

Witness Name: Tony Ryder

Statement No.: WITN0891001

Dated: 28 February 2022

ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

WITNESS STATEMENT OF TONY RYDER

I, Tony Ryder, will say as follows:

1. Introduction

- 1.1. My full name is Tony Anthony Edward Ryder. I currently live in Christchurch in a New Zealand Care home.
- 1.2. I describe my ethnicity as a New Zealander. I have a learning disability.

Early life

- 1.3. I was born in 1963 to my parents [GRO-B] and [GRO-B]. I am one of eight children. I have two sisters and five brothers, though some of them have now passed away.
- 1.4. Growing up, I used to often visit the freezing works where my dad worked. I would get free chickens from there that I kept as pets. Me and my brother [GRO-B] used to play lots of games and go bike riding. In the school holidays, my family would go to Waipara to visit extended family. I come from a big family with lots of aunts, uncles and cousins.

Events leading up to admission in care

- 1.5. I lived with my parents until I went into the care of [GRO-C] Home in [GRO-C] [GRO-C]. I went into state care because my mother couldn't cope with looking after me. I don't know what age I was when I went to [GRO-C] but some records show I went there aged 11.

2. Abuse

[GRO-C] Home

- 2.1. [GRO-C] was a children's home in [GRO-C] which was run by [GRO-C] church. There were two [GRO-C-1] that ran the place when I was there.
- 2.2. There were three main buildings at [GRO-C]. Because it was near the countryside, [GRO-C] was surrounded by paddocks. It had a pig farm and everything.

Arrival in institution

- 2.3. My first memory of being at [GRO-C] is that I was very upset. I remember climbing up a tree to ride a flying fox. After that, I ran through a creek to where the fire exit was. I then noticed I had got my clothes all dirty and wet.
- 2.4. When I got back to the home, the [GRO-C-1] was very angry with me for getting my clothes dirty. He smacked me around the ear and gave me the cane on my backside.
- 2.5. I ran off to a friend's place to tell them what had happened. The Police got involved, and the [GRO-C-1] ended up getting in trouble for it. I said I'm not going back to [GRO-C] after that, but I didn't have a choice.

Day-to-day life in care

- 2.6. There were lots of boys and girls at [GRO-C]. The girls slept upstairs, and the boys slept downstairs. All the boys slept in the same room, but we had our own beds.
- 2.7. We had to do some chores at [GRO-C]. One task I volunteered to do was cracking walnuts. When I was older I would drive a tractor around the nearby fields.
- 2.8. Sometimes we would get pocket money which we could spend at the shops in [GRO-C]. I would go out and buy Trumpet ice-creams for the guys. When I was older I would use the money to buy cigarettes, and I would sneak behind the trees to smoke them.
- 2.9. While I was living at [GRO-C] I attended Marchwiell School. I used to bike to get to school. I remember we would be taught how to read and write. I would copy down all the letters from the blackboard. Mr Eggleton was the headmaster at the time.
- 2.10. I was forced to go to [GRO-C] church services while I was living at [GRO-C]. We got told we would be punished if we didn't go to church. I hated going to church because I didn't believe in religion, but I didn't have a choice.

Physical Abuse

- 2.11. I would get punished by the [GRO-C-1] if told lies, backchatted or swore at him. He used to beat me up by smacking me around the ear. He also used a strap sometimes. It happened lots of times.
- 2.12. I remember one day I was in the gymnasium at [GRO-C] and the [GRO-C-1] asked a group of us to sit down on a chair. It turned out it was an electric chair and we got zapped when we sat down on it. I ended up regularly getting punishments in this chair if I misbehaved.
- 2.13. I have since been told by someone who was there at the same time as me that people shouldn't have to see, let alone be subjected to, the treatment that I experienced while at [GRO-C]

Sexual Abuse

- 2.14. When I was about 14, the [GRO-C-1] did some bad things to me. It happened in the boys' dormitory while everyone else was at school.
- 2.15. The [GRO-C-1] tied me to the bed with rope and pulled my pants down. He then tried to put his penis up my butt. He kept on doing it even though it was very painful. He was touching me on the front and the back and between my legs. I told him I didn't like it, but he just told me not to tell anyone.
- 2.16. I told lots of people about it, including my parents, and eventually the Police got involved. I told the Police about everything he did to me. I think that the [GRO-C-1] lost his job afterwards.
- 2.17. The [GRO-C-1] did it to some of the girls too. I know because the girls told me about it. They were crying about it when they told me.

Seclusion

- 2.18. There was one incident where I was asked to turn an electric blanket on upstairs, which ended up catching fire. The fire brigade was called to put out the fire. When I told the [GRO-C-1] about the electric blanket, he didn't believe me. Another staff member told him that I had lit the fire.
- 2.19. The [GRO-C-1] locked me in the basement as punishment for lighting the fire. It was a small space and there weren't any windows. I wasn't given any bedding and I had to sleep on the concrete floor. It was very dark and cold in there. There was also no toilet or shower, so I had to go to the toilet on the floor, and I would be taken for a cold shower every now and then. It felt like I was in there for a whole month.

2.20. Another time a group of six boys got caught playing with other people's food. They were all locked up in the basement together as punishment. I'm not sure how long they were locked up for.

Neglect

2.21. We had our own clothes at [GRO-C] and could choose what clothes we wanted to wear.

2.22. I didn't get to see my family very often. The only time I can remember my parents visiting is when they came to [GRO-C] for the opening of a new wing.

2.23. I did get to see my brothers [GRO-B-1] and [GRO-B-2], because they both spent time living at [GRO-C] too. But we didn't really get to play or spend much time together.

2.24. One morning before school, when I was about 14 years old, my uncle [GRO-B] picked me up and took me out for a drive. He was driving so dangerously that I thought he was trying to kill me. I was so scared at the time. I ended up arriving to school late and I got told off by the teachers.

2.25. Overall, I hated living at [GRO-C]. I would sometimes try to run away. I would sometimes ride off on my bike to Washdyke to see my parents and tell them about the bad things that were happening to me. I never wanted to go back to [GRO-C] but they always took me back.

IHC Homes

2.26. At some point during my teenage years, I switched out of [GRO-C] and into the care of IHC homes. From what I can remember, the IHC homes were also located in [GRO-C]. The IHC homes were like normal houses, with a mum and a dad running the home and looking after me.

2.27. I really liked living at the IHC home run by the [GRO-B-3]. They had about six kids with disabilities in their care. They used to take me out shopping, which I enjoyed. It was nice to do lots of outings. I was also able to visit my brother [GRO-B-1] who was still living at [GRO-C] at the time.

2.28. Another IHC family home I lived at was with the [GRO-B-4]. I didn't like living with them very much. They had an aviary with lots of birds, which used to annoy me.

Templeton Centre

2.29. I moved to Templeton Centre (**Templeton**) when I was about 15 years old. I was driven there by a man from social welfare called **GRO-C** I ended up living at Templeton for about 15 years in total.

Arrival in institution

2.30. On my first day at Templeton there was a community fair on. I noticed the swimming pool, the recreation hall and the canteen too. The place seemed very different to **GRO-C**
GRO-C

2.31. The first wing I lived in at Templeton was called Rowan House. Rowan House was a villa for new residents to stay in before moving into other wards at Templeton. There were about six other guys staying there with me, and we had one staff member in charge of us. We used to have meals together at the dining table, but the food was pretty shit. I didn't like living at Templeton from the get go.

2.32. I rang **GRO-C** from social welfare and told him I didn't like living at Rowan House. I told him I wanted to go on holiday with my parents. I ended up staying with my family until Christmas, but then I had to go back to Templeton after that. I lived in Rimu villa when I went back to Templeton.

Day-to-day life in care

2.33. During the day I would attend the training centre. We used to do heaps of work like gardening and building sandpits for the kids at Tempelton to play in.

2.34. I also pushed the food trolley to deliver other people their meals, which I enjoyed. I would push the trolley from one side of Templeton to the other. If I was feeling naughty I would steal some bacon from the food trolley.

2.35. There were some things I liked about living at Templeton. I liked the tractor engine, and the pony cart rides in the riding unit run by Effie Deans. She was one of my favourite people there. I also liked playing rugby at Templeton. I was very good at kicking.

2.36. There was a hair salon in Kōwhai ward where I could get my hair cut. One day I went in there and got them to give me a perm!

2.37. Peter Tinetti was the secretary of Templeton when I lived there. I used to go and see him and his family and have coffees at his house, which was at Templeton. There were also recreation officers who would take us out on trips.

2.38. I lived in lots of different villas during my time at Templeton. I lived in Tawa, Rimu, Beach, Hinau and Poplar villas. Poplar villa was the last place I lived at Templeton, where I got to do my own cooking.

Physical abuse

- 2.39. Rimu was the worst villa I lived in. [GRO-B-5] was the charge nurse at the time, who was a former police officer. He used to give us a smack over the head with his walking stick. There were also other staff in Rimu that would hit the residents. It happened all the time.
- 2.40. I remember one time when a staff member, [GRO-B-6] killed a resident [GRO-B-7]. He smacked this resident down to the ground and jabbed a safety pin into his butt lots and lots of times. I saw this with my own eyes. The resident went to bed after this incident and ended up dying.
- 2.41. Another staff member, [GRO-B-8] used to take the guys out the back room and beat the shit out of them. He would punch them with his fists. When I saw this happening, I reported it to the medical superintendent of Templeton, Dr Marshall. He said he would deal with it, but I'm not sure if he ever did.
- 2.42. In Pine villa, [GRO-B-9] was in charge and he used to smack the residents around the head. They were getting hit for things like not getting up in the morning for breakfast.
- 2.43. There were a few times where staff tried to hit me, but I used to duck and managed to avoid being hit. I think I would have been hit more if I got caught doing some of the naughty things that I did.
- 2.44. Instead, I was often called an asshole and a troublemaker by staff. They also called me retarded, handicapped, queer, spastic, and a dork. These words were used commonly by staff towards residents.

Sexual abuse

- 2.45. After reporting some of the physical abuse that I witnessed to the medical superintendent, I was molested by John Van der Pol. He was in charge of the training officers at Templeton.
- 2.46. He dragged me into a locked room by the boys' toilets in the training centre, where he tried to stick his thing up my butt. He said "I hope you like this", but I said I didn't like it. He also took photos of me while he was doing it, and he told me he would kill me if I ever told anyone. It felt like I was in there for a long time, maybe a few hours. Eventually I managed to get away, but I was so shaken up. This only happened one time at Templeton.
- 2.47. Another time I went to John van Pol's house in Papanui. He wanted me to help him with the shed. When I was in his house he did the same thing to me. He molested me. I cried

out and his wife heard.

- 2.48. I was too scared to tell anyone at first, but I eventually told Effie Deans, and then [GRO-C] [GRO-C] the medical superintendent. [GRO-C] said there was an arrangement with the NUPE union that any complaints against staff had to be dealt with within a two or three week period. This meant that John Van der Pol kept his job and I was told there was nothing that could be done about it.
- 2.49. There was a senior nurse called [GRO-C] who spent a lot of time making sure I was protected from John Van der Pol after this. But eventually, I think that John Van der Pol ended up losing his job. His wife also left him when she found out about it.
- 2.50. A resident called [GRO-B-11] used to take girls behind the stage and do bad things to them and get into their pants. I saw this happening one day, so I called the office and told them what was happening. The police turned up and caught him in the act.

Medical abuse

- 2.51. At Templeton, they put me on pills which made me go gaga. The pills were called Veractil, which I had to take in 25mg tablets. They were tranquilisers, which made me go downhill and slowed me down. I was dribbling and everything.
- 2.52. I had to take these pills at breakfast and lunch. When I realised the pills were making me feel bad, I tried to spit them out into the toilet. I pretended to drool so that the staff wouldn't realise I hadn't taken the pills. The other residents just swallowed them.
- 2.53. I told a psychologist at Templeton that the medication made me feel dopey, so he got the doctor to take me off them. I didn't have to take the pills after that.

Seclusion

- 2.54. I was once locked in the side room at Rimu villa. This happened after I saw [GRO-B-8] [GRO-B-8] beating up residents from the villa. I eventually managed to break my way out.
- 2.55. All of the villas had side rooms where residents were locked up in. I saw lots guys locked in the side room as punishment. They would often be locked in there at night and would not be let out until the morning.

Neglect

- 2.56. I slept in the dormitory for younger men while I was in Rimu villa. One night while I was in bed it sounded like someone was dying. His name was [GRO-B-10] I went and got some staff to check out what was going on. It turned out that he had died because his mouth had dried up from all the medication he was taking. I didn't like living in that dormitory after that. I also had my things stolen while I was in Rimu, like my tape deck radio.

- 2.57. I did have my own room in Beech villa, which I really liked. It was nice to have my own privacy. All my other beds were in shared dormitories, which I didn't like so much. It was hard not having any space to myself.
- 2.58. I didn't get paid much for the work I did at Templeton; only about \$15 a week. I could spend this money to buy smokes or treats from the canteen.
- 2.59. There was also a dentist at Templeton but they didn't do a very good job of looking after my teeth. One time the dentist got out a big drill and drilled my teeth. It really hurt. We called the dentist "the killers".
- 2.60. I also had to spend lots of time in the dayroom with nothing to do, and the staff treated me like I was retarded. If I got in trouble in the dayroom, I was made to sit in the corner and stare at the wall.
- 2.61. The other men in the dayroom were pissing and shitting in their chairs. The staff hadn't trained them to go to the toilet, and they never took them to the toilet. The staff were just sitting in the TV room smoking.
- 2.62. The men who spent all day sitting in their chairs didn't go to the training centre. They were in the dayroom for most of the day. Sometimes the staff would take them out for a walk, but not often. There were also lots of times when the staff would hit or kick these men for going to the toilet in their chairs instead of a toilet.
- 2.63. I once got a cuddle from a staff member for my birthday, which made me feel happy. But there was not a lot of love at Templeton.

Living at Effie's

- 2.64. After living at Templeton for about 15 years, I went to live with Effie Deans. I moved into her place because Templeton was closing down. I thought it was a good thing that Templeton was shutting. I wanted it to burn down.
- 2.65. It was bloody good to live in Effie's house, even though the bosses at Templeton didn't think I would manage living with her. She lived near Templeton in a large two storey house. She had pet pigs and horses which I liked. I also had my own room under the stairs.
- 2.66. While I was living at Effie's, I worked for Grace Brothers. I would help them load and unload trucks. I used to bike to work at first, and then I upgraded to a scooter. I got paid a decent wage at Grace Brothers, much better than what I was paid at Templeton.
- 2.67. I also did work for other neighbours in the area. I became an accepted member of the community and had gained some status. I also had more freedom since I had my bike, and I biked around to see lots of people.

NZ Care Home

- 2.68. After I had a falling out with Effie, I went to live at Hillmorton Hospital for a little bit, before moving into an NZ Care home. I had lots of support to make sure I was placed in a home that was a good fit for me.
- 2.69. There was also a change in my care around this time, where my NZ Care home became less about rules and more focused on my needs. This is good because I have lived through too many years of people telling me what to do. I prefer to operate on my own rules.
- 2.70. I have flat mates who I am good mates with. Some of us have now been living together for 15 years. We also have caregivers from NZ Care who help to look after us.

I like going out on long bike rides. I sometimes get work. Lots of people know me in the community. It used to be a problem with me waking people up when I came home so now I have a room outside the house that has its own entrance, so I can come and go as I please.

3. Impact

Mental / physical impacts

- 3.1. I have difficulty trusting people, especially when it comes to my possessions. I get worried that people are going to steal my things, like they did at Templeton.
- 3.2. I still have some issues with my temper. When things go wrong, I become angry very quickly, but then I start crying or destroy my own property. I destroy my own property because then no one can steal anything from me.
- 3.3. When I first left Templeton, I used to have difficulty sleeping at night. This is because I would think about the bad things that happened to me. I still think about GRO-C and Templeton and the bad things that happened to me before I go to sleep at night, but its not as bad now.

Criminal activity

- 3.4. One time about five years ago, I was accused of shoplifting from the Warehouse after I had tried to return an item. I was taken to the Police station for questioning. I was by myself. I didn't receive a conviction, but I was trespassed from visiting the Warehouse again.

3.5. I have also had a few other small run ins with the Police. One time I stole some security lights from Rolleston and ended up getting caught. All I wanted to do was protect my things at home. I didn't get into too much trouble, and I haven't had any trouble with the Police since.

4. Redress

Complaint to Police

4.1. I have never received any compensation or redress for the harm that I experienced. I would like an apology for the harm that I experienced while I was at Templeton and GRO-C I would also like some compensation.

4.2. I know that some of the people who hurt me have now died. I just wish that I'd had the chance to tell them how they made me feel while they were still alive. I don't know if anyone could apologise on their behalf.

5. Looking forward

5.1. I think the government should pull their fingers out of their backsides and look after people properly. The government needs to properly look after the other people who used to live in Templeton. Some of these people need serious help.

5.2. Service providers shouldn't be drugging people up on pills and making them go gaga. They should take the service users out on trips more, like trips to the beach.

5.3. My life would have been much better if I had more freedom. I would have been able to do more things and go for big bike rides like I do now. I love the freedom that I have. I really like my life now.

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: 28/2/22.

GRO-C

GRO-C