

Witness Name: PETER KEOGHAN

Statement No.: WITN0677001

Exhibits: WITN0677002

Dated: 7 April 2022

ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

WITNESS STATEMENT OF PETER KEOGHAN

I, Peter Keoghan, will say as follows:

1. Introduction

- 1.1. My name is Peter Keoghan. I am 66 years old.
- 1.2. I have had a disability all my life. I can't remember how to describe it but I am now in a wheelchair and I cannot use my hands.
- 1.3. Before Tokanui, I lived with my mum and dad in Te Aroha. It was good. I don't understand why I went to Tokanui. My parents dumped me, which wasn't very nice. No one told me anything.

2. Abuse

Tokanui Hospital

- 2.1. I was a little fella when I got to Tokanui. I was five years old and arrived in 1962 or 1963. There were other boys at Tokanui, but no boys like me.
- 2.2. I was there for a long time – 20 years. It was like a prison. I was locked up with criminals.
- 2.3. They never treated me properly. No one looked after me at all down there.

Seclusion

- 2.4. The staff would lock me up all the time. When I arrived, I was put into a side room, which was shut off and the door was locked. There were bars on the windows. I was in this room all the time with my pyjamas on. The bathroom was inside the room. They let me out for meals: lunch and dinner, TV and then back in again.
- 2.5. The staff never told me anything. I couldn't go anywhere. I was in this room until I left Tokanui. They treated me like a prisoner.

Education, work and activities

- 2.6. I went to school until I was 16. I did woodwork there and made guns. There was a good teacher and it was a good school.
- 2.7. We would also do the pub quiz and bingo. I won a packet of smokes.
- 2.8. When I was 11, we would push concrete in wheelbarrows to make roads within the Tokanui grounds. It was heavy but I was happy to do it. I also worked in the van, delivering packages within Tokanui. I put my back out from lifting packages.

Neglect

- 2.9. Sometimes I'd go home with mum and dad. But my parents did not visit me at all. I had a sister, but she did not go to Tokanui and I didn't get to see her.
- 2.10. The food was pig tucker, scraps. I was put on a diet by the dietician. I never liked her at all. She wouldn't let me have sandwiches.
- 2.11. There was no privacy at all. There were two guys in the shower when I was in it and a staff member would turn it on. The staff would also put a fire hose on me. It was cold like anything. They would do it every time.
- 2.12. I got sick from standing outside in the rain. If I got sick, the doctors would help me. There was some good staff there.
- 2.13. I started smoking when I was 5. Everyone smoked. I also received no therapy for my disability, no nothing.

Physical abuse

- 2.14. A staff member threatened me all the time. I didn't know why. He would say nasty things like "you're gonna die".
- 2.15. GRO-B-1 a staff nurse, took me on a walk to the farm. He kicked me in the stomach, and threw me down on the ground into the blackberry bush. It happened all the time.
- 2.16. In Ward 4, a staff member grabbed me around the neck and took me into the toilet. It was so tight around my neck that I couldn't breathe. He did that to a lot of people.
- 2.17. Another staff member punched me in the eye.

- 2.18. The other male patients would punch me in the mouth.
- 2.19. No one took any notice if I complained. There was a staff member who was good. I talked to him, he lent me a smoke. I told him and the Police about the assaults.

Sexual abuse

- 2.20. I did suffer sexual abuse. I was in the bathroom and a patient, GRO-B-2, laid on top of me. I hit him back.
- 2.21. It happened all the time. If I told anyone then I would get a hiding.

Over-medication

- 2.22. I was given drugs every day. The whole time I was at Tokanui, I was drugged-up. I was given Largactil syrup, which made me sleepy (see also my Tokanui fact sheet dated 24 August 1984 [WITN0677002]). The medication would put me to sleep or make me scratch the windows when I was locked up in the room.
- 2.23. I was never told anything. I didn't get any injections or shock treatment though. If someone told me to get shock treatment, I'd tell them no way.

Drowning at Tokanui

- 2.24. They had a swimming pool in Tokanui. One of the patients, GRO-B-3, drowned in there. She was a young girl and was my special one. She was in the water by herself and she went under – I tried to save her and did mouth to mouth but she didn't come back alive. I was also only young.
- 2.25. I said goodbye to her. I was sad that she passed away.
- 2.26. The staff didn't care or help when GRO-B-3 was in the pool, they took no notice. No Police were involved. She was buried in the cemetery at Tokanui.

Post Tokanui

- 2.27. My social worker and Dr Bennett got me out of Tokanui. I was 24 when I left and then went to a hostel in Tauranga.
- 2.28. When I got out, I said "I'm free I'm free! I'm free!" No one would kick me in the stomach or grab me around the neck.
- 2.29. My hostel in Tauranga was with IDEA Services. There were ten people living there. I liked it there.

3. Impacts

- 3.1. Tokanui ruined my life and it has affected me every day. It was not a nice place. The memories made me feel angry.

3.2. I feel much better now that I've left. I'm not angry or upset anymore.

4. Redress

4.1. I have got nothing at all from government. But I'm not worried about that.

5. Looking forward

5.1. The government should shut Tokanui down. The staff were rough.

5.2. I like it here in Whangarei. The staff here are better than the ones down there at Tokanui.

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:
Dated:

GRO-C

4/4/22.