



**Abuse in Care**  
Royal Commission of Inquiry



# **Boot Camp: Te Whakapakari Youth Programme**



**A case study**

**Published: August 2024**

# Before you start



This Easy Read document is about a report written by the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care.



Some of the information and pictures used in this document is very upsetting.



This document is about people being badly hurt by people who were meant to look after them.



The people who were hurt include:

- children
- disabled people.



Before you read it you might want to make sure you:



- are in a safe place
- have people who can support you.



If you do not feel safe call the police on **111**.



If you are upset after reading this document you can talk to your:

- whānau / family
- friends.



**NEED TO TALK?**



**free call or text  
any time**



You can also talk to a counsellor at  
Need to Talk by:

- calling 1737
- texting 1737.

It does not cost any money to call /  
text 1737.

You can also find support through the  
**Survivor Experiences Service**  
website.

[https://survivorexperiences.govt.nz/  
support-services/](https://survivorexperiences.govt.nz/support-services/)

[https://survivorexperiences.govt.nz/  
for-survivors/disabled-survivors/](https://survivorexperiences.govt.nz/for-survivors/disabled-survivors/)



You can contact them the Survivor Experiences Service by:



- **phone: 0800 456 090**

- **text: 8328**



- **email:**

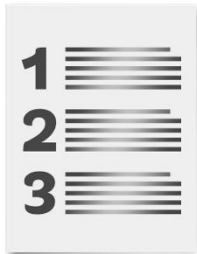
**[contact@survivorexperiences.govt.nz](mailto:contact@survivorexperiences.govt.nz)**

# What you will find in here

Page number:



About the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care.....6



What is this document about?.....9



About Whakapakari.....15



What happened at Whakapakari .....23

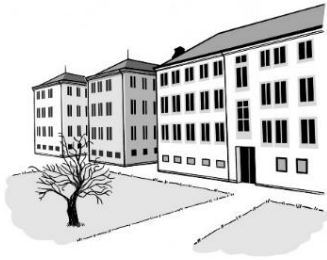
What the abuse did to people .....31

# About the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care



**Abuse in Care**  
Royal Commission of Inquiry

The **Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care** is looking into abuse that happened to people **in care**.



In this document being **in care** means that the Government or a **faith-based institution** was in charge of your care.



**Faith-based institutions** are run by religious groups like churches.



## Abuse can be:

- **physical** – a person kicking or hitting you
- **sexual** – a person doing sexual things to you that you do not want them to such as:
  - touching your body or private parts
  - kissing you
  - making you have sex with them – this is called rape
- **emotional** – a person yelling or saying things to you that are not nice
- **neglect** – a person not giving you the things or care you need.



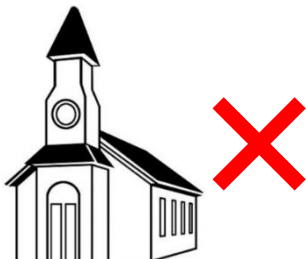
The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care is also called the **Commission**.



The Commission is **not** part of the Government.



The Government cannot tell the Commission what to do.



The Commission is not part of any faith-based organisations like churches.

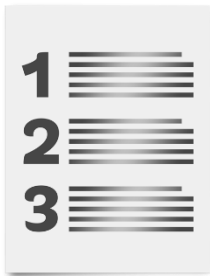


The Commission calls people who have been through abuse in care **survivors**.

# What is this document about?



This Easy Read document is a **summary** of a **case study**.



A **summary** is:

- shorter than the main document
- tells you the main ideas.



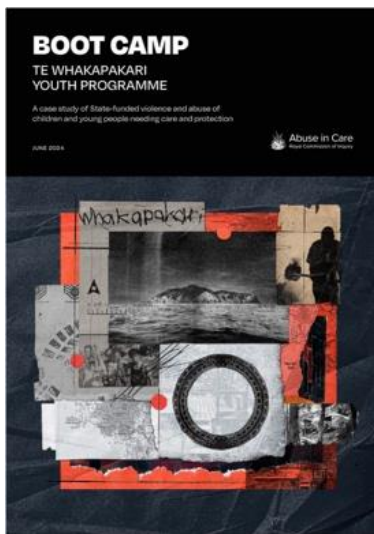
A **case study** is research that is done on 1:

- person
- group
- place.





The Commission asked for case studies to be done to talk about the abuse in care that happened to certain communities of survivors.



This case study report is called:

**Boot Camp: Te Whakapakari Youth Programme: A case study of State-funded violence and abuse of children and young people needing care and attention.**



This case study report is about abuse that happened at Te Whakapakari Youth Programme.

In this Easy Read document we will call Te Whakapakari Youth Programme **Whakapakari**.



Whakapakari was a **boot camp**.



**Boot camp** means a place that young people who are in trouble with the law can be sent to.



People in boot camps usually have to:

- follow strict rules
- do a lot of hard work
- do a lot of exercise.





There are some **quotes** in this document.



### Quotes:

- are words someone has said
- will be inside a yellow box like this.



The Commission has given a **trigger warning** to go with this document.



A **trigger warning** is a statement that says the information you are about to read has upsetting things in it.



The Commission says:

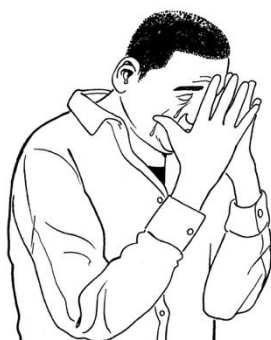
We honour and uphold the dignity of survivors who have so bravely shared their stories here.



We acknowledge that some content contains **explicit** descriptions of tūkino – abuse, harm and trauma – and may evoke strong negative, emotional responses for readers.



Here **explicit** means things are talked about in detail.



The Commission also says:

Although this response may be unpleasant and difficult to **tolerate**, it is also appropriate to feel upset.



**Tolerate** means to put up with something even though it is bad.



The Commission also says:

Respect others' truths, breathe deeply, take care of your spirit and be gentle with your heart.

# About Whakapakari



Whakapakari was started in 1977 by a man called John da Silva.



It was on Aotea Great Barrier Island.



Aotea Great Barrier Island is about 90 kilometres away from Auckland.

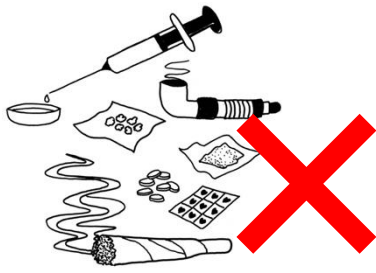


Whakapakari got money from the **Department of Māori Affairs**.



The **Department of Māori Affairs** was the part of the Government in charge of things that affect Māori.





The Department of Māori Affairs said Whakapakari was a place where young people could:

- stop using drugs
- learn to feel **confident**
- learn new skills
- find out about **Māoritanga**.



**Confident** means feeling sure of:

- yourself
- what you can do.



**Māoritanga** means Māori ways of doing things.



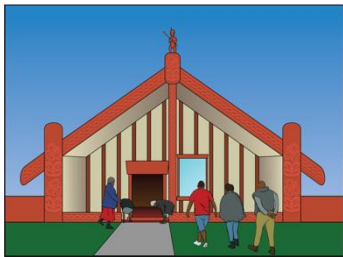
John da Silva was not Māori.

What happened at Whakapakari was not part of Māori **culture**.



**Culture** means the things a group shares like:

- language
- beliefs
- ways of doing things.



A lot of rangatahi Māori / Māori young people were harmed by what happened at Whakapakari.



Young people were sent to  
Whakapakari by:

- judges in the youth court
- **social workers.**



**Social workers** are people whose job is to support people who are going through a hard time.



Before anyone was sent to  
Whakapakari judges / social workers  
were meant to get **consent** from:

- the young person
- a parent / guardian.



**Consent** means you:

- agree to something
- understand what is going to happen.



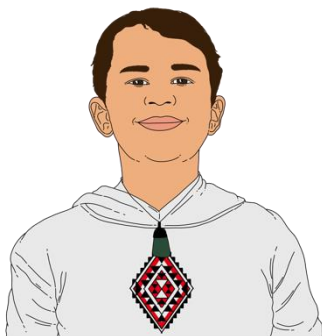
Judges / social workers did not always get consent before sending young people to Whakapakari.



No one checked if the young people:

- were disabled
- were **neurodivergent**
- had **mental health** problems.





**Neurodivergent** means having a brain that works differently from people who are not neurodivergent like:

- being autistic
- having ADHD

**Mental health** is about how you:

- think
- feel

Most of the young people who were sent to Whakapakari were 14 to 16 years old.

The youngest were only 12 years old.



Most of the young people at Whakapakari were Māori.



Most of them were boys.



Young people stayed at Whakapakari for 1 to 6 months.

The young people at Whakapakari lived in tents.



The tents were:

- wet
- cold
- not nice to sleep in.





Young people at Whakapakari had to use **long drop** toilets.

**Long drop** means a toilet that is just a seat over a deep hole in the ground.



The toilets were very dirty.



They often did not have hot water to wash with.



Young people at Whakapakari spent most of their time doing hard work like:

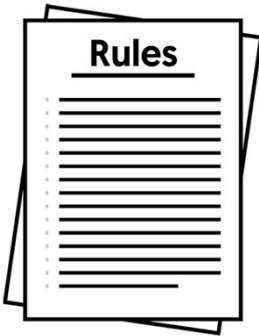


- chopping firewood
- hunting
- gardening.

# What happened at Whakapakari



Staff at Whakapakari used **military style discipline**.



**Military style discipline** means doing things like they do in the army.

It means:

- having a lot of rules
- punishing people for not following the rules right away.



The young people were expected to be **subservient**.





## Subservient means:

- doing what you are told
- not asking questions
- acting like you matter less than other people.

The staff at Whakapakari physically abused the young people.

The staff at Whakapakari also:

- sexually abused the young people
- raped the young people.

The abuse was done to scare the young people into doing what the staff wanted.



The abuse was also done to punish young people the staff thought had done something wrong.

Staff at Whakapakari had guns.



The staff said the guns were for hunting.

The staff used the guns to frighten the young people.



They used the guns to make it easier to sexually abuse the young people.



Young people were also neglected at Whakapakari.

It says what neglect means on **page 7** of this document.



Young people at Whakapakari did not get the things they needed like:



- enough food
- medical care



- education / school.



Whakapakari was a long way from anywhere else.

The young people could not escape.



Young people who tried to escape were punished very badly.



They were not able to get in touch with anyone to tell them about the abuse.



The Government kept giving money to Whakapakari until it closed in 2004.



The Government failed to keep the young people at Whakapakari safe.



The Government did not pay enough attention to what was happening.



A lot of people made **complaints** about what was happening at Whakapakari.



**Complaint** means telling someone:

- what has happened
- that you want them to do something to make it right.



There were **investigations** into some of the complaints about Whakapakari.

**Investigation** means people looked closely at what was happening.



Most of the investigations did not look closely enough.



Some of the investigations said Whakapakari should be:

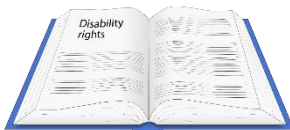
- improved / made better
- shut down.



The Government did not do anything.



The way young people at Whakapakari were treated was **cruel and inhumane**.



**Cruel and inhumane** means the way people were treated:

- harmed them badly
- caused them a lot of pain
- went against their **human rights**.



**Human rights** means:

- the things everyone should be able to:
  - have
  - do
- the way people should be treated.



## What the abuse did to people



The abuse at Whakapakari caused **severe**:

- mental pain
- physical pain.



Here **severe** means something was really bad.



A lot of the survivors of Whakapakari have **PTSD**.





**PTSD** is short for **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder**.

It is something that can happen after someone has been through something very bad.



People with PTSD might:

- feel worried all the time
- feel like they are living the bad thing over and over.



A lot of the survivors are scared of seeing the people who abused them again.



Almost all the survivors have had problems with:

- drugs
- alcohol.

**Research** tells us that boot camps do not do anything to stop people breaking the law.



**Research** is when people:

- find out about something
- learn from the things they find out.



The Government knew that boot camps did not stop people breaking the law.



The Government kept giving money to Whakapakari anyway.



Every Whakapakari survivor has been to prison.



Some survivors are still in prison.

In 2017 **Ruth Dyson** said:



A lot of government money was put into that programme and in the end it resulted in the State funding violence and abuse towards children and young people.

That's how horrific it was.



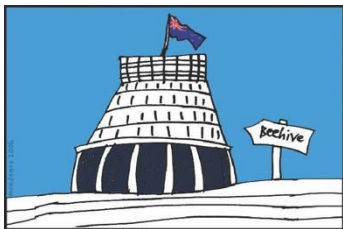
**Ruth Dyson** was the Minister of Child Youth and Family from 2003 to 2007.

She was part of the Labour party.



**Oranga Tamariki** told the Commission that sending young people to places like Whakapakari is:

...sometimes referred to as a fully funded failure model.



**Oranga Tamariki** is the part of the Government in charge of taking care of children who are at risk of being harmed.



A lot of young people had their lives ruined by the abuse at Whakapakari.



This information has been written by the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care.



It has been translated into Easy Read by the Make it Easy Kia Māmā Mai service of People First New Zealand Ngā Tāngata Tuatahi.



The ideas in this document are not the ideas of People First New Zealand Ngā Tāngata Tuatahi.



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