in that church institution is exposed, addressed and prevented from happening in the future,

*Public financial accountability*

239. What I want is an in-depth auditing of the Salvation Army's assets. I want the public to be aware of the extent of the Salvation Army's assets in New Zealand.
240. I wish to see public disclosure of the sums paid to the Salvation Army's commissioners and other high ranking members in New Zealand. I want that published in a major newspaper and broadcast on Radio New Zealand, and on TV1 and TV3 news.
241. I seek disclosure of current government funding of Salvation Army ventures. I want that published in a major newspaper and broadcast on Radio New Zealand and on TV1 and TV3 news as well.
242. I also want a public statement as to income and expenditure relating to the Salvation Army's orphanages. I understand the last orphanage closed in 1993. I want the Salvation Army

headquarters to publish details of government payments received for children in its residences.

*Limits to further government financial support*

243. I believe the Salvation Army needs to be recognized as the profitable organisation it is. When I see ads on buses urging people to leave a legacy to the Salvation Army in their will, my blood boils.
244. I wish for the Salvation Army to have to publicly justify any further income received from New Zealand taxpayers. It is not a charity. It is not a church. It does not need government help.
245. This is not a forgivable failure by a few, as the apology letter of 2008 claimed. My story and those of the other SAAS group members speak to a culture of systematic abuse, supported by New Zealand taxpayers for many decades, which needs to be brought to the public's attention.
246. The silence must be shattered. The New Zealand public deserve to know.

*An end to involvement with vulnerable members of society*

247. The thought of the Salvation Army having the responsibility of care for vulnerable members of society such as the elderly, infants and the disabled brings me genuine chills of fear. I see this as an ongoing assured stream of income for the Salvation Army.



248. I want close, open monitoring of all involvement with these vulnerable groups, and transparency around where government monies are spent.

*Financial assistance to all those survivors who may seek it – no questions asked*

249. I want a trust set up with funds paid into it by the Salvation Army, so that survivors can have what they need. They may need therapy, or a wheelchair, dentures, sessions with a psychiatrist or a hearing aid
250. I propose that the trust must be run independently of the Salvation Army, in acknowledgement of the suffering in their care, without questions or challenge, for those who need to access support. I do not want others to have to take the Salvation Army to court to obtain redress.
251. I want the existence of the trust published in a major newspaper and broadcast on Radio New Zealand and on TV1 and TV3 news so that survivors become aware of it.
252. This would be an acknowledgement of the harm and suffering of myself, the 44 other survivors of the SAAS group, and those thousands of little girls behind me.

*Amendment to ACC legislation*

253. I seek that Accident Compensation Act 2001 s21, Schedule 3, is extended to provide assistance for persons who are the survivors of childhood assaults, as I was.

254. For many years I was unable to access therapeutic help through ACC for historic abuse.
255. The sexual abuse at the Grange was only small part of my trauma. But it was not until after a suicide attempt, and subsequent discussions about my abuse history, revealing this aspect of the harm suffered, that ACC would meet the cost of psychological support under schedule 21.

### **Conclusion**

256. The Salvation Army stole everything I had as a child, except my mind, which has kept me alive.
257. I was abused, betrayed, silenced, but not destroyed. I am the exception, rather than the rule. I have not continued the abuse into the next generation, and I have not self destructed.
258. I am hopeful, in giving this statement on behalf of those who cannot speak any more, that others who have remained silent may finally find their voice.
259. I urge them to come forward and seek help. The hard work has been done in opening this matter up to public inquiry.
260. These people need to know they are entitled to live the best life they can.

262. If I can feel I have helped shape the future for survivors of abuse by the Salvation Army, that will bring me great relief. The abuse I suffered has haunted me every day of my life.
263. I am aware that for my SAAS companions, most of whom have now passed, the suffering was lifelong. For some, there was also great suffering in knowing that they – when they grew older and stronger - perpetuated the abuse which they had suffered, against others who were younger and weaker. There will be others who have remained silent. I urge them to shatter the silence as I have.
264. I close this statement by noting Stalin is reported to have said that *"one death is a tragedy, but one million deaths is a statistic"*. I refuse to become a statistic.

### Statement of Truth

265. 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.

GRO-C

Signed

21 - 10 - 2020

Dated