

**Witness Name:** GRO-A Ms EF

**Statement No.:** [WITN0896001]

**Exhibits:** [WITN0896002 - WITN0896005]

**Dated:** 27.10.2021

## ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

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**WITNESS STATEMENT OF** GRO-A Ms EF  
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I, GRO-A Ms EF, state as follows: -

### Introduction

1. My full name is GRO-A Ms EF, I am 64 years old born GRO-A 1957.
2. I was born in Palmerston North. It was there where I first went into care, and then was transferred to GRO-A-1 in August 1968 as an 11 year old. I still live here today.
3. My name in care was GRO-A

### Life before care

4. I came from a dysfunctional family. My mother had mental health issues and I understand the home was always very unkempt. I was the second born, my brother GRO-B-1 is 18 months older. My father was 20 years older than my mother. It was not until he died that I found out he'd actually had an earlier family with two children.
5. When I was just weeks old, he contacted Social Welfare asking for help, saying that my mother was unstable and not able to care for me.
6. We were followed up by Social Welfare, and for a period of time my father had on and off contact with them. My notes say I was cared for by people other than my

mother from the time I was a baby. He also got some help from volunteers outside of Social Welfare. I think Plunket and the Salvation Army in Palmerston North were involved with our family as well.

7. In terms of life at home, my father was abusive. I remember things like my father unwrapping the wadding off the hot water pipes and holding my mother's hand to them. I remember being often very fearful as a little girl, hiding behind a sofa in the bay window, the Police turning up, and tension in the home. There would be things like yelling, screaming, and throwing the milk jug across the table.
8. Considering I was there for eight years, there's not a lot I remember. I don't remember anything being personally directed at me or my brother, just there being a lot of tension in the home, my mother in a dark room not well, and a lot of people coming and going, helping to take care of us.
9. I have little recall of my mother at home, and more memory of trips on the train or the bus down to Wellington to go and see her at Porirua Hospital. She was post-shock treatment and in padded cells, drugged and out of it. It was horrible.
10. My mother herself had a traumatic childhood. From what I understand, she was left as a baby in the outside washhouse of an empty house in Christchurch in 1926. She was wrapped in a sack and so, whose was she? I didn't know any of her adopted family, or birth family.

### Sexual Abuse

11. I remember being very young, maybe a pre-schooler, and being on a bus going down to see my mother in an institution. I was sitting on my father's knee, and he was touching me [GRO-C]  
[GRO-C]  
[GRO-C]. I threw up on the bus because I was so scared.

12. I recall another time of my father sexually abusing me in the workshop at the back of our house. I was very young on this occasion too. To this day I remember the smell of the kerosene heater in the workshop and can relate that to the incident. On this occasion I think my mother was at home.
13. These are the only incidents I recall of my father sexually abusing me at this early stage, but I was so young that it could have happened more. I did not tell anyone at the time.

#### Entry into care

14. In February 1967, when I was nine years old, my father was going to prison. This is when I was taken into care. At the time, I was not aware that my father was going to prison.
15. My father had been convicted of sexually abusing a young girl. I did not know that until reading the documentation around it later in life. On that occasion he went to Mt Crawford Prison, and I think he was in Whanganui Prison later.
16. I do not recall a social worker or anybody ever talking to me at this time to find out if I was also being sexually abused by dad.

#### **Time in Care**

17. I counted that all up, I had 20 changes of placement during my time in care. Some of these changes included returning to the Children's Home at GRO-B-2 where I often went in the interim, or being placed elsewhere temporarily.
18. I do not ever recall knowing much time in advance about my next placement. I do recall that I was never naughty. If anything, I was withdrawn. I never drunk, went to parties or even the school ball.



### Transition out of home

19. GRO-B-1 and I were sent to Otaki Health Camp. I remember already feeling disconnected from my parents here. I remember being made to write letters home, and "Dear mum and dad" , did not mean "Dear mum and dad".
20. After the camp, I remember being sent home for a night before going to the GRO-B-3 my first placement in care. I remember a letter being read out at home, related to why I was going into care. I can't remember GRO-B-1 at the GRO-B-3 I am unsure how long I was there for, but I still actually connect with the GRO-B-3 today.
21. While in Palmerston North, there were three families I spent some time with, perhaps on holidays. Other than the GRO-B-3, I remember GRO-B in Fielding. I do not remember experiencing any abuse in these placements.

### GRO-B-4 ***Children's Home, Palmerston North – 1967, age 9***

22. My father volunteered for GRO-B-1 and I to go to GRO-B-4 I think he thought he would get us back. Throughout my time in care, he always fought to get us back. He would try and get me to tell authorities that I wanted to go back home, and he wrote a lot of letters to the authorities and to me to request us back. Often these letters were manipulative and psychologically abusive.
23. I recall him visiting the GRO-B-4 home, I remember he bought me a bike while I was there. I do not have many memories of GRO-B-1 being here, but it is recorded that he was here with me, and that he was a slow learner.
24. During my time at GRO-B-4 I remember one social worker visit, I think it was on my birthday and I was brought a gift.
25. From what I remember, the GRO-B-4 Home was a good environment, it felt much safer than home. I was well settled there, and remember things like making lunches around the table, and peeling potatoes. After a time I started calling Mr and Mrs

[GRO-B-5] who ran the home Aunt [GRO-B] and Uncle [GRO-B], and then it became Mum and Dad.

26. There was a time where they were questioning my long term care and considering adopting me and another girl. They were not going to take on my brother, but I was too young at the time to consider the implications around that. Then, I understood that Mr [GRO-B-5] had died. That was the reason given for my transfer on, though looking back I am not sure if this was the only reason.

27. August 1968 [GRO-B-1] and I and another child—ended up being transferred to [GRO-A-27] [GRO-A-27] [GRO-B-1] must have been at [GRO-B-2] with me briefly, but I am not sure where he was placed after that. I think he lived in some rural areas near [GRO-] [GRO-A]

28. The reason given for our transfer to [GRO-A-1] was that we would be close to a family member, my father's sister – my Aunt [GRO-B-6] and Uncle [GRO-B]. From what I remember of Aunt [GRO-B-6] though, she was very old, so not really in a position to look after us. When I would see her, it was usually with my father when he was visiting. He had borrowed a lot of money from her, and I remember during visits there was always anger.

29. I remember being in a car crash with Aunt [GRO-B-6], [GRO-B-1], and maybe someone else too, and waking up in hospital after a concussion. I don't think she drove after that.

[GRO-B-2] **Family home,** [GRO-A] – **age 10-14 (approx.)**

30. I spent a lot of time being scared at [GRO-B-2]. Looking back, I have realised that I was always scared about my father coming to see me, because he would sexually abuse me. My father was, for some reason, allowed the right to take me out to stay with him in Whanganui, or out unsupervised for a few hours at a time when he visited [GRO-A-1]. His visits were about monthly.

31. Outings with him were either for a few hours, say 5 hours on a Saturday or Sunday or both, and sometimes full day outings were also approved from 9am until dark.
32. There were times when a weekend to Whanganui was being arranged but then withdrawn – maybe because I actually wasn't happy to be being sent down there. It always felt like I worried about having to spend time with him either for a weekend, holidays or just his visits to [GRO-A-1] I always worried about having to write to him. More of my conversations with social workers were around encouraging me to write to him, than not.
33. My father would meet me at church and take me out from there. It is clearly stated in my file that he wasn't allowed to take me out from [GRO-B-2] or visit me there, so I do not know why he could take me out from church.
34. That is one of the things I have always questioned: How was he ever given the right to take me for visits when he had been in prison for sexually abusing? During this period where he was allowed to take me out, there was a second charge on him for sexually abusing a nine or ten year old girl. I knew nothing about this at the time (or if I did, I just don't remember).

#### A repeated place of return

35. I was moved on to the first of a series of foster homes, but I would often go back to [GRO-B-2] in between placements. It was always a base, up until the age of about 14 when I entered my final foster care placement with the [GRO-B-7  
GRO-B-8].
36. It was never a base that I liked returning to. I would always come back to [GRO-B-2] [GRO-B-2] for a couple of days prior to a visit with my father. Therefore, anything associated with returning to [GRO-B-2] had fear attached.



37. At first, when the [GRO-B-9] ran it, it was ok. I suppose it was home for me at that season. I used to feel more included as part of their family. I remember going white baiting with them at their Family Bach and really enjoying it. They were always caring, kind and inclusive.
38. During this time, I remember being clothed from a smelly cupboard at the Social Welfare building. The first time I had my own underwear bought for me I was almost 13. I always felt different, a bit inferior or ashamed turning up to school like that.
39. When the [GRO-B-10; GRO-B-11] took over, [GRO-B-2] was quite a different place. I didn't really connect with Mrs [GRO-B-10]. This may have been because I was only ever there temporarily under their care, so I was always an outsider. I was scared of Mr [GRO-B-11]. There were boys at home who were difficult, and I remember he used a lot of anger to deal with them.
40. On one occasion as a 15 year old I returned by railcar from a camp in Whangarei arriving into [GRO-A-1] at midnight. A taxi took me to [GRO-B-2] Children's home. I was met by the [GRO-B-10; GRO-B-11]. At 6.30am the next morning I was woken by a very stern Mr [GRO-B-11] to get my gear ready to be moving to the [GRO-B-7; GRO-B-8]. There was no consideration that it was an emotional transition time for me let alone such a late return to [GRO-A-1].

#### Sexual abuse by my father

41. There are two specific occasions where I remember my father's sexual abuse during his visits while I was staying at [GRO-B-2].
42. On the first occasion, I remember he took me out to [GRO-A] Beach. I was sitting next to him and he went to touch me underneath my clothes.
43. The second instance I remember is being at [GRO-A] Guest House, aged about 12. [GRO-B-1] may have also been there on that occasion. I remember my father touching

me. [GRO-C]. I remember being scared and angsty about it. It was after that time that I said that I didn't want to see him again.

44. I remember him telling me that if I ever told anyone, he'd be in trouble, and I'd never see him again. My father always played on what he could provide. It sounds trivial now, but things like passionfruit and electric blankets were important to a child.

45. I knew at the time it wasn't right, but I didn't feel I could talk about it. I didn't have anyone I could trust. It was something that always sat in my head as having taken place.

**The** [GRO-B-12 GRO-B-13], [GRO-B] **Road – age 12**

46. I lived with the [GRO-B-12 GRO-B-13] for a period of about a year. They lived on a farm, and life was generally good. They had an older daughter, [GRO-B] who was just a year older than me, and a son, [GRO-B] just a bit younger than me. Then they had a little girl [GRO-B] who turned five while I was there. They only had a three bedroom house, and [two children were sharing]. I think they felt that they couldn't continue with that arrangement just so that I could have a room of my own. So, I was moved on from their home, back to [GRO-B-2], before I went to the [GRO-B-14].

47. I don't ever recall a social worker visiting, though do remember having to bus into the office, being told to write letters home, and being shown some letters with parts taken out. To any question asked of me, I recall always saying, "I'm ok". I suppose the adults at social welfare were not very relatable to me, strangers in my world.

Feeling separated from the rest



48. The [GRO-B-12  
GRO-B-13] were quite a formal home, and I remember how it felt to feel separated from the rest. I remember sitting at the table and being criticised for how I used a butter knife, or how I held a knife and fork. Every time you go into a new home, you are expected to do things differently. How you iron clothes is different, how you fold things is different.

49. I remember walking down the street with Mrs [GRO-B-12] shortly after I arrived, and her saying to me, 'I don't know why you have to dress like that'. I remember turning to her and saying, 'Well, its not like I've got a choice'. To her credit, she did put in a complaint to social welfare after that, and made sure I had better clothing.

#### Sexual abuse disclosure

50. I must have shared with the [GRO-B-12  
GRO-B-13] that my father had sexually abused me. I ended up having to attend a meeting, and I felt quite insecure. I felt like it was an environment where I couldn't answer honestly, and I vividly recall my answers to all their questions beating around the bush, saying things like "What made you think of that? What?". I never answered their questions directly.

51. I think a lot of how I responded came out of the type of forum that I was put in to try and get that information from me. I could share it with Mrs [GRO-B-12] so why couldn't I share it with the next person? The interview was straight into questions, with people I had never met, so there was no way I was going to tell them anything. I was too scared to at that point.

52. Had I known a little bit more of the background of how my father had ended up in prison at the time, maybe I wouldn't have been so scared of the repercussions of being honest about what was happening.

53. I remember being sent up to Hamilton mid-1971 to a psychologist and being questioned further and being alone, but still not being able to tell them anything. I remember going there at least a couple of times – and staying in a Children's home in Hamilton overnight. The psychologist initially 'diagnosed' me as possibly psychotic – and compared me to my mother. I was given medication to take for a few months. I didn't like taking the medication and didn't take it for long and I did not believe that I was 'like my mother'. Later the psychologist concluded that my issues were more to do with the lack of emotional attachment.

54. I just remember not ever being able to tell anybody what took place. It became something I never wanted to bring up again.

The [GRO-B-15] [GRO-B] **Street – 1970, age 13.**

55. I was with the [GRO-B-15] for one and a half years. They had a strong connection to the [GRO-B] Church, so that's possibly how they heard about me. They were a family with very strong values and were very musical. They had three children, [GRO-B], [GRO-B] and [GRO-B] who were all younger than me. During my time living with the [GRO-B-1  
5] a niece returned to NZ from Papua New Guinea where her family lived and came to live with the [GRO-B-1  
5] also.

56. I often felt compared but included. I was included in holidays to see their relatives. We were given pocket money and made to document it. This was another family where I was expected to participate in new and different routines. I would need to watch and learn to figure out how to slot into their life.

57. The [GRO-B-15] sold their home and were moving into a smaller place while they built another home. It was not suitable for me to live with them as well so I was moved on.

The [GRO-B-14] [GRO-B] **Street – age 14**

58. I lived with the [GRO-B-14] for 5 months. I remember the [GRO-B-14] had three children, [GRO-B-16], [GRO-B] and [GRO-B]. [GRO-B] was about my age. Life was good here, very structured. I felt included, but don't remember doing any holidays with [GRO-B-14]

59. I remember one visit from a social worker during this time, where they took a photo of me in my school uniform. Otherwise, it was me biking down to the social workers' office. I was moved on when [GRO-B-16] was getting married.

### ***Inter-school Christian Fellowship camps***

60. I always chose to go to camps throughout my time in [GRO-A-1] because they felt like a safe place for me. They were held in different places around the country, and they were little lifelines. I had several different camps I used to go to, two or three times a year. At Easter camps, I had a good relationship with the people that I'd seen each time I went. I think it was contested at times, because there was a cost to me going. But I always wanted to go, and it was always ultimately allowed.

61. Before I was sent to the [GRO-B-7  
GRO-B-8], I remember going off to a Crusaders' Camp, and not knowing where I was going to be sent when I came back. I remember standing at the steps of the Salvation Army crying, and saying to the Camp Captain, "I'm going away, and I don't know where I'm going to be living when I come back. I suppose I'll be going to the [GRO-B-2] again". There was always a fear of going back to [GRO-B-2]. I think that something about this incident led to my placement with the [GRO-B-7  
GRO-B-8]. Perhaps they had overheard me crying on the steps.



62. I was trained back to [GRO-A-1]. I remember arriving back to [GRO-B-2] at some ungodly hour of the night, then being woken up in the morning by [GRO-B-11] and being told I had to get up and organise myself because I was going to a new family. Then I remember being taken to [GRO-B-7 GRO-B-8], and them welcoming me because that was their expectation. From the start I was feeling apprehensive.

[GRO-B-7] **and** [GRO-B-8] [GRO-B] **Road – age 14-18 ½**

63. [GRO-B-7 GRO-B-8] were in their 40s, and had two children aged ten and eight when I arrived. I arrived here for my fifth form year, and stayed until I was 18 and a half. The [GRO-B-7 GRO-B-8] kids had been in my singing group, so I knew of the family. Something never felt right about [GRO-B-7]. I was scared of him even prior to the abuse starting. He was quite an angry type person. While I was there, he did things like try to light a fire under the house.

64. The [GRO-B-7 GRO-B-8] had actually wanted to adopt me, they thought it was important for me to be part of a family. I remember talk of needing someone to 'give me away', when I got married. I never wanted a bar of it, it never felt right to me to allow them to have that place in my life. I lied to them about not having a birth certificate, to stall the process so that they wouldn't have the necessary documentation. The adoption never went through.

65. They did include me in anything they did as a family, including supporting me to have a relationship with my mother. At one point they even took me to see her. At another point, my mother may have come to [GRO-A-1] to stay with my father's sister, my Aunt [GRO-B-6]. This was recorded as a plan though possibly never actually happened. I think the [GRO-B-7 GRO-B-8] understood that I did not want a relationship with my father.

66. Once again, I was sexually abused. The abuse was from [GRO-B-7]. At that stage I didn't feel I had anyone to talk to, so I tried to fight the battle myself. I think I always wanted to tell somebody, but didn't have somebody I could talk to.

### Sexual abuse

67. [GRO-B-7] would come into my bedroom at night, which I shared with his daughter. He would wake me up and would start touching me [GRO-C]. I remember feeling very uncomfortable and scared. I would kick.

68. He would also try to come into the bathroom while I was showering, but I wouldn't let him. So yeah, he was a creep.

69. The abuse was repeated over a period of time. I cannot recall exactly how many times it happened because I just shut down. Though for a period of time it was happening regularly, until I started addressing him saying, 'Don't you touch me, don't you come near me'. He stopped trying after I started being more protective and verbalising how I felt.

70. I think my earlier experience where I was unable to tell anybody what really happened with my dad when I was living with the [GRO-B-12  
GRO-B-13] made me think, why was I going to tell anyone here?

71. I always battled with the fact that if I told someone [GRO-B-7] could be done. It was the same with my father. [GRO-B-7] died years ago, and my father died when I was 16.

72. In more recent years I've talked to their daughter and she was going through the same sexual abuse experiences that I was. I've never told her mother, and neither has she.

73. At one point after they divorced though, GRO-B-8 asked me if he had ever done anything to me. I just deflected the question and asked her 'what made you think that?' I don't know what she knew in order to ask me that.

### **Discharge from Social Welfare**

74. At 16 I was told by Social Welfare that I could leave school and go flatting, although school were trying to keep me on. I actually felt it was my better year with teacher relationships and learning, so I wasn't actually choosing to leave school. I was being told by the social worker, "You're 16, you need to be looking forward to a job and if you wait till the end of the year there will be all the school-leavers looking for jobs, you best be getting a job now." So I duly did this.

75. I couldn't believe that I actually got both jobs I applied for, and I had to choose which I was taking.

76. I took a job in a photographic studio. I was there for a year and then got made redundant. Then I got another job as an Occupational Therapy (OT) aide at the hospital. There had been a suggestion that I study nursing, and I was prompted to do a holiday course which I absolutely hated because of the injections and that sort of thing.

77. When I did OT aiding, I remember going into psychiatric units and hating it. I had to watch patients go through ECT, and observe them afterwards. I would get flashbacks to my mother and it made me realise what she would have gone through. It was too traumatic. Even to this day I don't handle the mental health sufferers. I still recognise the old protective wall from visiting my mother in mental institutions.



78. I should not have stayed living with the [GRO-B-7  
GRO-B-8] for as long as I did, but I wasn't ready to go flatting. It wasn't an option in my mind. Although at 16 social welfare discharged me, I stayed with the [GRO-B-7  
GRO-B-8] because they offered to keep me on. The bottom line was, the devil I knew was better than the devil I didn't know. I had to pay board and had to purchase all my own things. I had to pay [GRO-B-7] to drop me at work.

79. Although the sexual abuse stopped, probably prior to me turning 16, [GRO-B-7] was controlling and tried to stop me going out with [GRO-B-17], my now-husband. He tried to stop me having any connections with him even though I was 18, though I always found a way.

80. [GRO-B-17] to this day describes [GRO-B-7] like a raging bull. When [GRO-B-17] would come around, [GRO-B-7] would flare up, and once shoved him. [GRO-B-17] said 'I'm not moving'. [GRO-B-7] was intent on helping me move on, and was the one who encouraged me to go to the pastors of the church who helped me out of there.

81. I was attending the [GRO-A] Church, which I am still part of today. I went to talk to the ministers of the church, [GRO-A-1] and [GRO-A-2] and said, "I need to get out of where I am". I didn't tell them much at the time. They were only a young couple. [GRO-A-1] ended up ringing another girl a few years older than me who had a flat, and asked her if she could take me in. So there was me at 17 going flatting with [GRO-B-17]

82. When I told the [GRO-B-7  
GRO-B-8] I was planning to leave, they said, 'Well you can leave this weekend then'. I got out while the iron was hot, moved into the flat. I used to say every night in that flat, 'Gee this is peaceful!'

83. I remember vividly drawing a demarcation line when I was leaving school and out working, a line of "I'm not going to allow my past to affect my future". I made careful choices about who I was friends with, where I went and what I did. I never drunk, never went to parties, I never slept around. This was helped by the support I had

from [GRO-A-1] and [GRO-A-2], [GRO-A-1] knew enough about my story, without knowing all the sexual abuse stuff. She knew my world had been unstable, and she was a good anchor.

#### Contact with Social Workers

84. Each social worker did things differently, but they all worked off paper. They were all single women, not mothers themselves. I wonder how this affected their take on their job. From what I remember, conversations with social workers were often about writing to my parents.

#### **Education during time in care**

85. School was always safe. Teachers would read there was something going on with me. My focus and learning was off. But as always, if questioned, my response was, 'I'm fine'.

#### Multiple school changes

86. Going to [GRO-B-4] Children's Home brought about a shift in primary schools from Terrace End to West End. Then, I transitioned to [GRO-A] [GRO-A], the first of three intermediate schools. I do not have any memory of school during this period.

87. I shifted to [GRO-A] Intermediate when living at [GRO-B-2] with the [GRO-B-9]. Even though I moved halfway through the year, I remember having a kind and caring teacher there. I moved to [GRO-A] while living with the [GRO-B-12] [GRO-B-13]. I remember also having a good teacher here.

GRO-A

High School

88. I was at the GRO-B-15 when I first started high school. I remember often wanting to talk to a teacher and feeling a relationship with them, but not being able to tell them anything. I remember being questioned about what was going on.
89. One of the things that made me scared to say anything at school was that Ms GRO-A, who was a teacher of mine at school, had a sister who was a social worker at Social Welfare.
90. I used to help teachers after school, as a way to stall going home to the GRO-B-7 GRO-B-8. Yet, at the same time, I could get into trouble for not working to a high enough standard.
91. I remember sitting at school in the Music class singing the song, "I'm nobody's child", and all of a sudden bursting into tears. The music teacher said, "If you're going to act like that you can leave the class". Obviously I was on the edge of emotion, but I very rarely ever expressed it. I tried to keep the pan face, keep going, block it out and get on the best I could. As a child, I was shut down, though as an adult my emotions have come out more.
92. I have actually talked to that music teacher about this since, as an adult. He came to a reunion and I could share how I felt back then as a 14 or 15 year old.
93. I had one friend who was aware of what was going on in my world because she was experiencing similar in hers. We are still friends today and I still share important things with her.

Church as an anchor

94. Right through my time in GRO-A-1 I used to go to the church so that connection was very much an anchor. I was part of a children's choir there as well, so I had quite a strong connection with that group.



**Life after leaving care**

Family

95. [GRO-B-17] and I got engaged when I was 18, and married at 19. [GRO-B-7] still tried to give me away, though I said no way. From the beginning, [GRO-B-17]' family were amazing. His parents welcomed me very openly, and they didn't even know my story. At that point, [GRO-B-17] knew I had been fostered, but he didn't know much more either.

96. Before getting married, I told [GRO-B-17] that there were things I needed to work through. I didn't let my sexual trauma affect our relationship.

97. [GRO-B-17] and I have a now almost 43 year old daughter, [GRO-B-18], and a 41 year old son, [GRO-B-19] [GRO-B] [GRO-B] [GRO-B] I have grandchildren coming up six and three years old.

98. [GRO-B]

99. At points I attempted to reconnect with my mother. I invited her to my wedding, though she did not attend. At times she was open to reconnecting. I used to send her gifts every birthday. There was one time that my mother sent back every gift I had sent her.

Career

100. I worked as a matron, then [GRO-A] [GRO-A-3] I was there for 23 years, and left two years ago.

101. As a [GRO-A], I had to fight for sanitary products for girls under the care of Oranga Tamariki.

102. I always understood what these kids real need were. Even things like cell phones, you don't want kids who are already on the backfoot to end up stealing to get things like that. Those sorts of things need to be considered. Previous hostel managers got sick of things like that, but I think when you have a backstory and you understand, you feel for those going through the journey and you do want to help.

103. Before I worked at [GRO-A-3], I was a support coordinator for [GRO-A]. [GRO-A] Since 1995 I have been involved in the care and support of kids. I often thought I should have gone ahead and done the studies in counselling or social work, but I never did.

104. Now [GRO-B-17] and I have our own business. We [have an agriculture based business], and our business is growing substantially. I do all the importing, accounting, couriering and following up debt. It is nice to not be working 70 hour weeks for somebody else. I used to be on call 24/7 at the boarding school. We frequently visit the South Island, put our boots on and get on the farms.

Story on TV- paragraph contains identifying features

## Impacts

### Shutting Down

106. There were concerns raised around me daydreaming, and not focusing at school.

I would zone out in class, then repeat work at home more neatly as a way of managing this. I would curl up in a ball and sleep a lot, especially at the

GRO-B-7  
GRO-B-8

I remember it being said, 'She always sleeps'.

107. Whenever I was asked questions about myself, from teachers who may have been concerned, my response would be 'I'm fine', or 'You don't know, you don't understand'. The story about me recorded in my social welfare file always used to be 'as usual, she says nothing'. These were ways I was shutting down, to cope with what was happening.

108. About 25 years ago, I was driving through town with my kids and that song from my music class at school came on the radio: 'I'm nobody's child, I'm like a flower, just growing wild, no mamma's kisses and no daddy's smiles – nobody wants me, I'm nobody's child. I had to pull over because I was crying. That's when I realised I had to work through some stuff. It was starting to affect me emotionally, whereas back then, I would have shut down and not let those emotions be exposed.

### Lack of consistency

109. When you go through 20 changes in your young life, living in different homes, you can't tell me that you'll be the person who you could have been.

110. I never knew in advance where I was going to go. When I arrived somewhere, I never knew how long I was going to stay there. Even now, packing a bag to go away still brings up that anxiety.



111. Every home you go in you do things differently, and it changes from one home to another. What is normal in one family is not normal to someone coming into that family. In one family you wash your hair once a week, in another it's every day. How and when you change your sheets differs from one family to the next.

112. With those changes comes changes to schooling. During intermediate, I had three school changes in a two year period. I think you lose some of your anchors of support when you have changes there, as well as changes with where you are living and with social workers. I remember three or four social workers within a short period of time.

#### Loss of education and further opportunities

113. At 16, I was told I could leave school. It was my second year of fifth form, and I'd got low pass results in just two subjects. I could never concentrate for learning. I had a lot of stuff go through my head all the time.

114. If only I could be educated all over again. I was always scared to study further because I didn't achieve at school. Life could have been quite different if my support through education was better.

#### Separation from GRO-B-1

115. Being separated from my brother was always a big worry. I always worried about not knowing where he was. This separation had the biggest impact on me. He was my only family left, and he was taken away from me.

116. My brother died five or six years ago. Since doing the film, I have been thinking more about the reality of what took place in our family, and how broken it was. He went to a farm in Ōpunake, he went to Urenui, he went to Otekaieki, Campbell Park

School in Oamaru for schooling. I saw him every now and then, but it was more like a sterile visit, than having your family with you. The connection was lost.

117. I reconnected with him when he was 23, he was like a homeless man. He had all sorts of collections of things like rubber bands, toothpicks and badges.

### Intergenerational

118. My brother's life was much more messed up than mine. He was never into drugs or alcohol, but he was definitely a very disturbed young boy.

119. GRO-B-1's story is that when he was in the GRO-B-4's Home he was considered a slow learner. I didn't think of him as not being normal, to me he was just my brother. He was held back so we were in the same form at Primary School. At Intermediate he was in a Special Needs class. He was treated as schizophrenic at one stage.

120. He ended up at Kimberley and Campbell Park school. This side of Campbell Park, knowing what went on there, I would seriously question why he was sent there. It breaks me today to think that his life was most likely the result of what happened at those institutions.

121. I know when GRO-B-1 came to stay with us, GRO-B-17 asked him about abuse, but he doesn't remember the outcome of that conversation, so we don't know for sure. From what I have read on record recently, my father abused GRO-B-1 as well, though I am sure that cannot have been the only abuse he experienced.

122. I have communicated with quite a few people talking about my brother at Otekaieki, one who had been through Otekaieki and was gathering together a few people, and I remember saying to him, "Do you think that my brother would have faced abuse when he was there too?", they all just say, "Well, you only need to see the newspaper articles to know what was going on there".

123. Sadly, my brother is not here to speak for himself and I was not there all his life to support and protect him either. I know he withdrew from being supported under the [GRO-B] in Wellington because he wanted to be by himself.

124. I completely lost contact with him, and it was only in the short time before he died I started to follow him up. I didn't know that he was in ill health. When I saw him I got such a shock. The way he was living was just awful, a cabin type room with a wet stained mattress in [GRO-B].

#### Loss of Trust/Relational Impact

125. I am guarded with who I share what with. Though, once trust is there, I am very open. I didn't even start to open up to [GRO-B-17] about the abuse until several years into our relationship. We had already had children, and I had kept them safe. I think [GRO-B-17] always wondered why I was so protective with them.

126. When my kids were little, [GRO-B-1] came to visit us unexpectedly. When you've lived with abuse around you, I think you're much more protective about what can happen to your own children. [GRO-B-1] turned up with his transistor radio, a bus ticket and that was it. He had come to [GRO-A-1] to see his one sister. I ended up saying to [GRO-B-17] "I can't have [GRO-B-1] staying in our home because I can't risk our children not being safe."

127. [GRO-B-17] said, "What do you mean, do you think he's going to sexually abuse them?". I couldn't answer that, it felt too hard.

128. At that stage I had not told [GRO-B-17] about any of the sexual abuse I had experienced. That was not because of who [GRO-B-17] is, because he is honestly the most empathetic and understanding person but, at that stage it felt too hard to talk about.

129. It was the first time I'd seen [GRO-B-1] for a few years and I was just too scared that something from my past was going to unravel, and my children were going to be



affected. We put him up in a hotel and spent some time with him, then got him back on the bus.

#### Impact of seeing mother in mental health institutions

130. Even now, I cannot pick up the weight of somebody's mental health. There have been times in life where I could have given support to somebody going through stuff, but I don't want to go there. As a boarding manager you're often working with eating disorder kids and kids who are self harming. I would do what I needed to do, have the reports there, but it was always like, that's somebody else's job.

#### **Redress**

131. I have battled in my head forever, the question of how come I was left vulnerable to stay alone with my father? To have him visit, and to be taken out by him? How come this was allowed when there was not just one charge against him, but at least two, maybe three known?

132. Once I said to the GRO-B-12  
GRO-B-13 that he had been sexually abusing me, then those visits got stopped, but not until that point. There should have been protection in place for me from the start, the nine year old that went into care. There should have been instruction in place that never was that child left alone, or in a vulnerable position with her father. I can't answer how that happened.

#### Making a claim

133. I have not approached MSD, ACC, or anyone for redress. Years ago I kept a part of the paper with the intention that I would, but my work life is so full, and I was processing a whole lot of other stuff, so it was in the 'hard basket'.

134. I have been asked by Steph, the counsellor I've been assigned through Story on TV, whether I had considered making any redress claims. I told her I had considered it but don't really know how to do anything about it.
135. I have never made a complaint to the police. I probably could have and should have, but at the time there was fear and no one I could trust. I was scared that I would have been blamed for the abuse.
136. I am not out to get or blame anyone now. I just want to move forward.

#### Receiving my Social Welfare files

137. I spent about four years battling with the need to go back through my whole life and put some of the missing jigsaw pieces together. I didn't know how I was going to do it. Then one day I got up and realised I could get my Social Welfare papers, and I obtained those. Close friends used to say to me. "Why would you want to go back there?" I just continually felt I needed to start to open up and share honestly.
138. Within this process, I went and talked to Ms Jeffs who was one of my social workers I had while at GRO-B-12 GRO-B-13. We got coffee, and I felt I needed to share honestly what I couldn't as a young teenager. There were some key people in my life that I felt I needed to be open and honest with. GRO-A-1 and GRO-A-2 the pastors from the church were some. My husband, GRO-B-17 was the first person I started sharing stuff with.
139. When I got my papers, I shared them with a very good friend who lives in Nairobi. She was out here for a holiday. She'd known me since I was 15 or 16, and she works with homeless kids. She understands a lot. I spent a week going through the files with her literally page by page, and that was good.

140. Nothing in there was a surprise, apart from my father going to prison. I remember thinking if I had known that at the time, I may have been more forthcoming and open about his abuse.

141. Obtaining my files was more difficult than I expected. I thought it would be easy, I thought, 'I need them, what use are they to anyone else?'

142. It was about 20 years ago when I finally plucked up the courage one day to ring the office, in the July school holidays when I had some head space from work in the boarding house. It was explained to me that I needed to come down to the office and sign a form, and that they had to apply for them. I was working as a matron at school at the time, and I wasn't able to do this until the next October school holidays.

143. When I went to the office in October I was told I had to look through over the counter and see what parts I wanted. I told them I wanted my whole complete file. Then I got told I had to wait until they could photocopy it and give it to me. I finally picked it up the week before Christmas. I spent the next week, all hours of the night, reading the truth of my life before I was ready to share it with anyone.

144. To this day, I don't think I have got everything. There's enough important stuff in there though to piece together some timeframes, some people, some places. "She never says anything", was repeated, I don't know how many times over. I choose not to carry the labels of people's evaluations of who I am.

#### Mother and Brother's health records

145. Last year I obtained these via the Official Information Act. It seems that one of them also spent some time in Lake Alice.

#### My Father's Criminal Files



146. I have not been able to access information about my father's criminal convictions, and what he was charged with. I have tried through Papers Past and Archives, and I've written to the Police. I do have old family documents that were with my mother's things when she died that state he was in Mt Crawford Prison.

### Counselling

147. My counsellor is Stephanie GRO-A she's had her role through Story on TV but she has been qualified to follow through with me under the Commission.

### **Recommendations for the future**

148. When I was working in the boarding school, we had kids come in and out who were under CYFS and you'd feel for them. It was like, "Come on guys, keep your act together, provide the basic needs for these kids. Give them the support, the relationship they need with a person". If it's not working with one person, it must work somewhere with another.

149. That's where I think that careful placement and wrap-around support where there are different people involved, but you're all connected together, helps heaps. You need to all have that child's interests at heart, and strengthen who they feel safe to communicate with. That way if there was something they needed to share, they might open up.

150. GRO-A Immerse group, are doing some great work in this space of wrap around support, and creating trauma-responsive practices for working with kids in care.

151. There needs to be good records of abuse, and complaints need to be taken seriously.

152. Vulnerable children are vulnerable. They need extra care.

153. Siblings need to be kept connected. Even if they are not in the same home, they need to be brought together in an environment where they can be siblings.

**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: