# Citizens and Mental Distress

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## Whānau/citizen stories of police engagement while experiencing mental distress in Aotearoa New Zealand

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# Foreward

Tēnā koe,

I am pleased to present our book of whānau/citizen narratives on behalf of the project team. The common thread of having encountered police while experiencing mental distress is unquestionably an emotive and life-shaping experience. Although embedded in the past, these experiences and their repercussions continue to resonate for many today. To even contemplate sharing these experiences through a research project such as ours is a massive undertaking that is potentially fraught with re-traumatisation and/or exacerbation of trauma. It is our job as researchers to do everything in our power to ensure this doesn't happen. Still, it is much more than that - ultimately, we hope that the sharing process is empowering and settling for participants.

We tried to enable an empowering experience in a number of ways. We gave people as much choice as possible as to how and who is involved with the production of their narratives. Unfortunately, during this project, we were constrained to some extent by the COVID-19 pandemic but persevered as best we could online. All the team involved in producing the narratives are skilled and aspiring researchers but exhibit what I feel is best described as manaakitanga (translated in the Māori dictionary as hospitality, kindness, generosity, support – the process of showing respect, generosity and care for others). My thanks and much appreciation for this to Dave Burnside, Grant Cooper, Jess Hastings, Kerri Butler, Kiri Hunter, Madeline Hayward, and Stella Black. Thanks also to Ryan Quinlivan for designing our overarching narrative presentation template and producing each individual narrative in that format. Many thanks also to Associate Professor Katey Thom, who not only led the project generally, being involved in and delivering on all aspects of the work, but who also so beautifully and respectfully printed, packaged, blessed and sent the final versions of the narratives home to their owners.

The production of the narratives is very much a careful and involved process – and sometimes a reasonably lengthy one—and hence more burdensome on participants than many traditional research projects. We note that generally, the motivation of participants for being involved and dedicating this time to the project was to improve things for others in the future. We thank you all for your generosity of purpose and time and hope that you ultimately consider it to have been worth it.

The narratives of the participants who consented are presented as a separate output of the work so that their voices can be 'heard'—detached from the subsequent analysis, synthesis, and discussion of the material found in other outputs associated with the work. The stories deserve to be read independently and as a collective of lived experiences of interactions with police.

As participants and researchers, we have completed our work. We entreat those of you who have the privilege to receive these narratives that you treat them in accordance with why and how they have been produced.

So once again, and finally, we acknowledge the whānau/citizens located across Aotearoa, New Zealand, who have courageously re-lived and co-created their personal narratives to inform this project and extend a heartfelt thank you to you all.

*Hoki atu ki tō maunga kia purea ai koe e ngā hau a Tāwhirimātea*
*Return to your mountain to be cleansed by the winds of Tāwhirimātea*

Ngā mihi nui ki a koe,

A/Prof Sarah Gordon
Principal Investigator

# Ana

*Ko wai au?*
*Kō Taupiri te maunga,*
*Kō Waikato te awa,*
*Kō Tainui te waka,*
*Ko Ngāti Raukawa te iwi.*

After introducing herself, Ana begins by contextualising the intergenerational trauma that has affected her family and her upbringing. For Ana, the very process of reflecting on the past serves her to better understand the present and her future.

Ana recollects that her mother was born into a Māori family but spent most of her life living in a Western European household. Her mother experienced racism from both Māori and Pākehā which left her feeling like she didn't fit in anywhere. When her parents split up, Ana's mother was separated from her birth mother and her younger siblings. She and her older siblings were bought up by their father and his new wife. Her father was absent for the majority of her upbringing; however whenever he was present, he was 'narcissistic' and uncaring towards his children. His wife was an affluent figure in her community; however behind closed doors she struggled with her physical and mental health which impacted tremendously on Ana's mother.

Ana recalls that her mother tragically lost her birth mother in a car accident when she was only 11. She was re-united with her younger siblings at their mother's tangihanga. The differences between them were stark; the older children felt out of place and didn't know what to do. After the burial of their mother, they were told off for breaching the protocols of being blessed and washing their hands after exiting the urupā (cemetery). All the children were told not to return to the marae. The rejection, coupled with the loss of their mother is something Ana believes was a defining moment in her mother and the older siblings' lives. Their connection to their Māoritanga was affected, "That loss is something I can feel to this day, even though I wasn't there" Ana says.

Later in her life Ana's mother met and married a European Pākehā man, and despite health problems she gave birth to Ana. Her mum truly believed that Ana "was a gift from God" and her biggest achievement in life. Tragically, when Ana's mother was six months pregnant with Ana, her stepmother died by suicide. Ana and her mother believe that this loss had a lasting impact on them both mentally and emotionally.

Ana was subsequently raised in the Bay of Plenty in what she considers, a "white upper middle-class family." She had little knowledge of and connection to her Māori cultural identity in her early life. Ana's parents separated when she was two years old. This was also a difficult time in her mum's life, as she had to cope with being a young single parent whilst also studying.

Although both her parents remained in her life, Ana formed a particularly close bond with her mum. They became best friends and confidantes. On reflection, Ana truly believes that she is the person she is today, both good and bad, because of her parent's experiences and in the way they parented her. Hearing the stories about her mother's upbringing had a profound impact on Ana, causing her to often be worried for her welfare and wanting to look after and protect her:

*I became the mother, I felt like I had to be my mum's caretaker and I think in some ways I took that role on, on my own. Because I wanted to fix her, I wanted to heal her… [I feared] I was going to lose her.*

Ana attended a "very rich white high school" and recalls being the only brown skinned student in her class. It was in this environment that she came to realise how different she was. She felt that being brown and being Māori was different, and therefore something to be ashamed of. Ana explains:

*I had been in school with these people for years, you know, I was probably in year twelve. So, I've been with these, with these kids for 12 years of my life, and they were my friends, you know. Or so I thought anyway, until I was sitting in… this history class, and we were learning about the Black civil rights. And one of my classmates made a comment, or like, drew some parallel between the Black civil rights and the Treaty. I mean, they started talking about how Māori are lazy, and dole bludgers and all of these really, really negative, stigmatising comments. And I was sitting there, and I was looking down at my hand… I'm thinking, I need to hide, you know, my skin from everybody… I was looking around the room and felt like people were looking at me. So, that was like the first time that I*

*genuinely felt that point of difference.*

Ana began to think her classmates were talking about her, and her family. For the very first time she felt stereotyped.

Ana went to the University of Waikato to study psychology when she was 17. Whilst there, Ana entered a relationship that became volatile. By this point Ana was on a lot of medication, she wasn't going to her classes, and she barely left her room. When her partner drank, his behaviour completely changed, and they regularly got into arguments that would turn violent:

*I felt like nobody could see how much I was struggling. I was lashing out at my partner and at myself. I am not a violent person. But I had all of these emotions that were just erupting out of me, and I couldn't hold them in any longer. I started lashing out at my friends, or anyone that made me feel judged. I hated myself and I felt like a waste of space.*

After her mother had moved to Wellington and her relationship with her father became difficult, Ana felt alone and abandoned. She had lost contact with many of her high school friends and didn't feel like she fitted in with the people she was meeting at university. Ana felt that no one in her life cared whether she lived or died.

*So, I had nobody, I was isolated. And I was really, really sick. I was really, really unwell. And that was sort of my first point of contact with mental health services. But by this point, I was extremely suicidal, and I was actively self-harming, and I was also abusing alcohol and drugs as well as my partner. I was diagnosed with bipolar, generalized anxiety disorder, major depressive disorder, and PTSD. I was put on a shit ton of medication.*

Several times Ana sought to get the support and help she needed. Each time she felt judged and rejected. Nobody seemed to be able to help her make sense of why she felt the way she did. In her first contact with the crisis service, she was told, "That shouldn't make you want to kill yourself" after she found out her then ex was seeing someone else.

She finally felt as though she was going to get some proper help once she received a diagnosis and was referred to a Psychologist for Cognitive Behaviour Therapy. However, the sessions always came with stipulations, leaving her feeling like she had no choice or control over what they were going to talk about or what that therapy looked like. In addition, Ana felt that the kaupapa Māori service she was placed in was not the right option for her. She instantly disengaged after being asked if she would say a karakia. For her, being Māori and not knowing the te reo language made her angry that there was yet another thing that she was failing in, "God I can't even be Māori, I can't even be myself."

After being discharged from the service with no real resolution to her problems, Ana attempted suicide twice. When she tried to re-engage in therapy, she was turned away and told that she no longer met the criteria for the service. The decision was made for Ana to move home to Rotorua to live with her father and stepmother. It was there that she finally received the right treatment and the right diagnosis. "I healed a lot of old wounds, especially with my parents. Our relationship has never been better" she says. She also finished her Master's thesis, moved into her own flat, and got herself a job that gave her life meaning again.

Ana had formed some friendships with her neighbours. They would get together for some wine and a chat. One evening Ana divulged that she had been assaulted by another neighbour. Later that night, possibly as a result of the disclosure, Ana had a full-blown panic attack. Her friends called the crisis line for help because Ana had said she was going to hurt herself but she did not want to talk to this person, whom she found rude. The woman told her that she sounded drunk, which made Ana feel unnecessarily judged. Ana did not like the woman; she wasn't listening to her, and she felt she was twisting what she was saying. Ana asked that the call not be recorded; on a personal level, she was embarrassed and on a professional level, she didn't want her work colleagues to think she was unwell or incapable. In the end, Ana ended the call.

Then Ana was handed another phone call; this time it wasn't the crisis team, it was someone who worked at the police station. Ana recalls:

*She was really lovely, and she was listening to me but what she was actually doing was she was keeping me talking. But I didn't know that at the time. I was explaining to her why I didn't want to talk to the crisis team. She came across as being very understanding of that, and accepting of the fact that I didn't want there to be any trace of these*

*conversations… I was absolutely adamant that I was okay, and… by this point, I was able to admit that maybe I just had a little bit too much to drink, and I was being a bit of a drama queen… I just really wanted to get everybody off my back… having borderline personality disorder, part of it is your emotions are intense. So, when you feel anxious, you feel really anxious, or when you feel angry, you feel really angry… I tried to explain that to them that potentially my reaction tonight is heightened 1) because of my disorder, 2) because I've been drinking, 3) because I've just been through a very traumatic experience, and potentially rehashing it has, you know, caused this reaction… I'm showing you that I'm processing it, and that I'm okay. And you don't need to do anything about it… The girl from the police station was on the phone, and she was saying, "You know, your friends are really, really worried about you, Ana." And I was like, "I know, can I get off the phone with you so that I can actually talk to them and apologise for putting them in this position and all that sort of thing?" And she said, "Oh, no, just stay on the phone with me, talk to me talk to me" and I'm thinking, and that's when I started getting suspicious.*

The police turned up at the house and Ana's thinking began to spin out. She imagined being arrested and judged for being Māori and being drunk on a weekday. She feared being taken to the hospital inpatient ward involuntarily; she had always considered being able to care for herself, without being sectioned under the Mental Health Act as a great achievement. She felt guilty for the police thinking she was probably wasting their time:

*My life flashed before my eyes, and I thought, 'Oh, my God, I'm gonna get up, I'm going to end up on the ward, I'm going to be put under the Mental Health Act, I'm going to be all of these things, oh, my God, they're going to inject me with things, they're going to [put me] into a seclusion room.*

Ana had walked outside to talk to the two young white policemen whom she believed were as old as her; perhaps in their mid-20's. She asked them, "Are you going to arrest me?" They replied, "No, of course not. We just want to see that you're, okay… We're just worried about you. We need to make sure that you're okay." Ana felt that the younger police officer was really lovely. He asked if they could go inside because it was a little cold outside. Ana recalls she kept apologising for wasting their time and that they must have had more important issues to deal with. The police officer said, "No, you are important."

In her house, Ana offered the officers a seat; directing them where to sit. When one of them sat too close to her, he moved back until she felt better. Then Ana asked him if he was nervous, and he confirmed that he was "a little bit." Ana made a little joke, and the laughter broke the tension until he pulled out his phone and started to enter her name. She explains:

*He pulled up his phone, and I saw him type my name into the database and then I didn't see everything. But I saw him flicking through my file. I thought, what's on there, but I was too scared to ask him… I could see some of it, there was photo, there was a photo of me. And then I could see my date of birth. But then he was flicking through this really long list of things and I'm thinking, 'Well, what the fuck does that say, what does it say? Like, is the stuff in there about my domestic violence? Or is it something like what is in there…" I said to him, "Oh, my God, you're actually really freaking me out by doing that." "Oh, okay" and he put the phone down straightaway.*

He apologised and asked her directly what her name was. The officers must have been told of her assault from the liaison person she had been speaking to earlier on the phone. Ana didn't really like that, but the officer kept checking whether she was comfortable speaking with them. They continued talking about her life, including asking about her job. Ana shared her experiences of being Māori, having a mental illness, and dealing with the barriers. The police officers appeared amazed upon hearing her experiences, and she felt uplifted.

On reflection, Ana genuinely feels she guided the way the two policemen engaged with her that night. She liked that they respected her space, only entering when invited. They listened intently, asking questions when necessary, and they responded to her straightaway. Ana explains:

*I didn't feel that there was a power imbalance there. It was the body language, it was the fact that as police, they could have just come into my house… They both plonked themselves down on my couch, and just sat there with me… I felt like this was my house and they were*

*respecting the fact that they're in my house… Even though I was in a weakened state, I was still in charge. I was still being respected because this was my space. This was my experience. This is my story.*

The police officers wanted Ana to tell them more about her assault, but she refused to share any details with them. Although, they didn't apply too much pressure on her to share more, she found that trying to convince them was tiring and emotionally draining. Ana recalls it took a long time before the police actually left. They had needed to be absolutely sure that she had no intention of hurting herself, or anybody else, and that she was okay. Eventually, they left. Ana reflects that she felt respected and listened to. The police had looked directly at her when they spoke, rather than at their devices, and they did eventually agree with her that she was much calmer than she had been earlier. Ana could see that the police weren't just about 'catching the criminals' and dealing with negative situations. In her experience, part of their job was to do welfare checks on people:

*I think the way that they dealt with that situation was really beautiful. Because, you know, I think I asked them if they were scared of me… they said, "No, no, not at all." What they did for me was they removed that power imbalance, they removed that, not the facade… they removed the uniform, they removed all of that for me.*

Ana has remained in therapy and for the last three years she has found it empowering to talk about her lived experiences rather than trying to hold it all in. She is a strong advocate for destigmatizing mental illness and advocating that "We matter." She recommends that if the police are responding to whānau/citizens in mental distress, that they take a humanistic approach and listen to the concerns of whānau/citizens, stating:

*Remove the power imbalance, remove and provide reassurance that you're not there to throw your weight around or to arrest anybody. It's 'reassuring' a person… and just being a human being. That's what it comes down to, is just 'being a human being.' You're entering into that space, not as a police officer, but as a human being that's willing to listen and willing to help and to be an ear.*

She also talks about taking a trauma informed approach:

*Remember that when you are talking to someone in distress, you are talking to all their trauma, the trauma of their parents, of their ancestors. In particular, Māori are still experiencing the impacts of colonisation and inter-generational trauma. Shift from asking… thinking what is wrong with this person, to what has happened to this person. In doing that, you remove the judgement and allow this person to express their hurt.*

Ana is excited about exploring her Māori identity as she thinks this has been a tremendous part of what has been missing in her life and still causes her sadness. She believes that we all struggle with our identity. "It's a human experience to want to explore and understand who we are and what our place is in society, that's something we can all identify with." She believes that if we can empathise with a person's desire to feel like a valued member of society then we can help anyone no matter who they are or what they are experiencing.

# Annie

Annie was born in Germany and raised in Holland, where she lived with her sister and their grandparents. She moved to Aotearoa New Zealand when she was 19 years old, and has made it her home for the past 40 years. Annie lives with her son and husband, to whom she has been married for 26 years.

Originally, Annie left Holland with a feeling that she could get away from all of her problems, safely leaving them behind on the other side of the world. Of course, she soon realised that distress travels with you! Annie connects her experience of distress to childhood traumatic events. After Annie was born, she was cared for by her grandparents. Her mum only intermittently, and quite randomly visited her and her sister. Then, when her grandmother became too unwell to take care of them, Annie and her sister spent time living with different friends and family members. She eventually went into foster care.

From 10 years of age, Annie found herself unsettled and in a constant state of flux. At 14 years of age, Annie was sexually assaulted, which contributed to ongoing experiences of mental distress and attempts to take her own life. Throughout this time, Annie struggled to get validation and support from her family. When she arrived in New Zealand at 19 years of age, Annie lived in one house for 11 years, finding the security and stability she desired. However, around 25 years of age Annie found herself entering the New Zealand mental health system.

The next few years were full of ups and downs for Annie. She would seemingly be tracking well in her life, but with frequent intermittent hospital admissions:

*I just couldn't figure out what was going on. Why did things in my head happen this way? Why I felt the way I felt. Now everybody thought… I had such a great marriage, had a nice job. Nobody understood why I was doing the things that I was doing. And then for a while, I was going in and out of Kingseat [a psychiatric hospital in operation from 1932 to 1999]. … every six months to every year… I kept splitting up from my husband. I fell pregnant in 1989 and… had my son in 1990. I split up from my husband and was a single mother. Things went really well for a couple of years. And in '93, I just got really busy… I was really happy… I stopped sleeping and I flew off the planet on fresh air. I was in and out of hospital for about six months… lost custody of my son in the meantime. Yeah, was a really horrible time… I moved house. Decided to let my son live with his father because there were two of them and one of me, it would be a lot better for everyone.*

Annie started studying, completing a degree in computer engineering. It was during this time that she met her second husband. They have now been together for 28 years and married for 26 of those. Annie has enjoyed much longer periods of wellness however she has also experienced a couple of 'dips of very unwell' periods, both of which have involved the police. Annie openly admits that her memories of events during these times are not great. However, she is quite definitive about certain significant police actions and how they made her feel.

In 2009 Annie started to not sleep well, and within a few weeks she had flown 'off the planet on fresh air' again. After some unusual and dangerous behavior, such as going on shopping trips and maxing out all the credit cards, her husband became concerned. She was also only sleeping for ten minutes at a time. So in order to keep her safe, he was needing to stay awake. His concern was that should he fall asleep Annie would go for a walk or take the car again. As a result, he was extremely sleep deprived. In the end, her husband called the local mental health crisis team. They advised that they could not do anything and that he should call the police. Annie was agreeable with that:

*I was quite happy about that apparently. He said to me, "Oh, the police are coming"… I said "Okay" and went to pack some stuff in a bag and went with the police and said, "See ya"… I have no memory of this at all.*

However, Annie was taken to the police cells, not the hospital. She remembers walking into the police station and seeing all the screens showing the monitoring of the cells. In the cell, she needed to go to the toilet but did not want to be seen doing so. Despite becoming desperate, she waited for the assessment team before she asked, and was given permission, to be taken to a private toilet. Annie has very little memory of this, but she was aware that being away from home would enable her husband to get some sleep. The outcome of

the assessment was that the police would drop Annie home after her spending the night in the cell, and that her husband would then take her to the Mental Health unit. Once again, Annie was 'happy' with this plan. You see, for Annie, hospital was a place of refuge:

*…hospital, it's actually a safe space… it has taken me quite a while to figure this out. It was a safe space for me. It's not always safe. But hospital to me is a place where I can relax. I don't have to worry about anybody harming me. So for me, hospital is not a bad place. So I wanted to go to hospital. The psychiatrist said, "Do you want to go to the hospital?" And I said, "Yes, please." Because I knew I would get better if I was in hospital.*

Annie actually ended up being admitted to a respite service as opposed to the hospital-based inpatient service. However, after spending a period of time in respite with no improvement, it was decided that Annie be moved to the inpatient unit. Once again, she was quite agreeable to this. Annie and her husband thought that they would go in their own car but the police were rung by the psychiatrist to transport Annie:

*The police came in and they handcuffed me and put me in the back of that police car. I was sitting in the police car, and I just cried. I thought this is unreal, I am sick. And I still get emotional thinking about this, even though it's so many years later. I am sick and I'm sitting in the back of a police car. I have such a problem with that memory that never made sense to me… I wasn't violent. I was happy to come to the hospital with them.*

After this negative experience with the police, everything was going well and Annie had started on medication, and was working and happy. Then in 2021, Annie became unwell again, something that she partly attributes to a traumatic event and partly to the COVID pandemic isolation and changes:

*…because my wellbeing had gone down really slowly nobody had noticed that things weren't going well. And the people that would have picked it up, like my old boss, or my old manager, and some of my colleagues, because of COVID, hadn't been around me that much… we weren't working at the office very much, we were people that worked online, even had our weekly staff meeting online. So I didn't really talk to people or to my colleagues very much so nobody noticed how unwell I was. My unwellness just went unnoticed.*

Annie became suicidal and took the car. She phoned the police for help. They decided to take her to hospital:

*And they said, "Okay, what is going to happen, one policeman is going to drive your car and you're going to go with the other policeman in their car." I was like, "Yeah, fine." And I was all prepared to sit in the back and the policeman said, "Nah just come and sit in the front with me, you're not going to jump out or do anything daft?"… he just talked to me…and it felt ok, it was just really nice. They were just so nice.*

After a talk with a psychiatrist in hospital Annie was placed in respite. Whilst in respite, due to miscommunication, Annie went unmedicated for a period of time until she became very unwell again, and experienced further police responses, both of which were concerning due to the previous unpleasant experience:

*It took about a week and I went walking in my pyjamas and gumboots around the block. Jumping in puddles. I was picked up by the police because apparently I was on somebody's section… I have a very vague memory of that. And they [the police] were really awesome. They put me in their police car, the lady sat in the back with me and the man police drove. And literally, we drove around the corner… to go home. Then they said, "Please stay in the car" and they went and talked to my husband. And they said, "Okay, we are placing her on [a] section [because she needs a psychiatrist assessment], what you can do, she can stay at home and a psychiatrist will come and talk to her, or we can take her to the hospital. What would you like to do?" Now from his memory from 2009, he was like, yeah nah, if they don't come until tomorrow, she's gonna keep me awake all night long, that is not going to work!… "Could you please take her, but please don't handcuff her. Please don't hand cuff, my wife." They said, "Why would we? She's not doing anything, she's happy."…The lady sat in the back with me. They didn't handcuff me. They both talked to me.*

This most recent period of unwellness prompted Annie to make some big changes in her life, and to

start putting her well-being first.

In summarising the core differences between her negative and positive police experiences, Annie speaks to the potential of a humanistic approach. In the first example, the police left Annie feeling like she had committed a criminal act and was being punished:

*The negative [experience] was that they [police] handcuffed me and put my hands behind my back and put me in the back of the car. And they sat in the front of the car and don't speak to me in any shape or form. Like I was a baddy that sat in the back of the car. And then at the hospital, they went into the special zone for police cars and got me out, like, a bad person going into a police cell, except that I went into the hospital. And when the nurses came, two nurses stood on each side of me, like I was going to be really angry and lose it and fight, or whatever. … I was treated like a criminal. I still feel really, really sad and angry about that. I just wanted to say, and I might have even said at the time, "I am sick. I'm not angry. I'm not violent. I am sick. In my head, things are not working the way they should be. I am not a criminal." I thought like if anybody could see me right now in the back of a police car, they will think I'm a criminal.*

In the contrasting examples, Annie was not handcuffed, instead, police officers sat alongside her in the car and talked while travelling. One pair of officers stayed with Annie while waiting for the clinical team at the hospital and continued to engage naturally with her:

*Then we were in the hospital, I was sitting on the bed and they were sitting on chairs on each side. [I could hear] that sound, like they were playing games on their phone, and I said, "I don't know people, you're working and you're on your phone?" and they went, "Yeah, because we have to look after you. And I hope that it takes a long time!" [They were joking]. They were talking to me like a person. The lady talked to me and she asked me what happened? We sat and talked. I felt as I was a person. It wasn't like, I was a criminal. Or a non-person, they treated me like a person. And not even a person who was unwell. They just treated me like a person.*

# Hera

Hera was born in Taranaki to a part Māori mother and European father. Of her Māori identity, history and connections, Hera is enjoying learning about her heritage, "I'm still discovering, which is really cool." When Hera turned two years old, she went to live with her aunty in Rotorua. At the time her parents were having issues and had separated. Hera continued living in Rotorua with her aunty and attended the local schools.

She describes her upbringing as good because she had formed lots of connections, and had lots of friends. Although, she admits some of these friendships were not always the best. Then in her 20's Hera did her big OE, living in Europe for five years. Hera loved her travels, with her favourite European countries being Belgium and Holland. She particularly liked the Dutch people. Hera did a variety of jobs while overseas including working in hospitality and retail before returning to New Zealand. Soon after Hera returned to the country, she gave birth to a baby girl. The relationship with the father of her daughter did not last. He later remarried and cares for their daughter fulltime. Hera sees her regularly.

In the year 2012, Hera found herself at a crossroad as she had started thinking about what she really wanted in her life. She wanted to use her life experiences in some way, so she decided to become a social worker. Of her studies at Toiohomai, Waiariki, Hera recalls that learning was really hard for her. "I'm highly dyslexic. So, I really struggled." Since graduating in 2015, Hera has worked in many different spaces. She started working with adolescents experiencing mental health- and addiction-related distress and then went on to working with adults in the homeless space.

While Hera was enjoying her work life, she came to think she had also found happiness in her personal life. In 2020, Hera recalls how quickly her life changed after meeting the man she would marry. However, she eventually discovered that he wasn't all he seemed, saying:

*We got engaged after three months and was married within a year. And the marriage only lasted nine months. Because throughout the short time that I was with him, I discovered that he was a meth addict and growing cannabis and … full of lies.*

Trapped in her marriage, Hera had been feeling suicidal and depressed. She looked forward to the time she could spend with her friends - enjoying getting together and having a few drinks. It was during these times she would confide in her friends about the issues and abuse she was being subjected to. Her husband didn't like that she had friends, and he didn't like that she talked about him or their relationship. Then one evening, while she and her friends were catching up, her husband was high on meth and acted on his paranoia:

*He decided to start abusing me and threw the table at us. And I don't know if it was my friend that called the police or the neighbours, but the police were called.*

When the two white male police officers arrived at the property, the first thing they did was to both enter the house to speak to Hera's husband:

*So, there was two police officers and they both went to my husband at the time and spoke to him. Then they came over and spoke to my friend and then me.*

On reflection, Hera believes that the police formed their opinions about the facts of the evening based on getting his story first and forming the truth based on what he said. So, when the police came back outside again, Hera clearly recalls that she and her friend were "both pretty calm amongst the tears." As the police spoke to her friend, her friend divulged that Hera's husband was growing marijuana:

*My friend told the police about his apparent [cannabis] plants that he had, okay, but I didn't know because I wasn't ever allowed in the garage. But it was all locked up. The plants were there, and the police confiscated his plants… but the police didn't handle it well.*

Hera believes that by the time the police finally came to speak to her, they were not willing to listen to her. Nor did they possess the skills to connect with her and understand how she was feeling:

*I can't really remember much about what was said. I just know that one police officer that laughed at me I remember saying, "Why are you laughing at me?" He just said, "I'm not*

*laughing at you." [But he] was looking at me and laughing… I just felt angry and like, I'm trying to find a word that would describe that I just felt let down.*

For Hera, this police experience triggered other traumatic memories of a close relative who had also been treated badly by the police. The lack of empathy and inaction by the police officers on that night, led her to believe that they were not there to help her because they were not listening to her. After the police had taken everyone's statements, and seized the cannabis plants, they then approached Hera and asked her to leave the property. Up to this point Hera had not been aggressive saying, "I was quite well - not calm, because I was tearful." Then when the police asked her to leave, she concedes becoming "severally distressed" because she had nowhere to go. Despite her protests however, the police responded by saying:

*We don't care. You can sleep in your car for all we care". And because there'd been drinking involved. But I wasn't intoxicated. So, they let me reverse my car out of the driveway and they said, "Well, you can sleep in your car, if that's what you have to do" The other police officer took the keys off me and said, "Well, you're intoxicated, you've been drinking" but I wasn't intoxicated, I'd had no more than a couple of glasses of wine.*

Hera felt let down and abandoned by the police. She had no place to sleep, and no way of getting to somewhere else to stay the night. So, feeling like, she had no other option, Hera decided to wait outside the property she shared with her husband (the same property she had been trespassed from). She snuck back into her house after she thought everyone had gone to sleep. Unfortunately, her husband had been alerted on their home security cameras, and as Hera heard people arriving, she knew he had called the cops on her again.

By the time the police arrived at the house, a female and male officer came into the room Hera was in and told her:

*"You're under arrest for breaking in and trespass", and so they put cuffs on me. I think it's… I can't remember whatever hand it was. I know that they put the cuffs on so tight that I ended up self-harming. When I was in the cells because there was a little pinch, so I just sat there and just scratched the shit out of it.*

Hera recalls the police explaining to her why she was being arrested, but by that stage she had reached her limit. She no longer cared and didn't argue.

Of the processes that occurred in the cells, Hera does not recall anyone providing an explanation of what was going to happen to her; if she was going to be charged, and how long she was going to be held for. Although, she calculates being held in the cells for at least three hours. She also recalls that despite telling the police earlier that she wanted to kill herself, at no time was her level of risk assessed while with the police. During that time in the cells, the only person that checked on her was a female police officer who had known Hera's relative. She believes she was only released because that officer took pity on her.

Upon her release the police did not offer any other referrals to the crisis team or any other support services, but they did ask her if they could drop her off somewhere safe. Hera found support at her former boss's home:

*I went around to my [former] boss's house and knocked on their door. After about five minutes, they come to the door. And yeah, [I] just explained what had happened. And I stayed there for about an hour and a half. And then she ended up taking me up to the hospital because I just couldn't say that I was going to be safe.*

Hera is grateful to her former boss and friend for the care and support she received on that night. Of the process accessing hospital care she reflects

*The process was really easy when I was at the hospital… I was really surprised at [that] actually because I've heard lots of, you know, through social work. You hear bad stories about hospitals, but they were really quick to process me. I really felt like they wrapped as much support that they could with [the] little information they had.*

*The hospital rang her current employer to let them know of her situation. Of her employer, Hera is grateful for the loving care, compassion and support she received from them also.*

In her experience, Hera believes that the police need to take the time to listen to those in mental distress. She adds, that having a diverse range

of police officers with varying characteristics will better enable them to meet the needs of the people they are engaging with who may be experiencing mental distress. For example, Hera says:

*Just for somebody to listen to me, or maybe even having a female and a male there like not two males... I felt quite ganged up on. And that's probably a lot to do with my own issues as a child and sexual abuse and things but two males coming to visit you is... just overwhelming... [Also] I look white, they were white... I just feel like they didn't have an understanding. Whereas if it had been a Māori police officer, they just have a way about them and their words and their energy... I just feel like my values align, and our values align, and they respect. We respect one another and whether your point is right or wrong. It's just about being listened to and being heard.*

Hera adds that interacting with police who are Māori is likely to garner more empathy because they are more likely to have similar lived experiences. Hera also believes her experience was further exacerbated by the fact that the police were young, explaining:

*Really young, and they don't have that life experience... more understanding. I think... I don't believe that the police are equipped or have the knowledge to deal with people that have a mental health disorder. And I think that there needs to be more of that. And whether that's the training or whatever.*

Hera worked hard after her stint in the ward. She was able to get an ACC claim and has benefited from seeing a psychologist, who has given her several tools that she knows will be beneficial for the rest of her life. Today she has regained her confidence, inner strength, and power. She holds no animosity towards the police for the action they took on that night, and she hopes that in sharing her experience that she will no longer continue to hear these negative stories; truly believing that "everyone deserves to be respected."

Today, Hera works for the same former boss and friend that helped her at 3am in the morning, feeling safe and appreciated in her career. While on the home front, Hera has maintained her relationship with her daughter, seeing her regularly, and has found love again after moving to another town. Hera reflects that life for her now is much more sedate, and provides a 'back to nature' lifestyle. She exclaims, "That's probably the best thing I did... moving here for my own wellbeing and sanity."

# Iharaira

*From the marae I see the tohu*
*from Ranginui*

*Where the edge of the*
*rainbow starts*

*Where the shooting star lands*

*Calling me to drink in the awa*
*and*

*Rest in the embrace of*
*Papatuanuku*

## Pepeha

*Ko Whetumatarau rāua ko Titirangi ōku maunga*
*Ko Karakatuwhero rāua ko Waiau ōku awa*
*Ko Horouta rāua ko Takitimu ōku waka*
*Ko Hinemauria rāua ko Rangiāhua ōku marae*
*Ko Te Whānau o Tūwhakairiora rāua ko Ngāi Tamaterangi ōku hapū*
*Ko Ngāti Porou rāua ko Ngāti Kahungungu ōku iwi*
*Ko Iharaira tōku ingoa*

Iharaira was born in Australia, but at the age of about four years, the family moved back to their whānau homestead that belonged to his mum's mum in Rangiahua in Wairoa. The family had to return to New Zealand because his father was deported "after getting busted for drugs."

Soon after their return through, Iharaira's father left his mother, sister and him. Iharaira remembers spending a lot of time with his aunty, koro and nanny during that time:

*It was good, eh. Being dragged around to the maraes and the huis and sort of Māori Land Court and stuff like that and sort of wondering what's going on. Always been around te reo, but not really taking it in, you know? I knew my name and I knew when I was in trouble, but that was about as far as it went. Thoroughly enjoyed it, eh. Best times of my life because with all my cousins and that. No TV. It was just out in the bush, the creek and the river... Go ride horses and catch eels and stuff that I wish my kids did today.*

Some of his childhood memories are "pretty dented" because of the drug abuse and head knocks. He has big blanks in his memory, but he knows and feels that they centred on feelings related to whanaungatanga, being connected with whānau and te Ao Māori.

Iharaira's mum then moved them all to Gisborne, where she met and married Iharaira's stepfather. Together they had two more children. Iharaira comes from a large, blended family, having one full sister, eight half-brothers, three half-sisters and two stepbrothers. Moving to Gisborne from Wairoa was difficult for Iharaira, he found it confusing to be picked on and called a "honky". Some of his brothers were dark and others were light skinned like him. Although, it was easier for Iharaira to fit in with the Pākehā kids, he wanted to be with the Māori kids. He tried to impress them and would end up doing silly things that would land him in trouble at school.

At school, Iharaira was easily distracted and focused on things other than schoolwork. Iharaira knows he wasn't dumb, but he believes he had some difficulties in learning. Still, he developed the skills that helped him learn and get through school. Though, he says he was a late starter, he is now a good reader and writer. Iharaira was also a gifted athlete. He was always in the top three in all of the events he took part in. But when he was younger, a boy pulled his legs out from underneath him and the doctors found he had an issue with his muscle and bones that left him at risk of further injury. So, he was not allowed to play any contact sports.

At 12 years old, his whānau moved from Gisborne to Rotorua after his stepfathers' children moved there. Iharaira did not like Rotorua much at first - it smelt - and he did not know anyone. He missed his friends, close whānau and the lifestyle of going to the beach for a surf or dive. Iharaira spent a year at Mokoia Intermediate and then he went on to Rotorua Boys' High. Going to school was hard because they "were always quite pōhara". He often didn't have a proper school uniform because he grew out of everything so quickly. That's when things really started to get bad. He started missing school and was eventually kicked out. For a short time, after leaving school, he got a job in the bush with his uncle. He was smoking cigarettes and weed and got in with the wrong people who led him down a dark path. He started stealing and getting into crime.

At home, his negative relationship with his stepdad and stepbrothers was intensifying. Iharaira

believed his stepdad favoured his own kids instead of him and his sister. His stepbrothers bullied and made fun of him. Iharaira had so much anger towards them all, that one day he lashed out and seriously hurt his step-father. After this, Iharaira was trespassed from their home. So, at 16 years old, Iharaira found himself living on the streets. On reflection, Iharaira admits his resentment fuelled his stubbornness, in that he blamed others for not loving him enough, which made him turn to the streets in search of his own family that would love him. By this time, Iharaira was committing crimes to survive, breaking into cars, and houses:

*I was breaking in and just raiding their fridges. It was real ugly but had to survive. I did what I had to do to survive.*

In his early 20s Iharaira then moved back to Gisborne and continued living on the streets where he met his partner. After meeting her, he got off the streets and life seemed pretty good for a while. He had a group of friends who were trying to support him. But that all changed when he got drunk, broke into a car, drew a gun and threatened to kill the police:

*Almost got shot too because I had the gun on me, and they found me… They drew their guns out and they were like drop the weapon now. And I was like just – I didn't even listen. I wasn't even listening. I didn't even drop it or anything. I wasn't scared. I was just like ugh, shoot me, I don't care because I was so depressed. No self-esteem, no support from my family because I had totally disconnected from them. So, I was just in a real bad space. I didn't care for myself.*

Iharaira had no memory of this event; he didn't believe it was true because he had always been "a happy drunk, not an angry one". But the evidence was against him, and he went to prison for his first big lag. He was imprisoned for 13 months for unlawful possession and unlawful presentation of a firearm.

At the same time, Iharaira's eldest son was born to another lady that he had a brief but stable relationship with. Although, it was a good relationship, Iharaira was not happy, and he left to go up to Auckland. Unfortunately, leaving his eldest son deeply impacted him and has left Iharaira with a lot of regret.

Iharaira lived in Auckland for several years. When he first went there, he lived with his auntie and got work with whānau in the bush. The work would take them all over the country, and Iharaira loved being outdoors. He got into another relationship but being away so much was challenging. So he got another job as a brick layers labourer that would have him home more. Iharaira worked hard through the week but on the weekends, he would party harder, and he started using P with his partner:

*I saw the power that it had over people and that's what appealed to me more than the actual high, was the power that it had and the control that it had. I just could see the power that it had over her and I wanted that power… Like people will do anything to get it. You know what I mean? You can control, I want this and that, they'll go get it. It was just amazing. The money and the power, it was appealing more than drugs. But I ended up using too much and getting too far gone. No, it wasn't actually the first time I started seeing things because I was seeing things before I used P, but using P made it – amplified it.*

Iharaira was still getting into trouble with the police. He would see them every now and then for the harm he was causing his partner.

Iharaira was then convicted of an assault on a taxi driver and sent to Mount Eden prison. During this time inside, his partner left him. Iharaira recalls how crazy and possessive he had been over the course of their relationship. He had done some horrible scary things to her, including threatening to beat up her new boyfriend. He threatened to jump off a bridge if she didn't take him back. He was again homeless but this time the streets were a very a dangerous and scary place to be. Lots of people around Iharaira were using synthetics and meth and went to any lengths to get what they wanted - money or drugs.

Iharaira has trouble remembering the details and sequence of events in his life, due to numerous brain injuries, drug abuse and mental unwellness over the years. He has seen psychiatrists, psychologists and spent time in Tiaho Mai [an acute psychiatric inpatient unit] and a residential adult mental health service that supports people with mental health. He had experiences of seeing people that he later found out had died and his property would go missing and turn up in random places. His paranoia began to grow:

*Then I think I was suspicious that someone was around me, like touching my things, so I barricaded all the house because I hadn't slept for a while, and I thought I'd better go to sleep. I barricaded the house up, being paranoid of everything, but when I woke up, all the – because I put the furniture up against the doors and blocked all the windows, and then I woke up and everything was back to normal, and I was like eh? I started freaking out, like oh nah, this isn't happening, what's going on? That's when I knew I needed to go to [Tiaho Mai].*

During another police callout, WINZ staff had requested their help because Iharaira had threatened suicide in response to them refusing to help him pay his bills. He cannot recall the details because he had taken a cocktail of sleeping pills.

Iharaira's has deep scars where he slit his wrist. As he recounts this story of his attempted suicide, when the police, ambulance and fire service attended, he explains:

*Yeah, cut right through to the tendons and was bleeding out, and my cousin called the police because I was running around just letting it – I just sat there and was just like yeah kill me, I want to die. They didn't know what to do, the police, because I said to them, to keep them at bay, I said I'm HIV positive. Yeah, so immediately they didn't know what to do. Blood everywhere and I knew that would stop them from touching me. So, they were like – they just didn't know what to do and I was just sitting there, like laughing. 'I got you, you can't touch me, look, you want some of this?' I was really depressed. This was when I was sort of using and that and things weren't working out in my relationship.*

Iharaira recalls losing consciousness but recalls all the emergency services being there trying to help him. But he was so depressed that he did not care about whether he lived or died. He was determined to make it really hard for the police to do their job. So, although he was apprehended, handcuffed, and put into a police car, he somehow got out again and tried to make a run for it down the road:

*That's when they – I heard the policeman do some sort of whistle and next minute I know the dog had run right up to me and just latched onto my genitals and I was just like oh. Just dropped me like a sack of potatoes. They had to take me to the hospital after to get all sewed up in my arm, but they had to sew up my genitals as well. But it was at that stage that I was like, "Are yous allowed to do that?" I understand that you fellas – I sort of trumped you, but is that a legitimate way of detaining someone? You could have possibly stopped me from reproducing which would have been probably a good thing for me. From that day on I never trusted them.*

Iharaira resents having the dog put on him like that, arguing that he did not have weapons and he was somewhat subdued with having handcuffs on.

*There was no way I was really getting anywhere. I was just running away from you, and I wasn't going that fast… The police that actually called the dog, he knew me from a prior incident and I had embarrassed him in front of a whole lot of people and publicly he put his hands on me and tried to rough me up, and he knew about me because I had tried to buy alcohol from the supermarket and they wouldn't serve me because I was too intoxicated, but I wasn't going to budge. I was like nah, you're going to give me this, and I tried – I walked out with it, but they'd already called the cops. This cop, he's part of their old school kind of cop mentality. Yeah, like he'll call your bluff and then raise you. He roughed me up and that. I was sort of like you can't touch up, I'm not even under arrest and you're starting to grab me and manhandle me just because I made him look like an idiot in front of all these people. It was that cop, I can't remember his name, but he was the one that called the dog, and the dog did the thing. Forever I remember that day clear as even though I was quite drowsy and thing. I can still remember that clear as day."*

Iharaira went to court and the judge asked, 'what's going on for you, why are you like this?' Iharaira's mum advocated that he received the appropriate help with his mental health outside of prison.

Iharaira moved back to Rotorua and was living in emergency housing with a new partner. He had not been doing drugs for sometime, so when he started using again, it had a devastating impact. He lost control when he found out his partner was cheating on him. He set fire to the building where she was meeting with him. Fortunately, no one was hurt and the police arrested him. Ihairaira

was sentenced to four years in Waikeria prison for endangering the lives of others. On this occasion, Iharaira shared that the police response was good:

*Because I knew some of them. I had actually grew up at school with some of them so when they saw me – because actually when they arrested me… They treated me like I was still their bro and I was taken aback, like eh? You care? Why do you care? They were like bro we were worried when we heard that you'd cut yourself. They were wondering what made you get to that point. I was just like oh bro my missus left me and then she was cheating on me. Fuck dude, fuck. I wasn't coping, I'd been using, so the highs and lows were just like… You just go real dark, real quick and it's hard to come out of it. I couldn't bring myself out of it. I was trying my hardest, like I know this is wrong, this is the wrong thing to do.*

Unfortunately, when the officers arrested Iharaira, they failed to search him. He had a razorblade in his pocket and used it to cut his wrists while waiting in the cell. Iharaira knew there were cameras in the cell, he tried hiding the blood but when the officers came to check on him, he knew they would have to take him to the hospital because he had swallowed the blade. Still, he did not make it easy for the officers. He fought against them until they had no choice but to sedate him for transportation to the mental ward at Rotorua hospital. Iharaira was sentenced to four years in prison, but he was sectioned to the Henry Bennett forensic mental health service for a short time before being sent back to prison again:

*In terms of everything inside there, that really shock me straight for a while and that's probably when I started getting better medication and the help that I needed was when I was in there with doctors and that after being in Henry Bennett. They were like, "Woah, what can we do for you? What do you need?" That was the first time that they had actually said what do you need, not tell me what I needed. They asked me what I needed. Yeah. That is a bit of a thing, like eh? You're asking for my opinion? But you're the expert.*

After Iharaira served his sentence, he returned to Rotorua and was again living in emergency housing. So, when strange things started happening again, Iharaira was better equipped to know the signs that something was not right:

*I reached out to my mum because I was in emergency housing, I was using, and things started happening again. This is when I'd seen that dead lady. Then in my hotel room one night, I just got out of the shower, and I just walked out of the shower and a whole lot of blood just splattered up against the wall out of nowhere. I was like, eh? Oh no, it's happening again. I was looking at myself like I haven't cut myself, where did that blood come from? Then as that blood went up, my shaving cream flew off the shelf from behind me and started spiralling with all the foam coming out of it while it was travelling through the air, and I was like oh I need help, it's happening again. I reached out to my mum and said mum, I'm really scared, I'm scared, this is too much for me.*

Then his cousin found out that a new rehab was taking in their next intake. It suited Iharaira because it involved whānau from the Te Araroa. This meant he could connect with his roots, uplift his wairua and be immersed in aroha and free of judgment. The programme focused on finding the things that worked to keep you engaged while also building a picture of what is important. On the course Iharaira had the privilege of receiving a mirimiri and healing from a well known and respected tohunga (spiritual expert):

*He was singing, he said, "a lot of people say bad things about you, but all I can sense is good. You've got a heap of good in you, boy. You've got to get better and then you can come back and help us".*

This interaction really impacted Iharaira and gave him some hope that he could use his lived experiences to help others. Sadly, Iharaira did not finish the programme because he got sick and had to go to hospital, but he plans to go back and give back.

Iharaira returned to the Bay of Plenty from Auckland in November 2021 and got into trouble with the police again after assaulting another partner and her son. At first, he tried evading the police but realised he actually needed to hold himself accountable. So, he returned to her house and did some drugs to calm himself down from being highly fuelled with adrenaline. By the time the police responded, Iharaira asked the officer straight-up if after arresting him they would oppose his bail. He was told no, that they wouldn't oppose

bail and that they just wanted to get him home. But later at the station the officer, apologised, saying, "I'm sorry, we are going to oppose your bail and you're not going home". Iharaira was not surprised, but this blatant lie is another reason for his continued distrust of the police.

Iharaira received a sentence of home detention. Iharaira offers these suggestions in how the police could respond to a person in distress: don't turn up in a bunch, just send one officer at a time, approach him on a human level, not from your police point of view, avoid any discussions of being locked up, be honest and tell that person they are going home or will be held in custody, so they can accept their fate straightaway and process it:

*It's that not knowing what's going to happen is the scary bit, is the bit that I don't like. It's like I don't know whether I'm going to get out or when I will, but it's good to have that light at the end of the tunnel after you've done – like I knew and I know the process and it's like if I have a bit of information to sort of cling to then I can work through my problems and be cooperative. I'll cooperate. If you guys are pono with me and tika with me, I'll be straight up with you."*

Iharaira has been clean for a year. He has been living with his mum and stepdad, while serving his home detention. Rebuilding these relationships has been a long and challenging struggle over the years, but he is grateful they have continued to be there for him. His mother always comments on how it is a miracle he is still alive after all his risky behaviour and attempts on his life. His stepdad has admitted he wishes he had done things differently with him, and that has been enough to keep an opening for rebuilding their relationship. Iharaira's oldest son has also reached out to reconnect with him after him having his own baby son. Iharaira now has a firm vision of what his future looks like, he says:

*For me, it's going to be whānau orientated. That's because I've just lost so much time through being in prison and being on P and just being in my own little world for so long. I've forgotten that there was people out there that loved me and they cared about me and were scared because if I hadn't have got off the gear I would still be in – I probably might have died."*

Iharaira has been learning te reo Māori and has enjoyed making these connections with his culture. Being part of Huarahi Pai has strengthened his connectedness to his whenua, whānau and who he is. One day he wants to return and complete the programme and use his experiences to help other whānau. Although, he has also returned for tangi and hui, he feels more mature and able to contribute now than he did before. There are a lot of projects (construction of a barge and fixing the roads, growing lime, macadamia, avocado and olive trees), on the horizon taking place in Te Araroa and he would like to be part of it all.

Over the years, Iharaira tried to get help for his addictions from places like Odyssey House and Higher Ground, but he was always deemed too violent. But the kaimahi at Huarahi Pai and people like his cousin Kiri have really helped him change. The kaimahi at Tūwharetoa Health have also provided a lot of support while Iharaira has been detained at home. This has included contacting him regularly, facilitating partner counselling, advocating on his behalf with probation and keeping him busy by sourcing him some art supplies.

*I hope that [sharing my story helps you] find a better way to approach someone that's presenting as not well … because there isn't one size fits all… It's a real tricky game. I know that they have to take their safety into consideration and the safety of the offender, but there's always things that go on before that person gets to that point where they don't give a fuck. We need to work with people that reach out for help because I tried to reach out and then I wasn't getting it so I just thought fuck it all, fuck it, no one's going to help me, I'm not going to help myself, I might as well carry on.*

## Gwynnie

Gwynnie is a 38 year old mother of four. She is married, owns her own home, and runs a business. She is living a life of recovery and healing from her past, through which she is currently five years abstinent from crime and drugs.

Gwynnie comes from a background characterised by challenge. Her father was a gang member, and her mother had an addiction to heroin. Her parents separated when she was a minor, which led to Gwynnie being uplifted by Child, Youth and Family services. It was in State care that Gwynnie was molested. Not long after this occurred, her partner died by suicide. These events were the impetus for Gwynnie's life spiraling downward rapidly.

Coinciding with her trauma was drug dependence from a young age. By 15 years old Gwynnie was using methamphetamine intravenously. In an attempt to fund her drug habit, she began prostituting herself and committing crime. This led her into a revolving door of incarceration and substance abuse, which she found challenging to cease. Her list of convictions sits at around 168, and she has also undertaken various community based sentences. For Gwynnie, constant engagement with the police was a significant part of her life for 11 years.

One significant mental health distress event, involving the police, was when Gwynnie was eight months pregnant with her daughter, Gwynnie Junior. On remand at this time, she was transferred from prison to the cells in the court. When her waters broke, Gwynnie became highly anxious and desperate for help. Despite obviously being in need of hospital-level care, Gwynnie was not able to access such care and had to expend considerable energy pleading to be able to do so:

*I was down at the court, and I went into labour in the cells. My water started to break, and I was stressed out. I was locked up with two other females and myself, and they were yelling out to the police, and [the police] were just like, "Shut up, shut up". And then I said, "You need to come, I'm in labour"…they didn't believe me. I said, "I'm in labour, can you please ring an ambulance?" and they said, "Hop up on the table, and we'll deliver your baby for you." And I said, "I'm not having a baby in a cell on a crusty thing." Then they rung the ambulance and the Senior Sergeant from the police station escorted me in the ambulance to hospital. So that was quite a stressful situation with the police.*

Despite Gwynnie being in a highly distressing situation, the Senior Sergeant who escorted her to the hospital, did not converse with her at all. The trauma of the situation was to continue with the police having taken Gwynnie to the wrong hospital (the prison that Gwynnie had come from did not use this hospital). Hence, two guards from the prison came out to the hospital, handcuffed Gwynnie, put her in the back of a car, and drove her to a different hospital, all the while she was still in labour.

Her baby was eventually delivered eight days later by C-section. This surgical procedure was considered necessary due to the stress Gwynnie was experiencing long after her waters had broken in the cells, and the baby was not able to be delivered naturally. Gwynnie was handcuffed to the bed for the duration of her time in hospital with no specific mental health support.

Feeling powerless and under stress in police custody has been common for Gwynnie. One of the worst incidents was one in which she was experiencing severe substance-related mental health distress in the cells:

*I was just so unwell and was coming up and down off drugs. I was having psychosis and stuff like that, as well as my mental health. I needed a shower. I was like, locked up over a long weekend. I had my period, and they would not give me any tampons. They would not give me any blankets - new blankets because I had bled on my blanket. They would not give me any showering. It was, yeah, that was pretty rough.*

Gwynnie has one experience of kindness when she was being held in the police cells:

*When I was arrested last, I was in the cells and my stepbrother, so my dad's wife's son came out, he worked in the police station that I was arrested at. He came and like, talked to me and made sure everything was alright. He took me outside for a cigarette, gave me a drink. That was cool. Maybe because he was my family. So other than that, and I don't really have much good interactions of police. I haven't had the best experience with police.*

Being in a very different place with her life now, the nature of Gwynnie's engagement with the Police is also very different. More recently, Gwynnie called the police for help when she witnessed someone wearing a home detention bracelet on her security camera enter her property with a knife. Gwynnie was severely distressed and alone. She felt let down by the police:

*When I rang the police and because I was like hysterical. I thought how could you not know this person, you know, like, this is the clear pictures of the person… I was so stressed out, and they just dismissed the whole thing. They're like, "We're not going to follow it up…the person's gone." I said, about the broken window, "Surely… you can come and take fingerprints or something?" They're like, "No, you need to calm down… we're not doing anything about it." I found out who the person was, and then went into the police station, and told them who the person was. And then they're like, "Oh, well, we can't prove that that's him." I was like, "It's a clear photo, but the CCTV footage." And then I rang the person's probation officer said, "It's the same." They're like, "Yep." I was like, "So here's the confirmation from probation this is the person. Can you please go and do something about it?" And they never did. They just treated me like I was crazy.*

Gwynnie attributes the lack of care from the police to her having prior convictions. For Gwynnie, the police did not engage and respond in a way that provided her with the reassurance she needed when in an unsafe situation, experiencing a threat, or reporting a crime.

Gwynnie describes a more positive recent engagement:

*So, lockdown [pandemic restrictions] last year, the police drove past. We have got about eight children here on our whenua with us. And because we have cousins and stuff that we live on a huge farm, and the police drove past, and they dropped off coloring pencils and little fold out cars and coloring books and stuff for the kids to do during lockdown. That was cool. They are like the rural police though, not the city police, because we live just out of town.*

Although she did not see them for long that day, the positive difference they made was lasting and significant.

In summarising the core differences between her negative and positive police experiences, Gwynnie speaks to the potential of a humanistic, as opposed to a criminalising, approach. She also speaks of a power imbalance which presents challenges:

*I think just to respect my basic human needs and wants. Just needs, like food. If someone's hungry. So many times, I was locked up and I was sick or unwell. And I would need a doctor and no doctor would be called… it's so hard because you're not like human to human, it's like criminal to police, and the police look down on you, they are trained to intimidate you. They're trained to have very strong boundaries, you know, and all of that stuff, so that it's like a brick wall. It's like concrete. So, I don't know because it's all in the training and it's not designed to treat you fairly like from the moment you go in to be arrested; you're standing there so they make the office big, so they are standing above you. It is called that… the receiving office at the police stations. They are always above you, and you're down here.*

Gwynnie has experienced a very different way of doing things. A way that made all the difference for her. Coming off illicit substances, Gwynnie feels she was helped most significantly through the alcohol and other drug treatment courts. The principles of care, peer support, rehabilitation, and humanistic approaches, alongside accountability, were of huge benefit to Gwynnie.

It was through the drug court that Gwynnie also had genuine, positive interactions with the police:

*Yeah, nice policeman… the whole scene is different in drug court… it's not so much like a perpetrator and defense and stuff like that. It's yeah, it's still court but the whole vibe is different, you sing at the beginning, and they clap for your clean time. Yeah, you work towards, you [are] rewarded for your positive behavior, your proactive and productive behaviour.*

The police, they just say how proud of you they are, how well you're doing and stuff like that. And then they might like so if you had like a sanction which is like a positive drug test. I mean, obviously the police are going to hold you accountable and tell you what, you know what's going on. But mainly just positive stuff…It's more like they are looking at your behaviour rather than you.

## Katie

The background to Katie's story about her interactions with police where mental distress was involved, goes back to a relationship she began a year or so ago with Mike. Katie had had her own challenges with mental health and addiction earlier in her life, and had found new direction and strength through a spiritual connection.

The incident in question came about one morning in mid-2021 when her and Mike were at her home making coffee in the kitchen. There was a knock on the door, and it was a friend of theirs, Joseph, who said he had come to drop off a bible. Katie says that Joseph is "very religious" and she had started going to church with him a few months before the incident. She knew Joseph had some experience of mental distress, but she felt a strong connection to him as he shared her spiritual values, and she viewed him as having recovered like herself:

*I wouldn't say I am religious, nor have I ever been, but I was, you know... being in my 40's, exploring life and spiritualism...so yeah, I didn't call myself a Christian, didn't believe that anyone walked on water, but I like good morals and good values.*

Joseph had been messaging her saying she needed to come along to Church more often, but Katie wasn't able to go every week as she had a lot going on. She had recently graduated from a Level 4 Mental Health and Addiction course, and was considering where to go on to from there. However, Joseph just kept pestering her:

*So this morning... yeah, nine o'clock on a Wednesday morning, he just appeared with this bible. And I said, "Oh I'm just making coffee, do you want one?" He said "No, no I can't stay. I'm on my way to a lecture at Uni, but here's your bible." And then he gave me a hug and said, "Jesus loves you." And Mike couldn't be bothered with this because all conversation with Joseph would just revolve around Jesus and God and nothing else. And it was really in your face...so Mike went to leave the room...he [Joseph] is like "Bye Mike, Jesus loves you." [Mike said], "Fuck off, Jesus Christ... he's dead to me!"*

Next thing she knew Joseph was chasing Mike from the kitchen through to her bedroom. She ran through to see what was going on. Mike had the jar of coffee in his hand and Joseph accused Mike of having it as a weapon, and said he would defend himself if he was attacked:

*I said, "Look, no one's hitting anyone and could you actually just like, get the fuck out of my house." And then he turned around and swung at him [Mike] and hit him in the head and Mike's head went through the wardrobe door, he dropped to the floor. I panicked and screamed, ran through the kitchen to grab my phone. And then Joseph came out saying something. I can't remember what he said. And I called 111.*

It was nearly an hour before the police and an ambulance turned up. Katie only spoke briefly to the police initially, when she was standing by the ambulance. Together they decided it would be best if she just went quickly to the hospital to support Mike, and to give her police statement later.

It turned out to be months before Katie was able to give her formal statement, in what was an incredibly frustrating process. Several days after the event she presented to the police station for the first of many visits. Only the officer who had attended the event could take her statement, and she was told by them at the time that a trespass notice would be issued. She was advised to go and stay with friends that night in case Joseph retaliated.

Following the incident, they had arrived via ambulance to the Accident and Emergency department where Mike was assessed. Katie explains how Mike complained of a really bad headache and wasn't dealing well with all the bright lights, or the noise and chaos of the hospital environment. Staff kept trying to put lights in his eyes to check his pupils, which was causing him added distress. Katie explained that Mike was swearing at staff and was not given any medication to help calm him down, other than some paracetamol. Mike had difficulty opening his mouth because of the punch to his face but they wouldn't consider giving him a shot of anything.

After a few hours they were allowed to go to a whānau room. They closed the door, and turned off the light so they could have some privacy and calm. A charge nurse came in and insisted that the door was kept open, and the lights left on. Because Mike kept yelling at everyone to leave him alone,

they also had to have a security guard with them. Katie recalls he was not physically violent at any stage, but was confused and upset, and trying to get some time and space to settle, after all of the chaos.

Eventually Mike was transferred to a medical assessment ward where he had a CT scan and other tests. He was vomiting. A doctor told them that Mike's blood tests had shown elevated levels of various markers, and a possibility of an infection in his brain, which added further to both of their stress levels. Sometime later that evening, when she thought he was stable enough, Katie went home. Early the following morning she got a call from the hospital to say that Mike had walked out of the hospital, despite having a security guard with him:

*I don't know how he managed to do it. But he got a taxi and went home to his place. So… because he hadn't been discharged from hospital when he hadn't been fully assessed or treated, they got the police to go around and check on him…*

The police called Katie from outside Mike's place, and suggested that she meet them there, and go in with them so as not to alarm him. Katie agreed, as it had not been a good experience the day before when he was assaulted. Katie drove Mike back to the hospital with the police following them as an escort.

At first everything was ok, but Mike became increasingly uncomfortable. They were still shining lights in his eyes which distressed him, and he was verbally abusive. Eventually he decided he had had enough and wanted to go home:

*So next thing we knew he was trying to walk out down the hallway to go home, and he had one security guard on each foot, one on each hand, one walking on either side of him. That's six security guards. And next thing I know, the police have been called and he's been put in handcuffs. He's under the Mental Health Act and they were taking him to [Mental Health facility].*

They continued to argue with Katie saying that the primary reason for his admission was because of his mental health:

*And… they kept saying to me, "Oh he's here at the hospital because of his mental health." And I said "No, he's here because I called an ambulance because he was assaulted." And they went, "Oh well, we've got his primary diagnosis down as bipolar." I said, "I didn't call an ambulance because he has bipolar, that's there all the time… he's here because he was assaulted."*

Mike's condition deteriorated notably over the next week, to the point where Katie could hardly understand what he was saying. It was almost as if he was speaking in a foreign language. Katie suspected it was something to do with his physical injury, but the staff at [Mental Health facility] said they knew nothing about physical or neurological stuff and only focused on his mental health:

*They never looked into it, or investigated it. And so, it was Wednesday the next week… they got us a taxi back to public for an MRI. Within minutes, I was sitting in the hallway outside the MRI machines signing paperwork as they stuck a line in his arm and wheeled him into surgery in his clothes. And the anaesthetist pricked him in the hallway, because we haven't got time to wait for theatre to open to prep him or give him a gown, he's got a clot on his brain, and he needs surgery. And I'm sitting there thinking you bastards…*

Mike was very distressed to be told that he had had a stroke on the night he had left the hospital, and was subsequently admitted to [Mental Health facility]. The hospital charts showed evidence of that being the case.

Katie describes how the whole situation has impacted their lives considerably. Mike remains unwell, physically, and mentally. He is often depressed and abusive. Katie is now Mike's fulltime care giver, and it is likely that he will never be able to work again:

*If I'm lucky, I can get him to the supermarket with me every couple of weeks. Other than that, he pretty much doesn't leave the house. We don't get help from the stroke team because he's quite depressed because of what happened. The guy still hasn't been arrested…*

It is very frustrating for Katie who is constantly calling services; the hospital, the crisis team and the Police, to try to get answers into what happened and assistance moving forward. At one stage she thought he was going to harm himself, and she called police to try to get them to go and check on him as she was some five hours drive

away at the time. It took 24 hours for them to respond, and they reported that he was there, and had been verbally abusive towards them telling them to leave. Katie felt great relief upon hearing that he was actually alive.

Katie remains particularly frustrated at the lack of action taken by police against Joseph, the perpetrator of the original violence. He has tried to intimidate both her and Mike over the past 11 months which is still weighing heavily today:

*He sent me a text afterwards saying, "I know how you feel about violence. And I'm sorry it happened in your home, but I'm not sorry for what happened… And I could see darkness inside of Mike. And I will not bow down to the darkness." And he was talking about demons and devils and exorcisms and how we needed to get the darkness out of Mike. And I just kept thinking that he's going to come for me next.*

Katie has tried to access supportive and accurate legal advice, but has been unable to get protection orders in place for herself, with Mike also named as a protected person:

*So now I've discovered that yes, I can apply for a protection order. It doesn't matter that we weren't in a… you know, a committed relationship where we were living together, which I thought you had to be to get a protection order. Otherwise, I would have got one last year. But yeah, we're just not happy with the way that the police have dealt with Mike, and that you know… he was the victim… yet he got put in handcuffs and put in [Mental Health facility].*

Katie has had to work hard to legitimise her version of the initial assault in a formal police statement, with ongoing issues around locating police records of certain events:

*And it was August before my statement was finally taken. And I don't know how many times I've been into the police station or called up and said, "…yeah, when are you taking my statement?" and the cop said to me "…but, you said you didn't see anything." "No, I never said that, I was in the bedroom when it happened. I saw the whole thing. And I've got text messages. And I've got the security footage on my cameras that show him [Joseph] arriving and leaving and Mike arriving and leaving. So, I can pinpoint right down to a five-minute window of when they were both inside the house. And that's when it happened. And you can see me standing outside on the back deck on my phone. And you can see Joseph leaving the premises. And then while I'm outside waiting for the ambulance, you can see Mike staggering out the driveway and onto the road.*

Quite some time after the incident, when Katie called to ask what was happening, she was told by police:

*I don't think we're going to be going much further with this investigation because when we spoke to Joseph and delivered the trespass notice to him, he said that you had asked him to assault Mike because you were in an abusive relationship with him.*

Alongside questioning whether police did actually serve a trespass notice, the whole experience has been extremely damaging for Katie. She has PTSD from a previous abusive relationship, and has once more experienced a sudden and unexpected violent episode. Further, she has witnessed police treat Mike like he was the offender, the criminal, and has been made to feel unbelieved and unsupported herself:

*Like two weeks ago, we were told by the stroke team, they wouldn't be coming back to work with him until his mental health was sorted. Last week… I stopped writing down my call log when I got to 23 phone calls over three days between the crisis team and the police… and they were going to call me before they went around to see Mike… I ended up leaving because I thought I just can't deal with this anymore. I can't be there.*

Katie has reached out in desperation for support from agencies, but has been largely unable to get any help. She has approached the same church her and Joseph attended to try to get some assistance with meals or other help for Mike, but has been unsuccessful. She has been unable to focus on her own life and all her time has gone into supporting Mike and the fallout from the incident:

*All these people and they all said we can't do anything. I said, "He's under the bloody Mental Health Act, what do you mean you can't?"*

In relation to the police involvement, Katie knows that Joseph has been to prison for assaulting a police officer, and Mike has no criminal history at

all, so the lack of action against Joseph on the part of the police is quite galling to her.

Looking back on all of the events that have transpired following the traumatic incident, Katie wishes that a full-time experienced worker (rather than a part time volunteer) had been allocated to her case to provide her with much needed advocacy from Victim Support. Eventually they were provided with a Social Worker from Victim Support; however it was a friend who made the initial referral and not the police.

## Kelly

Since I was a teenager, I've experienced mental distress – what that means for me, is that I have the same emotions that we all feel – frustration, joy, disappointment, loneliness, grief – but I tend to feel these things extremely intensely, sometimes out-of-the-blue in a way that feels confusing and disconnected from what's really happening around me. I've had to learn ways to respond to these experiences that will be helpful and won't create bigger problems for me in the long term.

Over the past decade I have had multiple interactions with the Police whilst experiencing mental distress. Those experiences have varied from:

*Absolutely terrible, like stick in your mind kind of terrible experiences… through to some really empathetic, lovely people, who have been really helpful.*

One experience that really stands out for me was being transported to hospital in the back seat of a police car. Any requests I made to self-manage my heightened level of distress were denied by the attending police officers:

*Physiologically I was finding it really hard to be okay in my body. I was quite dissociated, quite distressed, quite highly sensitive to stimuli. So… it was really hot in the car, and I asked them if they could have opened the windows a bit more because they were only open about a crack, about a couple of inches, that much [indicating]. And they actually wound the windows up when I asked them if they could wind them down. And I asked them if they could turn the radio down because it was really loud and I was having trouble managing sensory input and they turned the radio up. And when we got to the ED, they wouldn't let me sit down. And when I was really distressed and sat down on the floor they said "You can stand up, or we're going to take you out of here and take you to the cells."*

After spending a prolonged time waiting in ED it was decided that I would move through to a consult or observation room. I can vividly remember the officers escorting me:

*I had a big male police officer on either side of me holding me by my arms. Now they're walking me down to an observation room, and it was the absolute lowest moment of my life. And they said, "This is your moment" as if we were walking down, you know, a red carpet to the Oscars.*

The officers' comment, made in apparent jest, affected me profoundly. This incident increased my resolve to challenge the stigma attached to my ongoing experience of mental distress.

I thought… "No, this is not my moment. I'm going to go and do a bunch of stuff in my life… that is going to be my moment…and you don't get to choose!" You know, it just felt like an existential attack on me and telling me, essentially, that this is all that I'd amount to. I'd like be a BPD [mental health condition] labelled person who would go in and out of ED having crises.

I can reflect now on how fortunate I have been throughout my life to have counter-narratives that have helped me to meet my personal life aspirations. I really empathise with others who may have had a similar experience with police and I hope that they too had alternative stories to draw on for strength.

I can recall another negative experience involving police. On this occasion I had become increasingly distraught and encountered police officers in a very public space, which only exacerbated my experience of distress:

*I had a meltdown on a bus once… I went to a market and it was just overstimulating as heck and I had to get on a bus to go home… the bus was going to go via the bus exchange, and that was going to be overstimulating. What I ended up doing was sliding under a bus seat, curling up into a ball and crying, and the bus driver didn't know how to deal with it. So, he got everyone else off the bus and onto a replacement bus. And we ended up having the police come and I'm not sure if the bus driver called the police or if my partner at the time, who was next to me who couldn't get me off this bus, called the police.*

But the police came and stormed this bus, or that's how it felt from my position on the floor, curled up in a ball. [They] handcuffed me and dragged me off the bus. And this was on one of the busiest roads

in [city]. And I was handcuffed at this main kind of bus stop across the road from the mall for what felt like ages while they were maybe [deciding] what to do with me. And I was handcuffed, I was really distressed. I was possibly having some kind of meltdown, mental health meltdown. I was crying and distraught, I wanted to leave and I couldn't go anywhere so I was throwing my body into a brick wall, a front fence of a business there next to the bus stop in front of all these spectators for I'm not sure how long.

And you just think, you know, how often are you on [this busy road], walking down the street, and you'll bump into a colleague or a friend or someone who knew you from school? I had no idea how many people who I had a tangible relationship would have passed me, but I was an absolute spectacle for however long that took. And I don't think that that should ever happen to anyone.

I am very aware that I am a small, young, White woman. I often reflect on how much worse my experiences may have been if I, for example, lived in my partner's body as a tall man with Samoan ancestry. I feel like I have probably benefitted a lot from my 'privilege' during my experiences with the police.

It is very easy for me to contrast the negative experiences I have had with ones that I have found very positive. They have felt completely different. The positive experiences have included police taking the time to listen and empathise, such as the following encounter:

*… the most helpful, amazing experience with a police officer when I was distressed was when I went to go swimming one day. Swimming's a big part of me being-well and healthy, and happy, and on top of things. I was trying to swim often… because it was still a shaky time in my life mental-health wise. I'd caught a bus to the swimming pool with my partner at the time. And we're about to go in. The pool's opposite a big mall. So, I'm just heading on into the pool and a big SUV drove up the driveway to the mall, across the road from us, and [it] didn't stop for a family of ducks and ducklings and ran over and crushed about five ducklings. And I lost it and was crying and screaming. I wanted to go over and help, but I knew that I couldn't and I just froze there distraught… again in front of lots of people, who hadn't seen the SUV, and didn't know what was happening… why this person was acting this way?*

I felt such a sense of grief and injustice and I was crying and yelling about SUVs and people going to malls and corporate greed and like… I just witnessed a murder of these ducklings. Because that's where I was at the time. And it was really distressing. And I had a police officer show up in that situation who got teary-eyed, said, "Oh my gosh, I'm an animal lover myself and that sounds really distressing! …. What were you here to do?" … like, "What was it before this happened that you were here for?" … "I just wanted to go for a swim"… and he's like…"How about you jump in the car, I take you around the corner to [another swimming facility]. And if you go for a swim there, are you all good to catch the bus home after that?" So, like… just helped [me] get back onto plan as usual. And it really de-escalated things.

That combination of caring and empathetic engagement and practical support left me feeling respect and admiration towards the police officer. On further reflection, I believe my partners have had a big impact on how the police have been engaged and the outcomes of those situations. One comparison I can make is between an ex-partner and my current partner:

*And I think a big difference [today] from earlier was that my ex-partner found it very difficult when I was in crisis, and things would really escalate. One of the things that happened in that situation was that there was… no questioning of why that was happening?… or why that was happening for me? And it took me a really long time to see that it wasn't a very healthy relationship at all.*

There was always an assumption that because my ex-partner would call the police on me and say… you know, give them details about my mental health history, they would show up with an idea in mind about what was happening, who I was, who he was. … there was this whole belief system that got built, and I was completely in the middle of that belief system, ascribed to it fully of 'I am a mad person, but I am also a violent person, that I am also a criminally acting person'… and by contrast, he was the victim. The reality was that we had a very tumultuous relationship, we were both not treating each other well.

So one of the other situations where police were actually really helpful was after probably about eight years in that cycle of being in this

relationship with my ex-partner, and having him call the police on me when I was distressed. We had a police officer who attended and [who] gave us each a pamphlet for the 'Are you ok?' number around domestic violence, family violence. [They] explained, "You know, you guys both look like you're struggling in different ways with this." [The police officer said] to my partner at the time… "You can call this number if you want some support" … and that alleviated the … only option being calling Police. [He said to me] "You can call this number if you like… because what's happening for you doesn't look okay, either." And I had had eight years of this kind of one-sided approach, where I never questioned that I was actually also potentially experiencing 'not okay' stuff in the relationship… because of the way that police… has this approach of there being, you know, potentially one person who's a perpetrator and one person who's a victim, or one person who's mad and one person who's sane. There's a lot of these kind of binaries that play out in those interactions.

I would describe my more recent experiences generally as being more neutral/positive, and I attribute that largely to my new partner and the way he responds to me including when I am distressed. There have been fewer times that the Police have attended when I am experiencing extreme distress or crisis, and when they have, the experience has been more positive than in the past:

*So … recent experiences, I think, have been shaped a lot by having my current partner who's very calm, and assertive. And he's a real kind of diplomat, between me being quite crazy or chaotic or upset and in crisis, and the police. He's a really good go-between and he very much comes with the message of, you know, "We've got this, thank you for being here… yes, we'll be in touch if anything's, you know, not good" … but like we're all good. And we pull in our friends and our family and people who will actually be able to support us on that individual way rather than that… you know, formal way that still brings a criminal justice lens. Yeah… so I think that's been the biggest difference in my experience and my experience of myself and my identity in crisis that I don't feel problematized and criminalized in the same way. So,… it's something with my new partner, who does that work on my behalf… and I really, I really appreciate that.*

As a result, the police response has been very different, one that I would describe as being more supportive and confident in me and in my partner's ability to self-manage:

*Yeah, bit more of a hands-off approach. [The police] have come, checked in and said, "Yep, you guys know what you're doing… we're here if you need anything… is there anything we can do for you now?" … and then have kind of taken that direction, and that helping approach, rather than maybe coming in with an idea that they're going to apply the usual sort of lens or approach… and fix things, or intervene with their kind of criminal justice policing, training.*

In thinking about my engagement with Police and potential learnings, I would emphasise the importance of community and how police responses to mental distress detract from that:

*I think our medium goal and our long goal needs to be to get Police out of mental health response, like having police involved 'criminalises' crisis. And it's not okay. It gives people a lot of messages about themselves, that take a great deal of work to unpack, undo and re-examine on an individual level. And on a societal level, it reinforces those untrue ideas that we are dangerous, that we're criminal, that we are risky, that we need management, that we need to be in handcuffs, we need to be restrained. What's the difference between handcuffs and a straitjacket?… you know, it's really perpetuating those ideas in our communities, amongst our neighbours. I've had situations where my neighbours have, you know, looked sideways at me… turned away from me. I've been in this house for eight or nine years now. If I ever think about moving, it's mostly around that [reason]. It's like, gosh, I've been, you know, stable for quite a while, if I left this house that I love, and moved somewhere else, I could be in a place where no one has ever seen the Police pull up in my driveway. Yeah, so that's a big factor. It's a great deal of shame and stigma and prejudice… it's not situational specific, you know, it embeds in relationships, neighbourhood relationships*.

If we're people who experience distress, and if we've got a system that's trying to encourage us to develop our, you know, natural supports. How the heck do you develop natural supports if the people who might lend you a cup of sugar next door have seen you being put in the back of a police car? It's

counterintuitive. We've got this system that wants to move in a particular direction. And the stop gap measures it's putting in place because we don't have compassionate, discrete crisis options are undermining our long-term transformation efforts, which are about everyone's right to be part of the community, to be able to reach out and lean on friends and family and neighbours in the first instance for support.

## Tane

Tane was born in Whangarei, where he lived with his parents and his sisters. His parents separated not long afterwards, and he moved, with his Dad, to Rotorua where they stayed until his late teens. He describes the environment of his upbringing:

*Drinking and drugs and domestic violence and [right from a] young age. Like a 'once a warrior' story is to put it pretty simple. Yeah. That was my environment... So, that sort of tells a story from the beginning. And I've like been around all the gangs and drinking and stuff like that. Yeah, smoking, smoking weed.*

Tane lived in this environment throughout his formative years until he himself ended up in the criminal justice system. Tane first went to jail in the early 1990's. He was sentenced to a three-month term at Rangipo Prison in what was called Corrective Training; a programme intended to act as a short, sharp lesson for young adults. For Tane this sentence just embedded him further into the gang and criminal world:

*In the early 90's I got involved with... gangs and everything that involves, not to the extreme but everything that gangs do. Yeah, and then sorta like, in the beginning...it was exciting, new and all that, and most things [about it were] quite good.*

At this time, methamphetamine wasn't around but he remembers that it slowly crept into his world, and before he knew it, the meth had a grasp on him, and he had to have it. He found he could not function without it, and he was committing more crime to fund his habit. He soon became heavily involved in the manufacture and supply of meth. His behaviour also deteriorated to what he calls doing "ugly stuff" including perpetuating the domestic violence that he had seen around him as he grew up:

*...not proud of it at all but it's just my environment that I was born in. No-one was to blame for any of this because I've got the right to choose to do something different but I didn't have the right people in the right place at the right time.*

Tane continued to cycle through the criminal justice system, and was constantly going in and out of prison. He attempted to get help, going into mental health and addiction treatment services at times. The services did help, giving him some positivity and hope, but they never managed to support lasting change until much later in Tane's life. He never managed to finish most treatment programmes that he engaged with, except for the Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Court, where he actually graduated. Although he admits to never really engaging with that either:

*Anyway, I went to the Drug Court, I was doing really well, had a job. I was complying. I was sort of like a role model for the Drug Court, but the thing was, I still wasn't 100%... actually I was dealing methamphetamine on the side through the Drug Court. No one knew about that.*

Tane talks about experiencing mental health issues, having high levels of anxiety, and bouts of depression that were never specifically diagnosed. When asked about how he experienced mental distress, and whether he still does, Tane says:

*Yep, who doesn't. You're pretty much a robot if you don't, everybody... suffers mental stress of some form or another. You can't tell me you don't. Because life's just like that. Unfortunately. Yeah. Life is just like that, whether you want it or not. It's coming your way... all mood swings, high, high, low, high moods...you [are] just like not yourself, your mood is out of whack. Discombobulated is what some people call it, you're out of whack.*

While the whole idea was to avoid police altogether, if possible, interactions with police were commonplace throughout Tane's life. They were accepted by Tane as being part of the world he was in. Like many in the cycle of criminal offending, Tane learned how to manipulate the system to his advantage, to get better outcomes. He learned that if he behaved in an acceptable manner then he would be better off, and it was best not to aggravate the situation. There was always an expectation that things could easily go wrong if for example, members of the police were a bit "too cavalier" or their actions were a "bit overboard;" or if Tane gave them any reason, then there would be consequences for that:

*There's been plenty of times when I've had to engage with them, a lot of the time they're pretty good. It's only if you're an asshole that*

*they can be assholes… I've been in high speed chases and stuff like that cause you're going to get a hiding after that, they really give you a hiding, they go mate… [but] most of the times the police I have dealt with they just do the job and you know I've done something wrong, they've called me up… they don't rough you up, or they're not there to rough you up and give you a hard time. They just need to pick you up.*

Tane knew that if it came to actually being arrested and ending up in police custody, then it was always bad:

*There are no nice times in custody. Custody is shit. No matter what way you want to put it, even if you [are] just visiting… you just like walked out like "Oh, man, I'm glad I'm out of there, [I'm] glad I don't have to stay in" … you [are] just isolated, [you're] like [an] animal in a cage, your rights are stripped from you. You don't get nothing, your shoelaces are taken, now your shoes taken off.*

While he holds no particular fear or regret in relation to his interactions with police, he prefers to keep them at a distance. He is no longer engaged in behaviours that would be of interest to police but is cautious, and he has a sense of distrust, because of those interactions that he has had over the course of his life where the police have acted harshly:

*Like the police are not welcome around, yeah really… it depends on the circumstances, and you know, all that stuff. But sometimes they can be a bit overboard. I've seen it… you know, Armed Offenders Squad, have kicked our house down with kids around. You know, they don't give a shit about the kids. "Everybody get on the floor, Motherfucker!" … That's how they are talking.*

Tane is particularly critical of Corrections. Periods of time in jail he describes as "wallowing amongst all these criminals." Despite thinking it might be an ideal time, Tane advises that the reality is that jail is not a place or a time where you can go about improving yourself.

Key to the life changes that Tane made was getting married to his wife Meg, whom he had known for some years. They had started their recovery journey together. However, continuing to engage in drug-related activity early on in their marriage broke down the trust between them and put their relationship on very shaky ground. Tane finally made the decision to make permanent changes in his life. He is of the opinion that forced change doesn't work, and despite him having supposedly 'failed' previously with a number of imposed interventions, Tane said they were not a waste. He applied his previous learning, and is now living a different life after finding his own way in recovery. He has not been in prison since 2018, and has been out of the criminal justice system entirely since 2019.

Tane and Meg are now living in their own home in Rotorua, both working and moving forwards together. They find strength in a spiritual connection of their own understanding:

*By some grace or power inside me to a higher power or something. I managed to turn it around and I'm living quite a peaceful simple life. We don't have to worry about much now. My main priority is my house, my wife's health, and wellbeing…*

For someone who has previously spent long periods in jail, freedom is highly valued:

*I can have… control over my door, I couldn't [go] in and out of my door [in prison]. That's… so that was a defining moment for me. Oh, do you want to be behind having people control your freedom? Man, I… I love my freedom. Well now more than ever, I love being able to just have a cup of coffee, or like go to the jug and turn the jug on. And you know what, I can't do that in prison. Or you can walk outside and go down by the river. Well I go, "Yeah, I'll have a peanut butter sandwich down by the river".*

Tane tries to stay in the present, and not dwell on what has happened in the past. He focuses on what is happening in his life now, and tries to keep moving forwards and taking his family forward with him. He has no huge aspirations but just wants to do life on life's terms:

*There's so much positive things happening for me these days. You know, the negative just creeps in now every so often, but a lot of good things. All the energy I put into doing crime, I put into doing gardens, I put it into doing whatever I want to do these days because I do so many things. I am one of those things people call an entrepreneur, but I'm just the doer. I just get out there and do stuff. And it's all positive, it's all productive.*

Previously Tane had never celebrated his birthday – he never saw the point given he was either in prison or just getting out of prison or just going back to prison. Part of living life for Tane now is the celebration of his birthday.

## Lisa

Lisa lives on a property in a small remote beachside settlement in the North Island. She has a teenage son whom she shares custody with an ex-partner. There are also three adult stepchildren in their lives. Lisa's professional life has involved working for the Department of Corrections, although more recently she has turned her attention to studying addiction and mental health at university.

Soon after they married in 2018, Lisa's now ex-husband became abusive towards her. This abuse led to Lisa's initial engagement with the Police, and requiring their assistance to remove him from the property. Despite protection and trespass orders being put in place Lisa's husband did not stop his threatening behaviour, and he continued to stalk her over the next two years. For most of this period he lived less than seven hundred metres away. Throughout this time, Lisa experienced many occasions of engagement with police while distressed. Some, like her first encounter, were positive, but many were negative.

One positive encounter with the Police occurred in 2020 as Aotearoa, New Zealand was entering its first COVID-19 lockdown. Two days before lockdown commenced, Lisa's ex-husband had threatened to burn her house down. This was particularly triggering for Lisa due to a tragedy that had happened involving her father several years before:

*He threatened to burn my house down... and he came round soon after making the threat. My tenants, who live down below, intervened. And we got the police here and they were very good, they came out quite quickly. He had disappeared by then. And I was very distressed because my ex-husband had supported me when my father was murdered through a deliberately lit house fire at the end of 2013. It was an almost two-year homicide investigation. So, this really triggered me. The fact that he thought it was okay, knowing how I felt about the murder, and my extreme safety feelings and arrangements I made when moving into a two-story house, such as creating extra fire exits... you know... like, I went over and above because of my dad being killed.*

When the sole police officer arrived on this occassion, Lisa was very upset but not able to articulate the reasons behind her distress. Her son was there at the time and was also very upset. The officer took the immediate action of serving a trespass order and Lisa felt this action validated her safety concerns:

*Through his [the officer's] acknowledgement of me telling him about why this was affecting me... as much as I felt it was because of my dad's murder...he confirmed it. He was very verbal about understanding my predicament, telling me that he could see why this would upset me. And he told me what he was going to do. And he rang me and told me when he had done it, and I was quite shocked about how fast he acted on it, because it may have even been like the night before we went into lockdown when it happened. So, I knew that the Police had a lot on their plate, like the rest of New Zealand, because it was our first lockdown. And he kept me informed. And he dropped off the paperwork. Everything was just really responsive, caring and genuine... he was really empathetic, and, told me what I could do. So that was a really good encounter for me, I felt really acknowledged and didn't feel like it was minimised.*

The combination of genuinely empathetic engagement by the officer, followed by swift affirmative action left Lisa feeling positive about the interaction. Lisa was encouraged to apply for a protection order:

*I did not utilise a lawyer because I did not have the money and consider myself to be a competent writer and able to navigate large forms with the complexity that it contains. What I did not anticipate was the significant mental toll it took on me (i.e., having to write about every horrid occasion in detail to provide sufficient evidence to support the judge to impose a protection order). It took me weeks to recover from this process and came as a great shock to me as I had previously considered myself a resilient, focused person... Then to find out over time that the protection order doesn't really achieve anything in terms of holding him to account!*

Over the next few years, as her ex-husband continued to stalk her, Lisa repeatedly called Police for help. These calls were made when Lisa, her family, and even people in the community

noticed concerning behaviours. There were exploits which often involved infractions of the protection and trespass orders that were in place. On multiple occasions however, there was no action taken on the part of the Police.

Lisa gave one account that culminated in her feelings of being let down by Police and her decision to no longer call for their help. Her ex-husband had posted a humiliating message on Facebook about her son. Friends of her son had shown him what was posted, and he had became distressed. Lisa became overwhelmed by seeing her son in distress. She explains that her emotions were already heightened by the unrelenting abusive actions of her ex-husband and having received no Police support recently.

At the time of calling the Police regarding the actions of her ex-husband towards her son, Lisa was low on faith:

*So, I ring the Police and I've got a dinner party… like I'm literally having all these people come around and I'm really overwhelmed… and I rang them and I'm in tears and I demand to speak to the Family Harm team. So, I talked to a woman… one of the officers in the Family Harm team. I said, "I've looked at the legislation on the Protection Order, and he's actually breaching it because he's publicly humiliating my son who's named in this". And they said… "No, the threshold hasn't been met", and "…we're not going to do anything about this" . And I said… "Look… you know… I've worked in Family Harm for years…and I'm telling you, this is a breach of a Protection Order". And she disagreed with me. And I said, "No, he's publicly humiliated my son… in public. And it's [the order is] very clear about this. This is a child". And I said, "And there's a threat and a very subtle threat about violence towards my son". And I also said, "I'm really concerned, and so is his father". And she said, "Look, I'll talk to my superior, and I'll come back to you". They came back to me the same night and said, "No, we're not going to charge him, and you need to stop reacting to this sort of stuff. You're being very dramatic about this". This is what they said to me, "You've been very dramatic, and you're giving him what he wants, you're giving him attention.*

Lisa was deeply disappointed with the police lack of responsiveness. Earlier in her career, she had had significant involvement in setting up Family Harm in the Police Service and did not see this response as being in line with what she knew about how those teams should respond. Lisa told the Police that she would no longer call them for assistance, and they would likely only hear from her when she had been subjected to harm by her ex-husband. As the stalking continued, Lisa dealt with it as best she could without police assistance. She didn't sleep and armed herself in order to feel that she and her son had some protection.
When the Police were finally involved again, due to Lisa's tenant becoming the target of a violent incident by Lisa's ex-husband, the Police asked Lisa why she hadn't been reporting what was going on:

*"…because back in March, you told me you're not interested. I'm real tired. I'm tired of this. I don't have the energy. It is what it is. I just have to live with it…. but it's not fair on my tenant…you know, no one's helped me". I said, "I've been through all this shit… no one from Woman's Refuge has rung me. No one except my work have looked after me or offered me any support… you kept telling me it's my word against his, and don't feed into his sense of entitlement, or you know… his arrogance. So… don't ring us all the time because all it does is make him feel like he's got one over you".*

Lisa was surprised when she was asked for a statement:

*"What do you want my statement for anyway?"…And they said, "Well, it sounds like he's been stalking you". And I said, "Of course he has. But you guys aren't interested". And then they said, "No, no, we want you to make a statement".*

That incident and statement led to charges being laid against her ex-husband. This was a surprise to Lisa but the response was also too little, too late. Lisa questioned why nothing had been done earlier:

*"You've done nothing. So, what is it about me? Do you think just because I work in Corrections that I can deal with this? Because…" I said… "I can't".*

As a result of her earlier negative encounters with Police, Lisa was also surprised when she received a welfare check from them following the charges being laid against her ex-husband:

*I said, "Why are you here? Because I haven't rung you. What do you want?" They said, "We just want to check on you". And I said, "Well, that's a refreshing change". And they said, "We've made a referral to Woman's Refuge for you". And I said, "Oh, wow!". So, he actually listened to the fact that I might need some help.*

Lisa has now had the support of Women's Refuge, which has included having her house made more secure. Thankfully, Lisa's workplace has been very supportive throughout, and she remains grateful for the way they continue to look out for her wellbeing.

If Lisa could tell the Police anything, it would be to never see one event in isolation, particularly with family violence. Also, to have an aim of empowering the victims that you are responding to. She believes Police should halt the process of rotating staff, especially without adequate training in family violence.

Talking with the police officer who showed little knowledge and empathy towards family violence was harmful to Lisa:

*That was when I went, "You know what?... you don't get it, you don't get the subtleties... it is not about punching or hurting me... this is a whole other level". She [the police officer] didn't even sound like she wanted to be there. So that would be my thoughts... don't actually put people in there if you have not given them proper training into a dedicated family harm team... because she was exactly why I stopped reporting. So, I just feel on the whole, that actually, some officers understand the dynamics of family harm really well, and others don't... and that they are the biggest liability. And I believe strongly, they're the main reason why people don't come forward and report.*

She also believes that Police should not make assumptions about a person's ability to cope with their situation based on their profession. Or develop stereotypes about what kind of people experience family harm:

*They treated my professional career as meaning I can deal with all this...like, why didn't they make this Woman's Refuge referral much earlier? ... I think they just looked at me as [this] educated, professional, white person who should have her shit together...and know better or something.*

To this day, these negative interactions have left Lisa with a reluctance to initiate engagement with the Police, even when she may need their help:

*Well, this is what I think... yeah...I used to be really pro-Police. Now I think how naive I was. I'd still think twice about ringing them for myself. And that's a really sad position to be in.*

In relation to the court case, Lisa's ex-husband plead guilty to the charges just before Lisa was about to be called into the courtroom. She reported feeling validated and happy he was being held to account. With her ex-husband now moved away from the community and the court case concluded, Lisa felt a sense of physical safety and opportunity to reclaim her mental wellbeing. Lisa felt she was making progress with getting over the short- and long-term impacts of her ordeal. However:

*It [the narrative] [originally] read as 'happy ever after'...which I naively felt was happening. The aftermath of this whole abusive relationship has very long tentacles...*

Since pleading guilty at the defended hearing, Lisa's ex-husband has made an application to the Court to have the conviction withdrawn and the charge dropped. The new scheduled hearing date is now a year on from the main incident that triggered the charge. Lisa feels she is still being manipulated by her ex-husband through the Court system:

*My ex has consistently handed himself in to Police immediately following the incidents... then pleaded 'not guilty' until defended hearing stage, whereby myself and witnesses have [to] then be in attendance at [The District] Court and subject to the challenges of such proceedings. This is a repeated pattern by him and I consider it is manipulative of the court system and actions towards me. I know that the justice process needs to be in place to give alleged offenders a fair process but this is a regular offender, showing the same pattern over and over again...*

Just the process of going to and from the Court is a major that Lisa does not feel is appropriately acknowledged and supported:

*I am responsible for my own safety arriving to and leaving Court. My ex has interfered with my motor vehicle previously…not charged due to insufficient evidence… and every time I am required at Court, I now need to arrange my own safety escorts and a different mode of transport. There is no recognition of this with Police when I have raised it. I wish more could be done to support victim's safety to and from Court.*

## Louise & Joy

Originally from Christchurch, Louise has spent the last 13 years in Auckland. With a history of severe childhood trauma, Louise started experiencing mental distress when she was about 12 and was hospitalized for the first time when she had just turned 16. She had admissions on and off over a number of years, which saw her hospitalized all up for a total of about two years.

From the age of 25, Louise had an extended period of wellness. She settled down with her long-term partner Joy, who had their first child, Alexander (now aged seven). However, in 2018/2019 whilst carrying the couple's second child, Louise experienced a difficult pregnancy and complicated birth. Reflecting on this timeline of events, Louise explains how she found herself struggling again and her reluctance to seek help through the system:

*It was just… it's just a comedy of errors really. And then I didn't want any involvement with mental health because all my involvement in the public system has been terrible. And I just don't want to go back into that. And I did end up going back under that…*

Louise's growing apprehension around bonding as a new parent, and the threat of having baby Judith removed from her care by Child, Youth, and Family Services (CYFSs), culminated in further admissions to mental health services and numerous encounters with the Police:

*I was really really suicidal, and I didn't know what was going on. It's not supposed to be like this. And I looked forward to this for so so long, this was years in the making. And I just wasn't great.*

The most recent encounter with the Police spoken about here actually involved Joy. Louise talks about the lead up to that encounter:

So…*[Judith] will be three in July. I [Louise] had just found her first and her second birthday leading up to that… although it's supposed to be quite joyous, I found it quite triggering and upsetting because the first birthday it just really reminded me… like I don't remember much of… probably the first six or eight months of her life and I desperately, desperately wanted to have that and remember that. Because when we had [Alexander] I remember being so surprised that how quickly it went… so I really wanted to cherish those first few weeks where they are tiny and snuggly and just sleep on you. Because I knew that it didn't last long. So I found coming up to her birthday just really upsetting, kind of reliving what had happened the year before…I went back to work when she was 10 and a half months because I just needed routine. I had attempted suicide when she was 7 months old and ended up in ICU for three days or something and then in hospital for a couple of days. It was like I had been holding on and holding on and telling them all these things, like, "This is what's causing me distress. I just don't feel like I'm connected to her. Like I just desperately want to be connected with her". And they did this big 12 week-long assessment… at the end of that they just say, "We're just going to do some more observational play with you". And I was just like, it just broke me… like I had this kind of plan for what I was going to do in my head for a really long time…I was just "I can't do this anymore. I'm damaging her [Judith] and damaging [Alexander], just screwing the kids up, I don't want to do that"…Then last year coming up to her birthday again, it was sort of the same.*

Louise talked to her psychologist about these feelings and the fact that she was feeling suicidal again. She then went on a meditation retreat where no-one was able to contact her. Everyone was concerned, attempting to get in touch and not being able to. That is when the police were engaged by the psychologist to do a welfare check. Louise had no knowledge of any of this.

Joy was one of the people that didn't know where Louise was and being extremely worried for her safety. She recalls two male police officers turning up at one o'clock in the morning. The main thing going through Joy's mind was… "Are you here because Louise is dead?" She recalls the visit:

*…two policemen banged on the door looking for [Louise] here. They came inside, and were kind of like, I don't know, it was quite a sort of… you imagine policemen they're massively padded up and all of their gear, they've got big yellow jackets on. It's like in the middle of the night, we've got two small children. I don't*

*know whether they knew that. But banging on the door, they could have rung and said, "Hey, we're outside". I felt quite intimidated through that process. … it felt like they were not necessarily casing the joint, but they were peering into the kid's bedrooms and stuff. And I felt a little uncomfortable with that. But I guess they were looking for you [Louise]. I don't know what they were doing… There was no empathy. It was more focused on where you [Louise] could be rather than, "This must be a really shit time for you [herself], I bet you're worried."*

Thinking back on the whole distressing situation, Joy questions many aspects about the Police visiting that night:

*Do they need to have all of their vest gear on when they come into a house where they know it's going to be a woman, or one single mum and two small children? So that's kind of physically… you've got this sort of barrier. You've got these massive yellow jackets as well… I didn't like that they sort of… so that's [Alexander's] [one of the children] bedroom there [indicating], and the door's never shut… staring, kind of looking in there, and I just found that a bit odd.*

Joy recalls feeling intimidated and uncomfortable and would have appreciated better communication and support from Police and the other agencies that were involved:

*…probably being a wee bit more empathetic to the situation. Their focus was on finding out the information that they needed. With, what felt like, little thought for what I was going through as a partner of somebody who potentially was trying to take their life. And more practical things like, don't bang on the door, give me a text, give me a call, and say, "Hey, we're outside. Can you? Can you come down? Can you talk?"*

*…so, there were all sorts of services…not really linked… [it would be good] having a coordinated approach with the services and having one central…right, here's the telephone number that you're calling and then… the person who's going to speak to you is going to be on shift… but then they're going to hand that over to somebody else. We will manage or coordinate the police, the whatever else is going, we'll tell you the story. Yeah, we'll work with you… [rather than you] getting all sorts of information… rather than being left to jump to conclusions of what's going on because you don't know.*

Based on their experience, Louise further emphasised the importance of how the Police present themselves.

*Yes, I don't think… if it [responses to people experiencing mental distress] is going to sit with the police… that they should be going out all geared up, or there should at least be somebody there who's just like a casually dressed person. You know, if there's a threat of violence, I think they need to be able to assess that before…before they choose who to send… do they need to be in a police car? Like that's quite triggering in and of itself, even just for normal person.*

Referring to this recent encounter Joy also adds, "Yes, I was immediately thinking what are the neighbours thinking?"

Louise reflects here on partner Joy's account of her experience and compared this incident with the other painful encounters she had had personally with Police many years earlier, and the impact of those:

*I always found them to be really… just kind of big and overbearing, and just 'pissed off'. Just feels like you're just an annoyance. And I literally had an officer say that to me one time. I tried to hurt myself… and then all these cop cars kind of came. I'd said something like, "Why do I have to go with you?" or something. Actually, I can't remember what I said. But in response to that I'd got [from Police], "We're the ones who always have to clean up your mess." And I was just like… at the time I didn't really think about it, but I know later on it just made me feel so terrible. Like… I'd never want to go to the police for help. I feel like if I were to go to the Police for something like a robbery… it was always this fear of… are they going to believe me because I have got this history?*

*It's always two big burly men, usually big heavy shoes on, all that gear. I remember that time… they had put me in handcuffs, back of the car and taken me down to the police station and put me in stitch gear and put me in a cell… It was like I was the butt of their jokes or something, like he'd [the officer]*

*said something… I can't remember, something about me not being very happy… or, "You don't look very happy" or something. And I was like…, "Neither do you", and they just thought that was hilarious…Terrified, terrified…I mean there's no dignity, there's no compassion for what you're potentially going through, how you got to be in that place…I find it's really embarrassing.*

When Louise articulates how things could be different, she speaks to the potential number of more humanistic approaches:

*I've never been somebody who's been aggressive or violent or… probably the opposite, quite submissive when the Police are there, yeah, I don't see the need for hand cuffs. … I do see the other side of the coin is the need to protect themselves, and they don't know how people are gonna react, or if they're gonna lash out, or if they've got weapons or whatever. Like, I get that as well. But I do think maybe whoever was coming out was having different conversations with people, like it's more like they need negotiators or something like that. Yeah, because it's just like they treat everyone as the same. Everyone is the highly psychotic person who's about to murder somebody which hardly ever happens right? Yeah. It's just it has caused me more… trauma.*

*I think a lot of it is more in the unsaid, than what's said. So the body language and the manner. Because you can tell when somebody is genuinely kind of interested and concerned… just through the way they look at you or engage with you, but definitely not making fun of somebody's distress. I just think being able to get alongside somebody and be able to kind of interpret their behavior; and be thinking about what, how did this person get here? Why is this person kind of behaving like this and how can I help them, as opposed to I just need to get this transaction done and get them in the cells so I can move onto my next job.*

*…it's a time thing for me for me, like getting alongside you, keeping on talking to you, saying things like we can see you're having a really distressing time, we just want to see or understand what's going on for you at the moment so we can get you some support and help because obviously in that moment you need something, you need to be somewhere, you need some sort of support…just a gentle approach which is something they don't know how to do I think?*

Louise talked about her valuing the research based on her perception of the status of the feedback generated through this kind of process:

*And I was kind of so heartened to see that this research was happening because I think you know, sometimes you give feedback and it's always just, "Oh, you're just a crazy person". So it's always just you know, it's never taken on board…. Most people can't speak out, or when they do it's dismissed.*

## Marion

Marion has lived all her life in Wellington, and spent most of her working career as a teacher. She and her husband have four kids together. Marion openly admits that she loves to show off about her kids – all of them are achieving and thriving in life. The children and her husband are equally distraught by what has happened to Marion.

The first time you get the sense that this is going to be a somewhat different narrative is when Marion is unable to answer the question about how long she has experienced mental distress. Essentially the answer to that was "never" despite having been committed to a psychiatric ward for a period of time. Recalling this experience, Marion is desperate to be believed otherwise.

Marion was one of her mother's Enduring Powers of Attorney. Her mother lived about 7 hours away, but Marion would make the trip to visit often. One day, while traveling she became very sick herself, ending up in the Emergency Department (ED). Marion was diagnosed with pneumonia and discharged with antibiotics but with advice to return to the ED if her condition worsened. Despite being sick herself, Marion proceeded to engage with her mum's medical and needs assessment teams, in an attempt to get her mother's medication and personal cares sorted. The people she spoke with for this purpose accused Marion of being abusive in her manner of engagement. Marion's own GP was alerted to the accusations of abusive behavior. He responded, "No significant mental health history, it sounds as if there is delirium and if so, there should be a brain scan. Needs BP". When Marion went to the health centre to complain about the way she was being treated, the complaints officer simply advised Marion that she had no right to complain. They then contacted Marion's family to inform them that Marion appeared 'mental' and should not be allowed to visit her mother. A police officer was also called:

*He [the police officer] went to talk to [the complaints officer]. When he returned, he said our stories did not align. He explained to me that the incident would not be recorded in my police records. He gave me his name and number and told me to call him if I ever need his help. He was very kind, supportive and helpful.*

Following this incident, Marion went to her mother's home but no one would let her in. The police arrived shortly after to advise Marion that she had been trespassed from the property:

*Again, the Police were very kind, helpful and supportive. They suggested I talk to our family lawyer as they did not get involved in 'civil' matters. I had biked over, and they offered to give me a ride home as it was getting late.*

The following morning, Marion returned to the house and called the police requesting assistance to see her mum. After being instructed to wait outside, she was then escorted in. A few minutes later the police returned, and advised her that she had to leave. Marion recalls:

*No explanation. Mum protested… holding me tightly and refusing to let me go. It felt like a 'tug of war.' [Police officer] and [Police officer] forcefully pulled me away from my mum. They uplifted me, grabbing me under the armpits… down the stairs and outside. [Police officer] grabbed my hands whilst I was trying to phone my husband and tightly cuffed them behind my back. He refused to loosen the cuffs which were hurting me.*

*Okay. Landed up in the police station… "Get out, we're in the sally port". And he said, "You can get out of the car now." He said, "Take your shoes off." I questioned, "Why? Is this some Māori protocol or something?" … And I said, "Are you taking your shoes off?" "No, take them off." Got my hands cuffed behind my back, holding my phone. I can't… I can't even get my hands around there to undo them. They pulled them off, [they told me] "Get out of the car." [I said], "No… pull me out of the car… lead me in." I'm still handcuffed. I have balance problems… I do lose my balance quite quickly… And so they put me into front of the counter. The bail counter, my husband calls it, I wouldn't have a clue. I didn't even know where I was really. And they undid the cuffs, and they took my phone away. My hands go on the counter. And it was just like, I'm going down this black hole. And I said to them, "I'm feeling really really unwell." CCTV footage shows me falling unconscious. And then it shows what I did. Tried to get back up on my feet. I remember coming round and they are dragging me by my ankles. And then I said, "You're hurting my back." I remember coming around, "You're hurting my back." They*

*had to carry me into the cell. And then it shows me… I've got my hand up and I remember calling, "Can I please call my husband? My daughter? I just think my son, my daughter, my husband, I need to call them." Wouldn't answer me. "Ok, can I call my family lawyer?… Oh, I know… I want to speak to your lawyer. Can I speak to your lawyer?" "No, not until you get up off the floor." The CCTV footage shows me trying to get up onto my feet. I fall over again. It shows me trying to do that a couple of times. I couldn't stand up; I couldn't get my balance. And then it shows them taking me to the car and we're back in the car.*

Marion was then taken and left by the police in a distressed state – shoeless and ringless – on a driveway in front of their tenant's house.

*The CCTV footage shows the Senior Sergeant [name] ripping them [my rings] off my fingers and I never felt a thing. I am unconscious on the floor. We asked… I asked. We went back in 2020 to see the Senior Sergeant [name]. And I said, "I want you to… see the CCTV footage with me." Oh boy, didn't want to do that. My husband came in after that. Oh, yeah, they listened to him, alright! So we sit down and watch it. He copied it onto his, he got another copy…And he [Senior Sergeant] said he couldn't answer that. I asked him, my husband asked him, I just get really traumatised by it. And I let my husband speak for me. So he asked all these questions, [Senior Sergeant] couldn't answer any of them. And then hubby said, "Well, what right did the police have to do this to my wife?" He said they were operating under the MoU. And I said "Okay, what's that"? He wouldn't tell us. That's like getting hands on gold, the Ombudsman had to come and get involved. I've had the Ombudsman on to this one. I tell you… got that in the end.*

Not long after Marion had been dropped off on that occasion, a duly authorised officer (DAO) arrived to do an assessment. The DAO recommended that Marion go inside and have a sleep, rest, and relax.

Despite her physical wellness worsening "feeling all woozy, dozy, unsteady on her feet again, and disoriented" - Marion sets out to walk back to the Police station with the intention of getting them to take her to the ED. A couple of kind-hearted passers-by attempt to help her on the way. When she arrives at the Police station, rather than asking for a ride to ED, Marion decides to make a complaint about the treatment of herself and her mother. The response from the woman at the station was:

Y*ou're that mental health patient, you need an assessment. "Excuse me?" I said, "No, no, no, no". And she said, "You faked your collapsing at the cop shop this morning. I was there, you faked that you need an assessment and she said… you sit down and stop yelling." I thought get out of here. So I calmly walked off… went around the corner to ring my husband. What are we going to do? This is what's happening now what am I going to do?*

*The next thing, two big police officers come out:*

*[They] wouldn't tell me what they were doing. And I'm put in the cop car. "We're taking you to a community centre to see your advocate, you want an advocate, we're getting you an advocate." And I just said, "Where?" And they just bullied me. That was about half past three. Half past four, they pulled up outside a building. I didn't know what it was. There's no signage on it. I later discovered its Community Mental Health Services, called CMHS. The male officer, he goes inside, he comes out. I'm not allowed inside. I'm not allowed to get out of the car. I've been in there. I believe I've fallen asleep because it's quite a long hour… Anyway, this guy comes out. And he says "Name and date of birth please?." And I wasn't out of the car. He wound down the window. The lady female officers on the other side of me… she's you know, making sure I'm not gonna be running anywhere. Anyway, the window goes down. He looks at me and says "What's your name, date of birth?" I told him all that. And then I said, "Oh, who are you?" [Name]. "What's this all about?" So he didn't answer any of my questions? He didn't tell me he was doing an assessment or anything like that. Next thing he goes back inside, and we drive off all over again. So what's happening now? We're going to another community center to see another advocate. And they just kept bullying me and I gave up in the end. I just… I must fall asleep again. 5.40 we pull up outside somewhere and I didn't know where I was. I said, "Where are we?" There's no names on this. I can't… I couldn't recognize where we were. Didn't even know it was the hospital. They tell me, "Get out of the car. I said, "No. You tell me where I am." I don't know… So, again. Come around*

*the back. Uplift me under the arms again. We get dragged through the door and I get put in the room. "What's this?" [They reply], "It's the recreation relaxation room, can't you see, all these lovely chairs…" And he said to me, one of the cops, the male cop said, "Oh, you'll be able to rest and relax here" ….So the nurses come in.*

At this point, Marion had been detained for more than two hours in the backseat of a police car, before being dragged into the psychiatric ward through a back door by the officers. She had no idea where she was or why she has ended up there. Marion asked to see the District Inspector. That request was refused. The CCTV footage from that time has been overridden, and no police 'notebook' entries exist. The detention at the psychiatric ward was made worse by the fact that Marion was still physically unwell. The staff accused her of forcing her coughing and retching whilst being held overnight in their low stimulus environment (otherwise known as a seclusion room). She requested a bed, and was threatened with an injection if she didn't settle.

At about 6.30pm her husband, after not hearing from Marion, rang ED thinking that she must have gone back there.

*Little did I know that the ED house officer that my husband had asked to go over and see me… he was standing out there… I don't remember. But he's got his whole write up, which is really cool. And I didn't know he had wanted to take me to ED. But they wouldn't let him go, they'd said I'd refused to go to ED, they said they'd taken all my obs [observations], even collecting my bloods.*

The only explanations Marion has been given as to why police placed her in the care of mental health services, related to their own assessment of her potential risk. Having since accessed some of their notes, Marion quotes them as saying:

*A bit '1M' [mental health related]. Marion has been removed from [medical centre] for the same thing earlier in the day. She is rambling about many different issues that don't make sense.*

The police phoned through their application for Marion's detention on [the date] but the responsible clinician claimed to have assessed Marion the day before. Marion's husband arrived first thing the morning after her detention, and got a rental car straight to the hospital. Marion's hospital records state she was admitted on [date] and discharged the next day, with no diagnosis of her ever being 'mental' and no treatment required. Before leaving the psychiatric ward, one of the nurses advised her to phone the Director of Area Mental Health Services (DAMHS) to complain about her involuntary police detention in the ward. Marion explains that she has since been accused by the DAMHS of being "disorganized", "abusive" and "paranoid", in a complaints process she instigated with the Health and Disability Commission for her rights being breached.

Since that time, Marion has managed to have some records corrected and some apologies proffered. However, due to some of the records that still do exist from that time, she is unable to get a police clearance for her job. Marion remains significantly impacted by her negative experiences with police and mental health services.

## Noeline

Noeline was originally born in the Waikato. Noeline's experience of mental distress started when she was 8 in response to being assaulted by her father. At the age of 17 she was finally able to get away by joining the Navy.

She got pregnant not long after that:

*And then my mother turned around and adopted her [my baby] out. I... didn't have a say in it. In those days... that's what they did. They just adopted you out. And I don't think I ever really recovered from that, or just sort of went downhill really.*

*I managed to get some jobs, and then I married my husband. And I had my third child, and my fourth child by then, and he was sleeping around with the waitresses at the time, he was a chef. And I turned around and had a hysterectomy and everything went to custard well and truly, I tried to commit suicide, I put myself into Tokanui [psychiatric hospital] during that time. It was horrible. Being there, I had a heart attack while I was there. Because I was frightened of the little electrical things that they were going to put on my head, the electrodes. Then the electrical shocks that they give you.*

*Noeline had only been 25 years old at this time. She was in Tokanui for two years and needed to fight to get her kids back. The only way she knew how, involved returning to her husband to try and make it work for the kids. She made several attempts to reconcile with her husband and they finally moved to Auckland together where he opened a business:*

*But he just went back to his old, same way. And I got... we went up to Auckland to see if it would help make him a different person. The shop worked all right for a while, but then he was spending all the money on the kids. And as he needed to go in the shop, and he wasn't going to listen to me. And then we went into bankruptcy. Well, we were solvent we managed to sell everything and get ourselves out of it. So, we had no job, he had no job.*

That was the end of the marriage as well. Noeline got married again, but her husband died four years later. She got married for a third time, and they were together for over 20 years. Noeline describes that time as wonderful. They lived in Whangarei for 15 years, nine years of which they spent travelling around New Zealand. They moved to Wairoa, where they bought a house, and lived for 7 years. That husband died 7 years ago, and Noeline moved back to Papamoa to be close to her daughter. Noeline has 4 grown up children; a daughter who lives in Wellington; a son and daughter in the UK; and then her daughter Elizabeth.

Unfortunately, Elizabeth died a year ago. Noeline remembers Elizabeth as an amazing daughter. She had travelled extensively, and then settled in England where she married and had two beautiful daughters, who still live there today. She had a great job at Harrods, where she worked as a secretary and always seemed to live life to the fullest.

Elizabeth had to have gastric bypass surgery and during this process it was discovered that she had bowel cancer. She had to undergo chemo and radiation therapy which was really hard on her, and then she suddenly died of a blood clot on her lung. Noeline has mixed feelings about the care Elizabeth got at the hospital, and feels the blood clot could have been avoided with better care:

*I still think the hospital has got a lot to do with it, because when they knew that I might have a blood clot, they gave me an injection of Clexane, and she didn't have it. If she'd had it, it would have broken down the blood clots... she probably would have been alive today, but she was exhausted from the gastric bypass and she just wasn't thinking right... what happened was they were getting her up to walk around the house because she wasn't walking, she was just lying, she felt so ill. And they took her to the toilet and her husband, and the youngest child found her on the floor and they couldn't revive her. It was really sad; it was a kick in the guts.*

Noeline has 3 grandchildren on her side, and on her husband's side, she has 21 grandchildren, 21 great grandchildren, and 2 great, great grandchildren.

Noeline speaks about a time when she was experiencing mental distress, and came to be engaged with the police. She was still sick at the time, recovering from back surgery, struggling with

cellulitis, and feeling mentally unstable. Noeline had been seeking companionship, and was upset because someone she had starting engaging with over the internet had turned out to be a fraudster:

*I was looking for companionship. And that was because I miss my husband. And this guy kept writing to me for three months. And I thought, "Oh, nice. This sounds good." And he was going to come up here. But he said, "Oh, I have to go to Egypt", because he was an aeroplane technician and something. A load of rubbish. Anyway. He went overseas, and then he started asking for $15,000. And that broke me down and broke me again completely. Because I was falling for him because of the letters. The way they write their letters, my gosh, you just... you would need to go to the moon. Oh, this is wonderful. But it doesn't... it's playing with your head. And it certainly played with mine.*

She had a neighbour across the road who was dealing drugs, "P, marijuana and things like that." She had come over the road and threatened Noeline. In her fragile state, Noeline became hysterical and called the police:

*I was frightened, I was really frightened because I wasn't well. I couldn't fight her if you know, she opened my door to come in, she had no right to do that. I've got an order that she's not allowed on my property for two years... I'm very weary of her and everybody is, you know, we can't trust her because she goes on the Methadone Programme. She's on that but she still gets the drugs.*

It was night-time, and when the police arrived, Noeline was quite distraught, mostly from all the challenges and struggles she was having just trying to survive in life. The threat from the neighbour was something that tipped her over the edge at the time. The police went over the road and talked to the neighbour then came back to Noeline, and talked to her until she calmed down:

*And then they came back and sort of talked to me for a while, and that was it. I felt really confident. You know, the police were so good. You know, they've had quite a few call outs with her. So, they were very good. They're very good indeed. And I couldn't fault them at all because they understood what I was going through. They were compassionate, they really understood that I was having problems, and any sort of pressure that would just set things off. And they gave me phone numbers to ring, and I did that the next day, I rang them and I talked to them because I was still emotionally sort of upset. It took a lot out of me actually. It sort of buggered up my life for a while.*

Noeline felt supported and comforted by the police. The neighbour has never bothered Noeline again, and she feels safe knowing that the police can act quickly and proficiently to help if she needs assistance.

When asked how police might be helpful for her when she is in a distressed state, Noeline says:

*I'd ask them for help in a way... for my safety, and anything if I was struggling and I needed... you know when you're sort of getting nearer to the suicide thing. I would ask them to, "Please help me get to the right place," because when you're in that state, you don't think about mental health, you don't think about anything like that. You are just in your own body... I don't think I would call the police on any false sort of things... but if the situation happened again like it did the last time, yes, I would ask them for help, we asked them for help to reassure me that everything's going to be okay, in which they did. The did, they reassured me that it was going to be ok.*

Noeline has been doing things to enhance her quality of life. Upon struggling with managing her finances, she got some assistance with budgeting:

*I've been struggling I've had to have food bags, because I've been struggling that much. I keep getting ripped off by fucking people... I had to get the welfare to take money out of my bank because I was spending too much on groceries, not thinking about groceries we're going up higher and higher each time, and so now the welfare pay my land rent and they also... I had to cut up my Visa card as well because I was relying on that as well because you just paying interest on... so high and I've just finished paying for it now so which is good and hopefully I... we're going to do the budget today, so hopefully that will be able to sort out a bit more there... for the groceries instead of relying on the food bank.. I can tune in heaven just a little bit more for the groceries instead of relying on the food bank.*

She has also joined a local singles group which has brought activity, joy, and companionship into

her life:

*Yeah. And I went out with them and that was the best thing I did. Because you go for morning tea in different cafes... and the laughter. The laughter is absolutely wonderful. This friend here... the laughter that... he makes me laugh so much is just absolutely wonderful. And I think laughter is the best medicine. And because we go aeroplane spotting. He took... first of all he took me. I went out fishing with them... trout fishing. I've never done trout fishing. And I just thoroughly enjoyed it... was so good [to] get out at that lake. And it was just peaceful. It was so peaceful. My mind was... blocked out everything. It was just so lovely. And I didn't want to go home because it was so nice. Because I knew I had to face things. But yeah, but he he makes me laugh every time he comes around. I always have a big smile when he came through because I know he's gonna tell me some jokes. He is a lovely guy. He's 82 years of age.*

## Rachel

Rachel is from the South Island of New Zealand, has lived overseas and at the time of the incident was living in Ōtautahi Christchurch. Rachel never had any significant interactions with the police until a couple of years ago, when a murder occurred at her apartment building. Rachel was distressed by this incident and had interactions with the police at the time, and during the subsequent court case. Rachel's first interaction with the police was right after the incident, when she and two other witnesses gave brief statements about what they had witnessed. A few days later, they gave full statements. Overall, Rachel says her experience with the police was extremely positive.

Rachel reflects on a few things the police did when they were taking these full statements that led to her positive experience. The police were empathetic and encouraging:

> I gave the statement… It was a male police officer. He was really understanding… I found him good. Empathetic. Supportive. Understanding. Professional, but not in a detached way. I actually sat with [my neighbour] while she gave her statement over the phone… she just needed that emotional support. [She was] nervous about interacting with the police, I actually visited her another time where the police were there, and my impression was that they were very understanding, and encouraging, and 'Thank you for doing this', and 'I know it's hard' and… Yeah, I found them empathetic.

Rachel also felt that the police officer was reassuring, and although she knew he was limited in what he could tell her, he was still able to answer her questions and share some information. This was important because based on what she had witnessed, Rachel knew something horrific had happened to her neighbour, and her imagination was working overtime to fill in the gaps:

> There were ways that he was kind of reassuring… I felt like I could ask questions, but I was also mindful of not prying too much… somehow, I got the impression, I got the information that he [the victim] had died by the time police arrived. And that there was nothing anyone could do. And that it may go to court, but they really didn't think it would, that they had what they needed. Throughout the conversations I got what I needed. The information, to kind of make sense of it, and be at peace about it. Because I think that's what I've heard people say about disasters or crimes… it's the unknown.

> I just got enough information from the police that I could kind of make sense of it… And not feel… even though a terrible thing that happened in my home, it wasn't gang related. He [the attacker] wouldn't be coming back. We were safe. He was in prison, or imprisoned… they were doing their job.

However, there was a communication breakdown on the night of the incident, which Rachel considers to be the one negative aspect of her police interaction:

> I thought the building owner and the property managers need to know what's happened… they need to know, and I can't do it. I definitely had a conversation [with one of the police officers]… And I said, 'Can you let the building owner know, and here's the phone number and the name'. And then I thought, 'Oh, I've done my bit, they'll communicate'… I really thought they would do it.

> The police didn't notify them. What happened the next morning is a journalist had called the building owner, saying, you know, 'There's been a murder at your building, do you have a statement?' She's hours earlier [Australian time zone], and then she can't reach her friends in New Zealand and doesn't know who to call and what to do and… I mean, the woman put her heart and soul into this building. So I got a call from one of the property managers. And she was horrified, distressed, you know… trying to understand what was happening, not getting much information, and said, 'Oh, I wish you'd rung me last night'.

> We've since talked about it and debriefed later on, but it was the one regret. So, yeah, if there was feedback to the police it would be about that, but again, you know… probably most property managers, they wouldn't be that involved. I mean, and it was nighttime… late in the evening. But they were the kind of women that would have wanted to know.

> I don't blame the police; and I guess I see it, as they've got their systems. They've got their operations… how I made sense of it in my head

is, they get information in, they're not necessarily giving information out. Because they're trying to solve a crime, and they have to be really careful what they say. Because they have to navigate potential court cases and media.

Rachel is empathetic towards the police for this breakdown in communication and it didn't affect her trust of the police going forward. However, it would have made a really big difference for Rachel's property manager if the police had followed up and communicated to make her aware of what had happened.

Otherwise, Rachel felt that the police were very communicative with her throughout the whole process. She identified that having one policewoman who was her main point of contact worked particularly well:

[There was] my contact person who stayed in touch, I had her phone number. She rung me, she sent me messages, she texted me, which, it felt very personal, very natural. It was very good.

Later, the property managers organised a memorial and blessing of the property. The police attended this, which Rachel knows the property managers really appreciated.

When it came to the court case, Rachel found the police's procedures for witnesses very supportive. One of these procedures was showing the witnesses around the court in advance, so they would know what to expect on the day:

What they offered to the three of us was a visit into the court, so that we would feel more comfortable knowing what we would go in for. I'd never been into the court building. And so they arranged a time that we could go in, and I remember being kind of, maybe a week or two weeks before, being nervous.

I had to go through security... you know, an actual x-ray like at the airport. And then [the main contact policewoman] was there and I met my friend and there were two women, and the main woman was there to advocate and support people who'd been affected by a crime, victims of a crime or people that were having to give statements. And she showed us around the courtroom that she thought it would be in. It turned out it was moved, but the courts are very much parallel images of one another.

On the days of the court case, Rachel also felt really supported by the police:

They actually sent a police officer to come and pick us [Rachel and her partner] up and take us in... so she drove us right to the court. We got an offer to get a lift home, but we just wanted to walk. They had a room for us giving statements, a whānau room. For a difficult situation again, I felt completely supported by the police.

Rachel also felt like the policewomen made sure that the witnesses felt appreciated and validated:

I found the police, [main contact policewoman] and her boss, who was a woman, really communicative and supportive and made sure we had a copy of our statements... They reassured me that in the court case, they understand that you may not remember every detail; that time changes things and memory changes and so on.

[We] went in, [I] gave my statement... and came out and it's that feeling of, you know, high tension, don't know if you've done it right, and then they were, 'It's great! Thank you, we really appreciate it'.

Rachel's main contact policewoman also went out of her way to keep her in the loop with the outcome of the case, and let her know her testimony had been appreciated:

At the end of the week, [the main contact policewoman] let me know that he'd been found guilty. And she actually sent the judge's summary, and the sentencing, which didn't put our names in for our privacy, but said... you know, 'In particular, the courage and testimony of the three women at the apartment building'. I mean, she didn't have to do any of that. And she did.

Rachel was also offered support through Victim Services. She found this to be a high level of support:

And I'm assuming this is through the police, connected me with Victim Support. I had a contact person through them who's checked on me since it happened, and since the trial, and they offered counselling... And they offer 30 free sessions, which I think is an unheard-of amount of funded sessions.

Overall, Rachel describes her experience as a very

positive one:

> Apart from them not contacting the owner and the property managers, they were, in every other way, very communicative. And empathetic and understanding and supportive and, yeah, everything I would have wanted.

However, Rachel recognises her privilege and that someone else's interaction with the police may have gone differently:

> I recognise that I'm a Pākehā woman, middle class, who's not had experiences with the police before. And... I recognise that we live in a racist society, with people with different life experiences and that, not everyone's experience of the police is going to be like mine. And... that the police is simply an institution made up of individual people, and there's good and bad and I happened to have an unusual life experience where for me, the police were very, very supportive.

> I also know it was a collaborative thing. So, I didn't come in with a suspicion of the police or a bad experience. And so... the empathy went back the other way. I was thinking 'Imagine having a job that you, you have to come out and deal with the worst of society'... you know, first response to a crime scene, the things that they must witness, and that they witness that, and that they have to stay empathetic. That would be very hard. But I endeavour to think, people are doing their best, and they're human beings.

It was also important for Rachel that she interacted mainly with policewomen:

> I think something for me as a feminist, is I largely dealt with women. I think it just happened to be their team [that was on the case], and their team happened to be one with a lot of women. I guess that's significant for me, because I think of my stereotype of the police is a male dominated group.

## Ngā mihi

We extend our gratitude to the whānau/citizens located across Aotearoa New Zealand for sharing their stories. It takes immense courage to share these inspiring narratives; they have shaped us all through being part of this project or in reading this collection. We offer you all this karakia whakanoa to close, ackowledging the deep emotions these stories may have incited. We invite readers to collaborate with us to draw on these stories to continue to push for wider positive change.

## Karakia whakanoa

Kia whakairia te tapu

Kia wātea ai te ara

Kia turuki whakataha ai

Kia turuki whakataha ai

Haumi e. Hui e. Tāiki e!

Restrictions are moved aside,

so, the pathway is clear,

To return to everyday activities,

Enriched, unified, and blessed.