

**IN THE WAITANGI TRIBUNAL  
HEALTH SERVICES AND OUTCOMES KAUPAPA INQUIRY**

**WAI 2575  
WAI 2109**

**IN THE MATTER** of the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER** of the Health Services and Outcomes Kaupapa Inquiry (Wai 2575)

**AND**

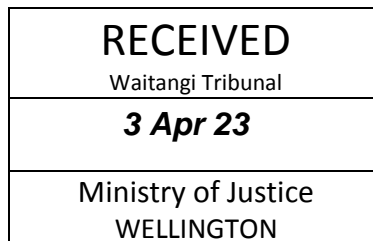
**IN THE MATTER** of a claim by Maaka Tauranga Tibble for himself and on behalf of all Kapo Maori (Maori blind, vision impaired and deaf blind persons) and their whanau and Kapo Maori Aotearoa/New Zealand Incorporated (Wai 2109)

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**SUMMARY OF AFFIDAVIT OF VICTOR CLYDE WEST**

**Dated this 13<sup>th</sup> day of January 2022**

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I, **VICTOR CLYDE WEST**, retired, of Waihopai (Invercargill), say:

1. I provide this summary in support of the Wai 2109 Kapo Maori claim.
2. I have six siblings. I am the second eldest. Two of my siblings were kapo like me, Iona and Julian (who has now passed away). So, three of us altogether. We all have retinitis pigmentosa, or RP, as it is often known.
3. RP started affecting me at the age of eight. I remember doing an eye chart test at school, and it was clear I had an issue with my peripheral vision. I went to an optician in Waihopai, and got glasses.

#### **Growing up in Waihopai and Motupohue**

4. My sight deteriorated quite a bit during schooling. By the time I was about 12, it was starting to affect me. I did not get any additional support or assistance at school – I was just put up at the front. That was about it.
5. In the early 1950s, Dad was not getting a great income and could not get a job. We were struggling as a whanau. At the age of 13, I got a job in a wool store. I became financially independent at 14 years old. I made sure I could pay for my doctor's visits – I did not want to put any extra pressure on Mum. She had enough going on. I had about eight different jobs between the ages of 13 to 18. Often the jobs were very physical and once it was realised that I was not able to see much, I would often get let go.
6. Nine years on from when I first saw an optician at the age of eight, we had to accept the fact that my sight was deteriorating significantly. That is when I went to see a specialist in Dunedin, who confirmed all our worst fears; my sight had deteriorated and the glasses I had been wearing were not correcting my sight. The specialist did not give me an outlook in terms of when I could expect to lose my sight entirely.
7. I did not end up using a rakau (white cane) until I could not see at all. I hated carrying it, but I had to swallow my pride. In a small community, everyone knew you had a slight disability, so it never left you.
8. After I went to the specialist, my parents got in contact with the Foundation for the Blind, as I understand it was then known. The manager of the Dunedin office

of the Foundation came and visited us. I was not part of the discussion – they talked mainly with Mum and Dad, even though I was 19. I was left out.

9. I was not quite sure about what else was available in support, initially. I was not told by the Foundation that there was a pension available at that time that I could have applied for. And although I had registered with the Foundation in 1958, I was not told then that there was a placement officer at the Foundation who could have helped to get me a job and advocated for me in Waihopai. With some help and guidance, I could have stayed and worked in the area instead, but there was no support provided at that time. There did not seem to be many other options that I was aware of, so I went up to the Foundation to the sheltered workshops.

#### **Life and work at the sheltered workshops**

10. I finished at the freezing works in 1959, and a vacancy came up at Pearson House in Auckland; accommodation for kapo run by the Foundation. We worked onsite, in sheltered workshops a short walk from Pearson House. I was placed in the basket making workshops initially. There did not appear to be any real consultation about what the other options were for work, I was just placed in that one.
11. The Foundation did not provide access to health or counselling services for resident kapo, so far as I am aware. It was just a place to stay.
12. The first month's board at Pearson House was free, and after that it was five pounds a week. It was at this point that the Foundation told me there was a pension available and that I should apply for this so I could pay the board. The money I got for basket making would not cover this. The wages we made were paid direct to the Foundation, who controlled the residents' finances. It felt terrible having them trying to control what you could do with your money.
13. After a couple of months, I was a bit disillusioned. My wages were just over two pounds per week and a five-pound pension, and I was not sure how I could continue to live on that – you could only really exist. I then found out that the workshop next door to the basket making workshop focused on making coir mats, which paid better. I stayed in that workshop for the rest of my time at Pearson House (just over six years). I did not mind it.

14. Everyone seemed to get on all right at Pearson House. One thing I noticed though, was that there was only one Maori person in management, which was a shame – having role models and people you feel you can talk to about issues is important.
15. Many kapo who were at Foundation residences were far too young to be in an institution. I had thought the Foundation would want people being independent, doing their own thing. In my experience, they did not promote self-reliance or independence – it felt to me as if you sort of became a prisoner in a way.
16. As time went on, I felt I needed to leave. Before I left, I met my wife, Marta Kahui at Pearson House. She started working there in 1964.

### **Finding accommodation in Auckland**

17. I had to look for accommodation around Auckland before I could move out. We had been turned down for temporary housing by the Foundation – they never gave an explanation, they just said it was full and did not offer any other assistance. They also wanted to keep all my bank accounts with them.
18. My wife and I struggled to find accommodation. It was difficult to get housing if you were Maori, as we both were, but if you also had a rakau, it was a double-whammy. By this time, I could not read the newspaper, so other people would read out the advertisements for flats. Often, these would read “no coloured people” or “no Maori”. But we persisted, until one day, we were in with a chance for a flat. Fortunately, we got it.

### **Returning home**

19. We soon made the decision to return home to Waihopai.
20. A week after we got back, I began work in the United Empire Box factory. The Foundation’s placement officer in the area, Lionel Boyce, organised this for me and a friend sorted out a flat for us. I worked there for just under two years, before I took over a vacancy for a job at the post office workshop. I began my career at the post office in August of 1967 and I worked there for the next 21 years.
21. Lionel, who was kapo Pakeha, really went above and beyond in his work. Lionel even assisted us to get a loan to build our home through Maori Affairs. This was

where we raised our three children and spent our lives, until I sold the house 10 years ago. I would still have been there if Marta was there, but I could not maintain it on my own after she passed. I have been in a council flat for seven and a half years now. I am happy there and have everything I need.

### **Everyday life**

22. You have to be organised if you are kapo. Everything needs to be adapted. You might have an accident every now and again, but you learn. Having accidents is just part of the territory. I have been knocked over by cars three times, almost four, when trying to cross the road.
23. Transport is another daily challenge. Getting to places when you cannot drive or bike is harder, and can be very expensive. You will find that a lot of kapo Maori do not have access to whanau or friends with cars, and transport is always an issue. Mobility training and then taking buses or walking (if it is not too far) are probably the best ways to get around, but, as I have already mentioned, walking can be dangerous. Most of time I bus or taxi, but it is very expensive if I use the taxi, even though we can get 50% off.
24. I would go to a lot more things, but if people do not offer me transport, I will not be going, because it is too expensive. I would not go to a health check sometimes if it is not urgent – it is a matter of priorities and a matter of budgeting what you have got. The great majority of kapo Maori are not well off, so they probably just have to walk, get buses, or rely on whanau. For myself, I like to be independent.

### **Kapo Maori Aotearoa**

25. I have known Maaka Tibble for a long time. I first met him in the early 1960s, but only briefly. He really did well in setting up Kapo Maori Aotearoa and I want to pay a big tribute to him for getting it off the ground. It has been great to see the organisation where it is today and all the work that has gone on to get it there.
26. In 2009, I got an invitation to join the organisation. I joined up that year. I was on the board from 2011 to 2017, and I had some great times! During this time, I saw some of the difficulties Kapo Maori Aotearoa and kapo Maori faced, particularly in getting recognition and with funding.

27. For a time, the Foundation would provide the funding for looking after kapo Maori to Kapo Maori Aotearoa, as it was the only organisation representing their interests.
28. We were always struggling for funding. Once we got funding from the Ministry of Health, we would have to spend it, and we could not keep it, as we would lose it. We had to account for every dollar spent. It was a pretty tight squeeze at times, I can tell you that.
29. At least we have our own organisation now. Kapo Maori Aotearoa is independent and can make decisions and assist their own – they have that mandate. This is the way it should have been in the first place.

#### **Remedies and hopes for the future of kapo Maori**

30. In terms of hopes for the future, I would like kapo Maori to be given the opportunity to be able to live as independently as possible with adequate support. For example, I would like them to be able to access information that sighted people have available to them in the community, to have access to transport at a reasonable cost to ensure they are able to participate in society like everyone else, and to access better education and employment opportunities.