

**ABUSE IN CARE ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY
TULOOU – OUR PACIFIC VOICES: TATALA E PULONGA**

Under	The Inquiries Act 2013
In the matter of	The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Historical Abuse in State Care and in the Care of Faith-based Institutions
Royal Commission:	Judge Coral Shaw (Chair) Ali'imua Sandra Alofivae Mr Paul Gibson Dr Anaru Erueti Ms Julia Steenson
Counsel:	Mr Simon Mount QC, Ms Kerryn Beaton QC, Ms Tania Sharkey, Mr Semisi Pohiva, Ms Reina Va'ai, Ms Nicole Copeland, Ms Sonja Cooper, Ms Amanda Hill for the Royal Commission Ms Rachael Schmidt-McCleave, Ms Julia White and Ms Alana Ruakere for the Crown Ms Fiona Guy Kidd QC for the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia
Venue:	Fale o Samoa 141 Bader Drive Māngere AUCKLAND
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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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1 Commission will be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

2 A. I do, yes.

3 Q. Thank you.

4 **QUESTIONING BY MR POHIVA:** Thank you very much. Dr Taufa, before we begin, I
5 understand that you have some acknowledgments and I'll just ask you to do that now
6 please.

7 A. Fakafeta'i ka Sihova he 'oku lelei ia, he 'oku tolonga 'o ta'engata 'ene ngaahi 'alo'ofa. Tapu
8 mo e 'afio 'ae 'Otua 'i hotau lotolotonga. Tapu moe kelekele tupu'a-ni, 'oku tau ua-lolo ai.
9 Tapu mo Hou'eiki mo Ha'a Matapule. Tapu ki he Hou'eiki Komisiona. Tapu ki he Kau
10 Fakafofonga Lao. 'Oku ou fakatapu mavahe heni ki si'l fanga tokoua, tuonga'ane, fa'e moe
11 tamai 'oku nau kei mo'ui mai, neongo hono tauhi kovia kinautolu 'i he ngaahi 'api 'oe
12 pule'anga. Tapu mo kimoutolu mei hotau komiuniti 'oku mou me'a heni. Pea tapu foki mo
13 ngaahi tu'unga kotoa 'oku fa'a fakatupua. Kau fakamonu 'ae koloa kuo to mo'oku.

14 Esther chapter 4:14. Mordecai sends a reminder to Esther of the importance of not
15 being silent and he says, who knows but that you have come to your position for such a
16 time as this. I acknowledge our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ in the midst of this hearing.
17 I acknowledge the Commissioners and those in attendance and I acknowledge the brave
18 survivors who have been called for such a time as this to share their truths. I do not
19 underestimate its weight and value or the responsibility that has been placed on all of us to
20 ensure that your voices are not only heard, but echoed.

21 Q. Fakafofonga atu e fakamalo Dr Taufa ho'o lava mai ke fakakakato e fatongia mahu'inga ko
22 'eni. Thank you very much, Dr Taufa. Can I begin by asking you to take us through or
23 share with us your migration story and your family background?

24 A. Malo. My name is Dr Seini Taufa and I was born in Auckland, New Zealand during the tail
25 end of the Dawn Raids, to Tongan migrant parents who at the time of my birth were
26 categorised as illegal immigrants. Like many other Pacific people in New Zealand, they
27 experienced racial profiling and discrimination because of their ethnicity and although
28 neither speak of their experiences during the Dawn Raids, as their child, their silence
29 speaks and I acknowledge my parents, who are here today.

30 I reflect on how fortunate I was to be born a citizen. Had I been born in today's
31 context with the changes in citizenship classification since 2006, I would have been
32 classified a stateless child, invisible and uncounted.

33 Reading through the survivors' statements, I wondered what would have happened
34 to me had my parents been deported back to Tonga? Would I have been placed in State

1 care? In 1984 my parents were granted residence and from there on in, our family home
 2 became a hub for Tongan migrants and overstayers. As a 10-year-old, I remember being a
 3 designated translator for everyone we housed; some blood related, some not, but all kainga.
 4 I often wondered why, when they were among other Tongans they were confident and
 5 vocal, but when placed in front of an authoritative figure like Immigration, police, doctors
 6 or teachers, they were always timid and lost for words. As I aged, life taught me why.

7 **Q.** Thank you, Dr Taufu. You say in your statement and you talk about how or what life
 8 taught you. And for the benefit of everyone here, Dr Taufu has kindly provided a statement
 9 that will be made available later on. Can I ask you, because I understand now that you have
 10 expertise in social theories which include social unconscious bias, your current work also
 11 relates to ethnicity and the importance of ethnicity data. Can you please take us through the
 12 journey or your journey since an early age up to where you are now?

13 **A.** Malo. In primary school I went from Seini to Jane, my brothers, Tevita to David, Sione to
 14 John. In retrospect I understood my parents did this in the hopes of protecting us from the
 15 prejudice and stigma that they experienced, being Tongan. They were conscious of what
 16 ethnicity meant in that given time and context.

17 My first vivid experience of explicit racism was as a check-out operator during
 18 high school. One day I served a customer who did not seem to like anything that I was
 19 doing. While I was scanning through the items, I was called a "stupid coconut" and told to
 20 go back to where I came from. And I remember being numb. Born in New Zealand, my
 21 residential area code directed me to Onehunga, but I knew what this customer meant,
 22 "from" meant Pacific, an Islander meant a place smaller and inferior to New Zealand.

23 Determined not to cry, my brain was trained to think that the customer was always
 24 right, so I apologised, not knowing what I was apologising for. Those around me stared
 25 before a more senior Pacific staff member came to my counter, told me to stop and asked
 26 the customer to leave.

27 As a 15-year-old, I had not yet developed the strength to counter what had been
 28 said and though this was blunt and in my face, the subtle racism that is tied to my ethnicity
 29 taught me that this behaviour was normal and that I needed to shake it off and get back to
 30 work. I have never shared this experience with my family and this is actually the first time
 31 I've verbalised it.

32 During my first year of university, I worked on an essay with a Samoan friend. I
 33 was always a confident writer and I helped her structure her essay. We were directed to
 34 write our names on the top of our essays before submitting; her name Palagi, mine Tongan.

1 When the tutor handed back our essays she asked my Samoan friend who had a Palagi
2 name if she was the same person who had written the essay. My Samoan friend pulled out
3 her ID to confirm that, yes, it was her. We received our grades back but she received an A+
4 and I a C+. After that, I refused to write my name on anything and I left the ethnicity box
5 unticked. My identity within my undergraduate degree became a -seven-digit- number.

6 Over time, I searched for indigenous knowledge and developed my critical
7 thinking and passion for advocacy. I made a conscious decision that I would not be bullied
8 into thinking I was someone I was not, based on the narration of someone who neither
9 looked nor lived within the same context as I. I threw the seven--digit number in the bin
10 and I regained my name, my grandmother's name, and my voice.

11 After reclaiming my Tongan self, I studied at the University of Auckland where
12 I gained a PhD in pediatrics using mixed methods, so that's qualitative and quantitative
13 research. During my studies I became a research fellow with the New Zealand child and
14 youth epidemiology services. It is during this time that I gained an interest in numbers and
15 started asking questions of data, like who came up with the questions, how are they
16 counting Tongans, what was the political climate of the time, and who determines what
17 goes in and what stays out of the reports.

18 I taught within the Departments of Social and Community Health and Pacific
19 Health at the University of Auckland for over 10 years, where I taught addictions, Pacific
20 health and social inequities, encouraging my students to think critically, to not be
21 intimidated to ask questions of the data and to understand that as Pacific we are not a blank
22 canvas, we are experts on Pacific because we live and breathe the context of our people.

23 I also took interest in understanding social theories like unconscious bias,
24 privilege, racism and intersectionality. The way people treat other people made more sense
25 when I understood that unconscious pro white bias occurs among children as young as three
26 to five years old. We are born into a society where race and ethnicity are tied to biases and
27 preconceived ideologies that have worked against us. Over time I developed an
28 unconscious bias and cultural empathy training, and when I say cultural empathy, I say that
29 because it's not enough to be culturally competent, empathy has to follow, and over recent
30 years have conducted workshops with organisations within the health sector and the
31 New Zealand Defence Force.

32 **Q.** I'll just ask you to speak a little bit slower.

33 **A.** Sorry.

34 **CHAIR:** If you can keep an eye on the signers who are following you and it's also being typed up.

1 I think "empathy" is a word you've just used.

2 A. Yes, it was. Sorry.

3 Q. Not at all, it's very difficult to slow, especially when you're reading, I understand that.

4 A. Yeah. Four years ago, alongside five amazing Pacific people, we left the security of a
5 university and established Moana Research, where I am the research lead. We are a Pacific
6 owned, led and governed research company. This is something I am extremely proud of,
7 and the aim of our company is to generate research that is transformative based on the
8 needs of our Pacific people and we are specific where we, as Pacific, ask the questions and
9 narrate our own stories.

10 I am also the senior Pacific advisor for the "Growing up in New Zealand" longitudinal study. This
11 is the largest longitudinal study in the country where I continue to advocate on behalf of our
12 Pacific families to ensure that when data is collected and Pacific people are engaged, these
13 activities are conducted in ways that are culturally appropriate, culturally safe, and not
14 solely deficit focused.

15 Those early experiences have shaped the career path that I chose, on a quest to
16 share our truths as a Tongan navigating through the diaspora. And so as I give my evidence,
17 I have Pacific people in mind, those who have passed, those who are here and those who
18 will come.

19 Q. Thank you very much, Dr Taufu. Your evidence today touches on four main aspects. So I
20 understand that in your statement you are referring to, firstly, how Government agencies
21 have recorded and reported on Pacific ethnicities since 1950, and that's here in
22 New Zealand, and secondly, to highlight any inadequacies in ethnicity recording of Pacific
23 survivors and Pacific people. Thirdly, how ethnicity recording and reporting has impacted
24 on Pacific survivors, Pacific people generally, with references to specific areas, and you
25 also will be providing recommendations for the future about recording of Pacific ethnicity.

26 I will now be asking you questions about that and if we can begin by looking at
27 how Government agencies have recorded and reported ethnicity data since 1950. Can you
28 please talk to us about that?

29 A. In Tongan culture, we understand that everything has a tukufakaholo, a whakapapa or a
30 genealogy. And while I was asked to examine how Government agencies have recorded
31 and reported on Pacific people in New Zealand since the 1950s, it is important to set the
32 context and understand the shifts in societal thinking and the conscious and unconscious
33 bias attached to race and ethnicity classifications.

34 Q. I understand, Dr Taufu, that you have provided a table and I'm referring to table 1. If that

- 1 can be shown on the screen.
- 2 A. Okay.
- 3 Q. What is this table here?
- 4 A. So this table looks at changes in race and ethnicity classification in New Zealand over time.
5 And I'm going to draw on a few key dates. In the 1916 census, a question on race was
6 added which included Polynesia as an option. This highlighted the fact that Pacific people
7 were in New Zealand during this time. During this time race was tied to biology and the
8 idea that if you were white and have the same characteristics and values as white people,
9 you were superior or more civilised.
- 10 Q. I'll just pause there, if we can.
- 11 A. So in 1926, people were encouraged to define their race by fractions of blood. During this
12 time all ethnicities, apart from Māori and European, were described as "race alien" and that
13 included Pacific. It's important to note that there are limitations to being a race alien. For
14 example, an alien cannot be appointed to the public service of New Zealand and were
15 therefore barred from entering the Army or the Police Force. Half casts, quarter casts, were
16 also used to define one's blood quantum, which was linked with identity, status, and
17 citizenship. And we have, as a people, transliterated some of these sayings like haafe kasi
18 or 'afekasi.
- 19 The focus on race and blood quantum continued through the 50s and the 60s. So survivors in State
20 care during this time would have been recorded using blood quantum. This means that as a
21 survivor, in order to answer the race question, you had to have knowledge of your mother's
22 and father's ethnicity and if you did not, it would have either left—it would have either
23 been left unanswered or assumed for you.
- 24 Q. And that's the period between the 1950s and the 1960s?
- 25 A. That is correct.
- 26 Q. What happened after that period?
- 27 A. Globally around the world during the 1970s, there was a shift in thinking, where people
28 started to move away from the idea of race which was based on biology, to ethnicity. But it
29 actually took another decade before the ethnicity question came up in this country.
- 30 Q. So to clarify, Dr Taufa, what you're saying is that the idea of ethnicity emerged during that
31 period but nothing was specifically done until a decade later, is that correct?
- 32 A. Yes.
- 33 Q. And when did something specifically happen in terms of ethnicity?
- 34 A. So in 1986, the question moved from race to ethnic origin. And in my opinion, it was just a

1 renaming of race, so race was renamed ethnicity. However, ethnicity inherited the shame,
2 the stigma and the marginalisation of race.

3 **Q.** And by—

4 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Can I just ask a quick question of Dr Taufua, because are you
5 talking about the categorisation in the context of births, death and marriage certificate, or is
6 it also the practice that you could see an identification of State wards as children as well
7 during these periods?

8 **A.** So during this period this is how—this was census data and Government agencies often
9 took their cue from the census. So you can assume that if it was documented in the census,
10 that would have been the measure that they used across a sector.

11 **Q.** So Education Department, for example, or Care and Protection of Children?

12 **A.** They would have all—

13 **Q.** Likely they would have used this criteria too?

14 **A.** have all used this blood quantum criteria.

15 **QUESTIONING BY MR POHIVA CONTINUED:** So prior to the question, we were talking
16 about race moving on to ethnic origin.

17 **A.** Yes.

18 **Q.** Could you clarify the difference or what's the difference of ethnic origin?

19 **A.** So the difference between race and ethnicity is race is based on biology, it's based on blood
20 quantum. Ethnicity is the ethnic group or groups that people identify with or feel that they
21 belong to.

22 **Q.** And that's across the board, again?

23 **A.** Yes.

24 **Q.** And then what happened when it came to 1996?

25 **A.** So in 1996, we moved to self-identification or self-identified ethnicity. This process
26 expanded the number of ethnic categories available for those who reported multiple ethnic
27 affiliations. A single level 1 prioritised ethnic group was also used which assigned Māori
28 ethnicity priority over Pacific, Asian, other, and European ethnic groups. So since 1996 we
29 have been asked to tick as many boxes as we like, but not told how our ethnicity data is
30 going to be used. For example, if I tick multiple ethnic groups like Tongan, Fijian,
31 European and Māori, I will only be prioritised or counted as Māori.

32 **Q.** So when you talk about prioritisation, and that's what you're referring to, only one of your
33 ethnic groups will be prioritised or counted; is that correct?

34 **A.** Yes. So if you are presented with a graph and they are using prioritised level 1 ethnicity in

1 that graph, and you see Māori numbers, Pacific numbers, Asian numbers, and European
 2 numbers, part of our Pacific numbers would be counted as Māori because you are
 3 automatically prioritised as Māori through this categorisation, which means that if you were
 4 in State care and you identify as Māori or Pacific, you will only be counted as Māori.

5 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Can I ask a question: so what you're saying is there's no
 6 opportunity for the individual to prioritise, it's automatically prioritised for them by the
 7 census?

8 A. Yes, and we are not informed when we are filling out, that if we tick multiple ethnic
 9 groups, we will be prioritised.

10 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Again, Dr Taufu, so this is based on census data, if you like, a
 11 centralised way of gathering information, but there's also evidence of that practice also
 12 applying in the context of the Care and Protection systems too, like Child Welfare?

13 A. Yes. As I noted earlier, different sectors take their cue from the census, but often it's
 14 delayed. So they—this happened in 1996. In some place it didn't come into effect until
 15 after, but yes, they would have used prioritisation.

16 **Q.** Just to be clear, so the Department of Social Welfare for example, or CYFS to bring it up to
 17 date, or Oranga Tamariki today is employing this method when it—yeah, is applying this
 18 method?

19 A. I will be presenting on data from those areas later on, but yes, they were. They've shifted,
 20 but I will present that later on.

21 **QUESTIONING BY MR POHIVA CONTINUED:** If it assists, Commissioners, that will be—I
 22 will be taking her through that evidence and outlining the different sectors as we go
 23 through.

24 So, just in a general sense, while you're on self-identification, the recent move
 25 towards self-identification, how important is it for—or what is the general importance of
 26 self-identification?

27 A. The prioritised—self-prioritisation is important because it has funding implications. The
 28 Government funds according to the data and so funding for ethnic specific services or
 29 support is based on this prioritisation. During my PhD I came across a quote that reads,
 30 “‘The power of authoritative knowledge is not that it is correct but that it counts’. The
 31 opinions of professionals leave lasting impressions on societal views, driving political
 32 behaviour, influencing the types of services made available and the support received by
 33 members of society.”

34 The prioritisation of ethnicity tells a story, but it is not a complete Pacific story.

- 1 **Q.** Can I just ask you to provide a few examples of what you mean by not providing a
2 complete Pacific story?
- 3 **A.** For example, in 2018 the median income for the New Zealand general population was
4 \$31,800. For Pacific it was \$24,300. For Tuvalu it is \$18,700. In 2013, 50% of the
5 general population own their own—either partially or fully own their own homes; 18.5% if
6 you were Pacific, 11% if you're from Kiribati. There are 18 plus ethnic groups under the
7 umbrella term "Pacific", and for years we've been asking for ethnic specific Pacific data so
8 that we can actually understand what is happening within our communities. When I say
9 that prioritisation tells a story, yes, it tells a story, but it doesn't tell the complete Pacific
10 story.
- 11 **Q.** Thank you, Dr Taufa. I understand that there are also other factors that influence or impact
12 on race and ethnic classifications. And if I can draw your attention to table 4?
- 13 **A.** This table was developed to highlight significant policies and events in New Zealand and so
14 when we're looking at data and when we are counting Pacific people, it cannot be done in
15 isolation from the context, from all of the things that are happening at different points in
16 time.
- 17 **Q.** What do you mean by that? Can you give us some examples?
- 18 **A.** So, an example, and I will touch on this again later on, is being Pacific in 2021 is different
19 to being Pacific in 1974. And so our freedom and the autonomy that we have to openly and
20 proudly say that we are Pacific is different based on the time and context in which we are
21 in.
- 22 **Q.** Why is that?
- 23 **A.** If I were to compare the experiences and the hardship that I have gone through compared to
24 the experience and the hardship that my parents went through because of the way Pacific
25 people were portrayed, it's—it would be totally different.
- 26 **Q.** And I understand that you elaborate more on that later as we go through your evidence.
- 27 **A.** Yes, I will.
- 28 **Q.** Can I now ask you to take us through certain Government sectors and talk to us about how
29 they have collected data in terms of ethnicity and highlight any inadequacies that you think,
30 or in your opinion are needed to be highlighted?
- 31 **A.** Thank you. I guess to understand the inadequacies in ethnicity recording, we have to ask
32 why ethnicity is counted in the first place. Official ethnic statistics in New Zealand have
33 been collected to meet objectives or purposes usually in the interests of the majority group
34 rather than other groups with less access to power and resources. In the New Zealand

1 context, the approach to ethnic records were historically developed within the context of
2 policies that were concerned with the assimilation and, later, integration of ethnic groups,
3 including the Pacific.

4 In most recent times, the official purposes of collecting ethnicity data have been to better
5 understand the make up of ethnic groups, to inform how we develop services and to
6 monitor social status and outcomes. The changes in the purpose along with the changes in
7 societal views towards race and ethnicity would, in my opinion, make it near impossible to
8 (a), monitor and document accurate numbers, and (b), monitor the recording practices that
9 have influenced the documentation of Pacific survivors and Pacific peoples.

10 And in my opinion, the tukufakaholo or genealogy of race and ethnicity classifications in
11 New Zealand is built on racism and the marginalisation of groups of people, including
12 Pacific.

13 **Q.** Thank you, Dr Taufa. I'm just going to move on to the specific, or ask you to comment on
14 the specific Government sectors. Can I ask you to comment on the vital statistics to tell us
15 what that is and how they record?

16 **A.** So ethnicity data and vital statistics is birth and death registration forms which have
17 historically collected information using the blood quantum, the degree of blood approach.
18 Until September 1995, the question on birth and death registration forms asked about the
19 degree of Māori blood and Pacific Island blood of the parents, so this is mother and father.
20 If the person's mother or father had Māori blood, details of the iwi were requested, and if
21 the person's mother or father had Pacific Island blood, people were asked to state the
22 Islands.

23 Following the passing of the Birth, Death Marriages and Relationships Registration Act in 1995,
24 there was a shift to collecting ethnicity for all births and deaths, in alignment with the 1996
25 census ethnicity question which we've covered. What they found was that there was an
26 increase in the number of Māori deaths recorded, as well as the number of Māori births,
27 which doubled between 1994 and 1996. This speaks to prior under representation of Māori
28 and Pacific and other minority populations in New Zealand in the data that had been
29 collated prior.

30 **Q.** So, effectively, the way in which it's been collected has—means that it's—Māori and
31 Pacific were under represented in terms of ethnicity data?

32 **A.** Yes.

33 **Q.** Do you have anything more to add about the vital statistics?

34 **A.** Going back to what I had said about blood quantum, it depends on who is filling out the

1 form as well, and so—and whether they want to acknowledge their spouse or not in how
2 they fill in the forms. So, again, going back to how data was collected using blood
3 quantum, it was extremely problematic and highlights the fact that we were under counted
4 during the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s up until the 1990s.

5 **Q.** What about the Health and Disability sector? Can you tell us about how they have recorded
6 ethnicity data?

7 **A.** So, in the Health and Disability sector, prior to 2005, ethnicity was largely collected at
8 prioritised level 1. Post 2005, the Health and Disability sector were encouraged to record
9 ethnicity at level 2, so this is if you identify as Samoan and Tongan, you will be shown as
10 Samoan and Tongan as opposed to just being Pacific. This allows for ethnic-specific
11 comparisons. While there have been significant improvements in approaches to ethnicity
12 data collections in the Health and Disability sector, there are still concerns about the quality
13 of ethnicity data.

14 **Q.** And what do you mean by that?

15 **A.** A lot of the Health and Disability data isn't time stamped, unlike the vital statistics where
16 you know when it was recorded. So they are relying on—so this data can vary depending
17 on when you're engaging with a health service and so forth. And I will present, even with
18 the other sectors, the way data is routinely collected isn't consistent.

19 **Q.** And then we move to the Social Welfare sector. Can you talk to us about that?

20 **A.** Ethnicity data relating to Work & Income has been collected since the end of 1991 and
21 there are some indications that there have been relatively high levels of missing ethnicity
22 data, historically. So if you're looking for data from the 1950s up until the 1980s, you are
23 not going to find it. And if you are, you're comparing apples and oranges because the
24 ethnicity question would have changed from race to ethnicity.

25 **Q.** Can I just refer you to table 1 and can you give us an example of what you mean by the
26 differences we're talking about?

27 **A.** Okay. So in relation to application forms for financial assistance, the questions differ from
28 the census ethnicity question. For example, the question asked in the census is which
29 ethnic group do you belong to. In the financial assistance forms the question is to which
30 ethnic group do you believe you belong. The voluntary nature of the question could impact
31 on the completeness of ethnicity data, because asking someone to identify, you know,
32 identify which ethnic group they belong to is different to which ethnic group do you believe
33 you belong to. So any slight change in the way you ask the question means that you can't
34 compare data.

- 1 **Q.** And that's what you were referring to earlier about the difficulties of comparing it through
2 sectors; is that correct?
- 3 **A.** That's correct.
- 4 **Q.** If I can just draw your attention back to paragraph 104 of your statement, could I just ask
5 you more about how social workers in the Department of Social Welfare have gone about
6 their recording?
- 7 **A.** The 1983 investigation into official ethnic statistics stated that, "It would appear that social
8 workers are reluctant to question clients directly about their ethnicity, and prefer, the
9 indirect estimation method which was contrary to field instructions." This would have
10 affected the record keeping for juvenile offenders, adoptions and State wards. And I will
11 touch on—I will also go over the fact that when people were recording—when ethnicity
12 data was recorded, more often than not it wasn't recorded by the individual, it was recorded
13 by either a staff member or someone who was working, who was over their care.
- 14 **Q.** So you'll touch on that later on, but for now, were there any further issues affecting the
15 Department of Social Welfare's recording of ethnicity?
- 16 **A.** A later report from the Department of Statistics in 1988 also suggests that throughout this
17 era, social workers were not sure if they were meant to record a client's race, or ask them
18 about what their ethnic affiliation was. The report recommended that recording of ethnic
19 affiliation be standardised throughout the Social Welfare sector to improve data collection,
20 with some ability to record descent where appropriate. So, again, if people aren't recording
21 the data you're not going to have the data.
- 22 **Q.** Just before we move from that topic, Dr Taufaa, is there anything else about the Social
23 Welfare sector that you wish to add?
- 24 **A.** I guess a further issue that affected the recording of the ethnicity is that they would often
25 copy the ethnicity data that had been initially recorded by Police, therefore data was
26 determined by the racial coding system used by Corrections, which we will touch on after.
- 27 **Q.** Thank you. Can I just move on to perhaps describe or explain how the criminal justice
28 sector has recorded ethnic data, ethnicity data?
- 29 **A.** Yeah. So in regards to ethnicity data in the criminal justice sector, while there has been
30 some level of collection of ethnic and/or racial data within the criminal justice sector, there
31 appears to be large gaps in the completeness of ethnicity data and a lack of standardised
32 approach. The collection of ethnicity data has yet to become routine practice across the
33 whole sector. So the data that is currently available is collected primarily through the
34 Police, the Department of Courts, and the Department of Corrections. When the Police

1 collect data, ethnicity is included as one of the demographic variables and this is published
2 by the Police in apprehension statistics. However, historically the law enforcement system
3 use the categories of Caucasian, Pacific Islander, Māori, Asiatic, Negro, Other and
4 Unknown.

5 Since the law enforcement system was replaced by the National Intelligence Application in 2005,
6 ethnicity for apprehension statistics have been collected using the following categories,
7 which is Asian, European, Indian, Latin American/Hispanic, Māori, Middle Eastern, Native
8 African, Other and Pacific Islander. However, to preserve historical time series in
9 apprehension statistics these categories are mapped to Caucasian, Pacific Islander, Māori,
10 Asiatic, Indian, Other and Unknown.

11 **Q.** What is the significance of these categories that you're talking about, and how does it affect
12 Pacific ethnicity recording?

13 **A.** It affects Pacific ethnicity because again, firstly, it's unclear whether they are using
14 prioritisation, whether if you identify as Māori or Pacific, you'd be classified as Māori, and
15 second, it doesn't provide us with ethnic specific information so that we know where we
16 can better support our Pacific communities. I sit on the Pacific Advisory Group for
17 Counties Manukau Police, where collecting ethnicity data on victims and perpetrators are
18 often missed. And it's often identified by people other than the individual. I've been on this
19 advisory group for over three years and for over three years, we have asked for ethnic
20 specific information and like other sectors, the response is often the same, "We're still
21 working on it."

22 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Can I ask, does that include that question of prioritisation, about
23 whether their methods are, in effect, doing that, the way they're categorising ethnicity?

24 **A.** As I noted, it's unclear whether they are using the prioritisation, and I guess that's one of the
25 hard things when it comes to ethnicity data when we're presented with evidence and with
26 figures. Usually there should be an asterisk that tells us how they have used the data, you
27 know, how they have populated it or whether they've used a classification system to
28 prioritise ethnicity. But that's not the case. We are told this is what it looks like for Māori,
29 this is what it looks like for Pacific. So when you're presented with that, you can only
30 make assumptions.

31 **Q.** How would you get the answer to that question?

32 **A.** I guess, as I've noted, I've sat on the Pacific Advisory Group and we have asked for ethnic
33 specific data or for a breakdown and the response is usually "We will get back to you" or
34 "We're working on it."

- 1 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Dr Taufa, if I may, that's a systems issue that you're alluding to
2 there?
- 3 A. Yes.
- 4 **Q.** Is it because it's too difficult for them to change the way that they record? Are you able to
5 offer a comment on that?
- 6 A. Bearing in mind that when you are, I guess, a frontline officer, often you are—I'm thinking
7 of those who are straight out of Police College and they're new to the front line and they're
8 trying to take a statement, often it's easy to forget the demographic ethnicity question, and
9 so what you might have is someone fill it out. It is a systems issue, and I think because
10 there's no mandate on collecting consistent ethnicity data that's collected the same across
11 sector, there hasn't been pressure to ensure that we get quality ethnic data.
- 12 **Q.** So, it's a matter that needs to be pushed with a lot more rigor perhaps within the systems,
13 within agencies themselves for them to get a full appreciation of why the ethnic specific
14 data is so important, because everything has a dollar sign attached to it?
- 15 A. Yes.
- 16 **Q.** So until that matter is actually corrected or fully appreciated, in terms of what the bigger
17 impact is, nothing will change, is that what I think I hear you saying?
- 18 A. That's correct.
- 19 **Q.** Thank you.
- 20 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Sorry, can I just ask a question as well, just to follow that. So
21 what you're saying is that the way it is collected and the way it is recorded can be
22 manipulated to achieve certain outcomes. So are you—is your view that that's done
23 inconsistently for an end purpose that is racially motivated, whether that's conscious or
24 unconscious?
- 25 A. Sorry, can you repeat that?
- 26 **Q.** Sorry if that's a convoluted question. So we're looking at the way it's collected but we're
27 also looking at the way it's reported, and the outcomes that occur as a result of the way
28 those two things are done. And I guess I'm just wanting to clarify your view on why they
29 are done that way?
- 30 A. I—if you look at the way different ministries collect data, it's all done differently. But in
31 my earlier statement I said it's important to understand the purpose and the reasons why
32 we're collecting ethnicity data in the first place.
- 33 **Q.** Yes.
- 34 A. Because that tells a story. And so often when we talk about Pacific, all we hear is the

1 deficits, and that's because it's determined by the questions that are being asked. A
2 colleague of mine reminded us that if you ask the wrong questions, you'll get the wrong
3 answers, and unfortunately when it comes to Pacific, Pacific ethnicity isn't looked at in
4 isolation from all of the deficits. And so I don't know if it is—I agree it's definitely a
5 systems issue that needs to be fixed, but this is where, across sector, they need to start
6 talking and being on the same page as to the importance of ethnicity, collecting ethnicity
7 data and also how it's going to be used.

8 **Q.** Thank you. I just, I guess what I'm looking a little bit more into digging into, if you'll allow
9 me to, is so the inconsistencies in your experience, are they—do they appear to be designed
10 that way on purpose, or is it just a matter of it being too difficult?

11 **A.** I think it's a bit of both. If you look at self-identification, as Pacific, there is no way we can
12 compare any data pre-1996 to data post-1996. Now, the voices of our survivors were from
13 1950 to 1999. That means based on what we would deem reliable data, we would not be
14 able to use any of the existing data.

15 That's problematic in a few ways, but I think the biggest problem is the fact that it feels like their
16 voices are stagnant and they're just left there, because we say, sorry, we can't compare it
17 because we—it was defined differently. It's like we're saying that's not—your voice isn't
18 important because I can't compare it to anything else.

19 And so it is definitely a system issue because of the fact that they are continuously changing how
20 they define ethnicity, how they define race. And I think part of it is racially motivated.

21 Like I said, there is a genealogy behind how we've come to ethnicity, and that whakapapa,
22 that genealogy is based on the—founded on principles that encourage assimilation and us
23 revoking our Pacific selves.

24 **Q.** Thank you.

25 **QUESTIONING BY MR POHIVA CONTINUED:** Thank you, Dr Taufu. If I can just take you
26 back, we're still on the criminal justice sector, if you could just paraphrase the different
27 sectors, highlighting how they have collected data and any inadequacies you wish to raise
28 in that, bearing in mind your view of the whakapapa or the genealogy of ethnic recording.

29 **A.** When the ethnicity question is asked, it's also important to understand in which context it's
30 being asked. For example, if I'm filling out the census in the comfort of my home and I'm
31 asked to tick as many ethnicity boxes as I want, I have that freedom and I don't have
32 pressure. If this is an inmate who's asked to record their ethnicity, they are going to think
33 twice about—they may think twice about how they record.

34 So with the Department of Corrections, inmates are asked to list their ethnicity and

1 if they have multiple ethnicities, they are asked to identify their preferred ethnicity. Which
2 again is problematic, because how do you ask a person to choose which part of themselves
3 they want to acknowledge? For example, my parents are both Tongan. When I am with
4 my dad's side of the family and they ask me "Where are you from?" I will loudly and
5 proudly say Tufuenga Kolomotu'a. When I am with my mother's side of the family and
6 they ask me "Where are you from?" I will loudly and proudly say Kolonga. The context
7 and space in which you are asked will impact the way you respond.

8 **Q.** To the question of—

9 **A.** To the question of ethnicity.

10 **Q.** —ethnicity. And just to clarify, Tufuenga Kolomotu'a is where your dad is from and
11 Kolonga is where—

12 **A.** Kolonga is where my mother is from.

13 **Q.** Any other comments about the criminal justice sector before we move on?

14 **A.** I guess it just shows that the inconsistencies in data collection and the different ethnicity
15 questions used makes it extremely difficult to track ethnicity, and leaves room for an error
16 whereby a person may be classified as one ethnicity in one dataset and a different ethnicity
17 in another.

18 **Q.** Can I now move on to Oranga Tamariki. Can you tell us about Oranga Tamariki collection
19 of data.

20 **A.** To date, data on Pacific children ethnicity collected by Oranga Tamariki is based on all
21 ethnicity recorded for a child or young person. And they have four categories. So the first
22 is Māori, and that refers to children who identify as Māori but not Pacific as one of their
23 ethnicities. The second is Māori Pacific, and that is children or young people who identify
24 both as Māori and Pacific within their ethnicities. The third is Pacific, so children who
25 identify Pacific but not Māori as one of their ethnicities. And the fourth is "other", so
26 children who do not identify as being either Māori or Pacific in any of their ethnicities. So
27 this includes New Zealand European and not specified.

28 **Q.** Can I just ask you how the different categories impact on the data that we see, and if I can
29 refer you to table 1—sorry, the graph, could you describe what this graph represents?

30 **A.** In 2020 I pulled out ethnicity data from the Oranga Tamariki website to help inform a
31 proposal that we were working on. And while I could not find Pacific ethnic specific data
32 at level 2, I was pleased that there was a Māori Pacific variable and that ethnicity was not
33 prioritised. Had it been prioritised, we would have been told that 10% of those recorded
34 were Pacific, so this is if we used the standard prioritisation. We would have been told that

1 10% of those recorded were Pacific, as opposed to 16% who identify as Pacific and Pacific
2 Māori. So the narrative changes, it then becomes a 10th of Pacific children to a 6th of
3 Pacific children.

4 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Dr Taufua, do you think—the stats from 2020, do you think that a
5 similar—how long has this more sort of targeted differentiation, categorisation been going
6 on for, is it something quite recent, like—

7 A. I only pulled out data for—so where was it, if we go back to the graph please.

8 **Q.** Because of course this priority question is a concern.

9 A. Yes, it is.

10 **Q.** Right.

11 A. Yeah. Again, when you go into different websites and you take information it does not tell
12 you when they start. So even if I tried to go back and sift through the information to see
13 when it shifted from prioritisation to actually having a Māori and Pacific variable, chances
14 are you're not going to find it. So this was taken over a ten—from 2010 to 2009(sic) so my
15 assumption just looking that is that it started in 2010 because it doesn't go further back than
16 that.

17 **Q.** This is a significant positive shift away from the centralised way of prioritising what
18 happens with the census figures.

19 A. Yes, and it also draws on the fact that there is a significant amount of our children who
20 identify as Māori Pacific and so Māori and Pacific need to come together and work together
21 to come up with plans or to provide services that can cater to both Māori and Pacific.

22 I was also able to access data on the reports of concerns, so distinct children and young people for
23 the year 2019, which is going to be shown on the screen. And though originally raw
24 numbers were given, I converted these numbers to percentages to see what it looked like to
25 be Pacific in each of the regions. So by region, in 2019 43% of children and young people
26 in central Auckland who were in the dataset as a result of the reports of concerns identified
27 as being Pacific. 44% in South Auckland and 7% in Te Tai Tokerau. I use this as an
28 example to show how different 16% is from 44%. This is a reminder that ethnicity data
29 when paired with other variables like region tells us story. Reports based on national
30 numbers may mask the extent of Pacific representation within regions where there is a high
31 proportion of Pacific peoples.

32 So if we were to get that—the first graph which showed us that 16% of Pacific people, Pacific
33 children are in Oranga Tamariki, we wouldn't know that it's actually 43% in certain parts of
34 Auckland.

1 **QUESTIONING BY MR POHIVA CONTINUED:** So what you're saying, Dr Taufua, is
2 depending on how you ask the question is going to depend on the results you get; is that
3 correct?

4 A. Yes, and it's also showing that ethnicity, when paired with other variables like region, is
5 actually quite powerful, because it can tell you where the greatest need is. And from—
6 again, from a funding perspective, lets us know where we need to pour assistance into
7 services to help that demographic population.

8 **Q.** So when you add the regional question to ethnicity, you get a different picture?

9 A. Yes.

10 **Q.** And a high proportion of Pacific in specific regions, is that right?

11 A. That's correct and who are currently in Oranga Tamariki. I think it's also important to note
12 that in preparing my witness statement I went back to the link I had saved to the original
13 data source only to find that it is no longer there. And this is another reality we face as
14 researchers, the taking down of information that's actually extremely relevant for our
15 people. So I have become accustomed to taking snapshots and screenshots of data so that I
16 can use it as evidence when I am advocating for our Pacific peoples.

17 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Dr Taufua, if I may, so what I think I hear you saying is that
18 actually you could go back in time if you'd taken the snapshots at a national level and a
19 regional level to actually have told perhaps a more reflective honest story about Pacific?

20 A. That's correct.

21 **Q.** Thank you.

22 **QUESTIONING BY MR POHIVA CONTINUED:** Thank you Dr Taufua. I am now going to
23 ask you about the census and in particular you had particular interest in the 2018 census.
24 Can you please tell us about what happened there and how that impacted on Pacific?

25 A. So data challenges around the 2018 census show clear examples of continuing flaws
26 within the New Zealand Government's ethnicity data practice. Leading up to the 2018
27 census, for the first time Statistics New Zealand utilised a digital approach whereby census
28 was conducted electronically because they believed that it would be more cost-effective.

29 The outcome was only 65.1% of Pacific people completed the census. So 35% of
30 our population did not complete the 2018 census. In order to make up for that, they
31 introduced alternative methods. So new methods was for a response to be counted, they
32 drew on the 2013 census data and they drew on the Integrated Data Infrastructure, so IDI to
33 complete that, to complete the census.

34 **Q.** And what does that mean, IDI data, what is that? Can you describe that to us?

1 A. The integrated data infrastructure, or IDI, was first established in 2011 and it is a collection
2 of New Zealand's whole population administrative data sources from Government agencies.
3 So the IDI is housed with Stats New Zealand but it brings together information obtained
4 from Government agencies, Stats New Zealand surveys, and nongovernment organisations.
5 So when we talked about the different sectors and how they collect data, it's all found
6 within the IDI. Personal identifiers, so they remove a person's name and their address and
7 they give them a unique identifier, which enables the same individual to be linked across
8 different datasets. But there are benefits and disadvantages to using IDI.

9 **Q.** So just to clarify what you're saying; are you saying that there is this pool of information
10 that different Government sectors will have been collecting and then they go into the
11 Integrated Data Infrastructure?

12 A. Infrastructure, yes.

13 **Q.** And you were just about to go into the benefits, can you tell us about that?

14 A. So a benefit of the IDI is that it contains population level data which means that all people
15 who engage with the Government system in some capacity are included in database. So if
16 we're talking about health, in the health sector, the IDI links health data to data from, again,
17 various Government sectors and this can add value to already existing health data in
18 determining both the drivers of health and the consequences of ill health. So there are
19 advantages if you want to create a fuller picture of how things are at a population level.
20 But there are also a lot of limitations as well.

21 **Q.** What are the limitations?

22 A. In my introduction I said that I was born—when I was born, had I been born in today's
23 context I would have been stateless. So stateless children don't necessarily have an NHI
24 number, if they are not going to school then education sector is not going to pick them up.
25 So there is a vulnerable portion of our population that is not going to be found in the IDI.

26 **Q.** So would you go as far as saying not to be counted anywhere?

27 A. Yes. So they are not counted. And when you're not counted you don't have a voice. Also
28 when you think about the inconsistencies and how ethnicity data is collected across sector,
29 again, it is comparing apples and tomatoes. Some of that data you wouldn't be able to link.
30 It's also problematic if you identify with multiple ethnicities. So I facilitated a workshop in
31 which I asked a question based on ethnicity and a Pākehā woman responded that when she
32 is at her GP with her son she will tick the Samoan and European box. But if she wants him
33 to get into a good school, she leans towards ticking the European box and omitting the
34 Samoan in the hopes that he will get in. When you consider the fact that 40.6% of Pacific

1 people identify with two or more ethnic groups, this is problematic.

2 **Q.** Why do you say that?

3 **A.** In many cases ethnicity data may not be self-identified at all. For example, again, in health,
4 if the recorded ethnicity is based on whether a patient is asked, or a staff member makes a
5 judgment or a family member fills out the form, you could get different answers to the
6 same person.

7 Another limitation is the fact that we are not told that the data we provide here will
8 also be used there. So I'm sure that when you are going to your GP and you're ticking the
9 boxes and told that your information is confidential, you are not being told that your
10 information is potentially going to be used in the IDI. And so the purpose is different.

11 **Q.** Looking at those limitations, what was the response from Pacific experts?

12 **A.** In response to the 2018 census, Pacific experts publicly voiced their concerns about the
13 census undercount and the dangers of utilising census data that inadequately represents
14 Pacific communities. Now as researchers and, you know, in the spaces that we're in we
15 rely on data to understand what is happening in our communities and what we need to
16 inform policy and practice for Pacific peoples in New Zealand. What I've presented shows
17 a continuation of the same problem created by the historical data collection flaws
18 throughout Government agencies which again means that our people are not recorded or are
19 recorded incorrectly. And if we're doing it badly now, imagine how bad it was from 1950
20 to 1991.

21 **Q.** Thank you Dr Taufa. Can I take you to how ethnicity recording and reporting impacts on
22 our Pacific survivors.

23 **A.** I think it's important to note that data is not just numbers, it's the stories that give meaning
24 to the numbers. And in my opinion, this hasn't been done enough and historically it's been
25 narrated by non-Pacific which is a problem. In Tongan we have a saying, 'Lau he kau pea
26 kau he lau'. Which speaks to the importance of participation, despite the David and
27 Goliath odds, to not be counted or to be disregarded because of the ethnicity variables is to
28 be unacknowledged and silenced. This speaks to the irresponsibility on the part of those
29 doing the reporting and the lack of accountability they have faced. Albert Wendt was once
30 quoted as saying, "Pacific Islanders exist only in New Zealand. I am called a Pacific
31 Islander when I arrive at Auckland Airport, elsewhere I am Samoan."

32 **Q.** So I take it that you mean that that links to the context of where you are and the space
33 you're in?

34 **A.** Yes.

- 1 **Q.** If I can ask you to carry on at paragraph 132 of your statement.
- 2 **A.** Polynesian or Pacific Islanders are panethnic constructs. We did not name ourselves
3 Pacific Islanders, we did not name ourselves Polynesians, these are terms that were
4 constructed by Palagi during—within a colonial context. And as I noted before, being
5 classified a Tongan in 1974, at the height of the Dawn Raids, would have had different
6 implications to how I self-identity as a Tongan in 2021. Ethnic classifications are tied to
7 preconceived ideas that would have and probably still impacts our Pacific survivors. So
8 when we are ticking and saying that we are Pacific or we are Tongan, we are based on
9 who's asking, there are already preconceived ideas around that, which will influence the
10 way people self-identity.
- 11 **Q.** Can you give us an example of that?
- 12 **A.** A common theme that emerged was the impact on racism and discrimination on survivors'
13 well-being. Many of the survivors experienced racism and discrimination first-hand,
14 however, their parents also experienced discrimination and racism in Aotearoa where
15 trauma became hereditary and passed, particularly during a time where the social climate in
16 New Zealand was racist. During the early 1970s, and this is an example of the importance
17 of numbers.
- 18 **Q.** While you're giving that I'll just ask you to slow down.
- 19 **A.** Sorry. During the early 1970s, unemployment rose from 0.1% to 5.6%. Within a decade,
20 so we're talking about the 1980s, the unemployment rate of Pacific peoples rose to 29%.
21 The stereotypes attached to ethnicity and to ethnicity classifications would have had a role
22 to play in that. And so what we have is a generation who are the recipients of the hardship
23 that was created and the context in which our parents were in when they identified as
24 Pacific. So if you were to conduct a media analysis on the use of the word "Pacific
25 Islander" during the Dawn Raids, you will see, and it was already spoken of on Monday,
26 we were blamed for a lot of things, for—we were blamed for the loss of work. And so
27 what I'm saying is, there's often a time period where you don't see the outcome until, you
28 know, down the line. A decade to that time, a decade to the time where our parents
29 experienced racial profiling, our unemployment rate was at 29%. That would have been
30 influenced by our ethnicity.
- 31 **Q.** So what you're saying, there would have been a time and place where other factors meant
32 that Pacific people wouldn't have identified as Pacific people?
- 33 **A.** Yes. So in one of the survivor's statements that I got, one of the survivors talked about
34 being called an "island boy" by State care staff before—and he would often be called

1 "island boy" either before being rebuked, picked on or mocked. And so negative
2 connotations is attached to the idea of "island boy" and "island boy" is attached to Pacific.
3 And so there would have been people that did not want to be Pacific because of how they
4 were treated based on ethnicity classifications.

5 **Q.** Would that also—you mentioned, if I can refer to paragraph 140, there were other factors
6 influencing that?

7 **A.** So survivors or those who witnessed State abuse and those who worked were acutely aware
8 of and fearful of deportation and a tensed relationship with the Police. So narratives from
9 the survivors speak of the lack of brown staff representation during this time which is a
10 form of racism by omission.

11 **Q.** And the influence of different time periods, that's the specific time events that you've
12 outlined in your table which is attached to your statement; is that correct?

13 **A.** Yes, so again re-emphasising the fact that you cannot look at ethnicity in isolation from the
14 time period in which you are collecting ethnicity data.

15 **Q.** And if there is no time period you are don't know where it's come from?

16 **A.** Yes. So if you look at 1950 to 1991, again, we wouldn't—we are unable to use any of that
17 data. And yet, over the next two weeks we hear survivors' stories which actually tells us
18 that they do exist. We just haven't been responsible as a country in ensuring that, in
19 recognising their existence.

20 **CHAIR:** And Dr Taufa, I think we also have discouraged it. We heard evidence of men who as
21 young boys and adolescents deliberately deceived, misrepresented themselves because they
22 didn't want to be part or didn't want to be identified for the very reasons you've spoken of.

23 **A.** Yes, because if you associate being Pacific with being treated badly, then you're going to
24 want to self-identity as another ethnic group.

25 **Q.** So that's yet another source of inaccuracy.

26 **A.** Yes.

27 **Q.** For good reason, but still an inaccuracy.

28 **A.** Yes.

29 **QUESTIONING BY MR POHIVA CONTINUED:** Self-identified or self-identification by
30 others, can you tell us about what are the other issues about that?

31 **A.** So when we say self-identified, the question that should be asked is whose self are we
32 referring to. In one of the survivor's statements I was privileged to read, there was a young
33 man who was asked about his ethnic background by a staff member and he responds
34 "Samoan". He should be confident in his identity as a Samoan and not corrected by an

1 adult who is in an authoritative position and who has the potential to influence his
2 experience in care. So this adult self-identifies this young man by telling him that he is not
3 a Samoan, he is a New Zealander because he is born in New Zealand. As a young boy who
4 relates being Samoan to Christianity, to family and to his mother, he is forced to adopt an
5 identity that doesn't belong to him. So New Zealander and with it the trauma of what he
6 was exposed to in State care as a New Zealander. This survivor said that from that point on
7 he self-identified as a New Zealander. If recordkeeping on this individual reported
8 ethnicity by which New Zealander was an option, he would not be identified as Samoan or
9 Pacific. And that would have been a survivor's voice lost to us, because he was told what
10 to say leading to the internalisation of a new identity that was not his.

11 In another statement, a survivor is told that he is Māori and goes through much of
12 his life identifying as Māori, only to find out when he receives his records that his ethnic
13 background is Samoan. This speaks to the power held by a dominant group to label another
14 with little consideration of the detrimental nature of such actions.

15 The policies within this country, including, but not limited to, ethnicity
16 classifications, continue to affect Pacific people in Aotearoa with the timeline of events
17 illustrating the double standards set by New Zealand to befriend Pacific when it benefits her
18 and disregard when it does not. And that's why I populated the table 4 to show when we
19 are needed in this country we are acknowledged. And when we are not needed, we are not
20 even counted.

21 Ethnicity and racism are synonymous based on time and context, where the social,
22 political and cultural climate in which you find yourself in. To be called a "coconut boy"
23 by a Pākehā, by a Palagi is degrading. In Tongan we refer to it as sio lalo, and in the
24 context of the survivor's statement, "Pacific Islander" and "coconut" are two and the same.
25 You cannot separate it. He would have entered that facility with the stereotypes attached to
26 Islander and the ethnic classifications of that time. That is why I never use the term
27 "Pacific Islanders". I refer to myself as—I refer to Tonga as a Pacific nation because I am
28 aware of where the concept of Islander came from.

29 This is supported by other survivor statements. One survivor referred to being
30 abused and put down because of his ethnicity, having migrated to New Zealand as a child,
31 English was not his first language and as a result he was mistreated within the school
32 setting. At school he sustained injuries that led to the admission into hospital and despite
33 his explanation, staff reported that his injuries were obtained as a result of violently
34 punching a window. This example speaks to the inaccuracies in the way that we are

1 reported, despite sharing our truth. So it can be extremely disheartening when you are
2 sharing your experiences, only to have someone else document it in another way. This
3 particular survivor spoke of his fear, because he was Pacific and because he was a child, his
4 fear of not being helped or listened to because of the fact.

5 In the survivor statements there are cases where, despite survivors' attempts to
6 self-identify and to remind staff of who they are and the ethnicity that they identify with,
7 what is written down is at the discretion of the person recording. So there was an example
8 of a psychiatric ward where a survivor had told staff of her ethnicity multiple times only to
9 have it misrecorded-.

10 So this has led to a survivor feeling frustrated and angry where she calls it
11 ignorance, because that is actually what it is. It reminds me of why once upon a time I left
12 the ethnicity box blank and, as I had noted before, when your experience teaches you that
13 you will be mistreated or judged based on the ethnicity box that you tick, you will act
14 accordingly.

15 **Q.** Thank you very much.

16 **MR POHIVA:** Commissioner, I'm just about to go into a new topic, I'm wondering whether it's—

17 **CHAIR:** Shall we take a break?

18 **MR POHIVA:** Take a break.

19 **CHAIR:** All right, we'll take 15 minutes and return to hear the rest of your evidence, thank you
20 Doctor.

21 **Adjournment from 3.25 pm to 3.46 pm**

22 **CHAIR:** Thanks Mr Pohiva.

23 **MR POHIVA:** Thanks Commissioners. Just before we resume evidence, there is an opportunity
24 to ask a lot of questions if the Commissioners have of Dr Taufa and that would—I ask that
25 that happen prior to her closing remarks.

26 **CHAIR:** Certainly.

27 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Are these your closing remarks Dr Taufa?

28 A. No.

29 **QUESTIONING BY MR POHIVA CONTINUED:** Dr Taufa, before the break we were talking
30 about, or we were speaking about the impacts data or ethnic recording or ethnicity
31 recording has impacted our survivors. Can you please tell us about how this also impacts
32 Pacific people in general.

33 A. I had touched on prioritisation in this country and I had mentioned the fact that it has
34 funding implications. But I think if we use the OT data that I had, so that's table 4, if we

1 could please have that on the screen, the graphs, it impacts Pacific people because it
 2 impacts the amount of support that we receive. For example, if the Government is still
 3 using prioritisation as a means to determine how they allocate funds, this means that based
 4 on prioritisation, 10% of the funds would come to Pacific as opposed to 16%. So it has
 5 implications when you think of it from a dollar value, from the perspective of dollar values.

6 **Q.** And in your experience, how does that directly impact our community in different sectors?

7 **A.** It impacts our communities across sectors because it impacts the amount of resources and
 8 the services that we have access to as Pacific. So if you think of Ministry of Health,
 9 Ministry of Education, they have ethnic specific services that are funded to meet the needs
 10 of their communities. But often they need evidence to suggest that there is a need in the
 11 first place, and that's where ethnicity data comes in.

12 My response to countering that is, rather than prioritise, double count-. Count—if a person
 13 identifies as Māori, count them as Māori, if they identify as Māori and Pacific, count them
 14 as Māori and Pacific. As minority groups we should not have to worry about where our
 15 funding goes, because the statistics show us that we are the ones who are in greatest needs,
 16 so that should be—yeah, so that should reflect in how we are funded.

17 **Q.** And how does that impact on everyone as a collective?

18 **A.** So I think when we are asking, earlier on I said—I talked about the importance of asking,
 19 you know, who is coming up with the questions, how are they collecting the data. Often
 20 when our data is collected it's one way, where a Government agency will come, will give
 21 you a form and you fill it out, but there needs to be a collective benefit. So it's not just
 22 about collecting data that will help the Government, there should be questions and there
 23 should be a way whereby the communities also benefit from the data that's being collected.
 24 That's only going to happen if Pacific people have a say and are enabled to screen the
 25 questions and ask the questions.

26 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Dr Taufu, Mr Pohiva, if I may. So is one of the things you
 27 might be alluding to—and correct me if I'm wrong—is that actually what we know is
 28 sometimes people get stuck on words like "targeting" and they want to use more universal
 29 principles when it comes to looking at data and allocation of funds for support services.

30 **A.** Mmm.

31 **Q.** Am I hearing you saying that actually if you just collected the data and responded to what
 32 we saw, we should be able to actually get a better sense of the impact if the funding is
 33 going to the picture that the data is showing?

34 **A.** That's correct.

1 **Q.** But it needs to be collected correctly in the first place?

2 **A.** Yes, it needs to be collected correctly and we can't underestimate the importance of the
3 person doing the collecting. For example, if you look at some of the survivors who have
4 shared their stories, those stories weren't shared in English, they were shared in our native
5 tongue, and so you have to have a separate skill set to be able to do that. So it's not enough
6 to be an expert in the subject matter that you're in or, you know, when you're going out to
7 collect that data, there needs to be additional things as well.

8 Also when collecting data you cannot underestimate the importance of vā, of relationships. You
9 can measure whether data is accurate or not based on who it is that you send out. If you're
10 sending out someone to collect data and they are ingrained in that community, that
11 community is going to feel comfortable and confident enough to share their truths without
12 wondering how it's going to be used and so forth. So I think there is a lot that we can do
13 better, but, yeah, just to support what you've said.

14 **Q.** And Mr Pohiva, if I may just one more question. Dr Taufa, so when you referred then to
15 the IDI national population data—and correct me if I'm wrong—what I thought I heard you
16 suggesting then that the regional data is probably just as important, if not more, to be able
17 to colour or tell the story of what the national data is actually telling us?

18 **A.** Yes, so the—I used regional example to highlight that when you add ethnicity to another
19 variable like region, it actually paints a more accurate picture than if you were just going to
20 talk surface level, this is how it is for Pacific people across the country. And in it for Tai
21 Tokerau I showed that if we were just counting based on Pacific ethnicity, the Māori and
22 Pacific children in that region actually are double the amount of just solely Pacific. And so
23 when you—ethnicity data tells one thing but it's only part of a story.

24 **Q.** Thank you, thank you Mr Pohiva.

25 **QUESTIONING BY MR POHIVA CONTINUED:** Thank you Commissioners. Dr Taufa, you
26 talked about people being in the right place to make a decision, I think you use the word
27 "table" and also "vā". Can you tell us more about what you mean by that?

28 **A.** When I introduced myself as an expert witness, I started by the introducing myself as a
29 Tongan in relationship to my family. The importance of vā, so in my written statement
30 I use what's called the Turanga Māori framework and it's a Cook Island framework used in
31 the family violence space. And it starts with the premise that everyone born has Turanga.
32 When we are born, when we are conceived, we belong. I belong to my mother, I belong to
33 my father, I belong to my kin. Every Turanga has piri'anga, and so that's in relationship.
34 And every Turanga and piri'anga has a akaue'anga, it's a duty of care.

1 I have personal Turanga, which I have acknowledged; I have community Turanga,
 2 for example I am a proud member of the Fakafeangai Mā'oni'oni Church, that's who I am,
 3 and I have professional Turanga, I am the research lead for Moana Research. When I go
 4 into a community, I'm not just carrying my Moana Research hat as a researcher, I carry the
 5 hats as a Tongan, as a member of a church, and with that the responsibility to ensure that
 6 when I'm going out and collecting data, their duty of care is the most important thing to me.

7 So I think that's where I—that's what I meant in terms of knowing the importance
 8 of vā and from a Pacific perspective it's not linear. It actually goes back and forward. So
 9 it's respecting that and understanding who the most appropriate people are to go and collect
 10 that data.

11 **Q.** And for the benefit of those who don't understand what vā is, how would you describe that?

12 **A.** Vā is relationship, it's the space. There is a Tongan saying and it talks about, Taki
 13 taha tāuhi 'a 'ene vaha'a ngatae. So it talks to the Ngatae tree. So traditionally in Tonga a
 14 chief's residence, so if you had a nōpele they would have Ngatae trees and there would be a
 15 space. So say a Ngatae tree from that part of the table to this part of the table. And the
 16 noble will allocate different families to tend to the space that's given to them. Now the
 17 issue with the Ngatae tree is if you let it grow to—if you let the branches grow, they have
 18 thorns which can potentially harm a person. So it talks—so I use this analogy to highlight
 19 the importance of actually tending to the space that's been given to you, because if you're
 20 not careful, people that follow may get hurt.

21 Vā is hard to describe in the English language, because there are no English terms that talk to the
 22 depth of what it means. But it's—so I had said our family home, we invited people who
 23 were family kin and who were just kin. That's vā. You don't have to be blood related to be
 24 related. Your grandfather might have been best friends with my grandfather and I would
 25 have met you for the first time; instantly there's a connection because of that vā.

26 **Q.** So talking about the connection and the relation, how do you link that back to what you
 27 earlier said about having people in the right places, if I can remember correctly, to ensure
 28 that ethnic recording is done—is improved?

29 **A.** So in—earlier on I talked about a survivor whose place of employment was in one of the
 30 State care facilities, and I talked about the lack of representation. To ensure that the vā is
 31 looked after, we need Pacific representation across the board, and by that I mean where
 32 we're not just going to collect data and to door knock, but we have a seat at the table to
 33 actually have a, you know, input questions to say this is culturally inappropriate, you
 34 should not be asking that. At this point I don't know what that looks like, but again, even

1 relating it back to the numbers, if 16% of Pacific people in Oranga Tamariki across
2 New Zealand identify as Pacific then at least 16% of your workforce should be Pacific. I
3 think that's the easiest way for me to describe it.

4 **Q.** And you talk about different sectors asking the ethnicity question of our communities, or
5 Pacific communities. Are there any assumptions that they make that impact our
6 communities or the way ethnicity recording is done?

7 **A.** There are always assumptions and I think, and like I said, depending on who's asking, will
8 trigger a response. The example that I gave of the European mother who had a Samoan
9 partner and when they went to the GP was happy to say that her child was Samoan
10 European but thought twice in education about disclosing the Samoan part of her son's
11 ethnicity, that speaks to the fact that our experiences within those sectors will have an
12 impact on how we responded by, and it will make us think twice before we respond.

13 **Q.** So in your experience in your work with various advisory groups and your work with
14 Government sectors, what has been your experience in terms of how they've sought your
15 assistance to work with Pacific people?

16 **A.** One of the biggest frustrations as a Pacific researcher is being called in after the objectives
17 have been set, after the questions have been drafted; and it doesn't feel tokenistic, it is
18 tokenistic. And so that has been, and that continues to be a huge programme—problem.
19 It's also part of the reason why we decided as Moana Research to start up our own
20 company, because we wanted the autonomy to say actually that's not being done right, and
21 have you taken into consideration A, B and C to ensure that our communities are not being
22 exploited, that the questions asked isn't just for the benefit of the Crown, that there is a
23 collective benefit.

24 **Q.** For Pacific?

25 **A.** For Pacific peoples.

26 **Q.** And does that link back to what you earlier said about the whole reason why ethnicity was
27 recorded, or the genealogy of it right at the beginning?

28 **A.** Right at the beginning, it's the reason why I said ethnicity has a tukufakaholo, it has a
29 genealogy. If you don't understand that you will read the information that's in front of you
30 at face value. And so with what I did with my students when I was teaching, I would
31 encourage my students to think critically and to always ask questions of the data. That's the
32 only way you can ensure there's a quality assurance by constantly asking how is it being
33 collected, who is collecting it, what questions are they asking. For Pacific, are all of the
34 questions deficit based, is it all based on what's negative, are there any questions that

1 actually celebrate our Pacific people. And if there aren't, then that speaks to the bias and—
2 bias of the methods and the objectives that have been set.

3 **Q.** And you mentioned that prioritisation has issues and in your opinion there should be a
4 move to double counting because it will better reflect and impact on our Pacific people, is
5 that right?

6 **A.** That is correct. I think it's misleading when you ask people to tick as many ethnicity boxes
7 as they want and then you decide for them how you are going to prioritise them. In
8 New Zealand we should be told of that, we need to be fully informed before we give
9 information based on how it's going to be used.

10 **Q.** And just to clarify my understanding of your evidence, in analysing it throughout the
11 genealogy it's important that the stories also travel along with the data that comes through;
12 is that correct?

13 **A.** Yes. I think in this country when we talk about data we just think of numbers, but datas are
14 actually the stories as well that accompany the numbers, because without the stories, we
15 will never understand the context in which those numbers existed. If we were to draw on—
16 so if for the Inquiry your task was to find out how many Pacific people were in State care
17 from 1951 to 19—from 1950 to 1991, and if there was a criteria there that you could only
18 interview or draw on voices of people who are actually in our system, we would not be
19 here. And that's the sad reality of, as I've said, the lack of care that was given to our people
20 during that time period.

21 **Q.** And that's when you refer to 'lau-he -kau', the importance of 'lau-he-kau' and 'kau-he-lau'.

22 **A.** The importance of being counted. It doesn't matter if you're last, just as long as you're
23 counted.

24 **Q.** Dr Taufa, I'm now going to ask you questions about your ideas or views about the future
25 and where to from here. What do you say about that?

26 **A.** I think we need to acknowledge the importance of Pacific data sovereignty. And when
27 I say Pacific data sovereignty I'm talking about the ownership and the guardianship of
28 information of data that's collected about Pacific people. So in 2019, following the
29 disappointment of the 2018 census and the undercount of Pacific people, at Moana
30 Research we hosted the Pacific—a Pacific data sovereignty seminar and the purpose of this
31 seminar was to provide a forum to bring together interested individuals and organisations to
32 promote and discuss the concept of Pacific data sovereignty. And we were privileged to
33 have a member of the Te Mana Rauranga which is the Māori Data Sovereignty Network
34 who made a statement that I will never forget. And he said data is the new lands. So I'll

1 repeat that. Data is the new land. Now as a Tongan, that spoke volumes, because land is a
2 part of our identity and once it's taken from us it's difficult to reclaim.

3 In the same sense our data should belong to us, but how it is used and for what purpose it is used
4 for, often leads to our identity being lost or misread in the system. And we have seen that
5 and I am sure you will continue to see that over the course of the next week and a half.

6 Following the seminar a key recommendation was to establish a Pacific data sovereignty network.

7 And this was to hold agencies accountable for how, what, why, and when they collect data
8 and who they commission to go out and gather our koloa, our voices as Pacific people.

9 So there was a recognition of the importance of Pacific data sovereignty, but in saying that, it
10 actually needs to be resourced. When we talk about—and we've covered, you know, the
11 importance of who is going out, and the purpose of Pacific data sovereignty, of Māori data
12 sovereignty, of indigenous data sovereignty is to ask questions of the data and to ensure that
13 our people are protected when people are going out to collect data from us.

14 **Q.** Because it has quite significant consequences or—

15 **A.** Yes, it does.

16 **Q.** Can you tell us what else is, your other thoughts about what should happen?

17 **A.** I think that the Government needs to be held accountable. On Monday Associate Professor
18 Honourable Luamanuvao reminded us that we as Pacific are accountable to our people. In
19 the same sense, the Government should be held accountable to her people and we Pacific
20 are her people. They need to prioritise collating data that will inform best practice, policy,
21 and give voice to the experiences of our Pacific people in ways that are again culturally
22 appropriate, culturally safe, and where there is a collective, again, collective benefit. And
23 I guess the Pacific data sovereignty network is a foot in the right direction in ensuring that
24 research and data collection is done in a way that is ethical and that will also benefit our
25 Pacific communities.

26 **Q.** And because you have the right people in the right place?

27 **A.** Yes.

28 **Q.** And then how—what steps will you take to ensure that things are done properly, if you
29 like?

30 **A.** Recently there was a report that was released, the Bula Sautu report and it proposed a
31 seven-step framework for a sector organisation and services to address Pacific health. So
32 there's already information out there and it's not necessarily about reinventing the wheel,
33 but actually taking what Pacific people have said time and time again and saying well,
34 actually, I'm going to listen to what they have to say. So they provided seven steps. The

1 first step is step one, we know our data. I'm not the first person to talk about the
2 importance of quality data. But it seems like, yeah, so it needs to be reiterated time and
3 time again.

4 And in the first step, there are six things that they suggest. So the first is asking the question, are
5 we collecting and reporting data by ethnicity. Every sector should be asking that question
6 and it's not enough to collect ethnic -specific level one ethnicity where we are just Pacific,
7 but this needs to be done using Pacific specific ethnicity as well. So- all 18 Pacific ethnic
8 groups should be counted.

9 **Q.** What level is that?

10 **A.** That's level—that will go from level two to four. Step two, what does the data say about
11 Pacific peoples. It's not enough to number count, to add how many people, you need the
12 voices to those numbers, you need—you need context. Three, is it meaningful. Four, are
13 we interpreting the data appropriately and are we applying a Pacific lens on data. I think
14 this point is extremely important. If you are working with our Asian communities or with
15 our Māori communities, it should be done—there should be an application of that cultural
16 ethic lens over the data.

17 Five, can we identify areas of improvement; and the last point is, do these improvements result in
18 lasting change. And I think throughout the course of this week and next week, that's what
19 we are wanting. Because sharing the narratives, that's a form of data collection in itself, but
20 it should lead to lasting change. And so these are questions that have to be asked across
21 sector, and in terms of accountability, they need to start collecting data in a consistent way.

22 **Q.** Which links to your analysis of, well, your evidence today is across the board there are
23 inconsistencies in gathering all of this evidence or data and slight changes in the question of
24 asking about ethnicity obviously impacts on data that we actually receive, is that correct?

25 **A.** That's correct.

26 **Q.** You talked about people being invited to the table to do this. Do you have anymore
27 thoughts about this?

28 **A.** So when I say "invited to the table", I don't—rather than use the analogy of a board table I
29 would use the analogy of a dining table. And it feels like as Pacific we are invited to come
30 and clean up after everyone has eaten. We are not invited to partake in the meal. I think
31 that's using that as an analogy. We have to—true partnership is being included at every
32 stage, and through my experience and in my opinion, that isn't being done.

33 **Q.** So through your experience you've experienced that, could you give us an example?

34 **A.** An example is when you're approached to—again, when you're approached to collect data

1 about your communities, but the objectives have been set, the questions have been set, and
2 your role is just—is to be a Tongan face to ask Tongan people about their experiences. I
3 think what is underestimated by people is that I'm not just a researcher, my Tongan face has
4 a village behind me and so what is disclosed won't necessarily be the same if you're a non-
5 Pacific. I think people are becoming aware of that, but we need—strategically we need
6 more people around the table to actually inform the development of these tools, and our
7 people need to be fully informed of how, once it is developed, the data is going to be used.

8 **Q.** So just to clarify my understanding, so you're saying that rather than being invited after the
9 objectives have set, Pacific people need to be part of the setting of the objectives, is that
10 right?

11 **A.** Yes, that's correct.

12 **Q.** And then you go on to talk about people in your community, or having the right people ask
13 the right questions, because even that will affect the answer that Pacific people give; is that
14 correct?

15 **A.** Yes, that's correct. And it's because when you go out, when I go out as a Tongan
16 researcher, I am mindful that I can take my professional hat off when I sleep; I can't take
17 my Tongan self off. And so there is that trust that is there, when they give me their
18 information or they share their truth with me that I'm to protect it and I'm going to ensure
19 that it will be written up in a way that is true to their experiences. If you don't have the
20 cultural context, that's going to be extremely hard.

21 **Q.** And you mentioned the word "trust". With Government agencies and them collecting the
22 data from our people, are you aware of what, if any, assumptions they make in terms of
23 trust?

24 **A.** So in my opinion there's an assumption that across sector that if I go out and ask people for
25 their information they are going to trust me and just wilfully give it. The fact that we are
26 here today actually shows that there is a mismatch in trust. And so again, we have to be
27 mindful of that, and I think throughout my statements I've made it clear that, depending on
28 which sector you're from and the—whether they trust you or they feel that they can
29 disclose, that will influence the response that you get.

30 **Q.** Thank you Dr Taufa. Before we go to the Commissioners, are there any other remarks,
31 because I understand that there may be questions and then we'll come back to do the final
32 remarks?

33 **A.** Closing remarks, I hope that this—my giving evidence provides an insight into the
34 importance of ethnicity and makes people more—and I hope that it raises questions

1 amongst those in the system to be more cautious of how they record, how they document
2 and the fact that it can and has, through our survivor voices, had an impact on their
3 well-being.

4 **MR POHIVA:** Thank you Commissioners. I'll just hand it over to you. She does have—there is
5 a particular way she would like to finish off.

6 **CHAIR:** I appreciate that, we will ask our questions then we will hand the baton, the stick back to
7 you, the rākau back to you. So I'll just ask my colleagues.

8 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Tēnā koe Doctor. I've really enjoyed your evidence around
9 ethnicity data and data sovereignty, because it absolutely is an important new whenua. I
10 don't know whether it's as important as the original whenua, but still very important. You
11 talk about the Government being held accountable and control over who they commission
12 to collect it and making sure it's culturally safe. These, as you've already alluded to, are
13 issues that are also—Māori are also—

14 A. Yes.

15 **Q.** —impacted by in a similar way. And I just wonder your view on whether or not
16 commissioning these responsibilities should be completely devolved to the likes of a
17 Pacific organisation for Pacific and a Māori organisation to look after. What's your view
18 on that? Is part of it could or should be or...

19 A. From my opinion there is Pacific data that only Government agencies are privy to, right, so
20 Government has a role to play. But in terms of the being non-biased, you would need to
21 work in partnership or commission it out in order for it to—if you want the truth.

22 **Q.** So which part do you see that being?

23 A. I think any part that leads to that where there was past traumas or where you know that the
24 Crown has done something that has impeded on the well-being of our people.

25 **Q.** So the historical data?

26 A. Historical.

27 **Q.** And data going forward, new fresh data could be—

28 A. The new fresh data could be in partnership but it would be what it is that you're wanting
29 information or you're wanting to seek research on. There is a saying, the message—the
30 messenger is just as important as the message. And so—and I know it's exactly the same
31 for Māori as well. And so it's having—it's working in partnership with key people who,
32 you know, if they were in a position where they had to choose between what the
33 Government prioritised or what Tangata Whenua/Pacific prioritise, the hat that they will
34 keep on is their indigenous hat. So I think it is not just about organisations, but actually

- 1 identifying key people who will go out and draw out information in ways that are true to
2 the needs and that will kind of—that will reinforce the well-being of their people.
- 3 **Q.** Thank you. Just one other question I had was around going back to the use of blood
4 quantum, it's quite a—to this day quite a controversial sort of topic.
- 5 **A.** Yes.
- 6 **Q.** And you've talked about how it was used as a method to under-represent in data.
- 7 **A.** Yes.
- 8 **Q.** Do you think that there was other reasons in addition to that around diluting the population
9 as a tool?
- 10 **A.** Definitely.
- 11 **Q.** For assimilation?
- 12 **A.** Definitely. And that's why I had the table that showed historical events in New Zealand
13 and different changes in policy. Race was used as a tool to try and assimilate Tangata
14 Whenua and when they couldn't fully assimilate Tangata Whenua then it was—the purpose
15 was then to try and fit in. If we look at early immigration policies it was easier to gain
16 residency in New Zealand if you could fit in. So it was easier if you were from Europe or
17 from Britain than it was if you were from the Pacific, because the criteria was how likely
18 are you to assimilate or to blend in with, say, Pākehā society. And that's why I drew on the
19 importance of understanding the tukufakaholo and the genealogy, because even if you
20 change the name, the backbone to it is still the same.
- 21 **Q.** And so using that term, using that method, is culturally inappropriate because it denies
22 whakapapa somewhere?
- 23 **A.** Yes. And it also creates segregation within different groups. For example, if you are—
24 during the time when they were using it, those who identified as being half-caste, half-caste
25 European were—there was status attached to that because you were more closely aligned
26 with Pākehā than if you were quarter European and three quarters Māori. So as well as
27 being culturally inappropriate, it created segregation within our own ethnic groups. And so
28 now when you talk about identity, I know that we in Tongan use haafe kasi and then in
29 Samoan they use 'afekasi. I've taught students who struggle with that because it's "I don't
30 fit here, I don't fit here", and again, those are labels and categorisations that weren't made
31 up by us, it was constructed by non-indigenous people for a purpose, and the purpose was
32 for us to eventually assimilate and become something we're not.
- 33 **Q.** Nga mihi nui.
- 34 **A.** Thank you.

1 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Thank you Dr Taufu, you've given us much rich thoughts this
2 afternoon. So essentially in terms of the kaupapa for us at the Commission here and
3 understanding our Pacific figures, actually what you're saying is is that they're distorted.

4 A. Mmm.

5 **Q.** Right from the get-go.

6 A. Mmm.

7 **Q.** So if you just relied on the figures that were reported, actually we're never going to get a
8 true picture and people might think it's very small number.

9 A. Yes.

10 **Q.** And so the way you've placed it in the context of rolling it out, actually you would get the
11 fuller picture, because people don't live in silos.

12 A. Yes.

13 **Q.** So if we understood how the questions were asked for the various agencies, we might be
14 able to understand a better life course of the survivor and where they show up, right?

15 A. Yes.

16 **Q.** So whilst they might not show up, say, in an MSD figure as a young person but they might
17 show up in terms of a benefit or a housing issue or something else if you're just looking at
18 the socio-economic pocket. But it's the systems-level suggestions that you've given us that
19 I think are really rich, because that's really where it's at for Pasifika. You're saying don't
20 look at it just in this little pocket otherwise you're never going to understand the bigger
21 picture and we'll keep perpetuating really the false story, I suppose, in one sense. I mean
22 that's my word I'm using.

23 A. Yes.

24 **Q.** But the inaccurate picture, is that right?

25 A. Yes, so in Moana Research one of the projects that we're working on is testing out a
26 screening tool. So it's asking parents questions about a tool that's already been developed
27 and there are 10 questions and they all start with, "Do you have any concerns?" I facilitated
28 these interviews, and one of the common themes is mothers and fathers asking "So when do
29 I get to talk about the good things?" And so that's the issue with data, is that you are asking
30 people for their information, but it's close ended because you're not asking them to
31 elaborate on what that actually means. And as I've noted, the numbers without the stories
32 are meaningless. You could have—and this is just for example; say there were three, our
33 records show that there were three people who identified as being Pacific in State care
34 during the Dawn Raids, we might look at those numbers and think those numbers are small,

1 they don't really mean anything. If you hear three survivors get up and share their stories,
2 you will actually see the full impact of the number three. And so this is where I'm asking
3 for accountability, for there to be a mandate whereby ethnicity data is collected, it's
4 questioned in a way where you can compare data, but that it also walk alongside narratives
5 to provide context to those figures.

6 **Q.** Thank you for that, Dr Taufu, you've been incredibly helpful this afternoon, fa'afetai lava.

7 **A.** Thank you.

8 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** I think we're doing that now right, through this process of the
9 quantitative and the qualitative data, and because the quantitative data is so sketchy, there's
10 a real challenge for us.

11 **A.** Yes.

12 **Q.** So I'm not going to ask you how to solve that now, maybe I could. I guess it's a matter of
13 collecting as much raw data as you can, right?

14 **A.** Yes.

15 **Q.** Kind of extrapolating from that and filling it out with the qualitative—

16 **A.** Yes.

17 **Q.** —data, yeah, simply, yeah. My question, first of all I want to say it's such a rich
18 conversation, I really appreciated it, in particular putting it in the context of the way in
19 which ethnicity data has been used to exploit and marginalise people, it's a really important
20 lesson. Now the context really is division of how we allocate resources is the kaupapa now,
21 trying to get that right. And if I think of what you've said about Oranga Tamariki, and the
22 path forward, if we start with the data that you worked on from 2020, is that a path forward,
23 does that have some promise, so there's—it's not only Oranga Tamariki, it's also for us, our
24 mandate is disability and our mandate is mental health and we also need to think about
25 survivors in prison as well as child protection. Is a way forward is to continue to
26 disaggregate data in that way so you have Māori, Pasifika as a category, perhaps even break
27 it down even further?

28 **A.** Mmm.

29 **Q.** Yeah, so these other two, three, four categories.

30 **A.** Mmm.

31 **Q.** Continue to do that, double count, right, because even if you disaggregate to Māori and
32 Pasifika, and if it's 16% from 10%, that still means your Māori identity in terms of
33 resources has been erased.

34 **A.** So my point with that is, if it goes from 10 to 16 I'm not saying take away from Māori, I'm

- 1 saying double count.
- 2 **Q.** Exactly.
- 3 **A.** Yeah, yeah, because then you can fully provide the support that is needed. I'm not sure
4 about whether I can draw on other data. So I had noted that I worked for the New Zealand
5 Child and Youth Epidemiology Service and they do a lot of, you know, data collections
6 from District Health Boards and so forth and there was a Pacific report that was released in
7 2008 and in it we found that hospital admissions for children were high across the board if
8 you were Pacific, it was high if you were Māori, it's higher if you're Māori and Pacific. If
9 you look at housing rates in New Zealand, home ownership rates are low, so from the
10 1990s up until 2013 Stats New Zealand have released kind of the decline in home
11 ownership since the housing reforms came about in the 1990s and what they've found is
12 that home ownership rates have declined for Pacific, it's declined for Māori but it's worse if
13 you're Māori and Pacific. And so I highlight that group to show that our Māori and Pacific
14 families actually need their own kind of support. But until we stop prioritising and start
15 looking at these groups we will never be able to, I guess, provide enough evidence to show
16 that there is a need.
- 17 **Q.** Okay, so taking that model, the double counting, you could extend that to disability—
- 18 **A.** Yes.
- 19 **Q.** —settings and—yeah. And then also an important factor is the data sovereignty and
20 effective participation of Pasifika communities at the table when it comes to method,
21 methodology and how you assess the data?
- 22 **A.** It would ensure that our communities aren't being exploited, and it will ensure that the
23 processes are done in ways that are ethical and that are also culturally appropriate. Because
24 it is about guardianship and making sure that when my mother and father who are here are
25 filling out a form, that they are aware of how their information is going to be used.
- 26 **Q.** Awesome. Okay, kia ora. I'm sure your whānau must be extremely proud of you and your
27 research. Thank you, kia ora.
- 28 **A.** Thank you.
- 29 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Dr Taufu, the Chair has kindly let me make one more
30 comment that's arisen out of Dr Erueti's comments. This group of Māori Pacific which we
31 know and they're very comfortable in their skin because they're able to tick both boxes
32 quite strongly; it's one thing for them to experience, it's another thing for, say, agencies and
33 Governments of the day to not really recognise this group as a valid group, isn't it, because
34 is the thinking that you're either one or the other but you can't be both?

1 A. Yes, and I think if you draw on the concept of intersectionality, they have the double
2 discrimination of colonisation and of the trauma that their Pacific families have gone
3 through. And so with that there's also the attachment of the added stereotypes, the
4 prejudice that you—so it's like a double, you know, it's twice as felt because you are
5 dealing with both.

6 **Q.** Thank you Dr Taufu.

7 A. Thank you.

8 **CHAIR:** I have just a couple of questions. The first, which goes nowhere near the esoteric levels
9 that we've been discussing, but really troubles me and you talk about stateless children,
10 which is an appalling concept in this land of ours.

11 A. Mmm.

12 **Q.** Do you have any idea, do we know how many stateless children we have in this country?

13 A. No. And that's the scary part.

14 **Q.** Yes.

15 A. My PhD was on teenage pregnancy and we had narratives of mothers who would just show
16 up to the hospitals to give birth and then leave straight away because they were illegal
17 immigrants which meant that their children are born stateless. There was a case, and I've
18 had experience with this, where a young boy who wanted to attend school but his parents
19 were reluctant to send him to school, 10 year old boy had committed suicide outside his—
20 the local primary school. People underestimate what it means to be stateless and not
21 counted. And as I had noted earlier on, had I been born in this era, I would be stateless and
22 I wouldn't have had the privileges that I've had that has now allowed me to sit and be in this
23 position to talk about how policies have gotten it really, really wrong for our people.

24 **Q.** Thank you for exposing that and that's something we will take away with us. The second,
25 you've really opened my eyes to the use of the word "Pacific" and I start to wonder whether
26 there's much value in using it at all when we're talking about data collection. It has become
27 a catch-all phrase, which has done more harm than good really. Would you agree with
28 that?

29 A. Yes, I would. I mean there are benefits, but I think, you know, drawing on what Albert
30 Wendt says, he is a Pacific when he arrives at the Auckland Airport, everywhere else he is
31 Samoan. And so when you take into consideration there are 18-plus ethnic groups under
32 the umbrella term "Pacific", that term does not allow us to show what makes each ethnic
33 group unique.

34 **Q.** Yes.

- 1 A. And so—and it also, every Pacific ethnic group they will have their own set of values and
2 their own set of support systems. A pan-Pacific umbrella does not provide us with
3 information on how we can support, and the fact that we can draw probably draw on some
4 of our indigenous ways of providing support.
- 5 **Q.** And the method of support, yes, which will differ.
- 6 A. Yes, so that's lost in the Pacific classification. I also don't like—and this is my own
7 personal preference—the "Islander" that's attached to Pacific, because of the negative
8 connotation that's attached to being an Islander. And so which is again why I refer to
9 Pacific nations and Pacific peoples, because that's who we are.
- 10 **Q.** I don't know if you heard the evidence of the man the other day who called himself a traffic
11 Islander, he was a street kid?
- 12 A. Mmm.
- 13 **Q.** That's a deeply tragic thing. I'm going to ask you an impossible question. Obviously the
14 numbers to deal with, and I'm going to say Pacific people but in a general way, between
15 1950, 1999 are hopeless.
- 16 A. Yeah.
- 17 **Q.** Is there any conceivable way of retrofitting, if I can use that phrase, the damaged goods that
18 we've been handed?
- 19 A. In my opinion, the only way would be to do what you are doing now. It's asking—
- 20 **Q.** Through the narrative.
- 21 A. Yes, asking people to come forward and to share their stories. If we spend our time trying
22 to weave a fala that cannot be rewoven, our energy's going to be exhausted on that instead
23 of actually trying to understand what it is.
- 24 **Q.** Yes.
- 25 A. So I think we acknowledge that data is still not great now, but it was even worse then, and
26 we look at what we can do as a collective to ensure that our families aren't silenced.
- 27 **Q.** Thank you.
- 28 A. Thank you.
- 29 **Q.** So we're coming to a close, before your closing statement, I'd just like to thank you. First
30 of all I want to acknowledge the presence of your parents. They must be very proud of you.
31 I don't know if they come to all your presentations, but we thank them for coming and
32 honouring us for their presence as well as your clever daughter.
- 33 You've talked about the narratives standing beside the data and that you've made
34 that very powerful point in fact the last thing you said just before emphasised it more. And

1 you have done what all good teachers do, you have demonstrated your technique in the way
 2 in which you have taught us today, you have used your own personal narrative to inform
 3 the data that you have given us. And that is a truly unique and special way of imparting
 4 information, which is difficult, this is hard stuff, and yet you have humanised it through
 5 your own story, at some personal cost I expect, and we acknowledge that and thank you
 6 very much for that.

7 And the last thing that struck me and which is so important, that you have spoken
 8 of the people of the Pacific nations as the people of the past, the present and the future. So
 9 you have brought all your communities together in time, space and through their
 10 genealogies and for that we thank you.

11 A. Thank you.

12 Q. And we hope that this is not the end of the conversation.

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. Again, we hope this talanoa continues through this important work.

15 A. Malo, thank you.

16 Q. Thank you.

17 **QUESTIONING BY MR POHIVA CONTINUED:** closing remarks.

18 A. Malo. I will draw on the words of Tongan scholar Epeli Hau'ofa, Fakafofonga atu 'a
 19 e fakamālō Dr Taufā ho'o kau mai he 'aho ni. Faingamalie ko
 20 'eni 'oku ou kole ke ke faka'osi mai mu'a 'aki ha'o who reminds us that if we fail to
 21 create our own reality, someone else will do it for us. He was a—in his writings he talks
 22 about being a teacher and how disheartening it was to welcome a room full of Pacific
 23 students and to only teach on the deficits and the smallness of their island nations. And he
 24 writes about his Paul on the road to Damascus moment when he was in Hawaii and he
 25 looked out into the ocean and realised that we are a people who actually belongs to the
 26 biggest body of ocean in the world. And so he talks about the importance of decolonising
 27 the way that we think, which is why I've drawn on his quote. If we fail to create our own
 28 reality, someone else will do it for us.

29 When it comes to questions about us, we need to have a say. I commend the
 30 Royal Commission of Inquiry for this platform for enabling a space for Pacific people to
 31 share our stories, our experiences, our truths and our realities. If in New Zealand we are
 32 true to the idea of equity and equality, this needs to happen. And so I draw on the verse
 33 that I started with, Esther chapter 4 verse 14. Commissioners, who knows, but that you
 34 have been called to your position for such a time as this.

1 **[Tongan song]**

2 **CHAIR:** We now call on the Reverend Atunaisa Langi.

3 **REVEREND ATUNAIISA:** Thank you so much for the—if I was called right then I would have
4 come and closed our meeting, after the singing, and I thank you for the closing. Thank you
5 for acknowledging God and as Pacific Island people that's what defines us. Paul says for
6 me to know, to understand life is to know Christ and the power of his resurrection. So as
7 Pacific people, as we close I started earlier this morning that Fiji is in a recovery mode,
8 some of our Fijian folks walked in when I was singing along, but finally they have left, but
9 I will sing the last three verses and I ask if we can be upstanding and my prayer as Pacific
10 people, that we will never, never feel inferior to worship God in this context in the
11 marketplace, in the years to come, that we will burst out with singing and places to God all
12 mighty.

13 So I'm going to sing the last three verses. I sang three verses earlier this morning as
14 I opened with devotion. I will sing the three versus in Fijian. There's probably 90% of
15 Pacific Island people here, come on, let's sing. So you sing the Fijian verse that is
16 translated into English. "I need thee oh I need thee", that's the chorus, but I'll sing the
17 Fijian verse. **[Fijian song]**

18 **Hearing adjourned at 4.53 pm to Thursday, 22 July 2021 at 10 am**

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