

Witness Name: Scott Aaron Carr

Statement No.: [WITN0313001]

Exhibits: [WITN0313002] – [WITN0313018]

Dated: March 2021

ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

WITNESS STATEMENT OF SCOTT AARON CARR

I, Scott Aaron Carr, state: -

INTRODUCTION

1. My full name is Scott Aaron Carr. I was born in Manawatu on [GRO-B] 1983.
2. My parents' names are [GRO-B-1] and [GRO-B-2]. I have two older brothers and one older sister.
3. During my childhood, my parents worked very hard. My dad worked two jobs and my mother worked shift work. My parents believed good parenting meant working hard, and by hard, I mean all the time. While I was not physically abused, I would say I was neglected. Sometimes, I could go two weeks without seeing them.

4. On 8 August 1997, someone had contacted CYFS to let them know that "something [was] not right" at home. [WITN0313002]
5. I can see from my records that a couple of days later, on 10 August 1997, a social worker called my mother. [WITN0313003] My mother told the social worker that our dad did not speak to me or my brother, and that all he did when he got home was sit down to read the paper. We were hanging out for some attention from dad. It is not like he ever physically abused us – he just never spoke to us.
6. On 11 August 1997, a social worker had made a note on my file that I had been suspended from school for six weeks. The school board had recommended that I could go back when things got better at school. [WITN0313004] The school never expelled me, but also refused to take me back. This meant I could not enrol in another school. As a result, I did not attend school from the age of 13. I do not know if this was the school board's intention when it made this recommendation, but that was the result. I also don't know why CYFS did not do anything about this when they already knew I had not been to school in six weeks.
7. On 22 September 1997, Monika Miranda from CYFS called and spoke to me. I told her I was home alone while my parents were at work. CYFS did nothing. [WITN0313005] I was very bored and lonely. This is when I started drinking and hanging out with an older crowd.
8. On 26 December 1997, an FGC was held because of how I was behaving. It was adjourned until 30 January 1998 to allow time for a full psychological assessment. [WITN0313006] When I appeared in Court on 13 February 1998, the Judge had concerns about the delays in having the FGCs. [WITN0313007] It took 9 months for the assessment to be done, just before I went to

Whakapakari. [WITN0313008] There is no copy of this assessment on my records, just a note that it had happened.

9. During the first half of 1998, I appeared in court several times. CYFS was not monitoring me. The police had also complained to CYFS that I was not attending school and asked CYFS to follow up, which didn't happen. [WITN0313009] I was spending my days at home, alone. I hated this so I was also running away to friends' houses.
10. On 6 April 1988, my mother called my social worker [GRO-C-1] to say I hadn't come home from a friend's house. [WITN0313010] [GRO-C-1] called the police and told them to keep me in custody, if I did not want to stay at home. On 8 April 1998, the police found me and held me at the police station.
11. That day someone from CYFS visited in me at the police station and noted that I was crying and refusing to return home and that I had told her that if CYFS took me home, I "*would not be found next time because all [they] would find was a dead body*". [WITN0313011] This was a reference to the fact that I had tried to commit suicide in the past. CYFS told the police to hold me until I could be persuaded to go home. After a while, the police refused to do this any longer, and a social worker organised a place with CYFS approved caregivers, the [GRO-B] I was not offered any help, despite telling CYFS I was suicidal. I ran away the first day of staying with the [GRO-B]
12. Another FGC was held on 20 April 1988. [WITN0313012] I had to remain at home with my parents, while the custody order continued. The FGC imposed a number of rules such as a curfew and I was not allowed to associate with people my parents didn't approve of. I was kept in the same situation which was making me so unhappy.
13. I ran away a couple of weeks later and my parents reported me missing to the police. [WITN0313013]. I appeared in Court a few days later and was remanded in the custody of CYFS.

Epuni

14. I was sent to Epuni three times during 1998. The longest out of these times was one and a half months.
15. Being one of very few Pākehā boys, surrounded by mainly Māori and Pacific Islanders, I was a target for bullying from the minute I first arrived at Epuni. Because of this, I had to learn to defend myself.
16. Staff members encouraged violence, telling me and the other residents that if we had any issues, we sort it by "scrapping it out". They would stand and watch while we fought. Outside of Epuni, violence was considered bad, but inside Epuni it was encouraged. I had never used violence before. Epuni was not only a new environment to live in, but a new way of living. It was incredibly traumatic.
17. A small group of Pākehā residents began a white supremacist group within Epuni and I was expected to join. When I refused, the group leader smashed me over the head with a portable stereo.
18. It was not only the residents who were violent towards me. I was also assaulted by a staff member there. I think his name was [GRO-B-3] and he was assigned as my case worker. [GRO-B-3] assaulted me because I had refused to turn around when he told me to. [GRO-B-3] grabbed me and forcefully turned me around, and then wrestled me to the ground. He then grabbed my foot and pushed it, which made my knee smash into the wall. He slammed my knee into the wall three or four times, while saying "stop damaging the wall". Eventually my leg went through the wall. [GRO-B-3] made me pay for the damage by taking \$5 out of my pocket money each week which meant I had no pocket money left.
19. Staff members used the older and bigger residents to dish out violent discipline, so they did not have to do it themselves. If I misbehaved, staff members would threaten me with a "mean hiding" from one of the bigger boys. I knew these threats were real because I had seen other boys get taken to a small room in the school block and then return, covered in bruises.

Drugs

20. While at Epuni, lots of the residents were on prescription medication, which they freely handed out to the rest of the residents. I also had a lot of access to marijuana if I wanted it (which I did not).

Secure Unit

21. During my time at Epuni, I was put in the Secure Unit three times, for around three days at a time.
22. While I was held in Secure, I was kept in a cell with no windows or natural light. I was not allowed to leave to go to the bathroom and would have to use a bucket in the corner. Someone would throw in a mattress at night, and my bedding was taken away during the day. I had to eat my meals in my cell. I was often not allowed out, but instead required to sit on the cold concrete floor, waiting to be released. I was not given any educational or reading material.

Education

23. Even outside of my cell, I was not provided with an academic education. I was only allowed to attend Māori culture classes, where I learned activities like bone carving or how to plait ropes. I was hardly ever allowed to keep the carvings or ropes and I believe it is because the teacher sold these items at the local market.

Strip-searches

24. Every time I re-entered Epuni after going away on leave, such as court appearances, I was strip-searched. I would say this happened between five to nine times. These involved stripping naked, squatting down, and coughing to prove that I was not hiding any drugs. I have since been told by my lawyers that strip-searches were only allowed if there were reasonable grounds to suspect I was concealing harmful items. I had never given staff members reason to think I was concealing anything. These searches were not noted on my file, either.

Whakapakari

25. On 30 July 1998, a social worker wrote to John and [GRO-B-152] Da Silva requesting my admission to Whakapakari on Great Barrier Island.

Strip-search

26. I went to Great Barrier Island on 21 August 1998. [WITN0313014] John Da Silva took me to the camp by boat and then took me to the house that he shared with his [GRO-B-152]. Once inside, I was told to go to the bathroom and strip. John then examined my genitals and buttocks to ensure I was not concealing anything. I have since been told by my lawyer that John had no authority to do this.

Physical abuse

27. I was placed in a tent group with a staff member called [GRO-B-6] as my supervisor. My group was assigned to chopping and carting firewood, even though the intention at Whakapakari was for residents to switch up jobs, including fishing and kitchen duties. This meant I was required to cart firewood across the island from early in the morning to late at night.
28. One morning, [GRO-B-6] woke me up at 5am and told me to wash some clothes by hand. I was surprised I was not supposed to be carting firewood, and asked [GRO-B-6] why we were doing washing, as this was not usually done in the morning. [GRO-B-6] told me to keep my "ballhead comments" to myself. When I told [GRO-B-6] I did not like to be called a "ballhead", he started headbutting me. He grabbed me, threatened to kill me, and placed me in a headlock. [GRO-B-6] then threw me off the balcony we were standing on. He chased after me, threw me headfirst into the ground, before throwing me down a bank, where I was knocked unconscious next to a punga tree.

29. [GRO-B-6] left me lying there covered in blood. I woke up around lunchtime, feeling groggy. I had been there all morning. I was told later that the other residents had been ordered not to help me or check on me. I was covered in bruises and had lumps all over my face and head. I still have multiple scars across the back of my head. My medical records say that on 10 September 1998, I received treatment for a painful shoulder after running into a tree. [WITN0313015]
30. This assault left me so distressed that I seriously considered throwing myself off a cliff, as I could not face the prospect of remaining at Whakapakari. I took to sleeping with a fish filleting knife in my sleeping bag, that I stole from the kitchen. This was in case [GRO-B-6] attacked me again.
31. [GRO-B-6] continued to harass, bully, and assault me during my time at Whakapakari. For example, he would deflate the air out of the tyre of my wheelbarrow that I used to cart firewood. When I could not push the wheelbarrow properly, [GRO-B-6] would throw firewood at me. On one occasion, the firewood hit me in my lower back and hip area, leaving bruises.
32. After I had been at Whakapakari for a few weeks, John Da Silva left the Island and Mita Mohi took his place. When Mr Mohi discovered a letter I had written to my mother complaining about the violence [GRO-B-6] had inflicted on me, Mr Mohi told me to apologise to [GRO-B-6] repeatedly, until I cried. To stop me crying, [GRO-B-6] choked me until I could not breathe. Mr Mohi then told me to rip up the letter and put it into the fire. Before I did this, Mr Mohi wrote my mother's address and told me he would go there, and "make her pay" if I ever wrote negative things about Whakapakari again. Mr Mohi also told me he would "get" me or my family if I ever told anyone about the choking.
33. After leaving Whakapakari, I read a lot about what Mr Mohi had achieved in helping other troubled young children and wondered why he chose to torment me instead.

34. I was also assaulted several times by the other residents. If I had a disagreement with another resident, staff would tell me to settle the disagreement through a fight, while the staff watched. I would say this happened around three times. I was also often stood over, bullied, and harassed by other residents, who would steal the food, cigarettes, and other treats that my mother would send me.
35. Throughout my entire stay at Whakapakari, I was exposed to serious violence. While I did not always participate myself, other residents were often set up to fight. I would describe this as 'cage fighting' that staff organised to watch for their own entertainment. I also had to watch.

Psychological abuse

36. Along with all the other residents, I was made to do kapa haka classes. Mr Mohi told all the residents to call me "white bread" because I was Pākehā.
37. If I misbehaved, I was forced to do physical labour as punishment. This included being forced to carry sacks of stones up a hill. Despite my parents sending me a new pair of gumboots, I was made to carry these sacks in bare feet, because GRO-B-6 gave my gumboots to another resident. The path up the hill was very rocky, and my feet would get covered in cuts that would become infected. This was not only painful at the time but has caused me ongoing feet problems into my adult life.
38. Once, Mr Mohi told me to dig holes in the ancestral graveyard to bury skull and skeleton bones. Mr Mohi told me if I did not behave and do exactly as I was told, I would end up there too.
39. Not long after I was admitted to Whakapakari, CYFS started an investigation after three boys tried to run away. The boys were apparently caught by members of the Head Hunters gang and forced to dig their own grave as punishment. All the residents were told about this and threatened with similar treatment if we misbehaved. As I boated into Whakapakari with Mr Da Silva, a

group of Head Hunters members stood on the ridgeline of one of the hills, and watched me arrive.

Alcatraz

40. I was sent to Whangara Island, a small island off Great Barrier Island, known at Whakapakari as 'Alcatraz'. I was sent there for one day with some other residents. We were not told why but it seemed to me like the residents who were left behind on the main island were the instigators of bad behaviour. I believe that myself and the other residents were removed to allow the staff to set up a large group fight between the troublemakers. This is because when I arrived back to the main island, a lot of the residents who had stayed behind had fresh bruising on their faces.

41. While on Alcatraz, I was very cold and not given any food. I was told to find oysters for food.

Hygiene and Food

42. During my stay at Whakapakari, I was not looked after properly.

43. I was often hungry because the staff made me and the other boys responsible for catching our own fish to eat. If we did not catch anything, we were only provided with potatoes and porridge. My mother would send me food parcels, but the staff always took most of the food out, either to eat it themselves or give to other residents.

44. I was only allowed to shower once every four days, despite being forced to do hard physical labour every day. I felt disgusting and dirty.

45. For my first month and a half there, the only toilet was a long drop that was so full, the faeces came right up to the toilet seat. I remember putting rocks into the toilet to try and ensure the faeces did not touch me while I used the toilet.

46. I also never saw my social worker, Mr GRO-C-1, after he dropped me off at Whakapakari. He called once, on 19 October 1998, and spoke to Mr Mohi, who

told Mr [GRO-C-1] that I was "doing well and fitting into the programme".
 [WITN0313016] Mr [GRO-C-1] never spoke with me directly, until three days before my departure from Whakapakari. If Mr [GRO-C-1] had called me, I would have told him about the violence and abuse.

Letters

47. After around one and a half months, [GRO-B-6] left Whakapakari and my tent group got a new supervisor, who might have been called Simon. Simon and I built a new long drop together, so that people didn't have to use the full one.
48. Simon was very kind to me. After I told him what Mr Mohi and [GRO-B-6] had done to me, Simon offered to post some letters to my mum for me. She kept some of these letters.
49. One letter is dated 4 October 1998. [WITN0313017] I wrote that [GRO-B-6] had called me a 'ballhead' and in response I wrote:

I said you can call me anything but not a ballhead. He came up to me he headbutted me [sic] and started to choke me and when he was choking me it got to the stage where I couldn't breathe and couldn't see anything [sic] then he let me go then came down to camp he wash [sic] saying don't tick me off like that or I will kill you and I said well don't call me a ballhead. He got me in a head lock and then pushed me down a step [sic] hill and I have down [sic] something bad to my shoulder – you don't have to believe me but it is true.
 [sic]

50. I wrote another letter, mentioning that my shoes and pants had been stolen, that "they wont let me wear my gumboots" and that I had "sore feet from wearing no shoes on stones for 3 weeks". The letter also mentioned that I had been involved in two fights, "and one involved a knife". [WITN0313018]

Back home

51. When I got home from Whakapakari, I felt overwhelmed, and struggled to fit back into society. I was never visited by a social worker or provided with any sort of support from CYFS to assist me in slotting back into life after Whakapakari. I did not cope.

Long-term effects

52. Those three months at Whakapakari have stayed with me for life.
53. GRO-B-6 assault occurred close to my birthday. To this day, I can barely acknowledge, let alone celebrate, my birthday. Instead, my birthday is depressing and anxiety-inducing.
54. I have intense flashbacks of this violence and of waking up next to the punga tree. This often keeps me awake at night.
55. I have ongoing problems with my arms, which doctors say is the result of trauma. This means I can no longer work as a painter, and instead I am a beneficiary.
56. I feel robbed of any opportunity in my adult life, especially because I never received a proper education.
57. I have struggled with alcohol addiction and I have used alcohol extensively in the past to block out traumatic memories. I attended Alcoholics Anonymous to help with this and I have not drunk alcohol for over five years. I have had to support myself through this.
58. A few years ago, I was diagnosed with a degenerative brain disease that is like Multiple Sclerosis. I have a lot of headaches and am on medication because of this. While it is difficult to pinpoint an exact cause, doctors have told me that

most my health issues could be triggered by Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder from my time at Whakapakari.

Appendix A

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: 7th March 2021

Annex B

Consent to use my statement

I, Scott Aaron Carr, confirm that by submitting my signed witness statement to the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care, I consent to its use in the following ways:

- publication on the Inquiry website;
- reference and/or inclusion in any interim and/or final report;
- disclosure to those granted leave to appear, designated as core participants and where instructed, their legal representatives via the Inquiry's database or by any other means as directed by the Inquiry;
- presentation as evidence before the Inquiry, including at a public hearing;
- informing further investigation by the Inquiry.

I also confirm that I have been advised of the option to seek anonymity and that if granted my identity may nevertheless be disclosed to a person or organisation, including any instructed legal representatives, who is the subject of criticism in my witness statement in order that they are afforded a fair opportunity to respond to the criticism.

Please tick this box if you are seeking anonymity.

Signed.. GRO-C

Date 7th March 2021