

Witness Name: GRO-A Ms AG

Statement No.: WITN0768001

Exhibits: [WITN0768002] - [WITN0768009]

Dated: 2021

ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

WITNESS STATEMENT OF GRO-A Ms AG

IN RESPECT OF THE MĀORI INVESTIGATION

I, GRO-A Ms AG state: -

INTRODUCTION

1. My full name is GRO-A Ms AG. I was born on GRO-C 1992 in Otahuhu.
2. My parents' names are GRO-B and GRO-B.
3. I grew up with my parents and five siblings: GRO-A Ms AK, GRO-A Ms AH, GRO-A Mr AI, GRO-A Ms AJ, and GRO-B-1. I am the third youngest of the group. I also have two much younger half-brothers.

4. My whānau is Māori and affiliates with Tainui Waikato. My hapū is Ngāti Tipa and my Marae is [GRO-A]
5. I do not really remember living at home before we were uplifted because I was so young during the first uplift. I am not really sure why we were taken away from mum and dad.
6. Because I was so young when we were taken, I don't have many memories of my wider whānau or of my grandparents. We were never given the opportunity to meet any of them during the years that I was in care. I know my grandparents' generation all had the reo, but we never had the chance to learn it from them.
7. I don't think CYFS ever gave us the option of living with whānau, over the more than a decade CYFS had us in its custody.
8. My records show that in January 1996, when I was four years old, four social workers and three police officers came to our mum's house and removed me and my siblings, while dad was asleep inside. They told mum that she could come with us and offered to take us all to a Women's Refuge, which mum agreed to. [WITN0768002]
9. This uplift was in response to allegations by neighbours that mum had been abusive and neglectful to my older sisters, and because the social workers were anxious that dad was back on the scene, as there were reports that there was a history of domestic violence between him and mum. [WITN0768002]
10. From my memories, mum was not abusive or violent toward me, and I don't remember violence toward my siblings.
11. During the uplift, social workers had to physically restrain both [GRO-A Ms AK] and [GRO-A Ms AH] to keep them in the car. When we got out at the Refuge, the social workers decided that they should let [GRO-A Ms AK] go because they

were causing distress to her, and they would have to use too much force to keep her there.

12. Our dad, on waking up to find us all gone, called the police to report us missing. He also contacted CYFS. He was angry, particularly as both GRO-A Ms AK and GRO-A Mr AI had been taken into care too, when they had been living with him until the night before the uplift and were not the subject of the notification that had triggered the uplift. **[WITN0768003]**

13. Two days later, on 12 February 1996, CYFS used the same place of safety warrant to remove us all from mum's care at the Refuge, after the Refuge workers complained that mum couldn't control us. There were also reports that mum had told dad where we were and had told him to come pick us up. **[WITN0768004]**

14. After removing us from mum, we were split into twos and placed in foster care. I was initially placed with my younger sister GRO-A Ms AJ and then a few days later I was moved to live with my oldest sister GRO-A Ms AK in the care of GRO-B in Hamilton. My records indicate that we stayed there for about 3 months.

15. In May 1996, me and all my siblings were placed into the care of a Tainui Iwi service provider, called Huakina Development Trust. Huakina then placed me and GRO-A Mr AI with a caregiver called GRO-B in Pukekoe. The rest of my siblings were placed by Huakina Trust into one of its Family Homes in Mangere, run by GRO-B

16. In September 1996, me and GRO-A Mr AI went to join GRO-A Ms AH and GRO-A Ms AK in Mangere, and our youngest two siblings, GRO-B-1 and GRO-A Ms AJ were allowed to move home to live with mum.

17. A year later, me and GRO-A Ms AH were also allowed to move home with mum and our little sisters, GRO-A Ms AK and GRO-A Mr AI were left at the Huakina Trust by themselves.

18. My records show that we didn't last long at mum's house, before neighbours started making notifications that mum was going on drinking binges and that she was leaving us four girls for multiple days with a babysitter. The babysitter was unhappy about this, and reported that we had no food, as our mother spent all her money on alcohol.
19. In August 1998, me, GRO-B-1, GRO-A Ms AJ and GRO-A Ms AH were all uplifted from our mum's care and placed at a Pukekohe Family Home for one night before CYFS returned us to our mum the following day.
20. On 4 September 1998 CYFS received another notification that we had been left home alone and decided that we were not being adequately supervised by our mum. We were yet again uplifted. During the uplift CYFS recorded that we all left crying and screaming for our mother. [WITN0768005]
21. On 9 September 1998, me, GRO-B-1, GRO-A Ms AJ and GRO-A Ms AH were taken by social workers and placed with foster parents GRO-B-2 and GRO-B-3. A few months later, GRO-A Ms AK and GRO-A Mr AI were transferred from their placement at Huakina to join us with GRO-B-2 and GRO-B-3.
22. All the placements, and the returning to mum is a blur to me. My first real memories of being in care begin at the following placement in GRO-C with GRO-B-2 and GRO-B-3.
- GRO-B-2 and GRO-B-3
23. Living with GRO-B-2 and GRO-B-3 was horrible.
24. I remember that initially we lived in the GRO-B-2 GRO-B-3 3-bedroom townhouse in GRO-B with a bunch of their family including a daughter, a few sons, and their grandchildren. At one stage there must have been more than 20 of us living there altogether. Me and my 5 siblings shared one room. At some point I think they shifted the 6 of us out to the garage. I do not know why CYFS

thought that would be a good place to put us, when there was clearly insufficient space for us.

Physical abuse

25. The main person who abused us out there was [GRO-B-2] I remember that we would have to do huge amounts of chores and that heaps of them were things we didn't know how to do because of how young we all were.
26. I remember being about 7 years old, and I had never learned how to vacuum-clean. I got a real big hiding with the vacuum pole from [GRO-B-2] for not doing it correctly.
27. After that hiding, I went to school, and I told the teacher about the hiding. I begged my teacher to not speak with [GRO-B-2] about the hiding, because I knew I would get another hiding for narking. The teacher ended up calling [GRO-B-2] about it anyway, and when I got home, I got another hiding, as I had known I would. [GRO-B-2] hurt me, and I was only young. That second hiding was with the jug cord, and her hands. To this day I still having the scarring on my body from that beating.
28. Living with [GRO-B-2] I would get some form of a hiding from her every day.
29. The physical abuse terrified me and made me anxious. Anytime I did anything wrong, it resulted in a beating. I know my siblings went through the same thing.
30. [GRO-B-2] adult sons would also abuse us. They would swear at us, slap us, whack us with sticks, or hit us with anything they could get their hands on.
31. One of her sons, who was about 30 years old, forced me to me eat my own snot one time. I was crying and my snot was running down my face and he made me eat it under the threat of more violence.

32. I also remember when we were in the GRO-B townhouse, someone we called Auntie would beat me for not knowing how to spell correctly or for not knowing how to brush my hair properly.
33. If I said something wrong, I got things thrown at me, like plates, or cups.
34. GRO-B-2 and Auntie also isolated me. I remember one time GRO-B-2 and Auntie putting me in a room in the back of the townhouse, where I had to stay all day and night. They did not feed me or give me water, and I was not allowed out to use the toilet. There was no bed, and I just sat on the ground the whole time. I remember that because I had not been let out to go toilet, I had had to mimi in there.
35. My sisters were trying to see if I was alright and were running around the house to spy through the window. I was crying and they could see me, but they did not dare let me out, because they would have got hidings for it.
36. My sisters asked Auntie to let me out, but she refused.
37. I cried for a whole day and night in there. I was 8 years old, and I didn't know adults could treat children like this, it was pretty tough. I know it was only a day and a night, but it felt like forever for me because I was so young.
38. One of the scariest parts was that I did not know when I would be let out. The fear that I would never get out is indescribable, and it still traumatises me to this day, even though I'm 29 years old now.
39. The next day when GRO-B-2 came to the door and asked if I was okay, I burst into tears again and told her I was not okay, and that I was hungry and thirsty. She did not care.
40. Sometime later, when a CYFS lady visited and asked us about what it was like out there, I cried to her, and told her we were getting beaten, and that I had been locked up for doing something naughty.

41. The CYFS lady told me that CYFS would come and remove us, but she never came back, and then the caregivers took us out to the farmhouse and it was even worse.
42. My records show the same account as my memory.
43. On 18 September 2000, our Lawyer for Child, Grant Litchfield noted that there had been concerns raised that [GRO-B-2] was hitting us. In response, our social worker told him that CYFS would prefer to “work with” [GRO-B-2] than organise a new placement for us. [WITN0768006]
44. In October 2000 it was recorded that we had moved with the [GRO-B-2
GRO-B-3] out to their farmhouse.
45. On 13 November 2000, our social worker said CYFS had investigated the concerns about us being hit, and had offered support to [GRO-B-2] but that [GRO-B-2] thought this was not necessary. CYFS appears to have closed the notification,
46. which matches my memory of them doing nothing at all in response.

Farmhouse

47. At the [GRO-B-2
GRO-B-3] farmhouse, it was again overcrowded.
48. Most of the [GRO-B-2
GRO-B-3] family came with us from the townhouse, and then there were other family members of the [GRO-B-2
GRO-B-3] already living at the farmhouse.
49. I remember that while with the [GRO-B-2
GRO-B-3] we never saw our mum, and just about never saw our dad. Later, I realised that the [GRO-B-2
GRO-B-3] farmhouse was very close to our whānau land, where my koro lived, and where dad was staying, at the same time that we were out there with the [GRO-B-2
GRO-B-3]. I remember dad driving past once, as we were pulling out thistles in the fields and stopping to say hi and to give us a hug. After that brief encounter I didn't see him again for years. I never saw my koro either, who was just down the road.

50. At the farmhouse, we were treated like slaves. I had thought it was bad at the townhouse with all the cleaning they had made us do, but at the farmhouse it was so much worse. We worked in the home, in the fields, and on the marae.
51. GRO-B-2 and GRO-B-3 would do things like wake us up at 3.00am to go out and pull thistles from the paddocks, or they would wake us up at midnight to go scrub the bathrooms or go clean the marae. It was like we were adults, the work they made us do, but we were only children.
52. During the day we would go to school, but only if GRO-B-2 wanted us to. Often, she would keep us home to work and so we missed quite a bit of schooling. I think I would miss a few days of school every week when we were at the farmhouse. My older sisters got it worse, and at some stage they weren't allowed to go to school at all, and were made to stay home and work.
53. If it got back to GRO-B-2 that teachers had been asking why we weren't at school, we would get a hiding. She made it clear we were not allowed speak to the teachers about what was happening at home, and that if we did, there would be more violence.
54. If teachers asked questions about anything to do with our placement, I would just tell them to ring GRO-B-2 and ask her, and then she would lie to them.
55. I remember that another punishment of GRO-B-2 was to withhold food from us. We might have spent the day working, or preparing food on the marae for everyone, but then if GRO-B-2 felt we had misbehaved, or if she just felt like being mean, she would take our plates off us, and send us to the back of the room to sit alone.
56. I would also get locked up at the marae sometimes. It was the same as the time at the townhouse, I was locked up for a full day and night. I remember some of my sisters getting the same treatment.

57. I remember that the marae was big, but when we got locked up, it was in a small side room somewhere, with nothing in it. I remember being locked in there on one occasion, when family of mine came to visit, and I couldn't go and see them. It was just horrible.
58. I remember being too scared to call out for help, and so I just cried.
59. I would ask my older sisters "why are we being treated like this". It was inhuman to just throw us in there and just leave us. When they would let us out, it was only with the threat of going back in if we did something else wrong.
60. GRO-B-2 didn't make her children or grandchildren do any of the work we had to do. It was like we were her own workforce; we were the ones that had to do everything.
61. I hated it there, and I wanted to run away from the GRO-B-2 GRO-B-3 but I couldn't as I was too young and it was big farm, plus I had nowhere to go.
62. GRO-B-2 was often threatening me and my siblings that if we told CYFS about anything that was going on, we would get hidings. I remember our CYFS lady came up to the farmhouse about six months after we moved there. I told the lady what was happening, as I just wanted out of there. I didn't care if I got another hiding for doing so.
63. Like when we had told CYFS in GRO-B the CYFS lady just left and didn't do anything. Her response made me feel like we were nothing to CYFS.
64. To me, she just shoved our abuse under the carpet and left us there to receive more of it. She knew we were getting abused and did not act. That was the last time I saw her.
65. Again my records show a similar account to my memories.
66. On 14 June 2001, our social worker recorded that GRO-B-2 admitted that she felt it was necessary to "whack", "boot" and "shove us" to discipline

us and that she did not know any other way to do it. She also referred to us as being a source of income for her. [WITN0768007]

67. Despite [GRO-B-2] statement we remained with her.
68. In October 2001 CYFS visited our school, where teaching staff stated that we were continuing to be physically abused at the [GRO-B-2
GRO-B-3]. The teacher told CYFS that we had no faith or trust in anyone, and that this was directly related to CYFS' lack of action in response to [GRO-B-2] admissions of assaulting us. The teacher informed CYFS that after the social workers had left in June 2001, [GRO-B-2] had told us kids that she told the social workers she hit us, and that she was going to carry on hitting us. [WITN0768008]
69. CYFS again spoke with [GRO-B-2] who told CYFS that sometimes she would kick and hit us, and that she would yell at us. She said she whacked us with a stick, but that she did not give us hidings. She also said that we all had our chores to do. [WITN0768009]
70. At some point after the second time we told CYFS about our abuse, we all got picked up and taken to a new placement.
71. The uplift occurred on 2 November 2001. Social workers came and grabbed us from school, and we were not even allowed back into the [GRO-B-2
GRO-B-3] house to get our clothes. We left with just what we had on that day for school. Our records state that several of us were crying during the uplift and defending [GRO-B-2] physical abuse of us.
- [GRO-B-4]
72. After finally getting out of the [GRO-B-2
GRO-B-3] home, we were all placed together with a lady called [GRO-B-4]. It was similar to the [GRO-B-2
GRO-B-3] in that there were heaps of [GRO-B-4] family there living with us.

73. I do not really understand why, but as soon as we got to that placement, we all started to get split up. I remember my older sisters leaving first, and then after about a year, my brother left too.
74. I don't know what happened, and I never asked them why they left. It felt like there was just too much pain in our lives and they had to look after themselves.
75. After the oldest three left, it ended up just being me and my two younger sisters there for about a year.
76. I didn't like it there either. I used to tell the social worker that I wanted to leave too.
77. [GRO-B-4] wasn't as abusive as the [GRO-B-2
GRO-B-3] which was good, but she would still whack me, and beat me up every few days.
78. The worst beating resulted in a scar that I still have today. She hit me with a mug, and it broke when she struck me. I had to get stitches.
79. When we went to the doctors to get the stitches, she told me I couldn't tell the doctor what had happened and that I had to say that the dog had got me. I did what I was told.
80. [GRO-B-4] kids would also abuse me. Mostly the abuse came from [GRO-B-4] daughter. She would slap me in the face, pull my hair, and yank me off my chair. From my memories, I think she was only abusive toward me and not my little sisters. I think my little sisters got off lightly, and I am glad they did, because they had already suffered so much at the [GRO-B-2
GRO-B-3] We all had.
81. [GRO-B-4] other children slapped me occasionally and swore at me, but they were not as bad.

Other foster homes

82. After the placement with [GRO-B-4] I ended up going through heaps of other foster homes by myself. I think I was being moved every 3 to 6 months. I never knew what was going on. One day, social workers would just arrive and pick me up from school and that was it, I would never see the caregivers again. The social workers would tell me this is where you are going now, and this is who you are staying with. It happened so many times.
83. I remember being in a home in Pukekoe with a woman we called Nan. I think her actual name was [GRO-B] and I think she was related to us somehow, but I am not really sure. I lived with her and her grandchildren for a while.
84. Nan was better than my previous placements. She never hit me, and she took me to school. She was lovely to me.
85. I do remember missing my siblings at this placement and asking my social worker to get us all back together. I remember my social worker telling me that she couldn't even let me know where my siblings or parents were, because it might breach their privacy.
86. I am not sure why CYFS moved me from Nan. I really liked her and she was really nice to me, but like always, I remember CYFS coming to get me, and then I never went back.
87. I think after [GRO-B]s, I spent a bit of time in a home in Mapu. I have no complaints a about my experiences there.

Primary Care Group

88. At some point toward the end of 2003 I was placed into the care of an organisation called Primary Care Group, run by a woman named [GRO-B] This organisation had several Girls' Homes, and initially I was placed in a home in Te Atatu.

89. I remember that home in Te Atahu had bars on the windows and locks on the front door. We were not allowed to leave the house unless accompanied.
90. We just stayed inside all day and did home schooling.
91. With so many girls, there was a lot of fighting between us. If the caregivers saw any fighting, they would intervene and we would be put in time out in our rooms, dock our allowance, or get extra chores.
92. After a few months at the Te Atatu Home, we were transferred to a home in Papatoetoe which was similar to the Te Atatu Home.
93. Eventually we were moved on again from there and ended up in a motel in Waiwera. Initially I thought this was cool, as it was different to anywhere that I had lived before.
94. However the living conditions were so cramped. They had six of us girls living in a studio room, with no separate bedroom. We all shared the small living space to sleep, live and eat. We had to top and tail in each bed that was squashed in there.
95. During the day we were no longer doing home schooling, so we would just sit around in this tiny space and chat. I remember telling a staff member that we needed our own privacy, but this was ignored.
96. The motel had no bars on the windows which was a welcome change, but we were still not allowed to leave the premises of the motel.
97. I remember that at this placement, similar to most of the foster homes I had been in, all the kids were Māori. I remember thinking that the State wouldn't have allowed six Pākehā girls to live in a motel as accommodation, let alone share one room. It was like we had been forgotten about.
98. The whole time I was there, I was not allowed visitors, or to go and visit my family. I remember once seeing my brother GRO-A
Mr AI when we were at the

supermarket and asking to be allowed to go say hi to him, but staff would not let me. I broke down in tears when they said no.

Titirangi

99. After the Primary Care Group, I was placed back into foster care in Titirangi. This was the placement where I suffered the most damaging abuse.
100. I remember that the caregivers were a husband and wife, and that they had four of their teenage daughters living there. My records indicate that the female caregiver was called GRO-B.
101. The female caregiver was violent and would assault me about once a week. On multiple occasions I remember her punching me in the head, hard enough to leave bruises and the occasional split lip.
102. On more than one occasion I remember going to school with a big scarf on to try and cover up my busted lip.
103. The caregivers' daughters also used to beat me up. I think I was about 12 at this stage, and they were all older than me. The daughters were going to the same school as me, so there was no reprieve from their abuse. They could get me wherever I was.
104. The daughters were mean to me because I was a 'CYFS kid'. They would tell me all the time that I was not one of them, and that I did not belong there.
105. If I complained to their mum, instead of telling them off, she would encourage them to taunt me more.
106. I think I lived there for about a year.
107. The worst part of my placement there was sexual abuse I suffered from the husband. He would get me alone when his wife would take their daughters shopping and would make me sit there and watch him as he masturbated

himself. I remember that it progressed to him making me masturbate him, and I recall being made to hold his private parts while I was crying, and I didn't know what I was doing.

108. I remember every time the wife and daughters left together, I would beg them to let me come because I knew what would happen if I stayed home alone with him. They would never let me come, and the abuse carried on and on until I finally left that placement.
109. At the start of my placement there, the abuse from the husband only happened every few weeks, but after a while it was happening nearly every second day. The daughters always had after-school activities and things like that to go to, and when the wife was taking them, the husband would insist I stay back to do cleaning etc.
110. I was always so scared, because I knew why he made me stay behind and I didn't want to be abused. I was only 13 and I had not asked to be abused like this.
111. On one occasion the man tried to touch my privates as well, but I just cried and kicked him.
112. He tried more than once to rape me, but I cried and cried louder and then he would stop and hop off.
113. I remember during the times he abused me, being in the corner, kicking at him and screaming, and then his wife and daughters would get home, and he would change back from this monster, and would go out to see them as though nothing had happened.
114. I eventually tried to run away from the placement. The wife told CYFS I was running because I wanted attention.
115. I remember when I tried to run, I got caught and put in a CYFS car to be taken back. I was kicking and screaming and telling the social worker I didn't want

to get out of the car. The social worker had to pull me out in the end. I kept telling her I didn't want to stay there, and I was crying to her. It did not matter. She left me there anyway.

116. I think I was only visited twice at that placement by social workers. I was too scared to tell them what was going on. I knew what was happening was wrong, but I had started to believe it was my fault and didn't want them to know what was happening.
117. For most of my placement, I would sit in my room crying to myself. I had no one to talk to about it and no one to help me.
118. During the time that I was being abused by the father, I remember that the nephew of the caregivers started living at the house too. He was an adult, and I was 13 years old at this stage. He decided that he liked me and would tell me he wanted to be my boyfriend. I remember being so scared that he might start to do the same thing his uncle was doing to me. He constantly tried to encourage me into a relationship with him. I didn't even know what a relationship was. It never progressed into anything physical, but his constant requests for me to be his girlfriend were terrifying.
119. I think his pursuit of me might have got back to the social workers, and I think that this might have contributed to me leaving that placement.

Kokiri in Otara

120. After the placement in Titirangi, I was placed at a Group Home called Kokiri in Otara. My brother was there when I arrived, and it was really good to see him again. My younger sisters also came to Kokiri at some point later. It was good to be with them again, after years of separation, although after Titirangi, I was damaged, and I didn't know how to cope, and I didn't know how to relate to them properly.

121. I went to a Māori immersion school while I was at Kokiri, which was hard but good. All the writing and maths and stuff was taught in te reo Māori. I learned the reo pretty quickly, although I think my younger sister GRO-B-1 struggled with it. I have since lost most of my reo again as I had no one to practice with, although I remember the basics.
122. My experience at Kokiri was mostly good. I think they were trying to help us there and we had mentors there that we could talk to, although I still was not able to talk to them about my past, and my experiences.
123. They tried quite a bit to get me to open up to them but I just couldn't face it. I did not know where to start. I also didn't know if I could trust them. I didn't know if they were really there to help me, or whether they would just take advantage of me like everyone else.
124. I was also provided counselling, but this didn't last long, as again, I didn't know if I could trust the counsellor. After the abuse at Titirangi I was so traumatised, and I remember having so much fear.
125. I remember that about this time my behaviour began going downhill. At Kokiri they labelled me a troublemaker and an attention-seeker. Little did they know what was going on for me.
126. Because of my behaviour, I was often on Loss of Privileges which meant I would get no allowance and receive extra chores.
127. It was quite controlling at Kokiri, and again we were not allowed to leave the premises. I remember I kept wanting to run away, but I couldn't, because my siblings were there, and I didn't want to leave them.
128. I remember one time, my older sisters, GRO-A Ms AK and GRO-A Ms AH showed up, hoping to say hello to me and my other siblings. The staff at Kokiri would not let them onto the premises. We could all see each other, and were calling out to each other, begging the staff to let us go and hug each other, but they said

no, and told [GRO-A Ms AH] and [GRO-A Ms AK] they had to leave. The staff said any visitation had to be 'by the book'. I hated them for doing that, and I felt shame at the situation, as all the other kids at Kokiri witnessed our upset.

129. Kokiri was my last placement in CYFS care. In December 2007 I graduated from Kokiri and went to live with my Nana [GRO-B] and Koro (Nana [GRO-B] was my mum's dad's sister) and in January 2008 I turned 17 and was discharged from care.

130. After leaving Kokiri, I stayed living with Nana [GRO-B]

Impacts

131. I remember that despite my Nana [GRO-B] being very caring toward me, after my experience at Titirangi I couldn't trust her husband Koro (or men in general) and my fear came out as anger toward him. He was a lovely man, and I know it frustrated my Nan that I treated him badly. I wish I had stayed with my Nan, but I didn't, and I left to move to Hamilton.

132. I had my two children young, the first came along quite soon after I left care.

133. Since having my kids, I have spent much of my time at home being a mum. I sometimes wish I had had them a little later, but I am so happy that I have them and they are really well-loved kids, and they make me strong.

134. I got married four years ago. My husband is a good man. He is not my children's biological father, but he sure wishes he was, and treats them as if they were his own.

135. I believe my experiences as a child affected me in so many ways that a person who has not been through the care system could not understand. I do not really know how to live my life to the fullest, or to be a normal person. I do not know what it's like to grow up with parents, or what it's like to have no CYFS in your life. I grew up with nothing and had no one to turn to as I got older.

136. I struggle to maintain employment and have just walked out of jobs when they became too hard.
137. I always thought that once I got out of care, I would be free and I would be fine, but I have not been fine. I love my blessings, particularly my children and my husband, but I still mentally suffer from it all. I feel like I should be able to move on with my life by now, but those experiences haunt me.
138. I still have a lot of demons from my time in care. I have struggled with depression and anxiety and have had to take medication for this.
139. I wish my childhood did not affect me today as an adult, but it still does. I can space out sometimes and go from being calm, to overacting and crying for no reason. I think it is just my continued fight with those demons.
140. I also have nightmares and flashbacks of my experiences in care. I struggle to sleep, and have tried taking sleeping pills, just to let my mind rest, but they did not really work. They made me sleep through my alarm and I missed getting the kids up for school.
141. Instead I now lie awake until 3 or 4 in the morning, thinking and thinking, and trying to escape the nightmares. I eventually fall asleep and then a couple of hours later it is 7am and I am awake to get the kids ready for school.
142. My mind is losing too much sleep, and I need to try to overcome it, but I do not know how. I have tried the pills and I have gone to the doctors. I often feel like I cannot get this part of me fixed.
143. I feel that my time in care impacted my wairua. I feel, mentally, that my childhood has corrupted me, and it continues to impact all areas of my life.
144. It has also impacted, long-term, my connections with my whānau. I have never reconnected with most of them. I know they are my whānau, but I don't know these people. It is a weird situation. If we had grown up together, then

we might have been close, but it wasn't like that for us. I have always felt alone.

145. My time in care also impacted my knowledge and connection to my whakapapa. I have learned all the words to my mihi, but I don't feel connected to them, and I don't feel connected to the places in it. Some of those places I have never been to, or don't remember.
146. I missed out on so much education, and I think my ability with things like maths only ever got to about primary school level. I watch my daughters now and they can do it all so quickly, but I struggle to help them with their homework.
147. I am still fearful of the State, in its current form as Oranga Tamariki. Recently, a neighbour told me that our kids' school was giving away second-hand uniforms, and so I went to the school to ask if I could get some. The school's social worker decided that my request meant I was not providing adequately and told me that she was going to refer me to Oranga Tamariki. I was in shock from what she said, and I broke down and walked out.
148. I now try to avoid my children's school because I am so scared of this person. I am so scared of the possibility of my own kids ending up in care that I have stopped asking for help anywhere, in case someone uses that as a reason to refer me on to Oranga Tamariki again.
149. I'm too scared to even ask for counselling because the counsellor might think that my past trauma means I am not fit to care for my kids, and that possibility terrifies me.
150. I don't want my children to ever go into care, or to suffer the pain and loneliness I suffered.
151. So far, me and my siblings have broken the cycle, and none of our kids have ever been in care.

Recommendations

152. I think that there should be better checks on caregivers. In addition, I think that once a kid is with a caregiver, the kid and the caregivers should be checked in on regularly. There needs to be way more checks than we got when we were in care. I think in some placements I never even saw my social worker.
153. I think there needs to be more support offered to kids in care. They need emotional support and guidance, and they need to be spoken with, one-on-one by someone they trust. I remember that the few times we were spoken to by social workers, it was always in front of our caregivers, and it's very scary to try and say that something is wrong, when the person causing the wrong is right there next to you.
154. Kids in care should get long-term counselling, while they are in care and afterwards. And the counselling should not be part-time and should be consistent. It is hard to build up trust with someone new.
155. I think another big thing for me is that siblings should be kept together. We kept being broken up, and then put back together, and then broken up again. That was hard.
156. I am currently taking a claim against MSD, and for me, I want recognition of what happened, and I do want compensation.
157. Most importantly, I want to know that something is being done to stop other kids going into care and staying in care so long. I know that most of the kids in care are Māori, and I remember that in all my placements, all the other kids were Māori too. I don't think Pākehā kids would have been so forgotten about, or as badly treated by caregivers and the system itself as we were. I think more needs to be done, to stop so many tamariki Māori going through what we went through.

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:

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