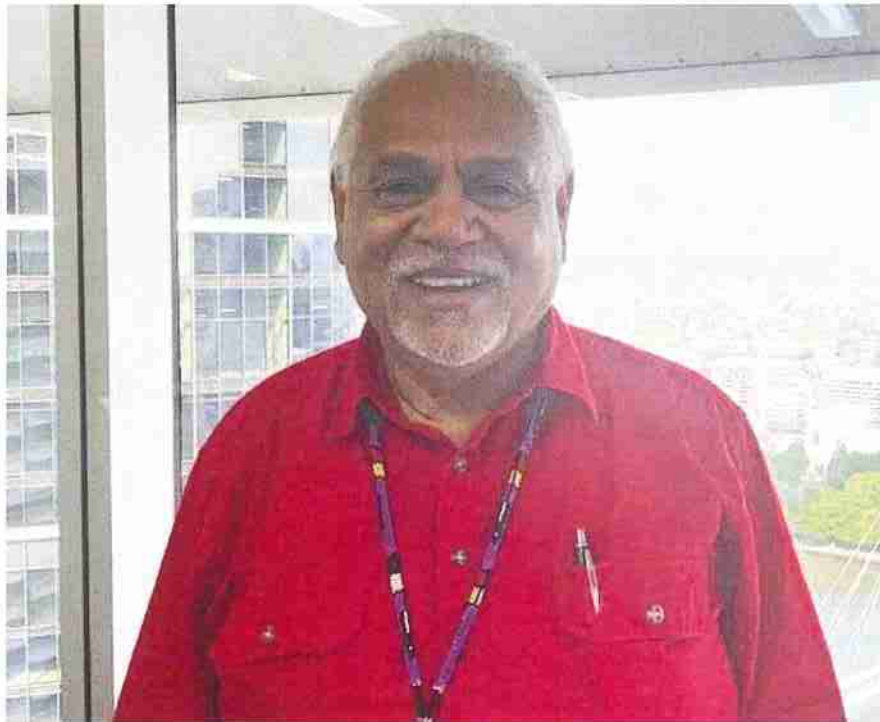


**IN THE MATTER OF THE
TRUTH-TELLING & HEALING
INQUIRY**

Submission of David Wragge



I, David Nugent Wragge, Wakka Wakka man say as follows:

1. My name is David Wragge.
2. I was born in Cherbourg in 1958. I just turned 66 and I'm still going strong.
3. I am a Wakka Wakka man from Cherbourg, but I also have traditional connections to Central Queensland (Ghungalu), and North Queensland (Juru, Bindal and Wulgurukba). I'm a third-generation Stolen Generation.
4. My Wakka Wakka heritage is very important to me. For us Aboriginal people, it is really important that everyone knows their roots to their ancestry, connections to their lands, seas and waterways.
5. I have worked for the State and Federal Governments, as well as the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry (Carmody Inquiry) and Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Royal Commission).

My parents

6. My mum was [REDACTED], she was born in 1935 at Cherbourg.
7. My dad, [REDACTED], was born in Cherbourg in 1936. Dad was a Wakka Wakka man, his Country was in and around Cherbourg.
8. Both Mum and Dad and their siblings grew up on Cherbourg, but they weren't put into the dormitories like me, and my brothers and sisters. Instead, given our family's connection to Gayndah and the other Wakka Wakka people in Cherbourg, my grandfather [REDACTED] (Dad's father) was able to have my dad and my auntie looked after by the other families when he went out to work so that they never got put into the dormitory.
9. My parents only went to grade three and four levels of education. This is because in those days, when they turned 12 or 13 thereabouts, they were sent out to work. The men were mostly sent out to work on the pastoral properties and the women, in most cases, were made to do domestic duties for families in the surrounding areas.
10. Below is a **photo** of my parents on their wedding day. I think they married around 1956 because my oldest sibling was born around 1957.

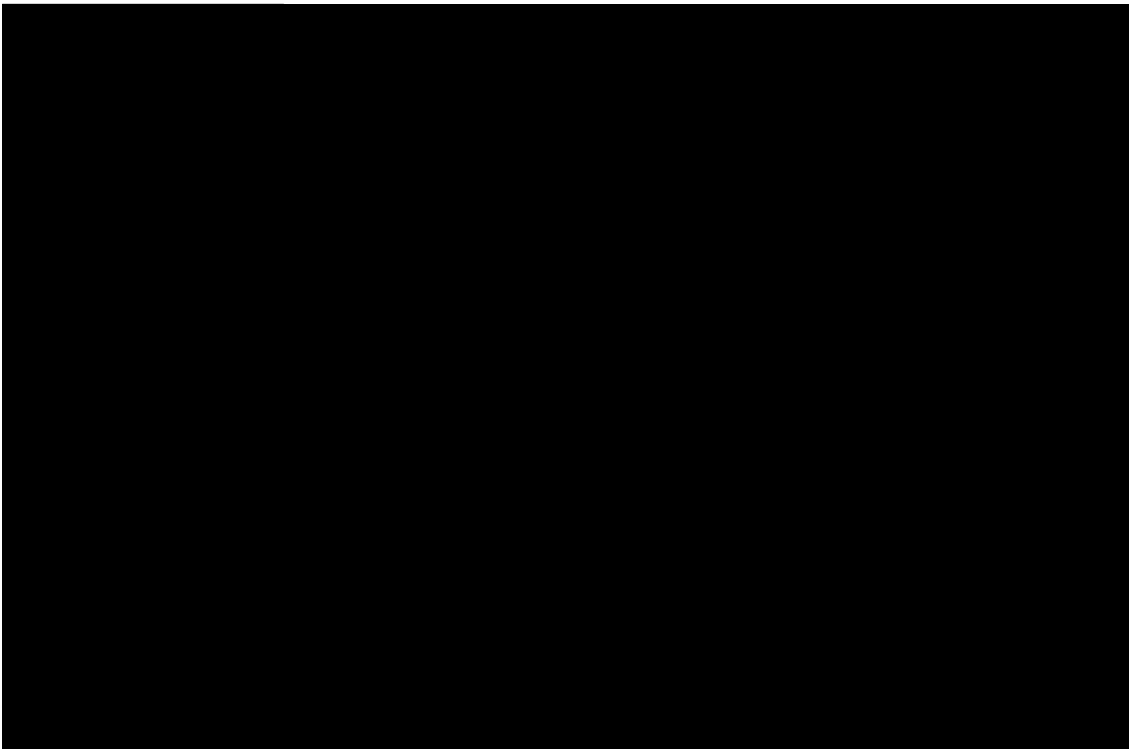


11. My dad worked out on cattle stations and in forestry, ring barking and clearing trees. He would go out to work and he'd come home every two or three months. He did that right across Northern New South Wales, Western Queensland, Central Queensland, and then when he would come home, he would try and come and see us.

12. My mum worked well into her seventies, particularly in aged care for our people in the drug and alcohol area. Hopefully, I can be like my mum and keep working until I'm well into my seventies. I don't know a lot about my mum's life due to family breakup and domestic violence. Records I've read say she worked on properties in a number of places, and I've seen agreements she made with the State to do work on the properties. She had a big family.

Grandparents and great grandparents

13. A lot of what I have learnt about my grandparents has come from the government records I have seen in more recent decades. This is because all but Grandfather [REDACTED] died before I was born or when I was young.
14. On my mum's side, my grandmother was [REDACTED] (who I call [REDACTED]). She was a strong Christian lady and a Ghungalu woman. [REDACTED] was picked up with her mother, [REDACTED] from Comet in Central Queensland on 7 June 1917, when Granny was about 16 or 17 years old and sent to Cherbourg. They arrived at Barambah on 9 June 1917. [REDACTED] passed when I was young.
15. My mother's dad was [REDACTED]. Records I have seen show that his parents were [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] (Wulgurukba and Juru people), and his grandparents and great grandparents had connection to the Burdekin region. My mum's dad and his family arrived at Barambah on 24 February 1911, they had departed from Townsville via boat. My grandfather lived into his eighties and was a young boy when he was removed but he never talked about it. Family records I've seen say he was a strong and smart gentleman, well-respected in the community. Those records I've seen also say he worked on railways in Woolooga, but he was retired by the time I remember him.
16. My dad's father, my grandfather [REDACTED], was born in Ban Ban Springs on Wakka Wakka country in around 1910 – 1916. He was a strong working man and died very young. He died of tuberculosis while I was in the dormitory in 1968. They buried him at Mount Gravatt in a pauper's grave.
17. [REDACTED] and his brother [REDACTED], they were forcibly picked up from Ban Ban Springs. They were forcibly sent by the government from the Maryborough district to Barambah, which is only an hour away. My grandfathers were lucky that when they were taken to Cherbourg they were still on their Country, Wakka Wakka Country.
18. [REDACTED] had five brothers. So, when I talk about my grandfathers, I don't just talk about my father's father, I talk about his brothers as my grandfathers as well. They were cattlemen, who worked on the pastoral properties supporting pastoralists. They were well known for drinking black tea, and well known for playing cards.
19. In the below picture my grandfather on my dad's side, [REDACTED], on the right. Some of his brothers who were removed are not visible but they are standing behind. My mum's father, [REDACTED] is also in the **photo** on the left.

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20. My father's mum was [REDACTED]. She was born in 1899 at Lawn Hill Station. She died when she was young, and while my father was only young too.
21. [REDACTED] was a lot older than my grandfather. My grandfather was 16 and she was about 32 when they married. It was a line up marriage. That was the power that the manager at Cherbourg had in those days.
22. One of my grandfathers, [REDACTED], applied for an exemption in 1932 to the Queensland Government, because he wanted to educate his family and to move to Gayndah and have his children go to school. He got knocked back. As you will see from the below annexures, the language used by the State to describe us in the government records is quite derogatory.
23. Annexed as **DW-1** to my statement is a copy of [REDACTED]'s request for exemption, the police report after his request and a copy of the State's response.

Cherbourg

24. In those early years, you have to realise that most of the people that were stolen taken and sent to Cherbourg came from other parts of Australia. Generally, North Queensland, Central Queensland, Western Queensland, and sometimes they even came from Northern New South Wales. So, that tells you about Cherbourg, it was a place for many tribes.
25. Each tribe and community generally stayed together on the mission. So, us Wakka Wakka people stayed together, and if you were from Cooktown, Quilpie, Charleville, Mitchell, Central Queensland and North Queensland you would all stay together in your own group. That's what happened when Cherbourg was first established. The different communities would still

- interact, but they stayed separately in their own groups. Obviously in those early years you were putting people together who were strangers in a cultural sense.
26. It is bad enough that families were getting uprooted from their traditional lands and sent to a mission or reserve, but then there was a dormitory system too, for children taken away from their families.
27. I have come to know through historical records that in the early years after the mission was established that, if you weren't in the dormitories, most people lived in humpies with dirt floors. There was no sawmill in those early years, but over 20-30 years people got access to timber and then most of the houses became timber houses with timber floors.
28. In winter, Cherbourg was a very cold place. You would have a fireplace stove inside and a fire outside as well. My Old People talked about having seen snow up at the Bunya Mountains, which is part of my Wakka Wakka country, so that's how cold it got.
29. Luckily for Cherbourg, we had a forest in the area and so my grandfathers would cut the timber. My grandfather, [REDACTED]'s brother [REDACTED], was a builder-carpenter. He built a lot of homes in Cherbourg in those early years, and he would then go to other Aboriginal communities like Woorabinda and Palm Island and pass those skills on so that other Aboriginal men could learn and be able to build their own homes in their area as well.
30. Cherbourg was segregated. The overseers lived separate from the main camp. All the white staff and overseers had discrete homes in fenced areas. Most people from the community knew that they couldn't go to that area, or they'd be picked up or arrested.
31. Cherbourg was lucky enough to have cattle. The white overseers and the bosses generally got all the good cuts of meats, and the Aboriginal families would then have basically the bones and leftovers, the not so good part of the meat. I can remember as a boy going down to get my rations for my family with my older brother. We had to queue up to get the rations. I would often go after school. Our rations often had weevils in them.
32. We also had to sustain ourselves by fishing and hunting. Cherbourg was lucky we had a river there, the Barambah River. We weren't allowed to go hunting and fishing, but people would sneak out and do it. We always shared any food that we got when we went out hunting and fishing.
33. You also weren't allowed to speak your traditional language or practice your culture at Cherbourg, and if you did, you could be sent away. There was a sense of fear of the Superintendent and Manager who had the ultimate power and who could send you to what we thought was Hell. Later in life, I have heard about some families that continued to speak in traditional language and practice culture in secret.
34. I remember before I went into the dormitory, which I talk about later in my statement, my family lived in the camp. We had one house down near the farm, that was within the mission

boundaries, where my dad worked. The farm was just before you crossed the Frank Fisher bridge, as you enter the main camp at Cherbourg. The farm had orange and other fruit trees, and dairy cows. We also lived in two other houses in the camp at different times before I went into the dormitory. Our family's houses only had three or four bedrooms. They were made of timber and had a stove and fireplace. The toilet was outside and there was no hot running water, so we had to heat the water up ourselves over the outside fire.

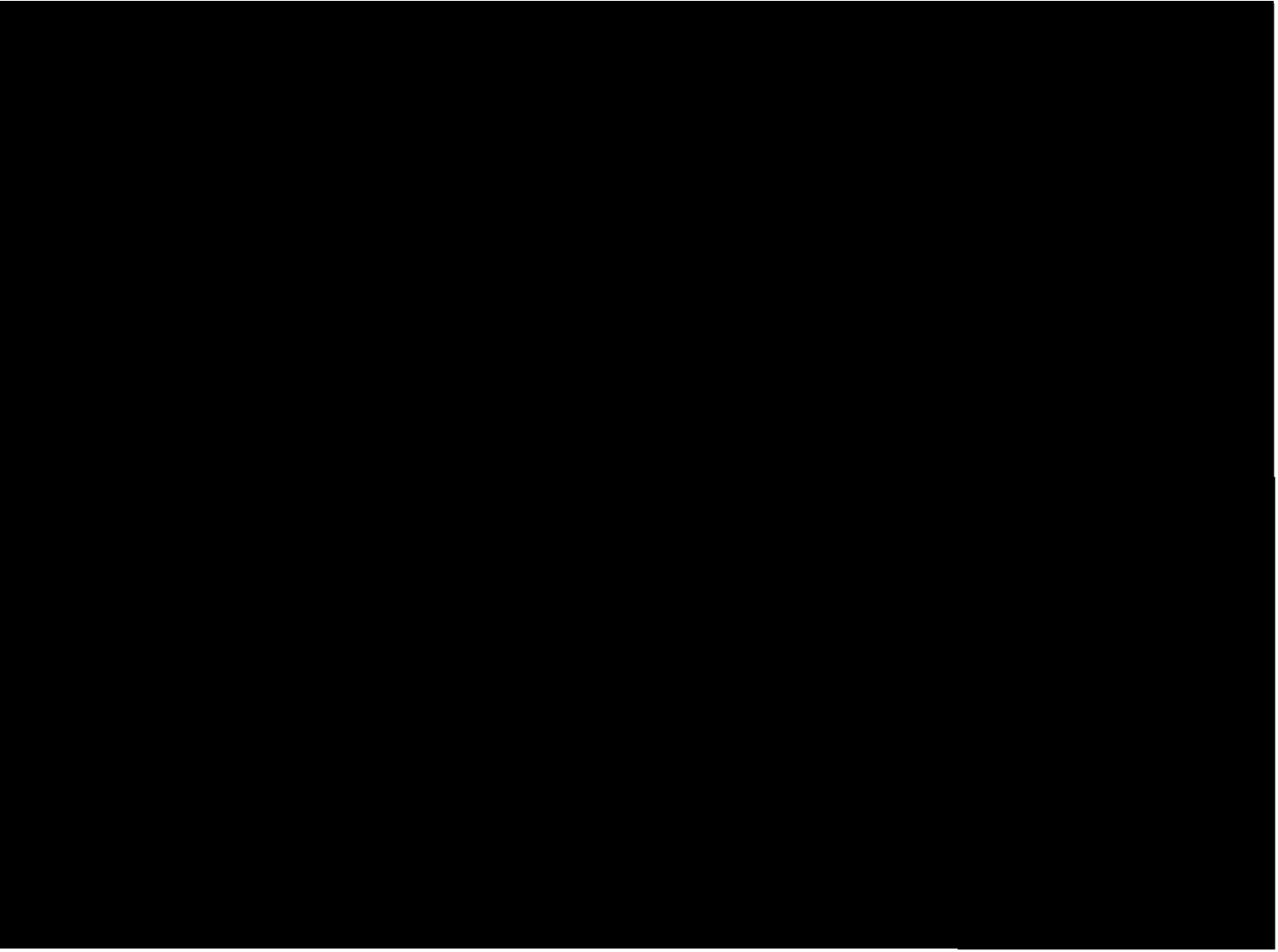
35. Growing up in Cherbourg before we moved to the dormitory was great. It was carefree, and I would just go running into the bush, run through my country and fish with my mates.
36. My parents' marriage broke up before I went into the dormitory. I found out from my sister later in life that my mother left due to the drinking and violence of my father. My father tried to look after me and my five siblings (who ranged in age from 3 to 10 years old) without my mother but he was working for the Murgon Council at the time. After a while, we went to stay with one of my father's uncles, but we weren't able to stay for long. We then went to stay with my [REDACTED] who was close with my mum's mum, but she had her own grandchildren to look after.

Life at Cherbourg – Dormitory

37. Because of those circumstances after Mum left, on 18 February 1967 when I was just nine years old my siblings and I were put into the dormitory at Cherbourg. I ended up staying in there for six years, until 30 September 1973 when I was in grade nine, the month before I had just turned 15 years old.
38. You never forget the day you're taken away from your family and placed into the dormitory. You don't necessarily remember the specific dates, but you remember what it was like to be taken from your parents, your families. It's been good for me to look back at all my records which show me when I went in and when I came out.
39. One of the things that lives with me still today is my youngest brother at the time, he was only three and a half years old. He couldn't come into the boys' quarters with us as you had to be five years or more. So, they sent my youngest brother into the baby quarters. Because he was so young when he went into the dormitory, he ended up calling one of the aunties 'mum' because she looked after him for a year and a half in the babies' dormitory, but we always reminded him that she wasn't his mum. She looked after him, and we gave her that respect and acknowledgment, but it was important for him to know that she wasn't his mum.
40. I remember the dormitory was broken up into open wards. Each of the wards would have 10 beds and the space between them was not even a metre. Generally, there were about 50 boys in the dormitory at once. There was a kitchen and then you had a dining area for eating.
41. The Manager was the overseer of the community, of the mission, the ultimate person. Within the dormitory system there was a matron that stayed at the girl's dormitory during the day. She'd manage the dormitory. The matron was a white person, and her husband was a senior

official who oversaw the community. The girls usually had one person, but during the years I was there, there was an Aboriginal family that was at the boy's dormitory, they were called the house family. The house family were the ones that looked after us. They stayed in the boy's dormitory but they lived in a separate part of the dormitory that was locked down and secure, unlike the boys wards that were not locked down, and instead were accessible to intruders beyond the night. We then had workers in the dormitories, cooks and cleaners who were all Aboriginal families. This was a paid job for them.

42. You had no love shown to you in the dormitories. You had no birthdays, nothing. I didn't know my brothers' birthdays, didn't know my sister's birthday. So, I have a book now that I look at with the days for my brothers' and sister's birthdays.
43. The days in the dormitory were very regimented. It would normally be a 6 o'clock start in the morning, down to the river. It was freezing in the middle of winter, but you had to do it. We would have a half an hour swim. Then we'd have to go back up to the dormitory, do our chores, and get ready for breakfast, then we'd go to school. You had to eat everything on your plate, even if it was food that would make you physically sick.
44. During some of my time at the dormitory, I'd be up at 5 o'clock or 5:30am in the morning, and I would go to milk the cows before the other boys woke up. I used to love milking the cows and I used to bring milk back for the boys. That was quite a walk away from the boy's home, but the boys would look forward to me bringing it home.
45. During my time in the dormitory my brothers and I had to go to church three times on a Sunday because of my [REDACTED], as well as my house parents, connection to the AIM church. We went to church in the morning, Sunday school in the afternoon, and then we came back for the main service at night. Sunday was a really long day, from 10 o'clock to about 9 o'clock at night. It was tiring as a kid, as generally 8:30pm was bedtime.
46. Below are a few pictures of the "Cherbourg Domo Boys" in the early years that come from my family's personal histories' record. These **photos** are taken within the dormitory boundaries and that white picket fence was the boundary that we had to stay inside. Some of these photos include my blood brothers, and the others are my 'brothers', the boys that were in the dormitory with me as well. I would like to give due respect to them too, and note that some of them have now passed.

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47. As I mentioned earlier in my statement, winters in Cherbourg are really cold. It's hot in the summer and freezing in winter. One of the boys would make three fires, one in the kitchen, the hot water system and the laundry too. We had boys to cut timber and then others would be doing chores prior to breakfast. It could be anything, it could be cleaning up the yard, cleaning the toilets, getting the breakfast prepared, or being the waiter. You did whatever you were told to do or otherwise you would get a flogging or punished or miss out on meals.
48. We had blankets but you never had your own clothes in the dormitory until you went to high school. Prior to that, while you were going to primary school in Cherbourg, all the clothes were shared and in the linen closet. So, every morning you had to battle and try and grab clothes, shorts and a shirt that would fit you. All of our clothing was khaki, so they knew that any kids wearing khaki, they were the dormitory kids, they were different from the clothes the kids in the community wore. I didn't have shoes until I was in high school. During my time in the dormitory, and due to the cold weather I developed cracks in the heels of my feet, which is a legacy of my time in the dormitory. I didn't get shoes until I went to high school.
49. Then at night, between 8pm and 9pm we would go to bed. The house parents might come around at about 9pm to check on us, but after that, the boys were vulnerable as the dormitory wasn't locked up, we had no security, anyone could come in.
50. One of the things, that lives with me about the dormitory system is that the boys' dormitory had men living there who would use the dormitory as temporary accommodation while they

worked in the nearby area. That should never have happened. You're talking about strange men living with boys from five years old up to 16. We also had the police and other blokes just coming in at night because the doors were not locked. It is not surprising that abuse happened to me and others, you know, physical, sexual and mental abuse. You should never have children with adults. We were vulnerable children who were not protected.

51. We also wouldn't go to the toilets at night by ourselves because that was unsafe, so you'd wake up your brothers beside you because the toilets were outside of the wards. As a kid that was really daunting and unsafe.
52. I never told my parents about the physical, sexual and mental abuse that happened to me in the dormitory. My father would have killed people, I have no doubt about that at all. I didn't want my mum to have that guilt, so that's why I didn't tell them. I had a bad stutter when I think back to primary school, and I think it comes back to the physical, sexual and mental abuse that happened to me. It took me years to control that stuttering. The physical, sexual and mental abuse that happened to us, to my brothers and the girls, we've never spoken about it.
53. It's important that men and women that have had that physical, sexual and mental abuse happen to them, in whatever setting, that part of our healing process we have counselling, especially if you have loved ones, you have children. For me, when my children were growing up, I would never let them go stay with anyone because of what happened to me. They would only go to my family or someone that I really trusted.
54. The girls' dormitory, on the other hand, was down the road and locked down at night, so no one could get into the girls' dormitory. It was a lockdown situation, and it was a two-storey building.
55. I also knew of people who were sent to the community gaol as well. If you went to gaol you only had bread and water. The girls had a gaol at the back of their dormitory and I've heard of girls getting locked up. You could be sent to gaol for weeks, but it was as long as the Manager wanted. If you got arrested the Manager could also send you to Woorabinda, to Palm Island, and in some cases, people went to the Torres Strait. You're talking about thousands of miles away from your family. I never went to the gaol.
56. Beatings were also a regular, daily event. Not every boy but certain boys got more than others. You could get a flogging, usually with a belt, you could get a strapping, or you could be denied food. This happened to me as well. I remember one of the brothers was put in a corner, sat there, peed his pants because they forgot about him, he didn't have any supper.
57. I remember one incident where three boys were getting a flogging, you got your pants pulled down, you had no underwear underneath, you would get a strapping on your bare bum. You remember those things happen to you as a child because they were very traumatic.

58. I took sick while I was in the dormitory, I ended up getting glandular fever and spent a week or two at the Cherbourg Hospital. Luckily for us, the dormitories were pretty close to the hospital. But we had no day-to-day care healthcare there. You didn't have any medicine that was given to you by the house parents. If anyone took sick, in most cases a senior boy would come to take us up to the hospital to visit the outpatients and visit the doctors. The house parents would have to give you permission to go. We had one main doctor, he lived in Murgon, but we had lots of nurses that came and supported Cherbourg. All of them were white staff.
59. We also had to have a permit to travel in and out of Cherbourg, and you would also have a time limit. I can remember as a boy, if we got pulled up by the police they'd say, "where's your permit"? One of the other brothers from the dormitory, he came to Brisbane for some medical treatment and when he was in Brisbane, they pulled him up and said, "where's your permit"? He had to produce his permit from Cherbourg to show that he was allowed to leave and be in Brisbane. Everyone knew the boundaries and knew the times and rules. If you didn't have a permit you would be arrested and put in jail or sent to a punitive mission on Palm Island or the Torres Strait. That was the power they had to punish and control.
60. While in the dormitory my dad was a regular visitor when he was home from jobs, but I didn't see mum, I didn't see her for years. Dad also wasn't allowed to enter unless he got a permit, so normally we would go to the fence line to talk to him. That's as far as people could come to see you. Parents couldn't just come in to visit their children.
61. We also had sports as well you know. We had cricket and we had football, rugby league. To me, sports played a really important part for me. So, when I left the home I always maintained looking after myself, healthy and being active. I've never been drunk in my life because of what happened to my parents with the trauma and abuse.
62. When we had a reunion in 2011, I said to the old auntie who was our house parent, she was a former dormitory girl as well, I made her aware, I said "*things happened to us when were kids there, abuse there, while you were in the home*". Not to make her feel guilty, but just to make her aware that bad things happened to us.

Life at Cherbourg – Post-Dormitory

63. When I was about 15, my mum got us out of the dormitory. She was lucky. My grandfather was on the Council, so he was a person of influence. I only became aware after getting out of the dormitory my mum was corresponding with my grandfather about trying to get us out and then the Department came and checked on my mum about her living situation and her ability to house and look after her children. So, they did all that groundwork and got me and my siblings out.
64. I remember when this happened, us kids had to come into the Manager's Office, it was quite intimidating. If you ever went to the Manager's Office, you were either going be in trouble or

you were going be sent to some other mission or get locked up. I remember Mum was there, our grandfather was at the table, and the white Manager. My mum and my grandfather put the case forward for us to come out of the dormitory and they agreed. It was a great relief to get out of the dormitory.

65. After I came out of the dormitory, there was no dramas going shopping in Murgon for example or other towns. But the police would always check what you were bringing back into the community, and they would also check if you were bringing alcohol. I remember the police were operating most times right around the clock, till about two o'clock in the morning.
66. Grade three and grade four was the highest levels of education in my parents' generation. 1958 was the first time that Aboriginal people from Cherbourg were permitted to attend Murgon High School, three of those four people were from my family. I was born in 1958, I was lucky enough to go to school and have good teachers in my life, even though all the bad stuff happened to me, I was grateful for that and hence my passion for education, especially for my own children.
67. I remember at primary school we just did basic maths and science, but generally when you went into high school you had all the other subjects. There would be a bus with all the other kids from Cherbourg. We spent all day at Murgon High School from 9 o'clock until 3pm and then returned on a bus back to Cherbourg.
68. We were also lucky to have some of the elders as part of the staffing in the high school. We had a couple of males and females that helped the kids that were coming from Cherbourg.
69. I finished grade nine in 1973 when I moved to New Farm in Brisbane with my mum and my siblings. Then we moved to Roma in 1973. When I got to Roma, it was too late in the year to enrol to carry on schooling, so I went to work at the meatworks for those last few months. And then in late 1973, I visited Cherbourg with some friends of mine. Coming back to Murgon made me realise that I really wanted to finish my schooling. Generally, grade 10 was the minimum and then, if you wanted to go on, the maximum was grade 12. I said I want to go back to school. Luckily for me, I came back and my [REDACTED] looked after me. My father was like a son to her. She took me in, she said to me, yeah, I'm happy to take you to finish off your senior years. So, I did that. I lived with her and travelled to Murgon State High on the bus each day from 1974 to 1976.
70. I've always believed in education, so did my family, and if you weren't doing that, you had to be working or contributing, doing something to help the community. I've worked all my life and I brought my children up the same way, either working or learning.
71. At the end of 1976, I also did a few months' work at Queensland Rail in Brisbane. Then, in 1977 and part of 1978, I worked at Cherbourg State School as a teacher-aide. Half-way through 1978, I went up to Townsville and I was doing teaching at the Teachers' College. I also played football for the university. I did a year there, but I didn't finish because [REDACTED]

██████████ passed away and I came back to Cherbourg. I briefly worked as community police in Cherbourg for a time with my father. Even then people coming into Cherbourg would still get checked, they'd check if you had anyone in your vehicle. They would say "*What are you doing in Cherbourg, what's your business here?*" Most people coming from a mission like Cherbourg, they knew that police were still operating in these places. They knew it was a dry community, alcohol free. So, if you brought alcohol, then you would be arrested as well.

72. All my wages were controlled by the government while I was working at Cherbourg, so I'm a part of the Stolen Wages group as well. I received pocket money while I was in the dormitory for milking the cows, and another job, collecting stone carving relics from Bundaberg, but the rest of the wages were withheld by the government. Wages were stolen from people like me, my grandparents and parents and with them, they built the infrastructure in Queensland, our main roads and hospitals. I think there's still that injustice that all those people never got any of their stolen wages as they died. Western Australia and Queensland are also the only two States that don't have a redress for the Stolen Generation. I think that's something that still has to be dealt with.
73. I met my wife in 1980 and we had our daughter in 1981. I'll be married 41 years this year with my wife. My wife is a Cherbourg girl and a Wakka Wakka woman as well. We got married in Townsville in 1983, after we moved up in 1982, and that's where I stayed working. A good friend of mine, he was white, he paid for a couple of months accommodation for us, and the bond. We were always very grateful for what he did for us.
74. I was working for the Federal Government in Brisbane in Aboriginal Affairs in 1980, and then after that in Townsville from 1981. I went to Canberra in 1985 to take up a permanent position in the Federal Government role before moving up to Rockhampton from 1986 until 2004. Between 1996 and 2002, I took leave from my Federal Government role when I was elected and served two terms as Chair of Central Queensland on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (**ATSIC**). I started work in the Queensland State Government in July 2005, which I continued until I took a role at the Carmody Inquiry. After this role, I started working for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse as part of the engagement team. I was the only Aboriginal male and there were two Aboriginal females. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse was the only inquiry to go into gaols and I did a lot of this work. I worked around Western Australia, Northern Territory, Queensland and parts of New South Wales and South Australia. I am proud that the Cherbourg dormitory boys and girls are the only Stolen Generations groups to hold private sessions with the Royal Commission.
75. I now sit on the Healing Foundation Stolen Generation Reference Group as well as working at the Queensland Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts. While I was doing work with the Royal Commission into

Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, I got involved with talking to Stolen Generation people right across Queensland and Australia, and also Link-Ups. They play a vital role for the Stolen Generation. The Healing Foundation was created after the National Apology to the Stolen Generations. I have also done work with some of the courts and the Magistrates to make them aware of the trauma that happens to people that were forcibly taken from their lands and put into institutions.

Resilience

76. My parents, my grandparents and my community, they all had a leadership about them, resilience. I acknowledge the old people of my community of Cherbourg. When I grew up as a boy, there was dignity and respect that the old people showed everyone. No child was forgotten about. If you weren't getting a feed, you could rock up at anyone else's house and you'd always be looked after. That's something I always carry with me to make sure that if there's people less fortunate than me to try and help them as well.
77. The resilience of my people is really special. That's why I always acknowledge those leaders, those Old People from the community when I was a boy growing up. The spirit of goodwill and resilience amongst them, even with the bad stuff that happened to them and their parents and being sent to Cherbourg. They never let that bring them down as people. My [REDACTED] died in 1964 and she had that spirit about her. I remember as a boy, she had a strawberry patch and she'd say to me that I couldn't take any strawberries until I finish Sunday school. That lives with me. I remember Granny converted an old big water tank into a garden, she cut it in half, and grew her strawberries in that in her back yard at the camp. I remember other families also growing strawberries and other fruits like this too at their houses. Given the rations we received, those on the mission found other ways to sustain their families with different foods.
78. I still remember her and those other old ladies, dear old ladies. Before I went into the boys' home, one of the old grannies from Granny's church, took us in. She had all of her own grandchildren as well that she had to deal with. She took the Wragge family in, another six or seven boys and girls with her own grandchildren. Even today, my family and I, we've always been close to the Hart family because we've never forgotten the spirit that she had and the love that she showed to us before we went into the boys' home and the girls' home.

Why Truth-telling is important

79. I think most Australians and most Queenslanders need to know the truth, that our lives were completely controlled by legislation, we were put into these missions and reserves, taken away from our family, forced to work for very little pay, subjected to physical, sexual and mental abuse and we had no freedom of choice. They cruelly and harshly governed people's lives, the never thought of you as a human person, you were treated like cattle.

80. I am really proud that the truth-telling is happening because I think it gives people a chance to get an understanding of the truth about Australia, the truth about Queensland.
81. I have said that there needs to be leadership in Australia and until we have leadership about the real history being taught as part of the curriculum in schools and university, we'll always have an "us and them" mentality. I'm very disappointed about the recent Referendum result, I think that shows that there is still a "us and them" mentality. There needs to be more education and truth-telling of the real history and it needs to be in the school curriculums.
82. We need to be mature enough to accept the things that happened all those years ago. We aren't accountable. You aren't accountable. I'm not accountable for it. But it's the history, it's what happened. So that's really what I'm about. I'm about making other Australians aware that this has never been a level playing field. The things you hear about black people getting everything is all incorrect, and the legislation that showed that government controlled Aboriginal people's lives is a demonstration of that.
83. Talking about this is also part of my healing journey. I've been on this journey since 2010. It has also helped other men and women to get up and talk about it. I realised that the women, the sisters that were with us in in the dormitory, they'd be going through the same issues of abuse, neglect and cruel, inhuman treatment as well as us, so we decided, with the assistance of the Healing Foundation, to form an organisation called the Cherbourg Boys, Girls Dormitory Limited. We are a charity organisation to help men and women from the dormitories, and their families to deal with the trauma from our time in the dormitories.
84. That's one of the key things that sort of drives us today, supporting other stolen generation families and people from institutions. If you were in the dormitory system like I was, you were getting abused in there. If you were sexually abused or physically abused, mentally abused, you've got that trauma as well. Here I am, I'm 66, but I honestly never thought I'd get to 30.
85. What happens to you as a child shapes you as a human being, and shapes you as an adult. If you have had that abuse happen to you, you are carrying that trauma with you, and unless you deal with it through some counselling, you're going to do that to other people. I've always had a disdain for bullies and for people that abuse other people especially if they are people in authority who are meant to be responsible for the welfare of others.
86. Truth telling is also about making people aware about issues like stolen wages, and just making people understand that we're not the enemy. Aboriginal people aren't the enemy. God gave us this country and it will always be our country, but we're willing to share it with others.

87. This submission made by me accurately sets out the evidence that I am prepared to give to the Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry (Inquiry).
88. This submission is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.
89. I make this submission on invitation from the members of the Inquiry to assist the Inquiry to perform its functions in accordance with the Terms of Reference dated May 2024 (Terms of Reference).
90. I consent to this submission being held by the Inquiry and acknowledge that it may be utilised and published by the Inquiry in accordance with the Inquiry's practice guidelines or procedures, which may change from time to time.
91. To the extent that permission is required to publish photographs contained in this submission, I authorise the Inquiry to make inquiries to seek and to obtain the relevant permission. Where required permissions are not given, I authorise the Inquiry to make any pre-publication redactions to photographs contained in this submission.
92. I authorise the Inquiry to make (at its discretion) any pre-publication redactions to this statement which are considered necessary and appropriate, including in accordance with the Inquiry's obligations under applicable laws and its Terms of Reference.
93. I confirm that:
 - a. I am not aware of any legal, cultural or other basis on which the information within this submission should not be shared with the Inquiry and/or published;
 - b. consent has been obtained from any living individuals named in this submission, for their names and the accompanying information to be shared in the manner in which it appears in this submission.
94. I acknowledge that at the conclusion of the Inquiry, this submission will be regarded as an Inquiry record, and handled in accordance with laws which apply at that time (which may see my submission transferred to the Queensland Government for archiving).

on 17 Sept 2024

Signature

Annexure DW-1

Grandfather [REDACTED]'s request for exemption, a police report and the State's response

