ABUSE IN CARE ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY
TULOU – OUR PACIFIC VOICES: TATALA E PULONGA

Under	The Inquiries Act 2013
In the matter of	The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Historical Abuse in State Care and in the Care of Faith-based Institutions
Royal Commission:	Judge Coral Shaw (Chair) Ali'imuamua Sandra Alofivae Mr Paul Gibson Dr Anaru Erueti Ms Julia Steenson
Counsel:	Mr Simon Mount QC, Ms Kerryn Beaton QC, Ms Tania Sharkey, Mr Semisi Pohiva, Ms Reina Va'ai, Ms Nicole Copeland, Ms Sonja Cooper, Ms Amanda Hill for the Royal Commission Ms Rachael Schmidt-McCleave, Ms Julia White and Ms Alana Ruakere for the Crown
Venue:	Fale o Samoa 141r Bader Drive Māngere AUCKLAND
Date:	19 July 2021

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

INDEX

OPENING SUBMISSIONS BY MS SHARKEY 2

OPENING SUBMISSIONS BY THE CROWN 8

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR HONOURABLE LUAMANUVAO DAME WINNIE LABAN
Questioning by Ms Sharkey 10
Questioning by Commissioners 26

FA'AMOANA LUAFUTU
Questioning by Ms Sharkey 29
Comments by Commissioners 56

CHAIR: Luamanuvao Dame Winnie Laban it falls to me to thank you. I don't have any questions, because this is the beginning of the conversation. This is the beginning of the talanoa, and what I want to acknowledge that has struck me is important, is your ability in placing New Zealand as a Pacific nation beside its Pacific cousins. I think the whakapapa links between are ones that are important, both in terms of individual families, of tribal connections, village connections, but also of State connections, and thank you for sharing that with us. Because what it does is that it brings to mind our collective responsibility. Everybody in New Zealand is collectively responsible for our children, for our young people, and let's not forget our vulnerable adults, those in psychiatric care, in disability care, we are all responsible.

What you've also brought to us is the recognition of the deep cultural underpinnings that have to be understood by all of us before we can start repairing. So recognising the va, recognising the particular forms of healing that if we don't do it right, we won't do it at all and you have set the tone of this whole hearing, for this whole hearing for our talanoa about how to analyse the reasons for abuse, but also importantly how to look at ways of healing that isn't just the usual cookie cutter method, but recognises the full richness of all Pacific communities. If we can't do that then we can't do it.

So we're very grateful to you, our very first witness at this Pacific hearing, our honoured guest, but also a source of great learning and you've given us much to think about. So thank you so much for your contribution.

A. And thank you very much for giving me an opportunity. You know we serve our people and we love our people. Thank you.

Q. That is why we're all here, thank you so much. On that note I think we should take a break. We all need our food don't we. So we will take a break now and we will resume again, Ms Sharkey, do you have a time that we should come back?

MS SHARKEY: 2.30.

CHAIR: We will resume again at 2.30, thank you.

MS SHARKEY: 2.30 sharp.

CHAIR: 2.30 sharp, okay.

Lunch adjournment from 1.30 pm to 2.30 pm

CHAIR: Good afternoon and welcome back everybody to the second half of today's hearing. Ms Sharkey.

MS SHARKEY: Next is Fa'amoana Luafutu.

FA'AMOANA LUAFUTU

CHAIR: Before we start your evidence, would you like to take the affirmation which I'll read to you.

A. Pardon?

Q. I'm just going to read you the affirmation and ask you to agree, is that all right?

A. Yeah.

Q. Do you solemnly, sincerely and truly declare and affirm that the evidence that you give to the Commission will be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

A. I do.

Q. Thank you very much.

QUESTIONING BY MS SHARKEY: Malo le soifua Fa'amoana Luafutu. Thank you for being here with us today. Just before we get into things, I'm aware that I've been told I might need to slow down so we just need to be mindful that there are some sign language interpreters, stenographer interpreting what we're both going to be talking about this afternoon.

A. Okay.

Q. Okay?

A. Yeah.

Q. Fa'amoana, are there any opening comments you would like to make?

A. Not really. Just to say that my name is Fa'amoana Luafutu.

Q. Thank you. Fa'amoana, what year were you born please?

A. 1952.

Q. 1952?

A. GRO-C.

Q. Thank you. And you were born in Samoa?

A. Yes, I was, in Falealili, Poutasi.

Q. And what villages are you from in Samoa?

A. Satalo and Poutasi.

Q. Okay, Fa'amoana, we're going to begin by me asking you to take us back to Samoa and you and your parents, they're getting ready to come to New Zealand?

A. Yeah.

Q. Can you please tell the Commissioners, tell the Inquiry what it was like at that time?

A. I remember as a small boy my parents, they packed their dreams in banana boxes. By that I mean that they grew bananas and they sold bananas and I watched them make the cases to

put the bananas in, and it was all to get our fare so we can move over to the new country which was here.

Q. So them packing those banana boxes and you were selling them at the markets, where were you selling them?

A. They used to have a Government truck come around and pick up all the bananas that each families have amassed. That's how they used to do it, they'd go around all the villages and grab all the bananas that the various growers had packed up ready for sale.

Q. When they were sold that money was put together to save up for the fares?

A. For our fares to New Zealand, yes.

Q. Why did your parents come to New Zealand, what was the dream?

A. The dream of a better life, like all migrants. But for me, myself, I was quite happy in my ignorance, I was quite happy as a little kid in my village. I knew everybody, I knew all my friends and I felt quite safe there, yeah.

Q. You felt safe in your village?

A. In my village, yeah.

Q. And that's what was known to you?

A. That's, yeah, that's how I felt safe and felt I belonged.

Q. And so then you arrive in New Zealand, you're just a little boy?

A. Yeah, I was six years old when I arrived in 1958.

Q. And what did New Zealand look like to you through the eyes of this young boy having just come from the Islands?

A. It looked really pretty from the plane. The little squares of green at the backyards of houses as we were coming over Whenuapai, because Whenuapai was the national airport in those days, the airline was called Teal, T-E-A-L and the irony about the bananas is they didn't have an airport in Samoa in those days and so we hopped on a banana boat to go to Fiji to catch the plane. So that was a bit of an irony for me and we slept on the deck of the banana boats on the way to Fiji to catch our plane.

Q. Thank you Fa'amoana. Fa'amoana, who were you named after?

A. My grandpa.

Q. Your grandpa?

A. Yeah.

Q. What was your grandpa like?

A. Strong, he was one of the best fishermen and he had a plantation as well, so he was -he fished in the ocean and he fished in the bush, if you want to put it that way, you know, he

had a garden and a bush and he was a good fisherman. And sometimes I'd go with him and I'd be on the canoe and I'd be baling the water of our canoe as he paddled along. So I was very close to my granddad, in fact I was named after him.

Q. And did he stay back in Samoa when you came?

A. Yeah, I was the oldest of four children, because only four could come, and we were -- my parents were the only ones that had a family, all the rest of the crew or the passengers that came with us, there were quite a lot, they were all single people, we were the only family, me and my two younger sisters and the youngest was a boy, my brother, so there was four of us that came in 1958.

Q. And when you come to New Zealand, Fa'amoana, you go to school and on your first day of school, Fa'amoana, what did your teacher say to you about your name?

A. I think it was hard for them to pronounce my name, I don't know why, but they found it sort of like too hard to say, so they opted for an English name that was easier to say, and I became John right there and then.

Q. So from that day on, you became known as John Luafutu?

A. Yes, that's right and in retrospect there was a big disconnection between Fa'amoana and John.

Q. Yeah. And so that name sticks with you at school and in State care and later on?

A. Yes.

Q. Right, okay. And we're just going to bring up a document, Fa'amoana.

A. Okay.

Q. And the first one, this is from Kohitere Boys Training Centre?

A. Yeah.

Q. Because they see Fa'amoana, they see John on some of your records. So you'll see that document there.

A. Yes, I see it.

Q. And the question is, made to the Registrar General, what is this boy's name and they're told it's Fa'amoana Luafutu. If we can bring up the next document this is where the principal says "Since this lad came to notice he has been consistently known as John Luafutu and to avoid any confusion I suggest this name be adopted for official purposes." And my question, Fa'amoana, is, did anyone at Kohitere ever ask you what name you wanted to be known by?

A. No.

Q. And so just thinking about paragraph 8 of your statement, and we're talking about the

impacts and you said before then the disconnection?

A. Yeah.

Q. I think Feke has your statement that we're going to pass over to you. Fa'amoana, we're looking at paragraph 8.

A. Yeah.

Q. We're just asking what were the impacts, if you could explain, of them changing your name and how it made you feel?

A. Well, I'll take you back to the plantation. I used to go with my grandfather every morning, or you know, when it was time for weeding, or go to the garden, and take off his lavalava, put on an old one and he would start weeding. I would stand there as a little boy, hold his tobacco and made sure the matches never got wet. So that was my job and I watch him work on the plantation, I see him sweating, his tattoos glistening in the sun, and that was a powerful image in my mind. And like I said, I grew really close to him, my father was quite busy, he drove a bus sometimes, but I was mostly with my grandfather a lot, and yes, I'm very close to him and the effect that when they took his -- when they took his name away from me that day at school, that's when this whole feeling of feeling not good enough sort of started coming into my mind, you know, I started questioning myself why wasn't my grandfather's name good enough, you know, as a kid when I loved my granddad so much, you know. But then I just put that away and just went with what was before me, you know, so it's like getting on, playing what was before my eyes and that was my new reality was John, I was still trying to come to terms with that.

Q. Thank you Fa'amoana. So, one question I had was what were the difficulties in speaking up? It might sound like a silly question, but for those who are here listening, tell us why you weren't able to speak up to that teacher who changed your name and to those who insisted on calling you a name that wasn't yours?

A. Well, I was just a kid, you don't answer your elders back. And that's the thing with our people, or my parents anyway, they're more worried about how I behaved as opposed to any kind of academic achievement. They looked upon me favourably if I knew how to say Tulou in front of people and how, you know, just to know etiquette around people, that was more important to my parents, how to behave around people. They have a saying that a prince is known by his princely ways, my mother used to say to me. So you know, it was like keep your Ps and Qs, know what you are around people. You being a doctor doesn't matter, you know, but if you're a doctor and you knew your etiquette as well, well then you're extra special. But, you know, it's more important that you knew etiquette around

people and just good behaviour, that's what my parents valued most. And yeah, so but they never took the chance or they never took time out to learn English, you know.

So homework for me and school in general was a non-event because I couldn't get any help from my parents, you know, and the same was "We brought you here to go to school, to educate you, we didn't come here to get educated, we brought you here to go to school." So it was always the sons will return back home. "You're going to be a doctor, you're going to go back to Samoa and help the Government go forward." That was the big dream of our parents back then, you know, but obviously that's not how it turned out.

Q. Okay, thank you Fa'amoana. So just clarifying what you were saying before with the teachers you couldn't you- felt like you couldn't- ask them to say your proper name, your real name, there was a power imbalance?

A. Pardon? Yes.

Q. Was there a power imbalance?

A. Yeah, definitely.

Q. With those --

A. And from the parents again, it's like they were very subservient to the white man, the white culture, you know, do what they say, they know better and that's the attitude that I took with me, you know. And so as you say, how did I feel about my grandfather's name being taken off me? I felt bad, I felt not good enough, but I had to accept the new reality and my mother's voice was right behind me.

Q. Right, thank you. So what is your message to those who educate our Pacific children who have names that may be hard to say or pronounce?

A. Well, I'm talking 50 odd years ago now, and I'm glad to see there are some changes in the curriculum, teachers are encouraged to speak the ethnicity of the child at hand. And, yeah, it doesn't matter whether you're from the Islands or whether from Middle East or wherever, you know, it's really important, for me anyway, that they keep the child's name that he's proud of.

Q. And what is your message to our Pacific people about giving our children Pacific names that may be hard for others to pronounce?

A. Don't worry about it, I mean, you know, that name's been in your family for hundreds of years, why are you going to change it over because of a new culture that you're in? You know, you've got to maintain the culture that you're born with because that's the source of your pride, I feel, you know, you take your name away then it's almost like saying that culture's no good, this is the new way, it's the English way, this is the proper way, and that's

it. And as a kid I really couldn't say anything, you know, I just accepted that these people are cleverer than me, they know better and that I'll be a better person if I listen to them.

Q. Because part of our Pacific names bring the history along with us and you think that's important?

A. Yeah, that's right, and most families keep those names, you know, and it's familiar, like I live in Christchurch now, but I come up here, I hear my mother's name amongst my cousins, you know, so it just helps keep the family knitted together by keeping those names from the old culture.

Q. And that's a way we can maintain --

A. Yes.

Q. -- our identities?

A. Identity, dead right.

Q. Okay, thank you Fa'amoana. Just moving along through your statement. We're looking at paragraphs 11 to 13. You speak in this part of your statement about the creation of the oldest Pacific Island gang back in the 60s. Can you tell us more about when and why the first Pacific Island gang was formed?

A. Right. When I first got here in 1958 the King Cobras had just been formed. I didn't know anything about it, you know, I was just a freshie, but that's when the King Cobras were born. And I mention them because those were the guys we looked up to because a few of those old Cobra guys had already been in the boys' home system. And us being naughty kids, as it were, by the Social Welfare Department, the only people we could really relate to was those older guys that had already been in the system, you know, those were the guys we could get along with because they understood us. And by saying that, some of our other people, there's nothing worse than getting judged by your own people to say that you're bad and that, when really we just we- were just mixed up, we were just brown little kids trying to make sense of this whole new world we were in. And we grew up in GRO-B, me and my cousins. They lived in GRO-B and I lived in GRO-B. It was like we were the generation that started the browning of Auckland way back then in 1958. Like I say, that's- when the King Cobras started and we looked up to those guys, because they showed us how to behave when we met up with difficulties on the street, you know.

Q. And how did the name come about?

A. King Cobras? Well, yeah, there you go, it's a migrational gang, it's a migrational story. How did the King Cobra migrate to New Zealand? Well, Ponsonby being the melting pot

of New Zealand, I suppose, there were so many languages going there, the only language I didn't hear much of was the Māori language, but it was Niuean, it was Rarotongan, it was Samoan, it was Tongan, it was all over Ponsonby. The state of what South Auckland looks like was what Grey Lynn and Ponsonby used to look like when I was young and I was quite happy there hearing all these colourful languages, our people in flowery clothes and things, you know. So yeah, that's the Ponsonby that I grew up in. Sorry, did I go away from your question?

Q. That's all right, we can come back to it.

A. Yeah.

Q. But I just want to pick up on something you said there. So you're saying that when you were younger in Ponsonby, you were hearing Pacific languages all over the place?

A. Yeah, yeah.

Q. Right. And just the name of the King Cobras, how did they come up with that name?

A. Well, let's say several boys down in Grey Lynn Park on a Wednesday night watching athletics and they wanted something to identify with because, you know, they were migrant children and there was no patch as such, the skin colour was your patch. All the migrant kids that were around at that time made friends with each other. So you had your Pacific Island guys and you had your other guys. One particular guy that was there that was a friend came from India, and as the boys were asking around they were trying to find a group name for their wee group as a means of identity. So they sat around and said "What do you think?" You know, "Oh what about the sharks, it's a feared thing back where I come from", you know, this kind of thing being bantered about. They asked the Indian mate, what was the most feared thing where you come from? And he said the King Cobra. King Cobras, wow, that's us. So that was like, you know, nobody knew much about the name, it was very, you know, how would you say, very Hollywood, I suppose, and nobody knew much about the King Cobras, let alone those young fellas and it just seemed a nice name to have and it came from their little Indian friend.

Q. Right, and that's the history?

A. Yeah, and that's the history of the Cobras, and that's how a lot of people say to me, "How did a Pacific Island, predominantly Pacific Island gang get a name like the King Cobras?" Well, because we were migrant children and that migrant friend of the boys mentioned King Cobras, so that's the name they took.

Q. Thank you Fa'amoana. So what was the attitude towards Pacific peoples back then which made you boys come together like that?

A. Well, it was like, you know, kids can be cruel, you can go down to the park and go for a swing and being in a minority, you know, you mightn't get a swing. So you knock around with friends same colour as you and same attitude, come from a different place. Like I said, migrant kids all getting together, so they stick together as a means of protection and to survive in the new place they were in and, like I said, they were very much in the minority, it was like not many Tongans, not too many Samoans, not many Indians etc, it was all coming in together, so the young kids got to, yeah, become friends, and be part of a group that they can feel safe, yeah.

Q. And you had said before there weren't patches, your skin colour was your patch?

A. That's right.

Q. And is that what brought you boys together?

A. Everyone knew each other, yeah.

Q. Then you say in your statement that there were other gangs formed by brown people after the King Cobras?

A. Yes.

Q. Why was this, what was happening in our society at the time?

A. What was happening at the time?

Q. With the turf wars.

A. Well, yes, I'm talking about the King Cobras, I was 6 at the time, by the time 1964 came around The Beatles had came out, I suppose, yeah, but I was in form 2 and we were waiting for our friends one time at the bottom of Francis Street and Richmond Road, there was a few of us Island boys and a couple of Palagi friends, and a lot of these white kids yelled out that we were a bunch of niggers, you know, out of the bus, that was just how we were, kids, you know, 13, 14 years old at that time, yeah. And so we took that name proudly, we called ourselves the Niggs, that was the name of our gang, and that was --we never made it up, that was thrown at us and we kept it. We kept that right through until it changed again in the late 60s.

Q. And out of one of the gangs that was formed after, did a member go to form on the Polynesian Panthers?

A. Well, there's a story to that. When the Niggs started, that was 1964, and then the next year, 1965, Seddon Tech had just opened up behind the zoo, it's now called Western Springs College, but it had a bad reputation because it was where all the Island kids went to from Ponsonby and Grey Lynn and from all the other schools around. So Seddon Tech was where all the Island kids went to. And halfway through 1965 I was made a State ward and

I ended up down through Ōwairaka, down to Kohitere Boys Training Centre in Levin, and then a couple of years after that I got out in 1967 and the whole of Ponsonby had different gangs by then, they had Apaches, they had the ex-hostel boys, that was run by GRO-B they call themselves the Blurples. There were all these other little crews going around and it was like all the kids in Ponsonby, it was like it imploded.

Everyone was fighting each other, we kind of knew some of the guys in the Apaches, you know, from around the area. But everyone was fighting and so there was a big brawl outside the Ponsonby Billiard Saloon one night and the Apaches and the Niggs were having a fight, I was in that as well, and what happened was these two older King Cobras, GRO-B, they pulled up in a taxi and they told us off for fighting. "Why are you young fellas fighting, you'se are all from here, what are you'se doing? You better stop that." And so we stopped the fight and GRO-B that runs the King Cobras now, he said "We want a meeting with you young fellas next week at Vermont Street", that's where we had one of our flats, opposite Marist school. So we had a meeting there and some of the older King Cobra guys, who all we looked up to with respect because they knocked around with our older brothers and uncles, so we looked upon them as older brothers; and when they told us to stop we stopped. And then we had our meeting and they came down and they said "From now on there'll be no more gangs in Ponsonby, you're all going to come under the Black Panthers."

So they dropped the King Cobras, we were so honoured that they were willing to drop their original King Cobra guys, they dropped that and said "We are now going to go as one under the Black Panthers", and that's the older King Cobra guys and all the different gangs around Ponsonby at that time. So we became one, Black Panthers. And that was mostly party up, Jake the Muss-type parties, you know, girls, bit of crime, what do you call it, sly grog because we weren't allowed in the pubs, so there was all that culture happening at the time.

Now we had a friend, his name was GRO-B and he was knocking around with us in the Niggs, you know. And we always kept him clean, we used to have a lot of fights with different gangs, but we always made sure that GRO-B got away from the Police because we wanted him to have a clean record, because he was the brainy one of us, he was making it through tertiary and we wanted him to be a lawyer. Because those days there was no Legal Aid, and any of our people that go up before court they'll end up in Mt Eden because you're not represented. So we wanted our mate to go through university and

become a lawyer so he can defend us all.

And what happened was around '68, something like that, going on '69, All Along the Watchtower just hit the charts and GRO-B came along to one of our parties on a Thursday night and he brought all these books by Malcolm X and Bobby Newton or whatever, Seize the Time from the Black Panthers over in America, you know, that political thing. In other words, GRO-B was trying to politicise us, he wanted to us come from a street gang to be part of this political movement that he was getting involved with. We said "Hey GRO-B we wanted you to be a lawyer, we don't you to bloody" you-- know, and he says "Look we've got to protest this and protest that, they're taking the Māori land." He got all involved with all those guys up there, and we got disappointed, you know, said "GRO-B, we're not that, we're here for good times, drinking, girls, you know, and crime and money. We don't want to do any of what you protest the Vietnam war or anything like that, you know, so go away with your fiddling around." So he leaves us but he took a few of our guys because he didn't like what he was seeing, you know, being educated he didn't like the way we were treating women, fighting amongst ourselves and fighting in general, the Police and things.

But like I said, he was all right because we kept him clean. So he left the Black Panthers and went with GRO-B so there was four of our guys left because of GRO-B and they wanted to go political and start something up for our people. Because back then, yeah, we're people from the grass huts, you know. Like we got to Ponsonby, it was flash to us, but by today's standards and looking back it was past its used by date, you know, they had the rat problem, they had the rubbish problem, they had all sorts of problems around Ponsonby, it was home to us and we loved it, you know. So that's how it was for us back then.

Q. Thank you Fa'amoana. I'm just going to go back a little bit. So you were saying before when you started school --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- you could only speak Samoan?

A. That's right.

Q. And at home your parents said only Samoan in the home?

A. Yeah, we weren't allowed to speak Samoan at home. It was obvious because they couldn't speak English, so it was us to retain our language and in a funny way it's helped me keep my language, even though it didn't help me with my homework back then, but my parents

didn't want us to, or encourage us, because they couldn't speak. So it was no use asking them anything about any kind of homework, and they made it a rule that when we came home we're back to Samoa, when we're outside of the home we're back to New Zealand, so it was kind of like growing up with a foot in both worlds.

Q. And with that struggle to speak and understand English, can you explain what it was like at school, what was the struggles you were having at school?

A. Well, I'll give you an example. I was given the task of doing homework and I went home and I asked one of my cousins what does "homework" mean? They said "Oh things that you do around the house, you know, home and work." I went "Oh yeah okay", so I went and swept up the rubbish and cut a little bit of grass or something. And the next day at school they said "Oh what did you do for homework?" I go "I cut the grass and picked the rubbish." So it was like everyone laughed, you know, and so it was like why are they laughing, you know, I felt like the end of a joke, you know. And to be told that's not homework and put a pointy hat on you and made to sit at the back of the class, that didn't make me want to go back to school at all, you know. So me and my cousins, we decided not to go to school and in that way we came in contact with the system.

Q. Right, so because you were struggling at school and not feeling like you --

A. Belonged.

Q. -- wanted to go back there?

A. Yeah.

Q. You start truanting or not going to school?

A. Yeah, not going to school, yes.

Q. And that's how you come into contact with the State?

A. Truant officers and the rest of it, yeah.

Q. And your files talk about the trouble, the offences that get you brought before the Children's Board. Can you share some of the trouble?

A. I think one of my first charges was I went with my cousin Atenai out to Manurewa and we were dying it-- was a hot day, we wanted an ice cream, we only had enough for a bus fare there and back, so we were standing at the bus stop and we seen all these people going to the matinees on a Saturday afternoon, all the kids go there and they had all their bikes. So me and my cousin ran across the road, grabbed a bike each when everybody went inside and brought an ice cream with our bus fare, ate the ice cream and then we started biking back to Grey Lynn. And it was the first -- I'd never ever ridden a bike in my life, but my cousin he was such a guy, you know, he helped me learn to ride a bike all the way to Grey

Lynn from Manurewa.

Q. And so there was stealing the bike?

A. Yes, I was charged with that, yes, for stealing a bike, the local constable, Mr Carson, yeah, he charged us with stealing bikes, yeah.

Q. And what was the trouble you got into that brought you before the Children's Board?

A. That was one of them, I got probation for that and supervision, and then one day at Pasadena we were down at the transit camp, that was before Western Springs was developed they used to have all these old houses at the back there where they used to have returned soldiers come. But these houses were abandoned by now and they were wrecked, it was just, you know, just a frame really.

Anyway, we were around there one day having a cigarette after school and we saw this possum. So we'd never seen a possum before, you know, so we got curious, so we started trying to find it and grab it, it was hissing at us from the corner. So we lit a fire trying to smoke it out, trying to we could have a real good look at it, because it was in the dark, we could only see its eyes shining. So we were trying to smoke it out and the whole damn thing caught alight, the whole place. And it had a bit of a tar roof those days, you know, on the roof of these old houses had sheets of tar on it before they put the iron on. Well that caught on fire really fast and it just went up, boof.

But yeah, so the next day at school we were at assembly and me and my cousins' names were called out in front of the school and we were charged with arson, you know. That was one of my other charges, and I was told it was a heavy charge to have on you, but, you know, I didn't really think much of it myself, you know, I just thought it was nothing because the thing about that was me and my cousin were the youngest of the group of boys that were there, there was about eight of us there, but me and my cousin got charged and the other six didn't. You know, so we got taken before the police station, it used to be up by the university then, the old police station, that's where we were charged and, yeah, from school.

Q. Thank you Fa'amoana. So you come before the Children's Board?

A. Yeah.

Q. Can you tell us what you remember about the day you said goodbye to your mum and went to Ōwairaka Boys' Home?

A. Me and my cousin and my aunty and my mother, both of us were going up before the court for this charge and the Children's Court used to be down the bottom of Queen Street opposite what they call the South Pacific Hotel back in those days, and the Children's Court

was above the Queens' Arcade in one of the offices upstairs. And, yeah, got sentenced there. Both our mothers were crying and as we were being led away, you know, these Samoan mothers they get out the hanky and they wave, she was crying and saying in Samoan, "Be a good boy, listen to them, listen to the directions they give you." That's what stayed in my mind as I was getting escorted away by the house masters to go to Ōwairaka.

Q. Thank you Fa'amoana. So that was you and your cousin both went away?

A. Yeah.

Q. So you say that the older boys at Ōwairaka didn't like you?

A. No.

Q. Why was that?

A. I don't know, like I said, you know, kids can be cruel, and us being foreigners, you know, we were called coconuts, a couple of little coconuts, you know. And this is from our -- from the other boys, some Māori, but that's what we were called. So right away we were on the back foot battling. But I was so glad because I had a cousin with me, I wasn't by myself, so, you know, and he spoke better English than me anyway, so he was able to -- we were able to stick up for ourselves.

Q. And how were Pacific Islanders treated compared to others?

A. I think everyone got treated the same, it was that same kind of treatment, you know, it was all based around discipline and chores and, yeah, things like that, you know, but I can't really say that we were treated any different, you know, and that's what made me think, you know, like once you get into those places, you know, you're all the same, you know, institutions, all jails is a good equalisers, everyone's the same.

Q. Who were calling you boys "coconuts"?

A. Some of the guys in there, some Māori fellas, we never got along with the Māori fellas in there, I don't know why, that was at the start. I don't know what that was about, but yeah.

Q. And at the time that you were in care, Fa'amoana, did you know of any other Islanders being in care around the same time as you?

A. Yeah, yeah, there were a few, some of them were lying about their names, you know, because of the shame thing, you know. Let me just say one thing about shame. You know, I felt that shame too, I felt the shame of my father, you know, he said "Look son, I'm sick of seeing my family name in the court pages", you know, and I felt his pain and his shame, you know, I realised what he was trying to say to me, but I was on a roller coaster then, even though I could hear him, you know, there was really nothing -- I was on my way, you know.

Q. And before your time --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- before you were in care, did you know of any other Islanders who went through the boys' homes?

A. Yeah, some of the older King Cobra guys were there, that's why we identified with them because they kind of told us how to behave on the street, you know, like "Look, anybody get smart to you, smack them in the mouth", you know, that was some of the older boys that had already been before us that I mentioned, like GRO-B and the such like, they'd already been in care and they would have been the first lot, you know, the first lot of guys that were in there. But in my time, yeah, I saw Niueans in there, Tongan, other Samoans, Rarotongans, yeah, there were other Pacific Island kids there.

Q. Thank you Fa'amoana. Some of your records that you've seen, you're recorded as non--Māori. What is your response to that?

A. I could have done that on purpose, you know, because of what I said about the shame of my father's name, you know, I felt his pain and his shame and I didn't want to let my dad down, and, yeah, if my name is spelt my name(sic) and I know a lot of other Samoan inmates, like when they go in for, to get into the police station to get charged, they say "What's your name?" I'll give you an example, "My name is so and so", "What's your last name?" "My name's Bule". "Oh yeah, how do you spell that?" "B-U-L-E", so the policeman writes down B, but there's no B in the Samoan language, it's a P, so it was Pule. So I say "Your name's really Pule", and they go "Yeah but my dad, you know, so I keep it like that." So there's a lot of us guys that wanted to shield our families by letting those names be spelled wrong, let it be said wrong, let them think we're Māoris because the shame of our Island parents, you know.

Q. So that shame factor making you want to hide your Pacific ethnicity.

A. Hide, exactly.

Q. Thank you Fa'amoana. So we're not going to go into the details of your abuse in the homes, it's all in your statement that will be made available afterwards. So just briefly, you say in your statement "I experienced all forms of abuse at Ōwairaka Boys' Home. I experienced abuse at other placements but for me Ōwairaka was the place that changed my life. By the time I left Ōwairaka the gun was already loaded and the dye had been cast because of what happened to me in there." So could you please tell us, Fa'amoana, what did the abuse at Ōwairaka Boys' Home do to you as a boy, a man, a future father, and husband?

A. Totally confused, mixed up, and thinking back about what my mother was saying that I was to obey everything that's been put before me, you know. But I know good touches and bad touches, you know, and it was good that I had my cousin there, because if any of those approaches had been made, you know, like it would just be like feral cats, you know, but for some of these other guys, they didn't have anybody, or they were scared, or they were too weak to try and react to what was being proposed or, you know, being put in front of them, you know. But yeah, it definitely changed me Ōwairaka, I became straight after that, after experiencing that, I became non-conformist, hated everybody, hated the cops especially, hated authority, and it was getting to the point where I was starting to hate myself, you know, and hate my culture. I had a love/hate relationship with my culture, seeing the money go over for fa'alavelaves and things, which I understand now. But to try and compare that to going to school with holey shoes and, you know, different socks and things, you know, like that's my reality, you know, and I'm not ashamed to say that yeah, we're poor, our family were poor. But as poor as we were, we still gave as --my father gave as much as he can to his father back in the Islands, you know. So that was my reality and I suppose that's why I had kind of a --I love my culture and I hate my culture too at the same time. I don't know if you can understand that, but that's where I was.

Q. I think there might be a few who can understand that, Fa'amoana. So you talk about by way of surviving Ōwairaka you nursed this deep anger within you?

A. It's what kept you going, you know, like all the hard men, they all got hurt little babies inside of them, you know, that's what I know because I was carrying that little hurt baby and every time I got angry with someone that baby wakes up and, yeah, bring it, you know, that was the attitude.

Q. And you say "I was confused and didn't know myself. The place had no function to meet the needs of a Samoan like me." What did you mean by that?

A. Well, everybody's a clean page and we're all born in innocence, you know, and what was written on my page by going into those homes made me the way I was when I came out, that was just total rejection of everything about this world, you know, I was quite happy to be back in the Islands, like I said, but now that I'm here, we'll have a look at it, you know, and the whole thing is it got back into this about what's success in life, you know. We all come here for the big dream we're going to be a doctor and that, but when you end up in a world like mine, you better try and run the place otherwise you'll be bent over a desk or something. So you've got the success in places like jail and that, is that you've got to be hard or you've got to run the place so that nothing can be done to you, and that's how it is,

that's the measure of successes for boobheads like me. If I can run the jail then I'm successful.

Q. So in the boys' homes and in jail it was about being the worst so that you could look after yourself?

A. Yeah, yeah. You've got to nut off, you know, when the time's right and it's needed you've got to show form, what they call form, so you've got to be more aggressive than the next guy if you want respect. That's the life of jails.

Q. And was that like a cycle, being, you know, more hard meant that you'd get in trouble more within the prison?

A. That does --you don't care anymore, you know, somebody crosses you in there you whack them and whatever you get well that just get it on --you just --that gets on top of what you're already serving. You might get charged with assaulting another inmate but so what, that inmate knows not to mess with me anymore.

Q. And that was a way to protect yourself?

A. That's right, that's the way you got on and earned respect amongst those guys.

Q. So Fa'amoana, what happens to you in prison that sees the beginning of you turning things around?

A. They didn't trust me outside the prison or anywhere, so the best place they could put me in was the library, it was nice and safe in there, there was no-one there, just books. So they locked me in the library and that's where I was, sort out, you know. Long story short was I came across a book by Albert Wendt, Sons For the Return Home, and when I read that the pictures of the banana boxes and what my parents were doing for us to get here, it call came back and it just, you know, I broke down and I went and saw the therapist because they give you a therapist, it's like (inaudible) for the psycho this morning.

So I was up there talking to my psychotherapist and I was saying to him that I was really pissed off with how my life has turned out and I just read a book by Albert Wendt and I feel like a failure to myself and my parents and to my family, you know. The last lag I was doing my wife was carrying our last son so he was born while I was in jail. We have another son, our middle son has got, what is that baby? Cerebral palsy and our elder son, yeah, he's all right. So we have a cerebral palsy son in our middle, the youngest one was born while I was in jail and my other son, the oldest son, he was born when I was on the outside, yeah, so I have three sons, yeah. I don't know, I might have lost track of what we're going on, I'm sorry I'm a bit nervous.

Q. No, that's fine, Fa'amoana, thank you. That was just about you being in the library because

they you- lost your privileges, is that right, and they wouldn't- let you out into the main part so they stuck you in the library?

A. That's right, so I read the book, talked to my therapist about it, he says "What do you feel?" I says, you know, "Guys like Albert and them they already knew the language, they grew up in Apia or around there and so they had a bit of an advantage as opposed to us that came straight from the village." I wasn't saying that in a bad way or in a jealous way, I was just stating fact, you know, and he says, "Why don't you write to Albert?" So I did, so I wrote to him and told him about my situation and he was very, very kind and he, --me and him started writing to each other like pen pals. He said "Why don't you write something about where you're at?" I mentioned that to my therapist and he said "It's good to write things because when you write things you start going back and then you can understand yourself better in the now when you examine your past." And I believe that to be true and, you know, when you write you write for yourself first, and that's what I intended to do, I wrote it for myself so I can understand and try and figure out why my life has turned out this way when other people that I was in school with, they made it, you know, one of my classmates became Superintendent of New Zealand Police. I thought how come the cookie crumbled different for him than for me. So that's what got me to write. Like I say, when you write you write for yourself, and then I had to go right back to the beginning, why we came, just like very much what you're doing to me here. And that way I got to understand myself a bit better and, yeah, and that's why I started writing and then I wrote my book Boy Called Broke, which is about leaving Samoa and coming over here for the better life.

Q. Thank you Fa'amoana. That was my next question.

A. Okay.

Q. A Boy Called Broke, good timing. A Boy Called Broke: My story, so far.

A. Yeah.

Q. Can you recall when you wrote that book?

A. Yeah, 1989, Rolleston Prison, that's where I started and I finished it off when I got out.

Q. And there's a passage of that story in your statement and I was going to ask you if you could read that out?

A. Okay, which?

Q. I'm not sure if it's there. I've got it here. Can you see that writing there, Fa'amoana?

A. Yeah, I've got glasses here now.

Q. You've got your glasses?

A. Yeah. Which number?

Q. So it's the small poem. Take your time.
A. At the end?
Q. It's at paragraph 65.
A. Is it number 65?
Q. Yeah. Maybe Feke can --
A. Sorry.
Q. No, no that's fine. We're running for time so that's all right.
A. Yeah. Yeah, I'm there. Do you mind me to write it out.
Q. Can you read it out please, this is part of your story?
A. Okay. "Sometimes I'd be angry at God or whoever it was that made this world. I had no idea what I was going to do once I got out. Of the time I've spent here the only good thing I learned was how to plant trees and scrub cutting. But I did learn everything negative like burglary, shoplifting, drinking booze, home brewing, armed robbery, safe cracking, tattooing and rebel rebel rebel and the hatred for authority arising from house masters in Ōwairaka going on to screws in prison. When I think of Satalo and Poutasi and Falealili, the villages where I was born and my present situation, I realised sadly I would never be the same again. Somewhere between Fa'amoana and John there was a break-down of sorts which had a devastating effect, leaving me here staring at the concrete ceiling of my cell."
Q. Thank you, Fa'amoana, that's very powerful.
A. Thank you.
Q. After writing this story, you're involved with two plays?
A. Yes, yeah.
Q. We'll start with the play The White Guitar. Why was it named The White Guitar?
A. Because my mother had a white guitar in the village, her sister from American Samoa brought it and gave it to her as a present. I remember her seeing her playing it and her playing me songs on it.
Q. And what was that play about?
A. Exactly what we're talking about, you know, leaving for a -- a dream of a better life, you know, that's what it was about.
Q. And then there's a play A Boy Called Piano. Why was it called A Boy Called Piano?
A. You know, my people are so funny, you know, they name their kids after all sorts of things. I know somebody that's named Hellaby after Hellaby corn beef. So but, yeah, my mother called me Piano because she used to play piano for a church and she had to give that up when she got pregnant and married my dad. So that story is piano was her first love, and so

I was her first born and I became Piano.

Q. That's beautiful. What was that play about?

A. It was an in-depth look at time in the boys' home and the damage done.

Q. And who was involved in your plays, were there people in your family involved?

A. Yes, I got my son and my grandsons all playing parts of the story in there, and while we're here it took the courage of The Conch picture theatre to come and put on plays like this, you know, real plays, real life plays and The Conch theatre belongs to Nina Nawalowalo and Tom McCrory, they're a couple that run this theatre company that help put these stories on.

Q. How did you get involved with The Conch, how did that relationship start?

A. That was funny. My eldest son, he liked acting and he was in Toi Whakaari and he was being taught by Nina Nawalowalo's husband Tom. Anyway, long story short was he didn't finish it, he's got issues and it's to do with me being a bad dad, and anyway, he had a talent, but he ended up running away from Toi Whakaari. But what he did was left a copy of my book A Boy Called Broke that I done in jail, he left it at Tom's locker box, Tom is Nina's husband, so he read the book and he wrote --he rang me up and he says "I'd really like to do a play concerning your story", you know, I got suss straight away, who's this Palagi guy, Carol, "There's this guy Tom, GRO-B teacher and wants to talk to you about making a play." "I don't want to talk to nobody, I don't trust white people much anyway, you know." So anyway I got to talk to Tom and I felt his soul through his voice and he said he loved my son and that's all it took. I said "You love my son? If you love my son I love my son too, so I'm in it if you want me to do anything", so he said yeah. So I wrote The White Guitar.

Q. At one of your plays you had children in State care come to watch the play?

A. Yeah, and The White Guitar, they all came down, we were doing it in Christchurch at The Court Theatre, about eight or nine of them came, you know, got us to sign their phone. Some of them were crying because they identified with what we were saying, you know, even though for them it was in the present, they realised that way back there in my time, you know, nothing had changed. And that's the other thing I want to mention, you know, the reason why I'm here is because I see one of my younger cousins get up here and give his statement, you know. And I saw it on the radio, we were halfway doing the Boy Called Piano, we were still writing it at that time and I said to Tom and Nina, I said "Look that's one of my cousins there giving evidence at the Royal Commission, I said I've got to come in, I've got to go in now."

I just try to hide behind my plays and my stories, I didn't really want to come out in a public forum like this and tell it. But when I saw my cousin do it I just thought I've got to get behind this and support Feke because what he was talking about was exactly my story, only mine was 15 years earlier. So I thought nothing's changed, so that's why I'm here, to support Feke and to point out the fact that nothing has changed at all, you know, if you want to look back two weeks ago what happened on TV with that little boy being thrown around, that's the same scene that we've experienced, you know. So thank you to Feke, my man.

Q. So Fa'amoana, with you doing your writing --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- and getting involved with The Conch and doing your plays --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- how have you found that, how can drama and the creative arts create social change?

A. Oh, like I said, it's like writing, you write it for yourself first and then when you do examine your life in the past and look at it, you know, in a positive way or look at it in a way that could help you go further in the future, you've got to do that. So, you know, like writing that book and writing those plays helped me come to terms with myself and to accept what happened in my life and to have a belief that God had a purpose for me to be here today.

Q. Thank you Fa'amoana. I'm mindful we're coming up to --

CHAIR: Yes, we're exchanging very strange looks here, Fa'amoana, that means it's time for afternoon tea.

A. Okay, I'm all for that.

Q. I'm sure you won't disagree with that. We'll take a break for 15 minutes?

MS SHARKEY: Yes, thank you.

CHAIR: We'll come back in 15 minutes time.

Adjournment from 3.29 pm to 3.53 pm

CHAIR: Welcome back everybody.

QUESTIONING BY MS SHARKEY CONTINUED: Fa'amoana.

A. Yes.

Q. Not long to go now.

A. Hope so.

Q. So we had started talking about the theatre and the creative arts and your story writing. And I just had a question about our Pasifika kids and youth and us being traditional orators and my question was, do you think that our Pacific children and youth can relate to the

creative arts, music and drama like you did?

A. Yeah, definitely, and I think it's a good help, you know, a lot of our kids are really talented, as far as the arts go. Polynesian people I suppose are sight learners, you want to learn how to weave a mat you sit next to your grandmother, you know, the academic world of reading books and that wasn't in our thing, you know, so sight is how I learned anyway, you know, to play the guitar, I watch other guys, where they put their fingers and such, you know, so yeah, I'm a sight learner and I definitely think that the arts and creative writing and stuff like that will be good for our youth. A lot of them are good, they're natural storytellers anyway, you know, a lot of our kids.

Q. And how was it for you expressing yourself through the plays and your writing?

A. Well, it depends on your life, but because I've had such a traumatic life, to have my story being acted out, it was like being transported back to the boys' home and reliving it. So it's kind of hard and cathartic to write about something that's not very nice about yourself and then to watch it being reproduced live on stage, and yes, every time I watch that play I'm back in the boys' home again. And that's the skills of the people that are around me like The Conch theatre, they were able to bring out those truths out of me in a nice, safe way, you know. And like I say, it's - it wasn't a very nice story, but I'm sure, you know, our Pacific people have really nice stories and our kids will be able to bring that out through theatre and help themselves at the same time, you know, like how it helped me was by writing about my life, I was able to go back as a kid and retrace and come back as to where the road went wrong-.

Q. Did it help you understand?

A. Yes, and understand and to accept and to finally forgive yourself, you know.

Q. And so for our children in State care, you mentioned before that some came to watch your play?

A. And some pre-release prisoners as well, yeah.

Q. And some of them were crying?

A. Yeah, they were really touched for it because like I said, you know, like they identified and it's sad that they could identify it when really this was happening to me 50 years ago. It's the same thing as I see it with Feks, how he gave his testimony here in front of all you people, and yet I was before him by about 15 years, you know, so I just thought man I've got to really come and support this whole kaupapa of denial about Pacific people being in these institutions. There were lots of them that I'd seen, you know, and I've given the reasons why some of them hid it etc., but yeah, definitely there's no denying a lot of our

young people were in there and I was one of them.

Q. Thank you Fa'amoana. So just coming back to the theatre and the arts, you would want to see those opportunities available for our children?

A. Definitely it would be good in the schools, all those type of things, you know. In fact when I said to Nina Nawalowalo of The Conch about this play that we were developing, she said "Where would you like it to be played first?" I said "I wouldn't mind it to be played in Pare", you know, in the jail because what I'm doing, that's the kind of work I like to get involved with, is try and change people's lives by sharing my story. And like I said, you know, like a lot of guys my age who are still in gangs now, I probably know them from those times as kids in State care, because I think that -- I know that a lot of kids my age that were in State care, when they left the boys' home they went back to gangs or they left the boys' home and started gangs. The reason for that is because gangs are usually people who have been in care and other people that come out of care, they're the only people they can get on with, it was very much like what I said about the King Cobras, the older King Cobras and we as younger ones looking up to them as how do we go forward in this new world. Of course, what they were experiencing was not good, so they became violent and they said to us if we meet up with that attitude, violence was the way. Violence is its own language isn't it, you know. You can convince somebody to do something you want by being violent. And that was the kind of attitude to give back to people who didn't like us here or thought we were monkeys or something.

Q. So violence was a language that was used?

A. Yeah, if you want something anyway. Especially in places like the homes and the whole gang thing, you know.

Q. So we're coming towards the end of the session Fa'amoana. There will be people in our communities watching this, there are Pasifika youth listening to you and watching this, and some Pacific survivors who might be listening and who haven't come forward. Is there anything you would like to say to our community and to other Pacific survivors?

A. Yeah, for all those that are in care or are still struggling as to who or why they're in the positions they're in, you know, all I can say is, you know, you've got to examine your past, you've got to have a really good, deep, long look at yourself, write about your story, write your life, you know, all these things will help you come to terms with where you are if you're on the wrong side of the tracks.

Q. There's one question I forgot to ask, it's about the film Ghost in the Shell that you starred in with a Hollywood super star. I just wanted to ask you a question about that. What was that

like?

A. It was amazing, you know, I was spoiled rotten. I just thought I was Marlon Brando. I had people coming around with all these hors d'oeuvres or whatever they call them, little bits of food and I had my own little caravan, I was sitting there like a star and people were just catering for me, you know. And yeah, it was an experience eh, you know, I don't know if it's something I'd like to do full-time, but yeah, it was something new for me and meeting up with that Johanna Scarlett woman, she was a young mother, she'd just had her baby and she was just like any other young mum, she was kind, she was good and I had a good experience there, yeah.

Q. And what did they use from you, was it imagery?

A. Yeah, I think it was imagery. I'm covered in tattoos, I've got my Samoan pe'a and all my body's covered in tats and that's what they wanted, they wanted a guy that looked like an Yakuza gangster and they picked a Samoan guy from a play, so yeah.

Q. Fa'amoana, you say in your statement, and this is how you opened your statement, you say "I always considered myself to be like a taro shoot trying to grow in the snow, it can never happen you know." Fa'amoana, I just wanted to ask what do you mean by that?

A. Well, like I said, I used to go with my grandpa to, --and my father sometimes, to the plantation. A tiapula is a taro shoot which is something that you put in a hole, you dig a hole and you put the taro shoot in and it grows and it becomes a taro. I just felt that the cold attitude that I felt as a kid in the boys' homes and that, I related it back to a tiapula being grown in the snow, you know, it could never happen, because it can only grow in warm, loving, caring place, environment. I found that this place was really cold for a tiapula like me to grow into a taro.

Q. Thank you Fa'amoana. So without the right environment, the right support and nurturing --

A. And love.

Q. -- it's hard for Pacific children.

A. To adjust, yeah.

Q. Right, thank you. And at the end of your statement you mention your sisters who have now passed and your cousins as well?

A. Yeah.

Q. All who were in State care?

A. Yes.

Q. And I wish to acknowledge them.

A. Yes.

Q. Is there anything you would like to say in memory of them?

A. My sister Losa and I were both in the Black Panthers, we were both in gangs. And when we got to Christchurch we sort of saw what the Polynesian Panthers that all our mates started with GRO-B and the rest of them. We saw that was a good thing. So when we got to Christchurch we actually started adopting some of the things that the Polynesian Panthers were doing, writing for funding for computers. And at the youth centre we used to have them all there so that our Pacific Island kids can come and use computers there, because we were still with that attitude of, that's a waste of money, this money's got to go to the fa'alavelave, you'se get brainy, but without the tools. So we realise that was in our Pacific culture, you know, our other people in the Islands came first sometimes, at the sacrifice of our own needs as children in this new environment.

So me and my sister, or my sister mostly, and Carol, they started up a youth centre down there and it was to promote our Island kids coming in to do their homework because they haven't got computers at home. So those were just some of the things that we got off the Polynesian Panthers that we're doing up here which we took down to Christchurch. From that we got Pacific Underground, we got the women's group, we had the men's support group for the Pacific community down there. And out of Pacific Underground theatre you get the likes of Dave Fane, Oscar and all them making their names with the plays that my sister's theatre group put on, yeah.

Q. So all of that support is about being there for our youth?

A. Yes, definitely for the future of our people and realising that that's why our parents took the brave move to bring us out here in the first place, you know.

Q. Thank you Fa'amoana. We have some footage that we're going to play.

A. Okay.

Q. And this, Fa'amoana, you talk about changing people's lives by sharing your story.

A. Yeah.

Q. This is an important part of your story is us watching this footage. Is there anything you would like to say before we get this footage up and we play it for everyone who is watching?

A. I just hope that all my efforts have been a way of saying, you know, give back, to encourage our youth and just to give thanks, you know, for life and, yeah, that's about it. I just want to be involved because I want to see our future children. Because as a parent you only want the best for your kids, you know, and I never want to be in the same cell as

my son, and I've seen it a couple of times, you know, father and son in the same cell, I thought I'd never want to be in the same cell with my son, you know. And this is just some of the things that help you as a man change, yeah.

Q. Fa'afetai lava Fa'amoana. Are we ready? Thank you, we're going to have a watch now.

A. Okay, thank you.

(Video played)

FA'AMOANA: "Innocence, we all begin in innocence. All that was the biggest forestry done by children in care, yeah. Being out here just took me away from the fact that I actually don't belong to my parents, I belong to the Government, you know, so yeah. Wash all the pain away.

GRANDSON: Seeing my grandfather take his pain and create this beautiful like story and experience and learning experience of growth and understanding not only just for our family but for others, for everyone out there who's been affected. Always knowing Grandpa's the greatest guitarist ever, everyone knows about him eh, everyone, all the older cuzzies or dad's generation, they all want to learn from him.

FA'AMOANA: No one's born bad, you know. I was the first one here when they built it. The pipes was how we used to communicate with our cell mates.

SURVIVOR(?): The system is protecting these people. I don't know why. I just got angry.

FA'AMOANA: The story of thousands of children has to be heard. For all my friends who were in care with me and have passed on, that will never get an apology. Our history must be faced. May the truth set us free. (Guitar music). In the beginning, you know, like we were just brown kids, brown poly kids growing up in Grey Lynn, Ponsonby, just arrived from Samoa and somehow the system got a hold of us because they deemed our parents couldn't control us, we were roaming the streets but at that time our houses were full. (Guitar music). It was a mixture of feelings, you know, because like I was leaving my mum but I was also excited about where I was going, you know. And from what my mother was saying, you know, this place will be good for me, so did the probation officer, said they'll make a good person out of me and I'll be a better person. I thought I would be, you know, because I was getting it "Trust him, trust the staff, trust the instructions they give you, be a good boy", you know, that was what I got as I was being led away. And of course he's crying at the time, you know. So for me it was like I was sad for my mum but the adventurous boy side of me was curious too, you know, it was a new world, I thought I wonder what the boys' home is like. Once we got into the home, they discouraged visiting us because, you know, they didn't want us to be too attached to our families but start to be

attached to what they're telling us to be attached to, which is their system. Hard core disciplinarian stuff eh. The windows, you know, it's like glass with wire through it, and then there's bars outside that, you know, so you -and the boiler, there used to be a whistle for the boiler, so, you know, that goes off at lunch time, so that was another timeliner. Otherwise there's just light of day you get to know, you know, certain light of day in the cell you know lunch is coming up or something like that, or must be nearly teatime-. You can see a few things like this, you know. Shadows on the window. (Music).

They turned everybody into files, reports, you know, on your behaviour at certain places that they put you and then they compile all those files up and that's your character, that's you in their eyes. When I left Ōwairaka I was, like I said, I was already starting to -- the rot had already started to set in in myself, you know, and by the time I left there and left Levin it was like I was just full of hate. I hated myself really, because when you don't give a damn about yourself you don't give a damn about anybody else, you know. And that's how I was getting, that's the kind of cycle I was getting into. All that came of that was just heaps of porridge and, yeah, lost freedom. You live in hope somehow we don't want to bring up our kids to have a life like I have, say, you know, I don't want my kids to go through the boys' homes and stuff like I have. So I try and be a better dad, even though I didn't know how to be a dad, you know. I was able to make children but I didn't know how to be a father. As a dad and a parent and a grandpa now, all you want is for your kids to do better than you done, you know. And that's my wish, that they go on and don't go through what I went through.

SON: I really didn't think I'd end up here, it was one of the things as a kid I was going to be a good boy, but I guess, yeah, the skills my father had picked up from the borstals he did the best he could but, you know, the damage that happened, you know, sort of spilled into our relationship. Yeah, I wanted to impress him, I wanted him to be proud of me and I thought this was the way for myself. And the thing was, yeah, a lot of my friends were also sons of men that had gone through the borstals, so it didn't seem like it was, you know, it wasn't out of the norm.

GRANDSON: And I'm just blessed I had a mother who loved my dad the way she loved him and understood him the way she loved him, she was able to explain why things were the way they were, you know, and just tell me to accept that and learn and it was hard to understand growing up until taking this journey with my dad and my grandfather now, I feel more centred and strong where I stand and know who I stand for, not only just for the future but for the past as well. (Music).

MS SHARKEY: Fa'amoana, thank you very much, that was very moving and very powerful. I have concluded my questions for Fa'amoana and I'll hand it to the Commissioners now.

CHAIR: We have decided that we have no questions for you, but we're very grateful and I'm going to ask my colleague, Ali'imuamua Alofivae to thank you.

COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE: Lau susuga Fa'amoana. A proud son of Falealili district. The villages of Satalo and Poutasi and there'll be people, Samoans in this room and others who may be connected to Samoans who can trace their ancestry back to these villages as well. Often silence can be interpreted, Fa'amoana, as one of those pauses where people feel they're not sure what they're feeling. But in this particular case, Fa'amoana, there is just an overwhelming sense of gratitude.

Fa'amalo le loto toa, fa'amalo i lou loto alofa ma le loto fesoasoani i le matou galuega, le matou komisina ae maise le tatou atunu'u pele, o Niu Sila. E le lava ni matou upu, Fa'amoana, e momoli atu i ai le fa'afetai. Fa'afetai ia oe, i lou aiga pele. Carol, you and your boys who have travelled this journey so patiently, so valiantly and so courageously with Fa'amoana. Fa'amoana, you said that you have a pe'a and as you well know, i le tatou atunu'u, a ta le pe'a, ua e ofu i le measina a le atunu'u. You are wearing our cultural dress lau tautala, lau savali, lau tu. How you walk, how you talk, how you hold yourself. The significance of your name, Fa'amoana Luafutu from Poutasi.

Ua filogia le tatou afiafi. There are many in this room who won't understand if I continue to say salutations to you in Samoan. But your gift to our Commission this afternoon, the precious gift from Poutasi is the story that you want your life to make a difference, Fa'amoana on behalf of the Commission, on behalf of our Chair and my fellow Commissioners who sit beside me, we receive your story in its entirety. We receive it and we want to use it for exactly what you are gifting it to us for: to create change.

Thank you for being able to outline so succinctly for us over the decades the way that your own personal family has contributed to the richness of the arts and culture beginning with the Pacific Underground movement in Christchurch. But even before that, what you're beginning to do with the Panthers. Many may not understand why we don't go deep and actually talk about the abuse itself. It's because we understand, Fa'amoana, you have provided us with your document. We understand and for many of us here sitting in this room today you will appreciate the hurt, the mamae, the shame, but the fact that Fa'amoana has come along today, Tatala e Pulonga, to lift the dark cloud, Fa'amoana, our blessing for you is that your life will continue to create change in all of the different spheres in which you populate in which you move. Your life counts.

For all of your friends who did not make it and who have passed on, we want to honour them as well. For your family members that have passed on, we want to thank them as well. Fa'amoana, for your parents, your grandparents and the rich, the rich ancestral lines that you come from, Falealili is a proud district. We want to honour the contribution that you have made through our Pasifika hearing this afternoon. Ia manuia oe ma lou aiga ma mea uma e pa'i i ai ou lima.

A. Fa'afetai.

Q. Fa'afetai lava. **[Applause]**

A. I just want to say that may God's name be praised and glorified with all the efforts that I and The Conch and my life can bring for our people. That's me, thank you very much for listening.

Q. Thank you.

CHAIR: Judge Ida Malosi would like to say something. Would you like to come forward please.

JUDGE MALOSI: Madam Chair, with your Your Honour's leave I'd like to address Fa'amoana directly on behalf of us all.

Fa'amoana; I've never had the privilege of meeting you in person. Maybe God had a plan that it would happen today in front of our people. My name is Ida Malosi, I've been a judge of the District Court. I've been privileged to have been a judge of the District Court for nearly 20 years. But I've been a Samoan and a child of God for all of my life. So I could not sit here and not respond to you and not claim you. On behalf of all of our people, all of our community, I claim you.

I offer myself, my success, whatever that means to you, because you and I together are the sum total of our people and together we make a whole. Together we are a whole. The lesson in me standing at this time for the Commission is that sometimes in this process the right thing has to be done, which is not part of the process. So I stand for us. I stand for the might of our people, and I honour you. I honour you.

A. Thank you.

JUDGE MALOSI: Because you show the best of our people, you are the best of our people, you are enough, and in my eyes, in his eyes, in our eyes, you are whole.

A. Fa'afetai lava. **[Applause]**

CHAIR: May I say that we have no process, we have people speaking from the heart and thank you so much for doing that.

COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE: This brings us now to the conclusion of our first day and as is typical for Pasifika can I now invite Reverend Mose to the front to close our proceedings.

Fa'afetai lava.

REVEREND MOSE: There is a Samoan saying that says “Se’i lua’i lou le ‘ulu taumamao” which translates "gather the breadfruit from the father's branches first", which is simple translation and an analogy for us is do the most difficult things first and today we begin the difficult work. But before we leave today, I wonder if you would indulge me for a couple of minutes as we join together to bring our day to a close and to prepare ourselves for the two weeks to come, but also to leave all the things that you have heard here today and you don't have to carry them.

So I'm going to invite you all if you could sit right back in your seat and put yourself in a comfortable position, comfortable and alert. You can close your eyes if you wish and hopefully my voice is not annoying for you to listen to. I invite you to find length in your spine, your chest open and letting your shoulders soften and release. Having that tension melting away. Let there be space under your chin and be long through the back of your neck.

Take a few deep breaths in and out, becoming aware of your breath, the coolness going in and the warmth coming out. Be aware of any tension that you might be carrying in your body. Be compassionate with it, softening that area as you exhale and go back to breathing normally, noticing your breath, in through your nose and out through your mouth, breathing. Imagine you are walking along carrying a bag. It is heavy and it is difficult to manage. You're tired but you feel you must keep going. You decide to stop and rest beside a river, which is flowing fresh and clear. You put the bag down and sit next to it. You watch the water flowing for a while and let its music soothe you and you begin to sense that God is inviting you to set down the things you have been holding and to let the water carry them away as it flows.

What do you notice in yourself as you contemplate releasing the things you have been carrying with you in the bag. Take a look into the bag and see what you have been carrying. What are the fears, worries, plans, and hopes that are wearing heavily on you. As you look into the bag, put your hand and begin taking out whatever comes to you in no order, just draw out one thing at a time and whatever comes to hand, let yourself feel the weight of it and notice where it shows up most often in your life and perhaps also where it lies hidden.

When you feel ready, start throwing the things you have taken from your bag into the river. Watch them bob up and down on the water as they are carried away, floating into the distance. What do you notice about how it feels to do this. Once your bag is empty, or

as empty as you are ready for it to be rest in the quiet. You may want to talk to God or say something out loud of the things that you let go from your bag, or you may want to talk about what senses still with you. Take a little time. When you feel complete in that exchange, imagine yourself fully at rest. Trust yourself to this moment, to the love that surrounds you and sustains you. Let this moment be fully sufficient, allow this moment to fill you with a sense that nothing is lacking and everything is gift.

Find your breath again, in through your nose and out through your mouth. And as you breathe we ask these things of God. Look down upon us with a heart full of compassion, with eyes filled with a non-judgmental stare and help us to reflect on our experiences of today, the things that may have brought some joy, the things that we found hard, the feelings that came up all of these we share with you. Whatever pain that we might be going through, remember the words of the psalmist, the Lord is close to the broken hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. We ask all of these things in the name of your beloved, Amen.

Hearing adjourned at 4.34 pm to Tuesday, 20 July 2021 at 10 am