

**Witness Name:** Sekope Kepu

**Witness Statement No:** WITN1479001

**Dated:** 26.09.2022

## ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

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### WITNESS STATEMENT OF SEKOPE MIAMI KEPU

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I, Sekope Miami Kepu, state as follows: -

#### INTRODUCTION

1. I am an Australian-born, New Zealand raised Tongan. My parents were living in Australia at the time I was born in 1986. They moved to New Zealand in 1989. I lived in New Zealand up until my wife and I moved to Australia in 2007.
2. I completed my schooling education here in New Zealand. I attended Glen Innes Primary School and Glen Innes Intermediate School in my earlier childhood years.
3. I attended Wesley College from 1999 to 2004 for my high school education. I was a fulltime boarding student at Wesley College.
4. I was a Prefect in my last two years of school at Wesley College. I was also in the 1st IV rugby team representing the school at inter-college sports. I was involved in the Tongan cultural group and a leader of that group in my final years at Wesley College.

5. I am now a Professional Rugby Player and have been playing rugby professionally for the past 18 years. I am currently playing for the Counties Manukau Rugby Football Union.
6. My Professional career began in 2005 with Counties Manukau before moving back to Australia in 2007 to join the NSW Waratahs. In 2008 I was selected and joined the Wallabies Australian rugby union squad. I played for the Wallabies for 11 and a half years. Throughout my career I have also played for clubs in France and England. I have now returned to New Zealand and most recently, I captained the new Moana Pasifika rugby union team in the Super Rugby competition.
7. One of my passions is to help prevent bullying in schools. I have been involved with an initiative at Wesley College this year (2022) and there are posters of a few of us rugby players around the school to campaign against it. I was asked by a staff member from Wesley College for my consent to use my photograph to campaign against bullying.

#### **Public Hearing – Faith-based Institutional Response**

8. I have been invited by the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care (the Inquiry) to participate in the Faith-based Institutional Response Hearing involving Wesley College.
9. I am aware that there have been a number of survivor witnesses come forward and share their experiences of abuse at Wesley College.
10. I have been asked to participate in this session of the hearing because I am an Old Boy of Wesley College who held senior leadership positions within the school and I am a role model for children and young people, especially our Pacific youth. I am also a Pacific community leader and am passionate about this very important issue and doing what I can to help address this in our schools.
11. I have been asked to provide my views on the following topics/questions:
  - a. The 'culture' of bullying, abuse and violence at Wesley College and any contributing factors.

- b. Pacific communities and a discussion around the issues of bullying, abuse and violence from a cultural perspective.
- c. How we can build safe spaces for our children and young people at Wesley College.
- d. How can Pacific families and communities (including the school and church) better support each other to prevent our children from being harmed in school.
- e. What does a safe school environment underpinned by Pacific values look like.

12. I believe that my experience as an Old Boy of Wesley College and community leader of Tongan descent qualifies me to participate at the hearing in this discussion about Wesley College.

**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: 26/9/22

**Annexure**  
**Consent to use my statement**

I, **Sekope Miami Kepu**, confirm that by submitting my signed witness statement to the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care, I consent to its use in the following ways:

- reference and/or inclusion in any interim and/or final report;
- disclosure to those granted leave to appear, designated as core participants and where instructed, their legal representatives via the Inquiry’s database or by any other means as directed by the Inquiry;
- presentation as evidence before the Inquiry, including at a public hearing;
- informing further investigation by the Inquiry;
- publication on the Inquiry website.

I also confirm that I have been advised of the option to seek anonymity and that if granted my identity may nevertheless be disclosed to a person or organisation, including any instructed legal representatives, who is the subject of criticism in my witness statement in order that they are afforded a fair opportunity to respond to the criticism.

Please tick one of the two following boxes:

if you are seeking anonymity

or

if you are happy for your identity to be known

Signed: GRO-C .....

Date: ↓ 26/9/22 .....