

**ABUSE IN CARE ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY  
LAKE ALICE CHILD AND ADOLESCENT UNIT INQUIRY HEARING**

**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

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Commission  
Ms Karen Feint QC, Ms Julia White and Ms Jane Maltby  
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for the Survivors  
Ms Moira Green for the Citizens Commission on Human  
Rights  
Ms Susan Hughes QC for Mr Malcolm Burgess and Mr  
Lawrence Reid  
Mr Michael Heron QC for Dr Janice Wilson  
Ms Frances Everard for the New Zealand Human Rights  
Commission  
Mr Hayden Rattray for Mr Selwyn Leeks  
Mr Eric Forster for Victor Soeterik  
Mr Lester Cordwell for Mr Brian Stabb and Ms Gloria Barr  
Mr Scott Brickell for Denis Hesseltine  
Ms Anita Miller for the Medical Council

**Venue:** Level 2  
Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry  
414 Khyber Pass Road  
AUCKLAND

**Date:** 18 June 2021

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**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

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1 intimate details that you've shared with us today.

2 Can I just reassure you that we have heard you, we have heard you, we have heard  
3 all of the other survivors that have come before this Commission and we believe you. We  
4 just want to make sure that you understand that we are receiving your information fully and  
5 it's certainly our intention to be able to use it. Thank you for filling out lots of detail for us  
6 and understanding the landscape of what actually went on at Lake Alice during that period.

7 Can I also just thank your children who I understand might be watching.

8 A. Yes.

9 **Q.** Can I please thank you for the enormous love that you have for your father for being able to  
10 understand where he was at and forgiving him those hours that he needed to be able to put  
11 this statement together for us. This is a moment in history for your father, he's contributed  
12 richly to our investigation, and we just want to let your children know and to you know that  
13 we are truly grateful and indebted for what you've been able to bring to us today.

14 A. Thank you.

15 **Q.** Thank you.

16 **CHAIR:** We will take a break now for lunch and come back at who's going to help me here,  
17 2 o'clock or --

18 **MS JOYCHILD:** 2 o'clock.

19 **CHAIR:** Thank you all.

20 **Lunch adjournment from 1.02 pm to 2.15 pm**

21 **CHAIR:** We have Mr JJ.

22 **MR MOLLOY:** I think Ms Joychild is in the room with Mr JJ.

23 **MR JJ**

24 **CHAIR:** So what we need is a screen so we can see them. Commissioners can't see them. Here  
25 we can. Hello JJ.

26 A. Afternoon.

27 **Q.** How are you?

28 A. Oh not too bad.

29 **Q.** Not too bad but a bit difficult. I'm Coral Shaw, I'm the Chair of the Commission. I just  
30 want to welcome you and I understand you've had a few problems getting here?

31 A. I have, very, very stressing yesterday.

32 **Q.** Yes, I'm really sorry to hear that.

33 A. Thank you.

34 **Q.** Are you okay now, more or less?

- 1 A. Yeah, yeah, kind of I think.
- 2 Q. Can I say I love your glasses.
- 3 A. Thank you very much.
- 4 Q. Very smart. All right, you've got Ms Joychild beside you and she's going to ask you some  
5 questions. But before she does that, can I just ask you to listen and agree with the  
6 following. JJ, do you solemnly, sincerely and truly declare and affirm that the evidence  
7 you will give before this Commission will be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the  
8 truth?
- 9 A. I absolutely do.
- 10 Q. Thank you very much and I'll leave it now with Frances to talk to you.
- 11 **MS JOYCHILD:** Thank you. Good afternoon Commissioners. Mr JJ, would like to be called  
12 John for the purposes of this evidence. So --
- 13 **CHAIR:** How do we spell that?
- 14 **MS JOYCHILD:** John.
- 15 **CHAIR:** Oh John, John it will be then, okay John.
- 16 **QUESTIONING BY MS JOYCHILD:** John, we're not going to talk about your early childhood,  
17 but apart from to say it was difficult.
- 18 A. That's right.
- 19 Q. So we're now going to look at your schooling and I'm going to read paragraph 7, then I  
20 want you to comment on it. So one of your main problems as a child was that "I had some  
21 sort of learning disability. I just could not learn how to read and write and spell. This was  
22 made worse by the stress I was under at home and the fact that the primary teacher,  
23 Mr Dillaway, would hit a cane on my desk and shout at me because I couldn't do the work."  
24 And then you go on to say you were aware you were behind the other children but you  
25 didn't know how to stop it?
- 26 A. That's correct.
- 27 Q. And then you talk about being teased. Do you want to tell the Commissioners about that?
- 28 A. Yes, I do. As I could remember, a child not being up at that level and not knowing how to  
29 read or write, they called me dumbbell or, you know, kids can be cruel, and then you get all  
30 frustrated and you start lashing out, not to hurt them but you just -- you just want to scream.  
31 It's very difficult.
- 32 Q. So you got a lot of teasing being called dumbbell, backward and slow?
- 33 A. Yes.
- 34 Q. And that was by the kids in the playground?

- 1 A. That's right.
- 2 Q. And even your siblings used to tease you?
- 3 A. Yes, they did.
- 4 Q. So because of that, you got a reputation of being quite aggressive, is that right?
- 5 A. Yes, that's right.
- 6 Q. Okay. And then what would you -- you'd come home from school and tell your  
7 grandmother, how did that go?
- 8 A. Well, not very good because my grandmother, she didn't like my mother and she didn't like  
9 us at all, that's why she's a cruel, horrible woman and she didn't listen to a word that we  
10 said or believed what we said, because of the hate that she had for her own daughter. And  
11 that's true.
- 12 Q. Your grandmother was your mother's mother?
- 13 A. That's right.
- 14 Q. And she was given you and the children were taken off your mum, is that right?
- 15 A. Yes, we were given to our grandmother to look after. She took us, but she didn't like us at  
16 all.
- 17 Q. Okay. Now we're just going to go on now to sexual abuse.
- 18 A. Yes.
- 19 Q. So you were still living at home with your mother and your stepfather, is that right?
- 20 A. No, not my stepfather. The man that married my mother.
- 21 Q. Right. You wouldn't call him your stepfather?
- 22 A. No.
- 23 Q. Tell me about him a bit.
- 24 A. As far as I know, he was a cruel, very aggressive man, he used to beat my mother to a pulp,  
25 blood nose, black eyes and I can remember being a child, I managed to hit him with a  
26 broom and I ran down to the GRO-B, which is not far away from the house, from one of  
27 the pastors there for my mother -- should I go on to say what happened.
- 28 Q. Yeah, yeah.
- 29 A. Then instead of getting helped he helped himself to me and sexually abused me. Horribly,  
30 and he had alcohol on his breath.
- 31 Q. So you went -- your father -- this man who your mother married was beating up your  
32 mother?
- 33 A. Yes.
- 34 Q. In front of you children and you ran to get help for your mother?

- 1 A. That's correct.
- 2 Q. But the pastor you called him at the GRO-B, would that be a priest?
- 3 A. Yes, he wore a white collar and black outfit.
- 4 Q. Right. He sexually abused you?
- 5 A. Yes, he did.
- 6 Q. Okay. That was the first time you were sexually abused. Did that happen once or more  
7 than once?
- 8 A. No, it happened more than once because at that time I was younger than -- I was still quite  
9 young and, you know, I don't really know, but when I told someone about it, which was my  
10 grandmother. She never believed me but I told my mother when I could, she believed  
11 every word that I said, but there's nothing that she could do. And I often wondered why.
- 12 Q. So when you were 6 or 7 you were moved to your grandmother's by the court, weren't you?
- 13 A. Yes, that's true.
- 14 Q. Your mum had had a break-down?
- 15 A. My mother had a break-down because of the marriage, my first father and her separated, I  
16 don't know what reason. And so she had a break-down, as some women do, but she's not  
17 mentally ill, she wasn't mentally ill at all, sorry.
- 18 Q. So then you were staying with your grandmother and there was an adult cousin there as  
19 well?
- 20 A. Yes, I remember him well.
- 21 Q. Tell the Commission about him.
- 22 A. Yes, well, he was my cousin. Like Māoridom, most of us Māori sleep with our own  
23 whānau for comfort and warmth, not for sexual abuse, but he used to sexually abuse me  
24 whenever he wanted to. You know, I used to be torn and whatever as a child, horribly. Go  
25 crying and screaming to my grandmother but she'd said "Get out of here I don't want -- it's  
26 nonsense he wouldn't do that", but evidence was there.
- 27 Q. When you say the evidence was there --
- 28 A. Yeah.
- 29 Q. -- you had anal tears?
- 30 A. Yeah.
- 31 Q. And you showed your grandmother them?
- 32 A. Yes, I did. And she did not believe that.
- 33 Q. What was her explanation?
- 34 A. "He'd have to be a puaka (inaudible) you know, a mad pig.

- 1 **Q.** Right, okay. She told you that you'd hit your butt on your bed end?
- 2 **A.** That's right, "Oh you did it yourself, you did your own injuries, you hit your bottom on the  
3 end of the bed." (Inaudible) but it wasn't true, I didn't do that at all.
- 4 **Q.** So with you having been sexually abused twice and then you're being teased of being slow,  
5 you got more aggressive as a child, is that right?
- 6 **A.** Well, yes, I did, but not to hurt anybody, I wasn't the type of person to get -- go out there  
7 and punch somebody, or rip somebody's head off, it's just the screaming and the yelling,  
8 just "Why are you doing this to me, why are you calling me this?" I couldn't understand  
9 why.
- 10 **Q.** Right, so you were screaming and yelling back?
- 11 **A.** Yes.
- 12 **Q.** So then on the 9 June 1970 when you were 12 years old you were made a ward of the State,  
13 formally made, and you were sent to Campbell Park in Dunedin?
- 14 **A.** That's right.
- 15 **Q.** How did you find Campbell Park?
- 16 **A.** Not good, it was -- Campbell Park was a school for boys, it was called a boarding school  
17 and kind of a health camp as well. And they called themselves "housemasters" where they  
18 should be looking after children with love and care, but they weren't, they were doing  
19 sexual abusing children with, you know, everything that you could possibly dream of, but  
20 we couldn't go to anybody because there was no-one there that would believe us. "The  
21 housemasters, oh no, none of them do that to you, no they wouldn't do that, they wouldn't  
22 touch you, that's not what they're trained for." I said, you know, often wondered in my  
23 mind what are they trained for, just to do sexual abusing children?
- 24 **Q.** So you saw sexual abuse at Campbell Park?
- 25 **A.** Yes, I saw other children getting the same treatment maybe worse than what I was getting.
- 26 **Q.** Right, so you were being abused at Campbell Park as well?
- 27 **A.** That's right. Why me, I say.
- 28 **Q.** A month later you were sent to Lake Alice?
- 29 **A.** Yes, I was.
- 30 **Q.** And I just want to read out a psychiatric report that Dr Pugmire wrote. I'm not going to  
31 read --
- 32 **A.** The late Dr Pugmire.
- 33 **Q.** The late Dr Pugmire. I'm not going to read out all of the quote because it's so upsetting to  
34 John he doesn't want it read out, but if Commissioners could read it.

1 **CHAIR:** Yes, John, just to let you know that --

2 **MS JOYCHILD:** I'm sorry, John.

3 **CHAIR:** John, just to let you know we have read everything that's in there, so if you don't want it  
4 read out we have still seen it, okay?

5 A. You're most welcome to, that's what I wanted you to see.

6 **Q.** Good we've got it the here.

7 A. That's okay.

8 **CHAIR:** I just want to say to Ms Joychild just be a bit slower please, when John has finished  
9 something just take a break so that it can be typed down before you ask the next question.

10 **MS JOYCHILD:** Yes.

11 **CHAIR:** Thank you.

12 **QUESTIONING BY MS JOYCHILD CONTINUED:** John, there is one sentence in that letter  
13 from Dr Pugmire that I wanted -- we decided you would make a comment on. That's the  
14 sentence where Dr Pugmire says, "Although John's mother has had the good fortune to  
15 marry a very fine Māori gentleman, who's well able to train normal children, John has  
16 proved quite unresponsive."

17 A. No, that's not true. He wasn't a good man. Like I said in the beginning, he was very  
18 abusive. He abused my -- he hurt my mother, gave her bleeding noses and black eyes. No  
19 woman who loves -- no man who loves her woman would ever do that. You should never  
20 ever touch the ones that you love. No, he was never my father, he was just a person, a  
21 person that I did not want to know but I had to because he was my mother's husband.  
22 Sorry.

23 **Q.** So we'd talked about how you were in -- how you came to be in Lake Alice.

24 A. This is what I want, this is what I want, yeah, to be read, thank you.

25 **Q.** Yeah. Okay. So you were in Cherry Farm for two years?

26 A. I was.

27 **Q.** And you say that it was a horrendous place and was actually worse than Lake Alice?

28 A. Well, in the sense of the word when you're a 12 year old and you're put into a ward like  
29 villa H and villa D, with the grown men, men, that are fairly mentally insane -- sorry to say  
30 that word -- and we weren't, we were just put in there because we had learning disabilities  
31 and couldn't read and write and I had a bit of anger at them because I felt like I was rejected  
32 everywhere I go.

33 **Q.** Right.

34 A. And I didn't think it was right.



- 1 **Q.** Right. So you say that you and the other children were sexually violated?
- 2 **A.** There was -- yes, there was more children. I don't know the ages, but we were very young.
- 3 I was 12, maybe they may be younger or a bit older than what I was, but yes, there was a lot
- 4 of children there. They used to get the same treatment.
- 5 **Q.** And it was the male nurses who --
- 6 **A.** It was the male nurses as far as I knew.
- 7 **Q.** Who would violate the children?
- 8 **A.** That's right.
- 9 **Q.** You --
- 10 **A.** Very violate -- sorry for interrupting.
- 11 **Q.** No problem, it's very important for you to talk and say it exactly as it is.
- 12 **A.** Thank you.
- 13 **Q.** So you also said that you were hosed down with high pressure hoses, laughed at and
- 14 taunted for no apparent reason?
- 15 **A.** That's correct. Yeah, they hosed us down, you know, those big fire hoses that can knock
- 16 you off your feet. As a child, knocked me off my feet, I can tell you that, and then poked
- 17 out and prodded at, laughed at and said, you know, "You're just a so and so", swore -- I
- 18 can't swear on camera -- and we had no-one to turn to, nobody, nobody could help us.
- 19 **Q.** So there was no-one you could complain to at Lake Alice?
- 20 **A.** No.
- 21 **Q.** That's at Cherry Farm. So then --
- 22 **CHAIR:** Just take a break.
- 23 **A.** Sorry.
- 24 **Q.** Don't be sorry, just take as much time as you need, John.
- 25 **A.** I'm just very emotional at the moment. Excuse me for a moment. Okay, I'll be fine. Thank
- 26 you.
- 27 **QUESTIONING BY MS JOYCHILD CONTINUED:** So you were at Cherry Farm with all
- 28 this horrid treatment for two years and then they said they were going to send you to Lake
- 29 Alice because it was closer to your family home?
- 30 **A.** That's right.
- 31 **Q.** You don't believe that, do you?
- 32 **A.** No, I don't believe that. You know, being a child I through oh well. It was closer to my
- 33 family but I didn't know they were lying to me. When you're 12 you don't know, you just
- 34 do as you're told I suppose. That's where they take you.

- 1 **Q.** And so then you -- we're looking at paragraph 18, you say you don't believe you had a  
2 mental illness and should not have been admitted to either Lake Alice or Cherry Farm?
- 3 **A.** No, no, not at all.
- 4 **Q.** And we've got a quote there from one of your files in Lake Alice and I'm going to read this  
5 to the Commissioners now.
- 6 **A.** Yes, please do.
- 7 **Q.** So it was signed by a social worker and it was 5 June 1973 and it says:  
8 "An early report suggests that John was diagnosed as schizophrenic but this is not  
9 correct. This was a tentative diagnosis and has not been confirmed by Lake Alice. John  
10 was readmitted largely because of a lack of suitable alternatives. As far as the hospital is  
11 concerned there is nothing psychiatrically wrong with him at least that needs further  
12 hospital treatment. He is currently being held but not treated."
- 13 **A.** [Nods].
- 14 **Q.** But you were treated as Lake Alice, weren't you?
- 15 **A.** Yes, very badly.
- 16 **Q.** Okay. So we'll just start off when you arrived. You did meet Dr Leeks, didn't you?
- 17 **A.** I did meet Dr Leeks, yes.
- 18 **Q.** How long did you talk with him for?
- 19 **A.** I wouldn't say that long, he just said "I'm Dr Leeks, I'll be taking care of you. We take  
20 good care of children in here, we won't hurt them in any way." That's as far as -- mind you,  
21 I would have been like 13 by then.
- 22 **Q.** Yeah, by then you were 14.
- 23 **A.** 14, sorry, and I said -- what could I say, I just shook my head, okay, so that was it.
- 24 **Q.** Did he tell you you would be getting ECT?
- 25 **A.** No, he didn't tell me I was getting ECT, oh that was I was getting Largactil, illegal drugs or  
26 anything, he said just there for care and learning. That's what the unit was called, child and  
27 adolescent unit, which was untrue.
- 28 **Q.** When you first went to Lake Alice, you say that you were put in a ward with crazy men, it  
29 was an adult ward, you were terrified of them, "they looked like they had come out of a  
30 horror movie and I felt I was living with monsters."
- 31 **A.** That's right. Well, as being a 14 year old child and you're just dumped, that's how I felt,  
32 dumped in this room full of people, you know, like zombies and spaced out and you just  
33 feel like yes, they look like out of a horror movie.
- 34 **Q.** So there were other boys there, weren't there?

- 1 A. There were.
- 2 Q. How old would the youngest have been?
- 3 A. As far as I'm concerned there would have been a 9 year old, probably would have been a  
4 6 year old as far as I know.
- 5 Q. And there were more Māori boys than Pākehā?
- 6 A. There were lots of Māori boys, yes. I'm not racist either.
- 7 Q. So did you sleep in the dormitory?
- 8 A. We had rooms upstairs as they called dormitories. They put us in there and then they took  
9 us downstairs and put us in a cage, all individual cages, that's what I call them now, with  
10 spring beds.
- 11 Q. So this a different villa, this is the adult villa that you're in?
- 12 A. Yeah.
- 13 Q. It's not the child and adolescent villa?
- 14 A. No, this is another villa, they're all top storey.
- 15 Q. So you would be locked in there for one to three days?
- 16 A. Mmm-hmm.
- 17 Q. You had a potty and some water and something to eat?
- 18 A. Not all the time, when they feel like it. If I may phrase that.
- 19 Q. So you didn't always get things to eat?
- 20 A. No.
- 21 Q. When did you get out of that villa and into child and adolescent unit?
- 22 A. Goodness, such a long time ago. I can't remember.
- 23 Q. Don't worry.
- 24 A. Could be weeks, could be weeks later. I can't remember.
- 25 Q. Let's talk about the electroconvulsive therapy?
- 26 A. Yes.
- 27 Q. You had both modified and unmodified, didn't you?
- 28 A. I sure did.
- 29 Q. You think you had far more unmodified?
- 30 A. Yeah, it certainly felt like it.
- 31 Q. So can you explain to the Commissioners what it was like? First of all start with modified  
32 therapy. Can you tell them what happened to you when you got it?
- 33 A. Well, sometimes when they modify you they give you an injection of some kind of  
34 Largactil, it's a liquid, it's got a very bitter taste, it's an off brown. Sometimes they'll give

1           you a big white pill to make you all dozy. That's it, they'll put these things, electrodes,  
2           sometimes they put them on parts of your body, maybe your genitals or whatever, and then  
3           they just put the voltage up and that's it -- that's not it, but when you come out all you're in a  
4           big room watching a TV and rocking backwards and forwards, not even knowing whether  
5           you're coming or going. Very sore, very, very sore.

6   **Q.**    Very sore in the head?

7   **A.**    Yeah, all parts of the body.

8   **Q.**    So when you got this modified ECT, were you in a room with other people on beds also  
9           getting it?

10 **A.**    What I can remember I know Selwyn, Dr Selwyn Leeks, I will not forget that face. There  
11          is also a nurse, there was a charge nurse, her name was Leonard, Nurse Leonard, she was a  
12          charge nurse and I think Pugmire might have been there as well, yeah, I think there were  
13          about three or four of them there.

14 **Q.**    And when you had it, did you have it with other patients as well in other beds?

15 **A.**    I can't remember them, but I assumed they were waiting for their turn because, you know,  
16          we were strapped down with straps and held down. Some with medication, sometimes we  
17          had medication, sometimes we wouldn't have anything at all. And the feeling of that is  
18          very, very, very hard to describe, it's like, I suppose (inaudible), I suppose it feels like your  
19          head has just exploded. You feel like little things just grabbing at your head, like blades or  
20          something like that.

21 **Q.**    Okay, so --

22 **A.**    And -- sorry.

23 **Q.**    No, keep going.

24 **A.**    Even though I was young at that time I can still remember at my age that I am today it's one  
25          thing that I -- horrible thing I'll never ever forget. Sorry.

26 **Q.**    No.

27 **A.**    Sorry for interrupting you.

28 **Q.**    No, you're the one that's talking, you can hold the floor the whole time, John. So when you  
29          were talking about that, was that the unmodified, like one lot you were put to sleep?

30 **A.**    Mmm.

31 **Q.**    Was that with the Largactil that put you to sleep?

32 **A.**    The Largactil and something else, I don't know what they in your bottom, it was in a needle  
33          anyway and sometimes we'd get the liquid Largactil or the big white pill. They're not even  
34          on the market today, they're totally illegal.

- 1 **Q.** And they used to put you into a groggy state and then --
- 2 **A.** Yes.
- 3 **Q.** -- you had ECT?
- 4 **A.** Yes, strap you.
- 5 **Q.** Strapped down?
- 6 **A.** Strap you to a bed, either hold you there, and put it on any part of your body, whether it's
- 7 genitals, sorry, your head, then they put the volts through me. I don't know why they did
- 8 that.
- 9 **Q.** Then you had ECT when you had no sedatives, nothing. How different was that?
- 10 **A.** Very. Very different. It's just that words cannot describe the pain. Even after all those
- 11 years I still can have a tear in my eye.
- 12 **Q.** You said it was really, really, really terrifying and often you would pass out. As far as --
- 13 **A.** It was, it was terrible.
- 14 **Q.** As far as you understood, it was punishment?
- 15 **A.** Yeah.
- 16 **Q.** You say you thought the doctors and nurses got a kick -- you're going to have a break?
- 17 Yeah, can we have a break?
- 18 **CHAIR:** We'll take a break.
- 19 **A.** No, I'll carry on.
- 20 **Q.** John, it's entirely up to you.
- 21 **A.** I want to get this done.
- 22 **Q.** You want to get it over and done with?
- 23 **A.** Where were we? Sorry.
- 24 **QUESTIONING BY MS JOYCHILD CONTINUED:** It's all right I'll keep talking. I'm just
- 25 going to read a bit out now and you can just sit there and deep breathe. Okay, "If it was
- 26 unmodified you first heard buzzing and then feel the shock as it went through your head
- 27 which would be throbbing, you'd be screaming and shaking. It was incredibly painful like
- 28 punching in the head. When it finished you didn't know anything. It was horrible and sore.
- 29 It was really, really, really terrifying and I would often pass out."
- 30 **A.** That's right.
- 31 **Q.** "I still get headaches today from it."
- 32 **A.** Still.
- 33 **Q.** "When the boys were in the lounge watching TV they knew when ECT was happening
- 34 because the stripes would run across the TV screen." And you saw those stripes running

1 across the TV screen?

2 A. Yes, they were only black and white those days but we still see them, it would go across the  
3 screen that was sitting on the shelf.

4 Q. You say you "think the doctors and nurses got a kick out of giving it to us"?

5 A. They did. They laughed and pointed at us. "It's your turn now. I bet you enjoyed that."  
6 Not so nice as I said it, but horribly. "I bet you enjoyed that", you know, poking us and  
7 whatever. Not only me, to a lot of children, innocent children. Should never have been  
8 done.

9 Q. And you say one day there was an incident between you and a nurse?

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. You accidentally broke a pot and he threw a hammer at your head?

12 A. That's correct, I've still got the bump right at the back of my head here. I have it there.

13 Q. And then he took you over to the villa and gave you ECT 12 times?

14 A. Yeah. Because how they worked it out, if you misbehaved, that was only an accident, you  
15 know, it was one of these ones that was made out of sand and put in sets, but it just dropped  
16 accidental. He was -- I don't know why he did that, you know, the hammer at my head.  
17 And then I went for ECT because he said that I was playing up because I purposely did that  
18 myself, I knocked it off the shelf. No, that's not true what he said, and it is true that, yes,  
19 that's what happened to me. The bump on the back of my head with that hammer, I was  
20 lucky to be alive, I suppose.

21 **CHAIR:** Ms Joychild, can I just ask John a question about that, do you mind if I ask you a  
22 question John?

23 A. Certainly.

24 Q. So this is the nurse who threw the hammer at your head and then took you to get ECT and  
25 you said 12 times and you said "He gave me ECT." So who was it, was it the nurse or was  
26 it Dr Leeks?

27 A. I meant to say Dr Leeks always gave it. Maybe I said, you know.

28 Q. When you said "he" you meant Dr Leeks?

29 A. Yeah, I mean Dr Leeks.

30 Q. Okay, thank you.

31 A. That's what I meant because no-one could actually give it unless Dr Leeks -- yeah, he was  
32 the main.

33 Q. Okay, thank you.

34 A. Pugmire of course. You're welcome, thank you.

- 1 **QUESTIONING BY MS JOYCHILD CONTINUED:** Did Dr Pugmire give you ECT  
2 sometimes?
- 3 A. I think he did, but I think -- I think it was -- Pugmire was the big boss, you know, he'll give  
4 the orders to his flunky Leeks to go and give this child or this child or that many children  
5 shock treatment and he'll go and do it. You know, like he would be his run around doctor,  
6 and Pugmire was the boss of that unit as far as I was concerned.
- 7 **Q.** Did you ever see Dr Pugmire giving anyone ECT personally?
- 8 A. I can't -- I do remember Selwyn Leeks, I can't remember Mr Pugmire doing that.
- 9 **Q.** So then you'd say that --
- 10 A. Maybe he did.
- 11 **Q.** You didn't see. So while you were waiting to find out if you were chosen, you'd hear the  
12 children's screams, they were horrible and eerie.
- 13 A. Mmm.
- 14 **Q.** "The nurse would then come and point to you and say 'you'. He would then drag you  
15 upstairs. It was all about punishment."
- 16 A. Yeah.
- 17 **Q.** Did you sometimes know why you were getting it, what you'd done wrong?
- 18 A. No, well, you know, as children, children, you know, they have play fights and they go like  
19 this when -- like fist fight, but they don't mean to hurt one another. Well, I suppose because  
20 of the unit it was and the nurses and doctors, I don't know who trained them, but they'd  
21 think we were fighting, we were deliberately hurting one another, so they said "He needs a  
22 dose, he needs a pill, he needs a drink of this or a drink of that", Largactil I'm talking about,  
23 or some other drug.
- 24 **Q.** So you say that a whole lot of nurses would hold you down?
- 25 A. Yeah.
- 26 **Q.** When it was modified you didn't have to be held down, did you?
- 27 A. Well, because, you know, you had --
- 28 **Q.** You had straps?
- 29 A. -- drugs in your body to -- and they strapped you down and they put them on you because  
30 your body will jolt and --
- 31 **Q.** Right.
- 32 A. I assume.
- 33 **Q.** So you would go unconscious and wake up in another room on a bed?
- 34 A. Mmm.

- 1 **Q.** Or under a sheet. Sometimes you woke in the bath.
- 2 **A.** That's right.
- 3 **Q.** Why would you be in the bath?
- 4 **A.** Because sometimes I think, because I'd been watching some movies and that, I think, I  
5 think because when people get shocked like that, you do, you know, the other end and the  
6 front goes as well because your body's going through trauma and everything works.
- 7 **Q.** So you wet and soiled, you always wet and soiled yourselves?
- 8 **A.** Yeah, that's right. Not as nice as I'm saying now, it was horrible. Excuse me, sorry.
- 9 **Q.** You say you got -- you estimate you had ECT about 20 times?
- 10 **A.** Yeah. Could have been more, but you know.
- 11 **Q.** Okay. Now what about, can we turn -- is there anymore you want to say about ECT?
- 12 **A.** What can I say? It was done in the 70s. Pugmire's gone, Dr Leeks is 92 years of age and,  
13 you know, I certainly hope that they don't do that anymore. And I also say this, I'm a  
14 Labour supporter, but at that time in the 70s it was under the Labour Government, Norman  
15 Kirk, but he passed on, and he allowed this because the Government was funding, funding  
16 all of those things. So I held responsibility the Labour Government. They could have  
17 looked into this years ago and found out. I'm not as silly as people think I am and I'm not  
18 as dumb as people think I am either. And I just think that, you know, the Government  
19 should be accounted for this, they really should be.
- 20 **Q.** Thanks . John We're now going to go on to talk about drugs. Now you say you got  
21 Largactil every day and it was a brown liquid that tasted very bitter, drowsy and you felt  
22 like a zombie and you put on heaps of weight?
- 23 **A.** Mmm.
- 24 **Q.** Hated it and had no idea while you were being given it?
- 25 **A.** No, I had no idea what it was. I didn't even know it was called Largactil until --
- 26 **Q.** You saw your notes?
- 27 **A.** Until I grew up a bit and then other people had -- I said "Yeah, that's the same stuff I was  
28 on." Not nicely, like not being proud of drinking it, just "Oh that was the horrible stuff they  
29 used to feed me."
- 30 **Q.** So explain -- you said you got about 10 Paraldehyde injections?
- 31 **A.** Mmm. Is that the injections in the backside?
- 32 **Q.** Yeah. Explain how you'd get an injection of Paraldehyde?
- 33 **A.** I was only a child.



- 1 **Q.** You said you were thrown on to the bed?
- 2 **A.** Yeah, well on the bed, you know, bottom up, jab in the backside, you know.
- 3 **Q.** How did that affect your backside?
- 4 **A.** Yes -- not very nice, numb, very numbing, very numbing feeling, sore of course, very sore,  
5 bruising, because, you know, I'm only a child, I'm only a minor, you know.
- 6 **Q.** How did it affect your walking?
- 7 **A.** Not very good, very -- couldn't, you know, you're very like, you know, no good. Very  
8 numb.
- 9 **Q.** After the Paraldehyde, you said that you would sometimes be get put into a lock-up after  
10 you got the injection; explain that.
- 11 **A.** Yes, I can remember that, it's still there. They were little cages on the floor and they had  
12 locks on the outside. You could put an animal inside it like a little dog or a cat, (inaudible)  
13 with a little potty, maybe some (inaudible), give us water and something to eat when they  
14 feel it, they go "You know why you're in here" and of course, you know, we're back in the  
15 corner, we don't know, we're slivering and they locked us up in there. There were several  
16 of them.
- 17 **CHAIR:** John, another question from me if you don't mind. How big were these cages? Just in  
18 proportion to the room you're sitting in at the moment, is it as big as the room you're in  
19 now?
- 20 **A.** Oh no, no, this room's huge. It was just as you would go through the doors there was a  
21 passageway and they were just against the walls. They were, what can I say.
- 22 **Q.** Was it big enough for a bed, could you fit a bed into the room?
- 23 **A.** No, no, you couldn't even fit a bed in it. You could fit a dog into it, couple of dogs into it,  
24 but no.
- 25 **Q.** Could you stand?
- 26 **QUESTIONING BY MS JOYCHILD CONTINUED:** Could you stand up in it?
- 27 **A.** No.
- 28 **Q.** Could you lie down in it?
- 29 **A.** No, no. It was just a square, it was a square like a kennel, they had wires all around it and  
30 on the front it had a padlock on the door. They used to lock us in there, not only me, there  
31 were several other children.
- 32 **Q.** Was that in the adult ward?
- 33 **A.** No, that was in the child and adolescent unit.
- 34 **CHAIR:** How many of these dog boxes were there, do you know?

1 A. Well, I'm sure there was about six of them against that wall. And I didn't even know that --  
2 I didn't even know they were used for us children until I experienced it myself. Horrible.

3 **QUESTIONING BY MS JOYCHILD CONTINUED:** You went back in 2020 with the film  
4 crew.

5 A. Yes.

6 **Q.** You say they were still there.

7 A. Actually when Mr Paul Holmes was still alive I rang TV One as if they would like to take  
8 me back through to -- they got permission and they took me through to the units and they  
9 were still there after all that time, and I think they're still there now. But the buildings were  
10 falling down, crumbling or whatever around the place, and I showed one of the -- Miriama  
11 Rogers and she cried. I said "Look at those pyjama pants", they were tiny pyjama pants  
12 thrown on the floor. They were black, white and blue. I said "That would have been some  
13 little child's pyjamas. This is what they used to lock us in." She said "No", I said "Yes".  
14 She was just shocked.

15 **Q.** Were they inside the building or outside the building? The cages?

16 A. No, they were inside the building.

17 **Q.** Upstairs or downstairs?

18 A. Downstairs.

19 **Q.** Downstairs?

20 A. Mmm, you go through the door, there's a nurses chaos there, just little side (inaudible)  
21 there's little boxes like dog kennels, yeah.

22 **Q.** So I might get  to draw a picture of that.

23 A. I can. You don't mind waiting one moment?

24 **Q.** We need a piece of paper unfortunately.

25 **CHAIR:** We'll get John a piece of paper shortly.

26 **QUESTIONING BY MS JOYCHILD CONTINUED:**

27 **Q.** Thank you.

28 A. You called me .

29 **Q.** Oh sorry.

30 A. Anyway, carry on, sorry.

31 **Q.** Don't worry, they will take your name off.

32 A. This is the wires. These are all the wires. There's the padlock there. You'd be shoved in  
33 there. I would be shoved in there. There's the door. I'm not a very good drawer, but that's  
34 how it was. The wall's there and nurses chaos there, it was around them on the corner.

- 1 **Q.** The nurses chaos?
- 2 **A.** That's where she dishes out drugs and Largactil and stuff like that, there's a hallway there.
- 3 **Q.** There's a what?
- 4 **A.** A hallway, that's what we called it.
- 5 **Q.** I'll just the write the name there?
- 6 **A.** There was another one next to it (inaudible) all along here, same design.
- 7 **Q.** Commissioners, John has drawn this saying that there's a hallway along here.
- 8 **CHAIR:** We can't actually make it out. I think the best thing to do is somebody will come in and
- 9 take a photocopy of it and we'll leave you with it and you can bring a copy in for the
- 10 Commissioners to look at. So why don't we just leave this point for a moment, get
- 11 someone to come and take a picture of it and then we can come back to it once we've got
- 12 the copy, all right?
- 13 **A.** Okay, thank you. Oh God.
- 14 **Q.** Are you all right there John?
- 15 **A.** I'm all right thank you.
- 16 **Q.** It's hard work isn't it.
- 17 **A.** It is.
- 18 **Q.** We really appreciate you doing this for us, very much appreciate it.
- 19 **A.** Appreciate you too very much.
- 20 **QUESTIONING BY MS JOYCHILD CONTINUED:**
- 21 **A.** Sorry.
- 22 **Q.** No, so we've talked about drugs and we've talked about seclusion. So the seclusion that
- 23 you were thrown in was --
- 24 **A.** Isolation I'd call it.
- 25 **Q.** Isolation. So when you were put into isolation, was this a different room to the dog box,
- 26 the cages?
- 27 **A.** That was what I call isolation in those little cages.
- 28 **Q.** So when you talk about seclusion it was always in those places?
- 29 **A.** Yes, it was in there, I don't know why, they just threw us in there.
- 30 **Q.** You couldn't --
- 31 **A.** We're lucky to have a pair of pyjamas on, just.
- 32 **Q.** Were there other children there at the same time?
- 33 **A.** Yes, they were next door, altogether.
- 34 **Q.** So you say sometimes you got food?

1 A. Sometimes we got food, sometimes we got water, but sometimes we didn't get nothing. We  
2 were screaming, "Let us out, let us out", not like this, but as children's voices, as you can  
3 imagine, just scared and terrified. No-one to help us.

4 **Q.** Okay. Just moving on to another point you'd say boys would be physical with each other  
5 and they'd misbehave, but not because they didn't like each other but just because they had  
6 too much pent up energy and stress?

7 A. Mmm, yeah.

8 **Q.** And if anyone saw you hitting or slapping or pushing another boy then you got ECT?

9 A. Yes, boys got ECT. Why on earth, I don't know why they give that to children. Why did  
10 they give that to adults even. It's either that, I think that's a way of them punishing us, they  
11 think that we're fighting one another trying to hurt each other, I think, I don't know that's  
12 just my mind saying, you know, it's like -- did they get it okay?

13 **CHAIR:** Yes, it's just arriving. Are you talking about your picture?

14 A. Sorry about (inaudible).

15 **QUESTIONING BY MS JOYCHILD CONTINUED:** You say you slept in lock-up rooms too,  
16 but they weren't the same lock-up rooms were they?

17 A. No.

18 **Q.** No.

19 A. No.

20 **Q.** So where were these lock-up rooms?

21 A. They were past the dog boxes, well that's what I called them, down the hallway, past the  
22 ablution blocks, ablution blocks where you have a wash and go to the toilet and whatever,  
23 and they had these little individual --

24 **Q.** Cells.

25 A. Mmm. They were all wired and you had a wire door, a wire -- I don't know if anybody's  
26 seen a wired bed with little springs in the bottom with very old-fashioned and a feather  
27 down kapok mattress that was ripped and we were just thrown in there like little dolls.

28 **Q.** That's when you were put into lock-up?

29 A. Yeah, just nothing. And then the big -- I know, and the male man will come in and have  
30 their way with us, sexual abuse, do anything with us and then they'll move on to the next  
31 one and you can hear them crying. They can hear us yelling and screaming but they could  
32 never able to help each other. These men were sometimes huge people. Imagine a 14 or 13  
33 year old looking up at this big man in a white coat, white pants doing what he likes with  
34 you, and there's no-one you can -- you can't call out to mum, you can't call out to dad, you

1 can't even reach out to anybody. It's horrible.

2 **Q.** Just going to read paragraph 33 and 34, you describe it in detail. "I was regularly sexually  
3 abused at Lake Alice by different male nurses. There were two male nurses that  
4 I specifically remember abusing me sexually. Mostly it was full sexual intercourse, full  
5 rape. One was a Māori nurse who was big and ugly and one a European. I was often  
6 abused while I was in lock-up. There were other nurses who abused me but I can't recall  
7 their names.

8 I also remember hearing other boys screaming in pain when they were being raped  
9 at night. Sometimes it was before the nurse would get to me and rape me also. I was so  
10 ashamed and embarrassed about what was happening to me sexually and this  
11 embarrassment and shame has stayed with me my whole life. These are horrific memories  
12 to live with?"

13 **A.** That's so true and so horrible.

14 **Q.** And now we'll talk about the staff. You say a lot of the male staff were horrible, but Nurse  
15 Leonard was lovely and kind and like a mother to you?

16 **A.** As far as I knew she was.

17 **Q.** As far as you knew her?

18 **A.** She still had to give us those horrible pills.

19 **Q.** "Mrs Duncan, the cook, was also lovely and would mother us children. Some of the female  
20 staff were lovely, they would give us lollies, kisses and awhi. Some male staff found any  
21 opportunity to laugh at us and make fun of us. For example, I saw a news item on TV,  
22 there were these towers in the pictures that were actually water towers. As children we  
23 were told by the male nurses there were men with guns in the towers and if we ran away we  
24 would be shot."

25 **A.** That's right.

26 **Q.** You believed that?

27 **A.** That's what I believe when I was a child.

28 **Q.** You never went to school there, did you?

29 **A.** No, I never went to school once.

30 **Q.** Right. And your mum visited you once that you can recall?

31 **A.** Yes, that's all they would allow her, they wouldn't allow her to visit me, so she told me in  
32 later years.

33 **Q.** She wanted to see you but she wasn't allowed?

34 **A.** She did, but she loved us. She loved me, she loved us, she loved all of her children, not just

- 1 me specifically.
- 2 **Q.** And to your observations, John, Māori children got more ECT?
- 3 **A.** Well, that's all I seen, it was the, you know, the -- yeah, our type, our type, maybe there was  
4 Europeans, but maybe they got it, but I seen a lot of experience.
- 5 **Q.** Young Māori boys getting it?
- 6 **A.** And I'm not proud of the fact to say that, but I want this to be heard, I want them to listen,  
7 I want justice. I think that's what we all want.
- 8 **Q.** Do you want to tell the Commissioners how you complained to Nurse Leonard about sexual  
9 abuse and what happened?
- 10 **A.** I'll try. Yeah. Well, it was the same old thing, is when I was in my right mind, you know,  
11 not have my course of drug and whatever, they put the helmet on your head, ECT they  
12 called it. But I used to find some time to talk to, because I thought I could trust her. As a  
13 child when you're 13 or 14 you learn to trust somebody like a mother and I told her what  
14 the male nurses -- that's what they called them, male nurses -- done to me. And I even  
15 showed her on the bottom and the marks of their hands, the bruising on a little boy's body.  
16 She just shook her head in shame. She tried to talk to Selwyn Leeks but he just shook it  
17 off, he wouldn't hear a word, he couldn't listen to what she said.
- 18 **Q.** Were you there when he spoke to Selwyn Leeks?
- 19 **A.** No, I wasn't allowed thereby there. It was a nurse to doctor kind of thing. You know, he  
20 could have said anything to her, because "No, he could have done that on the bed, he could  
21 have done them on that little raggedy old bed, he could have injured himself just for  
22 someone to feel sorry for them." He had no love, he had no passion, he was a horrible,  
23 cruel, ugly man. He shouldn't even be alive on earth.
- 24 **Q.** You felt that Nurse Leonard believed you?
- 25 **A.** Yes, I did.
- 26 **Q.** And she told you she'd been to see Dr Leeks?
- 27 **A.** She did, and I believe that.
- 28 **Q.** And that Dr Leeks wouldn't believe it?
- 29 **A.** No.
- 30 **Q.** Did she tell you that?
- 31 **A.** Yes.
- 32 **Q.** Did she tell you he must have self-inflicted it?
- 33 **A.** Yes, that's right, she did.
- 34 **Q.** He'd say "None of my staff would do that"?

1 A. No, he said, "Oh no, no, he would have done that himself." I assume that's what he would  
2 have said, you know, this is what Ms Leonard is bringing back to me. I can still remember  
3 at my age, it's a thing that you never, ever forget for the rest of your life, for my life. That's  
4 absolutely true, everything you've read out and was said on that paper, yes.

5 **Q.** Okay. Now I'm just going to read out the ACC experience. At paragraph 44, "I went to  
6 ACC about the sexual abuse and was given counselling but I only had about four sessions.  
7 I couldn't bear it, because the counsellor kept going over and over the same incidents and  
8 asking questions such as 'How many times?' I would complain to her that she'd already  
9 asked me those questions in the sessions before. I thought there was no point in me going  
10 as it was just making me very upset. I'd like to go back again, however, and have some  
11 proper counselling. I've never claimed earnings-related compensation."

12 Would you like to --

13 A. Read that last bit out, compensation.

14 **Q.** John, would you like to talk about the compensation?

15 A. Yes.

16 **Q.** Would you like to tell the Commissioners what you think about compensation?

17 A. Yes. Commissioner, I think that each and every one of us that have been through this  
18 experience at LA, Lake Alice, are entitled to compensation from the Government, because  
19 it's put a whole toll on my life, it's ruined my life, it's destroyed me. I tried to get married,  
20 tried to have, you know, I've got children, but they rejected me because the way I speak, the  
21 way I write, "Oh no, that's not our dad, he's too -- he's not clever enough, he can't write",  
22 you know, and nobody's listened to me, listened to us once. And I think the Government  
23 should have a good look at this, not just say oh, "Dear Mr John, I'm sorry for your  
24 experience at Lake Alice." That's not good enough. I've had one of those letters from  
25 before and all I did was, oh just go in one ear and out the other.

26 I think that we are all entitled to compensation because of the trauma that is put --  
27 how can I mend my life, how can I go back to my childhood and rebuild it up to where I am  
28 now? At least it can help me, try and live my life the best I can. And I just -- why on earth,  
29 why on earth have they got Lake Alice still standing. Why haven't they pulled it down? It  
30 belongs to Good Health Whanganui and it's still standing in ruins. It's still there.

31 **CHAIR:** John, can I ask you about compensation.

32 A. Yes.

33 **Q.** What does that look like to you? What would be adequate compensation in your mind?

34 A. What do you mean by "adequate" sorry?

- 1 **Q.** That's what I'm asking you, what would be enough, what would --
- 2 **A.** Compensation is when people are going through stress like I do every day, and depression  
3 and weakness, can't find a job that's suitable because of my background. I'm glad that I've  
4 got my supporter with me, he's also my carer and my friend. If it wasn't for him I'd be  
5 falling to bits right now. If I had compensation for the Government I could have something  
6 to look forward to the future, my retirement. You know, I'll be turning the ripe old age of  
7 65 soon, and, you know, I just want something to compensate all the pain and suffering that  
8 I've been through. I know Dr Leeks can't do that because he's 92. Has he got millions  
9 and millions of dollars to give us? No, he hasn't even got the common courtesy to say sorry  
10 or anything like that. That's not even good enough for us to accept. That's what it would  
11 do for me, it would be a great, great help.
- 12 **Q.** So it would give you a quality of life that you don't have at the moment?
- 13 **A.** No, I don't have.
- 14 **Q.** And some security?
- 15 **A.** Pardon?
- 16 **Q.** And some security?
- 17 **A.** Lots of security. My carer also, my whangai'd brother -- that means my adopted brother,  
18 I adopted him as my brother -- he's been my strong leg. But he can't be with me all the  
19 time, he's got to go out and find a girlfriend and get married and settle down. What about,  
20 you know, me, I'm going to be in this house alone and all these memories flashback in my  
21 mind about LA and all these horrible things and, you know, that I'm in a mess again. That's  
22 what I think -- that's what I think compensation would do for me.
- 23 **Q.** Yes, thank you for that, appreciate it.
- 24 **A.** Thank you very much. Sorry.
- 25 **QUESTIONING BY MS JOYCHILD CONTINUED:** No, you're the one, you need to talk.  
26 Okay. Can I ask what you'd use the compensation for, anything --
- 27 **A.** Do you have to know? Sorry.
- 28 **Q.** No, you don't have to say.
- 29 **A.** Build me a mansion -- no, no, I'm only -- that's only --
- 30 **Q.** Yeah.
- 31 **A.** Sorry, I didn't mean to be rude that way.
- 32 **Q.** That is absolutely fine.
- 33 **A.** I would use that, out of that compensation, to have a good life. To build myself a good life  
34 so I said hey look, I can do this, I can do that. You know, and for everything that's said in



1 this statement, even more, nothing can ever replace that. Nothing can replace the hurt, the  
2 pain, the sorrow, the suffering, the depression, the anxieties, everything that all of us  
3 children have gone through in that horrible place, and it still stands today. I wish if that  
4 place was just nothing. Sorry, am I able to add? Go on, you can speak, you're allowed to.

5 **SUPPORT PERSON:**

6 A. Judge, I can't see her name, Shaw?

7 **MS JOYCHILD:** Judge Shaw.

8 A. Judge Shaw.

9 **CHAIR:** So who's in the room with you?

10 A. My --

11 **Q.** Your carer?

12 A. Yeah, my carer and my support.

13 **Q.** So he's just made a comment to you, which we couldn't hear very well, would you like to  
14 tell us, if you want to?

15 **MS JOYCHILD:** Why don't you come and sit in my seat.

16 **CHAIR:** No I think -- he hasn't been affirmed, so let's just see if John would like to say anything  
17 as a result of what your carer has said to you.

18 A. I will.

19 **Q.** Okay.

20 A. Judge. What he has said through this trauma of ECT and no-one listening to them, they  
21 think that they're nobody and they think nobody cares, so what's the use of living, GRO-D  
22 , a lot of them, through ECT, got brain damage, a lot of them can't walk properly, a lot of  
23 them can't think for themselves, a lot of them haven't got the courage to speak like I have,  
24 I suppose, and, you know, poor things, what have they lost their lives to? Two stupid  
25 doctors.

26 You know, and I can't understand. I'm sure a lot of us who are in this situation,  
27 why on earth did the Government let it happen? Years and years and years and years and  
28 years and why on earth did children like us get it for no reason at all. We had no mental  
29 problems and no -- we were not schizophrenics, some of them might have been but I know  
30 I wasn't. But because we had schooling, the learning, the writing and I used to lash out at  
31 people and I thought there's something wrong with your mind, ward of the State and they  
32 dump you anywhere and everywhere they can, as long as they don't have the responsibility  
33 of looking after you and that was horrible. And that's what I've got to say.

34 **SUPPORT PERSON:** I just wanted to say that was legal in those days.

- 1 A. Illegal.
- 2 **SUPPORT PERSON:** But the Government legalised it. That's what I call --
- 3 A. She knows.
- 4 **SUPPORT PERSON:** That's what I call hypocritical.
- 5 **MS JOYCHILD:** Thank you, yes.
- 6 **SUPPORT PERSON:** They legal -- they made -- they actually signed it off.
- 7 **QUESTIONING BY MS JOYCHILD CONTINUED:** Thanks John, (inaudible) your
- 8 carer.
- 9 A. Right, now.
- 10 **Q.** So we're now going to get back on to the --
- 11 A. Thank you.
- 12 **Q.** -- on to the life after Lake Alice. I want to first of all ask you about employment. So how
- 13 did you go when you left Lake Alice in terms of getting a job?
- 14 A. Well, when I left Lake Alice I was fat -- I've got nothing against fat people, don't get me
- 15 wrong, I'm big now, look at me. But it wasn't me, it was the drugs that they were giving
- 16 me, I assume. And my eyes used to roll back, my head used to -- they made me into a
- 17 funny person. But I wasn't that person.
- 18 **Q.** Couldn't get work?
- 19 A. I couldn't get work, nobody would take me. Nobody would say oh no -- "Oh yeah we'll get
- 20 back to you." I know in my heart, no, they won't and I didn't -- they rejected you, rejected
- 21 me wherever I went to. I couldn't get work.
- 22 **Q.** You went to Watties for a while?
- 23 A. I went to Watties for a few seasons, but, you know, I couldn't handle it, all the noise it used
- 24 to remind me of the zzzzzzz in my brain, because you know --
- 25 **Q.** The factory noise?
- 26 A. Yeah, factory noise, even though we had little plugs, but I could hear it, it was driving me
- 27 crazy.
- 28 **Q.** Right.
- 29 A. In the sense of the word.
- 30 **Q.** So basically you did a few jobs, short periods fruit picking at Watties?
- 31 A. Yeah.
- 32 **Q.** But other than that you couldn't really get any employment?
- 33 A. No, I couldn't find employment at all.
- 34 **Q.** And that's been the same most of your life?

1 A. Yes, because I couldn't fill out the forms or write or read, I had nobody with me to help me,  
2 you know, I put my name and my address, but it would be just like a child's writing and  
3 I couldn't spell or answer the questions, so what does this say?

4 **SUPPORT PERSON:** The shock treatment destroyed your brain.

5 A. Yeah, and the shock treatment that I had while I was in that horrible place called Lake  
6 Alice, you know, it destroyed me too. I just couldn't -- I tried. Yeah, I got the odd job,  
7 picking fruit, going into Watties, but I was just -- just all that noise was just -- oh.

8 **QUESTIONING BY MS JOYCHILD CONTINUED:** Let's move on from there into your  
9 marriage. So you got married?

10 A. I did.

11 **Q.** You met a wife at a party?

12 A. Yes.

13 **Q.** And her mother organised the wedding?

14 A. Mmm-hmm.

15 **Q.** You had five children together?

16 A. Five beautiful children, yes, that's right.

17 **Q.** But you found it hard to be in the marriage because of what had happened to you. But you  
18 never wanted to physically discipline them, you just wanted to hold them and love them?

19 A. And love them.

20 **Q.** Give them everything you had not had?

21 A. That's right. Which was love.

22 **Q.** Then you told her something which changed everything. What was that?

23 A. I told her the horrible experience at Lake Alice Hospital. Sorry.

24 **CHAIR:** No, carry on.

25 A. Yeah, we had five children together, beautiful children. I love them, put them on that -- the  
26 love that I missed out on, getting hugged by my father and my mother. And then I got her  
27 trust because I was married to the woman, so I opened up about LA. Oh, that was it. That  
28 was it.

29 **QUESTIONING BY MS JOYCHILD CONTINUED:** She got suspicious of you?

30 A. She got suspicious of me thinking, "Oh no, you know, you must be like that, inclined."  
31 I said "Don't be stupid, they're our children", I said "I love my -- love our children." And  
32 I never ever was violent, I never ever hit our children once. I loved them. But she couldn't  
33 understand. Yeah, sorry.

34 **Q.** No, it's you that's doing the talking. Have you finished what you want to say?

- 1 A. Yeah.
- 2 Q. But her family also started to get suspicious of you?
- 3 A. Here we go with the whānau. Her whānau. Always butted their nose in, always came  
4 around, "Oh who is he, look at the way he's holding your child." I said "Hello, that's my  
5 child too, what am I doing? Aren't I allowed to cuddle a son or daughter, (inaudible)  
6 change their nappy, isn't that what a father and a mother does, change the nappies and  
7 clothes and bathed them?" That's what I was doing. "Oh, you know, isn't he a bit, you  
8 know, funny in that way?" You know, at her all the time to try and get rid of me.
- 9 Q. Because you told her you'd been sexually abused in Lake Alice?
- 10 A. That's exactly right. When I told her I was sexually abused her mind changed, "I better  
11 watch out for my children, he might be do the same to them." But that was totally wrong, I  
12 was very, very upset because she did that, I thought she would have been more loving  
13 towards me.
- 14 Q. In the end she left you, didn't she?
- 15 A. Then she left me, yes.
- 16 Q. And took the children with her?
- 17 A. That's right. I had nobody, again.
- 18 Q. You felt that she'd poisoned your children's minds?
- 19 A. Yes. Poisoned my children's mind with "Your father's been in here, you know what they --  
20 what that place is called, that's where they send the people that are loose in the head." This  
21 is her telling our children, the woman that I married. For goodness sake. You know, she  
22 used to say all these horrible things and as our children grew up they believed what their  
23 mother said. Dad was pushed aside, like a bit of paper. "Who you are, what are you  
24 ringing me up for? I don't know you anymore." "Did your mother tell you what  
25 happened?" I said "It's true what happened to me, but hey, you know, I wouldn't do that to  
26 you and hurt you in any way." They said "I know that dad", I said "So you believe your  
27 mother?" Well, that was me in a nutshell.
- 28 Q. Then you had a car accident after that when you were on your own?
- 29 A. Yeah, tell me about it.
- 30 Q. It was a very bad car accident just after the marriage broke up, you were so distressed you  
31 just walked out into the road?
- 32 A. That's right, I was, I was going through stress and depression because she took my children  
33 off me, told them lies and the children hated me and I thought oh well, you know, what is  
34 there to live for? Here we go, all these flashbacks came back, oh yeah, go on, walk across

1 that road, no, no. I was sober, no alcohol in my body whatsoever. I said to my friend on  
2 the other side, I said "Look I'm going to help that man", he said "There's no car there",  
3 I said "Yes, there is there's a car on the side of the road", he said "No", so I walked, one two  
4 three, bang, because my mind was -- no drugs, no alcohol, my mind was so distraught  
5 thinking I'll never ever see my children again.

6 **Q.** So you had to learn to walk again?

7 **A.** Yes.

8 **Q.** It took you three months?

9 **A.** Mmm.

10 **Q.** Now you walk with a stick?

11 **A.** Yeah, I walk with two sticks.

12 **Q.** Two sticks and you have a carer who lives with you?

13 **A.** That's right. I've also got a mobility scooter at home which gets me around because I can't  
14 walk far. And that sort of took a toll on my life as well. But in a way I didn't blame my  
15 wife because I loved her. I said well -- and I rang the children up as they got older and I  
16 said "Look it's your choice, but you've got a father, you know where your father is, I will  
17 always, always love you because you're mine. If you turn around, come to where I am, I'll  
18 never ever turn you away, even though what you've heard, what you say about me, I still  
19 love you."

20 **Q.** So we're now just going to move on, John, to the effects of Lake Alice, I'm going to read a  
21 paragraph.

22 **A.** Please do that.

23 **Q.** "My main problems now are PTSD, depression, anxiety and socialising with other people."

24 **A.** That's absolutely correct.

25 **Q.** I don't share what has happened to me when I was ward of the State and at Cherry Farm  
26 and Lake Alice because I fear I'll not be believed. I wasn't believed when my cousin was  
27 abusing me, no-one listened to my complaints and I still hate my grandmother for how  
28 cruel she was to me. I carry a lot of pain and hurt about my grandmother and Lake Alice.  
29 She could have helped so much by not putting me into Lake Alice in the first place."

30 **A.** Mmm.

31 **Q.** "I'm very upset I never got to learn to read and write properly, never got any schooling at  
32 Lake Alice or Cherry Farm. It never made sense to me why I was taken away just to be  
33 assaulted and sexually abuse and to get ECT, all just because I could not learn. I've never  
34 been an alcoholic or a drug addict. I do like beer but I don't overdrink. I was on

1 antidepressants for a short time but the doctor said he didn't think it was a good idea  
2 because I might get addicted. I felt I had to stop taking it because I didn't want the doctor  
3 to think that I was a drug addict, even though they helped."

4 And then you've said what you want from the Commission. You've had a  
5 one-on-one session with Commissioner Gibson and you loved it.

6 A. Thank you very much Mr Gibson.

7 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Kia ora, thank you John for that.

8 **QUESTIONING BY MS JOYCHILD CONTINUED:** And Commissioner heard everything  
9 you said and you were so impressed with him.

10 A. I sure was and I still am.

11 **Q.** Now you want the Government to be accountable for what happened to you while you were  
12 in the care of Cherry Farm and Lake Alice?

13 A. Mmm.

14 **Q.** "Helen Clark's apology is just words on paper because no-one was held accountable."

15 A. That's right.

16 **Q.** "Dr Leeks and the staff were never made to answer for the hellish lives they gave us."

17 A. [Nods].

18 **Q.** And you say the last settlement with Grant Cameron your voice was not heard. "It's very  
19 important to me that people hear what we went through and believe my story. I want  
20 people to listen carefully to me." And you said you'd like a public apology not a private  
21 one. "I think we should be able to go to the Beehive and have a publicly filmed apology  
22 from the Prime Minister so the whole country knows what we have been through.  
23 Everyone needs to know we are telling the truth. We did go through what we say we did  
24 and it is not a laughing matter or a joke."

25 A. That's right. I do, even more, even more, more than words can say. Each and every one of  
26 us, I think it was about 300 in all I think, might be, if I'm correct.

27 **Q.** Yeah. You've talked about the compensation.

28 A. That's right.

29 **Q.** You don't consider what you got from Grant Cameron as adequate.

30 A. No.

31 **Q.** Your entire life has been ruined by what happened to you at Cherry Farm and Lake Alice.

32 A. Absolutely.

33 **Q.** You'd like to learn to read and write and you think the Government should be helping all of  
34 the children with learning disabilities to read and write and support those with health

1 disabilities. Never been treated for the hurt and suffering and pain that you feel all the  
2 time. Some counselling for the sexual abuse but you do not want to go to a psychiatrist  
3 because after what you've been through you'd never trust one.

4 A. That's right.

5 **Q.** And you'd like your life to be made better than it is if that is at all possible.

6 Commissioners, that's the -- that's your evidence isn't it. Is there anything else you want to  
7 say?

8 A. That is my evidence.

9 **CHAIR:** John, do you mind if the other Commissioners, or even me, ask some more questions, is  
10 that all right by you?

11 A. You're most welcome, it is perfectly all right.

12 **Q.** Thank you very much, I'm going to turn you to Commissioner Alofivae to see if she wants  
13 to ask you any questions.

14 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Good afternoon John, talofa lava. Thank you very, very much  
15 for the very honest and clear way in which you've given your evidence this afternoon.  
16 I just have one question and it's actually -- it's in your paragraph 20 and you recall that a lot  
17 of the boys there were Māori, more than Pākehā, but you also refer to a young boy, maybe  
18 as young as 6.

19 A. Mmm, I do.

20 **Q.** Yeah.

21 A. And, you know, 9, there was a 9 year old, but I think, yeah, and 6 year old, that just -- oh  
22 God, yeah. Yes, that's right. I don't know what happened to him.

23 **Q.** Can you recall -- one of the things we're trying to get an understanding of, a better picture  
24 on is a really -- is the ages of the young boys, how young they were. So we've heard  
25 evidence that they were as young as 5, 6. Were there a few of them in there around that  
26 age? We've heard the average age about 10, 12, 15, but some of these younger ones that  
27 I'm really interested in at this point?

28 A. Yes, yes, there was. I've seen some, whether they were old, whether they were about 14,  
29 but they sure lacked like 6 year olds to me because they were only little, they were only  
30 little, you know, little children. You know, yeah, that's true.

31 **Q.** And were they in the same villa as you?

32 A. Yes, what they called it at Lake Alice was a child where all young children like myself and  
33 younger were put, they were supposed to educate us and teach us, instead they did all that  
34 ugly stuff to us is wrong.

- 1 **Q.** Thank you. Just one last question if I can, John, can I thank you for the picture of the cage  
2 that you drew. We've heard other evidence too about the cage, we're very grateful for the  
3 drawing now. Can I just ask you, and only if you're able to and you want to respond, how  
4 did you sit in the cage? Because the way you've described it you could fit two dogs in  
5 there. Were you on your hands and knees, were you --
- 6 **A.** Sort of like back on my ankles and like crouched, you know, you can hardly, barely blinken  
7 stand up in it. There was little bits of, oh I don't know, whatever was in there, yeah, no, it  
8 was, it was like a dog kennel.
- 9 **Q.** All right, so you'd have to crouch to get in and then crouch to get back out?
- 10 **A.** That's correct, and the way they pushed us about we were hurt badly, but they didn't fix us  
11 up, they just left us like that.
- 12 **Q.** And you've drawn the wires and the springs, so you could actually see the boys in the other  
13 cages beside you, is that right?
- 14 **A.** Yes, it was all 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 but they were all wired, thick wiring like you put on a fence,  
15 they were all like little diamond shapes and they had a door in it and a lock on each  
16 individual.
- 17 **Q.** Thank you very much for that, John, really appreciate your evidence this afternoon.
- 18 **SUPPORT PERSON:** They gave you a little pot to do your business in.
- 19 **A.** Yeah, that's the potty.
- 20 **SUPPORT PERSON:** A little bucket, a little pot.
- 21 **A.** Hold on. Yes.
- 22 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** The little bucket was to do your business, right?
- 23 **A.** To do the -- yeah.
- 24 **Q.** Thank you.
- 25 **A.** Thank you.
- 26 **CHAIR:** John, I've asked you all the questions I want to ask, so I'm going to hand you over now  
27 to Commissioner Gibson who you know.
- 28 **A.** Sure.
- 29 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Thanks John, it's a privilege to hear you again. I've got a few  
30 questions then I'll --
- 31 **A.** Sure.
- 32 **Q.** When you're in Cherry Farm you're about 12 roughly, is that right?
- 33 **A.** Yeah, about that, 1960, I don't know, 6.
- 34 **MS JOYCHILD:** You were 12.



- 1 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** You received ECT there.
- 2 A. Yes, I can remember that.
- 3 **Q.** How was that delivered, it was modified, unmodified? You know what's meant.
- 4 A. They were pushing something down my throat, whether it was tubes or whether it was pills,
- 5 you know.
- 6 **Q.** And were you conscious when you received it do you remember?
- 7 A. Yes.
- 8 **Q.** So that was really painful as well?
- 9 A. Being so small at that age you'll be strapped hard to the bed and they'd be holding, but your
- 10 body would be like, you know, like rubber bands -- excuse my voice.
- 11 **Q.** And at Cherry Farm was it similar to the unmodified at Lake Alice and the same reasons
- 12 was used for punishment or anything like that?
- 13 A. You're absolutely correct. I think they got a big laugh out of it, I think they just did that to
- 14 laugh and point out us and try and make us go, you know, crazy, I think, myself, now that
- 15 I've gone up to adult, I'm thinking back, I think that's what they did that to us.
- 16 **Q.** At Cherry Farm as well?
- 17 A. Cherry Farm Hospital.
- 18 **Q.** Just looking through some of your notes, would you say some of the comments in the
- 19 written notes were blatantly racist?
- 20 A. Yes, especially the one by Dr Pugmire. I didn't like Dr Pugmire.
- 21 **Q.** And so you experienced real racism at Lake Alice yourself?
- 22 A. I would think so, mmm.
- 23 **Q.** I suppose just the opportunity for me to thank you again, it was a privilege to listen to you
- 24 in a private session and I know you haven't been listened to or believed often throughout
- 25 your life, but now many, many people are listening to you and believing you and you are
- 26 teaching them, learning them, educating them.
- 27 A. Thank you.
- 28 **Q.** I hope it's part of a redress system, like you say, that people like you, who didn't have the
- 29 opportunity to learn to read or write, they can be part of it. I'm assuming that's what you're
- 30 recommending as well, isn't it?
- 31 A. That's right. That's correct.
- 32 **Q.** And thanks to your support people as well through this, and recognising how much you
- 33 went through as a young person, and the cost of you telling the truth at times. We hope
- 34 today that because of what you shared that there will be positive benefits for all of Aotearoa

1 New Zealand. What you have given is a great contribution, is a koha to us all, so thank you  
2 John so much, thank you.

3 A. Thank you, kia ora.

4 **CHAIR:** Kia ora. We will now take the adjournment. Thank you again. I hope you get a  
5 peaceful afternoon after this.

6 A. Thank you, you too.

7 **Q.** Thank you, bye-bye.

8 **Adjournment from 3.37 pm to 3.59 pm**

9 **CHAIR:** Last witness of the day Ms Thomas.

10 **DEBORAH DICKSON**

11 **MS A THOMAS:** Āe, kua tae tātou ki te kaikōrero whakamutunga mo tēnei ra nei ka mutu mo  
12 tēnei wiki. And it is my privilege and honour to introduce the Commissioners to Deborah  
13 or Debbie Dickson and her support person here today, Wendy. Nau mai haere mai both of  
14 you and thank you for taking the time to come to the hearings today.

15 A. Thank you.

16 **Q.** So like I talked to you about, we'll pass it over to the Chair of our Commission for your  
17 affirmation and then we'll start with your statement.

18 A. Yes.

19 **CHAIR:** Hello and welcome. And hello to you Wendy, thank you so much for coming and being  
20 here in support. Are you Deb, Deborah or Debbie?

21 A. Just Debbie.

22 **Q.** Debbie?

23 A. Yes.

24 **Q.** That's what you feel comfortable, do you mind if I call you that?

25 A. Yes.

26 **Q.** Don't be so frightened, it's all right. All right, I'm just going to give you the affirmation and  
27 I ask you to agree. Do you solemnly, sincerely, truly declare and affirm that the evidence  
28 you give to the Commission today will be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the  
29 truth?

30 A. Yes.

31 **Q.** Thank you.

32 **QUESTIONING BY MS A THOMAS:** Debbie, I know this is stuff that you've only just started  
33 talking about recently, so please take your time to go through the statement. Pause any  
34 time you need to and just let us know if you need a break, okay?