

**ABUSE IN CARE ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY  
STATE REDRESS 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)  
Dr Andrew Erueti  
Ms Sandra Alofivae  
Ms Julia Steenson

**Counsel:**

Mr Simon Mount, Ms Hanne Janes, Ms Kerryn Beaton, Ms  
Katherine Anderson, Mr Joss Opie, Ms Echo Haronga, Ms  
Tania Sharkey, Mr Michael Thomas, Ms Jane Glover and Ms  
Lorraine Macdonald appear for the Royal Commission

Ms Sonja Cooper for Survivor Mary Marshall

Ms Sally McKechnie, Mr Alex Winsley, Mr Harrison  
Cunningham and Ms Fiona Thorp appear for the Catholic  
Church

Mrs Guy-Kidd, Mr James Anson-Holland and Ms India  
Shores appear for the Anglican Church

Ms Jenny Stevens and Ms Helen Thompson appear for the  
Salvation Army

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

**Date:** 7 December 2020

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**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

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**NEIL CONRAD HARDING - AFFIRMED**  
**EXAMINED BY MS ANDERSON**

**CHAIR:** Good afternoon, Ms Anderson.

**MS ANDERSON:** Good afternoon, and good afternoon, Neil.  
Before the Chair takes your affirmation, can I get you  
to confirm for the record that your full name is Neil  
Conrad Harding?

A. Yes.

Q. You might need to move the microphone up a little bit  
towards you.

A. Is that better?

Q. That's perfect, thank you. If I can get you to sit  
there while the Chair administers the affirmation.

**CHAIR:** How do you like to be referred to?

A. Neil. (Witness affirmed).

**MS ANDERSON:**

Q. Thank you, Neil. Before we make a start through your  
evidence, do you wish to introduce the support people  
you have brought here with you this afternoon?

A. Yes. Can I begin, tēnā koutou katoa. With me is my  
partner Theresa and Steve Brown, the president of the  
Dilworth Old Boys Association.

Q. Thank you and welcome to you both and thank you for the  
support through this process. Two other procedural  
aspects, Neil, before we move on. As I have explained  
to you, the Commissioners have your full written  
statement and we're going to be going through that but  
not all of it might be given in oral evidence but for  
confirmation again that the Commissioners have the full  
statement and of course that statement will be  
available in its entirety on the website after you've  
given evidence.

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. And just a reminder, as we've discussed with the pace,  
3 as you'll see we have some people here signing and we  
4 have the stenographer taking down the evidence, so if  
5 at any point you get a little quick, either I or the  
6 Chair will interrupt to bring you back to a slower  
7 pace.

8 A. Sure.

9 Q. The evidence that you are giving here today, Neil,  
10 relates to your time at Dilworth School?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Can you explain what was special about the nature of  
13 Dilworth School, in terms of who it admitted as its  
14 student base back in the time when you were attending,  
15 this was in 1977?

16 A. Yeah. Dilworth is a private boarding school that  
17 offers free scholarships to boys from disadvantaged  
18 circumstances.

19 Q. And what was it, Neil, about your circumstances that  
20 meant you met the criteria for entry to the school at  
21 that time?

22 A. My parents separated. My father left for another  
23 woman, wasn't paying any - contributing towards my  
24 upbringing, and so I therefore met the criteria to be  
25 accepted.

26 Q. And you've said in your evidence also that an aspect of  
27 the vulnerability, in addition to those factors that  
28 you've just identified, was that you were very much  
29 looking for a father figure?

30 A. Yeah, I had to deal with abandonment and rejection from  
31 my father. I think my maternal grandfather, I think  
32 thought I reminded him of my father, so there was sort  
33 of like, there was a difficulty around those male role  
34 model figures in my life, so I was seeking that kind of  
35 attention.

1 Q. And we've got a photograph to bring up of you at the  
2 time when you were at school in 1977. We will just  
3 wait a moment, that will come up on the screen. You  
4 might need to expand it. That's you in the second row?

5 A. That's correct.

6 Q. And that's you as, what age were you in that  
7 photograph?

8 A. 11.

9 Q. You were 11 years old. And the person we can see in  
10 the front row there, can you identify that for the  
11 Commissioners?

12 A. The GRO-C-1.

13 Q. That is a person we will come on to talk about in your  
14 evidence?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Thank you. And before you attended Dilworth School,  
17 had you been - were you and your family active in the  
18 Anglican faith?

19 A. I was born, christened, born in Masterton, christened  
20 in the Anglican Church but I don't recall attending  
21 Church services prior to my time at Dilworth.

22 Q. You had some connection but not an overly strong  
23 connection?

24 A. I was considered Church of England, so the school was  
25 my faith.

26 Q. And how did you and your mother react to the news that  
27 you had gained a place at Dilworth?

28 A. We were really excited, it was a big thing. Dilworth  
29 is particularly impressive. It was going to be a  
30 wonderful opportunity for me to be given that free  
31 scholarship at a place like Dilworth and it was going  
32 to take a huge amount of pressure off her financially.  
33 I had an older sister, so it was kind of an opportunity  
34 for me to really do something to help them make their

1 lives better and an opportunity for me to get a really  
2 good education and a wonderful opportunity.

3 Q. So, an opportunity very well received by both you and  
4 your mother at that time?

5 A. Yeah, it was a special moment.

6 Q. And you've started school at Dilworth in 1977 at the  
7 beginning of the school year, haven't you?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. So, can you explain to us, you've come in as a boarder,  
10 so that's day boarding Monday through to Saturday  
11 afternoon and then home Saturday afternoon and Sunday?

12 A. That's correct.

13 Q. And can you explain for the Commissioners, you know,  
14 what your first impressions were of Dilworth School and  
15 explain the circumstances in which you found yourself?

16 A. It was a shock. I discovered very quickly there was a  
17 culture, it was kind of, it was overly harsh, it was  
18 kind of Military style, it was certainly not what I was  
19 used to. I was used to, kind of, kindness and  
20 gentleness and kind and loving and it was the opposite.  
21 It was brutal and there was - I saw quite quickly there  
22 was injustice, there was all sorts of stuff going on,  
23 it was a real shock to me.

24 Q. So, as an 11-year-old coming into this environment that  
25 you've indicated was shocking to you, how were you  
26 referred to by your fellow students and your teachers?

27 A. The staff referred to me either as Harding or 409 which  
28 was the number I was given. I think the boys, I can't  
29 remember whether we were always, we knew each other's  
30 first names but maybe we even started calling each  
31 other by our surnames as well but certainly the school,  
32 at house meetings and things they would be using the  
33 number, not the name.

34 Q. What was the impact on you of being referred to by a  
35 number as opposed to your normal name?

1 A. Pretty depersonalising.

2 Q. So, you've come in as an 11-year-old into this  
3 environment which is a big change for you. What were  
4 your coping mechanisms at the time as you came into  
5 this environment?

6 A. I have a placid nature, I'm not overly aggressive,  
7 physically aggressive, so it kind of - it wasn't  
8 particularly useful in that environment. I think the  
9 kids who adapted better were the ones that were  
10 naturally physically aggressive and could easily stand  
11 up and defend themselves. I, sort of, it's not  
12 inherently in my nature so I tried to practise  
13 invisibility. I found being invisible made me less of  
14 a target.

15 Q. And can you briefly explain, in the dormitory in which  
16 you were spending your evenings, what was the culture  
17 like in that dormitory? What did you experience there?

18 A. In the first year, we're talking?

19 Q. Yes, 1977. There's quite a large number of boys in  
20 that dormitory?

21 A. Yeah, there was about 11. We had kind of inspections  
22 where, you know, we'd have to make the bed properly and  
23 proper hospital corners. If it was not done to  
24 perfection, then there was a real song and a dance  
25 about the bed being stripped off and you had to do it  
26 again. So, there was - and clothes, shoes had to be  
27 polished and we had to be dressing smart and looking  
28 the part, which was all kind of fair enough but there  
29 was a lot of fear connected with not doing it right.  
30 At that age, that was kind of - it's sort of not what I  
31 expected, so the point, I suppose it wasn't terror, it  
32 was just fear at that point.

33 Q. In terms of the incidents that gave rise to that fear,  
34 did you witness and experience some forms of corporal  
35 punishment?

1 A. Yeah, I do recall one incident, which I remember really  
2 clearly because it really upset me, was after the  
3 evening meal before house meeting we had to brush our  
4 teeth, so our toothbrushes were lined up in toothbrush  
5 holders in the bathroom, so there was a whole series of  
6 toothbrushes, one for each boy, with your particular  
7 number. Your toothbrush was in your toothbrush holder  
8 with your number on it.

9 One tactic was for boys to instead of brushing their  
10 teeth, put their toothpaste on someone else's brush who  
11 had already brushed their teeth. And just before house  
12 meeting, the matron would come through, take the  
13 numbers of the boys who hadn't brushed their teeth and  
14 after house meeting they were caned.

15 So, I do recall one instance of a boy that had been  
16 framed, he had brushed his teeth, pleading with the  
17 tutor after house meeting to smell his breath, that he  
18 had brushed his teeth. And despite his pleas, he was  
19 caned, and I still recall the sound of the cane on the  
20 bare backside is a pretty horrific sound. Also, his  
21 crying and the crying more for the injustice in what he  
22 had experienced.

23 Q. Would it be fair to say that it would not be uncommon  
24 to be a witness and exposed to this action of caning  
25 other students?

26 A. Yeah, well, I mean -

27 Q. And experiencing their distress?

28 A. Oh, totally, yep.

29 Q. In terms of the aspects that you're going to cover in  
30 relation to your abuse, this occurred in the following  
31 year. So, you've come through 1977, it's been quite  
32 dramatic, from what you've said, but nothing compared  
33 to what follows in the following year?

34 A. Yeah, in the first year I was in the junior house, so  
35 we were separated at night from the older kids. But



1 then at the end of the first year, I was put up into  
2 the senior school.

3 Q. You've come back in 1978 and gone into Hobson House?

4 A. Yes, correct.

5 Q. You had a new number?

6 A. 320.

7 Q. And what kind of numbers of other older students did  
8 you have around you at that point?

9 A. From 2nd form through to 7th form.

10 Q. Compared to the culture of the first dormitory  
11 situation you were in the previous year, was there any  
12 difference in the culture in 1978 relative to what  
13 you'd already experienced?

14 A. Yeah. What I realised in the senior house, it was a  
15 bit of a free for all really. The older kids did  
16 whatever they wanted to the younger kids and there was  
17 an absence.

18 Q. How did they get away with doing that?

19 A. Just, I don't think we were supervised adequately, I  
20 would say.

21 Q. Supervision not being on-site and -

22 A. Well, it was probably, yeah, well the culture, the  
23 degree of supervision allowed the boys to do what they  
24 did. It was a consequence of whatever their  
25 supervision was or wasn't.

26 Q. So, just summarising, before we move on to events that  
27 are the focus of your evidence, would it be fair to  
28 summarise that there was again a lot of violence,  
29 student on student, in that environment?

30 A. Yeah. You can say bullying. Bullying is just like,  
31 it's not the right word. It's more violent physical  
32 assault. We'd get night raids, where we're sleep in  
33 bed and a dorm of older boys would attack the dorm of  
34 younger boys. Each one would pick a bed and you would  
35 wake up being punched and kicked through the bedding

1 which didn't provide much protection and then they  
2 would run off. That created a sense of - going to  
3 sleep at night there was a sense of terror of am I  
4 going to be violently assaulted and woken up while I'm  
5 sleeping?

6 Q. In terms of your tactic of invisibility that you'd  
7 adopted as your strategy in year 1, 1977, did you  
8 continue that strategy into 1978?

9 A. Yeah, I tried to.

10 Q. Was there something that happened in that year that  
11 gave you greater protection than you had experienced  
12 the previous year?

13 A. Yeah. On the Sunday evening Church service my mother  
14 and older sister would accompany me to Church service.  
15 The Head Boy took a liking to my sister, so the word  
16 went out to leave me alone.

17 Q. And that gave you a measure of protection?

18 A. A degree, not in my own house, I still certainly had  
19 things happen to me but it was a little bit concerning  
20 for me because I kind of didn't want it because it  
21 wasn't part of my invisibility tactic. I became  
22 visible through the fact that the word had been out to  
23 kind of leave me alone.

24 Q. And did that have another consequence for you?

25 A. Yes.

26 Q. Can you explain what that consequence was?

27 A. I remember a boy towards the end of that second year  
28 approaching me kind of like a hyena circles its pray  
29 and said, "You wait until he leaves, you're going to  
30 get it" and I believed him.

31 Q. The Head Boy, when would he be leaving the school?

32 A. At the end of the school year.

33 Q. It was a signal for you that you were protected for  
34 1978 but things were likely to change for you?

1 A. I knew I was going to get, it was going to be bad for  
2 me. When you become a target like that, I knew that  
3 they were going to follow through.

4 Q. And before we come on to talking about the experience  
5 that you had with GRO-C-1, you've mentioned in  
6 your brief something that stood out for you in relation  
7 to your lessons with your English teacher. Do you just  
8 want to briefly comment on that aspect?

9 A. Sure. Mrs Morgan, she was probably the only female  
10 teacher I recall at my time at school. She was my  
11 favourite teacher and when I look at that, it's not  
12 just because she was a really good teacher but because  
13 she was a female and I felt safe in her presence, and I  
14 think that's really an important aspect to this, is the  
15 absence of women, particularly the paedophile sniffing  
16 variety, is really, really good, and I think there was  
17 an absence of those kinds of women that would kind  
18 of - in that environment. Anyway, that's an aside.

19 We studied William Goldie's book the Lord of the  
20 Flies which, as we went through the book, I kind of  
21 didn't miss the irony of the book and at that stage  
22 being the younger boys, I remember having discussions  
23 with a couple of boys about who was Piggy and we all  
24 felt like we were Piggy.

25 Q. For those people who haven't read the book, the  
26 significance of that Piggy reference, is that that's a  
27 person who's taunted and is the object of scorn and is  
28 ostracised?

29 A. Yes.

30 Q. In that fiction?

31 A. Yes, a target. So, you know, my time at Dilworth was  
32 really a Lord of the Flies kind of environment where  
33 the big boys made up the rules, but the difference was  
34 for me, was we were being predated upon by staff.

1 Q. Turning to that, we're going to talk about the, as you  
2 referred to him, his title at the time, [GRO-C-1]

3 [GRO-C-1]. Can you explain to the  
4 Commissioners what his role was at the school and how  
5 you interacted with him relative to those roles?

6 A. So, he was the [GRO-C-1]. I was connected  
7 with him through the [GRO-C] that I was part of.  
8 He taught [GRO-C]. He also set up a [GRO-C]  
9 [GRO-C], I wasn't part of the [GRO-C] but he set  
10 up another [GRO-C] with young boys and [GRO-C] and  
11 things of that nature. And, yeah, somehow I think he  
12 selected me. I kind of -

13 Q. Before we move on to that, [GRO-C] ?

14 A. He [GRO-C], yes.

15 Q. And through that role, presumably he took the [GRO-C]  
16 [GRO-C] ?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. So, he's got significant presence, would that be a fair  
19 way to characterise him?

20 A. Yes, definitely.

21 Q. And you began to interact with him? As you said, you  
22 think that he picked you out?

23 A. Yeah, he kind of selected me, yeah, I don't know what  
24 it was about me that he selected me but I do remember  
25 him arranging with my mother and with the school, I  
26 think, I imagine it was through the school as well to  
27 take me flying, he was a pilot. I went up flying with  
28 him twice, once was in a Cessna, once was in a  
29 Cherokee. I remember because the Cessna had the wing  
30 above and I preferred the Cessna to the Piper Cherokee  
31 because they had less view of the ground.

32 He took me to some Christian festival with his  
33 family and a couple of other boys. He was kind of  
34 working with me about kind of my faith and believing in  
35 God and I was experiencing being a Christian and

1 thinking that one day I might be an [GRO-C]  
2 potentially at that time. I was enjoying that  
3 attention.

4 The other part of that though, was all the boys  
5 called him [GRO-C-1]. There was a sort of a thing  
6 about, and I thought that's me being a bit harsh, he's  
7 married with kids, [GRO-C-1], I don't know if I need to  
8 explain what that might mean?

9 Q. What did you understand that to mean, back when you  
10 were 12 years old?

11 A. It was a paedophiliac reference.

12 Q. You were interacting with him, how were you able to  
13 reconcile the two aspects?

14 A. I suppose I kind of had my alarm bells up, I suppose.

15 Q. Would you describe it as being consistent on  
16 inconsistent with your interactions with him at that  
17 point to know that he had this nickname?

18 A. Oh, the further we went, the more I thought that he was  
19 okay and that it was an unfair reference.

20 Q. And did it feel quite special to be taken flying by  
21 him?

22 A. Of course.

23 Q. Did he take many boys flying?

24 A. I don't know if he took any other boys flying. I never  
25 heard anyone else talk about being taken flying.

26 Q. We're going to move on to the time that you describe in  
27 your witness statement about when you visited [GRO-C-1]

28 [GRO-C-1] in his home, which is [GRO-C].

29 A. Yes, [GRO-C].

30 Q. Can you talk to us about that, including how it came to  
31 be that you were going to his house?

32 A. I cannot remember the circumstances of why I was going  
33 there or how that happened but all I remember is  
34 passing his wife in the kitchen, she was in the  
35 kitchen. I spoke to her briefly. He then escorted me

1 through out the back of the - towards the back of the  
2 house, into the dedicated [GRO-C] room. The  
3 boys in the [GRO-C] had built an [GRO-C] with [GRO-C]  
4 [GRO-C] and set up this really cool [GRO-C]  
5 [GRO-C] dedicated for that. When he led me in there,  
6 it was like why are we going in here? It seemed a bit  
7 strange because I wasn't part of the [GRO-C]. And  
8 then he directed me to the corner of the room, there  
9 weren't any chairs there, and I had to sit down on the  
10 ground in the corner of the room cross-legged and then  
11 he sat down cross-legged directly facing me and I was  
12 trapped.

13 My alarm bells were kind of, something didn't quite  
14 feel right about that.

15 Q. And then what happened next?

16 A. Well, then he proceeded to place his left-hand on my  
17 right knee and started to move his hand up my thigh.  
18 So, I grabbed his hand, pushed it away and leapt to my  
19 feet and got out of there.

20 Q. So, you've managed to push him off and you've rushed  
21 out of the room?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. And you've headed out of the house?

24 A. Yep, and I passed his wife in the kitchen on the way.

25 Q. Were you able to talk to anyone about this experience?

26 A. No. The culture of the school is cop it and shut up.  
27 I was conditioned to not saying anything about anything  
28 to anybody and so, I do remember racing back to my  
29 house, feeling terror of the fact that what I thought  
30 was safe wasn't, and feeling a bit of an idiot really  
31 too, that he was [GRO-C-1].

32 Q. We're going to take the lunch break shortly, Neil, but  
33 what I'd like to do, I think we talked about the fact  
34 that you would read paragraphs 69 and 70 of your

1 statement out. We will take a lunch break after we've  
2 got to this natural break in your evidence.

3 A. Okay. I knew another student who was in the Dilworth  
4 GRO-C the same time as me who was older. He was  
5 allegedly sexually abused by GRO-C-1. I have  
6 been informed that he told the school at the time and  
7 was never believed. I know his mother and brother who  
8 are very clear about what happened here. Apparently,  
9 the school were quick to close this down and sweep it  
10 under the carpet. Approximately 10 years ago he was  
11 killed in a car accident. If not for his premature  
12 death, I am sure that he would be presenting his  
13 submission to this Royal Commission. This has given me  
14 more determination, strength and courage to be here to  
15 also do this for him.

16 Q. Thank you, Neil. That's a strong motivation for you,  
17 isn't it?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. In terms of why you've come forward?

20 A. Yes. As you'll see through my submission, I kind of  
21 gave up on personal justice and I sort of thought the  
22 way I could find peace was maybe through helping  
23 others.

24 Q. Thank you, Neil. I think that's a - if you are happy  
25 to pause there, we can pause and take the lunch break  
26 and come back.

27 A. Sure.

28 Q. And begin with the rest of your statement which is  
29 focused on the redress processes that you've been  
30 engaged with.

31 A. Sure.

32 **CHAIR:** And before we do, what time would you like to  
33 resume, Ms Anderson?

34 **MS ANDERSON:** I think 2.15, given that we've run  
35 slightly over.

1       **CHAIR:** All right, 2.15.

2

3               **Hearing adjourned from 1.08 p.m. until 2.15 p.m.**

4

5

6       **CHAIR:** Welcome back everybody. Thank you,

7       Ms Anderson.

8       **MS ANDERSON:**

9   Q. Thank you, Neil. Just before we broke for the lunch  
10 break, you informed what motivated you to come forward  
11 to this Royal Commission and your desire to search for  
12 peace through helping others. We're going to come on  
13 to that, what you did to activate your search for peace  
14 through helping others in a moment but there's one  
15 further matter of something you experienced at Dilworth  
16 that we're going to uncover now and that relates to a  
17 teacher you identified not by name in your statement as  
18 having a predilection and interest in caning  
19 individuals. Could you talk to the Commissioners about  
20 what this person said to you and how you came to be in  
21 the circumstances of being caned by him, and then of  
22 course the third aspect of that is the impact that had  
23 on you at the time?

24   A. Sure. In terms of individuals, I am not sure about  
25 individuals, I only recall this really being isolated  
26 to myself, but he was a tutor in my house, in my  
27 boarding house. He had been assigned as the sporting  
28 coach. He approached me one day when no-one else was  
29 around during a game and said to me out of the blue, "I  
30 want to cane you". And it was a real shock, I had to  
31 process that quickly and all I could come up with was,  
32 "I would have to do something wrong first, Sir,  
33 wouldn't I?" and he said, "I'll be watching".

34       So, I then had to process this and on top of  
35 everything else I was going through, I found that this



1 was particularly - it created real fear for me, the  
2 fact that he's now watching me to find a reason to cane  
3 me.

4 So, one day in prep, prep was time that we had to do  
5 our homework, during prep I'd finished my homework and  
6 so I decided to play Patience with a pack of cards.  
7 All I knew was we couldn't talk, I didn't know we  
8 couldn't play cards. He came up to me with a big smile  
9 on his face and said "Gotcha, go to the duty room". I  
10 went to the duty room and he was there, and the canes  
11 were lined up in a pool cue rack and he took them one  
12 at a time, bent them in half, put it back and went  
13 through all the canes and I was looking at them going,  
14 "I hope he doesn't pick the thin one. I hope he picks  
15 the thick one". The thin one hurts more, it leaves  
16 less of a bruise. But, no, he picked the thin one and  
17 proceeded to cane me. And it was, again, a feeling of  
18 processing a combination of fear and terror. That  
19 someone that's supposed to be protecting me that has a  
20 duty of care responsibility for me is playing some  
21 sadistic game.

22 And at the time that act of Sadism enraged me more  
23 than any other experience I had at Dilworth. Over the  
24 years, I look at the whole thing and the whole lot  
25 really rages me now but that particular act was so  
26 unnecessary, so premeditated and sadistic.

27 I suppose, as an important context to everything  
28 that's here, is, you know, if it wasn't bad enough.

29 Q. And so, at the end of that year when you've come to the  
30 end of GRO-B and you know the Head Boy who's giving  
31 you some protection is going to leave, you summoned the  
32 courage to have a discussion with your mother and she  
33 agreed that you could leave Dilworth and attend a new  
34 school. You've got a memory of what it was like, your  
35 first day coming home from Takapuna Grammar. Perhaps

1 you could share that memory which encapsulates the  
2 distinction between the feeling of the two schools?

3 A. Until that point in my life, my first day at Takapuna  
4 Grammar in 1979 was the happiest day of my life. I  
5 went to school. I was riding my bike back home, I was  
6 an out of zone student and wrote about 7 kilometres  
7 home. I pedalled so hard, I was so happy and the  
8 thoughts running through my head were 'I haven't been  
9 beaten up' and 'no-one had stolen the pens out of my  
10 pencil case'. Which is kind of like, eh? Such a weird  
11 thing but I just could not believe that no-one had  
12 stolen my stuff and no-one had bashed me up and I just  
13 had this feeling of, wow, I'm safe. Something really  
14 normal could be so profound. My kind of best day at  
15 Dilworth was no better than my worst day at Takapuna  
16 Grammar.

17 Q. Thank you, Neil. We're now at paragraph 80 of your  
18 statement which is the section dealing with the impact  
19 of the abuse on you, and you're going to read that  
20 section out to the Commissioners beginning at  
21 paragraph 80.

22 A. Sure. My Dilworth experience was one of lost  
23 opportunity, melancholy and sadness. My time there was  
24 characterised of ongoing trauma in various terms.  
25 Paradoxically, it created both vulnerability and  
26 resilience. However, none of these experiences should  
27 a young boy have to endure.

28 I spent my adolescence and adult life confused as to  
29 whether I was an abuse victim or not. If I had been in  
30 a room with survivors who were raped or sodomised, I  
31 would have been conflicted as to whether I had the  
32 right to be there.

33 I had always qualified my abuse as attempted abuse.  
34 It is only since analysing the definition of child  
35 sexual abuse that I realised that I am a victim of

1 abuse, a survivor. I can now drop the word attempted  
2 from attempted abuse. The impact of what I endured has  
3 remained with me and has affected my actions, thinking  
4 and behaviour to this date.

5 The following definition is from Dilworth School's  
6 new Child Protection Policy. Definition: "Sexual abuse  
7 involves enticing or forcing a child or young person to  
8 take part in sexual activities, penetrative and  
9 non-penetrative, such as rape and sodomy, oral sexual  
10 connection, kissing, touching, masturbation, as well as  
11 non-contact acts such as involving children in the  
12 viewing or production of sexual images, sexual  
13 activities and sexual behaviours. A sexual  
14 relationship between an adult and a child will always  
15 be wrong, unequal and unacceptable".

16 Mine was non-penetrative but it was inappropriate  
17 and unwanted touching. I realise that the violation  
18 and breach of trust has had the greatest impact on me,  
19 more than the inappropriate and unwanted touching. It  
20 is only through noticing the difference and changes in  
21 my life from consistent and expert counselling that I  
22 realise how much this abuse has affected me. I have  
23 been attending regular, mostly weekly, counselling for  
24 the last 3 years.

25 There was no escape for me, over a reaffirmation of  
26 breach of trust from father figures and from a young  
27 child onwards, left me reeling, abandoned and rejected,  
28 as well as blunting my spirit.

29 It consequently changed my life and only now in my  
30 mid 50s am I really coming to terms with who I am.

31 It is only now that I'm not desperately seeking to  
32 belong.

33 It is only now that I'm not striving and striving  
34 and striving to be good, to be worthy, to be good  
35 enough.

1           It is only now that I am recognising that I do not  
2 always have to try to be funny to be liked.

3           It is only now that I recognise the empty void in my  
4 chest, battling loneliness, hyper-sensitivity to  
5 rejection, and that I overeat to provide self-comfort.

6           It is only now that someone is really stepping up to  
7 protect that child that still hides somewhere in my  
8 chest.

9           It is only now that I'm learning to say no to even  
10 my parents and sibling, to put my needs first.

11           It is only now that someone is speaking up for that  
12 child that was abused to say that was not good enough.

13           It is only now that the child feels protected, safe,  
14 validated and can relax enough to be himself and it is  
15 okay.

16           I lost touch with my Anglican faith because of what  
17 happened to me at Dilworth. Recently, I had occasion  
18 to attend a funeral service at a Church. It was only  
19 when I was inside and viewed the programme that I  
20 realised it was Anglican. I spent much of the time  
21 looking at the Reverend, wondering if he was a  
22 paedophile.

23           Unfortunately, my mother, my father and my sister  
24 have, for whatever reason, been unable to provide the  
25 support I have asked of them during the last 3-year  
26 journey. I therefore stand here without them, somewhat  
27 isolated, feeling a broken link to my bloodline and to  
28 those who have gone before me. However, it is enough  
29 that I stand here for myself, along with the people who  
30 have chosen to support me, including my children  
31 overseas.

32           What is the price of a young boy's faith? What is  
33 the price of dressing a wolf up as a sheep, giving them  
34 the title " GRO-C-1 " and releasing them amongst the  
35 lambs to groom and sexually abuse for a GRO-C-1

1 one-sided sexual gratification, then move them along  
2 quietly and quickly into another paddock and not ask  
3 any questions. The lambs might forget. This lamb  
4 hasn't forgotten, and the price is difficult to measure  
5 because the effects are ongoing. There is a  
6 consequence. Since the age of 12 and for the last  
7 43 years, even as I stand here now, I observe every  
8 Anglican representative and wonder are you a wolf in  
9 sheep's clothing? Are you a complicit harbourer? Are  
10 you a paedophile? That is the consequence of blatant  
11 hypocrisy.

12 The Anglican Church lost a young boy and what is  
13 really sad is that no-one came looking for me. Luke 15  
14 versus 3-5 says, "And he spoke this parable saying,  
15 what man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose  
16 one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the  
17 wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he  
18 find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on  
19 his shoulders rejoicing". There has been no search  
20 party, there has been no rejoicing. The shepherd has  
21 lost one of its flock 43 years ago and still no-one has  
22 noticed.

23 Q. Thank you, Neil. Now we're moving on to the part of  
24 your statement that addresses your attempts to seek  
25 redress.

26 The first time that this occurred was in 1997, so  
27 this is 20 years after your first year at Dilworth.  
28 Can you explain to the Commissioners the steps you took  
29 to engage with the New Zealand Police?

30 A. I spent a number of years overseas living in Australia,  
31 from 1985 to 2001. In 1997, I visited my mother at  
32 Christmas time on Waiheke Island. It had been  
33 concerning me the years leading up to that, that other  
34 children may be at threat from GRO-C-1, so I  
35 decided to go to the Police. So, I caught the ferry

1 from Waiheke and went to the Auckland Central Police  
2 Station and asked to speak to someone. I went upstairs  
3 to one of the rooms and met with a Detective, plain  
4 clothes, I can't remember his name. And I shared my  
5 experience of what had happened to me at Dilworth. At  
6 that time, the Detective informed me that he wasn't  
7 going to take a statement. That all he would do is  
8 check the database and confirm to me that GRO-C-1  
9 was GRO-C-1.

10 So, I was kind of under-whelmed. It had kind of  
11 taken a bit of courage and effort on my part and  
12 expense to make that trip and that's when I kind of  
13 lost faith of getting any kind of justice. After that  
14 point, I assumed that my experience was not worthy of  
15 anything.

16 Q. And the language you use in your statement, is you felt  
17 the response was dismissive?

18 A. Totally, I was wasting his time.

19 Q. And so then from that point in 1997, it's effectively  
20 another 20 years on, in 2018, when you take another  
21 step?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Seeking to engage with Dilworth School in relation to  
24 what you'd experienced there?

25 A. That's correct.

26 Q. And although it's not in your brief, perhaps for the  
27 Commissioners you could explain, there was a trigger  
28 event there, wasn't there?

29 A. Yeah, I had a pretty traumatic event occur on Christmas  
30 Day 2017, which involved the Police. Again, the Police  
31 did not take that particular matter seriously. I had a  
32 bit of a, sort of a bit of a breakdown.

33 Q. It was at that point that you've entered into your  
34 counselling?

1 A. Yeah, then I kind of sought counselling. My counsellor  
2 expertly kind of asked me when at other times have you  
3 not kind of experienced validation or support, and that  
4 was when I explained my experiences at Dilworth and at  
5 that point we kind of - she stopped and we kind of went  
6 in a different direction and the ACC Sensitive Claims  
7 Unit became involved and sort of the real counselling  
8 began really.

9 Q. So, about a year into that counselling, so the  
10 counselling began in 2017 and -

11 A. Early 2018.

12 Q. Early 2018, and it's also in early 2018 that you  
13 approached the Dilworth Trust Board?

14 A. In the process of that, I thought, I was prompted to  
15 write to the Dilworth Trust Board and that was again, I  
16 had no sense I was going to get any personal justice,  
17 so my way of finding peace was to say, okay, let's try  
18 and help other boys. I certainly wanted to try and  
19 make sure that Dilworth was safe now and I was  
20 concerned about - I knew that there were a lot of  
21 survivors of abuse from Dilworth and I wanted to make  
22 sure they had a pathway for dealing with historical  
23 abuse.

24 So, I wrote a report. I spent time on the Board of  
25 Trustees of my local High School. So, I wrote a report  
26 strategically sharing my experiences and giving the  
27 current board really no option but to take my report  
28 seriously.

29 Q. I'm going to call up on the screen a document which is  
30 Exhibit 2, WITN0010002, just the bottom half of that  
31 document, please.

32 Can you expand that bottom half? Just taking them  
33 in chunks, that first section there. This is from the  
34 letter that you wrote on the 18th of April where you

1 are outlining what you think are questions that the  
2 school is going to have to deal with?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. And so, you're identifying the questions that they're  
5 likely to face are, what is the nature of any abuse?  
6 Who are the known perpetrators? Who are the known  
7 victims? Who are the unknown perpetrators and who are  
8 the unknown victims? And indicated that you thought  
9 the board's challenge was with those last two  
10 questions. And then the bottom part of that is, what  
11 does the school do when people come forward? You  
12 outline the principles of the four steps to repentance?

13 A. Which are five, I've changed it.

14 Q. In your evidence and we'll come on to the fifth one in  
15 your evidence.

16 Can we go to the next page? What you say is you  
17 believe these four steps would serve the Trust Board in  
18 dealing with historical child abuse. And the four  
19 aspects are outlined there. Recognition, remorse,  
20 restitution and refrain. And what you say there, Neil,  
21 do you want to read out the last sentence?

22 A. "I am seeking to work collaboratively with the board in  
23 this matter, with the intent of helping myself find  
24 peace and closure and at the same time providing a  
25 pathway that may help others".

26 Q. Then it's four months later, isn't it, in August 2018,  
27 that, as you now understand things, the Trust Board had  
28 a briefing from an experienced psychologist on the  
29 issues of abuse?

30 A. Yes.

31 Q. Did the Trust Board give you a timely response to your  
32 communication with them?

33 A. I was having regular email contact with, at the time,  
34 Rob Campbell, the General Manager of the Board of  
35 Trustees, and I found his communication to be really



1 effective and he was very appropriate to that process.

2 He was very, very good.

3 Q. Through that communication, you understood that the  
4 Trust Board was working on reviewing the child safety  
5 policy for the school?

6 A. Yes. The fact that it was taking a long time made me  
7 feel comfortable that it was being taken seriously. If  
8 they had of come back to me with a response in a couple  
9 of weeks, I would have been disappointed.

10 Q. And in that collaborative mode, you were expecting to  
11 work in a collaborative mode with the Trust Board in  
12 relation to the review of that policy?

13 A. And particularly with the go-between of the General  
14 Manager of the Board of Trustees, there was very much a  
15 collaborative spirit of what we were doing.

16 Q. So, explain to the Commissioners the opportunity you  
17 had to review that new policy?

18 A. So, a draft Child Safety Policy was written and in the  
19 spirit of collaboration I requested to read the draft  
20 through the eyes of an old boys' survivor.

21 Q. Can I pause you there, Neil, we just need to be careful  
22 of pace, just in terms of delivery for the signing and  
23 the stenographer. This is just to confirm where it's  
24 landscaped in the timeline, this is July 2019?

25 A. Yes.

26 Q. So, you've first written in April 2018?

27 A. Yes.

28 Q. And you are now engaging in this process in July 2019?

29 A. That's correct.

30 Q. Please continue.

31 A. So, I requested a copy of the draft Child Safety Policy  
32 to peruse prior to my meeting with them but they didn't  
33 want to do that.

34 Q. But they did give you an opportunity to look at it?

1 A. Yes. So, I had an arranged meeting with the  
2 psychologist that had put together the draft policy  
3 document at the Dilworth Trust Board offices. So, I  
4 went over to have this meeting, so I had an opportunity  
5 to read the document immediately prior to this meeting.  
6 So, I kind of felt, in that spirit of collaboration, it  
7 was kind of a bit rushed for me to do the job properly.  
8 I didn't really have time to peruse and consider and  
9 look for appropriate feedback.

10 I think it was kind of a token read. I don't think  
11 I was expected to provide much. I think they were just  
12 kind of letting me be part of it.

13 Q. Would it be fair to say you viewed it as a token  
14 gesture?

15 A. A token gesture, yes.

16 Q. You were able to pick up some aspects of that that were  
17 important?

18 A. I found something I thought was very significant that I  
19 missed and it was only through my experience as a  
20 survivor that I picked up that omission.

21 Q. And this is dealt with in your statement beginning at  
22 paragraph 130 and can I invite you to read paragraphs  
23 130-133?

24 A. Yes, this is another point. One of the issues  
25 preventing survivors coming forward to report abuse, is  
26 the fear that they will not be believed. In the  
27 introduction to the child safety policy, there was  
28 reference to survivors "telling their story". To me  
29 the word "story" is a synonym for fiction or make  
30 believe and does not help this survivor feel he that is  
31 going to be believed. I feel that it is patronising.  
32 I voiced this concern and it was explained to me by the  
33 psychologist how this was accepted vernacular within  
34 psychology. As part of my university degrees, I took  
35 some psychology papers and feel that just because

1 experts decide to use this term, it should not  
2 necessarily override or negate feedback from a  
3 survivor. My concern was noted by Rob Campbell and  
4 said that he would change the wording. However, I got  
5 the impression, I got the sense that the contracted  
6 Dilworth psychologist was frustrated with me and felt I  
7 did not understand that this was a widely used and  
8 accepted term. I requested that telling their story be  
9 replaced with "sharing their experiences". I believe  
10 that the distinction between these two terms is  
11 significant.

12 I was acknowledged by the trustees of the Dilworth  
13 Trust Board for my contribution to the new child abuse  
14 policy and addressing historic child abuse with a gift  
15 basket. This arrived at home by courier one day. I  
16 was upset to see that the note attached to the gift  
17 basket said, "thanks for sharing your story". This  
18 felt like a gut punch and was particularly insensitive  
19 to my request.

20 I would like the Royal Commission to consider and  
21 analyse all jargon and use of terminology from the  
22 perspective of survivors as opposed to accepting  
23 existing terms that may not be useful.

24 Q. Thank you, Neil. Then you've set out in your brief  
25 you've had further communications with the Trust Board  
26 over the development of the steps that it was going to  
27 take and you've been quite complimentary of their  
28 commitment to address the concerns that you'd outlined.

29 And you had, there was an event where you had  
30 understood that you were going to be attending a  
31 meeting with the Trust Board in the spirit of  
32 collaboration that you'd approached them with? This is  
33 in July 2019?

34 A. Yes, it was arranged for me to come in and meet the  
35 board. So, I cancelled Monday's practice clinic and

1 made arrangements to go and meet the board. At the  
2 last minute, I think on the Friday, they cancelled the  
3 meeting on me and just rescheduled it for another day.  
4 At the time, it kind of affected me more than I thought  
5 it would. I thought it was kind of disrespectful and  
6 not understanding the inconvenience that was - they  
7 didn't really fully acknowledge what that meant.

8 Q. And so, then you were invited to attend the Trust Board  
9 in August and you do attend that meeting, don't you?

10 A. That's correct, yes.

11 Q. And something important happened in that meeting for  
12 you?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Do you want to explain to the Commissioners what that  
15 was?

16 A. The Chairman of the Trust Board, Aaron Snodgrass,  
17 apologised to me for what had happened at my time at  
18 Dilworth. I think it was a spontaneous act on his part  
19 and I sensed genuine feeling from him. And it was the  
20 first time I really felt any sense of validation at  
21 all.

22 Q. So, that was an important aspect of what happened and  
23 what you experienced at that meeting?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. And what you've said and explained in your statement,  
26 much appreciated?

27 A. Oh, it was a deeply moving moment.

28 Q. Following on from this, you've then received an  
29 invitation to a Dilworth Old Boys meeting, haven't you?

30 A. Yes.

31 Q. When did that occur?

32 A. 20 and 21 September 2019, the gala dinner.

33 Q. You received the email earlier in the month, haven't  
34 you?

35 A. Yes.

1 Q. Was there something about the communication in that  
2 email that surprised you?

3 A. Are you talking about the gala dinner or the Heritage  
4 Hotel?

5 Q. The Heritage Hotel event. Perhaps if we turn to, I  
6 will bring it up on the screen, Neil, Exhibit 4,  
7 WITN001004.

8 A. Yes, there was a gala dinner and prior to that they  
9 decided to call a special meeting at the Heritage  
10 Hotel.

11 Q. Of Old Boys?

12 A. Of Old Boys only to announce their new Child Safety  
13 Policy and pathway for dealing with historical abuse.  
14 This came through as an email with the title "important  
15 letter from the Chairman of the Board of Trustees".

16 Q. As it happens, you've opened that email and what you  
17 found as the attachment is the letter we have up here  
18 on the screen?

19 A. That's correct.

20 Q. We won't go through all of this, but it clearly refers  
21 to the title of the document is, "The Royal Commission  
22 of Inquiry", so at first blush that's what the letter  
23 looks like it's about.

24 When we come down, the two paragraphs under the  
25 heading "Support Services", can we enlarge that,  
26 please?

27 The letter is saying, acknowledging there was abuse  
28 at the school and the nature of that abuse. And I'll  
29 read this out so it's in the record, "On behalf of the  
30 board and the school, I would like to express our deep  
31 regret and apologise to those Old Boys whose lives were  
32 affected by abuse under our care".

33 And the next page, I won't take you to it but what  
34 they're doing is they're inviting Old Boys to a meeting  
35 on the 20th of September at the Heritage Hotel and the

1 purpose of the meeting in the letter is said to be to  
2 discuss the support services the school is putting in  
3 place for the Old Boys?

4 A. That's correct.

5 Q. As you have indicated, this meeting coincides is with a  
6 reunion?

7 A. Reunion of the Dilworth Old Boys Association.

8 Q. Was there something about that letter that was a  
9 surprise to you?

10 A. Well, it was a surprise to me, I knew in my  
11 conversation with the board that we had discussed they  
12 were going to be doing a press release, they were going  
13 to be saying the process was survivor-initiated and  
14 that was a clear understanding. I was very surprised  
15 to get this email because I wasn't aware that this  
16 meeting was happening. Under the spirit of  
17 collaboration, I thought I may have been made aware of  
18 it before getting this email. And what I noticed is  
19 they had removed the bit about survivor-initiated and  
20 instead, it was now a proactive board initiative.

21 Q. What was important for you having sought to have the  
22 reference to survivor-initiated included in whether it  
23 was a press release or a letter such as this?

24 A. It was really important. I was trying to break the  
25 code of silence. If an old boy getting this message,  
26 getting this letter, knew that an old boy had already  
27 come forward, it might pave the way and make it easier  
28 for others to come forward, but I felt the Trust Board  
29 saying Old Boys come, we've got this thing, I'm  
30 thinking that's not going to work. I was surprised, I  
31 was stunned.

32 Q. But you did go along and attend that meeting?

33 A. Yes.

34 Q. And about how many Old Boys were there? How many  
35 people?

1 A. There was about 20-25 people in the room.

2 Q. Did you go there with a support person? Were you  
3 encouraged to bring a support person with you?

4 A. No, no. It was Old Boys only. So, any support people  
5 were outside.

6 Q. Talk to us about the meeting because you've got some,  
7 we don't need to go through the full text of how you've  
8 described it in your statement but to give the  
9 Commissioners a sense of what happened in that meeting,  
10 I mean, survivors started to share their experiences,  
11 didn't they?

12 A. Unfortunately, I got to the meeting a little bit late.  
13 I had an important meeting with my local MP and I went  
14 straight there and got there a little bit late, but it  
15 seemed that the meeting was not being particularly run  
16 that well. It got to a point where people started  
17 sharing their experiences, survivors, and I'm thinking  
18 this isn't good.

19 Q. Why didn't you think it was good?

20 A. I just didn't feel that it was an appropriate space. I  
21 didn't feel like - I was really concerned that that  
22 might happen because that was going to stir up  
23 potentially a whole lot of emotion, particularly with a  
24 room full of survivors potentially. I was also  
25 concerned, at the end I was the last person to speak  
26 when the floor was opened up for people to speak and I  
27 kind of was prompted at the end to tell the truth to  
28 the Old Boys that were there, to say that I was the old  
29 boy who came forward and this process was actually  
30 survivor-initiated and not a proactive board  
31 initiative. So, I felt like I needed to make right  
32 that piece of information.

33 The Dilworth Trust Board had said to me that their  
34 legal advice had been to not mention that it was  
35 survivor-initiated to protect my confidentiality but I

1 wasn't being named anyway. So, I had made requests  
2 that they reconsider that, but I never got a response  
3 to that.

4 Q. And there's something else relatively dramatic happened  
5 in that meeting, at the end of the meeting, didn't it?

6 A. Well, once it was ended and everyone had a cup of tea  
7 and coffee and there was some food there apparently,  
8 this man, elderly man that was standing in front of me  
9 and next to me, I sort of saw him and he looked a bit  
10 unsteady and the next thing he collapsed. So, I kind  
11 of leapt forward and caught him before he hit the  
12 ground and lowered him to the ground and put him in the  
13 recovery position. He was in a state of kind of  
14 catatonic paralysis. So, I was in the process of kind  
15 of performing first aid and making assessments as to  
16 from a first aid perspective.

17 Q. Who came to your aid during that process?

18 A. No-one. So, I did - then three of his support people  
19 came in of his family that were outside.

20 Q. They had been outside the room, not allowed to come in?

21 A. They had been outside. They sort of got ushered in, I  
22 don't know who told them, I was completely focused on  
23 performing first aid. So, they came in and said, "It's  
24 okay, we don't need an ambulance, this is a known  
25 condition. He will be okay. We just need some time".  
26 As he's laying there and I'm kind of, sort of, calming  
27 him and he sort of comes to a little bit and he starts  
28 talking to me and then he says to me that he believes  
29 that this condition that he has was a consequence of  
30 abuse at Dilworth where older boys when he was a junior  
31 boy would come up behind him and grab him around the  
32 chest and squeeze until he passed out and then he'd  
33 wake up unconscious on the ground and this happened a  
34 number of times. He said that he was a doctor and he  
35 first noticed this condition when he was doing junior



1 rounds at the hospital and he didn't know how long he  
2 had to live. He didn't want that information to die  
3 with him and wanted me to know and wanted me to know  
4 this.

5 Q. Thank you, Neil. I'm going to now invite you to read  
6 paragraphs 158-159 of your brief which records the  
7 impact of this event on you?

8 A. This experience was incredibly upsetting and not what I  
9 expected to occur at this meeting. It was way out of  
10 control, that a fellow survivor should be left to  
11 provide first aid and deal with this. Not a lot of  
12 thought went into what survivors might need during and  
13 subsequent to this meeting. For some, it stirred up  
14 emotional trauma without the appropriate protocols to  
15 support it. Given the way the meeting was not guided,  
16 it was always going to be a recipe for disaster.

17 I shared this man's experience with the Chairman of  
18 the Dilworth Trust Board Aaron Snodgrass.

19 Q. Neil, you also shared your experience, the impact that  
20 this had had with you in a counselling session with  
21 your counsellor after this event?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Tell the Commissioners about, you and your counsellor  
24 end up on a phone call, don't you, as a consequence of  
25 issues you've raised with your counsellor. Can you  
26 talk to us about that?

27 A. Yeah, well, I raised concerns with the Board and they  
28 just organised for the counsellor that was present on  
29 that day to give me a ring. He basically said that he  
30 knew something like that was going to happen. He said  
31 he left me because he thought I could handle it. He  
32 was pretty blasé and pretty flippant about the whole  
33 thing and everything was kind of fine. I just was  
34 stunned. I just thought that it was just, particularly

1 for someone of his professional area, I just thought it  
2 was not particularly competent.

3 Q. So, didn't fill you with a sense of confidence?

4 A. Well, it was just like - it's not already bad enough,  
5 you know, now to be having to do that and be left  
6 alone. It's sort of like, I just had this sense of  
7 frustration. If he knew that something like that was  
8 going to happen, he should have called paramedics or  
9 should have had someone there for when it did, not just  
10 have good old Neil to have to step in and do it.

11 Q. Just moving on to paragraph 171 of your statement, you  
12 invited the Chair of the Trust Board to attend your  
13 private session with the Commission?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. And what was the response?

16 A. He wished me the best and told me he supports the Royal  
17 Commission and that it would not be appropriate for him  
18 to attend in his capacity as Board Chairman.

19 Q. And what had been your motivation for asking him to  
20 attend?

21 A. He was an Old Boy, I was working collaboratively with  
22 the Board, I appreciated the Board's elements, mostly  
23 what the Board had done I felt was good and I just  
24 offered him that opportunity. So, it was okay, there's  
25 no ill-feeling around or sense that he declined, it was  
26 his choice.

27 Q. The next section of your statement, Neil, I'm going to  
28 have you read through. You've given some quite  
29 considered thought to recommendations of how things  
30 might be able to be done better in the future in a  
31 redress context. Can I invite you to begin reading at  
32 paragraph 172?

33 A. I have been asked to comment on what I think Dilworth  
34 could have done better when I raised the fact of the  
35 historic abuse with them and what they could do better

1 in relation to supporting and helping survivors. I  
2 understand this aspect of my evidence may help the  
3 Commission when it is making recommendations about how  
4 redress processes can be improved in the future.

5 As a survivor, it is not my place to define Dilworth  
6 School's relationship with the Anglican Church or to  
7 determine which one is ultimately responsible. But  
8 because there is an overlap, including that GRO-C-1  
9 was abusing children, I am concerned that one may  
10 attempt to hide behind the other. I am not seeking to  
11 blame, but I am wanting each to take responsibility for  
12 their own part, in the sexual abuse that occurred. I  
13 want them to consider both commission and omission; in  
14 other words, what was done and what wasn't, in terms of  
15 prevention, support for the abused children and  
16 investigation. I would like to know when they reported  
17 instances of sexual abuse to the Police.

18 The relationship between the Church and the school  
19 then and now is an area that I would like the Royal  
20 Commission to analyse carefully.

21 There is no doubt that in the past the approach to  
22 dealing with abuse was to sweep it under the carpet.  
23 It seems that perpetrators of abuse were often moved  
24 along, rather than being made accountable for their  
25 actions. This makes the institutions responsible.  
26 Their historical records will therefore be inadequate  
27 and inaccurate when it comes to providing transparency,  
28 analysis or justification of the decisions that they  
29 made. They also failed to record the names and  
30 experiences of those boys affected.

31 Dilworth was complicit through their knowledge of  
32 abuse as well as their inaction. I am unaware of any  
33 steps being taken to determine the prevalence of abuse  
34 of boys that were associated with known offenders under  
35 their care.

1 The Anglican Church was also complicit because it  
 2 was their [GRO-C], [GRO-C-1], [GRO-C]

3 [GRO-C]

4 [GRO-C] at Dilworth and they never took steps to  
 5 determine whether other boys were affected. [GRO-C]

6 [GRO-C]  
 7 [GRO-C]  
 8 [GRO-C]  
 9 [GRO-C]  
 10 [GRO-C]

11 The Anglican Church now needs to consider its  
 12 response to the Royal Commission. I would be  
 13 disappointed if I only received a weak apology about  
 14 the actions of the [GRO-C-1]

15 . This would be inadequate.

16 The Church needs to explain if it had a culture of  
 17 moving offenders along, rather than exposing and  
 18 holding them to account. If that was the case, who  
 19 were these people who did that? I am sure they had  
 20 names, for they would be just as responsible for  
 21 further offending as if they did it themselves.

22 It seems it could be that the reputation of the  
 23 Church was more important than its most vulnerable, the  
 24 children. Sexual abuse then became acceptable and  
 25 normalised.

26 I would like the Royal Commission to consider the  
 27 four Rs of repentance which when thinking about it are  
 28 actually five Rs. Recognition; recognising and  
 29 accepting that this occurred.

30 Remorse; communicating genuine remorse that this  
 31 occurred.

32 Recompense; making appropriate financial  
 33 reimbursement.

34 Restitution; considering how things can be made  
 35 right.

1           Refrain; putting into place policies and measures to  
2           avoid this from reoccurring in the future.

3           I do not believe that it is appropriate for a  
4           survivor, perpetrator or organisation responsible to  
5           determine any recompense or restitution. This requires  
6           an independent third party.

7 Q. Thank you, Neil. And you've got some concluding  
8           remarks that you have carefully thought through, so  
9           again can I invite you to read those to the  
10          Commissioners, please, beginning at paragraph 182.

11 A. Sure. I do not really consider myself a true Old Boy  
12          of Dilworth because I did not stick it out until the  
13          end. I checked out early. I believe Dilworth School  
14          missed out on a good student and alumni member with a  
15          promising future.

16          I know events of this chapter cannot be re-written  
17          and has influenced the following chapters in my life.  
18          The boy that did not have anyone to stand up for him  
19          then is now representing himself 40 odd years later.

20          I would like to think the next chapter also involves  
21          the Dilworth Trust Board backing me by collaboratively  
22          supporting personal healing, as well as considering how  
23          it addresses the same issues that will having affected  
24          other members of the Dilworth family.

25          The theme in my childhood was having numerous, a bit  
26          of a shock experiences. Emotional, physical and sexual  
27          trauma somehow became normalised for me into "a bit of  
28          a shock". I would like to see organisations and  
29          institutions focus on all elements of safety, share  
30          their policies and knowledge with each other, so that  
31          best practice standards will provide safety for all.

32          The questions for me are now, how do I now obtain  
33          closure from these experiences and what in fact does  
34          that actually mean? Does it require ownership from

1 those responsible and/or complicit? Do I need to work  
2 on forgiveness?

3 If I am indeed the sum of my experiences, I must  
4 consider that perhaps there will never be true closure.  
5 Despite this, I still do carry the hope that  
6 eventually, despite all that happened, I will find  
7 peace.

8 And an important part of this has come from finding  
9 my voice. The Dilworth motto may as well have been  
10 "cop it and shut up". Generations of Dilworth boys  
11 were trained to silence, and it is only now, some of us  
12 are finding our voice and being heard. When the Royal  
13 Commission's scope of inquiry did not originally  
14 include faith-based institutions, it felt like another  
15 unjust situation where the 11-year-old in me was to be  
16 ignored and is still not allowed to speak. I applaud  
17 the insight and decision to include faith-based  
18 institutions which has given me a voice. I also  
19 applaud the Police for the changes that they have made  
20 since 1997 when my experiences and concerns were  
21 negated. There has been a societal shift and not only  
22 in relation to sexual abuse. Children now have a  
23 voice, are empowered to speak but most importantly are  
24 taken seriously. I hope that today's 11-year olds do  
25 not have to wait until they're 55 to be heard.

26 Recently, I watched Making Good Men, an account of  
27 bullying, honesty and forgiveness. In this, Manu  
28 Bennett said to Norm Hewitt, his childhood bully, "We  
29 have to travel this far to understand the past". It's  
30 resonated with me. I am only now beginning to  
31 understand the trauma in myself and the Royal  
32 Commission has provided a vehicle for my journey and  
33 for this I am truly grateful.

34 Q. Thank you, Neil. That brings us to the end of your  
35 witness statement. Before I invite the Commissioners

1 to ask any questions they may have arising out of your  
2 evidence, is there anything further you wish to add?

3 A. Yeah. I have been thinking about my meeting with the  
4 Dilworth Trust Board and the person who really I felt  
5 had the most impact with me, other than the Chairman  
6 and his apology, was Mrs Valentine, the only female  
7 board trustee and the first I think since Isobella  
8 Dilworth in 1906, and I would encourage that the Board  
9 considers that more females be involved. I felt that  
10 she was particularly empathic, and I look at it and I  
11 go, you know, in terms of boards, one is a token, two  
12 is a minority, three is a voice, and I would like the  
13 Dilworth Trust Board to consider that.

14 Q. Thank you, Neil. Rest there and we will see whether  
15 Commissioners have any questions.

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**NEIL HARDING**

**QUESTIONED BY COMMISSIONERS**

**COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Tēnā koe, Neil, thanks for sharing your evidence today. I have one question and it is around the meeting with the Old Boys in September at the Heritage Hotel. You talked about it not being run well and with minimal support. Can you tell me in your view what would have made it a better meeting? What are the sort of things you would have liked to have seen?

A. When I read that email, I thought what are they doing? I probably wouldn't have had the meeting like that.

**COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** There was nothing in particular -

A. I wouldn't have had it. I would have said don't do it, it's a recipe for disaster.

**COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Kia ora āno. So, I just have some questions, they're about the Dilworth letter of 10 September 2019 talking about their closed reforms. I understand you collaborated and were participating in that process. I notice that there's nothing in here about monetary compensation, not that I can see. To your recollection, was that part of the discussions?

A. My effort was genuinely collaborative. I did not feel it was appropriate to discuss anything financial because that would kind of make it appear that I might have had an ulterior motive. And that's part of my submission, is that who decides what? You know, I'm not doing this looking for money. As I've certainly discovered certain things about absence of investigations and things have certainly made me fairly angry around the fact that if things had of been done



1 differently I may not have been abused. So, there are  
2 things that have come to pass with that. But that's a  
3 question mark that I have with the Royal Commission  
4 really. Who has that work and who decides and how much  
5 and what's the price. That hasn't been part of my  
6 agenda.

7 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Yes, I do see that as one of your  
8 five Rs is recompense which is talking about financial  
9 reimbursement?

10 A. Sometimes it's like, I mean for me with the Dilworth  
11 Trust Board, maybe there could have been some  
12 consideration of the fact that I lost a day's work.  
13 Maybe that's coming into recompense, ferry trips and  
14 things like that. They did offer me reimbursement of  
15 my ferry fares and I said, look, just give me the free  
16 tickets to the gala dinner. I kind of negotiated and  
17 they were happy to do that. But in terms of all  
18 the - that's where it starts getting messy, isn't it?

19 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Setting out all these reforms  
20 which include these independent Panels of expert  
21 psychologists and a free listening service, but it just  
22 seems to me that seemed to be missing from the usual  
23 list of -

24 A. There's been no discussion in any of my collaboration  
25 with the Board that relates to any kind of monetary  
26 recompense.

27 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** And given the nature of the  
28 school, about how it's there to provide for higher  
29 education for vulnerable children in particular, I  
30 imagine there's a lot of Pasifika and Māori, others,  
31 perhaps children with disability; any discussion about  
32 these particular factors when talking about a response,  
33 to your mind, to your recollection?

34 A. No. The demographic has kind of changed a little bit  
35 over the time. When I was there, it was mainly

1 European boys, with the odd Māori and the odd  
2 Pacific Island boy but that's changed a bit. There's  
3 been - my focus has been really about the pathway for  
4 dealing, for them to get ready really. As I went into  
5 this, you know, it was coincidental that the Royal  
6 Commission was there and I kind of said to them, "Hey  
7 look, it's probably good if you get yourself ready  
8 because I think you might need to be" and to their  
9 credit they have done a lot to be prepared,  
10 particularly around Operation Beverley, in their press  
11 releases and discussions with that they've kind of just  
12 got themselves ready in time.

13 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Thank you. One last question,  
14 you talk about the relationship between the Church and  
15 the school and I thought that's an interesting  
16 question, right, for a survivor? For example, the  
17 first question might be, where do you go to first if  
18 you are seeking an apology or accountability? And, to  
19 your mind, has that been a question that I have been  
20 uncertain about, about whether you should be going to  
21 Dilworth School or whether you should be approaching  
22 the Anglican Church?

23 A. I've never considered approaching the Anglican Church.  
24 I've never approached the Anglican Church.

25 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Okay.

26 A. But that's kind of something that - my big concern is  
27 that one may try to hide behind the other and I really  
28 don't want that.

29 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** But to the mind of some  
30 survivors, there might be that perception about -

31 A. Every if there's a perception of that, I don't want  
32 that perception because that's not useful to a  
33 survivor.

34 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Kia ora, thank you.

1     **CHAIR:** One question for me, Neil. I think the  
2     Commissioners all respect and appreciate the systemic  
3     approach that you have taken. In spite of your  
4     personal experiences, you are able to bring an  
5     analytical lens to this which is appreciated.

6             One of the things in that regard that struck me, was  
7     that you noted that Dilworth had failed to record the  
8     names and experiences of those boys that were affected.  
9     Record-keeping is a big issue for us, it's historically  
10    been very wrong. What does it signal to you, that the  
11    names and experiences of the boys who were affected  
12    have not been recorded, what is the significance?

13  A. Sorry, I'm probably - I'm not privy to whether they  
14    have or not, so I might be wrong, there might be a  
15    list. If there is a list, I imagine you would love to  
16    see it.

17    **CHAIR:** If there were a list, what would you have  
18    expected Dilworth to have done with that list?

19  A. I would have expected the Police would have that list  
20    and I would expect that, yeah, but it's really about,  
21    you know, you hear these things come out and you go,  
22    well, this particular person was here with these boys,  
23    you know, it's the omission for me is greater almost  
24    than the commission. There's so much more that wasn't  
25    done.

26    **CHAIR:** Yes.

27  A. You know, and how much was it just ignored? How much  
28    was it actually shutdown? And I know and I've heard  
29    things, there's some things that I know that really  
30    give me strong reason to believe that investigations  
31    were shutdown to protect the reputation of the school  
32    or maybe the individuals within the school.

33    **CHAIR:** Do you think there was any obligation on the  
34    school to have, once one person's experience is brought

1 to light, to actively - proactively go out and find out  
2 if there are other boys who were affected?

3 A. That's my big concern, I don't believe that was ever  
4 done. I've never saw that. I've never heard that that  
5 ever happened.

6 **CHAIR:** That answer implies the answer to my question  
7 is, yes, there should be proactive searching up?

8 A. I think Dilworth now is a much different Dilworth to  
9 what it was then and in discussions with the Principal,  
10 I asked him this question. He gave me a really good  
11 answer. I am very confident that the school now is  
12 moving forward in a really, really healthy direction  
13 and the pastoral care, you know, there's more people in  
14 there looking to open the boys up, not shut them down,  
15 bringing them out, you know. When I was there, we got,  
16 you know, "shut up and cop it". What does that do?  
17 You end up leaving Dilworth frustrated, traumatised,  
18 unable to express your feelings and emotions and it's  
19 "Go forth into the world. Good luck. Good luck at  
20 relationships. Good luck at jobs. Good luck at  
21 managing yourself" and many are dead. Many have drug  
22 and alcohol issues, many have mental health issues and  
23 it's "good work, good work". And that's a big part of  
24 why I'm here today, is I'm speaking for myself and I  
25 hope I'm speaking for some of those that aren't alive  
26 and some of those that are not equipped to speak for  
27 them.

28 **CHAIR:** Thank you for that. On that note, I am going  
29 to turn you over to Commissioner Aloffivae who I know  
30 you have already met?

31 A. Yes.

32 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Thank you. Neil, just one  
33 question or point of clarification. You referred to  
34 independence. So, using your experiences and with the  
35 benefit of hindsight, going back to the little 11-year-

1 old boy that you were back in the '70s, do you think  
2 schools can be trusted to investigate themselves when  
3 complaints of this nature come up?

4 A. In the past, no. You have to look at the reputation.  
5 You know, Dilworth is, you know, that's sort of the  
6 wealthiest private school in the country by a long way.  
7 You know, it has a proud tradition. So, it risks,  
8 there's all sorts of risks with that. So, you would be  
9 looking at the policy and their ability to follow their  
10 policy. I know that, you know, management, senior  
11 management obviously would have to follow the policy of  
12 the board but then who oversees the board, is the  
13 question. And what accountability do they have? You  
14 probably need to answer that one.

15 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Yes. What I think I hear you  
16 saying is actually, it comes back to the people and the  
17 ethics that are applied?

18 A. And the integrity.

19 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** And the integrity of the  
20 school?

21 A. And their genuine desire to fulfil their duty of care  
22 obligations, and that needs to be central, and that's  
23 what didn't happen. The reputation of the institution  
24 is more important than the duty of care that they had  
25 to the boys.

26 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Thank you. Neil, look, on that  
27 note, can I thank you. It's been a very long morning  
28 now into the afternoon for you. The evidence that  
29 you've given has given us some really rich insights  
30 into your experience and I like how you phrased it, you  
31 found your voice to speak up. We often, we have a  
32 saying that we use at the Commission sometimes, that N  
33 doesn't equal 1 and your voice is often representative  
34 of many of those who will not come forward for a myriad  
35 of reasons that you have already outlined, so thank you

1 for the courage of putting yourselves out there and  
2 speaking up to actually help others. I don't doubt  
3 that there will be a sense of peace generated from  
4 this, those that can take comfort who are here today  
5 watching in person but who may also be watching online.  
6 Can I extend my thanks on behalf of the Commission to  
7 Theresa and to Steve, thank you for being such towers  
8 of strength for Neil and for walking so strongly and  
9 staunchly beside him in a process that has not been  
10 easy. For that we extend our sincerest gratitude,  
11 thank you so much.

12 **CHAIR:** On that note, we will take an adjournment  
13 before our next witness. Thank you all very much.

14

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

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