

Witness Name: Dr Tamasailau Suaalii-Sauni
Statement No.: WITN0686001
Exhibits: N/A
Dated: 15 July 2021

ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

WITNESS STATEMENT OF DR TAMASAILAU SUAALII-SAUNI

I, Dr Tamasailau Suaalii-Sauni, states as follows: -

Introduction

1. I am of Samoan and Tongan ethnicities, from the villages of Saoluafata, Salani, Saleaumua and Iva in Samoa, and Niuatoputapu of Tonga.
2. I am an Associate Professor in the Criminology Programme, School of Social Sciences, University of Auckland. My research and teaching work focuses on Indigenous Pacific (particularly Samoan) jurisprudence, Indigenous Pacific research methodologies, Indigenous criminologies.
3. I am currently a commissioner on the New Zealand Criminal Cases Review Commission, and as well a member of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care's Research and Ethics Approval Panel. I currently lead a Ministry of Social Development funded AOG research project on the Pacific sexual violence workforce and co-lead an international study on Maori and Samoan experiences of youth justice, funded by the Royal Society of New Zealand Marsden Fund.
4. I worked for over 10 years with Pacific community groups in the New Zealand mental health and addictions sector and was on two Samoa-based community trust boards from 2010-2019, one of these governed the first community-based Samoa mental health service, Goshen Mental Health Services Trust.

5. From 2018-2020, I also worked on the Pacific film documentary *Loimata: The Sweetest Tears* (directed by Anna Marbrook and Jim Marbrook, funded by NZ on Air and NZ Film Commission), as a co-executive producer. The film explores themes of sexual abuse.
6. I am currently co-lead of the qualitative component of the Ministry of Health funded research project titled Pacific COVID-19 intelligence gathering and analysis, which will work closely with Pacific community groups in New Zealand, especially those who are service providers for Pacific individuals or families affected by COVID-19 in New Zealand.
7. Lastly, I am also a part of the executive leadership team of the newly established Pacific Aotearoa Researchers' Collective, promoting Pacific research excellence, and Pacific researcher capacity and capability building in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Public Hearing - 'Tulou – Our Pacific Voices'

8. I have been asked by the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care (the Inquiry) to participate as part of the public hearing on Pacific people's experience of abuse in care, 'Tulou – Our Pacific Voices' ("the Hearing").
9. I have been asked specifically to provide my views as part of the Talanoa Panel discussion on 'Pathways into care' and have been asked to provide my views on the following topics and questions:
 - a) How can we build safe spaces in Pacific communities to share information about mental health, care and protection and justice for our children and young people?
 - b) What do Pacific communities need to understand about the care and protection, mental health, transitional justice and disability support systems in New Zealand?

- c) How can Pacific families and communities better support each other to prevent our Pacific children from going into care?
- d) How can we ensure that Pacific children are given the opportunities to grow their knowledge and understanding of their culture and language if they go into care?
- e) How can we hold caregivers accountable for their actions of abuse and/or neglect towards Pacific children’s cultural wellbeing and needs?
- f) What does a care system/justice system/mental health system underpinned by Pacific values look like?

10. I believe that my cultural and academic background and experience qualify me to participate as an expert witness on the Talanoa Panel discussion.

Statement of Truth

This statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and was made by me knowing that it may be used as evidence by the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care.

Signed: GRO-C

Dated: 15 July 2021

Annexure A**Consent to use my statement**

I, **Dr Tamasailau Sualii-Sauni**, confirm that by submitting my signed witness statement to the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care, I consent to its use in the following ways:

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

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

Please tick one of the two following boxes:

if you are seeking anonymity

or

if you are happy for your identity to be known

Signed:

GRO-C

Date: 15 July 2021

