

Witness Name: Emeline Afeaki-Mafile'o
Statement No.: WITN0687001
Exhibits: N/A
Dated: 15 July 2021

ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

WITNESS STATEMENT OF EMELINE AFEAKI MAFILE'O

I, Emeline Afeaki-Mafile'o, state as follows:

1. I am of Maori, Tongan and Samoan descent. My father is Ngati Awa and hails from Pangai, Ha'apai, Tonga and Falefa in Western Samoa. My mother is from Kolofo'ou, Tonga and Savelalo in Western Samoa.
2. I am married to Alipate Mafile'o who was born in Kolonga Tongatapu and together we have three boys; Taanilasike, Sepasetiano and Isikeli Mafile'o.
3. I was born in Auckland and raised in Mangere, South Auckland, where I have lived most of my life. In the past 15 years I have lived and worked between Tonga and New Zealand.
4. My academic achievements include a Bachelor of Social Work (Hons) from Massey University. I also have a Masters in Philosophy, (majoring in Social Policy), and a Postgraduate diploma in Social Sciences.
5. In 2006 I received the Sir Peter Blake Emerging Leader Award and in the same year I was selected to be a member of the Tindall Foundation New Zealand Social Entrepreneur Fellowship. In 2014, I won the Woman of Influence Award for the Categories Community and Social Enterprise. I was awarded a member of the Order of New Zealand Merit in 2016 for services to the Pacific Community.

6. I am a social entrepreneur and have been self-employed for more than twenty years, having started several social businesses for our Pacific communities. In 2001 I founded Affirming Works, followed in 2004 by the Fofola Consultancy. In 2010 I established our Community Cafe in Auckland and Tupu'anga products in the Kingdom of Tonga.
7. Affirming Works currently employs forty staff. As the Executive Director of Affirming Works, I am fortunate to work in the governance and operations areas, providing both accountability to our independent directors and design and delivery of the programmes we deliver. These include our family violence programmes and mentoring for children and youth.

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, **Emeline Afeaki Mafile'o**, 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*