

**Witness Name:** Dr. Seini Taufa

**Statement No.:** WITN0714001

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**Dated:** 18.07.2021

## ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

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### WITNESS STATEMENT OF DR. SEINI TAUFA

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I, Dr. Seini Taufa, will say as follows: -

*There are no more suitable people on earth to be the custodians of the oceans than those for whom the sea is home...we seem to have forgotten that we are such a people...our roots...our origins are embedded in the sea...our ancestors were brought here by the sea...the sea is our pathway to each other and to everyone else, the sea is our endless saga, the sea is our most powerful metaphor...the Ocean is in Us... if we fail to create our own reality someone else will do it for us.<sup>1</sup>*

#### INTRODUCTION: KO HAI AU (WHO AM I)

1. As I write this statement, I write with Pacific people in mind; those who have passed, who are here, and who will come.

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<sup>1</sup> Hau'ofa, E. (1993). *A new Oceania: Rediscovering our sea of islands*. School of Social and Economic Development, The University of the South Pacific in association with Beake House.

2. There are three concepts that I will use to position myself within this statement:<sup>2</sup>
  - a. **Turanga:** the acknowledgement by self and others of one's position/standing and potential within the collective.
  - b. **Piri'anga:** the acknowledgement that an individual and collective belong to a reciprocal network. Piri'anga identifies and responds to collective and shared responsibilities and privileges both inside and outside of the *papa'anga* (genealogy/kinship) that determines the individual place within the collective.
  - c. **Akaue'anga:** the acknowledgement and fulfilment of individual and collective duties.
3. When a child is conceived, they have *turanga*, they belong. Every *turanga* has *piri'anga*, a collective reciprocal network. With every *turanga* and *piri'anga* is *akaue'anga*, a duty of care to ensure relationships are fostered and maintained.
4. My name is Dr. Seini Taufu, and I was born in Auckland, New Zealand, during the tail end of the dawn raids to Tongan migrant parents, who at the time of my birth were categorised as "illegal immigrants". Like many other Pacific people in New Zealand, they experienced racial profiling and discrimination because of their ethnicity. Although neither speak of their experiences during the dawn raids era, as **their** child, **their** silence speaks.
5. I reflect on how fortunate I was to be born a citizen. Had I been born in today's context, I would have been a stateless child, invisible and uncounted. Reading through the voices of our survivors, I wonder what would have happened to me, had my parents been deported back to Tonga. Would I have been placed in State Care?
6. In 1984, my parents were granted residencies and from there on in, our family home became a hub for Tongan overstayers. As a ten-year-old, I became the

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<sup>2</sup> In 2012, as part of the Nga Vaka o kaiga tapu frameworks, the Ministry of Social Development published *Turanga Māori: A Cook Islands Conceptual Framework*, created to transform family violence and restore wellbeing.  
<https://www.pasefikaproud.co.nz/assets/Resources-for-download/PasefikaProudResource-Nga-Vaka-o-Kaiga-Tapu-Pacific-Framework-Cook-Islands.pdf>

designated translator for everyone we housed, some blood-related, some not, but all *kāinga* (family). I often wondered why, when they were among other Tongans, they were confident and vocal but when placed in front of an authoritative figure (like immigration, police, doctors and teachers), they were always timid and lost for words. As I aged, life taught me why.

7. Those early experiences shaped the career path I chose, on a quest to share our truths as a Tongan navigating through the diaspora.
8. When I am among other Tongans, I place myself appropriately in relationship to the other, a knowledge of places, people and events. I build connections where I can say I know who you are and in the same context, I know who I am.
9. **My Turanga:** granddaughter, daughter, niece, sister, advocate, translator, Tongan.
10. I am also a proud daughter of the Pacific. I belong to ancestors who have felt the harsh hand of supremacist ideologies and the intergenerational trauma that they create.
11. Through the New Zealand school syllabus, I was never taught about the 1918 influenza (genocide) in Samoa, that took the lives of about a fifth of the Samoan population because of the negligence of New Zealand. We are rarely reminded that the same boat travelled to Tonga, spreading the influenza that killed 10 per cent of my people.
12. I was never asked to reflect on 28 December 1929, when a non-violent march in Samoa led to open fire by New Zealand troops. I was not taught about the Dawn Raids that randomly raided our homes and asked my parents to carry their passports, largely fueled by media campaigns that painted “Pacific Islanders” as being violent and the root cause of New Zealand’s economic issues.
13. I was never taught New Zealand’s Pacific history, or the role policy played in exacerbating our experiences. Her (New Zealand) finger was always pointed at us, without self-reflecting on **her** role in **our** hardship.

14. In primary school, I went from Seini to Jane, my brothers Tevita to David, Sione to John. In retrospect, I understand that my parents did that in the hopes of protecting us from the prejudice and stigma they experienced being Tongan. They were conscious of what ethnicity meant in that given time and context.
15. My first vivid experience of explicit racism was as a checkout operator during high school. One day, I served a customer who did not seem to like anything I was doing. While scanning the items I was called a *stupid coconut* and told to *go back to where I came from*. I was numb. Born in New Zealand, my residential area code directed me to Onehunga, but I knew what the customer meant. "From" meant "Pacific," and "Islander" meant a place smaller and inferior to New Zealand.
16. Determined not to cry, my brain was trained to think, "the customer was always right," so I apologised, not knowing what I was apologising for. Those around me stared, before a more senior Pacific staff member came to my counter, told me to stop and asked the customer to leave.
17. As a 15-year-old, I had not yet developed the strength to counter what had been said and though this was blunt and, in my face, the subtle racism around me taught me that this behaviour was "normal" and that I needed to shake it off and get back to work.
18. During my first year of University, I worked on an essay with my Samoan friend. I was always a confident writer and helped her structure her essay. We were directed to write our names at the top of our essays before submitting – hers Pālangi, mine Tongan. When the tutor handed back our essays, she asked my Samoan friend who had a Pālangi name, if she was the same person who wrote the essay. My Samoan friend pulled out her ID to confirm that it was her. We received our grades back but she received an A+, and I a C+. After that, I refused to write my name on anything and I left the ethnicity box unticked. My identity within my undergraduate degree became a seven-digit number.
19. Over time, I searched for indigenous knowledge and developed my critical thinking and passion for advocacy. I made a conscious decision that I would not be bullied into thinking I was someone I was not, based on the narrations of

someone who neither looked, nor lived within the same context as I. I threw the seven-digit number in the bin and regained my name and my voice.

20. After reclaiming my Tongan self, I studied at the University of Auckland where I gained a PhD in pediatrics using mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative research). During my studies, I became a research fellow with the NZ Child and Youth Epidemiology Service. It is here that I gained an interest in numbers and started asking questions of data, like: who came up with the questions, how are they counting, what was the political climate of the time, and who determines what goes in and what stays out of reports.
21. I taught within the Departments of Social and Community Health and Pacific Health for almost ten years, teaching my students to think critically, to not be intimidated to ask questions of the data, and to understand that as Pacific, we are **not** a blank canvas. We understand the context of our people.
22. I also took an interest in understanding social theories like unconscious bias, privilege, racism, and intersectionality. The way people treat other people made more sense when I understood that unconscious pro-white bias occurs among children as young as three to five years old. We are born into a society where race and ethnicity are tied to these biases.
23. Four years ago, alongside five amazing Pacific people, we established Moana Research where I am the Research Lead. We are a Pacific-owned, led, and governed research company aimed at generating research that is transformative, based on the needs of our Pacific people, and where we as Pacific ask the questions and narrate our own stories.
24. I am also the Senior Pacific Advisor for the *Growing up in New Zealand* Longitudinal Study. This is the largest longitudinal study in the country, where I continue to advocate on behalf of our Pacific families to ensure that when data is collected, and Pacific people are engaged, these activities are conducted in ways that are culturally appropriate and not solely deficit focused.
25. **My Turanga:** once upon a time aspiring academic, educator, researcher and fulltime activist.

## OBJECTIVES OF THIS STATEMENT

26. I have been commissioned by this Inquiry to explore the following objectives:
- a. How government agencies have recorded and reported on Pacific ethnicities in New Zealand since 1950.
  - b. Highlight any inadequacies in ethnicity recording of Pacific survivors and Pacific people.
  - c. How ethnicity recording, and reporting, has impacted on Pacific survivors and Pacific people generally, with possible reference to:
    - i. Individual wellbeing and identity.
    - ii. Community wellbeing and capacity for informed collective decision-making based on accurate evidence.
    - iii. Policy decisions that impact on, or are tailored for, Pacific people.
  - d. Provide recommendations for the future recording of Pacific ethnicity.

## PACIFIC PEOPLE IN NEW ZEALAND

27. Firstly, I want to define 'Pacific people' in the New Zealand context, so that we can understand why ethnicity classification is important.
28. Throughout history, Pacific people have moved within and across nations, as expert navigators of the sea, exploring and migrating across oceans. Accordingly, their resource, culture and philosophies of the world were never restricted to Island boundaries but have been traced wherever Pacific people reside.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Kirch, P. V. (2000). *On the road of the winds: An archaeological history of the Pacific Islands before European contact*. University of California Press.

29. Pacific people have lived in Aotearoa New Zealand for over a century. New Zealand was termed by early Pacific migrants as, “the land of plenty”, attracted by employment, health care and educational opportunities.<sup>4</sup>
30. Of Melanesian, Micronesian, and Polynesian ancestry, the largest Pacific groups currently residing in New Zealand identify as being of Samoan, Cook Island, Tongan, Niuean, Fijian and Tokelauan ethnicity. The growth of these communities in New Zealand has been so rapid that for some (Cook Island, Niuean and Tokelauans), their communities in New Zealand exceed the size of the populations in their home island, influencing their geographic perspective.<sup>5</sup>
31. In 1945, an estimated 2,200 people in New Zealand were identified as being of Pacific origin. By 2018, it increased to 381,642, now contributing to 8.1 per cent of the total New Zealand population.<sup>6</sup> There are 20-plus ethnic communities under the umbrella term “Pacific”, the third largest minority ethnic group in New Zealand, after “Maori” and “Asian”.
32. Migration is largely a response to real and perceived inequalities in socio-economic opportunities, within and between states.<sup>7</sup> The opportunities for migration to New Zealand were considered important, especially in a context of relatively ‘few opportunities for socioeconomic advancement’ in Pacific countries.<sup>8</sup>
33. The history of migration into New Zealand varies amongst the Pacific nations, with entry easier for some than others. Since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, New Zealand has administered the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau, who all retain citizenship within New Zealand. Those from Samoa, Tonga and Fiji usually

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<sup>4</sup> Otago Millionaires Club (1996). “The Land of Plenty.” <https://www.nzonscreen.com/title/land-of-plenty-1996>

<sup>5</sup> Hau’ofa, E. (1993). *A new Oceania: Rediscovering our sea of islands*. School of Social and Economic Development, The University of the South Pacific in association with Beake House.

<sup>6</sup> Statistics New Zealand (2018). *Pacific Peoples ethnic group*. <https://www.stats.govt.nz/tools/2018-census-ethnic-group-summaries/pacific-peoples>

<sup>7</sup> Connell, J. (2006). ‘Migration, Dependency and Inequality in the Pacific: Old Wine in Bigger Bottles? (Part 1)’, in *Globalisation and governance in the Pacific Islands*, edited by Stewart Firth, 59–80. ANU E-Press.

<sup>8</sup> Lee, H. M. (2004). ‘All Tongans are Connected: Tongan Transnationalism’, in *Globalization and culture change in the Pacific Islands*, edited by Victoria Lockwood, 133–48. Pearson.

migrated through temporary permits, quota schemes and family reunification provisions.<sup>9</sup>

34. A pull-factor into New Zealand was the opportunity for migrants to provide for their families in their Island nations and to pave a path of greater opportunities for children born in New Zealand. As a result, many Samoans, Tongans and Fijians, on temporary permits, obtained semi-skilled work while often overstaying the extent of their permits. After the Second World War and up to the 1960s, overstaying was accepted while demand for semi-skilled workers was high.
35. 'Pacific people' were not only encouraged to migrate by New Zealand, they were targeted to fill unskilled and low-skilled jobs.<sup>10</sup>

36. Lay writes:

*In most cases these immigrants did the jobs Pākehā New Zealanders no longer wished to do or had been educated beyond: shift work, factory work, assembly line production, processing, cleaning, work involving long hours in unpleasant conditions.*<sup>11</sup>

37. This practice was tolerated by the state and encouraged by employers – as long as there was a need for low-skilled labour in secondary industries.
38. Between 1973–74, an oil crisis changed the nature of the global economy and New Zealand faced a recession, during which unemployment rose from 0.1 per cent to 5.6 per cent. The secondary industries, where the majority of Pacific workers were concentrated, were hit hardest. Jobs, once plentiful, became scarce. One of the responses to this economic downturn, loss of jobs and competition for scarce resources was to 'racialise' workers from the Pacific through the media.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Bedford, R. & Hugo, G. (2012). *Population movement in the Pacific: A perspective on future prospects*. Labour and Immigration Research Centre.

<sup>10</sup> Ongley, P. (1996). 'Immigration, Employment and Ethnic Relations', in *Nga Patai: Racism and Ethnic Relations in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, edited by Cluny Macpherson, David Pearson and Paul Spoonley, 17–36. Dunmore Press.

<sup>11</sup> Lay, G. (1996). *Pacific New Zealand*. David Ling, p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> Ongley, P. (1996). 'Immigration, Employment and Ethnic Relations', in *Nga Patai: Racism and ethnic relations in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, edited by Cluny Macpherson, David Pearson and Paul Spoonley, 17–36. Dunmore Press.



39. The New Zealand Government embarked on an 'overstayers campaign' from 1974 to 1976 in which Pacific people were targeted as illegal immigrants in New Zealand and were seen to be threatening the rights of 'New Zealanders' to jobs.<sup>13</sup>
40. The Immigration Act 1964 was ignored while the economy needed to be built. However, with the economic recession, the government of the day enforced it. A 1968 amendment to the Act allowed for the deportation of those who had overstayed their work permits, and section 33(a)<sup>14</sup> gave police the power to ask people to produce not only a valid passport, but also a permit to enter and remain temporarily in New Zealand, as well as other evidence of identity.
41. This led to the infamous Dawn Raids, which targeted Samoans, Tongans and Fijians in particular, but also involved the police stopping and arresting individuals from New Zealand's realm countries and Māori, who did not look like 'New Zealanders'.
42. As Lay says:
- ... xenophobic feelings were fomented by the National Government during the latter half of that decade and the word "Islander" came to assume a pejorative aspect.*<sup>15</sup>
43. Within a decade, the unemployment rate of Pacific people rose from 5.6 per cent to 29 per cent.<sup>16</sup> In the late 1980s, Pacific people were more likely to be participating in the labour market than the rest of the population. By the mid-1990s, their participation was well below the average and has remained so ever since.<sup>17</sup>
44. The chain of events described above shows how Pacific people became positioned in New Zealand society economically, culturally, socially and symbolically. Fifty years later, we are still trying to recover.

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<sup>13</sup> Spoonley, P. & Bedford, R. (2012). *Welcome to our world? Immigration and the reshaping of New Zealand*. Dunmore Press.

<sup>14</sup> 'Immigration Amendment Act 1968.' [http://www.nzlii.org/nz/legis/hist\\_act/iaa19681968n30245/](http://www.nzlii.org/nz/legis/hist_act/iaa19681968n30245/)

<sup>15</sup> Lay, G. (1996). *Pacific New Zealand*. David Ling. p. 13.

<sup>16</sup> Ongley, P. (1996). 'Immigration, Employment and Ethnic Relations', in *Nga Patai: Racism and ethnic relations in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, edited by Cluny Macpherson, David Pearson and Paul Spoonley, 17–36. Dunmore Press.

<sup>17</sup> de Raad, J. & Walton, M. (2007). *Pacific People in New Zealand economy: Understanding trends and linkages*. Paper presented at Thought Leaders Dialogue, Auckland, 30–31 August.

45. Let us not forget, Pacific migrants were encouraged to come to New Zealand to fill unskilled or semi-skilled jobs in predominantly secondary industries. In competitive markets, they occupied devalued positions associated with limited capital and were then used as scapegoats and stereotyped by mainstream media, influencing how mainstream New Zealand society consciously and unconsciously perceive Pacific people.
46. The experiences of Pacific people in New Zealand, and the policies which segregated ethnic groups, illustrate the institutionalised racism that plagued Pacific people. Mila (2017) asserts that to date, Pacific people, as New Zealand citizens, have not yet experienced the full rights and privileges of equitable citizenship.<sup>18</sup> Although the historical trajectory that brought Pacific and Māori people to their current positioning is very different,<sup>19</sup> there are several similarities with regard to current socio-economic, health and educational disadvantage.
47. A current statistical snapshot of Pacific people tells us that, on average, they live five years less than the general population,<sup>20</sup> and experience a heavier burden of illnesses and health problems compared to others in New Zealand.<sup>21</sup> A Pacific person living in New Zealand is 2.6 times more likely than the average person to be living in hardship.<sup>22</sup> Young Pacific people are twice as likely to take their own lives, and to experience anxiety and depression.<sup>23</sup> Pacific people are almost three times less likely to live in their own homes compared to the general population.<sup>24</sup>
48. We know the inequities that exist because most often, those are the questions asked and measured. Which leads us to ask, how are we defined, and who defines us?

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<sup>18</sup> Mila, K. (2017). 'Deconstructing the big brown tail/tales: Pasifika Peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand', in *A land of milk and honey? Making sense of Aotearoa New Zealand*, edited by Avril Bell, Vivienne Elizabeth, Tracey McIntosh and Matt Wynyard, ch. 7. Auckland University Press.

<sup>19</sup> Clifford, J. (1997). *Routes: Travel and translation in the late Twentieth Century*. Harvard University Press.

<sup>20</sup> Ministry of Health (2014). *Tagata Pasifika in New Zealand*. <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/populations/pacific-health/tagata-pasifika-new-zealand>

<sup>21</sup> Statistics New Zealand and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs. (2010). *Education and Pacific Peoples in New Zealand*.

<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Social Development (2009). *Non-income measures of material wellbeing and hardship: First results from the 2008 New Zealand Living Standards Survey, with international comparisons*.

<sup>23</sup> Statistics New Zealand and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs. (2010). *Education and Pacific Peoples in New Zealand*.

<sup>24</sup> Statistics New Zealand (2018). Pacific Peoples ethnic group. <https://www.stats.govt.nz/tools/2018-census-ethnic-group-summaries/pacific-peoples>

## HOW NZ GOVERNMENT AGENCIES HAVE RECORDED AND REPORTED PACIFIC ETHNICITIES SINCE 1950

49. The way we generate knowledge governs how we view our surrounds and those around us. Questions often overlooked include: How is knowledge created? Who provides it? Why is it important? How do we make sense of it? Who determines whether knowledge is legitimate or whether it is not? Or, once armed with ‘knowledge’, how do we go about sharing it?

50. Brigitte Jordan argues:

*“The power of authoritative knowledge is not that it is correct but that it counts.” The opinions of professionals leave lasting impressions on societal views, driving political behaviour, influencing the types of services made available and the support received by members of society.<sup>25</sup>*

51. There is no agreed upon definition of ethnicity, and it is a concept that is loaded and debated in literature, policy and practice. Ethnicity is a relatively recent term, but the concept is not. For example, the Greek term *ethnos* which translates to ‘people’, ‘nation’ or ‘tribe’ – used to distinguish Greek and non-Greek – was intended to separate one group from another. The use of the term has become increasingly common and institutionalised in many settings in recent decades, but mainly post-1960s.

52. Ethnic identity plays a vital role in the lives of individuals. It can influence the way people perceive their surroundings, their value system and the actions of others.<sup>26</sup> Early New Zealand census statistics were based on a racial assessment of blood ties through questions on blood quantum. While the concept of race has been scientifically discredited, ethnicity provides continuing energy to such organising categories: “People’s ethnic identities are often informed and shaped by the ways in which they are racially categorized”.<sup>27</sup> From a political point of view, ethnicity has both structural and societal significance.

<sup>25</sup> Jordan, B. (1997). ‘Authoritative knowledge and its construction’, in *Childbirth and authoritative knowledge: Cross-cultural perspectives*, edited by Robbie E. Davis-Floyd & Carolyn F. Sargent, 55-79. University of California Press.

<sup>26</sup> Spickard, P. & Burroughs, W. J. (2000). ‘We Are a People’, in *We are a people: Narrative and multiplicity in constructing ethnic identity*, edited by Paul Spickard & W. Jeffrey Burroughs, 1–22. Temple University Press.

<sup>27</sup> Song, M. (2003). *Choosing Ethnic Identity*. Polity Press. p. 12.

53. While I was only asked to examine how government agencies have recorded and reported on Pacific people in New Zealand since the 1950s, it is important to set the context and understand the shifts in societal thinking and the conscious and unconscious bias attached to race and ethnicity classification.
54. For centuries, population censuses have played a fundamental role in generating official statistics and have been paramount in producing and reproducing social realities through the categorisation of identity.

55. Kertzer and Arel state:

*The rise of colonialism, based on the denial that the colonized had political rights, required a clear demarcation between the settlers and the indigenes. The “Other” had to be collectively identified... The categorization of identities became part and parcel of legitimating narratives of the national, colonial, and “New World” state.<sup>28</sup>*

56. Early ethnicity classifications were established as attempts to assimilate to the New Zealand Pākehā group. Through the application of ‘blood quantum’ in early Censuses, those who were less than a half Māori and who dwelled among Europeans, were categorized as European in this attempt to assimilate them.<sup>29</sup>
57. In the 1916 Census, a question on race was added which included ‘Polynesia’ as an option, highlighting the fact that Pacific people were in New Zealand during this time.<sup>30</sup>
58. In 1926, minority groups other than Māori were classed as “race aliens”<sup>31</sup> following a growing interest in assimilation and anxiety about miscegenation, which were features of the time. The focus on race and blood quantum continued until the 1970s, however the idea of self-identified ethnicity also began to emerge, using the term ‘ethnic origin’.<sup>32</sup> In retrospect, the use of ‘ethnic origin’

<sup>28</sup> Kertzer, D. & Arel, D. (2002). ‘Censuses, identity formation, and the struggle for political power’ in *Census and identity: the politics of race, ethnicity, and language in national censuses*, edited by David I. Kertzer and Dominique Arel, 1-42. Cambridge University Press. p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> Brown, P. (1984). ‘Official ethnic statistics in New Zealand’, in *Tauīwi: Racism and ethnicity in New Zealand*, edited by Paul Spoonley, Cluny McPherson, David Pearson & Charles Sedgwick, 159-171. Dunmore Press.

<sup>30</sup> Cormack, D. (2010). *The practice and politics of counting: Ethnicity data in official statistics in Aotearoa/New Zealand*. Te Rōpū Rangahau Hauora a Eru Pōmare. p. 12.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>32</sup> Brown, P. G. (1983). *An investigation of official ethnic statistics*. Department of Statistics.

as a classification has been problematic, with acknowledged challenges of categorising those who were part of multiple ethnic groups.

59. The 1981 Census Population was the subject of long-standing public debate, with issues raised on the implications of the census beyond the census. As a result, an investigation took place which aimed to identify the range, nature and use of current official ethnic statistics. It reviewed the relevancy and reliability as well as recommendations to improve the quality of the data (including ethnicity data).<sup>33</sup>
60. For the investigation, 'ethnic statistics' were defined as statistics pertaining to persons classified based on: (a) common ancestry and (b) shared cultural beliefs. The investigation found that there was a wide range of official statistics that fit this description in several subject-matter areas.
61. The main sources and repositories of where ethnic data was collected (e.g., sectors or government departments) included:
  - a) Census of Population and Dwellings, conducted by the Department of Statistics.
  - b) Vitals (Births and deaths).
  - c) Registration systems under the control of the Registrar general.
  - d) Migration Arrival and Departure Systems by the Department of Labour.
  - e) Police Offender Report System.
  - f) Department of Health Hospital Admission/Discharge System.
  - g) Department of Education Statistical Returns from Educational Institutions.
  - h) Department of Social Welfare Juvenile Offenders.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

i) Adoption and State Ward Collections.

62. Brown asserts that across sectors, while ethnicity data was collated, there was an inconsistency or 'diversity' in the definitions of ethnicity employed between the collections. Above and beyond this, there were inadequacies or 'variations' in:

- a) methods/methodology ergo; and
- b) procedures for collecting this data.

63. This has significant implications for the relevancy and the reliability of the statistics produced that still occurs today.

64. In 1983, a recommendation was made for a more standardised approach to data collection. In addition, and of significance to the development of the measurement of ethnicity in Aotearoa/New Zealand, it was argued that the 'cultural affiliation' concept be used instead of traditional biological approaches. This was seen to align more closely with the thinking at the time and to address concerns about the relevancy of the degrees of blood measures that continued to be employed in official statistical collections.<sup>34</sup>

***Self-Identified ethnicity***

65. The 1996 Census ethnicity question prompted respondents to "Tick as many circles as you need to show which ethnic group(s) you belong to". Additionally, there were changes to the tick box response options in terms of the order of categories, the labels used, and the range of options included.<sup>35</sup>

66. "New Zealand Māori" was moved up to become the first response option. The label "New Zealand European" was reworded to become "New Zealand European or Pakeha". A new "Other European" tick box was also included, with a separate list of six tick boxes (English, Dutch, Australian, Scottish, Irish, Other) added.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Lang, K. (2001). *Review of the Measurement of Ethnicity: Policy perspectives paper*. Statistics New Zealand.

67. This process expanded the number of ethnic categories available and for those reporting multiple ethnic affiliations, a single "Level 1 Prioritised" Ethnic Group was assigned using Statistics New Zealand's prioritisation algorithms, which assigned Māori ethnicity precedence over Pacific, Asian, Other, and European ethnic groups.<sup>36</sup>
68. Within these datasets, each ethnic group is coded using Statistics New Zealand's 4-Level Hierarchical Classification System. In the 2006 Census, if we were to use Kiribati as an example:
- Level 1 (least detailed level) e.g. code '3' stands for Pacific;*
- Level 2 e.g. code '37' is Other Pacific Peoples;*
- Level 3 e.g. code '371' is Other Pacific Peoples, and;*
- Level 4 (most detailed level) e.g. code '37124' is Kiribati.<sup>37</sup>*
69. Level 2 has 21 categories, Level 3 has 36 categories and Level 4 has 233 categories.
70. As a result of the shift to self-identification, there was a significant increase in the numbers of people reporting multiple ethnic identities, particularly for Māori and the 'Other European' groups. Anyone who identified as Pacific and Māori, through this prioritisation, is automatically only counted as Māori.
71. In the 2013 census, more than 11 per cent of the population identified with multiple ethnicities, and the levels of multiple ethnic identification are even higher for children and young adults.<sup>38</sup> Multiple response ethnicity provides a better reflection of the ethnic identity of the New Zealand population than prioritised ethnicity; however, to this day, it is rarely counted or consistently recorded.
72. For the 2001 Census, the ethnicity question reverted to that which had been used in the 1991 Census. In relation to response options, the label "New Zealand

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<sup>36</sup> Taufa, S. (2015). *A mothers hope: Pacific teenage pregnancy in New Zealand*. Thesis.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Statistics New Zealand (2014). *2013 Census QuickStats about culture and identity*.

<http://archive.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summaryreports/quickstats-culture-identity.asp>

Māori” was changed to “Māori”, and “Pakeha” was removed from the “New Zealand European or Pakeha” tick box label. In addition, the extra categories for “Other European” included in the 1996 question, were removed.

73. The change to the question appeared to impact on the number of multiple ethnic responses, which was 9 per cent in 2001, compared with 16 per cent in 1996. A further change in the 2001 Census was the enhanced ability of Statistics New Zealand to code up to six responses, while it had only previously been possible to code three.<sup>39</sup>
74. Table 1 provides a timeline of changes in race and ethnicity classification in New Zealand over time. **[WITN0714002]**
75. The ongoing changes in how ethnicity is defined, along with the way in which questions have been added, changed or deleted, make it difficult to measure or count Pacific people, particularly those in New Zealand prior to 1996 who were expected to know their ethnic origin.
76. Traditionally, wider government recordings have taken their lead from the National Census. The changes in ethnic classification, the slight changes in the way questions are asked, and the specific options that have been provided, makes it difficult to compare data from different time periods.
77. In this country, we have a history of being placed in categories that have constantly changed. This has isolated Pacific People, because this makes building connections and understanding trends impossible. Within the time period that was given to me to focus on, there is no way I would be able to conduct trends analysis and as a result our people/their voices and visibility are lost because of poor processes.
78. In Tongan we have a saying, “Lau he kau pea kau he lau”, which speaks to the importance of participation despite the David and Goliath odds. To not be counted, or to be disregarded, because of “ethnicity variables” is to be

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<sup>39</sup> Kukutai, T. (2002). 'The problem of defining an ethnic group for public policy: Who is Maori and why does it matter.' *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand* (23), 86-108.



unacknowledged and silenced. This speaks to the irresponsibility on the part of those doing the reporting and the lack of accountability they have faced.

### ***The importance of Pacific Data Sovereignty***

79. In 2019, following the disappointment of the 2018 Census which will be discussed later in this statement, a Pacific Data Sovereignty Seminar was hosted by Moana Research. The purpose of this seminar was to provide a forum to bring together interested individuals and organisations to promote and discuss the concept of ‘Pacific Data Sovereignty’. We were privileged to have a member of the Te Mana Rauranga, the Māori Data Sovereignty Network, who made statement that I will never forget: “data is the new land.”
80. Our whakapapa/‘uhinga is tied to land - it is who we are and history has taught us that once it’s lost, it is difficult to reclaim. In the same sense, our data should belong to us, but how it is used, and for what purpose it is used for often leads to our ‘identity’ being lost or misread in the system, as I have read in the survivor statements.
81. Following the seminar, a key recommendation was to establish a Pacific Data Sovereignty Network to hold agencies accountable for how, what, why and when they collect data and who they commission to go out and gather our taonga/our voices as Pacific people.<sup>40</sup>

### **INADEQUACIES IN ETHNICITY RECORDING OF PACIFIC SURVIVORS AND PACIFIC PEOPLE**

82. To understand the inadequacies in ethnicity recording, one must understand why ethnicity is counted in the first place. Official ethnic statistics in New Zealand have been collected to meet certain state objectives or purposes, usually in the interests of the majority group rather than other groups with less access to power, resource, and voice.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Moana Research (2019). *Seminar report: Pacific data sovereignty, day 2*. [https://www.staging13.moanaresearch.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Pacific-Data-Sovereignty-Report\\_FINAL\\_2.pdf](https://www.staging13.moanaresearch.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Pacific-Data-Sovereignty-Report_FINAL_2.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> Brown, P. G. (1983). *An investigation of official ethnic statistics*. Department of Statistics.

83. In the New Zealand context, official approaches to ethnic records were historically developed within the context of policies that were concerned with the assimilation, and later integration, of ethnic groups,<sup>42</sup> and with the monitoring and exclusion of those particular ethnic groups that were considered ‘undesirable’.<sup>43</sup>
84. In more recent times, the official purposes of collecting ethnicity data have been to better understand the make-up of ethnic groups, to inform service development, and monitor social status and outcomes. The variations in purpose, along with changes in societal views towards race and ethnicity, would have made it difficult to: a) monitor and document numbers, and b) monitor the recording practices that have influenced the documentation of Pacific survivors and Pacific people.
85. If you ask the wrong questions, you will get the wrong answers.

## **ETHNICITY DATA ACROSS SECTORS**

86. Although it is not a recent phenomenon, ethnic (or historically ‘racial’) counting has become increasingly institutionalised in New Zealand, especially across government agencies. While a comparison of ethnicity data across the National Census presents its own challenges, the inconsistencies within how ethnicity data is collected and how complete information is, present a unique set of obstacles regarding the recording of Pacific people.

### ***Ethnicity data in vital statistics***

87. Birth and death registration forms have historically collected information using a ‘degrees of blood’ approach. Until September 1995, the question on birth and death registration forms asked about the “**degree of Māori blood**” and “**Pacific Island blood**” of the parents (mother and father). If the person’s mother or father had Māori blood, details of the Iwi were requested.<sup>44</sup> If the person’s mother or father had Pacific Island blood, respondents were asked to state the Island.

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<sup>42</sup> Spoonley, P. (1988). *Racism and ethnicity*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>43</sup> Barber, K. (1999). ‘Pakeha ethnicity and indigeneity.’ *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Anthropology*, 43(2), 33-40.

<sup>44</sup> Statistics New Zealand. (1997). *Statistical Standard for Ethnicity*. p. 7.

88. As a result, information was only collected if one or both parents were Māori or Pacific Island (in descent terms), and no ethnic information was collected for other groups.<sup>45</sup> This is problematic because it assumes that everyone knows the ethnic origins of their parents.
89. Following the passing of the Births, Deaths, Marriages and Relationships Registrations Act 1995, there was a shift to collecting ethnicity (as opposed to descent) for all births and deaths, and an alignment with the 1996 census ethnicity question, which allowed for multiple ethnicities to be recorded. There was a resultant increase in the number of Māori deaths recorded, as well as in the number of Māori births, which doubled between 1994 and 1996.<sup>46</sup>
90. This speaks to prior under-representation of Māori, and other minority populations in New Zealand.

### **Health and disability sector**

91. Ethnicity data has been collected within the health and disability sector for several decades, with varying levels of completeness and standardisation. In the health and disability sector, ethnicity data is most commonly collected when someone uses a health service/provider, with quality issues in the ethnicity data.<sup>47</sup> Ethnicity information is also routinely collected by the Accident Compensation Corporation (**ACC**), who report on injury statistics by ethnicity.
92. In 2004, the Ethnicity Data Protocols for the Health & Disability Sector were established, which provided guidance for the standardisation of data collection and output across the health and disability sector. The Protocols were based on Statistics New Zealand standards, but were released in advance of the Statistical Standard for Ethnicity 2005 and therefore reflect the policies and practices in place prior to this. This further highlights the inconsistencies in measurements used for measurement.

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<sup>45</sup> Graham, P., Jackson, R., Beaglehole, R., & de Boer, G. (1989). 'The validity of Maori mortality statistics.' *The New Zealand Medical Journal*, 102(864),124-126.

<sup>46</sup> Cormack, D. (2010). *The practice and politics of counting: Ethnicity data in official statistics in Aotearoa/New Zealand*. Te Rōpū Rangahau Hauora a Eru Pōmare.

<sup>47</sup> Bramley, D. & Latimer, S. (2007). 'The accuracy of ethnicity data in primary care.' *The New Zealand Medical Journal*, 120(1262).

93. Hence, prior to 2005, ethnicity was largely collected at Level 1 (where all 18+ ethnic groups associated with a Pacific country fell under one ethnic umbrella term 'Pacific') which failed to acknowledge the constitutional differences between Pacific groups (realm countries vs non-realm) and the uniqueness of each Pacific specific ethnic group.
94. Post-2005, the health and disability sector were encouraged to record ethnicity at Level 2, allowing for ethnic specific comparisons. While there have been significant improvements in approaches to ethnicity data collection in the health and disability sector, concerns relating to quality of ethnicity data remain.

### ***Ethnicity data in education sector***

95. The Ministry of Education routinely gathers ethnicity data from early childhood, primary, secondary, and tertiary education providers. The data is used to produce statistics and information on a range of indicators including student participation, achievement, and outcomes. Ethnicity information for students attending early childhood, primary, secondary, and tertiary education institutions is generally collected on enrolment forms.
96. The Ministry of Education provides guidance that “enrolment forms should allow for students to self identify or be identified by their parents/guardians as belonging to more than one ethnic group.”<sup>48</sup> However, it is likely that there is variation within early childhood centres, primary and secondary schools, and tertiary institutions, in terms of the specific question and method used to collect ethnicity. In the tertiary sector, for example, university enrolment forms currently contain a range of ethnicity questions, which are generally neither consistent with each other nor with the population census ethnicity question.
97. While the Ministry of Education has routinely collected early childhood, primary and secondary student ethnicity data, it has only been from 2007 that the Ministry of Education has required that codes based on Level 3 of the Statistics New Zealand classification of ethnicity be used to identify ethnic group data in School

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<sup>48</sup> Ministry of Education (2021). *Ethnic group codes*. [https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/data-services/code-sets-and-classifications/ethnic\\_group\\_codes](https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/data-services/code-sets-and-classifications/ethnic_group_codes)

Management Systems (**SMS**), ENROL (the student enrolment system for schools) and Tertiary Student Management Systems.

98. Schools are also advised to allow for students to identify with up to three ethnic groups. However, for the purposes of Roll Returns, the data is provided to the Ministry of Education in a collated form, with only one ethnic group reported for each student.<sup>49</sup> Consequently, students with multiple ethnic responses are coded to one ethnic group based on the Statistics New Zealand prioritisation method.

***Ethnicity data in the social-welfare sector***

99. The Ministry of Social Development (**MSD**) currently has responsibility for activities across the social welfare sector, including child and youth protection, youth justice services, adoption services, administration and delivery of superannuation, employment and income support, and student allowances and loans.
100. MSD collects ethnicity for those people obtaining Work and Income Services. This information is used for the monitoring and development of appropriate services and policies. However, as it is not related to entitlement or eligibility for assistance, it is not a compulsory field. Ethnicity information may be collected on application forms or through other interactions with Work and Income such as in person, on-line or through call centres. This would make it difficult to access data on Pacific people and/or families that have gone through state care.
101. Ethnicity data relating to Work and Income has been collected since the end of 1991 when the SWIFTT computer system began to be used. Data transferred to SWIFTT from before this time did not have ethnicity recorded. At times, ethnicity would, therefore, be excluded until a person re-applied for assistance. Initially, ethnicity classification on SWIFTT was not completely in line with Statistics New Zealand's standard classification.
102. When Work and Income New Zealand (**WINZ**) merged with the Employment Service in 1997/98, information on individuals was available from the

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<sup>49</sup> Leather, F. (2009). *Prioritising data in an increasingly multi-ethnic society* (Working Paper IPS 09/05). Institute of Policy Studies.

Employment Services SOLO system, including ethnicity. The SOLO system allowed for individuals to identify with multiple ethnic groups and used the Level 3 classification for coding. There is now a single system that holds information about users of Work and Income services, including ethnicity. However, some of the information would have been collected over different time periods and using different methods.

103. In relation to application forms for financial assistance (or benefits), there appear to be several variations of the ethnicity question in use, which may impact on data comparability. In addition, the questions differed from the Census ethnicity question in terms of wording, layout and order of response categories. For example, the question asked on the paper application form for the unemployment benefit asks: "To which ethnic group do you believe you belong?". The voluntary nature of the question could impact on the completeness of ethnicity data. There is some indication that there have been relatively high levels of missing ethnicity data historically.
104. There is evidence that during the period covered by this Inquiry, some social workers within the Department of Social Welfare (**DSW**), the predecessor to the MSD, did not follow a consistent or official method for recording ethnicity. The 1983 *Investigation into official ethnic statistics* stated that, "It would appear that social workers are reluctant to question clients directly about their ethnicity and prefer the indirect estimation method," which was "contrary to field instructions."<sup>50</sup> This affected the record keeping for juvenile offenders, adoptions, and state wards.<sup>51</sup>
105. A further issue affected the DSW's recording of the ethnicity of juvenile offenders, as social workers would often copy the ethnicity data that had been initially recorded by police.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, this data was determined by the racial coding system used by Corrections.
106. A later report from the Department of Statistics in 1988 suggests that throughout this era, social workers were not sure if they were meant to record a clients' race,

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<sup>50</sup> Brown, P. G. (1983). *An investigation of official ethnic statistics*. Department of Statistics. p. 49.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23, 49.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

or ask them about what their ethnic affiliation was.<sup>53</sup> The report recommended that recording of ethnic affiliation be standardised throughout the social welfare sector to improve data collection, with some ability to record descent where appropriate.<sup>54</sup>

### ***Ethnicity data in the criminal justice sector***

107. In the criminal justice sector, while there has been some level of collection of ethnic (and/or racial) data within the criminal justice sector, there appears to be large gaps in the completeness of ethnicity data and a lack of standardised approach. The collection of ethnicity data has yet to become routine practice across the whole sector. The data that is currently available is collected primarily through the Police, the Department of Courts, and the Department of Corrections.
108. When the Police collect data, ethnicity is included as one of the demographic variables and this is published by the Police in apprehensions statistics. Historically, the Law Enforcement System (colloquially known as the Wanganui Computer) used the categories of 'Caucasian', 'Pacific Islander', 'Māori', 'Asiatic', 'Negro', 'Other', and 'Unknown'.<sup>55</sup>
109. Since the Law Enforcement System was replaced by the National Intelligence Application in 2005, ethnicity for apprehension statistics has been collected using the following categories: 'Asian', 'European', 'Indian', 'Latin American/Hispanic', 'Māori', 'Middle Eastern', 'Native African (or cultural group of African origin)', 'Other (specify)', 'Pacific Island', and 'Unknown'. However, to preserve historical time series, in apprehension statistics these categories are mapped to 'Caucasian', 'Pacific Islander', 'Māori', 'Asiatic', 'Indian', 'Other', and 'Unknown'.<sup>56</sup>
110. In an advisory capacity, I sit on the Pacific Advisory Group for Counties Manukau Police, where collecting ethnicity data on victims and perpetrators are often

<sup>53</sup> Department of Statistics (1988). *Report of the Review Committee: Ethnic statistics*. pp. 105-106.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, p. 106.

<sup>55</sup> Brown, P. G. (1983). *An investigation of official ethnic statistics*. Department of Statistics. p. 22.

<sup>56</sup> Morrison, B., Soboleva, N., & Chong, J. (2007). *Conviction and sentencing of offenders in New Zealand: 1997 to 2006*. Ministry of Justice.

missed, identified by people other than the individual, and are usually only reported at prioritised ethnicity Level 1.

111. The Department of Courts records ethnicity data for Family Court applicants and those involved in domestic violence programmes.<sup>57</sup> While it is possible to record multiple ethnicities on the Ministry of Justice's Case Management System (**CMS**), most cases have only one ethnic group recorded, and this is suggested to be related to the way in which the screen is configured.<sup>58</sup>
112. The Department of Corrections collects ethnicity "...from people serving prison sentences or in community correction programmes."<sup>59</sup> Inmate ethnicity collection allows for inmates to identify with more than one ethnic group. However, inmates are then asked to identify their preferred ethnicity. While preferred ethnicity is used in many Corrections publications, total response ethnicity data is used to calculate rates.
113. These examples show that within each government sector, the inconsistencies in data collection and the different ethnicity questions used makes it difficult to track ethnicity, and leaves room for error whereby a person may be classified as one ethnicity in one dataset, and a different ethnicity in another dataset.

### ***Oranga Tamariki***

114. To date, data on Pacific Children Ethnicity collected by Oranga Tamariki is based on all ethnicities recorded for a child or young person:
- a) Māori – refers to children who identify Māori (but not Pacific) as one of their ethnicities.
  - b) Māori-Pacific – children who identify both Māori and Pacific as their ethnicities.

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<sup>57</sup> Lang, K. (2001). *Review of the Measurement of Ethnicity: Policy perspectives paper*. Statistics New Zealand.

<sup>58</sup> Barlett, E. (2006). *Family Court statistics 2004 report*. Ministry of Justice.

<sup>59</sup> Lang, K. (2001). *Review of the measurement of ethnicity: Policy perspectives paper*. Statistics New Zealand. p. 8.



- c) Pacific – children who identify Pacific (but not Māori) as one of their ethnicities.
- d) Other – children who do not identify Māori or Pacific as any of their ethnicities, includes "New Zealand European" and "Not Specified".

115. In 2020, I pulled out ethnicity data from the Oranga Tamariki website to help inform a proposal we were working on. While I could not find Pacific Ethnic Specific data at level 2, 3 or 4, I was pleased that there was a Māori-Pacific variable and that ethnicity was not prioritised. Had it been prioritised, we would have been told that 10 per cent of those recorded were Pacific (Pacific and Pacific/Māori) children and young people, as opposed to 16 per cent. **[WITN0714003]**

116. I was also able to access data on the reports of concerns – distinct children and young people for the year 2019 – and though originally, raw numbers were given, I converted these numbers to percentages to see what it looked like to be Pacific in each of the regions represented.

117. By regions, in 2019, 43 per cent of children and young people in Central Auckland, who were in the dataset as a result of reports of concerns, identified as Pacific – 44 per cent in South Auckland, and 7 per cent in Te Tai Tokerau. I use this as an example to show how different 16 per cent (National) is to 44 per cent (South Auckland). This is a reminder that ethnicity data paired with other variables like region tells a story; reports based on National numbers may mask the serious extent of Pacific representation within regions where there is a high Pacific population density.

118. In preparing my witness statement, I went back to the link I had saved to the original data source only to find that it is no longer there. That is another reality we face as researchers, the taking down of information relevant to our people.

### **2018 Census**

119. Data challenges around the 2018 census show clear examples of continuing flaws within the New Zealand government's ethnicity data practices

120. Leading up to the 2018 Census, for the first time Statistics New Zealand utilized a digital approach whereby census was conducted electronically, because it was believed to be more cost-effective.

121. They collected data in two ways.

- a) **Traditional New Zealand method:** in previous censuses, a census response was defined as receipt of an individual form. No minimum amount of information was required for the form to be counted as a response.
- b) **New Method:** for a response to be counted, it needs to have received two or more of the following information fields about an individual on census forms: name, date of birth, meshblock.<sup>60</sup> This information could come from an individual form, dwelling form, or household summary form.

122. Using the traditional response, which is consistent with how Census data had been collected in previous Censuses, the Pacific response rate was 65.1 per cent compared to 83.3 per cent of the National population. Within that 65.1 per cent, we are not told what that looks like for the 18-plus ethnic groups that fall under the umbrella term “Pacific”.<sup>61</sup>

123. When the new method was used, the Pacific response rate went up to 73.5 per cent, which was still much lower than the 87.5 per cent response rate for the National population. The Census highlighted the importance of modality when collecting data among other things. The 2018 Census was the first to be delivered electronically, as opposed to on paper. Consequently, the collection response rate for the 2018 illustrated significantly lower response rate compared to the 2006 (93.9 per cent) and 2013 (90.8 per cent).<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Meshblock is a measurement of geographical area used for statistical purposes.

<sup>61</sup> Stats NZ (2019). *2018 Census: Interim coverage rates, collection response rates, and data sources*. <https://www.stats.govt.nz/reports/2018-census-interim-coverage-rates-collection-response-rates-and-data-sources#collection>

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

124. For those who did not provide information about their ethnicity in the Census form, 17 per cent of ethnicity information came from the 2013 Census and 15 per cent from administration data sources which included the Department of Internal Affairs (births), Ministry of Education (tertiary enrolments) and the Ministry of Health (primary health organization enrollments).<sup>63</sup>
125. This data was obtained from the Integrated Data Infrastructure (**IDI**), a large government research database. The IDI brings together information obtained from “government agencies, Stats NZ surveys, and non-government organisations (**NGOs**).”<sup>64</sup> A benefit of the IDI is that it contains population level data, which means that all people who engage with the government system in some capacity are included in the database. However, there are limitations.
126. The sections on ethnicity data across sectors already speak to the inconsistencies in which ethnicity data is collected across government, and information collected in the administrative dataset is there for a different purpose and under different circumstances to a National census.
127. Consequently, a person can give a different response to an ethnicity question depending on the way they are asked, the context, and for what reason they are being asked. In a workshop I facilitated, I asked participants a question based on how they answer their ethnicity question or that of their children. A Pākehā woman responded that when she is at her GP with her son, she will tick the Samoan and European box, but if she wants him to get into a good school, she leans towards ticking the European box and omitting the Samoan in the hopes that he would get in.
128. In many cases ethnicity data may not be self-identified at all. For example, if the recorded ethnicity is based on whether a patient is asked, or a receptionist makes a judgement, or a family member fills in the form. Consequently, an individual’s ethnicity can easily be recorded differently between datasets.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Stats NZ. (2020). *Integrated Data Infrastructure*. <https://www.stats.govt.nz/integrated-data/integrated-data-infrastructure/>

129. Another limitation of the IDI data is that ethnic identity can change over time and much of the ethnicity data in the IDI is not time stamped (e.g. health data), unless it was collected on a particular date like a National Census. In the case of the mother who filled in information for her son, some datasets do not fully allow for multiple ethnic responses.
130. Reid (2016) notes that the quality of combination ethnicity responses between admin datasets and the 2013 census reveals the poor performance of many of these datasets (including health and ACC) to identify someone with more than one ethnicity compared to the census.<sup>65</sup> When you consider the fact that 40.6 per cent of Pacific people identify with two or more ethnic groups, this is problematic.
131. In response, Pacific experts publicly voiced their concerns about the Census undercount and the dangers of utilising census data that inadequately represent Pacific communities. We rely on data to understand what is happening in our Pacific families and communities and what we need to inform policy and practice for Pacific people in New Zealand. These are ultimately continuations of the same problems created by the historical data collection flaws throughout government agencies.

## **ETHNICITY RECORDING AND REPORTING IMPACTS ON PACIFIC SURVIVORS AND PACIFIC PEOPLE**

*Pacific Islanders exist only in New Zealand; I am called a Pacific Islander when I arrive at Auckland airport, elsewhere I am Samoan.*  
(Albert Wendt)<sup>66</sup>

132. 'Polynesian' or 'Pacific Islander', as terms, are pan-ethnic constructs of outsiders which began with the "explorers, European colonisers, later anthropologists, archaeologists, and now Western bureaucrats and policy-makers."<sup>67</sup> They are

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<sup>65</sup> Reid, G., Bycroft, C., & Gleisner, F. (2016). *Comparison of ethnicity information in administrative data and the census*. <http://archive.stats.govt.nz/methods/researchpapers/topss/comp-ethnic-admin-data-census.asp>

<sup>66</sup> Anae, M. (1997). Towards a NZ-born Samoan identity: Some reflections on "labels". *Pacific Health Dialog*, 4(2), 128-137.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

not indigenous terms but palagi constructs which arose out of the colonial context.<sup>68</sup>

133. While the umbrella term Pacific is useful when making global comparisons, it is futile when applied to actual people and groups of people who consider themselves not Pacific nor Polynesian, but Samoan, Tongans, Fijians, Cook Islanders, and so on.
134. Anae argues that, “the reifying of terms or concepts like Polynesia, Polynesian, Pacific islander and ‘Pacific Way’ serve to create a myth of Pacific Island ‘unity’ or ‘community’.”<sup>69</sup> She continues, “In the contemporary scene, this view has highlighted the total lack of regard for the distinctiveness and diversity of each Pacific Island nation encompassed within this culture area. This homogenising tendency has led in turn to the practice of generalizing and stereotyping Polynesian migrants.”<sup>70</sup>
135. In a New Zealand context, Pacific people have been marked for as long as we have settled here whereby the Pacific embodiment is interpreted differently from context to context.<sup>71</sup> On the rugby field and among the All Blacks, Pacific male bodies are celebrated. In a crime and punishment context, Pacific male bodies are associated with racist discourses of violence, rape, gangs, fear and danger. Pacific people thus construct their identities and live their lives at the intersection of positive histories, language and culture, and negative and stereotypical ideas and beliefs produced by the dominant group.
136. The following sections will examine how ethnicity and being ‘Pacific’ influenced Pacific survivors’ sense of wellbeing in state care.

## WELLBEING OF PACIFIC SURVIVORS

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<sup>68</sup> Arvin, M. (2019). *Possessing Polynesians: The science of settler colonial whiteness in Hawai‘i and Oceania*. Duke University Press.

<sup>69</sup> Anae, M. (1997). Towards a NZ-born Samoan identity: Some reflections on “labels”. *Pacific Health Dialog*, 4(2), 128-137. p. 129.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Underhill-Sem, Y. (2003). ‘Marked bodies in marginalised places: Understanding rationalities in global discourses.’ *Development*, 46(2), 13–17.

137. The following section will now focus on how ethnicity recording and reporting impacts on Pacific survivors and Pacific people generally with possible reference to:

- a) Individual wellbeing and identity; and
- b) Community wellbeing and capacity for informed collective decision-making based on accurate evidence.

138. A common theme that emerged was the impact of racism and discrimination on survivor's wellbeing. Many of the survivors experienced racism and discrimination first-hand. However, their parents also experienced discrimination and racism in Aotearoa, where trauma became hereditary and passed. Particularly during a social climate where New Zealand policies were racist.

139. Consequently, being called "island boy" by state care staff, before either being rebuked, picked on or mocked would create negative connotations to the ethnic classification "Pacific", or self-identifying as Pacific impacting on their well-being.

140. Survivors or those who witnessed state abuse were acutely aware of and fearful of deportation and a tensed relationship with the police. The narratives from the speak of the lack of representation of state staff, which is a form of racism.

### ***Being self-identified by others***

141. When we say self-identified, the question that should be asked is whose "**self**" are we referring to? In one of the survivor statements I was privileged to read, a young man is asked about his ethnic background by a staff member and he responds 'Samoan'. He should be confident in his identity as a Samoan, and not corrected by an adult who is in an authoritative position and who has the potential to influence his experience in care.

142. This adult 'self-identifies' this young man by telling him he is a New Zealander because he was born in New Zealand. As a young boy who relates being Samoan to Christianity, to family and to his mother – he is forced to adopt an identity that does not belong to him – "**New Zealander**" and with it, the trauma of what he was exposed to in state care as a New Zealander.

143. This survivor said that from point on, he self-identified as a New Zealander. If record keeping on this individual reported ethnicity by which New Zealander was an option, he would not be identified as Samoan, or Pacific. A survivor voice lost to us because he was told what to say, leading to the internalisation of a new identity.
144. In another statement, a survivor is told he is Māori and goes through much of his life identifying as Māori, only to find out when he receives his records that his ethnic background is Samoan. This speaks to the power held by a dominant group to label another with little consideration of how detrimental nature of such actions.
145. The policies within this country, (including but not limited to ethnicity classifications) continue to affect Pacific People in Aotearoa, with a timeline of events illustrating the double standards set by New Zealand to befriend Pacific people when it benefits her, and disregard when it does not (see below). I have put together a table which shows significant events since the 1900s which have impacted, influenced, or informed certain policies and laws. **[WITN0714004]**
146. Ethnicity and racism are synonymous based on time and context – the social, political and cultural climate in which you find yourself in. To be called a “coconut boy” by a Pākehā, is degrading. In Tongan, we refer to it as sio lalo – and in the context of this survivor’s statement, [Pacific] Islander and “coconut” are two in the same. He would have entered that facility with the stereotypes attached to Islander, the ethnic classification of that time.
147. This is supported by other survivor statements. One survivor referred to being abused and put down because of his ethnicity. Having migrated to New Zealand as a child, English was not his first language, and was mistreated because of it. At school, he sustained that it led to admission into hospital. Despite his explanation, staff reported that his injuries were obtained as result of violently punching a window. This example speaks to the inaccurate ways in which we are reported despite sharing our truths.
148. This survivor spoke of his fear because he was a Pacific child. His fear of not being helped or listened too because of the fact.

149. In the survivor statements, there are cases where, despite survivors attempts to self-identify and to remind staff of who they are and the ethnicity they identify with, what is written down is at the discretion of the person recording. This has led to a survivor feeling frustrated and angry in what she called ignorance.
150. It reminds me of why, once upon a time, I left the ethnicity box blank. When experience teaches you that you will be mistreated or judged based on your ethnicity, you will act accordingly.
151. Growing up in our family home, my mother would remind us "if you value something, you'll acknowledge it/fakamahu'inga'i". The lack of ethnic-specific data collection across sector and agencies speaks to the importance they place on our Pacific people. I sit on various Advisory Boards, one I have been on for three years, and for three years I have asked for ethnic-specific data and have been told "we're working on it" throughout that time.
152. The government needs to be held accountable. They need to prioritise collating data that will inform best practice, policy and give voice to the experiences of our people. They need to also invite us to sit at the table, to add to the questions and to say, "no that is not appropriate". Until that is done, my fear is nothing will change.
153. My witness statement acknowledges the inadequacies of ethnic classification and data collection in New Zealand, both past and present. It highlights the fact that these classifications were never developed by us but imposed on us.
154. The variables collected in the past have been largely deficit focused, only telling one story which shapes stereotypical perceptions of who Pacific people are.
155. The insufficiency reinforces the inequities that have always existed, the lack of power that Pacific people had, and the lack care for Pacific people who were not counted or misclassified.
156. It talks to the stereotypes attached to being labelled "Pacific" and how that inadvertently would have impacted how survivors were viewed and treated and the ethnicity boxes they chose to tick.



157. This statement concludes by drawing attention to the systemic racism seen in our past policies and the whakapapa of race and ethnic classifications in New Zealand. “Ko e kole, ketau Lau he kau pea kau he lau”.

**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.

GRO-C

Signed:

Dated: 18 July 2021