

**Witness Name:** ALAN HENDRICKS

**Statement No.:** WITN0316001

**Exhibits:** WITN0316002 – WITN031600

**Dated:** 8 April 2021

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## ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

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### WITNESS STATEMENT OF ALAN HENDRICKS

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I, Alan Hendricks, will say as follows: –

- 1 My name is Alan Hendricks, and I was born on GRO-C 1961. I am 59 years old. I currently live in Whangarei. I am a survivor of Lake Alice and was there for 7 months between 8 May 1974 and 29 January 1975.
- 2 I was one of the claimants in the Grant Cameron proceedings. I made a previous statement about my time in Lake Alice. (Statement of Alan Hendricks for Grant Cameron Proceedings, dated 2001 [WITN0316002]) I endorse what I said in that statement and it is to be read as part of this statement.

#### **My early life**

- 3 I was born in Marton. My father is GRO-B and my mother is GRO-B.

- 4 In 1967, my parents divorced and my father remarried. My sister and I lived with my father and his new wife. My father was employed as a nurse at Lake Alice.
- 5 My home life was not a happy one. I was treated badly by my stepmother. She made me work after school and into the night. I had no love or affection and was unhappy. My father was just as bad and did not stop her from treating me badly.
- 6 In 1972 and 1973, I started having counselling sessions with Dr Leeks and was admitted to Manawaroa for about three weeks. The first impression I had of Leeks was that he was nice. But that was just a front, and I quickly learnt that he was actually a snake.
- 7 I remember the event that led me to being put in Lake Alice. I was in my bedroom and had rolled up some newspaper to use as a cigarette. I was 12 at the time and was just experimenting. The smoke, which I had tried to direct out the window, blew back into my room. I opened my door to clear the smoke. My dad thought I was trying to light a fire. I tried to tell my dad what had happened, but he didn't want to hear. It came to the point where my Father pretty much said "Either Alan goes, or my wife goes". (Lake Alice Information Sheet dated 15 October 1974 **[WITN0316003]**)
- 8 I was taken by my father to Lake Alice that same evening. It is my understanding that my father told them that my behaviour had become increasingly bizarre and that I had tried to light a fire in my room. As I set out above, that's not what happened. (Social Worker report dated 1 July 1975 **[WITN0316004]**)
- 9 Even before going to Lake Alice, my father had often threatened that he would take me there and apply ECT. He knew what was happening there and would scare us with the stories to keep us in line.
- 10 I believe my dad and Dr Leeks came up with the plan to admit me. My later records show that they had said I had an acute psychiatric (behavioural) disorder. I didn't. (Department of Social Welfare Letter dated 25 July 1975 **[WITN0316005]** and Dr Leeks Psychiatrist report undated but prior to Lake Alice admission **[WITN0316006]**)

## **Admission to Lake Alice**

- 11 I was admitted to Lake Alice on 8 May 1974. I was 13 years old. I was discharged on 29 January 1975 after spending over seven months locked up there for no reason. (Lake Alice Discharge Notes dated 29 January 1975 [WITN0316007] and Dr Leeks Discharge Letter dated 17 February 1975 [WITN0316008]). I think I was in Villa 9 or Villa 11.
- 12 I do not believe that I should have been admitted to Lake Alice. I was a physically and mentally well 12-year-old when I was admitted. A report obtained from my school at the time, Rangitikei College, indicated that, until my removal to Lake Alice in May, I was co-operative, helpful, and no trouble at all. (Report from Principal of Rangitikei College dated 10 November 1974 [WITN0316009])
- 13 I had always done my schoolwork and tried hard to please. I had liked games and always played with good sportsmanship. I was described as having an outgoing personality and that most children liked me. I was also described as generally clean and tidy. The principal recorded that my father had been to the school prior, and the principal even said to him that he had not noticed any change in my behaviour or attitude at school and that I was a pleasant and helpful child. [WITN0316009]). Despite that, I was removed from the school and sent to Lake Alice, as I mentioned above.
- 14 I think that this shows my father had been thinking about putting me into Lake Alice for a while. It wasn't just the one "fire incident" in my bedroom. He wanted to get rid of me. And Leeks was quite happy to have another child to torture.
- 15 There was no inquiry made by the hospital authorities about me prior to my admission. It was just an arrangement between my father and Dr Leeks.

## **Accommodation**

- 16 I was placed in a villa with other kids who were clearly extremely unwell. My sleep would be interrupted by people talking to themselves, screaming, fighting with other children and having epileptic and other types of fits. I understood

that there were a number of schizophrenic children in the hospital. It was a very scary place to me.

## **Punishment**

- 17 On Saturday mornings, Leeks would visit the villa. The lounge door would be locked, and the staff would meet with him and decide who would be punished. It depended on who they said had been good and who had been bad during the week. I always tried to be good, but you still never knew if it would be you who would be picked. There would be this constant fear on Saturday morning as everyone sat around looking at each other and thinking "I am sure I have been a good boy this week". If they said you had been bad, then you were taken for ECT or you could be punished by being given drugs, as I describe below.

## **Electro-convulsive Therapy**

- 18 Thankfully, I did not get ECT. My records from social welfare show that I did not cause much trouble at Lake Alice and tended to keep to myself. Leeks himself said I was "a delight to have around". There was a good reason for that – I was terrified of the punishment that I had seen given to other kids. (Lake Alice Nurses Notes dated between May 1974 and Jan 1975 [WITN0316010] and [WITN0316008])
- 19 ECT was regularly used as punishment. The ECT machine would be wheeled into the dining room to scare us into being good. As soon as we saw the machine, everybody stopped talking and we would be silent. The only reason for the presence of the ECT machine was as a threat of punishment.
- 20 From the dormitory where I was placed, you could hear the screams of boys being given shock treatment. I regularly saw boys being dragged off to the ECT machine for punishment. I am quite sure that it was punishment and not part of the treatment. I wasn't stupid and could put two and two together. I saw people misbehave, saw them threatened with the punishment, saw them dragged away, heard their screams, and could see the heat marks left on their legs around the knee area when they returned. Those marks were described to me by the boys involved as being from the electrodes.

21 I remember this guy **GRO-B-1**. He was said to be a paranoid schizophrenic, and he used to get ECT all the time.

22 **GRO-B-2** would get it all the time for running away. He was called “roadrunner”. He would get the electrodes on his legs. We would see him the next day, and then he would run away again. I saw him once and he’d been knocked out and so he was carried up into the padded cell. We were once taken into the surgery, and **GRO-B-2** was comatose on the bed and we were told, “This is what’ll happen to you guys, too.”

## Drugs

23 I might not have got ECT for punishment but I did get drug injections for punishment. I remember one time I was punished for misbehaving, but I was just being a normal 13-year-old boy, running around, being noisy and playing. Me and a group of other boys were taken back to the villa and told to wait outside the surgery. I remember the deathly silence as the six of us waited for our turn to go in and get punishment. Just standing in the queue and waiting was horrible. The line would get smaller and smaller, and the whole time we would be listening to the cries of the other boys from behind the closed door. There was nowhere to run, and we knew we couldn’t escape the pain that was about to come.

24 When it was my turn, I was taken into the surgery and held down by a nurse, **GRO-B 100**, while another nurse, Steve Hunt, administered the paraldehyde injection. It had a very distinct smell. I would recognise the smell today. I only ever received this one time, and that was enough.

25 Getting paraldehyde in the arm is excruciatingly painful. I’ve had two hips replaced and spinal surgery, but that pain was something else. I remember screaming from the intense burning in my arm. It was horrible – I guess like pouring boiling water into your arm.

26 I was scared shitless. After this I tried not to misbehave again at Lake Alice. I withdrew inside myself and just did as I was told.

### **The Truth Drug**

27 I was also given “the truth drug”. It was different from paraldehyde and would be given by Leeks himself. I don’t know what it’s called, but he would give it to us and then you would start to feel out of it. It felt like you were asleep, but you weren’t; you could still talk. I would wake up in a padded cell, all alone, and it would be completely dark. The windows were blacked out.

28 I only received this the one time as soon after, I was discharged.

### **Sexual assaults/Mental abuse**

29 I never saw anyone and wasn’t aware of anyone get physically or sexually abused. We were mentally abused every day though, little comments like “wait till Saturday”.

### **Staff**

30 As I said, Dr Leeks ran the adolescent unit. My dad worked in the adolescent unit too until I was admitted, and then they moved him somewhere else. I would see him now and then in passing, but that’s it.

31 I had a few meetings with Dr Leeks. He was placid to talk to, but you couldn’t go against him, he was the boss. The less you had to do with him, the better. It wasn’t good when Leeks was around.

32 There were some good people in there. Some nice nurses. For example, Terry Conlon and Dennis Hessleltine. They treated all boys with respect and were certainly not involved in that sort of behaviour. Those two men actually took great pity on me and even took me home to their families for home leave. They clearly believed that I was inappropriately placed.

### **Schooling**

33 I went to school in Lake Alice with about a dozen other boys. It wasn’t every day; it was just now and then. I don’t remember how often, and I don’t remember what we learnt. There’s not really much more to say about that.

- 34 I remember we would be on our breaks and just sitting on the steps outside. There would be some of the adults who had been locked up in Lake Alice walking past us. If they had wanted to, it would have been easy for them to do anything they wanted to us. Luckily, that didn't happen to me. I just kept to myself and didn't communicate with them.
- 35 This is pretty much the approach that I took at Lake Alice. It was the only way to survive. I had no family. The only person that I trusted in there was another boy who was in my Villa, GRO-B. We became very close friends in Lake Alice and looked out for each other. We have recently reunited and talk almost every day.

### **How I left Lake Alice**

- 36 For seven months, I was exposed to the stresses of life in a psychiatric hospital, dealing with the threat of ECT and drugs as punishment, actual drug punishment, and generally, the horror of being locked up as a child against my will.
- 37 On 11 December 1974, D G Page, on referral from Leeks, prepared a Psych report in order to be considered for discharge and educational placement outside of Lake Alice. The report notes that I was above the intellectual scale and the only thing affecting me was my home life and the fact that I was suffering a bit from depression because of the way I was treated at home. (D G Page Psychiatric Report dated 11 December 1974 **[WITN0316011]**)
- 38 In November 1974, I understand that dad approached social welfare and requested that a section 12 agreement be prepared for me. **[WITN0316004]** He entered into that agreement on 29 January 1975 (Department of Social Welfare, Section 12 Agreement dated 12 January 1975 **[WITN0316012]**)
- 39 I found out later that my mum didn't know anything about me being admitted to Lake Alice or my dad trying to section 12 me. It actually took her a long time to even find where I was. I understand that, when she found out, she contacted the doctors so that she would get custody of me. My dad agreed, and the section 12 agreement was terminated. I went with my mum. **[WITN0316005]**).

40 In July 1975, I went to live with my mother, who had remarried and was living in Cheviot in the South Island. I was adopted by her and her husband and took the name Hendricks, which I have kept to this day.

41 I was glad she found me. After Lake Alice, there was no way I wanted to go home to my father again. How could he do that to his own kid? How could he lock me up in Lake Alice knowing what they did to kids there? I remember seeing him on the streets of Wanganui a number of years ago and confronting him. He didn't even recognise me or know who I was. He wasn't sorry and didn't show any remorse. I showed him a picture of my son and told him I would never do to him what he did to me, to my child. I said he would never meet his grandchildren.

### **Complaints and compensation**

42 I'm not sure how I originally got involved in the Grant Cameron proceedings. It could have been through watching the *60 Minutes* programme that I was involved with and he contacted me that way. I can't remember. I don't know if I was in the first group or the second group. The whole process was all a bit removed from us, and I don't think there was any closure for any of us who went through with those claims.

43 I received some compensation. I can't remember how much but it's all gone now anyway. It certainly wasn't enough to make up for what we all went through in Lake Alice. It was just the one payment. I got a letter of apology from Helen Clark, which means nothing to me. I'm sure it's just a copy of a template letter that was sent out.

### **Effects of Lake Alice and state care on my life**

44 As soon as I was able to start working and earning money, I made a commitment to myself that I would not let Lake Alice effect my ability to provide a life for myself and my family. The best way to do that, was to stay out of jail and keep constant employment. I have worked in Gold Mines in Australia, operated under ground heavy machinery, operated trucks and trailers and been



a road worker. I fought hard with my demons inside to so I could keep a job and people wouldn't look down on me.

- 45 In the last two years, I have been employed as a security guard but have been getting dizzy spells and am currently on a sickness benefit.

### **Withdrawing from people/fear**

- 46 For years after Lake Alice, and even now, I simply withdraw into myself and do not communicate with anybody. I guess I just become a robot, doing what people tell me to do, being where I am supposed to be and saying what I'm supposed to say because that's how I had to survive in Lake Alice. That fear doesn't just go away because we have been released. I have done my best to battle against that fear, but it comes back and haunts me every now and then.

### **Trauma and traumatic memories**

- 47 Although I have done my best to get on with my life, the whole experience at the hands of the doctors and nurses, and also the authorities in charge of Lake Alice, has had a traumatic impact on my life. It has affected the quality of my life and the memories I have of being exposed to pain and hearing others exposed to pain at Lake Alice. Those memories haunt me every day and will be with me for ever. When you are 12 and see fear all around you, it is a very frightening experience.
- 48 I know that there are people who are worse off than me and suffered more than I did at Lake Alice, but I also know that it doesn't matter how long you were in Lake Alice or what happened to you when you were in there – just being in that place will cause you harm. And that trauma will stay with you for life.

### **Stigma**

- 49 After leaving Lake Alice, it was hard to adjust again to "normal life". I have always had considerable guilt and embarrassment regarding my time in Lake Alice and, in particular, the fact that people might find out and brand me as having a mental disorder. I do not and never did. But people don't know that, and they don't know my story. All they see is that I was in Lake Alice for seven

months. That whole stigma around Lake Alice is real, and it has followed me around my whole life.

### **Loss of birth family**

- 50 A huge effect Lake Alice had was the breakdown of my family. I think my sister got admitted to the girls' unit there as well, but I don't know. When I got admitted to Lake Alice, it was the last time I saw her. I have spoken on the telephone with her, but that's it. Although I cannot hold Lake Alice solely responsible, our confinement there definitely contributed to the breakdown of our family life and our continued

### **My current situation**

- 51 I now have a family and am employed in Whangarei. When my son was born, I made a commitment that I would love him and treat him like a father should, not like the way my father treated me. The cycle needed to be broken, and I'm happy to say that we have a loving relationship. He lives in Tauranga now, and I try to see him and my grandchildren as much as I can.
- 52 To get to that stage has been very difficult though. I have had great difficulty in forming and maintaining relationships, as I do not express myself but tend to bottle up my feelings. As I said, that is behaviour I learned at Lake Alice as a coping mechanism, and I don't think that feeling will ever go away.

### **What I want from Royal Commission**

- 53 The main thing that I want from this Commission is for someone to step up and take accountability and responsibility for what happened to us. This needs to be the individuals like Selwyn Leeks, **GRO-B-100**, and Steve Hunt, but also those who were in charge in government at the time who turned a blind eye to everything that was going on. They let this happen, and they need to own up to that.
- 54 I want a public apology. There's no point in these individual letters that mean nothing. Everyone in New Zealand needs to hear that apology and what they are apologising for.

- 55 I also think some sort of appreciation should be given to those who were trying to help us in there. God knows what would have happened if there weren't some good staff members in Lake Alice. They put a bit of humanity into our day by letting us be children, by organising soccer games, and playing the saxophone to us. I do want to thank them.
- 56 Lastly, I want to receive proper compensation that reflects the terrible experiences we had at Lake Alice.

### **Statement of Truth**

- 57 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.

**GRO-C**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Dated: 8 April 2021

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**INDEX OF DOCUMENTS FOR STATEMENT OF ALAN HENDRICKS  
DATED 8 APRIL 2021**

<b>Doc ID</b>	<b>Document Description</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Para</b>
<b>WITN0316002</b>	Grant Cameron Proceedings	2001	2
<b>WITN0316003</b>	Lake Alice Information Sheet	5 October 1974	7
<b>WITN0316004</b>	Social Worker Report	1 July 1975	8, 37
<b>WITN0316005</b>	Department of Social Welfare Letter	25 July 1975	10, 38
<b>WITN0316006</b>	Dr Leeks Psychiatrist report	undated but prior to Lake Alice admission	10
<b>WITN0316007</b>	Lake Alice Discharge Notes	29 January 1975	11
<b>WITN0316008</b>	Dr Leeks Discharge Letter	17 February 1975	11, 18
<b>WITN0316009</b>	Report from Principal of Rangitikei College	10 November 1974	12, 13
<b>WITN0316010</b>	Lake Alice Nurses Notes	between May 1974 and Jan 1975	18
<b>WITN0316011</b>	D G Page Psychiatric Report	11 December 1974	36
<b>WITN0316012</b>	Department of Social Welfare, Section 12 Agreement	12 January 1975	37