

Witness Name: Neta Bernadette Gilbert (Kerepeti)

Statement No: WITN00427001

Exhibits: WITN00427002 – WITN00427020

Dated: 22/04/2021

ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

WITNESS STATEMENT OF NETA BERNADETTE KEREPETI

I, Neta Bernadette Gilbert (Kerepeti), will say as follows:

Introduction

1. My name is Neta Gilbert, I am grateful for this opportunity and for the time and space to share my story and while I intend to maintain focus on the period during the 1970s in which I was a ward of the state I'm cognisant that this process may take on a life of its own and take me places I've not visited in a long time.
2. I appreciate the Commission will be making recommendations to the government and faith-based institutions and possibly looking at changes to law, to policy, rules and regulations, to ensure that future ways of working help better respond to those who need it most, being those who suffered abuse and neglect inside and outside state care. I hope what I share today contributes to and helps inform the investigation carried out by the Commission.
3. In sharing my experiences there is no impartiality, this is a very personal story, so it will have personal bends. I don't think I talk about these incidents in isolation from

other parts of my life. I hope that I have been able to weave together some sense of the depth and impact of abuse that occurred, and that my own experiences can be validated through this process.

4. The exercise of pulling memories together has not been inconsequential. I have tried to keep journals and have often focused my writings to provide my children with information on their mother. These efforts fall short.
5. To help me get through the exercise of recalling memories and thoughts I rely on the values of aroha (love and compassion), pono (honesty and truth), tika (what is just and fair), and whanau (family connectedness). These have helped to sustain me in my journey. Although these values have common use in Māori settings, they help to both influence my thinking and to challenge my perceptions. I hope they have sharpened my focus, as they have certainly provided comfort during difficult times.

Whānau and whakapapa – where I come from

6. In the beginning, I was born on the [GRO-B] in 1961 to Cecelia Mary Theresa Taylor and Rawiri Pene Kerepeti at Whangārei. When I came along my mother had already delivered my nine older siblings, four from her first marriage and five more and me from her second marriage. I am the youngest of ten children.
7. My whānau name is Kerepeti or Gilbert. I am of Te Rarawa, Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Wai, and Ngāti Mutunga descent. My mother was from Te Waiariki hapū in Panguru, in the Hokianga. Her father was a [GRO-B] [GRO-B] and her mother was a [GRO-B]. A maternal tipuna, [GRO-B], connects me to Taranaki iwi Ngāti Mutunga. Another of my maternal tipuna, [GRO-B] confirms kinship ties to Panguru. My maternal grandfather, [GRO-B] who I mentioned earlier, consolidates my kinship

ties to the many Hokianga hapū, predominantly Te Waiariki, Kai Tūtai, Ngāti Manawa, Ngāti Korokoro and Ngāi Tūpoto.

8. My father Rawiri Pene Kerepeti, more commonly known as Bill, connects me to the hapū of Te Waiariki, Ngāti Korora and Ngāti Taka, and it's through those hapū that we connect to Ngunguru rohe, a place we as a whānau and now my children take their children back to. Whangārei and Ngunguru are home to me.

Early life in Ngunguru

9. I grew up out at Ngunguru which is about 25km outside Whangārei on the east coast. My whole whānau grew up here, my aunties, uncles and all my cousins. It was isolated because our whenua is on a peninsula, so there is no power and there is limited access. Before my mother passed away my father built a home for us in Whangārei where we moved to, but Ngunguru would continue to be a significant place in my/our lives to present day. There were times when we would go to the Hokianga to reconnect with whānau from my mother's people, but having lost my mother aged six, it would be fair to say that I was mostly raised by my father's people.
10. It's important to me to mention that my mother was known as a tohunga rongoā and she was also a hunter-gatherer. I've already mentioned that she died when I six years old, and this has certainly been a life lesson I'd feel the impact of for some years. After my mother passed away my father as a widower singlehandedly raised me during my earlier adolescent years. Sometimes I had help from my older siblings, mostly my sisters, and now and again with help from a couple of neighbouring pākeha families.

11. Other caregivers included my father's younger brother my uncle GRO-B, and his wife my aunty GRO-B they became like a second set of parents to me. Later though, it was the state and the then Department of Social Welfare, some family homes and number of state foster parents.
12. Growing up in Ngunguru was rich with culture. There was a real sense of community there with all my whānau living in the area. Te ao Māori and te reo were a big part of my upbringing. It was the language the old people would speak to us in; it was all around us. We would fish, hunt and live off the land. Through these experiences we learnt a lot from our old people, we learnt rongoā Māori and learnt to understand the world around us through a Māori lens, Māori eyes.
13. My father was a staunch protector of the hapū and its whenua, and despite the failings of my parents, they gifted me their shared Te Waiarikitanga and their interests in whenua Māori, both in Panguru and at Ngunguru. I appreciate now what that encompasses.

Schooling

14. I might have started school at Tikipunga Primary, my older siblings went to school at Ngunguru, but I spent more time attending at Ngunguru school, due to my father choosing to spend less time at our house in Whangārei. After my mother's death we spent more days, weeks, and sometimes months at our Kerepeti homestead. That often meant that regardless of the time of day, just simply at my father's will, he'd pack us up and we'd be off to catch the mail car, the milk truck or the bus to Ngunguru.
15. Ngunguru really was my safe place because it provided freedom, space, and time at the beach, time with my cousins, riding horses, diving, sunbathing. Being out at

Ngunguru all the time meant I was having a bit of a hard time explaining my absence to my teachers at Tikipunga Primary School and I don't ever recall my father ever coming to the school to explain my whereabouts, so it'd be left to me or my older sisters.

16. I should mention that a few months straight after my mother's burial I was sent to Ngāruawāhia to live with my aunty GRO-B my GRO-B my mother's younger sister. It was with the intention to be a long-term plan, but unfortunately my father missed me, and at the next set of school holidays he brought me home to Whangārei. I have fond memories of my short stay with aunty GRO-B and my uncle GRO-B and I've got good but hazy memories of my time at school there.

Early experiences of abuse

17. My father was many great things, but he was an alcoholic and an abuser. My earliest memory of childhood sexual abuse was between eight and eleven years old. Despite all that I continued to love him, and I still do, and I've since found it in my heart to forgive him. I've forgiven him and I'm okay with that.
18. There is a very vivid memory of my oldest sister standing on the front porch at number GRO-C, Whangārei. My father was standing, towering over her. She's crying and he's demanding things from her. Then there's me and my middle sister, standing in our shortie pyjamas, out on the footpath near the front of our house, and we're cold and it's dark. Dad won't let us in unless my sister agrees to let him bed her, so I start crying and yelling at her to hurry up because I'm cold and my other sister is trying to comfort me.
19. Of course, when you're eight, nine, ten, or eleven, your behaviour is bound to change when things at home start changing. So, things get too much for my sisters

and they leave home at twelve and thirteen, respectively. They don't come back for several years. Only one of those two sisters is still alive, and she's been living in Australia for the last forty years. With my sisters gone, my father then turns his attention to me.

Fortunately, before my sister's passing, we were able to talk about our childhood abuse and to address and resolve some issues that had impacted our relationships as children, as adolescents and as young women.

Reflections on my father

20. I believe my father was likely abused himself, although in what form, I don't know.

My father and his brother lived together growing up. Their mother, my grandmother, was a lovely woman I'm told. She was young, shy, and gentle. My grandfather was the opposite, a hard man, and he was hard on his sons I believe. That hardness manifested differently in both those sons. My father became an abuser, a sexual predator; my uncle became an chronic alcoholic.

Interactions with the state

21. I believe I was made a ward of the state at age twelve somewhere after my return from Ngāruawāhia to Whangārei. My siblings had all left home by this point. I think truancy was the main reason for coming to the attention of the social welfare department. Spending so much time out at Ngunguru and not attending school in Whangārei hadn't helped the situation. My records show that I first came to the attention of the authorities in March 1973 where I was found unlawfully on a premises **[WITN0427002]**.

22. My older sister had a child before she was thirteen. This made life at home difficult but the whānau would come together to look after my nephew. I would stay home from school to look after him. I would have been about eight or nine when this happened. It was a real struggle. Anyway, I remember Ms Gilbertson, a social worker, who would come and visit our home.
23. She started looking for a family to foster my nephew because I needed to go to school and my father was a single elderly man, it wasn't in her eyes an appropriate or sustainable situation. Ms Gilbertson eventually found a Pākeha lady and her Māori husband to look after my nephew, and so he went into care. The husband was in fact a relation on my mother's side from whānau in Panguru. I don't remember Ms Gilbertson being involved with our whānau for too long, she was only there to find my nephew a new family to care for him. These were my early interactions with the social welfare department but nothing to do with me directly. They were aware of me because they knew I wasn't attending school as I should have.
24. I started to realise the abuse I was suffering wasn't right. It started affecting me in different ways, I started acting out by intermediate school. I was becoming rebellious, I was a bully, I didn't want to be at school. I started wagging school and smoking pot. Truancy was a big part of me getting mixed up with the authorities.
25. I am aware that my records show I was suspended from Whangārei Intermediate School in November 1974 for "increasingly aggressive, belligerent, obstructive, defiant' behaviour and for 'drifting in and out of class" **[WITN0427003]**.
26. A child psychologist report from the Department of Education notes my troubled behaviour and lack of adequate control and guidance at home **[WITN0427004]**.

27. I'd often be picked up by the Police at the Entertainment Centre, a games arcade in downtown Whangarei. I was picked up by Constable and Youth Aid Officer Mr Jim Stoddard. He was a good man. He would pick me up, take me home and tell my father I couldn't be roaming the streets and missing school. After he'd leave, my father would give me a hiding, or at least try to.

Abuse by police officer

28. My father would beat me for getting into trouble, so I would run away, and the cycle would continue. There was one occasion where I was picked up by another policeman. Instead of taking me home he took me to Tikipunga Falls in Whangārei. When we got there, he parked up, put his hand on my lap and said that if I talked about what was happening no one would believe me because I was a naughty child and had a reputation for being wayward, who would believe me over a police officer. He was a Sergeant with the Whangārei Police.

29. A distinct memory from this encounter, was he laid me down on bracken grass, which was hard and spikey. He attempted to rape me, and after it was over, he cleaned himself up and took me home. I was only twelve.

30. I saw him again some years later when my sister passed away. I recognised his face at my sister's tangi at GRO-B in Whangārei. As we were going through the process of hariru and acknowledging family he began to speak to me. He thought I was my other sister but when I told him who I was, he went bright red, and I believe he realised I was the girl he had abused.

31. My sister had worked as a counsellor at Presbyterian Support Services, and I had no idea that they had been working there together. I thought about making a scene and calling him out in front of everyone else, but I couldn't do that to my brother in-

law who was grieving. But I would always remember that he worked as a counsellor at Presbyterian Support Services, and he worked with young people. I can't remember his name. He was friendlier than Jim Stoddard the nice police officer, however this guy's behaviour was different, he formed relationships with people and then abused them. I was happy to get into the car with him because he was a friendly guy. I wasn't aware at all that he'd turn out to be an abuser.

Court appearance

32. I am aware my case reports show I appeared before the Children's Court on two occasions in 1974 for unlawfully taking a bicycle [WITN0427005] and wilful damage. I was to remain in the custody of my father and placed into supervision of social welfare during the period of adjournment.
33. My father was summoned to appear in Court for what I believed was my truancy from school, and certainly for not having proper care and control over my behaviour. This seemed to be enough for the Court to make me a ward of the state and I was placed into the care of the Director-General. My father left the Court that day without me and I was taken to the Department of Social Welfare office in Whangārei.
34. There are three names I remember from the Department of Social Welfare, Ms Feeney, Anette Keating and Warwick Jory. Ms Feeney was horrible; she was the person who was initially assigned to me and was supposed to look after me. After Court I was placed into a room, I was left all alone, no one to look after me. I had no idea what was going on and I remember her being absolutely awful towards me. She would always speak down to me and use derogatory language. She would refer to me as "it". All I knew was my father had gone and I had to stay there for several hours, I had no food, no water and I had to plead to go to the toilet.

Dundas Road Family Home

35. I was placed into a family home at Dundas Road in Whangārei. I remember they were a pākeha couple; she was a heavy smoker. Their daughter also lived in the home with us, as she was still in High School. The couple's two older sons lived away from their parents and sister, but came to the family home on a number of occasions, often staying for a night or two, or over a weekend,
36. There were about six or seven state welfare kids living in the home, both boys and girls. I remember two of the boys there that I got on well with - GRO-B and GRO-B
37. The mother would always treat us differently, possibly because we were Māori. We were only given water or cocoa to drink whereas the others would be given Horlicks and Milo. Whenever new people would come into the house, we always had to double bunk but the pākeha girl GRO-B-1 would always have a room to herself.
38. They also kept a room for their two sons who were working in the far North but as I've already mentioned, they'd come home to visit their parents and sister from time to time. They might have been in their early 20s. The father was an abuser and so was the oldest son GRO-B-2. The oldest son would try to have a go at me and then he'd have a go at a couple of other girls in the home.
39. I remember this one time I had to go under the house to do some chores, some laundry, and he was waiting down there for me; he tried to grab and touch me. I do remember him not being that much bigger than me, so I could at times tell him to go away and he would. But knowing he was abusive and doing the things he was doing made living there an awful experience. GRO-B-1 was the older pakeha girl in the home. She was in college, and she was in love with him, with GRO-B-2. He would

always say if I can't have you then I'll have [GRO-B-1] and he would just go for her. I can't remember anything more.

40. The father was abusive in more than just a sexual way. He'd just lash out and smack you or any of the kids, or he'd throw a coffee mug across the kitchen, and might also send you to bed without any kai. So, I gravitated towards some of the other kids in the home, the younger ones that I wanted to protect and some older or tougher-looking ones that I wanted to buddy up to.

41. It just became a horrible and unsafe place to be. I remember thinking why was I removed from my home for truancy and then placed into care with evil people who were abusive. How could the Social Welfare Department not know that these people were abusive, and what made them think that putting me with people like that would make my situation any better? Despite the things my father had done to me I still loved him, and I believe he loved me, and I felt safer being at home with him than I did being with this family. I couldn't make sense of the situation, I just wanted to go home at this point.

42. I also spent some time in another family home in Onerahi. They were a lovely couple, he was pākehā and she was Māori. They were quite a religious family. I also had time with private foster families, including a Cuban/Jamaican couple and their family, Mr and Mrs [GRO-B-3]. They had two sons and a daughter, all who were a few years older than me. They were good people, but culturally, we were miles apart. We had absolutely nothing in common. It wasn't an option for me to go where I wanted to or to live with whānau, Social Welfare wouldn't allow me any input into what I might want and where I'd like to go. I am aware my files show that I raised with my social worker that I was no longer happy living with the [GRO-B-3] in Parua Bay and no action was taken [WITN0427006].

Abuse by doctor

43. While I was at Dundas Road, I developed a cyst on my upper right thigh. I got taken to Whangārei Hospital. Rather than cut or treat it with antibiotics at the time, I don't know why but the treatment prescribed was to swim in a hot pool to see if that would help the swelling go down. It just kept growing and growing and growing, to the point where when I finally was admitted to hospital. It was raised from the top of my knee up to my inner thigh and it was sort of angry and red and purple.
44. The doctor I saw, when he examined me, he didn't take any notice of my thigh, he looked straight at my vagina. He got me to bend over with no pants or clothes on in front of him and then he got me to lay down on the bed with my feet together and my legs apart. He didn't do a damn thing about the cyst on my leg.
45. I was unwell and I ended up on the ward. They tried to make it go down with lots of antibiotics. They were jabbing me in the side of the leg, the thigh, and that was just horrible because it was so painful. Eventually they had to put me under a general anaesthetic and take me into theatre and cut it out. Then I had some time on the ward again until I healed. But I won't forget that doctor. It was either GRO-B-3 with double "l" or one "l."
46. You want to trust that what someone's doing to you, they're doing what's right. You really want to believe that. When I had shared this once or twice with others as an adult, I've been asked, "Why didn't you say something? Why didn't you?". Because the child that I was wanted to believe that the adults who had already done some terrible stuff, they were gone now, and I didn't have to worry about them anymore. But there were other adults doing terrible stuff, and there was no advocate for me.

Absconding from Dundas Family Home

47. I hated Dundas Road Family Home so much that I ran away. I was eventually found at the ports in Whangārei and taken back but I continued to run away as I couldn't stand to be there. My files show on 25 September 1975 I appeared in the Children and Young Persons Court on a complaint under section 27 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1975 where it was recommended that I be placed into the care of the Director-General [WITN042707]. On 30 September 1975, an order was made to place me into custody of the Department of Social Welfare at Whangārei [WITN0427008].

48. Social Worker Annette Keating and a Police Officer eventually took me to Bollard Avenue Girls Home in Avondale. Annette Keating was an awful person, awful to me; she would also speak to me in a derogatory way. It was difficult being in an environment without any advocacy support.

Bollard school for girls

49. On 25 November 1975 I was placed under the guardianship of the Director-General [WITN04270009]. On the same day I was admitted to Bollard School in Avondale for increasingly uncontrollable behaviour, truancy and absconding from school, I was thirteen years old [WITN04270010]. Other girls at the home were thirteen or fourteen. Going to Bollard Girls School was all new for me. There was no one there to support me or to let me know what was going on. I remember all these people just speaking about me and not to me. Again, being in a situation like this without an advocate was distressing.

Medical checks by doctor

50. On entry to Bollard I was made to shower naked. I had to go and see a doctor for a venereal disease test. There was no nurse, only a male doctor. I had no idea what a venereal disease was. I had to undertake a pregnancy test. He would get me to stand up and bend over in front of him, and then to lay naked on the bed with my legs apart and feet in stirrups. I was fully exposed to him, there was no female present. To this day I don't know why he was doing this, it just felt abusive at the age of thirteen. This was all explained to me as part of an STD and pregnancy test. We came to refer to him as Dr Death. He was rough, raw and had no regard for our care or wellbeing.

Secure

51. After that, I was taken to secure and put into a cell. This was the first time I found out about Avondale spiders. The secure units were covered with spiders. To make matters worse the doors were locked. I was told I needed to be there for a week. It's like a jail, there was a bed and a little toilet. No one bothered to come and check on me other than to put food through the sliding door. I was eventually taken out about five days after being in secure. It was frightening being in that cell, and you can't yell or call out, as all that signals to the staff is that you're a baby, you're being hysterical which means you need to stay in secure for longer until you settle down.

52. Before I was introduced to the general wings, I was told there are house mothers, social workers, cooks. The staff make up at Bollard was mostly pākehā, the few Māori and Pacific people that worked there worked in the kitchen, either in cooking or cleaning jobs. They were all quite nice to me, but the admission process wasn't a nice process.

Daily life at Bollard

53. There was a school at Bollard, we would play a lot of sports like badminton. It was enjoyable. What I do remember were all the different jobs. We all had jobs to do. Chores were a big part of daily life there. I would usually do the laundry.
54. Most of the girls were Māori, at least three quarters. There were some Pacific girls but mostly Māori. There was no real acknowledgment of Māori culture there.

Abuse by staff at Bollard

55. The principal was Aidan McLean, he was short, thin and smarmy. If you behaved yourself, you got the privilege of cleaning his house. He would come around and hand pick who would get to clean his house. One day I got chosen to clean his house. I was raped by him at his home.
56. I remember waking up one morning with bad stomach cramps, I was turning in my bed and feeling a little wet. I was thirteen. I thought I was having a period. The sheets were covered in blood. I was cramping heavily. I remember pulling my sheets off and sneaking off to the laundry to try and clean them up. I woke up my friend [GRO-B-6] and asked if she could help me. She went to tell Miss Brown a house mother what was happening. I was told to run a bath. I got into the bath and all these blood clots came out and were floating in the bath. My friend [GRO-B-6] was there trying to comfort me. I didn't know that I was miscarrying because I'd never had a period like this before. The house mother just told me to wait for the doctor.
57. During the period surrounding this incident, the only experience (of intercourse) I'd had was when I had been at the principal's house to clean it. [GRO-B-6] and I went back to the office and spoke to Miss Brown, I told her that I thought I'd just had a miscarriage. She didn't believe me, she thought I was just having a heavy period. I'd been at Bollard for about a year by this time (give or take), and I had been

cleaning the principal's house for a couple of months. It became a secret that some of us shared. He would just choose who he wanted to clean his house.

58. I did say that I needed to see the doctor, but I wasn't permitted to see the doctor because the doctor wasn't scheduled to come for another couple of days. It was about four or five days later before the doctor saw me. When I explained what I think had happened to me, I was dismissed, it was too late. I wasn't bleeding any more. So, I was told I was ok. I'm certain that I miscarried while I was there.

59. I asked if it could be noted in my notes and I remember asking if I could see what was written about me and I wasn't allowed to do that. My files show that I had problems with my menstruation cycle, and it is the opinion of doctors that I suffered a miscarriage while in Bollard **[WITN004270011]**.

60. I remember GRO-B
-6 who was deaf, causing a scene and getting so angry at the lack of care being shown towards me, that she punched a window. She got taken to secure for that. She couldn't express herself because she was deaf; I understood her mutterings and also through signing.

61. I don't know if any of the other staff members knew what was going on. He (the Principal) left during my time there and another man took over. He was lovely. He was the acting Principal, and he was lovely. He behaved like a principal should, like a professional. He behaved like I'd expect a professional teacher at all girls' home to behave. I don't think anything happened to Mr McLean.

62. I had another experience at Bollard Girls Home with a lesbian housemaster. She took a shine to me because she was trying to foster a relationship with me while in there. I remember her getting quite close to me and in my personal space while I was there. She never physically did anything to me, but I could always feel her

giving me attention but also there being some tension between us. She even contacted me after I'd been released from care.

Absconding from Bollard

63. Bollard became too much for me. I had not seen my family, I had not heard from my dad, I had not been told whether they had tried to contact me or not. A real shift happened for me after I was raped by the principal. I became even angrier, bolshier, more vocal and tougher. So, I ran away. About four of us absconded and two of us managed to evade the police, we had everyone looking for us. I ran away with a girl called [GRO-B] (we called her [GRO-B]. The [GRO-B] whanau are related to me, they are from the north, but she was an Auckland girl. We went to different homes of people she knew. We stayed out for some time, several weeks, but eventually we were caught in December 1976 [WITN04270012]. We were taken back to Bollard and there was the threat of having us, or one of us, being taken to Weymouth and the other to remain and stay at Bollard. I note my files show that my admission to Weymouth was declined [WITN04270013]. But we both ended up staying at Bollard, I was admitted back to Bollard in January 1977 [WITN04270014].

64. You go through the same process on return to Bollard, down into secure, stay there for a week, if you behave yourself, you could get released. I got out a bit earlier because of the lesbian housemother, who fancied me, and she let me out, after a few days. I didn't have to stay down there the whole week.

65. So, I was at Bollard for a bit longer, until I was fourteen. Then I ran away again and this time I stayed away. I went down to Auckland and hitch-hiked down to Wellington. I was living on the run for about two years from the age of fourteen to

sixteen until I decided to return to Whangārei. A file note from the Social Welfare Department shows that I had been missing since November 1976, although I was located at various intervals in Wellington, Dargaville and Onehunga **[WITN04270015]**.

66. Reflecting back on Whangārei and the time I was placed with the Cuban/Jamaican family; they were lovely, but he was he was a heavy drinker too. I took off from there and went to Dargaville. I didn't want to be in any welfare home, have any social worker, get anywhere near anybody that might take me back to Bollard, so I did whatever I had to, to evade being caught by the police.

67. I continued running away from social services while back in Whangārei. I am aware a file note from the Social Welfare Department shows that I was found in Dargaville and taken back to Whangārei **[WITN04270016]**.

68. At sixteen I was wandering around Whangārei and decided not to hide anymore. I ended up going down on the wharves and on ships, I made some friends there. I got involved into substance abuse and was trying to evade the police. My Children and Young Persons report confirms this activity **[WITN04270017]**.

69. On 26 March 1978 I gave birth to my first child, I was sixteen years old **[WITN04270018]**. A note from a social worker shows my daughter was being cared for by my sister Diane who was interested in caring for her on a more permanent basis **[WITN0427019]**.

Experiences with the department of social welfare

70. When I ended up back in Whangārei I remember running into Miss Feeney and Miss Keating and I remember Warwick Jory being appointed my social worker.

While I was on the run, effectively, Miss Feeney just wanted to wipe her hands of me. But they invited me into the office, and they appointed Warwick Jory as my social worker.

71. While I was at the social welfare office, I remember Miss Feeney coming into the interview room, I had a love bite or a couple of love bites on my neck. I'd probably been off with some other street kid, because I'd been living on the street and living rough for a time. I remember her looking at me and not talking to me, but she said to Warwick, "She disgusts me, she's absolutely disgusting. Look at her".

72. One of the things that I've carried with me to this day, is that I pride myself on my personal hygiene. It was hurtful to me when someone looks at you like that and tells you that you're disgusting.

73. Warwick Jory was a wonderful man; he would ask me how I was. He would ask me if I wanted anything to eat or drink, if I knew where the toilets were, he would ask me what I wanted to be when I grew up. He seemed genuinely interested in my responses, even though at times I just said "I don't know" he was genuinely interested.

74. He wanted to talk about a whole lot of other things "Where have you been all this time, why did you run away, who have you been with?". I appreciated that. He has since passed away, but he has had a lasting impact on me.

75. I told Warwick about the abuse at home, and I started to tell him about my encounters and my experiences down at Bollard. There are chunks that I'm missing, these chunks include short stays, sometimes maybe a maximum of a few months at ordinary family homes, two welfare homes, where there's a smaller number of both male and female kids and a set of foster parents that look after the

group family home. Quite different to Bollard. And then also some time spent with an individual family at a foster home.

76. I was supposed to see Warwick Jory one day for some assessments to see how I was progressing. He didn't turn up and I didn't hear from him. My foster parents called the Social Welfare Department, and they eventually came up to the home, but it was Annette Keating not Warwick who was appointed to me. She said he was in hospital. I remember feeling gutted because she was the one that took me down to Bollard and I didn't like her.

Foster Home

77. She wanted to transition me to a private foster home. So, she did, and that foster family were nice. I say nice, and I mean it with absolute respect, there's still something in people's behaviour that lets you know that there's something wrong with you and they're good people because they're helping you. As lovely as they were, there was something in their behaviour that certainly didn't let me forget that they were doing me a favour, a service. So, in terms of foster family, at times there was a real absence of fostering. It's not easy caring for someone else's child. And I know that because I've done it myself. I ran away from that foster family.

Impact of abuse

78. At thirteen my sister had her first baby, who is only a few years younger than me. My next sister was fifteen. So, that's how lives can be impacted by abuse. I'm talking about abuse at the hands of my father, but worse was still to come, and that was the abuse I suffered at the hands of so-called safe homes, welfare homes, girls homes, by the very people paid to take care of you, but they don't, they abuse more

fiercely, more violently, and it's this abuse which takes a whole lot of working through.

79. The abuse that occurred in family homes and in Bollard and at the hospital with the doctor is compounding. I eventually went back to Whangārei where I was discharged from the care of social welfare in October 1978, I was sixteen years old **[WITN04270020]**.

80. I had trust issues with people because of the abuse I suffered. One of the things I learned from sexual abuse, whether it be a family member or a non-family member, is that if I do something I'll get something, what it taught me was manipulation, how to manipulate people. One of the things it taught me was how to be a good liar, how to be a good manipulator and how to be an abuser. There have been times in my adult life where I've had to really check myself. It taught me that I can get what I want or what I need.

81. I've learnt how to make up some stories, to make it believable enough that people are satisfied with the response. Well, I have been fortunate to meet some other good people, some other Warwick Jory's, male and female too, including reconnecting with my sister, the one that I lost.

82. I managed to get on a pathway towards counselling and took advantage of that counselling and as many sessions as I could get. And then what I realised was that after a time that counsellor could only take me so far. You know, then I'd go and see someone else.

83. I only went to them for as long as I felt they were useful to me. You asked how did this impact on my later life and that? One of the first counsellors I saw was a male, a Canadian guy, he was good looking, he was always well turned out and he saw me in a private consultation space attached to his home. After a time talking with

him, I remember sitting there and thinking, this is the person I mentioned earlier that must be kept in check, I am the person that must be kept in check. These are just some of the things that I learned from the abuse.

84. I remember sitting there thinking, if I wanted to, I could have my way with you because I'd know how to get my way around you. And I could probably make you want me, desire me, and like me, and leave your wife for me. So, it what abuse taught me was that I could use sex to get what I want. That's the kind of manipulation, that's the depth of deceit, lying, and manipulation it has taught me.

85. I didn't do that with the counsellor but knowing that I could, I decided he had taken me as far as he could, and I needed to see someone else. So, I went to see a Māori woman who I became very close to. My whānau know her as Auntie Miriama Kahu. She was born and bred in Kaikōura and she passed away several years ago, but she became a very dear friend, much like and as close as an older sister.

86. She took me to places I really didn't want to go. One of those places that she took me, was to confront the doubt that I had from the sexual abuse as a child. It doesn't matter how many times the male counsellor or anybody else that I'd seen said, "It wasn't your fault, it wasn't your fault", there's still this little seed of doubt. It took me until adulthood to understand the physiology of the body because that seed of doubt grew from the sexual abuse from my father, the sexual abuse at the hands of Mr McLean and the doctors I'd seen. To acknowledge that my father made me feel incredibly worthless, that somehow you are telling me it was not my fault, you are telling me that I did not like it, I had to try and work to change the tapes playing, to try and change the tapes that I have recorded all those years.

87. I know that my body was only responding as a body does. So, my friend from Kaikōura did immense and very intense work with me. There has been a whole lot

of peeling back of layers and in today's process there is a continuation of that, except I have not shared it or been willing to share it more widely, like with the Commission, only with a trusted few, and the odd counsellor, that is all.

Impact on whānau

88. I had the conversation with my sister before she died. She thought she was some evil, disgusting, horrible person for leaving me with our father to become his next victim. We shared in each other's hurt, we shared our stories, we realised that we sabotaged our own relationships, which might well have started out quite healthy.

89. I've learned this is short-lived and shallow. I've wanted and enjoyed new relationships that are more meaningful and built on other values and principles. It's one thing to say that I've forgiven my father, but I haven't forgiven the people that I mention today. Several, like Miss Feeney, she has likely passed, Annette Keating, I don't know where she is, but she was working in adoptions in MSD or Child, Youth and Family. The police officer in Whangārei, Jim Stoddard I think that he's since passed away, he was the decent youth aid officer. The other copper who was a Sergeant and the last I knew was at Presbyterian Support Services. I could find out his name, I might do that. The doctor in Whangarei and Aiden McLean at Bollard.

Racism while in care

90. Racism was huge back then. Looking at what's happening in the States with Black Lives Matter, it makes me think about how I've been perceived by others while in care. I think back to the time where she (the social worker) spoke the way she did about me, calling me disgusting right in front of my face. You can't help but think there is underlying racism being exhibited there because of me being Māori. She

was so disgusted by what she saw. So, do I think there was racism absolutely. The pākeha girl that was at the Dundas Road family home, she got to have Horlicks. It might not mean a lot to anybody else but it did to me at the time.

91. I mean I did not have family with me at the time but that wasn't thought about as being something important. I'm aware I've had social work training and I've shared that, you know, my backgrounds in social work. So, on one of the key documents that I still think serves the role of social work well today is Puao-te-Ata-tu. And it's not just a resource for Māori. And of course, Puao-te-Ata-tu is underpinned by the Treaty.

Redress

92. I sought redress several years ago. I did find it useful. I had a friend who came to visit and told me about this redress process. She said I needed to visit my doctor, and to ask for a referral to a counsellor and they would connect me to ACC. At the start of this process all I saw was \$10,000, but I soon realised no amount of money was ever going to give my life back. It was never going to get me back to before the abuse started.

93. So, I went through the ACC process, which I felt was slightly flawed. I started the process of counselling. I was only offered four paid sessions and these sessions only assessed whether you'd qualify for a pay-out for the sexual abuse. It did not do anything to address the harm that it had caused me. I felt like they were assessing to fix my back not for suffering sexual abuse. ACC sent me to the Canadian man through the sensitive claims process, I was never given the option of a Māori counsellor. I ended up going back to see my kuia in Kaikōura. This was far more effective than any other service I've been to.

94. In saying that, I do intend to go through the historic claims process through the Ministry of Social Development.

95. There are times you feel like I've dealt with that, that's bloody great, it feels good and then something else will pop up. And then I can say hand on heart when I would trace the whakapapa of that issue, leading back to the abuse in my early years, and the abuse and rape in care.

96. I do intend to go through the historic claims process. I am aware that it is a slow process, and that disappoints me hugely.

Personal insights and recommendations for change

97. Both my father and I should have had an advocate at the Court to begin with. My father wouldn't have known what was going on and what impact this would be having on his child and whānau. There should have been an advocate there to support us both.

98. From the start of the Court process, the police were there to deliver me, pick me up and take me away. The social worker was there to tick off a couple of boxes, it was all process driven, there was no one there to explain to me what was going to happen. They could have been clear about where the support begins and ends for the family. The Social Welfare Department practices were not whānau centric they were more focused on working through the process and putting me into the system.

99. Why didn't anyone stay with me when I'd to go and see Dr Death for the sexual diseases check? Today I always make sure I'm with my daughters when they go to family planning even with all the privacy and care around patients today. Those

experiences stay with me. I know now these processes have certainly changed; they didn't exist then or if they did, they weren't deployed.

100. This would have been useful as a service at the time It would have also been useful to have continuity of the people involved. By this time, I had had several social workers. Even prior to that, if there were any concerns about my absenteeism, before wrenching me from the only home I knew, it might have been helpful to have had someone come and speak with me and ask, why wasn't I going to school. People like Warwick Jory did advocate for me and were genuinely interested in my wellbeing. We remained good friends and he became my support person when I was completing my studies as a social worker.

System changes

101. There is still a long way to go. Not everybody is in favour of Oranga Tamariki. Do I trust the state to take care of my mokopuna? I'd say no because its history doesn't bode well as a responsible caregiver. But then how do we ensure that whānau, hapū and iwi Māori are then equipped to support our own? I know that my foster parents received payment for my care, it does not mean that the level of care I got was commensurate with that payment. Should I be paid to take care of my mokopuna because my daughter is not coping? Should I need help to ensure that their care is maintained at a basic level, why then, should I not be able to access the support necessary to maintain care for my own, at that same basic level?

102. I do not want the state to intervene in my family's life. It's incumbent on me and other family members to ensure that we step up to the plate. But if to ensure the safety of the child remains paramount, we need some help to be the best family whānau caregivers that we can be. Is it fair that we shouldn't receive access to resources when a stranger would? That I struggle with.

103. Any change needs to involve the entire system. What the courts do, what Corrections do, what the Police do and what social workers do, what other institutions that have contracts, obligations and responsibilities with ensuring the safety of tamariki and mokopuna do. It can't be done in isolation.
104. From what I know there is a shift forward. I still think Oranga Tamariki will continue to see the child in isolation from its whānau. I think that's why the Puao-te-Ata-tū report is important and as relevant today as it was when it was first penned. It is the exemplar for what should be done. It is paid lip service, but it isn't being applied as rigorously as had been intended. It's not like Te Tiriti o Waitangi doesn't have that status, but because reports like Puao-te-Atatū are not a matter of law they are only given lip service.
105. There's been good work written by Judge Becroft and Judge Mick Brown. He wrote some good stuff because he was Māori, and he was adopted into a pākeha whānau. I think if we want a system that is not racist and if we want a system that acknowledges tāngata whenua and all its citizens and if we want a system that not only talks about the treaty in principle but applies the principles of that treaty, I think it's going to require a major shift in the system, but let us not forget, that the system I'm speaking of here, is in reality the people employed by agencies to give effect to the system, and to implement human designed policies, processes and procedures. There is no obscure being that exists as that system.
106. This could be shared responsibility and decision making as it relates to whānau, tamariki and mokopuna impacted. I do think that working with Māori across different levels is a good a starting point. I think National Iwi Chairs is an appropriate forum to go through, a place to start dialogue. Forums such as this will know who amongst their people can represent at the various levels the interest of children within their

regions or nationally. Māori organisations at the Rūnanga level and other organisations like the Māori Women's Welfare League and the National Urban Māori Authority can also partner with government to help deliver change.

Culturally appropriate services

107. There are not enough culturally appropriate services available for Māori. I don't think the services are checked for whether they are fit for purpose, but I do believe that a qualification or an accreditation doesn't necessarily provide the best service. People should not have to be registered under western standards to deliver services.

108. There is no one method or mode of therapy to help overcome trauma and grief. What is on offer should be checked whether it's fit for purpose. There are many ways of managing and helping with trauma, for example, someone who works in rongoā or who takes you on a haerenga (journey) into the bush where you can learn about rongoā and breathe some different air. How do you define this as therapeutic support for trauma? I suppose it is widening the range of services under the banner of support for individuals and whānau of abuse in care, so that the support includes a range of therapies and methods of healing.

109. When I was looking for Māori to connect with in Kaikōura I found whānau at Takahanga marae, they were operating their own matua-whāngai model. Sometimes we never spoke about sexual abuse or my time in care. Sometimes it was about the history of Te Tai o Marokura (the area around Kaikōura). Hearing these stories and the different connections to another iwi, this was more helpful because it reminded me that where I had come from was better and greater than

anything my father or counsellor had done for me. It took me back to my happy place at Ngunguru and I remembered the good things about my father.

110. Services should also be outcomes focused not just based on a set of targets. We should be asking questions like is the whānau in a state of ora? (wellbeing). If its NZQA accredited or approved people think it is the best way. Government agencies should have trust in Māori and let our people take the lead and have tino rangatiratanga or involvement in decision making.

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: _____ 22/04/21 _____