

Witness Name: David James Crichton

Statement No.: WITN0456001

Exhibits: WITN0456002– WITN0456010

Dated: 09.07.2021

ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

WITNESS STATEMENT OF DAVID JAMES CRICHTON

I, David James Crichton, will say as follows: -

INTRODUCTION

1. My full name is David James Crichton. I was born on 1 March 1967 in Newtown, Wellington. At birth I was named David James Mohi. My Mum, Lillian Mohi, was legally married to a Māori man with that surname. I thought he was my father.
2. I went into care as a baby and was discharged when I became of age, 18 years old. I spent all but my entire childhood in care.
3. My last name told me I was Māori. Throughout my time in care, I was told I was Māori. I was referred to by others as Māori. I believed I was Māori.
4. When my partner and I were expecting our first child, we decided to request my care files so I could learn more about myself and where I came from. This was important for us in starting our family. So, in 1997, at age 30, I requested my case files from the Ministry of Social Development under the Official Information Act 1982.

5. It was only upon receiving my records that I found out my biological father was a Samoan man named James (Jim) Crichton and that I am of Samoan heritage. By this time, I had well claimed the Māori culture I thought was my own and carried Māori tattoos all over my body.
6. There are no words that will ever come close to fully describing the impact this has had on me. I suffered all forms of abuse during my time in care, but the stripping of my cultural identity is the one thing that hurts the most and has had the most effect on me and my family. This is the main reason why I am sharing my story with the Inquiry in the hopes that no other child goes through what I have.
7. After discovering my Samoan heritage, I managed to find some relatives from the Crichton family. I told them I would change my last name from [GRO-B] to Crichton and I did. That was important to me, I am a Crichton not a [GRO-B]. My children all carry the Crichton name and have their own connection with their wider family and Samoan culture, which is something I am very proud of as their father.
8. I am also speaking up because I want to highlight the poor record keeping of those institutions who were responsible for my care. Records and information about me has been lost, does not exist, is inaccurate and/or incomplete. The responses I have received from those institutions who cared for me has been wholly inadequate.
9. I also outline the appalling treatment I have experienced during the MSD Historical Claims process and the impact this continues to have on me and my family.

FAMILY BACKGROUND AND EARLY LIFE

My Father

10. My father was from the village of Sataua in Samoa. I do not know when he migrated to New Zealand. I'm unsure of how he and my mother met, but to my knowledge they were not together for a long time.

11. My father was not part of my life. I never got the opportunity to meet him, and I never got the chance to know him. He passed away in 1983 while I was in care.

My Mother

12. My mother, Lillian Mohi (formerly Lillian Howard), was born in England and came to New Zealand on a boat when she was very young and grew up in Dunedin.
13. When she was 16, she began a relationship with her neighbour and they had two children, a boy and a girl. She also had a son about five years before I was born, and he had a different father to me. I first met this half-brother at the age of four or five years old when I was placed in the same foster family as him. He was put in care shortly after his birth.
14. My records show that my mum had significant mental health issues. She was not well and Presbyterian Support Services Association (now known as Presbyterian Support Central (PSC)) and the State knew this. Information provided by her should not have been relied on to any degree given her mental state.
15. My records detail conversations between my mother and social workers. There is also specific reference in a child welfare report about my mum giving a lot of conflicting information.

Views of Samoans and Pacific Islanders

16. My records state that a major source of conflict for my mum was that my father was Samoan, that she despised him for being Samoan and that Samoans are all of an inferior social and intellectual level. She is reported to consider herself to be superior in every way to my father and felt that by living with a Samoan she had degraded herself.
17. One entry by a social worker shortly after my birth states, "The baby's father is an Islander and this coupled with Mrs GRO-B's low intelligence would probably make adoptive placement for the baby rather doubtful." [WITN0456002]

18. When I was three months old my records refer to problems my mother had in finding anyone to look after me during the day so she could work because I was a Pacific Islander: "The baby is dark and has distinctive Island features and this has also made difficulties as Mrs Mohi's relatives will not have anything to do with an Island baby." **[WITN0456003]**
19. On 10 November 1967, a welfare report stated that when I was 9 months old I was reported by a social worker to be "a healthy attractive child with distinctive Samoan features and colour". The report stated that my mum's conflicting emotions over my father transferred to me, that "although she loves him and cares for him well she constantly makes reference to his colour 'he is not as dark as he used to be' or 'even though he is Samoan'". It notes that she insisted that I look like her when in reality I looked very much like my father. **[WITN0456004]**
20. The report also stated that, "Mrs Mohi has been in receipt of a benefit for nearly a year and the Dept are unlikely to continue...for much longer. David's future looks rather bleak at present, his mother's attitude towards his colour, her nervous temperament, her age, her precarious financial position are all contributing factors".

My Name, My Family, My Identity

21. My birth certificate does not record Jim Crichton as my father. It states that my father was unknown. But my mother knew that Jim Crichton was my father. She kept his name off my birth certificate intentionally.
22. My father's sister, Aunty Rose, is mentioned in the early reports. But no one made attempts to contact her directly. The social workers believed all the negative things my mother told them about my dad and my family, despite references in the report to my mum being "disturbed" and information provided by her lacking credibility.
23. My mother gave me the surname Mohi. I think this was probably so that the Crichton family couldn't ever find me or that she would rather people think she had a child to a Māori rather than a Samoan, I will never know.

24. But one thing I do know is that PSC and the State knew from the very beginning that Jim Crichton was my dad, and that I was of Samoan heritage. It is there in black and white.
25. When PSC and the State became responsible for my care, they should have done all they could to locate my dad and my paternal family directly, but they did not. My Samoan family lived in the Wellington region, and it would not have been that hard to find them.
26. The obligation on the State to establish, preserve and strengthen a relationship between me and my paternal family was further heightened because they knew my mother had such strong feelings against my Samoan father, family and heritage. They knew she was very unwell. There was no way she was going to support and encourage any relationship between me and my family so when PSC and the State became involved in my life and responsible for my care that duty fell squarely on them.

CARE PLACEMENTS IN EARLY LIFE

27. My records show that my mother first placed me in the care of PSC in June 1968 (1 year, 3 months' old). I was placed in one of their residential facilities for infants, St Barnabas Home, in Wellington.
28. At the time, the director of PSC was Walter Lake. He was later convicted of child-sex offending involving children that were in his care at PSC.
29. From St Barnabas Home, my records state that I was placed in a number of short-term foster care placements through PSC.
30. My records show that in September 1968 (1 year, 6 months' old) I was placed in the Salvation Army Residential Nursery, Wellington. I was under their care for approximately 2.5 years.
31. During this period, I was moved in and out of the Salvation Army Residential Nursery until I was placed at Berhampore Children's Home administered by PSC (Berhampore). Placements during this time included Our Lady's Home of Compassion, Wellington (October 1968) and a Dutch family (early 1970).

32. There is an entry on 28 November 1968 by a child welfare officer which states that she called on my placement "to find [the carer] no longer has David in her care. [The carer] was astonished that I didn't know [I had been moved] and thought that the Social Worker from Presbyterian Support Services would have notified us when they removed David...He left on 18 October 1968." So, for a period of time, the State did not even know where I was.
33. To my understanding there were many other placements, but TSA and PSC advise that they hold no specific file or information about me. PSC also mentioned there was a fire in which some records were destroyed. I am upset about this. These records would be all I have to piece together my early life.

Dutch Family

34. I was around three years old when I was placed in the care of a Dutch family in Blenheim. This is where I met my biological half-brother. They already had him in their care and my understanding is that I was placed with this family through the PSC.
35. These people owned the local shoe factory, were quite well-off and they were good people.
36. An entry record states that this family wanted to have my half-brother and I in their care long term, but my mother wouldn't agree to both of us staying with them permanently and I was moved on.

BERHAMPORE CHILDREN'S HOME & FOSTER CARE PLACEMENTS THROUGH PSC

37. My records say that on 19 August 1972 (5 years, 5 months old), I was first placed in Berhampore. This was a residential facility for infants and children administered by the PSC.
38. This record cannot be correct. I specifically remember that I turned 5 years old and had my 5th birthday while I was already at Berhampore. I had been there for a while. I started at Berhampore School while I was there and one of the few childhood photographs I have is of me on this day with my satchel bag.

39. I was moved in and out of Berhampore from around 1971 or 1972 until about 1979. I was not first placed there in August 1972 as my records suggest. During these 7-8 years I was moved in and out of Berhampore so many times I lost count. It was more than 20 times. I was placed in short-term foster care placements organised by the PSC and later the Open Home Foundation (OHF).
40. According to my records, I would be sent back to Berhampore whenever the foster care placements weren't working or if the foster family's circumstances changed. Sometimes I would be told to be good, that I was going to a family that 'might' keep me, but then that family returned me back to Berhampore.
41. As I got older, I feel I caused a lot of these placements to breakdown. I was angry and confused about everything that I was going through and so I did my best to make life difficult for all my foster parents. I believed that the placement would eventually breakdown, so I didn't see the point in behaving well for people who would send me away when things got hard.

The Abuse at Berhampore

42. The abuse I suffered at Berhampore was physical, sexual and psychological. I was abused by both staff members and the other children.
43. There was a violent culture of abuse and bullying at Berhampore. I often witnessed other children being abused there.
44. For most of my time at Berhampore, I was the youngest boy in a group of around sixteen other boys and girls which made my experience especially hard. All the boys and girls were going through their own abuse and trauma, so they would transfer that on to the smallest guy in the room, which was me.
45. One of my earliest memories of Berhampore is hearing another boy being sexually abused by Mr Lake. This happened at Mr Lake's residential house that was on site not far from the home. Mr Lake would come and select a boy and take him back to the house and into his office. He would have a 'favourite boy' for a while who he would take into his office. We used to get the shits when we were called to go up to the house.

46. Violence was used to punish us for breaking the rules or for not following the correct procedure. For example, there were daily room checks, the children were expected to make our beds and have our rooms organised in a certain way. If your room was tidy and everything was in line with the correct procedure then you were left alone, but if your room was not up to standard, you would be given a hiding.
47. If we 'played up' or were naughty the staff at Berhampore would threaten us with violence from staff members who had reputations for being violent. I remember some staff members threatening us by saying things like, "I'll get Karen onto you".
48. I specifically remember a staff member at Berhampore, GRO-B-1 She used to beat me and the other children, she was very heavy-handed. I specifically remember her beating me at the Berhampore placement because later on, at twelve years of age, I was placed in the care of her and her husband.
49. Another form of regular punishment was having to hold out our hands while something was used to whack them. I remember one day I ripped my shirt and I was beaten with a dog collar/belt. The beating was so severe that my legs were bleeding afterwards.
50. At mealtimes there was a rule that we had to finish everything on our plate. If you didn't finish all your food, the plate with unfinished food would be set aside and it would be served to you at the next mealtime for you to finish. Sometimes staff members would come around with a big stick and hit our elbows and hands at the dinner table.
51. I remember being taken to Willis Street in the city where there was a dental clinic. The dentists working at this clinic were trainee dentists, there were rows of dentist chairs and busloads of us got taken down. When I was taken there, they pulled out several of my teeth.
52. While I was in care at Berhampore, I was put on anti-psychotic medication, Mellaril. I was only eight years old at the time. I remember this because the medication made me feel sick, gave me sore guts, severe headaches, made me tired and sluggish, and sometimes knocked me out. I could feel that the

medication wasn't good for me, so I decided to test it by 'gumming' a few of them. Once I'd saved a few pills, I crushed them up and fed them to a cat, which died. This confirmed in my mind that the medication was bad and that I wasn't going to take it anymore.

53. Looking back on this now, I don't think it is right that I was prescribed this medication without being thoroughly checked, spoken to and without anyone external being consulted.
54. In 1976 all the children at Berhampore were sent to live in Timaru for a year in another Children's Home. We were put into a mainstream school. I remember being bullied because I was the only brown child at the school. I didn't know anyone and got into a lot of fights.
55. I remember going to Court a few times. At some of these hearings my mother would be there. Whenever she was there, I was usually being transferred to another placement. This all happened when I was very young. I remembered not knowing what was happening in Court.
56. Between Berhampore and my foster placement with the [GRO-B-1] the OHF was involved and I went through temporary placements under them. OHF was like a hub for children waiting for a foster placement.

[GRO-B-2] *Family*

57. When I was eight or nine years old, I was in the care of the [GRO-B-2] family. I still remember their address to this day. The father was an Anglican Minister at the [GRO-B]. He was an ex-boxer so when he hit, it really hurt. There was one occasion when he tied me to a clothesline and left me outside at night as a punishment.
58. While I was in their care the family moved to Auckland and I went with them. While I was in Auckland, I attended St. Thomas's School in Kohimarama.

The GRO-B-1

59. At 12 years old, I was placed in the care of the GRO-B-1. Again, this was a placement organised by PSC.
60. I already knew Mrs GRO-B-1 from Berhampore. But she was no longer working there when I was placed in her care.
61. I vividly remember I didn't want to go into her care because she was violent, and I didn't trust her because of how she was at Berhampore. At the same time, in my mind any placement was better than going to Epuni.
62. Mrs GRO-B-1 was the disciplinarian of the house. I already knew from Berhampore that she was heavy-handed. She would do things like pretend to hit me to see what my reaction would be. I would flinch, and she would say, "I'm not going to hit you". She got a kick out of it.
63. Towards the end of the placement, I stopped fearing her and I began to rebel more. I would sneak out of my room at night and stay out for the weekend at my friends' houses. I remember putting a few holes in the walls of their home.

EPUNI BOYS' HOME

64. In 1980, I was sent to Epuni Boys' Home. This would be the first of three placements there, back and forth from the GRO-B-1 home. I had heard bad stories about Epuni before going there.

Physical, Sexual and Emotional/ Psychological Abuse

65. On the first day there, I went into the secure unit for a couple of days. That's what happened to all the new kids. You got a haircut, deloused with the powder, clothed and eventually sent off for your 'initiation'.
66. My initiation consisted of a beating from the other boys. They beat me with pillow cases containing bars of soap and shoes.
67. At Epuni it was expected that on your first night you would get another hiding in your sleep. This tradition was called the 'welcoming party'. So, later that night I

- got another beating from the boys. The staff knew that all of this was happening, but they would be giggling and turn a blind eye to it. At other times they encouraged the violence.
68. Violence was a big part of how things worked at Epuni. The staff there were violent and would use violence to make the children fearful and to enforce rules. They would be violent towards you for small things. The staff would often make the boys line up against the wall for the head count. If you were talking or were not against the wall, a staff member could, without warning, punch you in the face.
69. If one of the boys was hit by a staff member he wouldn't be checked on, medical assistance wouldn't be sought, and everyone was expected to carry on. There wasn't much talking or 'telling off' at Epuni. Instead, extreme violence was used.
70. The 'Kingpin' system was in place at Epuni. The 'Kingpin' was the 'toughest' boy at Epuni. He was closer with the staff than the rest of the boys were and would carry out violence at their request. The 'Kingpin' would get extra cigarettes and could smoke in areas where other children weren't allowed. Back then children could smoke at Epuni and there was a 'smoke time' when you could smoke if you had cigarettes.
71. Staff members at Epuni were sexually abusing the boys, one of whom was Mr Chambers. He would rub up against you, push you in the corner and put his hands down your pants. I was sexually abused but I didn't get it as much as others. I don't want to describe this in any further detail. Shower time was when certain staff members would grope the boys or do other sexual acts.
72. The staff at Epuni would also make us complete monotonous tasks with improper equipment as a form of punishment. For example, if you got caught spitting it was common for staff to make us scrub the courtyard with toothbrushes or to cut sections of the lawn with scissors. There were times when I was made to clean the toilet or forecourt with my toothbrush and brush my teeth with it afterwards.
73. For discipline I remember a time when the staff put a group of us on 23-hour lockdown and we were only let outside once a day for personal training (PT). PT

was run by staff who got a thrill out of making the boys suffer by doing overly difficult exercises. One of these was making us squat and carry the long wooden chairs from the dining hall around the field, this was called a 'duck-walk'. In the gym he would make us hang by our arms from overhead bars. We would then have to raise our legs and hold them in a horizontal position. If your legs dropped below horizontal, he would smash you on the feet with an object.

74. Some of the staff members at Epuni were real pricks. One staff member would take me into a room when I misbehaved and yell abusive things at me like, "You're fucken useless! No one cares about you! You're a typical nigger! I'll see you in jail, you'll never amount to anything".
75. There wasn't any way to complain about the violence at Epuni because we knew that the staff already knew it was happening. I became aware from early on that I couldn't complain to them about the treatment I was getting.

Secure Unit

76. The 'secure unit' at Epuni was run by Mr. GRO-B. I remember three separate times when I was sent to the 'secure unit'.
77. The first time I was there for initiation. The next time was punishment for six-weeks for running away. Other times I was there for two weeks each.
78. During my time in secure, I was locked in my room for 23 hours of the day and was made to do half an hour of 'PT' outside my room. The PT sessions were another form of torture and if you didn't do the exercises properly you would be beaten up by a staff member.
79. When I was about 14 years old, me and some mates tried to run away but got caught by the Police and were taken back to Epuni. As a punishment for trying to run away I was put in the 'secure unit', alone, for six weeks.
80. My records show the Epuni staff had recorded that I was placed in the secure-unit for two days. This is completely false. I know that on the occasion in question I was in secure for six weeks. I believe that the staff would have

recorded this incorrectly, because they knew that what was done to me was wrong.

81. Another time during one of the school holidays at Epuni the staff took all the children to a boys brigade camp in Wainuiomata. During the camp myself and about seven other boys took off. At the time, Mrs GRO-B
1 was having an affair with a guy that lived in Wainuiomata and so we headed out to her place. She called the Police and told on us and so we were arrested and taken back to Epuni.
82. I was blamed for the other boys running away and was singled out as the ring leader. I was put in secure for two weeks. The secure unit at Epuni only had two cells so I don't know where the other boys got shipped off to.
83. I knew there were other Islanders in the home, but no one would dare say it. In that era everyone hated 'coconuts'. If you were Māori, you were treated like shit. If you were an Islander, you would be treated like dog shit. Islanders would be hiding under the banner of Māori.
84. The room had a painted floor, there was a constant humming noise from a heater, the bed was concrete, and we weren't given a pillow or blanket. They would never turn the light out – it was pink and always on.

Visits with Mum

85. My mother did come and see me when I was at Epuni.
86. I remember my mother would take me out to town for tea during the visits and we would also see friends or relatives of hers. Whenever we would see other people, there was always a false story that she would coach me to play along with. She would say things like, "Oh, remember to say that we went to Fiji and Australia and that you had a good time". There was always a different story that I had to tell depending on who we were going to see.
87. During the term holidays and Christmas time, all of the other boys would go home to spend time with their families or relatives, but I would always stay behind.

88. I don't know if this is because there was no request for me to come home or because nothing was organised by my Social Worker and the staff at Epuni.

Medical Diagnoses

89. From my Epuni case files I have learnt that at 13 years old I was diagnosed as having 'hyperkinetic disorder' and 'personality disorder'. The following are excerpts from my care files:

The boy's personality disorder. It seems David is developing a sociopathic disorder.

I have seen in the past the boy has been diagnosed as having hyperkinetic syndrome. Whilst this boy is to some extent over-active, I would not think this over-activity is that of a hyperkinetic type. At this stage I would suggest that it would be wise to avoid labelling effects and try not to put David as either a sick person or a criminal in the making. Whilst the boy's future does not look terribly good, it appears that he is willing to delve into activities beyond his age range. He probably deserves a further trial in the community. In fact it's more a question of less the detrimental alternative for this instance as this boy is slightly socially advanced for a near-14-year-old he could well become a kingpin in the Hokio Boys Group. In addition he would find the school at Hokio less challenging than Naenae College and he may become difficult to deal with. If Kohiteri was suggested we would wonder about his vulnerabilities to the more sophisticated delinquents.

He projects as a well-adjusted adolescent who could be competent who will cope with day-to-day pressures he will encounter in the community. He is able to communicate well verbally to the point of being able to discuss and rationalise many of his problems. This unfortunately is only a facade, which David has built up over the years to block out many emotional pressures.

90. These medical people didn't even know me. They labelled me and made assumptions about me.

91. I saw many psychologists during my time in care. The process was always the same. I always approached them with a level of distrust, because of what they would ask me about and because I understood that this information could be used against me.
92. Looking back now, it is concerning that the only medical and personal history provided to the psychologist would have come from my care file. The files contain biased and inaccurate opinions about me which had to heavily influence the psychologist's decision to put me on such strong medication at such a young age. They just had to label me – there had to be a name as the reason I was behaving a certain way and a medication that could 'fix' me.
93. Around the time of these diagnoses while I was at Epuni, a decision was going to be made about whether I went to Hokio Beach School or into another foster placement. Reports and comments like this were used as part of the decision-making.
94. About this time, when I was 13 years old, I was legally placed under the guardianship of the Department of Social Welfare ("DSW"). I would have expected that DSW would have sought out the Crichton family or in the very least to have made some effort to connect me with my Samoan family and heritage. My paternal family's details are in the Epuni records.
95. Instead, the DSW continued to interact with me in ways that led me to believe that I was Māori and that I was a part of the Mohi whānau.

GRO-B-3

AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA

96. At the age of 13, I began attending the Hutt Valley Activity Centre. This place was an alternative school for children that couldn't go to mainstream school.
97. There was a teacher there, GRO-B-3, GRO-B
GRO-B which was under Naenae College.
98. When I started at the Activity Centre, I was in Epuni as my placement had broken down. An alternative placement was needed to be found for me. I was told that

I would be sent to Hokio Beach School and after all the stories I had heard about Hokio, I was scared. The alternative was [GRO-B-3]. Somehow, he found out I needed a placement.

99. I was placed in the care of [GRO-B-3]. He was a young, 26 year old, single male. He had another 16 year old boy in his care and lived with two male flatmates. That boy was sleeping in the same bed as this carer. Later, he would want me to do the same.
100. This carer would supply us with drugs and alcohol. Marijuana and alcohol were available on a daily basis. LSD was available when he could get it. I remember taking drugs that had me tripping out for days.
101. After being in his care of for about two years, he went for a teaching position in Papua New Guinea (PNG) [GRO-B]. At the time, this was very significant because I was the first State ward to be allowed out of the country to live with a caregiver overseas. Next thing I knew I was on a plane to PNG.
102. When we got to PNG, this carer connected with a male local and I was exposed to conversations that were nothing short of inappropriate. I didn't feel safe, and I went off and did my own thing. I was supposed to be doing school correspondence work, but I couldn't stay in that environment.
103. Because of what was happening there with this carer, I ended up running away. For about six months, I lived in the bush with a group of locals, a tribe who took me to their villages and introduced me to their families and way of life.
104. I was eventually located by local authorities and was accompanied by this carer back to New Zealand.
105. I do not want to talk in any detail about the abuse I experienced by this carer. I wrote to the State in 2001 disclosing abuse by him. Nothing came of this complaint.

106. I know that this carer went on to be convicted for child sex offending. I know this because one of the victim survivors who took him to Court told me. I am aware of children being sexually abused by this carer. I know at least three of the people he has offended against and am still good friends with them.
107. Everyone saw this carer as a saint who was running programmes at [GRO-B] [GRO-B] for 'bad kids' and taking them in when they had nowhere else to go. But that was far from the truth. And there was no kind of monitoring or outside people coming to check on us while we were in his care.
108. My partner [GRO-B-5] and I have contacted authorities, agencies and employers of this carer wherever we have suspected that children may be involved with him. I openly speak out about it. [GRO-B-5] [partner] called this carer after reading an article about children being invited to acting classes with him in a [GRO-B] paper. The acting classes did not go ahead. He should not be allowed anywhere near children or young people.
109. As part of this Inquiry process, this carer has acknowledged abuse I suffered while in his care. [WITN0456005]
110. I hold both him and the State responsible for my abuse, and the trauma and impacts this has had on me and my family.
111. After I returned from PNG, I was in and out of so many places until I was discharged as a State ward at 18 years old.

MY TIME IN CARE

112. From as early as I can remember, I always wanted to be in a family that cared for me and to make the placements work. I wanted to have a mother, father, brother and sister who cared for me and a place where I could stay without having to move all the time. When I was younger, I didn't understand why I kept being moved and a lot of the time I wasn't aware of why different families couldn't or didn't want to keep me. A lot of the time I blamed myself for being moved around and thought that there was something wrong with me.

113. As I got older, I remember being a handful for the families that I was placed with. The anger, rage and misbehaving were all because I didn't understand why no one wanted me. I couldn't understand why all the other children I came across knew their family and I didn't, or why they had someone or some family to go back to and I didn't.
114. When I was in foster care placements, they were always with Palagi families. Based on the treatment I received and my experience in these placements, I felt that most of these families only took me in because the Government was giving caregivers a fair amount of money to care for children. The caregivers would get money for their food, water, power and for any expenses related to my care.
115. Some foster parents made me feel like a burden. They tried to make it seem unfair that they had to look after me so that they could justify using half of the resources on their own children. The foster parents treated these resources as another 'meal ticket' for their own children.
116. The interactions and relationships I had with the children of the foster families were good and bad. The way I behaved towards the children would largely depend on how the foster parents treated me. If the foster parents were mean to me then I would pass the same kind of treatment on to their children in my own way.

Social Workers

117. During my time in care, I had a lot of different social workers, and I was sent to see a great number of psychologists, so many that I have lost count. I don't remember having a lawyer represent me during my time in care, I only remember having a lawyer for my criminal matters later on in life.
118. When I was in foster care, the main reason I would see a social worker was when they came to give the foster parents resources to buy things for me. I don't recall seeing social workers for any other reason. The social workers would provide the foster parent with a pink or yellow slip that could be used in certain stores. I would go with the foster parent and their children and pick out clothes that I wanted, but most of it would go to their children.

119. Whenever I was in a foster care placement, the only time I was 'checked on', by anyone external was when I was really naughty. When this happened, a social worker from the organisation would come and talk to me to find out what was going on. Other than this, the usual case was that once you were placed in a foster family there was no external monitoring of the foster parents.

Education

120. Throughout my time in care, I was going to public schools, but I didn't stay at one school for very long. I wasn't able to settle down at one school. I lacked confidence in the classroom. I ended up being the 'class clown' and being disruptive. **[WITN0456006]**

121. I enjoyed maths at school, but I found reading difficult and would be mocked by the other children because I couldn't read well. When this happened, I would find the child at lunch time and give them a hiding.

122. I attended Naenae Intermediate and Naenae College while I was in care. I was only at Naenae College for a few weeks before I was expelled. One of the students there called my friend a 'nigger' and so I punched him in the jaw.

IMPACTS OF THE ABUSE

Neglect and the Loss of my Culture and Identity

123. The loss of my cultural identity is the part of my experience in care that hurts me the most. I spent all my childhood, youth and the beginning of my adult life believing that I was Māori. I was denied any knowledge of my Samoan family, culture and identity. I am covered in Māori tattoos because I believed that that was who I was. If I had truly known of my Samoan cultural heritage I would likely be covered in Samoan tatau.

124. My records state that the first time I was told that my father was Samoan was by a social worker at 8 years old. I don't remember the recorded interaction between myself and a DSW social worker where this was alleged to have been explained to me. At no stage after this was anything done to link me to my paternal family or culture. It definitely wasn't something that was reinforced or accurately

recorded on my file during my time in care, because throughout my time in care I was still under the belief that I was Māori. That is how my ethnicity is recorded in my file, that was what my last name told me, and I don't remember being told anything different.

125. All my best friends are Māori, everyone I've ever known is Māori. Later in life I spent a period in prison and I was sent to Hamner Springs, a recovery place. I went into the Māori unit there – because I thought I was Māori. I was the leader of the group, I led the haka, the formal welcomes, everything.
126. And there was a little bit of conflict between Māori and Samoan already. Some Māori don't like it because Samoans can speak their language fluently and a lot of people that I know might say things like, "Ah, bloody coconut", so I was in a real bind.
127. It took many years, and I still struggle with it, to accept that I'm Samoan, because I wasn't raised as a Samoan, but all my family is. With my Māori family and friends I'm very comfortable, they're mostly gang members and staunch people of Māori descent and they would be the first to say that I'm Māori.
128. I feel like I was Māori before I was Samoan and when I'm around my friends I still feel like I'm Māori. Adjusting to the Samoan culture has been challenging. The way things are done is quite structured and there is a hierarchy of who can say and do different things. I am quite a vocal person, so I have had to adjust that to fit into the Samoan way of doing things.
129. My children very much identify with the Samoan culture. They have been around their Samoan family their whole lives and have a strong connection to being Samoan. At times I feel guilty about not being able to teach them about my family and the Samoan culture, but it has been great to learn things together and to build bonds with our Crichton whānau in the process.
130. It has been a joy to see my children's desire to be connected to who they are. Seeing my daughter building connections online with the extended Crichton family and hearing my sixteen-year-old son's speech in the Samoan language are great successes for us as an aiga.

Neglect and the Loss of my Father

131. My Dad died while I was in the care. My mother knew for ages that he had been sick. He died on a Monday. I understand that the previous Friday, the staff at my placement became aware that my Dad was in hospital, that he was likely to pass away and that he had asked to see me. But, the staff kept this information from me until Sunday.
132. On Monday morning the staff contacted the hospital to organise a time for me to visit my father, but they were told that my father had died a few hours earlier.
133. Later that week my mother and a social worker took me to my Dad's funeral. I had no idea what was going on. At the funeral my mother was telling my Dad's family that James Crichton was my father. She was introducing me to people by saying things like, "This is Jim's boy". I vividly remember family members staring in disbelief, some didn't know how to take it, which made me feel very uncomfortable. I was only there for a very short time, less than half an hour. It was so confusing for me.
134. My aunts have since said that they spoke to my mother and a social worker prior to the funeral and that my aunts gave us permission to attend the funeral. One of my cousins from the Crichton family, who is a bit older than me, also remembers that day. She said that the family wanted to see me and talk to me. My mother kept me close and took me away without saying anything.
135. I never had the opportunity to meet my biological father while he was still alive. This was a confusing experience for me as my mother and the Social Worker didn't really explain what was happening before we got there.

Neglect and the Loss of Connection with my Samoan Family

136. Personal details for my biological father and his sisters are recorded in my records from Epuni. My Aunts Rose and Margaret Crichton were recorded as being present at my birth and my ethnicity is recorded as Samoan. There are also addresses and contact details for my father's family, but there are no records

showing any efforts to contact them or that any effort was made to assess whether they could have had me in their care.

137. When I was 30 and received some of my files, I got in touch with my Crichton family. I found out that my Auntie Rose lived in Porirua while I was at Epuni, which is about a 25-minute drive from Epuni. When I spent time with her, she would often cry when we were together and say things like, "I don't know how we didn't get you, we didn't know where you were and how did your mother managed to hide you away?". She showed me an old photo of myself as a child, that my mother had given to her. The photo was from when I was in care at about 11 years old. I found out that my mother was still in touch with the Crichton family while I was in care, but she told them that I was at boarding school and other lies.
138. As an adult, other members of the Crichton family have also told that they would have had me in their care but they didn't know where I was or that I was in care. It was painful to hear this, knowing that the DSW had their contact details and never made an effort to contact them.
139. Having no access to my extended family while I was in care, is a form of abuse that I went through. When I was in Berhampore and Epuni, during the end of year holidays, all the other children would have family that they would go home to. I was often the only child left at Berhampore and Epuni over the holidays that had nowhere to go to. While I was in care, I was led to believe that this was because I had no family to go to.
140. When children are in care they need to be made aware of their ethnicity, their true identity and of their extended family. Because my mother was so secretive and deceptive about my father and any extended family that I had, I missed out on having relationships with my extended family and also because PSC and the State neglected their own duties. I believe that the organisations responsible for my care had a duty to at least tell me who my family was, to tell me about my ethnicity, to make genuine efforts to look for my family. This responsibility increases, in cases like mine, where a child spends their whole upbringing in care.

141. This is what getting my files was all about – to break the cycle for my kids, I thought maybe they could find a cousin or something. Only to find out they were living not far away from me all along.
142. It brings me a lot of joy to see that my children know their family, that they get the chance to have relationships with their cousins and are connected (in their own ways) to being Samoan.

Mental Health

143. Shortly after finding out about my Samoan heritage in my 30s, I really struggled and ended up going into the Mental Health Unit for a screening. After the screening interview I was told that the waitlist for treatment would be around six to eight months. A week later, they told me to come back because of how concerned they were after a quick review of my screening interview results.
144. The Mental Health Unit referred me to a psychologist for an assessment. The psychologist was a good one and said that I likely had PTSD from my upbringing in care. But he didn't want to formally diagnose me with PTSD because it would affect my employment as a truck driver. He explained that if he diagnosed me with PTSD, I would need to disclose the diagnosis and medication to my employer.
145. I wanted the psychologist to prescribe me with medication to help me deal with the explosive outbursts and extreme lows that I was suffering from. Because I didn't want the diagnosis and medication to affect my employment, the psychologist prescribed me with Zyban, which is a smoking-cessation and anti-depression medication. This medication worked well for me and helped to mellow me out. I wasn't as reactive and angry all the time.

My Family

146. My family has had to learn to live with the things that I need in my life to heal from my time in care. In the past this meant that I may spend days away from home hanging out with friends. For me, this was where I felt at home and could really

be myself. I needed to be around people that went through similar experiences to me in their childhood.

147. My partner has taught me about a lot of the behaviour that I have that isn't 'normal'. I have learnt that I was quite desensitised to violence and sexual deviance. If it happens around me, I'm not shocked by it and will just carry on as normal. I believe that this came from my time in care. Violence is what I learnt as a normal way to be, it could happen at any time when I was in care and I saw and experienced so much of it that it became normal to me.
148. The end of year holidays is always a difficult time for me. It reminds me of the holidays I spent in Berhampore and Epuni. While I was there, all the other children would go home to their families or relatives, but I wouldn't have any family or relatives to go to. For a long time, I couldn't enjoy the holidays because they would just bring up these memories.
149. Now that I am a grandfather, my daughter has been telling me about things they missed out on in their childhood. She does this because she doesn't want our moko to miss out as well. Because I never got the chance to spend time with my parents or grandparents, my children teach me about the 'little things' that are really important in your childhood.

REDRESS

My Claims

150. On 17 April 2001, I wrote to Child, Youth and Family (CYF) seeking guidance and direction on how to bring a claim for the abuse I suffered in care.
151. On 27 April 2001, I received a response from CYF advising me that they were not in a position to respond until they received a formal statement of claim which should set out the allegations in detail together with any causes of action in tort that I believe I might have against the Department. I was informed that I might wish to consider seeking legal advice. **[WITN0456007]**
152. We sought legal assistance to lodge a claim but the fee was so large that it put us off making a claim.

153. After this, I suffered from significant cultural confusion and an identity crisis. I needed to prioritise myself and my family. I did not make a claim until 14 years later.

MSD Historic Claims

154. In 2015, I lodged a claim with MSD's Historic Claims Unit. My claim has been ongoing for the past six years. I have been told by MSD that my claim is being 'fast-tracked' but that is rubbish. MSD uses a lot of delaying tactics to draw out this redress process and they consistently fail to follow through with what they say will be done.

155. When it comes to notifying claimants of changes, requests for further information and updates to a claim, the onus has been on me to follow up with MSD about any updates for my claim. They always say they'll come back to me. The latest time they said we would hear from them in April 2021 and I followed up with them again last week and they have told me there are very high level legal issues affecting my claim. The delay has been unacceptable.

156. In the past I never considered seeking compensation for the abuse I suffered in care. My approach has always been that what happened, was just the way things are and to get on with serving my sentence.

157. But given the way I have been treated by MSD, I am now interested in looking at compensation. I want a genuine acknowledgement and a meaningful apology for what I went through and for what they are still putting me through. I want my past convictions wiped.

158. The redress process needs to have a clear pathway and timeline for the different stages in the process.

159. MSD should be more proactive in following up with and informing claimants about the progress of their claims. In my experience, MSD would give an approximate date for when the claim would progress to the next step. These dates would come and go and there would be no update from them about what was happening with my claim. Throughout the claims process MSD never initiated

contact with us, it was always the case that we had to chase MSD for information and updates.

160. As a survivor of abuse the current MSD claims process increases my anxiety because you're constantly having to relive it. It's the worst thing you can do to someone. I will often have emotional outbursts or will be short tempered with my family during the time I am expecting an update from MSD.

161. The staff in the Historic Claims Unit at MSD are almost exclusively Palagi. From my experience, the Palagi staff at MSD are unable to empathise with what it feels like to be lied to about your cultural identity and the existence of your extended family.

Meeting with MSD's Historic Claims Unit

162. In around June 2020 I was asked to meet with staff from the Historic Claims Unit to hear the outcome of my claim which I lodged in 2015. Initially, they told me to come to their offices for the meeting, but I wanted the meeting to be on my terms and so I told them that the meeting would be held at our local marae.

163. Two members of the Historic Claims Unit came to the meeting, both I think had social work backgrounds. A taxi waited for them outside the whole time during the meeting. That spoke volumes to me – they were ready to leave when they could.

164. GRO-B-5 partner opened the meeting with a karakia and we decided to read out an essay that my daughter, Brooke, had written about how she and our family had been affected by my time in care.

165. In the essay, Brooke referred to the hurt caused by State employees falsifying documents in my file. After the entire essay had been read out, the very first response from one of the ladies was, "What documents were falsified?". Of all the things to hear in that essay, that is the one thing they picked on.

166. This response was very upsetting to me, as it showed that they weren't really listening to my story and had only come to the meeting to dispute the truth.

167. Following this, they explained that they believed that they were only responsible for the abuse that took place from the date I was formally placed under the guardianship of the DSW (around 14 years old). They had come to the meeting with a pre-written apology that reflected this time period only. This made me angry.
168. They went on to explain that I wasn't placed in the care of my Crichton family because "they didn't want you".
169. They also claimed that my father didn't contribute to my upbringing because he was paying maintenance for his other children. Both of these statements are entirely untrue. My records show that is what my mother told them and they relied on it knowing that she was not mentally well.
170. Firstly, there are no references in my file to Social Welfare approaching the Crichton family about the possibility of caring for me. Secondly, I was the only child that my father had, so their belief that he couldn't provide for me because he was contributing to payments for other children is incorrect.
171. Neither PSC nor the State made any direct contact with the Crichtons about caring for me. Any views they had formed were made in reliance on information my mother gave them.
172. During the meeting I was offered a \$15,000 payment and a written apology accepting responsibility for the abuse I suffered in their care, but only from the date that I became a State ward in 1981.
173. The written apology was conditional on me accepting the \$15,000 payment and signing a waiver that I wouldn't be able to make any further claims against the State. To put this in perspective, my daughter receives about \$10,000 a year for our grandson under the Working for Families Scheme. The amount offered by DSW doesn't at all relate to the loss and trauma I have suffered, the effects and impact the abuse has had on my life, nor the expense involved in healing from that trauma. **[WITN0456008]**

174. No apology should be conditional. It shouldn't be the case that I have to accept the terms of their settlement for them to apologise.
175. The meeting lasted a few hours. It felt as though I was on trial and that they were trying to disprove my version of events.
176. During the meeting, they raised my care with [GRO-B-3], they disputed my claims that he was a child molester and that he had been convicted of child sex-offending. Then they quoted from the files and said there was nothing in the file that indicated I was unhappy. I responded by pointing out that I had attempted to end my life twice. They wouldn't have everything in the file, my files are incomplete, no one cared what was happening to me. It really angered me as they should have investigated my claims about him prior to coming to the meeting rather than challenging me without any basis to disprove my claim.
177. They said that they would investigate my claim relating to this carer and his convictions, and that we would have another meeting once this was completed. This never happened.
178. They told me that they are only responsible for a claim while I was a State ward. They said for the period before this my claim is with PSC. They gave me contact details for PSC which were incorrect.
179. At the end of the meeting, I'd had enough of their attitude and had become quite agitated by how they had conducted themselves, so the meeting ended quite suddenly. They left quickly, without following any of the marae protocol. There was no karakia and no sharing of food to end the meeting.
180. After the meeting [GRO-B-5 partner] made an OIA request to MSD for information as to how MSD came to certain decisions about my claim.
181. Through this Royal Commission of Inquiry, [GRO-B-3] has now acknowledged his abuse of me and the allegations I made about him.
182. The State are responsible for placing me in his care and for the abuse I suffered.

Impacts of the MSD Historic Claims Process

183. Six years later and my claim is still processing. I have been told that legal issues have been identified which has impacted a number of claims, including mine. I am told the legal issues are 'very high level'. It is just rubbish. **[WITN0456009]**
184. In the beginning an apology would have included accepting responsibility for the way I was treated, for failing to provide access to my extended family and Samoan heritage. I wanted them to apologise for withholding information about my family who lived so close by in Porirua when I was in Epuni. But the attitude that MSD brought to the claims process meeting took away any meaning in an apology.
185. When I first started the claims process, it was really important to me that MSD accept responsibility for the way they treated me and how the abuse I suffered in care affected my life. But now, because of how I have been treated during the claims process, the money has become a more central thing because a genuine meaningful apology and them accepting full responsibility just isn't going to happen.
186. The claims process needs to be culturally sensitive and appropriate for people, so that survivors can heal in a way that works for them. Part of this is about ensuring that the people who are assessing claims can empathise or at least sympathise with the pain of claimants and work with them in a trauma informed way.
187. I was so badly affected by the Historic Claims process that I lodged an official complaint. **[WITN0456010]**
188. The compensation or redress payments for survivors need to be more in line with the actual costs involved in the survivor and their family healing from the abuse. I feel as though I have traumatised my family because of the way that I am. But MSD don't see this kind of trauma as something that is a central part of the redress process.

189. The abuse I suffered in care took place over the 17 years I was in care. It still affects me today. It affects the lives of my partner and children, and we shouldn't be expected to heal in a set amount of time or with access to a limited amount of resources. I would like for my partner and children to have access to counselling and wellbeing services because they have experienced their own trauma through me.

ACCESS TO RECORDS

190. Requesting my files and personal information from my time in care has been a very complicated, distressing and exhaustive process.
191. When I initially requested my files in 1996 and 1997, I received only a few pages of notes which were heavily redacted.
192. In 2002, I made a further request, and I received a larger portion of my care file.
193. My partner located PSC's details, who operated Berhampore and administered many of my foster placements, to get a copy of my file from when I was in their care.
194. Initially, PSC tried to tell me that I was never in their care and so I had to send them some documents to prove that I was. Shortly after sending them this documentation, they informed me that there had been a fire in their Blenheim office where all their files were stored. I am sceptical about this.
195. I again contacted PSC in 2018 and 2020 for further information, without success.
196. On 3 June 2021, I received the following message from PSC's lawyer through the Royal Commission of Inquiry:

PSC wishes to apologise to Mr Mohi for the fact that his previous efforts to reach out to them have not resulted in a satisfactory response. PSC has confirmed that it would welcome contact from Mr Mohi if he is comfortable speaking with them, including if he wishes to make a complaint about what occurred during this time under their care. As noted on PSC's website (at <https://www.psc.org.nz/royal-commission/>)

Patrick Waite (the former CEO of PSC) can be contacted in the first instance at pat.waite@psc.org.nz, or by phone on (04) 439 39 80. Pat is happy for Mr Mohi to contact him directly if he wishes, or I am happy for you to liaise through me.

197. This apology is lacking in substance in terms of empathy and there is a real lack of insight and understanding of the impacts this correspondence might create for me. It reads as a very transactional piece of writing. This is not an apology. I do intend to make a complaint about what occurred during my time in PSC care. Had I not gone through the Inquiry process, I doubt that this offer to make a complaint ever would have happened and that is wrong.
198. I am aware that the Royal Commission of Inquiry requested files and information about me from PSC and were informed that they hold no further information other than two documents which referenced me. However, following an in-person search of PSC's physical archives there was some more information about me. These are the things that afford me no confidence that people are telling the truth and they are just trying to cover up things.
199. Some of the records from PSC and the State are inaccurate and heavily redacted. Many pages have the word 'delete' sprawled across them. In some instances, false information was recorded by staff members to cover up unlawful and unethical behaviour. Information was recorded that they knew not to be true.
200. The records I have received through my OIA requests are very valuable to me, because they give me a place to start when trying to understand what happened to me in my childhood and where I have been. Other children have photos, identity, culture; but I just feel like a file number, all I have is my records.
201. I know the Royal Commission of Inquiry has requested my files and made every attempt to piece together my history. There have been delays and extensions sought by organisations and some places replied that they just hold no information about me. Permission had to be received for some documents to be shown to me. That is unfair. This is my life. Everyone else knows my life except me.

FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

Employees in Social Services

202. Social workers are a very important part of protecting children in care. I do not believe that you should be able to go into social work just because you have the qualification. I think it's a job where life experience and understanding how cultures, people, families and communities work, is more important than anything you can learn at university.
203. Employers in the social service sector give too much weight to university qualifications and that they are biased towards hiring 'like-minded' people. I believe that if you are trying to solve a problem, such as how to care for and protect children, with only 'like-minded' people, you will never get to the core of the problem because you need people that are off the other end of the scale, someone who isn't 'like-minded' to give another perspective.
204. In the social services you want people that are real and can relate to the people they work with. But what I have experienced and seen, is that they employ the person that's squeaky clean, who's got a lovely little CV that ticks all the boxes. This makes no sense to me, because most of the clients won't relate to them and they're not going to tell the real truths that their clients need to hear. I remember as a kid I could pick a liar a mile away, it was one of the skills that you learnt to survive, and I know that clients working with employees in the social services will be the same way.
205. There also needs to be more accountability for wrongdoing by professionals involved in the care and protection of children. Institutions and government departments need to accept fault for allowing abuse to take place and for not carrying out their duties properly.
206. My upbringing has led GRO-B-5 partner into a career of working with youth and children. A theme that often comes up is the need for protective oversights of children in care and that these oversights need not be negative or punitive.

207. Protective oversights should be a way to look at what is really happening in the situation and finding ways to empower those involved to provide the best care for their child. The emphasis should be on walking alongside whānau to provide the supports needed for them to fulfil their parental role, rather than uplifting children from their family and forcing parents into programmes.
208. The professional staff that work in the care and protection of children, must be trained in how to apply a trauma informed response. I believe that they should also have to demonstrate that they are able to apply this kind of response. At present, there are no requirements for staff to practice in this way.

Convictions, Employment and the Clean Slate Act 2004

209. After coming out of care, when I was in my early twenties, I spent some time in prison for firearm, cannabis, and theft against the person offences. This was a direct result of all the many forms of abuse I suffered while in the extensive number of care placements, including the drugs I was supplied with as a child and the neglect of my culture, identity and family. I refer to this as the State care to prison pipeline.
210. Trying to find employment has been very difficult my whole life because of my time in care and because of my convictions. At every interview I have had to disclose my convictions, which are very personal and difficult stories to tell. It's difficult to tell these stories to complete strangers in a job interview when I haven't even been able to tell my children about all of it yet.
211. Whenever I apply for a job I explain my convictions, my upbringing in care and my life since being in care, just so that an employer will have some context to my convictions. This process is belittling, embarrassing, and I often find myself trying to explain things I did in my youth, that are so far from who I am today.
212. My criminal convictions also prevent me from travelling overseas. Recently, I was supposed to go to Australia, I went to the Australian High Commission and got a letter because I would be entering Australia under a special class of visa. I was told that the letter didn't guarantee my entry into Australia and so I decided

to give the ticket to my son because I was too overwhelmed about what could happen at the border.

213. In 2011/2012 I sent two letters to my local MP, Chris Hipkins, to tell my life story and to advocate for the Clean Slate Act 2004 to apply to convictions with a maximum penalty of ten years' imprisonment instead of seven. Mr Hipkins wasn't interested in helping me and so I sent letters to both Andrew Little, Minister of Justice and Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister, but these attempts also led to nothing.
214. An alternative to the Clean Slate Act 2004, would be for the Courts or another body to be able to assess whether convictions should be quashed on a case by case basis. In cases of adults who were raised under the guardianship of the State, this would acknowledge the role of the State in the survivor coming through the justice pipeline. I have paid my debt to society for the crimes I committed 30 years ago, but having convictions means that my punishment has continued since I came out of prison.
215. The same can't be said of the professional staff that abused me and the professionals who failed to carry out their duties. They haven't been punished in any way. Their lives aren't affected because of the wrongs they've committed. The professional staff that were involved in my care played a large part in shaping who I am today, but they have not faced any consequences for their role in this.
216. In April 2021, my partner and I saw a photo of [GRO-B-3] in [GRO-B] newspaper. It was a photo of him [GRO-B] [GRO-B]. We were very concerned and upset that he was able to continue working with children and that his convictions didn't prevent this from happening.

My Aiga

217. After being in State care for the first 18 years of my life, there was a long period of figuring out how to adjust to living in the community. I was lucky that I met [GRO-B-5 partner] in my early twenties and that she helped me to adjust. The smallest things about

being in a loving relationship and being in a loving family were things that I had to learn from ^{GRO-B-5}partner because I had never seen or experienced these things before.

218. When I found out about my Samoan heritage, I became suicidal and life was very volatile for all of us. It took me about 15 years to accept the change in my ethnicity. This all happened just before we had our first child, so the timing of it all was terrible. I resorted to very heavy drug use during this time and went into a very dark place.

219. ^{GRO-B-5}partner has been a real anchor for me in recovering from the trauma that I experienced in care. A big part of the reason why she chose her career was because of my time in care. We have been together for 29 years and in this time, we've had to come up with ways to shelter our children from my background, upbringing and the 'ups and downs' that come with who I am.


220. When our children were young, my partner and I would tell them that a 'dark cloud' had come whenever I was going through a low period. Through this our children have had to come to understand emotions and the lows that people can experience, in ways that other children never have to.

221. As a family we have come up with a practice of having family 'circle of trust' meetings once a month on a Sunday. We call them our village meetings, they're an opportunity for anyone in our immediate family to bring things to the table. In our meetings you're not allowed to talk over anybody, you get to say what you want to say, in your own words and nothing is ever right or wrong. These meetings have created more awareness between our family members of each other's thoughts and in turn has brought us all closer together.

222. A copy of my written consent to use my statement is **annexed** to this statement.

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: GRO-C 9th July 2021

Annexure A

Not relevant to Natural Justice process

Date: GRO-C 9TH JULY 2021