

Witness Name: [GRO-A Ms ED]

Statement No.: WITN0865001

Exhibits: WITN0865002 - WITN0865006

Dated: 07.02.2022

ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

WITNESS STATEMENT OF [GRO-A Ms ED]

I, [GRO-A Ms ED], states as follows: -

Introduction

1. My full name is [GRO-A Ms ED], my name while I was in care my name was [GRO-A Ms ED]. My name may also be recorded as [GRO-A] [GRO-A], as my mother was married to a man with that surname for some time.
2. I am 49 years old, born [GRO-A] 1972 in Christchurch. I grew up, and still live here today.
3. My mum was [GRO-B]. She passed away when I was 30, which was 19 years ago. I only found out three months after she died, but I did go over to Australia a year later to see her grave. My dad was [GRO-B]. I had no contact with my dad, but then he got really sick. He was an alcoholic with terrible heart problems and all his organs started shutting down. When I found out he was in hospital, I was with him every day until he died.
4. My mum's family were originally from France. They came over on a ship to Akaroa in 1840. Mum was an only-child. She grew up on the West Coast. Her father died when she was a teenager, and her mother was mentally unwell and [ended her own life] when Mum was pregnant with me. My dad's family were

German, and he grew up moving around quite a lot. By my uncle's account, my dad's grandfather was [GRO-B].

5. I have three older half-brothers. We all have the same mum. Their surname is [GRO-B] although I have since found out that [GRO-B] was only the biological father of one of them. My eldest brother, [GRO-B] passed away about 20 years ago. We had lost contact when we were kids and had only just found each other again when he was killed in a car accident. It was really devastating. My next brother down from him, [GRO-B-1] lives in Christchurch. He is five or six years older than me, and [GRO-B] I have no contact with him. My only remaining brother [GRO-B-2] is in Perth now, and him and I are really close and stay in contact as much as we can.
6. My husband [GRO-B-3] and I have been together since my son was eight months old. He's now [GRO-B] so we have raised him as our own. We also have a foster child that we have had for five years now.

Timeline

Entry into care

7. My mum and dad wanted their social life over their kids. They were both gamblers and played cards. Dad was a heavy drinker as well. There had been complaints to social welfare even before I was born. My parents would ask neighbours for food and others had noticed that we weren't attending kindy when we should have been.
8. Social workers used to come and check in on our family regularly. Mum didn't have good housekeeping skills, there was incredible filth, and you couldn't open the laundry door. It came to a point when one time, the social workers said it wasn't good enough and left to organise a warrant to uplift us. After they left, Dad contacted a second-hand dealer and sold almost everything in the house. Mum and Dad packed the remaining things into rubbish bags, and we jumped on a train headed towards Invercargill. The train was intercepted in Dunedin, and there was a big scene between my Dad and the authorities. The Police handcuffed Dad and took me off the train. I was taken home by a social worker for a few days. I was 18 months old at the time. According to my records, I was made a ward of the state in December 1974, when I was two years old.
9. I have had 36 different placements throughout my journey in care, from 18 months old until I had just turned 19. I have been fortunate in that I have had

my files for quite a long time, so I have spent a lot of years processing and reading between the lines. From what I can gather, a number of placements broke down for the simple fact that I was unable to form a bond with the parents and they struggled with that.

10. My brothers and I were often separated, living in different homes, but would still see each other maybe on a weekend visit to Mum and Dad's. It wasn't every weekend. From time to time we were placed together, and we were regularly in Cholmondeley and Methodist homes together. The only family home we were in together was the [GRO-B].
11. I have lived in a few homes in Invercargill, including a boys' home called St Joseph's.
12. Twice I got sent back to live with my parents, but both times it lasted less than a year before I was back in care again. We did go for weekend visits and things like that, however.
13. There would have been about four or five placements that I was in from age two to four, all in Invercargill or down south. Following that, I went to Christchurch and was rehomed many times.
14. From about the age of four I was sexually abused by my brother, [GRO-B-1]. This started when we were living down south. I remember there was another child his age in the room when it first happened. He touched me below my waist and had his hands down my pants and he put my hand down his pants. I knew it wasn't okay because it hurt me, it felt sore. It went beyond touching too, there was also digital penetration and eventually it escalated to rape.
15. When I went back to my parents on holidays and weekends, I would have mixed feelings. I desperately wanted to be home with my parents but I knew when I went home, I would suffer abuse from [GRO-B-1]. But in my mind, it was worth suffering to be able to be with my parents.
16. I don't know where [GRO-B-1]'s behaviour came from, but I would think it's obvious that he's been abused. That behaviour is not something 10-year-olds just come up with. I certainly think something would have happened to him along the way.

St Joseph Boys' Home – age 4

17. I have no memory of being in St Joseph Boys' Home, but according to my file I was in a boys' home. I guess there was nowhere else for me to go in an emergency or something.

18. The first time [GRO-B-1] abused me it was in this home. This is the incident described at paragraph 14, where he put his hands down my pants and put my hands down his pants.

Cholmondeley Home – between age 5 -7

19. The Cholmondeley Home in Christchurch was a home run by nuns, they weren't dressed like nuns but I remember we had to call all the staff Sister Mary and things like that. There were other kids who lived there too, as a little kid it felt like there were hundreds of us, but there were probably about 15 all up. We shared everything and no belongings were yours, not even underwear.
20. I first went to this home when I was about five years old, but I also returned about three or four times after that. I don't think we got abused in the home, but it was an incredibly impersonal institution. Every time it was the same, with the same impersonal treatment. There was no love and I don't think I got a single hug. We were just treated like numbers. They would herd us in and out for meals.
21. I had a bed wetting problem as a kid, and a Sister used to pick me up and put me in the bath when it happened.
22. I think my brothers were there with me each time I returned to the Home. I remember [GRO-B-1] and [GRO-B] being the oldest boys in Cholmondeley. They used to chain a bike to the top of the shed so no one else could get it, as they couldn't reach.
23. My oldest memory is watching my brothers go to school. There was a school on the grounds, over a creek with a bridge. I remember being pissed off that I wasn't allowed to go, but I would have been too little.
24. My most recent memory of Cholmondeley is when my parents were supposed to come for a visit, and they had promised me a new doll. You could put fluid in the mouth of the doll, and it would wet its nappy. They didn't come and they didn't bring me my doll. I think I would have been close to leaving about the time that happened.

Methodist Childrens Home, Papanui – between age 5 -10

25. I returned to this home a number of times, possibly up to six times throughout my childhood. It was run in a military way and was very impersonal, even more so than the Cholmondeley Home. Even the way the building was set out was

like the army. We had to call the different sides of the building 'wings', like the 'left wing' or 'right wing'.

26. There was a lovely Sister there, Sister Rona. She was beautiful and she helped my parents with food hampers. She would give presents to us when they didn't have anything for us. I remember being a little kid and not being able to figure out how she was involved. She was like Mother Teresa compared to everything else I'd experienced.
27. I don't have any memories of social workers at that stage.

Abuse

28. I didn't like the skin on top of the porridge. One day at breakfast I was trying to take the skin off the porridge and give it to someone else. A lady hit me over the head and told me off for giving my food away.
29. There was a lot of emotional neglect. Rooms were filled with cubby holes where clothes were kept. It would be a race to get clothing – first in, best dressed.

Mr GRO-B-4 and Mrs GRO-B-5 GRO-B St, Bishopdale – age 8

30. I lived in this home for almost two years. They were nice people. Mr GRO-B was a bus driver and we hardly saw him really. All my brothers stayed there too, and the GRO-B-4 GRO-B-5 had two biological kids and a grandchild they were raising as their own. I feel I was treated well by the GRO-B-4 GRO-B-5. I was treated the same as the other children, and I wasn't excluded. We went for holidays in the caravan and my first birthday cake was in this house. I had my own room, I don't recall what the arrangement was for the other kids.
31. I wasn't unhappy when I lived there. They were "nice" parents. They would do things with us and take us to restaurants and on holidays. The food was good, and I was clothed properly.
32. I would visit my parents at least once a month. When I came back from their place, Mrs GRO-B would get upset and huff at us saying "you stink like cigarettes." She would make us get in the bath. I don't think she meant it personally, we did reek, but it would make me feel dirty like there was something wrong with me. Mum and Dad smoked heavily, but I do remember feeling really embarrassed.
33. I don't remember going to school at this time, but I'm sure I would have been attending.

34. I recall social workers would come and visit the house every now and then. They would ask how we were doing. I never told them about [GRO-B-1].
35. I tried to tell Mrs [GRO-B-1] about [GRO-B-1] and she didn't do the right thing. The only reason I told her was because I wanted to stay up later and not go to bed and I thought she would stay up and talk to me. I didn't understand the hugeness of saying "he touches me" or "he does rude things to me". When I told her, Mrs [GRO-B-5] got [GRO-B-1] out of bed and wagged her finger saying "do it again, and I'll tie your willy in a knot". Then turned to me and said, "no more prancing in your nightie, from now on you will always wear a dressing-gown". And that was the end of that. I didn't raise it again with her. I figured she wasn't going to do anything about it.
36. The placement ended when they decided to move house. Apparently, the new house didn't have enough bedrooms and only [GRO-B-1] stayed on with them. I took that on as, I told them what happened to me, and then they chose to get rid of me.

Mrs and Mr [GRO-B-6] [GRO-B-7] [GRO-B-1] St (now [GRO-B-1] St) - age 9

37. Mr and Mrs [GRO-B-6] [GRO-B-7] were my foster parents when I was nine years old. They had two sons of their own and I was the only foster child. One of the sons was about my age, but the other was a year or two older. They were treated like kings, and they could do no wrong. My brothers didn't come with me to this placement.
38. I lived with the [GRO-B-6] [GRO-B-7]s for around a year. Mr [GRO-B-6] was a small man but Mrs [GRO-B-7] was really big. Looking back, I think he was terrified of her. He never physically stood up to her.

Physical abuse by Mrs [GRO-B-7]

39. I was treated like an animal at [GRO-B-6] [GRO-B-7]. Mrs [GRO-B-7] was very cruel, she was physically abusive and would beat me until I was black and blue. She was a nasty, nasty woman. It was the worst physical abuse I experienced out of all my placements. I was punched, kicked, slapped, and beaten with the buckle end of a belt. I have a chipped tooth from her beatings. I think the punishments were daily, but I can't be sure. I would be terrified of her daily.
40. The beatings happened often and were normally for punishment. She didn't seem to need any reason to be violent; it could be because I was late home

from school, or my room wasn't tidy. She also had a real thing about me wetting the bed. It would enrage her, so I used to have to try and hide it.

41. Mrs [GRO-B-7] would withhold food from me for days on end. I would then be force fed and made to eat my own vomit. Because she wouldn't feed me, I would steal food out of the rubbish bins at school. The other kids saw me and it was embarrassing.
42. The [GRO-B-6] [GRO-B-7] boys were unkind, and they would pick on me. They would try and get me in trouble with their mum by blaming things on me. They'd say things like " [GRO-A] [Ms ED] threw a stone at me" and then I'd get a hiding from Mrs [GRO-B-7]
43. Mrs [GRO-B-7] used to make me brush my hair a hundred strokes before I went to bed. If I didn't, then there was a belt beating and then my hair would be hacked off with the kitchen scissors.
44. I used to get locked outside and made to sleep on the doorstep by Mrs [GRO-B-7] Mr [GRO-B-6] would leave early in the morning for work, so he would get up and let me in then wake me really early so I could go back on the doorstep when Mrs [GRO-B-7] woke up.
45. I used to go to Brownies, I would walk there and back by myself. It was a half hour walk, and I was only nine years old. One night I was late coming home, Mrs [GRO-B-7] locked the door and yelled at me through the bathroom window saying "you fucking stay there".

Social Welfare involvement

46. I would be picked up by a social worker to be taken to Mum's for the weekend. This was normal, as I would regularly visit home on the weekends. One time, when I came to leave Mum's, I held onto the door and refused to go. When I got back to the [GRO-B-6] [GRO-B-7] I cried and said I didn't want to stay there. No one asked me why I didn't want to be there.
47. When the social worker then left, I got a hell of a hiding from Mrs [GRO-B-7] She said if I behaved like that, Social Welfare would think something was wrong and that I didn't want to be living there.
48. I was too scared to complain to a social worker about the abuse. I also didn't tell any of my teachers at [GRO-B] Primary about the abuse. I recall going to school with marks and bruises on me from the violence and beatings. Mrs [GRO-B-7] told me "If anybody asks, you tell them you walked into the seesaw". So, when I went to school, and the teacher asked what happened, I said I walked

into the seesaw. One of the teachers phoned and spoke to CYFS as she had concerns. I didn't look like a well kid, I had black eyes and fat lips.

49. I remember a social worker, Vicki Buck, came to check on me. I think she might actually have been my brother's social worker and that she was told about the marks on me, so she came to check on me. Before she arrived, Mrs [GRO-B-7] made me put on a puffy dress and play with a jigsaw. She said to me "you're happy, you're happy". Vicki saw the bruises when she arrived. Mrs [GRO-B-7] told her that she had thrown something at the cat, and it had missed and hit me, so there were two different stories. Vicki Buck became suspicious and had me removed from the home.
50. I would like to thank Vicki - I really don't know if I would have got out of there alive if it hadn't been for her.

Complaints of abuse made by Mrs [GRO-B-5] to Social Welfare

51. There are records in my file showing that on multiple occasions, Mrs [GRO-B-5] urged the social worker to complain about how I was being treated by the [GRO-B-6] [GRO-B-7]. Mrs [GRO-B-5] was fearful for my safety and she accused Mrs [GRO-B-6] of purposely giving me the black eye. My social worker noted that she "will not listen to such tales without [GRO-B-6] there to defend herself" **Refer WITN0865002** (Social Worker notes dated 24 May 1982) **and WITN00865003** (Social Worker notes dated February 1982). Despite these allegations, my social worker still believed I was well placed with the [GRO-B-6] [GRO-B-7].

Mr and Mrs [GRO-B-8] [GRO-B-9], [GRO-B] Ave - age 10-12

52. After being moved out of the [GRO-B-6] [GRO-B-7], I moved back to the Methodist Children's Home for a few months before moving in with [GRO-B-8] and [GRO-B-9]. [GRO-B-8] and [GRO-B-9] were very upstanding members of St Michael's Church. They were my foster parents, who I had to call Mum and Dad, for the two years I lived there. It was my longest placement.
53. The [GRO-B-8] [GRO-B-9]'s biological daughter [GRO-B] also lived there. She was a bit older and had just started university. There was also another foster child called [GRO-B-10]. [GRO-B-10] was a year or two older than me and I was quite close with her. There were some other foster children who came and went, like [GRO-B-11], and a girl with bright orange hair, but they did not live there permanently.

54. [GRO-B-9] was actually quite lovely. She was old-fashioned and strict, but fair. At the time I thought she was an old battle-ax. If I wanted to go for a bike ride, I would have to clean the blinds. You wouldn't get anything for nothing. In hindsight, some of her requests were a bit unreasonable, for example I remember having to clean my room, [GRO-B-10]'s room, the lounge and dining room before being allowed to go for a bike ride. All the cleaning took two hours and then we wouldn't want to go for a bike ride.
55. [GRO-B-9] later got a Queen's Service Medal for her work in foster care. She had hundreds of kids through that home. She was fostering for a long time and her treatment was consistent with everyone. There was no cruelty from [GRO-B-9] and at the home we were well fed and clothed.
56. [GRO-B-8] however, sexually abused me the whole time I was there.

Sexual abuse

57. The abuse from [GRO-B-8] was not often. I only remember three times, but I don't know whether I've blacked other times out. I know it happened once in his bedroom, and twice in the bathroom. The abuse involved touching and digital penetration.
58. I used to go to piano lessons, and [GRO-B-8] would drive me and [GRO-B-10] to those. He used to buy us a bag of lollies in exchange for a feel on the way. At the time, [GRO-B-10] and I never said anything to each other.
59. One time I saw him with [GRO-B-10] pinned up against the wall. I saw his face and I knew it wasn't okay. I didn't know what to say, I looked to the left and [GRO-B-10] was sitting in a chair. I thought he would be able to see, I remember thinking at the time "you know". But he didn't say anything.

Reporting [GRO-B-1] sexual abuse

60. The abuse by [GRO-B-8] stopped as soon as I told [GRO-B-9] about the abuse I had suffered from [GRO-B-1]. [GRO-B-8] backed right away, he didn't even want to look at me. It was weird. He asked me one day "did [GRO-B-1] do what you said?". When I said yes, the abuse stopped.
61. After I told [GRO-B-9] about [GRO-B-1], [GRO-B-8] also never touched me again. I was at St Michael's, and I was wanting to get baptised and have my confirmation. I remember I just wanted the bit of bread when everyone goes up, but I couldn't get that because I hadn't been baptised. We were working towards me getting

baptised when I told her. Apparently, [GRO-B-9] had known as soon as I walked in that she was working with an abused child. She sat me on the couch and said, "you can't have dark secrets, black secrets, if you want God to accept you". So, I told her. She was loving and supportive and she hugged me. She then rang Social Welfare, organised to get my medical checks done, and contacted my Mum. Social Welfare picked Mum up and brought her down to the home.

62. I felt heard and supported. I didn't mention what [GRO-B-8] was doing, because in my mind what [GRO-B-1] was doing was worse. In my head, I could put up with [GRO-B-8] but [GRO-B-1] was getting more scary and violent. He had escalated at Mum and Dad's when I was visiting home.
63. I then had to have a medical exam which was arranged by Social Welfare with a Family Planning Clinic Doctor and I made a statement to the Police. It's bizarre, I have the medical examination reports as two were produced on two consecutive days by the Doctor and there are two outcomes. The first report, dated 26 May 1983 says, "findings are consistent with repeated sexual intercourse", "this young girl may have an infection of the pelvis. I shall be seeing her again when the swab is to hand" **Refer WITN0865004** (Medical Report by Helen McGill dated 26 May 1983). There is a handwritten note on the back of this report saying "Not given to Police. Dr McGill [not legible] another [not legible] on next [not legible]".
64. The second report, dated the next day on 27 May 1983 says "These findings could be consistent with repeated sexual intercourse over the years. These findings do not prove that sexual intercourse has taken place" **Refer WITN0865005** (Medical Report by Helen McGill dated 27 May 1983).
65. Essentially, nothing was definitive. [GRO-B-1] was interviewed, I believe, and given a formal police warning.
66. When it all came out, Mum had to sign something saying I was living with them for weekends. [GRO-B-1] was not allowed to be there, there was a blanket rule Mum agreed to saying she would keep me safe. But [GRO-B-1] was there all the time, and Mum lied to the social workers. I was forced to lie too because Mum said they would take me away again. I never felt safe, I was always scared. [GRO-B-1] never touched me again though.
67. Social workers would come and take me to counselling sessions and play therapy, and things like that. I wanted to go back and live with Mum and Dad, and that was eventually organised by Social Welfare.

Home with Mum and Dad, [GRO-B] St

68. I returned home to stay with my parents for a few months. While Dad was living there, he didn't care that [GRO-B] was there. When my parents broke up, Dad went to Social Welfare and said "get my daughter out of there".

69. I was treated fine there. I didn't have much in the way of clothing or food but Mum treated us okay. I'd say my parents neglected me, but never abused me.

70. We continued to have regular visits from social workers while in their care, I think these were on the weekends.

Mrs [GRO-B-12] and Mr [GRO-B-13] ([GRO-B] St, Cracroft) - age 14-15

71. I left [GRO-B-8 GRO-B-9]'s to go to Mum's, but after that fell apart, I wanted to go back to the [GRO-B-8 GRO-B-9]'s. [GRO-B-9] said she had no room, but their daughter, [GRO-B-12] said I could come and live with her and her husband, [GRO-B-13]

72. Life was fine with [GRO-B-12], it all felt quite normal when I lived there. They were harsh on travel though – I used to bike from Cracroft to Burnside High, which was one side of the city to the other. It was a long way across the traffic, and I had to do it no matter what the weather was, even in rain and hail. [GRO-B-13] actually worked not far from the high school, too, so it always stuck with me that he never gave me a ride and that I was made to bike. That was the only thing I thought was unfair when I lived there.

73. They had a girl called [GRO-B-14]. She got pregnant and had a baby boy just a few weeks before I moved out.

74. [GRO-B-10] was still living with the [GRO-B-8 GRO-B-9]'s but we used to go to the Salvation Army youth group together. We were at an ice-skating rink one time, and she broke down in tears saying she was scared of getting pregnant. I asked if she and her boyfriend were having sex, she said no, but she knew that he would get the blame. I asked what she was talking about, and she said "Dad is raping me" and showed me the bruises on her arms.

75. I thought it couldn't go on. I had no intention of telling anyone about what had happened to me, it had already stopped for me, I just wanted it to stop for her. It was [GRO-B-10] I wanted to protect.

Reporting [GRO-B-8]'s sexual abuse

76. [GRO-B-10] said she didn't think anyone would believe her. I said "Yeah, they will, because he did it to me too". We didn't know that while we were living at the same home together, Mr [GRO-B-8] was doing it to both of us. We never spoke about it. I never told her; she never told me. It was only after I had moved out that she said "Dad's been raping me" and I knew she was telling the truth because of what he had done to me.
77. The first person I told was [GRO-B-12], I said I needed to talk to her. I said, "[GRO-B-10] has told me this about Dad". I still called him Dad at that stage. When I told [GRO-B-12], she said "how dare you make those accusations?". I was marched over to the [GRO-B-8] [GRO-B-9]'s, the social workers were called, and [GRO-B-10] was there too. [GRO-B-12] said "Say to him what you said to me". They all said it didn't happen. [GRO-B-10] was dragged out and she was crying. When I said "he did it to me too", they asked why we would jeopardise ourselves like that, especially if we wanted to live together. We were ostracised and called liars and sluts. We were absolutely disbelieved; it was clear everyone was on their side from the beginning.
78. The social workers took us to the police station to give a statement. There was no talking in the car on the way, there was stone cold silence. It was while we were at the station that a social worker threatened us with being sent to live in Wellington and never seeing each other again.
79. The police pretty much had already made up their mind probably before they'd even taken our statements that nothing was going to happen with it. That's what it felt like, like it was a token thing "we'd better do the right thing and do a statement", but it was never going to go anywhere. The policeman kept saying "why are you making up these lies?".
80. [GRO-B-9] is still alive, I think even living in the same house. [GRO-B-8] has passed on. He would have been in his fifties or sixties when the abuse happened.
81. After that day, I was taken to a house on [GRO-B-10] St, I can't even remember the names of the caregivers. [GRO-B-10] was sent to another foster home and we lost contact until we were in our twenties.

Temporary Homes - [GRO-B] St and a friend's house

82. I was in the [GRO-B] Street home for a good three or four days. It was a really uncomfortable stay because the parents were friends with [GRO-B-9] and [GRO-B-8].

83. I then stayed with a friend of mine from church. Her name was [GRO-B-15]. Her mother had to apply to look after me. I don't know what her name was. I was there for a few months before a permanent home became available.

[GRO-B-16] and [GRO-B-17], [GRO-B] Crescent Family Home – age 16

84. When I was a teenager I lived with [GRO-B-16] and [GRO-B-17]. [GRO-B-16] and [GRO-B-17] weren't old. They might have been in their mid-forties. [GRO-B-17] was very violent towards his wife, I believe there was ongoing family violence between those two. He was the boss of the house. [GRO-B-16] would be scared if she spoke out of turn and she would often be sent to her room. [GRO-B-17] was a really big guy and he used his size to intimidate others.

85. There were heaps of other kids at the home. There were at least six bedrooms with bunkbeds, sometimes with three to four kids to a room. At one stage there were four girls in my room. To be honest, it was a good thing. I still have some friends that I made in that home.

86. We used to pinch [GRO-B-17]'s cigarettes and he would get mad, using his size to walk up to us, all staunch and yelling. Although [GRO-B-17] never actually hit me, he would use his size to push me against a wall, not with his hands but with his chest. He would hold me against the wall with his chest. I saw [GRO-B-17] hold another girl, [GRO-B-18], up by the scruff. He had her in the laundry against the wall. He was screaming in her face. I don't know what that was about.

87. While I was living with [GRO-B-16] and [GRO-B-17], things weren't going well with my parents. I started to visit them less and pull back. Mum was having an affair with a man called [GRO-B-19] he had been Dad's [GRO-B]. Dad knew about it and there had been incidents with machetes and violence which the police had been involved with. I remember thinking "nah, I'll stay here". Social welfare continued to visit while I was in the home.

88. Food and clothing was fine. There was lots of food.

89. I continued to attend [GRO-B] High after I initially moved. But for seventh form, I changed schools and went to [GRO-B] High. The attitude to schooling by [GRO-B-17] and [GRO-B-17] was disengaged. [GRO-B-17] and [GRO-B-18] said they were my foster parents while I was in their house and it felt like that meant nothing was their problem.

90. I became pregnant to my boyfriend while I was in seventh form. [GRO-B-17] and [GRO-B-16] said they would support me with whatever I chose to do. I told them I wanted to keep the baby. I went to school and then part-time I worked a job at a fruit and vegetable shop.
91. [GRO-B-16] and [GRO-B-17] went to the school and said "No, she's not going to sit seventh form. Forget it. Just tell her to leave" because they were trying to tell me to leave school, "no point finishing if you're going to have a baby". I felt like there was every point in finishing because one day this baby is going to be big enough, and I'm going to carry on.
92. One day I got home and all my stuff was packed into rubbish bags and there was a social worker at the kitchen table waiting for me, and they kicked me out.

[GRO-B-20] and [GRO-B-21], [GRO-B-20] Rd Family Home

93. I stayed with [GRO-B-20] and [GRO-B-21] for six months. They were beautiful, lovely people. They were the first 100% supportive family I had ever been with. They encouraged me to go to ACC and get some money so I could make sure my baby had something. I said I didn't want to because it would be "dirty" money. But [GRO-B-20] said "What about this baby in your belly? Do you want somewhere stable for him?". So I agreed.

Discharge from Social Welfare

94. I did what [GRO-B-20] and [GRO-B-21] suggested by going to ACC. That was when foster care ended for me. I had to go to the Court and get signed out, it was in 1991 and I was 19 years old. I remember telling the judge that I was sorted and had a house and was in a relationship. I used the ACC money to put a deposit on my first home. I put it a shared name with my then-partner, [GRO-B-22].

Education during time in care

95. Throughout my time in care, I was left to my own devices most of the time, however I actually did really well throughout school. I went all the way through high school, I got my seventh form UE Entrance while I was pregnant with my first child. I knew at an early age, probably 13 or 14, that I wanted to do well. I was told constantly "you're going to be just like your mother. You're going to turn into nothing. You're going to amount to nothing. You're worth nothing". I just wanted to prove everybody wrong.

96. I don't know how I got through school. I never had friends at primary school, I was a loner and I used to get picked on. I don't remember schoolwork; I don't know if I did it. By the time I got to high school, I decided I was brainy. I passed tests and I decided I was going to throw myself into that. Despite the abuse not happening anymore I still would have memories of it. When I was studying, I wouldn't think about it.

Life after care

Relationships

97. The first man I went out with after I was discharged was named [GRO-B-22], he was very manipulative of me. After we broke up, [GRO-B-22] said, "If you sign the house over, I'll sign the kid over". [GRO-B-22] said to me that if I signed over the house to him and let him buy me out then he wouldn't take me to Court. I think he paid me \$15,000 and walked away with my home which really sucked. Had I had family support, a mum, a dad, or an uncle telling me "No [GRO-C Ms ED], don't do that", I could still have the house. If somebody had been on my team, then it might have been different. However, after spending ten years in Court fighting for custody of our son, [GRO-B-23], I always won.

98. After I broke up with [GRO-B-22], I got into another relationship very quickly with another man called [GRO-B-24], he was horribly abusive. He was an alcoholic, violent and not a nice man

99. When I left [GRO-B-25]'s dad, it felt like the first time I'd ever been able to just be me. I'd never had to sit in a room and figure out who I was. I spread my wings. I was really promiscuous, I was risk taking, doing drugs. I think I was soul searching. I don't think it was to do with family, it was to do with me. I think the sexual abuse was a big part of the promiscuity. I thought I was taking the power and being the boss and I thought it was healthy because I was making the rules. Though at that time, I thought I was getting my power back from men, but really, they were just able to take it.

100. I was then single for years and years before I met [GRO-B-26] in my thirties. I was with him for seven years when we had a surprise pregnancy. He didn't want that, so we broke up. I have a 15-year-old, [GRO-B-27], to him.

101. I am now with my husband, [GRO-B-3]. We met before [GRO-B-2]'s first birthday.

Overcoming my 'demons'

102. After coming out of care I had to fight my demons. There were times in my adult life when I was raising my two older children, when they were quite young, and I was heavily into the drug scene. I went through a period of taking lots of pills and another phase of taking cocaine. I never became addicted though.
103. I got into gambling. I didn't click that gambling was a hereditary thing at the time because I didn't live with my family. Since then, I have been to gambling counselling at the Oasis Centre. I learnt a lot and was able to overcome this.
104. I was a prostitute for a while, I went through some really bad relationships which involved domestic violence. I walked that life for about ten years before I came out of it, and I am where I am now.
105. Social services was my calling - I am good at looking after other people. I have the empathy that was never shown to me. I completed my level three and four papers in health and wellbeing. I worked at Women's Refuge for about seven years and then I worked with intellectually disabled women for a number of years I am now retired.

Children

106. I raised some really good kids. My adult children both went to university on scholarships. My son was a [GRO-B] nurse at [GRO-B] Hospital, but now lives in [GRO-B] and my daughter was the manager of a [GRO-B] store but lost her job because of Covid and now works at Countdown.
107. I'm doing the same with my next two, my [GRO-B] son and my [GRO-B] [GRO-B] foster daughter. They're coming along beautifully.

Becoming a foster parent

108. A wee girl, [GRO-B-28], that my husband and I foster was taken by CYFS from her parents and put into the care of her grandparents. CYFS paid out the 'Home for Life' payment to the grandparents. A 'Home for Life' payment means that Social Welfare paid \$7,000 per child to the grandparents. There were three children all up. None of that money actually went to the kids, I don't think they would have seen any benefits from it while they were living there.
109. I happen to [know] the grandmother. The grandparents were taking care of three little girls, but they separated. Because of their age and health, neither of them were able to take on all three girls on their own. I'd

- known these girls all their life and I said "I'll help - every Christmas they come and hang with me, you know I love these wee girls". So, [GRO-B-28] the middle child, came to live with us. We got [GRO-B-28] when she was eight, and she is now 13.
110. The arrangement was originally done informally, just to help the grandparents out for a week or two. It then stretched out and stretched out. I finally rang [GRO-B-28]'s grandfather and said if [GRO-B-28] was to stay with us, that'd be fine but we needed to do something about it legally. We went through CYFS. I rang CYFS six weeks after [GRO-B-28] had moved in, because I thought they would want to know where she was living. I was told by the CYFS worker "well, you know we've paid a 'Home for Life' payment so she's not actually under our care anymore".
111. So, I have this little girl whose last care providers was CYFS, but because they've already paid out some money to the nana, it's like they don't worry about her now. It was then organised for us to go to Court, and my husband and I now have both of our names on the parenting order, alongside [GRO-B-28]'s grandparents.
112. [GRO-B-28] has been with me for six years and not once has anybody from CYFS phoned me or come to my house. We've had no support in dealing with her issues. Support would have been really helpful. [GRO-B-28] has complex needs. Her needs are different because of the trauma she has come from.
113. We looked into getting counselling for her but there was a three-month waitlist, which wasn't helpful when she needed it then and there.
114. We do receive financial support in the form of the Unsupported Child Benefit from WINZ for [GRO-B-28] which we put into a savings account for her. I guess most people that have a child living with them, that money gets soaked up into your weekly stuff, but we made a decision from the start to put it aside for her. She'd been with us for nearly a year before we started getting paid and it wasn't a problem, so we knew we could do that.
115. My husband and I are in the fortunate position where that money is not needed weekly for our bills. [GRO-B-28] doesn't eat a lot, so that money goes into a bank account for her. She has over \$10,000 now. If she needs uniforms, it's taken out of that. Whatever [GRO-B-28] needs is taken out of that bank account.
116. It would be nice to have other support for her, and for us. I have had questions sometimes, like: why does she want to piss in the laundry basket? That's really odd. Then I think about how I used to do that stuff, and I have to remember my stuff to be able to help her.

117. I remember wanting to steal food everywhere, I hoarded food because I might not know where my next meal was coming from. I did that for a long, long time. [GRO B-28] did that for the first four years of living with us, knowing that she will never go hungry. We have open food, if you're hungry, then you eat. But she was still getting up in the middle of the night and stashing food because she'd obviously come from a place somewhere along the line where she was hungry. There were other things too such as stealing money, reasonably large amounts of money like \$100 bills. She didn't understand the implications of it.
118. But sometimes my stuff is not her stuff, and I don't know how to help. I'd just like it if there was some support. I actually think it would be a positive thing if CYFS were brought back on her case. If [GRO B-28] came and said "I really need someone to talk to" or "I have some questions", and I can't answer them, or I have my own questions, it would be great to be able to call a child psychologist and ask "Hey, why's she doing this?".
119. [GRO B-28] is well balanced and doing well now, academically there are no issues and we are so impressed.
120. [GRO B-28] has very irregular contact with her mother, I think because her mother has a new boyfriend. Contact with her mum doesn't destabilise her, although it used to. There were some hiccups for a few days after that contact, but now there has been nothing at all.
121. The main assistance I would like to access for [GRO B-28] is a social worker for her to talk to and a counsellor. [GRO B-28] had her own lawyer when we were getting a parenting order for her. But they only saw her twice, at school.
122. We are raising her like she is our own and instilling good values in her. She has stability and she says she will be with us until she is 26. She often will say, out of the blue, "I'm so glad I'm living here". We have also got a lot of enjoyment raising her. It helps knowing her since she was born.

Impact of abuse

Trust and relationships

123. I have trust issues in other people, but also in myself. I'm very distrusting. I find it hard to trust my own judgement. It has made me second guess myself and always ask whether something is right. I think this has really affected my relationships.

124. Emotionally I can find things tough. Especially in the past when I wasn't able to talk about what had happened to me. I wasn't able to tell my partner at the time why I was acting the way I was. One of my partners used to say "that's yucky, shut up I don't want to hear it". That impacted whether I told people, or how I told people.
125. It took me a long time to open up to my husband, [GRO-B-3]. A lot of it came about through nightmares, I suffered terrible nightmares regularly, often [GRO-B-3] would wake me. I also used to experience flashbacks, although I don't have as many of those anymore. I found it really hard to trust that he wouldn't treat me differently if he knew. It doesn't effect us anymore, we have been married for eight years now.

Raising children

126. With raising my children, I used to worry what I would be like as a parent. Especially when I was pregnant with [GRO-B-23], [GRO-B-23]'s father would constantly put me down telling me how shitty my family was. I was worried there was a hereditary thing and would worry that I wouldn't be able to love [GRO-B-23]. I knew I wasn't violent, I was more worried that I wouldn't love him because I was convinced my mum didn't love me.
127. I was hypervigilant with my daughter, [GRO-B-25], because of the effect of the sexual abuse I suffered. If you spoke to [GRO-B-25] I think she would say I did a great job, she has a really good head on her shoulders. I don't know if it was normalised but even now, with [GRO-B-28] I'm very much the same. She had a sexualised incident where she made a video she shouldn't have made and sent it to a boy. I got really mad, I don't know if I would have handled it differently if I hadn't been through what I have. I'm just hyper vigilant, if something doesn't feel right then I'm out, and so are my kids.

Financial

128. If it had an impact financially, I think the abuse had a positive impact on me financially. It made me concentrate on something that was going to benefit me, and at the same time it made me not have to think about all the shit that was going on.

Redress

ACC Sensitive Claims

129. I ended up putting in three separate claims regarding the abuse by [GRO-B-1], [GRO-B-8], and one for a stranger. The stranger was someone who had abused me when I was travelling on a train.
130. There was an assessment, where I had to go to a couple of different psychologists. At the time, I found it really tough, I wasn't emotionally prepared for what I was doing. There was some counselling organised but it didn't last long, which was at my choice.
131. I ended up getting a lump-sum payment of \$30,000. That was what I used to put the deposit on my house.
132. I felt comfortable with the process, they made it really clear and I never had to ask for a review of any of the decisions.
133. I now receive an ACC payment every five years, as part of the sensitive claim. This varies, but it is around \$5,000. It is assessed every few years, and a percentage is worked out for how much it affects you. I think this is bullshit, because I could be having a really good day or a really bad day and that would determine the amount. To make a true assessment, I think they need to come and see you in your home and see how you are living.

MSD Claim

134. About eight years ago I made a claim with MSD. It was a horrible process. Internally, I wanted the money, although externally I thought it was blood money and I didn't want it. I wanted accountability from them and I really fought it, it was horrible. It was an emotional rollercoaster.
135. I was interviewed by them. That process was actually okay. I was just telling my story and I felt believed.
136. The length of the process was two years as my claim was fast-tracked. I was offered \$10,000. There was no discussion, they just came and offered it. They said I could object, but if it was reassessed, this may also result in the amount being reduced. It was essentially "take it or leave it".
137. There was also an apology, it meant no more than a piece of paper to me. The apology is only really an acceptance from the Government saying they accept the things that happened to me. It's not really an apology. The only form

of apology that would mean anything to me, and I don't think I'll ever get it, but having the social worker and the foster parent saying to me that they fucked up is the only form of apology that will mean anything to me.

Confidential Listening and Assistance Service (CLAS)

138. I went through CLAS and found it to be a positive experience. It was empowering as I felt heard. Judge Henwood was awesome, I really liked her. She was lovely.
139. I found it empowering because I had told [GRO-B-5] what happened with [GRO-B-1] and she didn't do anything about it, but then I got to tell Judge Henwood. Up until that day I had not told anybody that "I told her this and she didn't do anything about it". But I got to tell Judge Henwood. It was helpful for me walking out of there, it felt like "it's not mine anymore – you have it".
140. I gave CLAS my poem (attached at **WITN0865006**, and they asked if they could get it published. It ended up being in the [GRO-B]

Police Report

141. About six or seven years ago, I tried to have [GRO-B-1] charged. I don't know why. I picked up the phone one day and rung the police and told them what he did. He was 17 when the abuse stopped, and he was never charged or held accountable for it. I told them I wanted to do something about that. I asked them what my chances were. They told me to come in and provide a statement. The police investigated for 12 months, and he admitted what he had done, but because of something about not being able to punish him more than once, even though he had no punishment, but because of the verbal warning he had received, he couldn't be charged. That really sucked.
142. The Police said they couldn't do anything because it would be double jeopardy as he had previously had a warning from the Police at the time the abuse had occurred. That was when I was about 11 and [GRO-B-1] would have been about 17. It went to the Police Complaints Authority as I didn't think a Police warning was sufficient for rape. The Authority came back to me and said they couldn't do anything.
143. I have got to a place now where I know he is not going to be punished by the law for what he did. There are other punishments. I recently learnt that he's

been diagnosed with late stages of emphysema. It's a pretty shitty way to die. I don't feel any sorrow for him at all to be going out in such a nasty way.

Reflections and Recommendations

Social Welfare

144. The child department of Social Welfare was faceless. I felt like I belonged to this government agency, there was no face, there was no name. I didn't know who I actually really belonged to and I think that would be something that would be really nice for kids. Sometimes it doesn't necessarily matter who you belong to as long as you belong to someone. To not have that feeling was really difficult.
145. I don't hold Social Welfare responsible for what these people did to me. I hold Social Welfare responsible for not picking up on what must have been some really, really strong red flags very early on and I hold the social workers responsible for not picking up those flags.
146. My social worker before Vicki Buck, the one who put me in the GRO-B-6
GRO-B-7 wrote in my files "Some unexplained bruises on GRO-C
Ms ED but we have nowhere else for her so she'll remain where she is". I have no words for that.
147. I had so many social workers, they changed so many times. There was nobody to hold my hand.
148. I'm not sure why I was in so many placements and why they broke down. My files suggest that I was cold and didn't allow foster parents to get close to me. I wasn't the little girl they wanted me to be, they thought I was hard.
149. I remember so clearly when I was at the GRO-B-6
GRO-B-7, where I was beaten black and blue, they told me "your social worker is coming at three. Put your best dress on. Sit there and play your jigsaw puzzle". So I literally sat on the floor and played with a jigsaw puzzle and the social worker sat on the couch and didn't say a word to me. They thought "GRO-C
Ms Ed is happy, everything's all good" and left.
150. I really think that needs to change. There needs to be a social worker for the mum or the foster parents, and one for the child. The child needs to know their social worker, their person, not their foster parent's person. That person needs to remain stable, it is important for the child to have a consistent social worker. That would have changed my life, if I had the right social worker. I never felt particularly that they were there for me, that the visits were about me. Equally, it is important for the foster parent to have support.

151. There was no way I could have opened up to anybody about what I was experiencing in care as a child, because I couldn't form a relationship. I was never anywhere long enough to form a relationship, even with a social worker. I never had a social worker long enough to feel safe.
152. I also think there need to be spot checks on kids in care. Every time a social worker would come to visit me when I was in care, we knew they were coming so the parents could prepare. It would be better if a social worker turned up at 8 am when the house was in chaos and everyone was stressed, they would have been able to see how they cope under pressure.
153. There should be instant action if a child's safety is ever in question.
154. When I left care, I really felt like I walked out of that court room being all on my own. If someone could have helped me through that process, what kind of mother I was going to be, if someone could have helped with that transition. It would have been so good to have someone by my side at that time in my life. If someone had said to me, no you can have the house and the kid, but I didn't have anyone to do that.
155. It also would have been beneficial for me to have had some financial literacy support when I got paid out from my claim. I was lucky with my ACC payment that at that time I was living with the GRO-B-20s. They guided me through that. They gave me good advice which I took. I was able to buy a house and furnish it. Government agencies shouldn't be handing over this money without any advice.

Receiving my Social Welfare files

156. When I received my files there was a lot that was blacked out, and that troubles me. It was explained to me that this was due to protecting the privacy of people mentioned in the notes. I understand that, but there was one paragraph about us when we were little kids, we weren't living with our parents, a social worker had visited Mum and Dad and it says, "visited 51 GRO-B Street" and then its blacked out. The whole page is blacked out, then right at the bottom paragraph it just says, "Needless to say we will not be sharing this information with the children". I wonder what this was referring to as it was obviously important enough to put in my file. It's also obviously something to do with me

as it's in regard to my parents. The fact that this page is blacked out really bugs me.

157. Receiving my files has brought up a lot of stuff that I didn't know. For example, I didn't know that I'd had 36 placements. I couldn't remember that many placements at all.

158. It was definitely beneficial for me to receive these files as I had so many question marks.

Childrens rights

159. I don't think children actually know their rights. It's all very well and good to say to a child "you have a right to complaint" but that child also has to know how to do that.

160. At my last job, we had a poster on that wall that tells you it's your right to complain, it's your right to be able to talk to somebody in a language that you understand – the poster is similar to the kind of things you see at the doctors. I would hate to see that in family homes because it would look institutional, but it's important that children are provided with this information, in an age-appropriate way.

What do I want from the RC

161. It is abhorrent to think that this has been happening for 70 years and it is still happening. Look how far we have come in terms of everything else – we have modern phones, cars and things, but children are being left behind? I want things to change for our children of tomorrow.

162. I love knowing that GRO
B-28 will never have to do this. She will never have to sit with someone and tell them she's had a horrible childhood. That is something all children should have.

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

Dated: 7 February 2022