

Witness Name: GRO-A Mr TY

Statement No.: WITN0206001

Dated: 24.06.2021

ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

WITNESS STATEMENT OF GRO-A Mr TY

I, GRO-A Mr TY, will say as follows: -

INTRODUCTION

1. My name is GRO-A Mr TY. I am 60 years old. I have been married for 45 years. I have GRO-A children and GRO-A grandchildren.
2. My evidence is about the abuse I experienced while growing up, firstly while staying with my grandparents and then when I was placed at Owairaka Boys Home and Kohitere Boys Home.
3. I'm not the type of person to complain over spilt milk. The things that happened to me while I was in care, it was a long time ago. It took a lot of convincing for me to come forward. My brother was also in care, he called me and told me that he was going to come forward and share his experience. He encouraged me to speak up too because we had gone through the same places. This process has brought us closer together.
4. It's a big deal for me to come out and speak about this. As Islanders, we don't really like to talk about abuse, we just accept it or suffer in silence. But I want to share my story because we've still got young brown people going through

the system and I certainly hope that things aren't the same for them as they were for me.

EARLY LIFE

5. I didn't have a normal childhood. My parents split when I was young. My three siblings and I were sent to live with my grandparents. I have GRO
A siblings overall but at the time I was living with my grandparents, there were only four of us living together. We were the four eldest children of my parents. Out of the four of us, only my brother GRO-B
1 and I went into care.
6. When I was sent to live with my grandparents, I was really young. It was before I started primary school, I think I was about four years old. There were lots of different people living in my grandparents' house. The main people we interacted with were my aunty, my intellectually handicapped uncle and my grandparents.
7. My grandparents were traditional Samoans. They spoke Samoan. We didn't really understand it because we didn't know how to speak Samoan. My grandparents migrated to New Zealand from Samoa in the 1950s. My grandfather was part of the Home Guard in Samoa and I'm not sure why they decided to come to New Zealand, but he migrated with my dad and grandmother.
8. Like most Island families, the church was a big part of my childhood. My grandparents were very involved with the church. My grandfather was in charge of the church choir.
9. Because of my grandparents' involvement with the church, everything looked good from the outside. But within the walls of our home, it was very different. Things weren't as good as they should have been.
10. My grandfather was an alcoholic and was often drunk. When he was drunk, he was quite troublesome. He would wrestle with my aunties. We would hide the machetes because we knew that it would be the first thing he would go for.
11. My grandparents used to give us hidings. My grandmother was lethal. She would usually ask me to go and get a stick, so she could give one of my other

siblings a hiding. If I brought her something that was too small, I was the one that got the hiding. Of course, I would always try to find the smallest branch, so she would give me a hiding instead. They would also hit us with the wooden spoon, jug cord and vacuum pipe.

12. Sometimes my aunty would hit me with a vacuum pipe. One time she almost damaged my eye socket, and I was off school for a week.
13. These church people told our Islanders not to spare us the stick, so my grandparents didn't spare us the stick. I think that the church is often cowardly. That's how I see them. They never helped us. I would ask myself, "Why do we feel like we have to listen to them?" These people, the church, they weren't even helping us.
14. It wasn't just hidings. I witnessed a lot of things that happened to GRO-B
1 like sexual abuse. It was with my aunty, when she was living with us at our grandparents' house. I saw the things that she made GRO-B
-1 do. It was a regular thing, always during nap time. She did it a couple of times to me while I was in his bed. I don't want to talk about this in any detail.
15. My problem at home was not having a life, having no freedom. All of us, my brothers and sisters, we never had any friends of any kind outside of church. Obviously, we had to go to church, that was probably the only time we got to socialise with people away from school.
16. Apart from that we used to get locked up in our rooms when social things were on in our home, like if our grandparents had visitors over. We would spend all our time locked in the bedroom, sometimes for about 12 hours because the events dragged out. We weren't allowed to come out of our rooms.
17. I was usually in the room alone with my uncle for the whole day and whole night. When everything was finished, we had to go outside and clean up the mess from their social gathering.
18. Every second of our day was accounted for. We had a certain amount of time to get back home from school. I was always worried that a mate from school would come and knock on our door, asking to play. Some of my mates would

say, "I came by your house, and I could hear someone crying". I would always make up an excuse about where the noise came from.

19. I broke the rules at home. I would sneak out on Saturday to play rugby for my team. I wasn't allowed to play rugby or do any extracurricular activities. When I would come back from rugby on Saturday, the walk home felt way longer. I knew what was waiting for me when I got home. I was walking the green mile. I got used to that sense of apprehension.
20. I was probably not as rebellious as others, but I never felt like home was home. I just always got the feeling that GRO-B-1 and I were never wanted. I felt like we were an embarrassment because of how my parents divorced. I don't know if that had anything to do with it, but if it did, it made life with my grandparents hard. In our community, being divorced was frowned upon and wouldn't have been a good thing.
21. GRO-B-1 was the clever one. He just knew when it was time to bolt. When things got bad, GRO-B-1 bolted. He'd run away, and I would be left to get the hidings. I felt like he just left me there alone. Sometimes I was so scared of the hidings I would end up urinating on myself. But I feel that my brother and sister got worse hidings than me, so I shouldn't complain.

School

22. I went to GRO-A School for primary. I was a good achiever in school, mainly in sports. I probably wasn't as good in the classroom. When GRO-B-1 went away, I had to take on all the chores that he used to have at home.
23. I was always late for school because of all the extra responsibilities. I would be up at around five in the morning, getting breakfast ready for everybody, making the beds and cleaning up the house. I also had to do the washing and had to get my uncle ready before going to school too. I usually missed eating breakfast and stuff.
24. Once I had done my chores for the morning, I would get changed into my uniform. Then I'd go and see my grandmother and she would always have a list of groceries for me to get. I'd run up to the shops, get all the groceries and then I'd race to school.

25. I really enjoyed school, but it was a different life. I always felt like we were in two worlds. It was one life at school but when you got home, it was a different life again. Things were bad at home. We had to go to our room and stay there. We weren't allowed to have any friends. Our grandparents relied on us to do chores and to help around the house.
26. I don't think I was a bad boy at school. I was pretty good. The teachers kind of liked me. At all the schools I went to, I represented them in some sport, whether it was rugby or softball. I was pretty good in that sense.
27. When I became troublesome in school, for fighting or answering back or whatever, the school would ask if everything was all right at home. I didn't tell them the truth because I was angry. I never let it out.
28. Nobody at school knew what was going on at home. In the Samoan culture, it's bad to betray your family and speak ill of them. For my grandparents, family was everything, we had to protect the family name. It's hard for me to talk about this because I still feel guilty saying this out loud.
29. Because of this, I never told anyone else what was going on at home. I just ran away.

Running away

30. I was sick of the abuse at home, I wanted to get out. Nobody wanted me or my brother, and I had nowhere else to go. At the time, my grandparents were attending [GRO-A] Church in [GRO-A]. I think it was the only place that I knew of that had a service in Samoan. But I couldn't go to the church for help because they're just as bad.
31. I would've been around 12 years old when I ran away from home. I remember that I was at [GRO-A] Intermediate when it happened, and I'm not sure if I finished Form Two.
32. I had a mate who lived in Morningside by Kingsland. When I ran away I lived in a tree hut outside his house for 3 months.

33. Sometimes my mate would bring me food. I don't think his parents knew I was there. When I was really desperate, I took milk money from the milk bottles outside houses so that I could buy food.
34. My records show that in March 1975, the police found me walking along the road with a blanket and picked me up. I don't really remember why or how the police found me. I don't know if anyone reported that I was missing.
35. I remember the police didn't pick me up for any kind of crime. I couldn't give an explanation to the police as to what I was doing when they found me. The police took me to court.
36. When we went into the court building, I was in a room practically by myself. I had to stay there, and I remember I was really shit scared because I knew my grandma was going to show up. I think I was more frightened of her than of what was going to happen to me in the courthouse.
37. I only remember what happened in the courtroom. I had no lawyer. I didn't have a social worker. I was alone. I remember standing by myself in court and everyone around me was talking about me. I didn't understand what was going on.
38. After reading my file so many years later, I realised that I was charged with "Not being under control" for running away from my abusive household. I had told the police that I took money from milk bottles to survive so they also charged me with theft.
39. I didn't get a chance to speak. No one asked me anything, they just asked my grandmother if she wanted me to go home with her. My grandmother left me standing there in the dock and told the judge, "No". She didn't want me. She walked out.
40. I felt pretty naked. I wasn't sure what was going on or why I was there because in my mind, all I did was run away from a hiding. I ran away from the abuse, and I needed somewhere safe to go. But I got the feeling that I was being tried for something else.

41. That was the last I saw of my grandmother, and it's pretty much the last contact I had with my family. I still think about that day. I still think about how my grandmother left me there.

GOING INTO CARE

42. I was taken by the cops straight from the courthouse to the secure cells within the secure wing at Owairaka Boys' home ("Owairaka").
43. It was a really confusing time for me. I was asking myself, "Why the hell am I in here?" Nobody explained anything to me. I couldn't figure out what I had done. I thought I must've been really bad. I couldn't get that out of my head.
44. The secure cells were on the lower level of the Owairaka facility. It was bare and cold. There was a window, but it was facing inwards and you weren't allowed to look through the window. There was a lock on the door, just like a normal cell you would see in Mt Eden prison or something. It's just concrete, it's cold. Everyone kept talking about 'up top' and how they wanted to be "up top". Up top is where all the other boys in Owairaka were. If you weren't living up top then you were in secure.
45. After a few days, I was released from the secure wing and taken up top to where the rest of the boys were.

Initiation

46. The first time I went up top, I got beaten up by the other boys in Owairaka. It was an initiation thing, it happened to everybody. It wasn't just me.
47. We called the housemaster "Catch". We called every housemaster Catch, it wasn't a nickname for anyone. As soon as the Catch did his rounds, you knew the hiding was coming after he was gone.
48. Overall, I liked being up top. We had a bed, there was a window even though it could only open a couple of inches and the food was good. It was better than what you got down in the secure cells and you got more of it.

School in Owairaka

49. There was a little school there, but it was only one classroom. I don't know the guy that was running it, but he was old. I can't even remember what we learned there.

Racism in Owairaka

50. I could tell that people were getting treated differently because of their cultural background. One housemaster might treat you like you're a human being, the other housemaster might treat you like you were born in a tent or something.
51. For us Maori and Pacific boys, there were times where I felt like they thought we couldn't speak English, or they thought we couldn't read or write or that we were disobedient just because we were brown. It was just the way that they looked at us and spoke to us, they spoke to us like we weren't smart, like we were dumb and couldn't understand them.
52. When it came to dishing out jobs for the boys to do, all the Maori and Pacific boys were getting the worst jobs. We had to clean the toilets and wax all the floors. The white boys got to work in the recreation room or do things in the dining room. For the brown boys, our work days were also longer. The white boys always seemed like they were getting more free time than us. They were all hanging out while the brown boys were sweeping the driveway or on our hands and knees.
53. If the housemaster came walking by us, you could see the white boys that had smirks on their faces. They knew that they could get away with more because they were never driven as hard as us. When we had our exercise sessions, they weren't pushed as hard as us.
54. The system was driven mainly by white people. I think I only saw one or two non-white housemasters in the whole time that I was in care. Everyone else was white. The non-white housemasters were ok, they didn't drive us as hard or treat us as badly as the white housemasters.

55. The Maori and Pacific Islanders that were in there would often congregate. If we could sit at the same table, we would. We would stick together whenever we could.

PT sessions

56. I wasn't allowed to go outside when I was in the secure unit, except for when we had Physical Training ("PT") sessions. PT sessions were agonising for a lot of the boys.

57. I was lucky because I was pretty good at sports but there were other guys you could see who were going to have trouble. Other boys were made to run to the point where they dropped to their knees and got sick.

58. Staff would make me lead the sessions sometimes so that I could set the pace for everyone. I had to do it as fast as possible until the kids would throw up or collapse. I wasn't allowed to go easy or slow because I knew that I would be punished.

59. At PT sessions, we did things like running, sit ups and push ups. The weaker boys were targeted because they couldn't keep up. When some guys were on the ground, you could see they were done. I could see they were done but the staff didn't care. The staff would keep yelling abuse at them. Every now and again, one staff member would come in and put the odd boot in there.

60. There was one staff member with a ginger beard and British accent. He was a real martial arts type of guy. He would grab you around the skin using two fingers and it would really hurt. He was probably one of the better built staff and he could be really sadistic, this prick. He liked soccer, so he would line us up against the wall and we had to stand still while he kicked balls at us.

61. I think the staff rotated around. It wasn't always the same guys. There were some real pricks in there, but there were also some good people in there.

Family contact at Owairaka

62. I didn't receive any letters or phone calls or visits during my time there. I think I would've been in that place for 8 or 9 months. I was always left behind, even

when other parents would come along and take their boys home for a holiday. It was hard.

Seclusion

63. I was taken into the secure wing again when I was accused of planning to run away. I can't remember the exact date. This would be my second time in the secure cell. This time I was in for much longer, I think it was for a couple of months. I can't remember.
64. I hated the cell I was in. There was a toilet and a sink inside it. There was one skylight, that was the only daylight you got. It was in the middle of your cell. My cell was right next to the shower unit, which is weird because I don't remember getting showers in the secure wing.
65. The showers were a place where they punished people. I could hear the boys getting hit with a strap or the paddle, it was bad. Whenever somebody was in there, it didn't matter where you were, you could hear the hits. You could hear the housemaster doubling up the hits each time someone pulled away.
66. I had it done to me too. When it was my turn to get hit, they'd make me grip each side of the toilet with my hands and would hit me around the back of my legs. As soon as you pulled away, you'd know there's an extra couple of ones coming your way.
67. When I was in secure unit, I don't remember getting a toothbrush or a comb. I don't remember ever getting a shower. I think I didn't get those things until they took me out of that place. I didn't go to school when I was in the secure cell. I think I got a book which came around maybe once a week.
68. The secure wing was practically silent. The second time I was down there, I went nuts. My whole mental state changed. You get doubts in your head because you're in there for so long. I could hear people coming in but then I would hear them leaving. I was stuck there wondering, "Why is everyone else leaving but not me?" The whole crowd I went into secure with, they all left. Nobody explained to me what was happening.

69. There was no way to talk to anybody else in the secure wing. Solitary confinement is wicked. I would rather get the beatings.
70. After a couple of weeks at Owairaka, you don't even know what day it is. You have no sense of time. You get used to being on your own. I remember when I came out of that place, it was hard for me to talk to people. I didn't like people in my space.

Foster family

71. In around 1975, a lady from social welfare came down to see me while I was in the secure unit. She came to tell me that I was going to meet some foster parents. I still don't even know who she was, only that she arranged a meeting and because she was in there, I have to say I was quite jubilant because I hadn't spoken to anyone else in the secure unit for a while.
72. I didn't even know I was on a list for a foster parent. This was the first time I ever heard about that. I didn't know how to react because I was confused and happy at the same time.
73. My foster family were Samoan. They were a good family. They were younger and more lenient. They weren't like my grandparents. Their names were Mr and Mrs [GRO-B].
74. I went to school while I was with them. We were living in Mt Wellington and I started third form at [GRO-A] High. It wasn't until a year later that my foster parents separated, and I had to figure out where to go next.
75. My foster dad's sister, Mrs [GRO-B], took me in and said that I could stay with her. She lived in Ponsonby. I moved in with her and her family. I still attended [GRO-A] High even while I was living in Ponsonby.
76. At about 16 years old, I was in Ponsonby with a couple of friends. We did a smash and grab at a shop, and I ended up back in Owairaka. I didn't see my foster family ever again. I left my clothes at their house, and I was too embarrassed to ever go back and get them. I was embarrassed because they were so good to me.

Back at Owairaka

77. When I got back to Owairaka, I was placed in the senior wing. When you got to senior wing, you also got your own room. I was given the responsibility of looking after the dust room.
78. When you get to the dust room, you're considered the number one boy in that place. You would stay in there the whole time. You were like the storeman. You looked after the polishing rags and the wax stuff for the floor. You had to be the top guy to work in there. It's like a seniority thing, you had to be in a senior wing.
79. The boys also know who you are because your t-shirt is a different colour to everyone else. I wore a different t-shirt and was given more freedom.

Family contact at Owairaka

80. I remember that the other kids were getting visits and I wasn't and that's why Mr [GRO-B-2] came down to talk to me. Mr [GRO-B-2] worked in the administration office. It was when I was top dog at Owairaka.
81. He came to talk to me on a Saturday and I was in the dust room. He asked about my family and whether they had contacted me. He said, "Is everything all right at home?" Everyone was asking me that! But this time was different because I was the only kid that got no visits, no letters, no phone calls.
82. For a couple of seconds, I was silent. I didn't know what to say. And that was the first time I really cried I think. The tears just poured. I didn't know what to say. Out of everything that ever happened to me, that one moment is what I remember the most. Nobody called me, visited me or checked on me. I'll always remember that.
83. I hated that question. Even today, it dumbfounds me. "Is everything all right at home?" It's one of those things that sticks in your mind, I guess, one of those memories you have.

Sexual abuse in Owairaka

84. Sexual abuse never happened to me, but you just knew it's happening. It's up to the boys if they want to step up and share. Some boys in the senior wing would get a few hours to go out with a housemaster. I think they would go to the movies or something. I don't know what they did out there because even though I was a senior boy, I never went.
85. No-one has to tell you, you just know the signs, like Catch going missing for an hour and then you notice an empty bed space. You can't hide that stuff.
86. Every now and again, if the housemasters weren't around, we were in the rec room, we'd go up and ask the boys who went out. We'd ask things like, "Oh what did you get last night?" The boys who went out alone with the housemasters got special treatment in return for whatever they had to do.
87. The kids being taken away were normally the more placid ones. Even though it's a boys' home, there's a hierarchy in there. When there were lollies in someone's drawer, that was a dead giveaway that they were being targeted by the housemasters. Another sign was when they would be kept off all the worst jobs.

Leaving Owairaka

88. The next big shock I got was that I was being shipped out. They told me I was being sent to Levin to Kohitere. This was in 1977. Nobody explained why I couldn't go back to my foster family.
89. The only thing that I was told by the staff was, "We don't know what to do with you and we're shipping you out". Even though I was the top dog at the time. They flew me down to Levin with an escort. I just gave up, I didn't know what was going on, I just went where they told me to go. They didn't give me much notice; I was gone within 48 hours.

Kohitere

90. Firstly, I'm a Buzzard and proud. Buzzards was the name they gave us because of the villa we were living in at Kohitere. There were two villas at

Kohitere; Tui villa and Kiwi villa. I was in the Tui villa. Everyone in the Tui villa were Buzzards.

91. Then there was "Disneyland", which is what we called the secure wing at Kohitere.
92. I remember it was a dreary place. I guess that's where they got the name Buzzards. There were no main doors so if the wind was blowing through, you could feel it. We did have heating inside the rooms but they were basically like cubicles with no doors.
93. They put a rugby team together and we went into the local competition. I was part of that. The name of our team at the time was "The Wanderer". There was also a place out there called "Camp Peak". It's like a reward for the good boys. They go over there and can camp out. I never made it onto any of the Camp Peak trips.
94. Even when I was in Disneyland, I was still let out on Saturday to play for the team and then after that I'd go back into the cell.

Working

95. Boys were released from Kohitere on their 17th birthday, so around two or three months before leaving, you were sent to work. I got put into a work gang doing forestry work while I was at Kohitere. It was good. I worked a normal 8-hour day instead of going to school. I didn't get any money for the work that I did but when you'd done a certain amount of time there, they would help you get a job. If you had a job, they called this "Day Service".
96. As part of Day Service, we would get dropped off to wherever our jobs required us to be. I ended up getting a job at a place called "Feltex" in Levin. We made springs in the factory. I can't remember getting any money for the time I worked at Feltex.
97. I still liked Kohitere better than I liked Owairaka. They gave us things to do, and they had band equipment there. It was also the first time that I came across lady staff in general population, doing the same duties as a normal housemaster.

98. I don't know whether that was good or not, but the ladies were better to talk to than the men. It was just unique. The staff weren't as hard as they were in Owairaka. The staff would give us tobacco every single week, even to people who didn't smoke. I didn't smoke before Kohitere. I couldn't even roll a cigarette. Then I became a smoker when I came out of there.
99. The guys were older in Kohitere than they were in Owairaka. There were also people of different persuasions, different sexual orientations. It's why most of us never went into the shower blocks, nobody wanted to get raped.

LEAVING CARE

100. As soon as I turned 17, I was put on the Northerner train and sent to Auckland. I had to find my way to this youth hostel in Ellerslie. I was by myself. I said goodbye and then I was on my own.
101. I didn't have a job lined up. I stayed in the youth hostel for two days and then I just gapped it back to Ponsonby where I reunited with the Polynesian Panther Party. This was in 1977. I was already a member of the Polynesian Panther Party. I joined when I was 15 years old, when I was living with my foster family.

Polynesian Panthers

102. In the Panthers, I was involved with the "PIG Patrols". PIG stands for Police Investigation Group. We watched police officers to see who they were questioning. We did seminars on this because they were raiding Polynesian people's homes. We were called all the names back then like "coconut" and "coon".
103. Even back when I was in my school uniform, I'd be stopped by police. I still remember the questions they would ask me. They asked me about the number of people living in my house and whether any of them arrived recently. I didn't like being stopped on my way to school by the police. In Ponsonby it was like a normal thing.
104. I was friends with a lot of the guys that originally made up the "KC's" (King Cobra's). Lots of them were like us, staying at the Polynesian Panthers HQ in Ponsonby at the time. I think I got a good education there too, especially the

causes we went out to fight for. There were pictures of Huey P Newton on the wall and other leaders, they'd explain who they were and stuff. We followed the political model of the Black Panthers.

105. We'd have people advising us on our rights if police approached us. We were told they had to have reasons for stopping us. I think lots of our people didn't know that.
106. On PIG Patrol, we'd walk in groups up and down Ponsonby Road waiting for police to stop us. The police didn't like us. We'd say "Why have you stopped this guy and not that one? You can't do that, what's your reasonable cause for stopping him? Why are you asking for his name? You can't do that".
107. What made me want to help our people was just how police and immigration blatantly did these things and it was targeted against Islanders only. You knew when the raids were on. Then we took up the cause at Bastion point to support Maori and put up a fight there too.
108. The Springbok tour, that was the worst. I lost contact with the Polynesian Panthers soon after the Springbok tour. I don't think young people today understand how that one moment, the 1981 Springbok tour changed the fabric of this nation. I think the police were different after that.
109. From 1977 to 1981, I was staying at the Polynesian Panthers' house. I stayed there for a bit in 1975 as well. I liked helping people and with the Panthers I felt useful. I felt like I was doing something good. I was helping my people. A lot of people have asked me why I'm not a lawyer or a politician.

LIFE AFTER CARE

110. I met my wife in 1977, the same year I got out of Kohitere. I don't know why she's still around or why she stayed with me, but she did. We have GRO
-A children and GRO
-A grandchildren.
111. What saved me was when I moved from Auckland to the Bay of Plenty. When I moved there from Auckland, that's when I really got grounded.

112. When I moved down, I still wasn't a good person. I had a chip on my shoulder and I didn't knuckle down to authority.
113. I had to mature and realise that my actions are my own responsibility. I realised that I had to front up to that. It took me a little while to figure that out. In the end it was just the threat of losing my wife and kids. I had no choice but to stay out of trouble.

IMPACTS OF ABUSE

Guilt

114. I think my life would've been better spiritually and emotionally if I never went into care, that's what's bothered me in my life. A lot of wrongs were done there, and I was a part of bad things that happened there.
115. I still think about the other boys in the homes. I have a guilt complex over it. As top dog in the home, I had to break the guys who were 11 years old during our PT sessions.
116. At school and in the homes, quite often I was helping the younger boys. It wasn't a good feeling to then turn on them when the staff asked me to set the pace for the PT sessions.
117. I still feel ashamed of breaking down the younger boys, that still sits with me. I can't help feeling guilty because I know I was a part of it and I was used to achieve somebody's end. I felt like the bully. The boys would be all right back in the rec room, they'd still talk to you, but it still wasn't a nice feeling.
118. Growing up I always looked after my younger sister the way my older sister looked after me. You take that with you, so watching an 11-year-old get broken down because of what you've done and inside you wanna do something, but you don't know how. I have a lot of guilt for that.
119. People tell me that I was just a kid so I shouldn't be blamed. I appreciate that but it's like I'm being patted on the back for something, and I don't want to be patted on the back for it. I don't want pity. It doesn't make me feel better.

120. I carried a lot of the things that I experienced while in care into my later life. I didn't really start straightening myself out until I was about 37 years old. I was an angry man for a lot of my life, it got me in trouble. Through the justice system, I spent a little bit of time in jail, nothing long-term.

Family relationships

121. To this day, I don't have a good relationship with my family. I recently tried to visit my aunty that abused us, and it didn't go down well. I was so angry. We were just kids and I had to run away and go through all of this because of what was happening at home.
122. We couldn't say anything or tell anyone because we had to uphold our family name. In the Samoan culture, protecting your family name and reputation is everything. It still hurts that we were put through that and hidden away because of the fear of putting our family name to shame. Just because our parents were divorced.
123. We were always told that the family is the most important thing. That's why it's hard for me today to sing in tune to that I guess because they didn't seem to care about us. I haven't seen my older sister in almost 30 years now. She ran away to the States and made her life over there. Sometimes I envy her. She got to leave this place.
124. Even at my age I'm still finding out things about my family, it's still coming out. It's taken more than 40 years to connect with half of my siblings and we're still not a tight unit.
125. In many ways I feel like I was dealt to more harshly than my brother GRO-B
-1 was. He's gone back and stayed with family, cousins, aunties and they've taken him in, but I've never ever gone. I can't pretend.
126. I just felt like I disgraced the family, so I've stayed away. I just stick to myself, it's easier that way. After the kind of life I've lived, you tend to stick to yourself.

My own family

127. I've been angry with everybody most of my life including being angry at the police and at my family.
128. I'm all right with my children and they are all right with me, but I don't have long conversations with my children. I'm probably not as close to my children as I should be, and it's not their fault. Sometimes I don't know why I nag back or clam up whenever I'm trying to communicate with the kids. It's because I choose to keep everybody away. It's just me. I have a better relationship with my grandkids.
129. I'm a bit standoffish. I don't tend to mix in a crowd unless I know them well. I don't talk to people I don't know. I don't hold conversations well, and I tend to be the odd one out. It's like I've got to put up an act of some kind when with my friends, even at work. I don't open up to people. I can't do it. I feel it's due to my time in solitary, I hate people in my space and sometimes I snap.
130. When I think about my time in the secure unit, it's hard to explain. In that secure unit, space and silence is all you had. You were shut off from humanity. You might get a book to read but that's about it. I looked forward to the PT sessions because this was when they let me out and I was able to see people. You weren't allowed to talk, but at least I could see them. In secure, space in the cell and space in your head was all you had. I think that's why I don't like people in my space now. I've kept myself segregated from other people and that won't change.
131. Nothing can make this better. I'll be like this for the rest of my life, I'm just used to it. I know if I want help, it's there. But to me, in my mind, there are some things that are better left unsaid. It's in the past, leave it there. I've accepted that there is nothing that I can do to change this. I'm just frightened of being broken again.
132. My wife and kids don't know what happened to me in care. I don't think they would understand. I don't tell them half of this. I'm afraid of how they would perceive things. I'm afraid that they wouldn't be even-handed in their judgement.

133. I still think about what happened in care. I have dreams about it. It plagues me to this day. When I dream about being in care, if anything it's that one moment I was asked that question by one of the staff members at Owairaka, GRO-B-2 It was a perfectly innocent moment and question, but I always think about it.
134. I had a lot of baggage, I guess. Too much baggage for a relationship. I was directed to complete anger management classes because of domestic violence. I started hating everybody. Everyone else had the problem, not me.
135. I was intelligent enough to understand that I had to swallow my pride and attend the anger management course, but I wanted to hit the people running the courses. The courses were good. It got pretty deep listening to other men having the same problems.
136. I went through with the course and it wasn't easy. It's no fun sitting down, listening to the things that hurt people, but you have to listen. I've had to do everything on my own. It was uncomfortable to say the least.
137. The simple decision for me was; do you want your family or don't you? So, I'm grateful to my wife and children. Me and my wife have been together 45 years this year. It took a lot of things to turn my life around, but I must've done things at the right time.
138. Now I try to encourage others to take a step forward and smell the roses. My friends or brothers and sisters, if they don't look happy, I'll ask; "Are you having domestics?" Domestics are fine, they're normal, except the physical part. I always check in on people.
139. I don't blame my grandparents for the way that they raised me. They're from the mother country and they were old. They had been through terrible times in Samoa like the flu epidemic, the New Zealand police shot a Samoan leader at a protest, they rode the depression out, they had to go fight a war. One thing about them that I appreciated was that they're a much sturdier generation than we were. They could take more I think. I tell my kids, "You fellas talk about a hard life, but you don't know what that is".

140. But it still really hurts to remember all those years ago when my grandmother left me in the courtroom. I have never forgotten it. For me, she was the one that held that power. When she died, she never gave me her blessing. She never came to look for me or to tell me that she forgave me or that she wanted me to come back home.
141. Church is an important part of Pacific Island life. They talked about forgiveness, but they never gave it. Church was everything to my grandparents and yet my grandmother still didn't give me her blessing when she died.
142. When we had these problems when we were little, there was no help for us. We had no counsellors, no caregivers, if we had a problem with the system there was no way we could argue, no leg to stand on.
143. My wife is Maori. I decided to raise my children as Maori because I know that they'll have an easier life living as Maori. If I raised my children as Samoans, they would've had a hard life like I did. I don't speak Samoan to my kids. They know that they're Samoan and they know that they have Samoan relatives, but I've done my best to protect them from the life that I had.
144. I really want to say though, I do not want to put my people on trial. Being Samoan is not a bad thing. Our culture is not bad. My kids do ask me about the Samoan culture and if you were to ask any of my kids what they know about my aiga or my culture, you won't ever hear any bad stories because I haven't told them that it's bad. I always try and let them know that Samoans are good people, we just have a different way of being raised.
145. There's a lot of rules when you're Samoan, especially when the church is involved. This is why I give my kids a lot of freedom too, I let them do what they want to do. I want to stop the cycle and I want our people to know that there's a better way of dealing with things, other than using the jandal.
146. Our people in the Islands, they're brought up differently to us. We've got a different education system from the Islands. There are differences in how we view certain situations. What troubled me in the past was that I hated it when people said I wasn't a proper Islander because I was born in New Zealand. I

just never knew where I belonged. This is still something that I still struggle with.

REDRESS / IDEAS FOR TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE

147. In care, they should have things for Maori and Pacific kids to show that they care about them. In our day there was nothing for us Pacific or Maori, we always had to do everything the Palagi way.
148. Most screws in the boys' homes were white. I always hung with my kind and only the Maori boys came up and talked to us, not the Palagi's. No one was querying what anybody was doing or anything.
149. Kids should get a say in where they get to go. It would've been better if I'd stayed with a Samoan family. It would've been helpful to have had social worker support but that wasn't how it was done. Family is meant to look after family, right? Aiga for aiga, right? Even now if my family needed me, I wouldn't be that vengeful. I wouldn't treat them the way I was treated in the homes.
150. Apologies are good but at the same time, if there's no action with that then as far as I'm concerned, apologies are meaningless. It's easy to come out and apologise but if the system is still wrecked then they need to fix the system. We always had a saying back in the day, "If you're born white, then you've got a leg in the door". Us Islanders, we didn't even have a key.
151. A copy of my written consent to use my statement is **annexed** to this statement.

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-A

Dated: 24/06/21

Annexure A

Consent to use my statement

I, GRO-A Mr TY, 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-A

Date: 24/06/21