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MRS D - AFFIRMED
QUESTIONED BY MS MACDONALD

CHAIR: Hello, Ms Macdonald. You may start.

MS MACDONALD: Good afternoon, Commissioners. The witness we have this afternoon is Mrs D and she is within the building but in a separate room. You can all see her?

CHAIR: Yes, we can see her. Can you see us, Mrs D? Perhaps not at the moment.

A. Yes.

CHAIR: You can? Oh, that's good. First of all, we are about 15 minutes late and I'm sure every one of those 15 minutes was agony for you, so I'm sorry for that. We try hard to keep to our timetable but we do get a bit delayed occasionally, so I am sorry for any damage that might have caused you. Let's start now by acknowledging your support person, hello, thank you for being there for Mrs D. And just to ask you to take the affirmation, Mrs D. (Witness affirmed). Thank you very much, now I'll leave you to Ms Macdonald who will ask you some questions.

MS MACDONALD:

Q. Mrs D, you have come to the Commission today to talk about what happened to you at St Mary's Home for Unwed Mothers. I'd like you first to start with any opening statement you have and then you can go on to start to tell us a little bit about yourself and your background.

A. First of all, I'd like to thank my daughter.

CHAIR: Just take a breath and some water and your time, please.

1 A. And my granddaughter for coming as my support people.
2 And I'd like to thank my Counsel Assist for all the
3 long hours and caring support preparing my statement.
4 I'd also like to thank the Commission for inviting me,
5 enabling me to present my story.

6 **MS MACDONALD:**

7 Q. Do you want to start by just telling us a little bit
8 about yourself?

9 A. Yes. I was born in Tauranga in 1953. I am 67 years of
10 age.

11 I have three children, a girl and a boy in
12 New Zealand and one son in Australia who was taken from
13 me at his birth by Matron Gallagher at St Mary's Home
14 for Unwed Mothers. I was married twice, the first time
15 at 16. Neither of these marriages lasted and one of
16 them was to a very violent person. Relationships were
17 very difficult for me because I carried a big secret of
18 what happened to me as a young person.

19 Everything I achieved I have done on my own. I
20 became a nurse at 16 until I was forced to stop my
21 career. I went back to study at 55 and got my nursing
22 degree finally. I have five grandchildren and they are
23 the light of my life. Everything I do is to give back
24 to my children and grandchildren. I have experienced
25 some terrible things but I have had to be a survivor.
26 I cannot be a victim. I had to get on with things. I
27 would not wish what happened to me on anyone but
28 sometimes, I wish people could just walk in my shoes.

29 Identify as a New Zealand European and I am proud to
30 come from Tauranga. My parents ran a business there.

31 I contracted polio as a child, a baby, and when I'm
32 tired I still sometimes have a slight limp. I suffer
33 from post-polio syndrome and this causes persistent
34 fatigue, muscle weakness, muscle and joint pain and
35 sleep apnoea.

1 I have been a hard worker all my life and I was
2 brought up this way. In fact, when I was younger, my
3 parents would deal with any lingering polio symptoms by
4 telling me to work harder.

5 My Dad was a Presbyterian and we were brought up in
6 that Church until the Church complained about my older
7 sister wearing trousers to Church. Then we didn't go
8 back. My mother was an Anglican and she trusted the
9 Anglican Church, and this is how I was sent to St
10 Mary's Home — oh my God.

11 Q. You're doing absolutely fine. You can take as much
12 time as you like.

13 A. This is how I was sent to St Mary's Home for Unwed
14 Mothers in 1969.

15 I was 15 years old. I was very fit because I was a
16 keen surfer. We used to bike to the beach at the Mount
17 after school and surf until it got dark. I did not
18 even realise I was pregnant until I had stomach pains
19 when I was around five months pregnant. I already
20 suffered from endometriosis and one day I had terrible
21 stomach pains and my friend took me to her doctor at
22 the Mount. They thought maybe it was a urine
23 infection. Then they did a urine test, they said they
24 would send me the results. My mother got sent the
25 results and told me I was pregnant. I was so naive
26 about bodies and their functions that I did not realise
27 what had been done to me by an older boy. He sort of
28 tricked me into it. We knew nothing back then,
29 absolutely nothing about sex or even periods. And even
30 our mothers didn't tell us.

31 For a time my mother was not living with us and my
32 Dad was working overseas, so my sister looked after us.
33 She was 16, three years older than me, and I was three
34 years older than my brother. If the authorities had
35 known we were alone, they might have taken us into

1 care. My Dad sent money from overseas and we never
2 missed a day of school or got ill, so no-one found out.
3 I am still very close to my sister.

4 It always upset me that my mother sent me to St
5 Mary's. I came home from school and my bags were
6 packed and I was whisked away. I couldn't understand
7 it because we had a good relationship otherwise. And
8 when she was dying, I finally asked her and she got
9 very upset. She said when she realised I was pregnant
10 she asked the Anglican Church for advice and the Church
11 had said to send me to St Mary's.

12 She went to the Church for help and she trusted them
13 to tell her the right thing to do.

14 When I was in the home, she came to visit me every
15 single week for three hours on a Saturday afternoon all
16 the way from Tauranga to Auckland. She would take me
17 out for afternoon tea. I cried when she dropped me
18 back and it must have been an awful trip home for her
19 too. I would try to tell her what was happening but
20 she didn't believe me at the time. She trusted them to
21 look after me.

22 **CHAIR:** Mrs D, you don't have to go through this pain
23 if you don't feel up to it. We have other ways of
24 dealing with it. For example, somebody else could read
25 it in your presence, if that would help you. Would you
26 just like to couple of minutes to talk to Ms Macdonald
27 about how you are and whether you'd like to continue or
28 maybe do it in a different way? Would you like that
29 opportunity?

30 A. I think I would just like a few minutes just to get
31 myself-

32 **CHAIR:** To compose yourself.

33 A. I have read this and reread it and I was fine.

34 **CHAIR:** And now the moment has overwhelmed you. Look,
35 we will give you a few minutes. You just let Ms

1 Macdonald know when you're ready to come back and
2 discuss also if there might be another way of doing it,
3 if you want to. But it's entirely it's entirely up to
4 you which way you choose to go. All right?

5 A. Yes.

6 **CHAIR:** Thank you.

7

8 **Hearing adjourned from 3.23 p.m. until 3.40 p.m.**

9

10 **CHAIR:** Hello Mrs D, we're back again, are you feeling
11 a little more composed?

12 A. Yes, thank you.

13 **CHAIR:** Let's get on with it then, get the agony over
14 with. Thanks, Ms Macdonald.

15 **MS MACDONALD:**

16 Q. If you just want to read from paragraph 14, please,
17 Mrs D?

18 A. While at St Mary's I was a son who was forcibly removed
19 from me immediately after his birth and against my
20 will. I was made to give birth laying on my side so I
21 could not even see the baby. I was left alone in
22 labour for three days in a bare room, except for when
23 Matron Gallagher beat me. I mean literally beat me.
24 Punched me and slapped me as I was in labour and
25 delivery. She said I deserved it because I was
26 promiscuous. I was given food during this time but I
27 do not remember any doctor coming to check on me during
28 my labour.

29 My first child was taken away by adoptive parents at
30 10 days old. My Mum saw him in the nursery. I had
31 never been allowed to hold him or even see him. I only
32 saw him through the window of the nursery when the
33 nurse on duty left the curtain open toward the end of
34 her shift. We all got to know it was about 10.00 p.m.
35 at night she would do this and that secret was passed

1 down to all the girls in the dorm. I wish I knew the
2 nurse's name because it was pretty much the only act of
3 kindness we ever received in that place. I remember we
4 would hoist each other up and try to get a glimpse of
5 our babies. My sister was visiting me. She was
6 pregnant with her first child and while visiting me at
7 St Mary's she went into labour. She gave birth at St
8 Mary's and both of our children were in the nursery at
9 the same time.

10 A lawyer came to St Mary's after the birth of my son
11 and I was made to sign papers. I was never told I had
12 any right to decide whether or not my child would be
13 adopted. I did not want my baby to be adopted. I
14 never agreed to this. Matron used to say to us that we
15 had given up all rights when we went into St Mary's. I
16 do not know the name of the lawyer but his name will be
17 on the adoption papers. 30 years later I was so sick
18 of all the hurt that I went to an organisation called
19 JIGSAW to see if they could help me. A woman called
20 Nola Pinny encouraged me to apply for my son's birth
21 certificate. She was very supportive. I didn't think
22 I would get it but a couple of weeks later I had it in
23 my hands. It had the name of the adopted family on it.
24 We looked in the Auckland phone book and remembered
25 being told he was flying north. There was an odd phone
26 number that we later found, it was a Waiheke number.

27 My daughter actually phoned the number and an older
28 lady answered. But we were going to tell a false
29 reason for calling but I actually just ended up telling
30 the truth on the second call. She asked me to call
31 back in half an hour. She was the mother of the
32 adoptive mother who had moved her family to Australia
33 years before. The mother was literally on her way to
34 Waiheke from Australia to move her mother from Waiheke
35 down south. The mother answered when I rang back, she

1 said she had been waiting for a call from me for
2 30 years. She told me she had paid \$200 to the Matron
3 at St Mary's to buy my son to replace her baby that was
4 stillborn. She'd even given my son the same name as
5 the baby who died. She said it was the worst \$200
6 she'd ever spent. I found out that my son had grown up
7 very troubled. Apparently she had always told him he
8 would never measure up to her own son. He had had a
9 very difficult life and was especially upset about not
10 knowing who his father was.

11 I arranged to meet the adoptive mother as she was
12 coming back through Hamilton where I was living. I
13 wanted to give her some things for my son I had kept
14 all those years, a Pounamu and a poem on a plaque. It
15 was a crowded train station in Hamilton because it was
16 the week of Field Days but the crowd somehow parted and
17 we saw each other. I told her that I had seen her
18 through the window at St Mary's as my son was being
19 taken away. And I asked her if she'd ever thought
20 about me over the previous 30 years. I had never been
21 told anything about how he was doing. The adoptive
22 mother had never tried to find me or help him try to
23 find me but she said to me that somehow it was my
24 responsibility to fix him.

25 I had always told my children about my firstborn son
26 from the beginning of their lives. I phoned my son in
27 Australia and wanted to be able to welcome him into our
28 family, but he only wanted to know who his father was
29 and whether my family were wealthy.

30 My other son tried to contact him, and we offered to
31 pay for his flight to come over. I have tried to keep
32 in touch with him and told him that if he wants to come
33 to New Zealand, he can meet his family.

34 Q. Thank you, Mrs D. Now, that wasn't your only
35 experience of St Mary's, was it?

1 A. No. My son was born in late 1969. I left St Mary's
2 two weeks after my son was taken from me, then started
3 nursing training in February 1970 because of an
4 arrangement because I was so young, the arrangement was
5 made between Matron Gallagher and Matron Wilson. I had
6 always wanted to be a nurse. I became pregnant again,
7 never thinking it would happen again because there was
8 no contraception, and was not considered old enough to
9 live independently. Matron Wilson at the hospital
10 where I was training said I would have to give up the
11 baby if I wanted to continue nursing and register.

12 I knew that nursing was the only way to support
13 myself and my children. I had always wanted to be a
14 nurse, so I did not want to give it up, but I felt I
15 was being blackmailed into giving up nursing as lots of
16 young nurses became pregnant. There was another young
17 woman who had a baby and was allowed to graduate. I
18 remember Matron held up her nursing badge in front of
19 me and said, "You will never get this".

20 I went back to St Mary's to have my second child. I
21 was absolutely clear that I did not want to give her
22 up. I would look after her myself.

23 My daughter was born in 1971. I was told by CYFS
24 that I had six weeks to get everything together and
25 show that I could support my baby. I went back to
26 Tauranga and my Mum helped buy a bassinet, pram and
27 clothing. I managed to get a cleaning job at night so
28 I could look after her.

29 About 10 days after my daughter was born, I had been
30 taken with two other girls to a lawyer's office at
31 Otahuhu. The paper we were forced to sign was folded
32 so we were not able to read it but one of the other
33 girls who was from Australia asked what it was we were
34 signing. Matron Gallagher said it was for continued
35 care as we were not paying for care at St Mary's. We

1 did not get a copy of the papers, even when the girl
2 asked for them. We were not told they were adoption
3 papers, but I think that was what they were now, from
4 the later letter stating the adoption was not
5 finalised. There were two of us there who wanted to
6 keep our babies.

7 To get to the lawyer's office, coming from St Mary's
8 we used the Great South Road entrance, we turned off
9 onto Great South Road left and drove north to the fork
10 of Great South Road. We veered right past the war
11 memorial and statue with the horse and the lawyer's
12 office was upstairs in a building on the right. The
13 lawyer was an old Pākehā gentleman, he wore glasses.
14 He did not discuss anything with us or explain what we
15 were signing. He only spoke to Matron Gallagher.

16 I think my daughter must have left St Mary's after
17 me as I saw her at two weeks old when I left. I was
18 waiting to collect her at six weeks but she did not
19 come. I found out later she was taken to a family
20 later in 1971. It may have been one of Matron
21 Gallagher's friends because she was suspected of giving
22 or selling babies to friends of hers. CYFS contacted
23 my Mum by phone to be told the placement was not
24 working out and the baby was now in new foster care.
25 Years later the official line from CYFS was that as the
26 baby's biological father was Māori, the baby was too
27 dark for the family as she did not fit in with their
28 existing child.

29 I was asked if I wanted my daughter back which I had
30 always said I did or is she to be placed again? I
31 immediately went with my Mum and sister to the foster
32 home to pick up my daughter. The foster family were
33 very nice and were appalled at what had happened. When
34 we arrived they were in tears. The husband who had
35 gone to get my child was crying his eyes out.

1 My baby daughter was black and blue. She'd been
2 badly beaten. She was 11 weeks old.

3 Q. Mrs D, what did you and your mother was with you, is
4 that right?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. And your sister was with you?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. What did you do when you realised what had happened to
9 your daughter?

10 A. The foster family said, we took photos and the foster
11 family said that they'd never seen such a thing and we
12 should take further this further and they would always
13 be witnesses.

14 Q. So, just to make that clear, your baby daughter was
15 taken from St Mary's and given to a family, and that
16 family, while she was with them this had happened, and
17 then someone, CYFS it would appear, had taken the baby
18 and placed her with the second foster family?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. And it was when she arrived with that foster family,
22 they were just appalled. So, they encouraged us to do
23 something and go to the Police and complain. After my
24 daughter was returned to my care, I tried to find out
25 what happened. We had taken the photos of my baby's
26 injuries to the Police in Tauranga. We never got
27 further than the front desk. We told the older male
28 Police Officer that I had been at St Mary's and that
29 CYFS had taken my baby and she had been beaten. We
30 showed him the photos. Police said it was a family
31 issue and directed us back to CYFS and St Mary's.

32 My mother called Matron who said to her "if I were
33 you I wouldn't complain too much" and that if we did
34 not destroy the photos they would take my baby away
35 again. My Mum was scared and destroyed the photos.

1 Q. Can I just confirm whether you that that was Matron
2 Gallagher who said that to your Mum?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Thank you.

5 A. Yeah. And CYFS, we contacted CYFS, they did not want
6 to know. They refused to tell me who the adoptive
7 family was. They have continuously refused to tell me
8 and refused Official Information requests on the
9 grounds that the adoption was revoked, so never
10 legalised. This does not make any sense to me at all.

11 I had been prevented from completing my nursing
12 qualification and I worked in many jobs over the years
13 to support my family. My sister had two children and
14 she helped me. I lived for a time in a flat at the
15 back of her house, so she could look after my children
16 at night. And when I went back to Tauranga with my
17 daughter, we lived in our family home with my Dad and
18 brother. My Dad was so shocked as he was told I had
19 gone nursing and then I come home with a baby. They
20 bonded immediately though. It didn't take long before
21 he was taking her off to work with him, with the
22 bottles and nappies and the family dog.

23 I worked in a supermarket, I trained as a
24 phlebotomist and lab technician, and I went back to
25 study nursing at the age of 55 and gained my Bachelor
26 of Nursing degree and did one year post grad. I am now
27 working as a qualified staff nurse. Matron Wilson was
28 wrong. When I graduated it was my proudest moment in
29 my lifetime.

30 Q. Thank you very much, Mrs D. Now the next bit of your
31 statement deals with more detail about your experiences
32 of abuse at St Mary's. So, just take it slow and if
33 you want someone else to read for you, we can do that
34 in portions. You just see how you go.

1 A. Okay. In a time when I felt I should have received the
2 most support and compassion from the Church, the nine
3 months I spent at St Mary's were instead categorised by
4 fear, loneliness and mistrust. The misplaced shame I
5 already felt was reiterated daily by Matron who even
6 beat me during the delivery of my children to reinforce
7 I should be punished for my actions.

8 She should have been a caring figure.

9 Not only were my children removed from me once I had
10 given birth to them but I was made to labour alone for
11 72 hours on both occasions. I then had to give birth
12 on my side specifically so I could not catch a glimpse
13 of my newborn children.

14 We girl at St Mary's were not allowed to use our own
15 names. We were given new surnames. Then our identity
16 was stripped from us even further by being referred to
17 as "Gallagher's girls". The same surname was given to
18 all the other girls. Gallagher was Rhoda Gallagher's
19 surname, the Matron. She is dead now. We were not
20 allowed to tell each other our real names. We did
21 though, as a sort of act of rebellion.

22 Sometimes in your life you meet someone who has been
23 at St Mary's and we describe ourselves as "Gallagher's
24 girls" which sort of sounds cheerful, like Land Girls
25 or something. It is not that. It is simply a badge of
26 survival and we recognise each other for what we all
27 experienced.

28 If we tried to run away or they found out that we
29 had told each other our real names, Matron would
30 threaten the girls that if they did not do exactly as
31 we were told, our babies would die. She used to say
32 "The woodbox behind the chapel is where your babies
33 will end up".

34 All the nuns and the sisters behaved the same way
35 towards us. No-one stood up to Matron Gallagher. The

1 only person who did at all was the nurse who left the
2 curtain open.

3 There was an Australian girl who was all by herself
4 in New Zealand with no family and I felt sorry for her,
5 so I asked my mother by letter if we could take her
6 with us for afternoon tea. Matron Gallagher told us
7 she could not come. I did not understand how she even
8 knew I had asked my mother but then my Mum told me that
9 all my letters arrived with big sections blocked out,
10 so obviously all our letters were opened and censored.

11 On my first week at St Mary's, I was so lonely and
12 shocked at the treatment that I cried a lot in my
13 pillow and one of the older girls gave me a Little Red
14 Diary and said "this will be your friend, write it down
15 and keep it forever".

16 I kept it in my bra and did keep it forever and
17 wrote all sorts of things in it. I last looked at this
18 diary when I was packing my possessions up for storage
19 13 years ago and was going to throw it out as it meant
20 nothing to anyone else but I could not, so I hid it
21 with my firstborn's birth certificate.

22 Q. And do you think that you still have that diary?

23 A. Yes, I do, it's still in my storage.

24 Q. So, you've told us about some of the behaviours of
25 Matron Gallagher and the other nuns and sisters at St
26 Mary's. Were you mistreated by other people while you
27 were at St Mary's?

28 A. Yes, I was sexually abused by two doctors; one younger
29 and one old. The older one was Dr Caffell. I remember
30 his name but it was confirmed to me by one of the girls
31 I met in later life who said she went to see his grave
32 in Purewa Seminary. I remember he was much lauded on
33 his passing. I was upset to think his family thought
34 he was such a saint. There was inappropriate touching
35 of my breasts and vagina under the guise of a weekly

1 medical examination. I am a qualified nurse and I can
2 say categorically that the examinations I am talking
3 about were not a necessary procedure for regular
4 antenatal compassions. Not all of the girls got the
5 same examination. We built up courage to talk to
6 someone about it, to the sisters, nothing was done and
7 it carried on.

8 Q. Thank you. Do you want to go to paragraph 52 and tell
9 the Commissioners whether, as well as the inappropriate
10 touching or assaults, whether the doctors did anything
11 positive for you?

12 A. No, neither doctor prepared me with any knowledge of
13 delivery or attended during the labour or the birth.
14 Dr Caffell was the doctor for both stays at St Mary's
15 and Matron was normally in the room I think in case we
16 spoke of the evil happenings at the home. Matron never
17 questioned the regularity of the vaginal examinations
18 by either doctor. In fact, I had no recall or memory
19 of any discussion between Matron and them at the
20 examinations.

21 I recall a girl called Alison who died giving birth
22 to twins. She was left to labour alone for two days.
23 She was screaming like a child animal all the time.
24 She was denied pain relief and the staff refused to
25 call an ambulance or even call a doctor. I am a
26 qualified nurse and because there was so much
27 haemorrhaging during the labour, I believe Alison had
28 placenta previa, where the placenta blocks all or part
29 of the cervix and then tears easy during birth. This
30 leads to blood loss and is fatal very quickly if not
31 dealt with. I believe the pain Alison was in would be
32 indescribable. We tried to get someone to help her,
33 but no staff member would. We didn't give up until
34 someone came to see her. One of the girls went to the

1 nursery sister and then went to Matron's cottage on the
2 grounds and then an ambulance was called.

3 I think she would have been taken to National
4 Women's. When the ambulance came, the girls were
5 threatened by Matron not to tell anyone ever about this
6 and we never saw her again. We were told she died and
7 the twins too. In her death notice it said Alison and
8 twins, and I still have the cutting. I will never get
9 overhearing her and seeing her in so much pain and
10 fear.

11 My Little Red Diary has the New Zealand Herald
12 clipping of Alison's death. When Alison died we had
13 not yet had our babies so we were all terrified. The
14 staff deliberately kept us apart from girls who had
15 given birth. We could have helped each other by
16 talking about what to expect but the staff did not want
17 that. They wanted to keep us in complete ignorance and
18 fear.

19 Once I had had my first baby I was not allowed to
20 speak to the new girls on the next visit. It is
21 strange to think I was given weekly examinations by a
22 doctor but never any medical support for birth, even
23 though I was only 15.

24 My babies were 9 pound 1 and 7 pound 12. It would
25 have helped to know what was coming.

26 One of the really upsetting things I have never been
27 able to forget is the cruelty to the children in the
28 orphanage section, where I was working prior to my
29 son's birth. I had worked for a couple of days in the
30 laundry and then one of the laundry workers from
31 outside brought us some lollies. Well, Matron found
32 out about this and we were told we couldn't work there
33 again. I wanted to work in the orphanage section
34 anyway because I really loved children and I already
35 knew I wanted to be a nurse.

1 The only care we were allowed to give the children
2 was very basic. Working there was very distressing
3 because the children were never hugged and if any of us
4 girls tried to hug any of them, we were punished and
5 beaten by Matron. I am still upset at the memory of
6 the little ones with their arms out to be picked up and
7 cuddled and being forbidden to comfort them. I do not
8 understand how a supposedly Christian institution could
9 be so barbaric to children.

10 Q. Are you okay to carry on, Mrs D, or would you like a
11 break?

12 A. No, I'll keep going.

13 Q. Okay.

14 **CHAIR:** Mrs D, just know this, the Commissioners have a
15 copy of your brief of evidence which we have read
16 carefully already. So, if there are parts that you
17 find just too difficult to read, I am quite happy for
18 you to skip over, knowing that we understand what's in
19 them.

20 A. Okay.

21 **CHAIR:** So, you choose. If you want to leave something
22 out, please know that we do know about it.

23 A. Okay, thank you. I remember there was an outbreak of
24 dysentery in the home. I remember a little Maori boy
25 who was about three years old was forced to sit on a
26 wooden fixed potty for literally days at a time with
27 vomiting and diarrhoea. He wasn't getting better and
28 could not keep any food down. He also had rickets and
29 was often in pain. He constantly cried for want of
30 affection and the girls were not allowed to comfort
31 him. It haunts me to this very day.

32 **MS MACDONALD:**

33 Q. So, as well as working in the laundry and the
34 orphanage, Mrs D, was there other work that you were
35 made to do?

1 A. Yes. Along with the other girls I was forced to do
2 demeaning and unnecessary work, cleaning outside
3 corridor floors with liquorice like thread on a wooden
4 ramp in the winter. Each groove of the matting had to
5 be cleaned with a brush, like a toothbrush. Even as I
6 suffered from hyperemesis, I was on my hands and knees
7 outside trying to scrub a floor with a toothpaste.

8 Q. Can I confirm for the non-medical people, what you are
9 talking about is you had very, very extreme morning
10 sickness, what's called morning sickness?

11 A. Yes. At the time we were not allowed to wear
12 underwear. We were told this was because they might
13 harm the baby. I now know that there is no medical
14 justification for this and that it was done to demean
15 and humiliate us.

16 The girls were verbally abused by the nuns and the
17 Matron—told they were worthless, fallen and useless.

18 Q. We're going to go on to talk about, if you're okay to
19 go on, I'm going to ask you if it you can talk about
20 what the effects on you were of what you of what you
21 experienced but if you want to take a wee break, we can
22 do that.

23 A. No, I'm fine.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. One of the effects of the sexual abuse by the doctors
26 when I was so young and at my most vulnerable, and the
27 fact that men saw it was happening at St Mary's to me
28 and others and did nothing, is that I cannot trust men.
29 I have been married twice and neither has worked out.
30 At least one was very abusive. He put me in hospital
31 and I had to leave my hometown in secret.

32 Despite everything that has happened to me, I was
33 able to be a good Mum for my daughter. She was a good
34 and beautiful baby and I have never understood why the
35 adoptive family came close to killing her. And I've

1 never understood why CYFS did not involve the Police
2 and instead protected the abusers.

3 For decades I lived with the effects of being shamed
4 and humiliated and abused and violated as a teenager.

5 Q. Mrs D, if you want, we can go to paragraph 70 and you
6 can talk about going to the Turning Point Trust.

7 A. It was not until getting out of the hospital that I
8 went to a place called Turning Point Trust in Tauranga.
9 It took a holistic approach to mental illness which
10 includes art therapy for example. I had an amazing
11 counsellor psychologist who introduced me to cognitive
12 behavioural therapy. I went twice a week. It was very
13 intense, but it helped me a lot to stop blaming myself
14 for what had been done to me by others and should have
15 cared for me. I think funding for this therapy was cut
16 after that which is a shame.

17 After that, I went to Outward Bound. I found it
18 really challenging but I got a lot out of it. I found
19 myself helping and being relied on to support and a
20 listening ear for all the younger people. I didn't say
21 anything to them but inside I sort of wished I could
22 share my experience. After Outward Bound, I applied to
23 start nursing.

24 Q. Thank you. Now, you described earlier how after you
25 got your daughter back you tried going to the Police?

26 A. Yeah.

27 Q. So, can you talk about what you decided to do much
28 later on, when you decided to go back and try and get
29 some sort of redress?

30 A. Much later I decided I felt strong enough to try to get
31 some answers and potentially an apology or other
32 redress for the disastrous effect the treatment of me
33 by the Anglican Church had had. It wasn't just what
34 had happened to me but the memories of what I had seen
35 done to others. It would not leave me.

1 I had read about three women who had received an
2 apology from the Bishop of Auckland in 2005 for their
3 treatment at St Mary's and the article said the Church
4 was discussing compensation.

5 In September 2012 I wrote to CYFS asking for names
6 and documentation relating to the family my baby
7 daughter was first sent to. I also wanted to find the
8 second foster family who had been so kind and so upset
9 at the brutality to my baby. I wanted to let the
10 second family know we were still a family and to thank
11 them. I received a response from Paula Gill.

12 Q. So, in terms of that response, we don't have to go
13 through it in detail.

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. Basically, she told you that the files had been
16 requested today from recall?

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. And a lady called Lynley Brophy would contact you to
19 let you know what information there was relating to the
20 foster placement?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. And then she also gave you a number for the Auckland
23 Anglican Diocese office?

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. And then after that you got a response from the lady at
26 CYFS, is that right?

27 A. Yes.

28 Q. And that was on 16 November 2012. I'm just going to
29 get that document put up on the screen, so that's
30 document 3, please. And it should be visible to you as
31 well, can you see that? We're going to zoom in on it
32 but you've got a copy of it with you?

33 A. Yes.

34 Q. If you could pull out the first bit of highlighting but
35 do the entire paragraph, the entire first paragraph?

1 A. "Our records indicate".

2 Q. I can read this if you like or you can read it if you
3 prefer.

4 A. You can read it, Lorraine.

5 Q. "Our records indicate that your daughter, born in 1971,
6 was placed for the purpose of adoption with a couple.
7 This placement was facilitated by St Mary's. This
8 placement was abandoned because of your daughter's
9 darker skin colouring and Maori features. The couple
10 felt that this was too different to the fairer
11 colouring of their son and they were concerned about
12 the impact of this difference on the children. Our
13 records note that your daughter was then placed in
14 temporary foster care. Our records indicate that your
15 daughter was subsequently returned to your care.
16 Neither our adoption nor Care and Protection records
17 contain any information about your daughter being
18 physically abused during the course of these
19 placements".

20 And if you could highlight the final paragraph on
21 that page, from halfway down, just that bit, yeah.

22 "Please note that you have a right to complain to
23 the Ombudsman in order to seek an investigation and
24 review of our decision to withhold this information".
25 And that's related to the names of the people involved.
26 "Section 10 Adult Adoption Information Act 1985 enables
27 our service to approach adoptive parents on behalf of a
28 birth parent. However this provision cannot be
29 utilised as your daughter's adoption was not finalised,
30 and it is therefore beyond the scope of our role to
31 make the approaches that you have requested".

32 So, if you go to paragraph 76 of your statement.

33 A. None of this makes any sense because the only reason
34 they contacted me was because she'd been badly beaten.
35 How could there be no record of it?

1 Q. So then you try to contact the Anglican Church, is that
2 correct, Mrs D?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Just carry on from there.

5 A. Around the same time in September 2012, I called the
6 Anglican Church to ask who to contact about my
7 experiences at St Mary's. I was directed to Kevin
8 Third, the Diocesan manager, I wrote to him in 2012
9 outlining my experiences at St Mary's, including things
10 I had witnessed happen to others.

11 Q. Can I call up Exhibit 5, please, and if you could pull
12 up the highlighted section. What I'm going to do,
13 Mrs D, I'm not going to read through all of it. I just
14 want to point out that you told them in 2012 quite a
15 lot of the same details that you've told the Commission
16 today. You didn't hold back on the details of what
17 you'd experienced, would that be fair to say?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. So, you told them that you were beaten in child birth,
20 which is the first bullet point there?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. You told them that you were sexually abused?

23 A. Yep.

24 Q. You told them that you weren't allowed to wear
25 underwear and that you had to work very long hours
26 cleaning on your hands and knees when you had
27 Hyperemesis?

28 A. Yes.

29 Q. You told them about what you witnessed in the
30 orphanage, the distressing evidence that you told us
31 earlier about the way the children were treated? And
32 you told them about the girl that subsequently died?

33 A. Yep.

34 Q. And that you told of being threatened if you tried to
35 run away, where your babies would end up?

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. And you also told him about some of the personal
3 effects on you?

4 A. Yep.

5 Q. So then if you go to paragraph 78, you met with
6 Mr Third, is that correct?

7 A. Yes. I met with Mr Third in October 2012 and a meeting
8 was arranged with the Bishop. I remember Mr Third
9 saying "it was a different time". That immediately
10 made me very angry because the things that were done to
11 me and my daughter were illegal then as much as now. I
12 really felt I wanted vengeance for myself and my
13 daughter.

14 Q. So, who did you meet with next?

15 A. I had a meeting with the Bishop of Auckland, Ross Bay,
16 on 14 December, attended by Diocesan manager Kevin
17 Third and Jane Hanley from the Auckland Trust for Women
18 and Children which had taken over the running of St
19 Mary's. At the meeting I remember Bishop Bay saying
20 there would be no continuation of this discussion and
21 if there was an apology, the apology had to be
22 accepted.

23 Q. I am just going to ask you a question about that. In
24 terms of what the Bishop said to you in the meeting,
25 are you clear that that was exactly what he said and
26 what he meant? Is it possible that you misunderstood
27 what he was saying about the apology having to be
28 accepted?

29 A. No, that was my total understanding of what was said.

30 Q. And you don't think it was—he wasn't saying it was up
31 to you whether or not you accepted the apology?

32 A. No.

33 Q. So then, did you receive a written apology?

1 A. Yes. I received a written apology from the Anglican
2 Church via the Bishop of Auckland Ross Bay on the 21st
3 of December 2012.

4 Q. Could we call up number 6, please? If it's okay, I'll
5 read some of this but if you want to read it yourself,
6 you can.

7 A. No, you can read it, thanks.

8 Q. Okay. If you could pull up the first bit that's
9 highlighted, please? "I wish to reiterate some of the
10 things which I said to you at our meeting. I very much
11 regret and apologise for the decisions that were made
12 on your behalf by the staff at St Mary's in arranging
13 for the adoption of your daughter without your
14 permission. This should not have happened". And then
15 he apologises for the lack of care placing your
16 daughter with a family that was not appropriate and who
17 ultimately treated your daughter badly and he was sorry
18 for the treatment that you received as a resident of St
19 Mary's. Sorry, I've gone further than you are. If you
20 just highlight, no, that's fine.

21 He apologised for the treatment you received at St
22 Mary's, for the abusive environment in which you found
23 yourself and for the actions of the Matron and the
24 doctors in that regard. And he accepts that this has
25 cast a significant shadow over your life these last
26 40 years.

27 And the last part of the lowest paragraph, "It is to
28 our shame that we must acknowledge the period in its
29 history when this was not so, when people were not
30 treated compassionately". I am referring to a
31 paragraph above "and when you and others who were there
32 with you experienced such poor and cruel treatment".

33 And then if you can scroll down to the next page.
34 "I hope that the actions that you have been taking to
35 try to resolve this period of your life are bringing

1 about some sense of healing for you. The blame clearly
2 lies with others. However, you may now be able to feel
3 that you have done what you are able to draw these
4 matters to the attention of the Church authorities so
5 as to be sure that we may learn from them" and he
6 finishes the letter saying, "If there are any further
7 matters which you would like to discuss or raise with
8 me, I hope that you feel able to make contact".

9 So, it would seem that they have acknowledged a lot
10 of the things that you have complained about? There's
11 no suggestion that they don't accept what you say
12 happened?

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. So, if you go to paragraph 81?

15 A. Jane Hanley got involved again. She insisted it would
16 help my healing for me to revisit St Mary's. I am not
17 sure what her qualification to say that was but when I
18 agreed to go, it ended up being absolutely horrific. I
19 suffered a panic attack just being there. I think she
20 wanted to show me there wasn't a woodbox with dead
21 babies in it behind the chapel but that was no comfort.
22 I still shudder to think who or what might be under the
23 ground at that place.

24 I sat with this for a year before deciding that an
25 apology was not enough to compensate me and my family
26 for the devastating effect of what was done to me and
27 my children under the Church's auspices. I wrote to
28 Bishop Bay on 14 February 2014 acknowledging the
29 apology and seeking monetary compensation for the
30 criminal acts that were committed on me. And I refer
31 to a copy of the letter.

32 Q. So, if it we can pull up 7, please, Exhibit 7, and if
33 you pull out the highlighted section, please?

34 So, in the letter you acknowledge the apology that
35 was made to you but you also say, "I have now come to

1 the decision that your apologies are not sufficient
2 recompense for the actions of the Church and this
3 letter seeks monetary compensation for the treatment I
4 suffered".

5 And then the next paragraph down, please? "As I
6 communicated to you during our meeting, in addition to
7 my son being adopted without my informed consent and my
8 daughter being taken from me without my permission and
9 placed in the care of people who mistreated her, I
10 consider the treatment I endured at the hands of the
11 staff at St Mary's was no less than criminal."

12 And then in this letter you also again specifically
13 to the Bishop, you outline the treatment that you
14 received. So, on page 2 of the letter, you talk about
15 being beaten in child birth, you talk about being left
16 alone to labour and giving birth on your side and you
17 talk about the effects of this on your life. And at
18 the bottom of page 2 of the letter, if you could just
19 pull up that, "Since our meeting and your letter of
20 2012 I have had time to consider the apologies and
21 admissions you communicated to me. Although I
22 appreciate the acknowledgment of past actions I do not
23 feel they constitute a significant recognition of the
24 loss I suffered. St Mary's altered the course of my
25 life and left me a stranger to one of my children. I
26 know that other women in similar situations have
27 received monetary compensation and I am willing to
28 engage a lawyer if this cannot be settled without legal
29 action. At this stage, for the reasons outlined above
30 I believe that compensation is appropriate"

31 So, if you go to paragraph 83 and tell the
32 Commission what the result of that was?

33 A. The Bishop wrote back on 24 February 2014 saying, "We
34 are willing to discuss this matter with you. In the
35 first instance it requires the involvement of the

1 Diocesan Manager Kevin Third. He is on leave at
2 present and returns to the office next week. Once he
3 is back and I have been able to talk with him about
4 this, we have make contact again as soon as possible".

5 Q. And then did you receive a letter from Kevin Third?

6 A. Yes, a letter on the 29th of April came from Kevin
7 Third stating responsibility for any compensation was
8 with the Anglican Trust for women and children.

9 Q. Can you pull up Exhibit 9, please, and the highlighted
10 section, please. In this letter it states, "As you
11 will recall from our earlier meetings, the historical
12 issues around St Mary's home come under the oversight
13 of the Anglican Trust for Women and Children, ATWC.
14 ATWC are responsible for all residual assets and
15 finances of the home. In order to progress this
16 matter, it is necessary to involve the board of ATWC.
17 I have brought your correspondence to the attention of
18 the Board Chair and ATWC will make contact with you
19 regarding next steps".

20 And that's the letter, finished.

21 So, did anybody contact you, as the letter said?

22 A. No. It appears nothing was done and nearly a year
23 later in February 2015 I wrote to Kevin Brewer, the
24 ATWC Board Chairperson seeking financial compensation
25 for the criminal treatment I received under the guise
26 of the Anglican Church. I said that I had made phone
27 calls to ATWC, Philip Bielby, he was the CEO at the
28 time, and was told they had had no brief from anyone
29 about my case. In May 2015 I received a letter from
30 Christina Bryant, a partner at Hesketh Henry on behalf
31 of the Anglican Trust for Women and Children denying
32 any legal liability.

33 Q. Can you call up Exhibit 11, please? Are you happy for
34 me to read from parts of this letter?

35 A. Yes, thank you.

1 Q. If you could pull out just the paragraph with the
2 highlighting, so that's paragraph 3, please, but the
3 whole paragraph?" Institutions such as St Mary's home
4 no longer exist. They were a reflection of their time,
5 when attitudes towards teenage pregnancy and adoption
6 and the social support available to young mothers were
7 very different".

8 And then the final sentence, "It is with sadness and
9 regress that the Church acknowledges the pain
10 experienced by women who felt pressured or compelled by
11 circumstances to give up their children for adoption".

12 And then if you could pull out the next highlighted
13 section, please, down to the bottom of the page?

14 "You have asked for financial compensation from the
15 trust for your experiences at St Mary's home and
16 afterwards. The focus of the trust is on the current
17 needs of at risk families, and the trustees have a
18 responsibility to use the trust's resources best to
19 meet those needs.

20 We are the trust's legal advisers. We have advised
21 the trust that it is not liable at law to pay
22 compensation. We recommend you obtain your own legal
23 advice on this issue. Putting legal liability to one
24 side, the trust is very willing to continue a process
25 of reconciliation and healing and is willing to discuss
26 options with you or your lawyer to assist that process.
27 The trust has an excellent counselling service, which
28 can be made available if that is an option you wish to
29 explore".

30 What's your reaction then and now to that letter?

31 A. The first paragraph of the letter still to this day
32 makes me angry. I did not give up my children for
33 adoption willingly.

34 Q. And was that really the last that you heard from
35 anybody in the Anglican Church or the trust?

1 A. Yes. I looked into taking legal action through Cooper
2 Legal which was a firm that did that kind of work. I
3 was told because I worked full-time I was not eligible
4 for Legal Aid, but I could not afford private legal
5 representation on my nurse's salary. Although I'd
6 worked all my life, I am forced to work full-time and
7 although I love my work, at 67 it is exhausting. Money
8 is definitely a barrier to me being able to do things I
9 want to do.

10 Q. Now we've come to the end of your statement and I just
11 want to ask whether there's anything else that you want
12 to say. And if you do, you can say whatever you like.
13 And if you don't, I will, if it's okay with you I will
14 ask the Commissioners if they have any questions for
15 you, especially it would be questions about the redress
16 process.

17 A. I just would like to add that, to add insult to all my
18 injury, I got a call from the Royal Commission media
19 liaison officer explaining how she would liaise with
20 media questions and I categorically stated no to all
21 media queries. I do not want to sensationalise my
22 experience in newspapers or the news.

23 Also, she said she had read my statement and under
24 the guise of her journo hat felt that my story would
25 benefit Oranga Tamariki today of uplifting of children.
26 I was and am still very hurt and angry at this. I have
27 had it explained to me about what happened and that it
28 shouldn't have happened, and I understand this
29 Commission is all new but I just would take it as a
30 learning for everybody for the future.

31 **MS MACDONALD:** Thank you. And are you okay to take
32 questions?

33 A. Yes.

34 **MS MACDONALD:** Thank you.

1 **CHAIR:** Mrs D, before I ask my colleagues if they want
2 to ask any questions, can I most humbly apologise to
3 you for what happened to you in relation to that. It
4 was clearly a breakdown in our processes.

5 A. Yeah.

6 **CHAIR:** We aim not to do any harm and clearly we have
7 harmed you on this occasion, and so I unreservedly
8 apologise to you for that. It is something you should
9 not have gone through.

10 A. Yep.

11 **CHAIR:** When you have so graciously agreed to assist
12 us.

13 A. Yep.

14 **CHAIR:** Again, I am very sorry about that. I am going
15 to check with my colleagues if there are any questions
16 about the redress processes?

17 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** I did have just one question,
18 if that's all right? Thank you for coming in and
19 sharing your experiences today. I just wanted to
20 understand around when you first went to the Police and
21 they had told you to go back to the Church or St
22 Mary's, after that did you ever approach the Police
23 again or consider that?

24 A. No. We virtually lived in fear because in those days
25 you held the Police Officer in your town high on a
26 pedestal. You expected them to help you.

27 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Thank you.

28 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** I do just have one question, if
29 I may, Mrs D. When you approached the Church in
30 September 2012, did you have any idea in your mind
31 about what you would have wanted in terms of a redress
32 package?

33 A. Yes, I did. I felt that St Mary's under the Anglican
34 Church destroyed and robbed me of my life, my future
35 and my children's future. And I know I would have gone

1 on to higher education. I've always loved children and
2 while I was doing my bachelor degree, I found a passion
3 that I wanted to go on to be a doctor. Everyone said
4 "you should have been a doctor" and I wanted to do
5 haematology and oncology, with an interest in
6 infectious diseases, having had polio.

7 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** And so, just in that first
8 meeting, they didn't offer you a suite of options?

9 A. Nothing.

10 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Nothing about compensation?

11 A. Apology.

12 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Nothing about counselling?

13 A. No.

14 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Okay. But for your
15 persistence, two years later in 2014 you were able to
16 look at this again?

17 A. Yes.

18 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** And made the approach to them?

19 A. Yes.

20 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** And then they come up with a
21 legal argument in 2015?

22 A. Yeah, that it was under the Anglican Trust for Women
23 and Children and out of their scope to deal with.

24 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Thank you. If I could just ask
25 you one more question. You said there were lots of
26 young girls there with you?

27 A. Yes, there was.

28 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** And they were underage? Some
29 of them you felt were underage?

30 A. Yes.

31 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Do you recall how young the
32 youngest might have been, from memory?

33 A. I know there was one girl the same age as me and I
34 think the oldest girl that was there was 17 or 18.

35 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** And girls with disability?

1 A. Yes, there was one girl with a disability.

2 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** And different ethnicities?

3 A. Oh yes, yeah, there was people from overseas that came
4 here to have their babies. Their parents didn't know
5 that they'd had children.

6 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Thank you for that, Mrs D,
7 thank you.

8 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Kia ora, Mrs D. My name is
9 Anaru. I just have some questions about the redress
10 process. I wondered how, it seems that you, when you
11 seek monetary compensation for the redress from the
12 Anglican Church, that you're then redirected back to
13 the trust?

14 A. Yep.

15 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** I wondered how that made you
16 feel?

17 A. Just, once again, worthless.

18 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** And it seems it got to a point
19 there where there's a stand-off with basically the
20 lawyers get involved and then you're unable to do
21 anything under you lawyer up?

22 A. Yep, until I heard that the Royal Commission had been
23 set up and I felt strong enough to actually stand up
24 and actually have my voice heard.

25 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Thank you. Thank you, I
26 appreciate your testimony today. Kia ora.

27 **CHAIR:** Mrs D, I have no questions but an observation.
28 I've lost count, but I think at least three times you
29 have told people your story, your account and your
30 experiences, and there may well be more times that I
31 haven't encountered. It's quite plain that it is a
32 most painful story and each time it costs you dearly to
33 tell. So, for that reason, we truly value your bravery
34 at coming again today. Again, I am sorry that you have
35 been hurt through our process but I hope that you will

1 know that we have not just listened to your account but
2 we have heard it, and that what you have told us today
3 will add to our knowledge and understanding of what
4 went on to young women and girls who were in your
5 circumstance. And so, your story is not just yours but
6 that of your fellow sufferers back there and the
7 adoptive children who suffered as a result. So, we do
8 acknowledge your bravery and your persistence. I think
9 above all for me, what has shone through, that you will
10 not give up. And so, rest assured, your story and your
11 account here today rests with us and we will be taking
12 it fully into account. So, thank you so much. I hope
13 you can now go get some help and some support.

14 A. Yep.

15 **CHAIR:** And be able to recover from what's plainly been
16 a very difficult experience for you.

17 A. Thank you.

18 **CHAIR:** Thank you very much. We are now going to
19 close. We always close with a waiata and some closing
20 words, so I'm going to invite the kaumatua to come. If
21 it you would like to stay there and watch and
22 participate, you are most welcome.

23

24 (Closing waiata and mihi)

25

26

Hearing adjourned at 4.52 p.m.