



(REDACTED) TRANSCRIPT OF DAY 4 – WURREK TYERRANG

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MONDAY, 2 MAY 2022 AT 10.02 AM (AEST)

DAY 4

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Yoorrook Justice Commission


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Where work flows.

5 CHAIR: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to Yoorrook Justice Commission, which is now in session. Thank you. We welcome everybody here present today at Charcoal Lane for the second week of the wurrek tyerrang, the public hearings at which we are receiving truth-telling evidence from Elders, and later this week some further evidence from the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria. Thank you. Counsel.

10 MS McLEOD: Commissioner Hunter.

COMMISSIONER HUNTER: Did you want me to acknowledge country?

15 CHAIR: It's on the running sheet. Sorry.

COMMISSIONER HUNTER: Yes, I would like to acknowledge that we are on the lands of the Wurundjeri and pay my respects to Elders past and present and all our Elders that have gotten us this far here, and particularly, Aunty Fay, that your Elders and ancestors are with us today and they are going to watch over us as we conduct Aboriginal business. Thank you.

20 CHAIR: Thank you, Commissioner Hunter.

MS McLEOD: Thank you, Chair. The first order of business is to acknowledge this morning's witness is Aunty Fay Carter and she is a sister of Commissioner Atkinson. The second order is that we seek two orders in relation to publication of material that may cover some sensitive information and, subject to Aunty Fay Carter's wishes, before that evidence is led later today, we seek these two orders in anticipation that there may be a private session and non-publication of some of that material.

30 The two orders are in front of you, Chair. The first order is in respect of section 24 of the *Inquiries Act*. We seek the order set out on that paper to close part of the session as set out in Order 1 and post a copy of the order on the door here and also publish this order on the website. So I seek the order in these terms.

35 CHAIR: Thank you, Counsel. I make each of the orders in the terms sought and direct they be published on Yoorrook's website.

MS McLEOD: The Commission pleases. I will signal when we get to the point in the evidence where we need to close the session and for non-publication.

40 CHAIR: Thank you, Counsel. Thank you.

MS McLEOD: If the Commission pleases, the first witness, as I have indicated, is Aunty Fay Carter, or Fay Priscilla Carter, and Aunty Fay has indicated she wishes to give an undertaking to tell the truth, with her Garni, or digging stick, and would seek to do that now.

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<FAY PRISCILLA CARTER AFFIRMED

50 FAY CARTER: I say dja, which is Dja Dja Wurrung for yes. Yes, I do.

MS McLEOD: Aunty, can I just ask you put that microphone a little towards you? It just - it helps in the room to amplify your voice a little bit so I can hear you over here.

FAY CARTER: Yes. Yes. Is that better?

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MS McLEOD: That's very good, thank you. Aunty, may I call you Aunty for the purpose of these proceedings?

FAY CARTER: Yes.

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MS McLEOD: Thank you very much. Aunty, you have prepared with the lawyers and others assisting the Commission the Balert Keetyarra or witness statement. Have you had a chance to read that witness statement through?

15 FAY CARTER: Dja.

MS McLEOD: And is it true and correct?

FAY CARTER: Dja.

20

MS McLEOD: Could I invite you first, Aunty, to introduce your family members sitting with you and also in the hearing room.

25 FAY CARTER: Yes, I would love to do that. Sitting next to me, I have got my daughter, Wendy Berick, and son, Rodney Carter. Two precious children that I'm very proud of, proud of their achievements throughout their life. And I look down in the gallery, and I see my beautiful family. I see my son, grandson or grandsons, Drew and Josh. Two next to Josh is my dear niece, Gabrielle. She's actually Wayne's daughter. Then who else can I see?

30 I see my beautiful sister Marlene and her husband Paul. My sister-in-law, Kath. Dear Jess sitting there. Not family but, really, the way she's worked with me has made her like family. I have got Dan, my granddaughter Neane's fiance, who I have grown very fond of, Dan. And I've got, oh, my beautiful granddaughter Natasha, who I'm so proud of. I've got Elise, Drew's partner. Is there anybody else there? I'm sorry. Neane, my granddaughter Neane, is doing
35 some work on her computer. She couldn't sort of get out of that, so she will be in and out of this computer. Gosh, these computers have become part of our life, haven't they?

40 But I'm so proud of my family. I'm proud of their achievements. Each and every one of them. And, you know, it all stems from and comes from our ancestry. We have had such wonderful ancestors, old people in our lives that have passed down us being able to achieve what we have today. So - and I thank them very much for being here with me and supporting me. And can I talk about the digging stick now or later?

MS McLEOD: Yes, certainly.

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FAY CARTER: I've got two precious things with me. Firstly, if I could say I've got my digging stick, which is a Garni in Dja Dja Wurrung language. My grand-daughter Natasha, who is sitting over there - stand up there, Natasha. Yeah, that's my grand-daughter, Natasha. She went on country and got this piece of wood off a wattle tree. She pared it down and made
50 it smooth, and then she did the emblems on them which are very, very significant.

At the top is me, if you can see that. That's my two children, Wendy and Rodney. And then further down are my six grandchildren. And so it's very precious to me. Not just the meaning of the symbols, but that my granddaughter has made this for me. I'm wearing a possum skin
 5 cloak that was made by my son Rodney. I had a long one but I used to trip over it, so Rodney decided, no, Mum, you need a shortened one. So he made this one that just comes below my moom. You know what moom means, don't you? So it's short and more comfortable.

And so I thank Rodney for that and I thank Natasha for this. These beautiful symbols that I've
 10 got with me today. Aren't I a lucky person? You know I - here I go. And Nick is going to cry too, I know. I'm so lucky. I'm so lucky to have the family that I have and the support and love and care that I get. And, you know, when I say my name is Fay Priscilla Carter, my mother nicknamed me Fif or Fifi. And my siblings, Wayne in particular, my siblings still call me Fif. So that's significant to record as well, that it's a special name for me that came from my
 15 mother's lips. Okay.

MS McLEOD: Thank you, Aunty, for that lovely introduction and for explaining and sharing with us the story about your special objects. Could I invite you to tell us about - to introduce yourself in a culturally appropriate way to say where you're from and where your country is?
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FAY CARTER: Okay. So I have sort of written myself some notes here and I do that because I get tracked, you know, side-tracked, and when I go anywhere to give a talk I always apologise for having to read what I've written. And I say to them, if I don't read what I've written I will go off track and I will just start talking about how - how deadly my
 25 grandchildren are. And, of course, they are deadly. But - so I usually sort of make myself some notes.

So I have apologised here that I've written down what I want to say. I - as I say, my name is Fay Priscilla Carter née Johnson. I'm not sure whether I have sort of said about family, but I
 30 have sort of written down here that my mother was living on the Cummeragunja Mission when I was ready to be born. And because of medical issues she was taken into the Echuca Hospital. However, I was born on the veranda of the Echuca Hospital, because in those days they didn't take the Aboriginal mothers into the wards with the non-Aboriginal mothers.

When I was 16, my mother got me a job at the Echuca Hospital. She was already working there as a cook. She got me a job as a wards maid in the hospital, and the day I started she took me by the hand, she said, "Come on, Fif. I want to take you and show you a special spot." And she took me to the veranda where I was born. You know, she didn't think there was anything wrong with that. She was quite happy to be outside on the veranda but, of
 40 course, at my age, I had started to realise what racism was all about. So I wasn't happy with it. I wasn't happy with finding that out.

But it's part of my story so I need to share it with people and to talk about it, because when you talk about these things it's like a healing process. It helps - helps you heal but it doesn't
 45 stop you from crying. Okay.

MS McLEOD: Thank you, Aunty. Just to give you some level of reassurance, the things that are in your witness statement, what's written down, will be part of the evidence that you give. So the story that's captured in the witness statement will be part of your story and we can

talk - I will ask you some questions to tell some of those stories, but if we don't talk about it, it will be there as part of your evidence in the witness statement.

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FAY CARTER: Yes, thanks, Fiona.

MS McLEOD: You mentioned the Echuca Hospital. Where is the country of your people?

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FAY CARTER: Yes, well, I belong to two - I'm linked to two tribes. Yorta Yorta, through my grandmother Priscilla, and Dja Dja Wurrung, through my grandfather George. And I have also got a great, grandmother, Granny Mag, who was Waywurru, and - but we sort of aren't totally connected to that country for a number of reasons.

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MS McLEOD: So those who are following the Commission understand, where, roughly, is Yorta Yorta country?

FAY CARTER: Yorta Yorta country is in the Goulburn Valley, and Dja Dja Wurrung country is central Victoria. Bendigo is probably the centre of Dja Dja Wurrung country.

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MS McLEOD: And Echuca is up in the north of the state on the river?

FAY CARTER: Yes, Echuca is probably central, and Wayne might help me out here. Our clan of the Yorta Yorta is central to that area. Wollithiga is the clan of the Yorta Yorta, and so I would say Echuca is central to that area of our clan, Wollithiga.

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MS McLEOD: So does it extend on both sides of the Murray, the Murray River?

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FAY CARTER: Definitely, yes. That sometimes becomes an issue that - because we didn't make the boundaries of New South Wales and Victoria. They were made by white man. We had both sides, the Murray River as our - as our country for Yorta Yorta.

MS McLEOD: And roughly how far north of the river does the Yorta Yorta land extend up into New South Wales?

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FAY CARTER: Gosh, that's - that's something I'm probably not quite au fait with.

MS McLEOD: That's fine. In terms of growing up in Cummeragunja, that was an Aboriginal mission; right?

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FAY CARTER: Yes.

MS McLEOD: And you were born in Echuca and then raised on Cummeragunja. Were you there living there when the walk-off occurred?

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FAY CARTER: Yes.

MS McLEOD: Yes. So could you tell the Commissioners about the walk-off?

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FAY CARTER: Yes. And I wasn't actually raised on Cummeragunja. I was there until I was 4 years old.

MS McLEOD: Yes.

FAY CARTER: When the walk-off from Cummeragunja occurred. And the walk-off, of course, occurred because of the harsh treatment to our people and that they weren't allowed to speak their language, weren't allowed to practice anything cultural. And so a lot of the families, and our family was one of them, walked off in protest against that treatment that was received on the mission. And if I can talk about where I was - - -

MS McLEOD: Yes, please.

FAY CARTER: - - - raised. Most of the families, mine included, ended up in a fringe-dwelling situation at the Flats, which is a community that was - came together of those families that walked off Cummeragunja to live on the Flats. And they, first of all, camped - camped and it was on the Goulburn River just outside Mooroopna, not far from Shepparton. Probably in between Shepparton and Mooroopna in the Goulburn Valley.

And I was raised there and I'm so privileged. Even though it was hard times, I'm privileged to have had that experience of being raised in that situation and learning and understanding just what racism does to a people. And learning how we survived. And we survived because, you know, they say Aboriginal people are a sharing, caring people. Let me tell you, they were the true days of sharing and caring. That's how we survived, because we shared and we cared for one another.

The homes were built by clever old men, let me tell you, that, you know, cut down posts from the trees to make the posts to build the homes. The old women used to sit and sew together the bags for the walls. They would crush out the kerosene tins flat for the roofs and the chimneys, and I can remember once the walls were put up and the roof was put on, us children were given flour and boiling water to make paste. And they had collected over time, while the camps were being built, they collected magazines, newspaper and whatever, and it was our - us kids' responsibility to mix the paste, paste the paste onto the papers that were collected and put them on the walls, on the bagged walls, and that created, what do you call it, insulation.

And - but it was funny because my grandmother, who was a very strict nanny, made them paste the papers upside down so that we couldn't read them, yeah. She didn't want us to know too much about the outside world, okay. Yeah.

MS McLEOD: So the newspapers were on the walls. Were you speaking language in those homes on the Flats?

FAY CARTER: Well, I get asked many times about this. My children have questioned this. Why didn't the old people teach us the language? And I believe - I firmly believe - and I state this quite often - that they did not pass the language on to us because they did not want us to get into trouble like they did. They did not want us to get into trouble speaking our language like they got into trouble for speaking the language.

But, of course they dropped words here and there, and we keep those words going as much as we can. We keep them in the forefront of some of the things that we are talking about. But they were - we can't fluently speak the language. But the old people used to gather in a little

circle by themselves and choof us children off and they would talk to one another in language.

5 MS McLEOD: You mentioned your grandmother. You can tell us something about her?

FAY CARTER: Oh, look, she was the most wonderful - I would need lots of time to tell you about her. She was a clever old lady. She was very caring, very strict, but in a loving way. She - you know, she raised 19 children on that riverbank.

10 MS McLEOD: She raised how many?

FAY CARTER: 19. Nieces and nephews and, yeah. She raised 19 children. Keeping them away from welfare. Feeding them, clothing them, educating them. She was amazing, how she - how she did that in - in this meagre environment that she was trying to survive in. But she did it and that, you know, proves just how strong - how strong she was.

MS McLEOD: And can you tell the Commissioners about your mother?

20 FAY CARTER: I had a beautiful mother, and I've got a story to tell about her when we are ready to tell it.

MS McLEOD: We - we might leave the story about what happened to your mother until later. When you were little and growing up on the Flats, had she lived on the mission with her mother?

25 FAY CARTER: Yes. Yes. She was born on the Cummeragunja Mission, my mother. And she lived there, yeah, for most of her ages up to teen - teenage. The - my mother and, you know, the women of that age - and men as well - they left the rearing of the children to the old people because they had to go out and work. And the work that they did, of course, was on the orchards picking fruit, out in the fields picking tomatoes, beans, peas, whatever. That's the sort of work that the younger people in the family had to do in the families, not just my family. And to survive. And - yes.

35 MS McLEOD: Were the families very resourceful in finding things for the house and - - -

FAY CARTER: Gosh, yes.

MS McLEOD: Could you give us some examples of that?

40 FAY CARTER: We had a - we had a tip over the highway from the Flats where we lived called Daish's Paddock, and that's where, you know, people all around used to take and dump things that they didn't want and didn't need any more. And that tip furnished our homes. The men and some of the women used to go over to the tip and bring back tables, chairs, cupboards, you name it, whatever. And my grandmother used to - she was pretty fussy.

45 She used to mix what we call Phenyle. It was a disinfectant, and she would mix that in a bucket of water and she would disinfect all the things that were bought back and before they went into our home. And I will tell you a little story that once her and one of the old aunties, Auntie Ollie Muir, they went across to the tip and they found a big roll of old lino. And they dragged it back. And it's a fair way, and over the highway. And they dragged it back down to

the Flats and they laid it out and cut it in half. Aunty Ollie took half for her front room and Nanny put hers in her front room.

5 And we thought we were very flash. We thought we were very flash, having lino on our floor. And people from the other camps used to come around, just to have a look - have a look at what it looked like to have lino on the dirt floor.

MS McLEOD: Did your grandmother have a sewing machine?

10 FAY CARTER: Oh, did she ever. She had a sewing machine that I - I'm calling this Garni precious and this possum skin precious, and that machine is very precious to me. It would be maybe 150 years old now, and it had been around the traps, let me tell you, and it became very dilapidated so I gathered some funds together and I had it refurbished, and it looks beautiful now. It's in my lounge room, and it's got a special place there in my lounge room.

15

MS McLEOD: What would she make with the sewing machine? What sort of things?

FAY CARTER: Well, we used to have concerts in those days. We used to have many concerts all around the little towns, around the Goulburn Valley. Because our people were beautiful singers. We had what we call the Cummeragunja Choir. That name is still bandied around these days, and most of the descendants from that old Cummeragunja Choir are still beautiful singers. So we had beautiful singers in the concerts, and we had good dancers, and I was one of those.

20

25 And the money that was raised from having the concerts, they would donate to the war effort and to, you know, different welfare groups. So they did a really good job with that. And even during that war time and war effort time, women on the mission used to gather together and have knitting days, and they would knit socks and balaclavas for the soldiers. And, you know, I don't think many people know just how resourceful and how caring and giving our people were. Yes.

30

MS McLEOD: You mentioned Welfare before. Were Welfare visiting on the Flats?

FAY CARTER: Gosh, yes. They would just walk in with no notice. So just walk in walk through, checking everything out and checking to see if there was enough food, checking who was sleeping where and, yeah. They really were heavy, heavy people. My grandmother used to save - you know how you get lots of food in different cans, like fruit or baked beans or powdered milk or whatever. My grandmother used to save those cans and she would fill them up with dirt, put the lids back on, put them high up in the cupboards so that when the welfare came, they could look up there and say, "Oh, she's pretty well stocked with food. She's really looking after these kids, yeah." So she was very clever, you know. Sometimes a bit sneaky, that might sound, but I think it was very clever.

40

MS McLEOD: And just to understand that or explain that, she did that so that Welfare were not threatening to take away the children?

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FAY CARTER: Gosh, yes, yes. All the time she had that in her - in her head that she was having to look after children. And you know, that's all she did. She - all she ever did was look after children. Anybody could bring their children there and she would look after them.

50

MS McLEOD: She also had - or asked you to - and others to get the damaged cans from the Letona Cannery.

5 FAY CARTER: Yeah. Because we used to go and - two of my mother's sisters, Aunty Lulla and Aunty Margie, they married New South Wales Aboriginal men, and they ended up living on a fringe-dwelling place like the Flats called Wattle Hill in New South Wales just outside Leeton. And we would travel up there by train and stay with them for quite some time. And just on that, travelling on a train, Nanny would take her machine on the train. And that's how special that machine was to her. And we would stay up there for a while, yeah.

10 MS McLEOD: And what about the cans?

FAY CARTER: Oh, and we would walk to the school in Leeton. About 8ks it was, we had to walk from Wattle Hill into the school, in Leeton. And we would have to pass the Letona Cannery, and they had a tip where they used to throw out damaged cans. Nothing wrong with the contents, just that the cans were damaged and they couldn't put the labels on them. So my grandmother knew - knew every - every can, what its contents were, by the numbers on the base of the can.

20 Like there would be, you know, C-22, B-25. My grandmother knew what was in that can by that - that name - that letter quoted. So she would write down a list before we left for the school. "I want three cans of B-25, two cans of C-26," and so on. And we would have to go to the tip on the way home from the school and collect - collect those cans and bring them home. And, you know, that helped - that helps us survive. That fed us.

25 MS McLEOD: We have some videos of you talking about your life, your early life, that I want to play to you. So there's two videos. We will play them one after the other, and then we will talk a little bit about those videos. Okay?

30 FAY CARTER: Okay.

MS McLEOD: So the first one, Commissioners - you don't have the list yet, but the first one is - will be part of Exhibit 3 in due course. It will be Exhibit 3-5, interview with Aunty Fay Carter, entitled 'Your home is where your people were', produced by the Koorie Heritage Trust. And the second will be 3-6 - and we will get this list for you - is a video entitled 'Resisting Colonial Rule', Deadly & Proud Treaty campaign. Aunty, can you see the screen there?

40 FAY CARTER: Yes.

MS McLEOD: Just pause it while we get the volume working. And maybe go back to the start.

45 FAY CARTER: They can't see.

MS McLEOD: That's all right. They are just dealing with the technology.

FAY CARTER: Look at the black hair.

50 **(Video 'Your Home is Where Your People Were' plays)**

(Video stopped)

MS McLEOD: We will just load up the second one.

5 **(Video '*Resisting Colonial Rule*' plays)**
(Video stopped)

MS McLEOD: So the first of those videos, Aunty, was filmed in 1988. So that's more than 30 years ago. And then the recent one was just last year.

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FAY CARTER: Mmm.

MS McLEOD: Is there anything you want to add to those stories that you told there on those videos today?

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FAY CARTER: I'm trying to prompt myself.

MS McLEOD: Yes.

20

FAY CARTER: Wayne.

MS McLEOD: Yes, thank you, Commissioner Atkinson.

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COMMISSIONER ATKINSON: Thanks, Fiona - Counsel. Now, just some statistics on that. So the first one was recorded in 1988. That was the year of the bicentenary. A big year, of course, in Aboriginal affairs. That was recorded by the Koorie Oral History program, and the program was set up in the State Library. And the other person involved in that was a cousin of ours, Val Heap.

30

And that was for a program that she created at the state - at the Museum, because that's when the State Library and Museum were connected together, called 'Daughters of a dreaming'. 1988. So let's calculate that back. At that time, I was 45, and sister girl was 53, to be precise.

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FAY CARTER: And sister girl is 87 now.

COMMISSIONER ATKINSON: Thank you. Yes.

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FAY CARTER: I'm very lucky to still be here, aren't I, at that age. And to have my faculties. I mean, sometimes they are a bit loose, but, in the main, I can tighten them up. But I am lucky. You get a little bit frailer in the body as you get older, but I'm very lucky to have it - still have it up here, aren't I. And I'm looking at my grandkids when I say that, because you will remember that, won't you? That I've still got it up here.

45

Yeah, so I often wonder how to - how to put in words how that has happened to me, because you hear so often of Aboriginal people dying young. And I think to myself now, I'm old now and I'm still here. So it must be somewhere in the genes or something. But - because my grandmother, Priscilla, she lived until she was, what, 96? 96. So I've got a few years to go yet. Yeah.

MS McLEOD: As well as those two videos - and we've got a third one coming - you made a contribution to some books and other public records which we've listed in your witness statement. Could you open that folder in front of you, Aunty, and you will see a tab there which has got a number 2 on it. Perhaps Wendy could help. I think I've got the video loaded instead now instead of the photograph. So we will do the video first and I might come back to this.

Do you see that? That's a book that you contributed to in - about seven years ago, eight years ago? Yes. And I just want to read to you from the opening passage, and then we will come back to this topic after the video. Do you recognise yourself there, Aunty, in the photograph?

FAY CARTER: I'm with Aunty Nora there. Aunty Nora Nicholls. Aunty Nora Charles, nee Nicholls. She was Uncle Doug, Sir Doug Nicholls' sister. Yeah.

MS McLEOD: So because we've got this video up now - I will come back to that, so just leave that page open, if you wouldn't mind, and we will come back to that. And we will play the third video, please.

(Video 'Heal Country' plays)

(Video stopped)

MS McLEOD: Thanks, Aunty. Is that a convenient time for a morning break?

FAY CARTER: Yeah. Yes.

<ADJOURNED 10:59 AM

<RESUMED 11:20 AM

FAY CARTER: That's - 'Old Shep' is an old song, and I always sing it because it's the only song I remember the words of. So wherever I am, people say, "Aunty Fay, do you want to sing something?" "Oh, yes, I will sing Old Shep." But I think it's in my story that I have started to write a song about Dja Dja Wurrung, and I've done the first verse and I'm slowly working on what should come next. I want it all to roll into - not to be a long song, but to roll into meaning, and if I could just sing that first verse for you?

MS McLEOD: Yes, please.

FAY CARTER: Yeah.

(Sings)

Look around you and you will see
Aboriginal people just like me
Our colour has faded
Our features have changed but in our hearts
Our culture remains.

And so then I would like to talk more about what that meant for our culture to remain. Yeah. And I think I've - in my story, I've mentioned why I'm talking to - or singing to people, just

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about what that means, to look around you and you will see Aboriginal people just like me. Because it's really hard for us to convince non-Aboriginal people that we are Aboriginal. That's why we say we are Aboriginal, and we continue to say that.

5 We don't have to have black skin anymore. That doesn't mean that you're Aboriginal. It's what's in your heart and your history and your story that means you're Aboriginal. And I know a lot of young people, including my granddaughter Neane - they suffer a lot because Neane is so fair, red hair, blue eyes, but, oh, isn't she beautiful, but she finds it very hard to convince people that she is Aboriginal. On both sides her family - her father, Dja Dja
10 Wurrung, Yorta Yorta, her mother, Wamba Wamba. So her history is there for her to carry on and hold on to.

And it's - non-Aboriginal people have to understand us, they need to know our stories. They need to know our feelings. They need to know why we say we are Aboriginal today. And it's
15 very hard for non-Aboriginal people to understand that. Yeah. I think I'm saying the right thing.

MS McLEOD: Thank you, Aunty. Aunty, you have a brother Dimpsey?

20 FAY CARTER: Pardon?

MS McLEOD: You have a brother.

FAY CARTER: Dimpsey, yes.
25

MS McLEOD: And Dimpsey and you have a non-Aboriginal father.

FAY CARTER: Yes.

30 MS McLEOD: Do you want to say something about him?

FAY CARTER: I haven't put him in my story because he's really not important to me. And I say that because he had nothing to do with me growing up. Nothing to do with nurturing me. My father I'm talking about, yeah. Yeah, sorry. Yeah. But when he passed away, my brother
35 Dimpsey heard about his passing and found out where his funeral was. And so Dimpsey said, "I think we should go to his funeral out of respect." I wasn't keen on doing that at the time, but I wanted to give Dimpsey support because I knew it was important for him.

And so we did. We went to the funeral, and people were looking at us like if - we were aliens.
40 "Where did these two come from, where did they belong? Haven't seen them before." And so we were then asked to go to the wake. So we went to this little house where the wake was. And we were - I was - we were - Dimpsey and I were introduced to my - our father's non-Aboriginal wife and daughter, Anne. They didn't know who we were. They were in shock that we even existed.

45 He had never told them that he had been married to an Aboriginal woman and that he had two Aboriginal children. Never told them. So they didn't know anything about us. They were absolutely in shock. I - I'm telling this to highlight just how non-Aboriginal men can treat Aboriginal women and Aboriginal families. They are ashamed of them, they are ashamed of saying "Oh, I was married to an Aboriginal woman." And, so, we were never told - they
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never heard about us. They didn't know anything about us. They were actually in shock about that. So it just highlights to you why I'm saying he's not important in my life and I didn't want to write him up in my story.

5 MS McLEOD: Thank you, Aunty. You said your mum had some medical problems when she was pregnant with you. Could we bring up, please, Annexure A, which is the book that we had open in front of you there. You might not be able to read the writing.

FAY CARTER: Very small, yeah.

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MS McLEOD: But we will just bring that up on the screen and I will read it to you, if you can't see it on the screen. Yes, it's very tiny. So if I might read this out to you because those are your words.

15 *** "I was born on 1 January 1935. My mother was living on Cummeragunja Mission where I was born. In those days, most of the babies were brought into the world by the old aunties on the mission, but if there were any medical problems, they were taken to the Echuca Hospital. My mum did have some medical problems in her pregnancy with me, so they took her into the hospital. But in those days, they didn't take the Aboriginal women into the wards with the*
20 *non-Aboriginal women so I was born on the veranda of the Echuca Hospital.*

When I was about 16, I started working at the hospital and my mum was working there as well. And I can remember the day I started she said, 'Fifi, come along and I will show you a special place', and she took me to that veranda. She said, 'That's where you were born, right
25 *there.' I got a shock and I said, 'What, out here on the veranda?' And she said, 'Yeah.' She didn't think there was anything wrong with that. She thought that was okay.*

In those days they just accepted the way they were treated. It was just part of their life. But by then, at that age, I was very much aware of discrimination against our people."

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FAY CARTER: Yes.

MS McLEOD: So that story of being born on the veranda and people being treated on the hospital, that's an important story for you; right?

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FAY CARTER: Yes, Yes. And I can go on further about that.

MS McLEOD: Yes.

40 FAY CARTER: When we were living down the Flats, of course, there was many people in the community that became unwell and had to be taken to the hospital, and they were also treated on the verandas. They weren't taken into the wards. They were treated for their health circumstances on the verandas. And when I was 12 years old, I got appendicitis, and I was taken to the Mooroopna Hospital to have my appendix removed. And I can remember my
45 grandmother whispering to me, 'Fifi, don't tell them you're Aboriginal, otherwise you will end up out on the veranda."

And I didn't tell them, but I felt really bad about not - not telling people that I was Aboriginal. I felt really bad about that. But I - I knew what my grandmother was saying, and I wanted
50 to - I wanted to keep quiet for her. Yeah.

MS McLEOD: Would you keep quiet today?

FAY CARTER: No way. No way. I'm more outspoken now. More confident in speaking out.
 5 Not - you know, our people - throughout their lives, I can see each and every one of our old people, how they were scared, they were scared all the time to speak out. They were frightened of getting into trouble all the time. That was their lives that I can remember growing up, how - how they felt that they didn't have the right. They didn't have a voice.

10 And I always say, you know, today we are their voices. We are able to speak out. We are able to tell stories. We are able to bring them here with us, you know, bring them along with us. So I think that's important for all of us, for you young ones sitting over there. Never, ever be ashamed of saying you're Aboriginal. Tell your story. Tell people who you are, where you come from. And I say to young people - there's a lot of young people that I have the
 15 opportunity to speak with.

And, you know, most of them don't know their background. They don't know who they are. And I say that to them. "You draw yourself a tree and you find out. Find out your history. Find out who's in that - who's on that limb. Who's on that limb. Who's on the base of that tree.
 20 Get your story together, get your tree together, and that gives you your strength. That gives you your strength in your Aboriginality and your strength as an Aboriginal person to know who you are, where your roots are, where your history is, how you become - come by your history. Find it out. That's what will help you throughout your life."

25 MS McLEOD: You mentioned being 12 years old with appendicitis. I want to ask you about being 12 years old and dancing. Do you remember dancing as a 12-year-old?

FAY CARTER: Yes, I do. Yes. I love to dance. And my grandmother had me taught dancing, and she had me taught dancing because she felt it was a way of me becoming equal
 30 in life. Equal amongst young people, that I could dance like everybody else. And I became a good dancer, really. And my sister Marlene wanted me to talk about - because she said, "If you don't, I will." So I've decided that I better, that when I was 12 my grandmother entered me in a competition at the Shepparton Oval, on New Year's Day celebrations.

35 And she entered me in many competitions but this one in particular, and I did the Highland dancing. Highland Fling. Seann Triubhas, Sword Dance, all those dances, which I had learnt from this lady that Nanny used to pay. I would see her scrounging for those payments for my - to take up to the lady who taught me dancing. But anyway, I won grand champion. Grand champion of Highland dancing that day at the Shepparton Sports Ground.
 40

And I can remember my mother and Aunty Clare were so excited, they kicked their shoes off, grabbed the trophy, the cup, and ran around the oval holding the - the cup up high for everybody to see. They were so excited about me winning that. Yeah. And I've still got that cup, yeah.
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MS McLEOD: As well as the Highland dancing, were you doing ballet and tap dancing?

FAY CARTER: Yes. I did both. Both that.

MS McLEOD: And how important was it for your grandmother, this being able to dance as an equaliser?

5 FAY CARTER: Yeah. That - that was very important for - she seen that as a way for me to be equal in the community, that I could dance like the other young people who were being taught to dance. And we had - I think I spoke before about - we had many concerts in our community, and we had an old aunty, Aunty Evelyn Briggs. I don't know whether I have spoken about her. I don't know where she got it from, but she had this beautiful way of teaching us how to do ballet. And she was so graceful. And so she taught us ballet dances. I will just go off track here a little bit.

MS McLEOD: That's fine.

15 FAY CARTER: Just tell that. We went to Sydney, a couple of friends and I, to the Sydney NAIDOC Ball one year. And Aunty Evelyn at - by this time contracted dementia, Alzheimer's, and she was living with her daughter in Sydney. So the two friends and I said, "Look, while we are here, let's go out and visit Aunty Evelyn and say hello to her." Which we did do. And her daughter said, "Mum, you know who these are." And she was looking - thank you - I've got to sit back a bit - yes, so Naomi said to her, Aunty Evelyn, 20 "Mum, you know who these women are."

And she's looking at us very intensely and she kept on looking and looking at me and I could see she knew who I was but she couldn't think of my name. And so because she had taught us ballet in our younger days, she just went "lalalalala, la la, la la" like if she was teaching me to dance. So she did remember who I was.

MS McLEOD: Did you want to strike a pose when she did that?

30 FAY CARTER: Yes, I did.

MS McLEOD: Can I ask that Annexure B, the photograph, be brought up, please? Do you recognise that photo, Aunty?

35 FAY CARTER: Yes, I do. I love that photo.

MS McLEOD: Tell us about that photograph.

40 FAY CARTER: Well, that's my grandmother Priscilla sitting at the organ. That's outside the Cummeragunja school.

MS McLEOD: Yes.

45 FAY CARTER: Where the church group and the choir used to get together and my grandmother used to play the organ for the choir to sing. That's old Grandpa James there. Sorry.

MS McLEOD: Just zoom out a little bit.

50 FAY CARTER: Yeah. And, oh, there is so many beautiful old aunties. A couple of Nanny's sisters I can see there.

MS McLEOD: Yes.

5 FAY CARTER: Aunty Becky and Aunty Louie. And leaning on the organ is Grandpa James, who used to take the services. Over here on the far left is Grandfather Henry Harmony Nelson. Oh, it's such a beautiful history photo. Yes.

MS McLEOD: Grandfather is with the long beard?

10 FAY CARTER: Grandfather Henry Harmony with the long beard, yes. Yes. Grey - grey hair, grey beard. And when you look around our family, you can see where that grey hair came from. Yeah. I look at Wayne over there, yeah. Drew over there. The grey hair comes out. Marlene. Yeah.

15 MS McLEOD: So when the - Aunty, when the old people talk about Cummeragunja, were they talking about it with affection or some other feeling?

20 FAY CARTER: My mother used to talk about Cummeragunja like if it was a human being. She would say - you would talk about Cummeragunja, something that was happening there, and she would say, "Oh, dear old Cummera" just like if it was a person. "Oh, I loved old Cummera." So it was very close to them, that place. Even though there was bad things that happened there, there must have been very, very good things as well, for them to feel like that. It was country too, wasn't it. You know, it was Yorta Yorta country.

25 MS McLEOD: So just on that, did all the families leave with the walk-off and go to the Flats or did some stay?

30 FAY CARTER: No, there was a number of families who stayed behind. As a matter of fact, there's still a couple of families that are still there to this day. Yes. So - they were strong people, to - to work through that, yeah.

MS McLEOD: What was the choice that was being offered - well, not the choice that was being offered, but what was the choice between staying or going that people made?

35 FAY CARTER: I think it depended on how you felt about that sort of life, you know. How strongly you felt about - well, do I want to stay here and be looked after, listen to the bell ringing, queueing up to get the rations, get whatever benefits we needed? Or do I go and fend for myself? And I think the families that went off to fend for themselves, even though I think the ones that stayed must have been pretty strong in their own way to go through that, but I
40 think the ones that walked off were stronger to be able to work through surviving in this outside world.

45 You know, we've - Aboriginal people, we've had to walk and live through living in two worlds, the Aboriginal world and the white man's world. We've had to adapt and adopt to do that. I think Aboriginal people are the most adaptable people in the world, the way they've lived and survived through all this that's happened. All the bad policies that were imposed on them.

MS McLEOD: I will just ask for the next photograph to be brought up. That's Annexure C. You mentioned the concerts that your aunties and Nanny made costumes for. Just while we bring up that photograph of a ball - so tell us about this photograph?

5 FAY CARTER: Okay. Well, that's me in the front doing the splits. Many times when people were in a - you know, a forum somewhere, people see that and they say, "Oh, Fay can you still do the splits?" Oh, goodness gracious, no. But those costumes that the girls were wearing were all made on that beautiful machine I talked about before, Nanny's precious machine. Old aunties like Aunty Geraldine and Aunty Ollie, they would do the cutting out of
10 the costumes and my grandmother would sew them, sew them together on that machine.

And if there was a concert coming up and they didn't have money for - to buy materials, they would get the crepe paper, the coloured crepe paper. You know, you could get it in green, red, yellow, blue. And Nanny would cut costumes out of that paper and sew them up on
15 sewing machine. She was very clever.

MS McLEOD: Thank you. We can take that - is there anyone else in that photograph you want to tell us about?

20 FAY CARTER: Well, they are all passed now.

MS McLEOD: I see.

FAY CARTER: Bar the one at the back on the left, Aunty Frances Mathyssen. She's still
25 alive, living in the Rumbalara nursing home in Shepparton. I think she would be about 94 now. And, of course, me. And we are still here, but all the rest have passed on. And let me tell you, there's - oh, there's a story to each of - each of those lives. I know that - I think it will be all right to say it that Aunty Lois Peeler is going to be part of the truth-telling.

30 And the little lass behind me there, on the right in the front, that's her sister, Leah. That's her younger sister. And Frances Mathyssen, who I just mentioned, she's in her 90s now, the only one alive, that's Lois' elder sister. So isn't it amazing how families come out of photos like this. Yeah.

35 MS McLEOD: So we will remember to ask Aunty Lois about that and about the photograph.

FAY CARTER: Yes. And the one next to Frances, Hyllus Maris, she - that's another sister of
40 Lois'. She was the founder of Worawa College, the Aboriginal college in Healesville. She was the founder of that, yeah.

MS McLEOD: So the Commissioners will hear some evidence about the college and that family as well. So thank you for sharing that. I want to ask you now about working part time in retail when you were 14 years old. So can you tell us about the job fruit and vegetable
45 shop.

FAY CARTER: Yeah, well, I think I think I might have only been the Aboriginal girl working in a shop at that time. Later on, my sister Marlene began work in a butcher shop. Yeah, later on. But yeah. I was the first Aboriginal girl to have a job in the town. And I don't
50 know whether I set an example with that or not. But I think, over time, I may have set an example of what you can achieve. Yes.

MS McLEOD: Was there a reason why Aboriginal people weren't employed in retail that you know about?

5 FAY CARTER: It will be mainly because seeing an Aboriginal person up front serving food, in particular, non-Aboriginal people wouldn't want to eat that food or touch that food because it had been handled by this Aboriginal person, you know. Yeah, I think shop owners were very lax to employ Aboriginal people in their business, in their shops.

10 MS McLEOD: Did you experience any racism in that work that you were doing in the fruit and vegetable shop?

FAY CARTER: Oh, yes. Yes. Just what comes to mind is not there at the moment, but, yes. I mean, my mother-in-law, she was a very racist old lady. I can remember when my husband
15 told her that he was going to marry me, she said, "Oh, no, no, no. I don't want any little piccaninnies running around my backyard." And she was a dress maker. And she used to make me dresses and she used to say, "Now, Fay, I'm making you these clothes so that you dress properly when you go down the street and go shopping so that you look like everybody else." I thought I did look like everybody else anyway. In my own way.

20 MS McLEOD: What about how people were served in the shops as customers? What's your memory of how Aboriginal people were served when they - - -

FAY CARTER: Look, I remember going shopping, when we lived down the Flats, with
25 Nanny and a couple of old aunties, and we would go down the street in Mooroopna shopping. We would go into a shop, and if there were non-Aboriginal people in there being served, our old people were asked to stand up against the wall, stand back until all the non-Aboriginal people were served. So they were treated second-class citizens to the very lot.

30 And if they were called forward to be served after non-Aboriginal people were finished being served, they could have been serving somebody when another non-Aboriginal person walked in - they would stop serving that Aboriginal person to serve the white person first. And so that - what a racist act that was for our people to suffer. But they didn't complain about it. They didn't make a fuss about it. They just did what they were told, really. Sadly.

35 MS McLEOD: Was it just the case in the shops, or with other services?

FAY CARTER: No, it was in doctors' surgery, in the hospital. Any business that they went into, they were treated second class, keep your place, stand back, go behind there. Yes.

40 MS McLEOD: I want to ask you about your Aunty Ruby, Ruby Muir. Are you happy to tell the story about Aunty Ruby Muir?

FAY CARTER: Yes, yes. I like her story to be told. Aunty Ruby was, with her two brothers,
45 Uncle Charlie and Uncle Billy. When they were children, they were brought by paddle steamer down from Barkandji country to Cummeragunja and taken out to the mission. My grandmother adopted Aunty Ruby. She was a little girl then. I would say 5 or 6 or 7. And so Nanny adopted Aunty Ruby into our family, and she was seen as my mother's eldest sister. And that's how I grew up thinking who she was.

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It wasn't until I was married, actually, which was back in 1954 - I think I was 25 - was I 20 - in my 20s anyway. Sorry. And - that I found out that she wasn't my mother's blood sister, that she had been adopted into the family. And so - because time went on and Aunt Ruby become very frail and ended up in a nursing home in Mooroopna, and a cousin of mine, 5 Lilian Cameron, we used to go up and visit her. And - but during - prior to that, she had a niece, Uncle Charlie's daughter, Kerry, Kerry Muir, who researched what had happened to Aunt Ruby and Uncle Charlie, why they were taken by paddle steamer off country down to Cummeragunja Mission.

10 And the research ended up showing that their mother had been massacred in a massacre on Barkandji country, and the children were found hiding in a water tank. And so the police took the children, put them on the paddle steamer, and they were taken down to Cummeragunja Mission. And Aunt Ruby, okay, she's in her 90s now when she's in that nursing home, and, at that age, she was still asking the question, "Why did my mother give us away?"

15 So hearing this story that Kerry had researched, Lilian and I were able to go to the nursing home and even though Aunt Ruby was very frail, the bedclothes pulled up close around her face - very, very frail - we were able to tell her her story. That her mother didn't give her away, that her mother had been massacred and died. That's why she was put on a paddle 20 steamer and sent down to Cummeragunja. And she put - pulled the bedclothes down, put her hand out and grabbed hold of mine and Lilian's hand, as much as to say, "Thank you for telling me my story."

Oh, that was a wonderful outcome, really, to know that we were able to tell her before she 25 passed - because she passed the next morning - that her mother hadn't given her away, that - and what had happened to her mother. That was - that was wonderful, for us to be able to do that. And she was a beautiful old - she was a beautiful lady. I think there's a photo of her there somewhere.

30 MS McLEOD: We bring up Annexure D please. We will show that photograph. So Aunt Ruby is in that photo?

FAY CARTER: Yeah, holding the cat. Nursing the cat.

35 MS McLEOD: Who else is in this photograph?

FAY CARTER: Okay. Well, there's Grandfather Henry Harmony. And leaning on his knee is Uncle George Nelson, Mummy's brother. Then there is Aunt Ruby holding the cat. Then there is Granny Mag, with my mother sitting on her knee. That's my mother sitting on her 40 knee. Uncle Bill Onus is over here. Behind Granny and Grandpa is Aunt Margaret. Standing next to her is Nanny. Nanny Priscilla in her young days. What a beautiful old photo. Yes.

MS McLEOD: Commissioner Atkinson?

45 COMMISSIONER ATKINSON: The story of Margaret. Stolen - taken.

FAY CARTER: Okay. Yes.

MS McLEOD: So would you tell us the story about Aunt Margaret?

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FAY CARTER: Yes. This is another sad story. Aunty Margaret, of course, was one of Grandfather Henry and Granny Mag's daughters. They had two daughters. And they took girls at that - at that time from the mission and sent them to a training place, really, called Cootamundra, where many Aboriginal girls were taken. And they were trained as maids, really, housekeepers. So Aunty Margaret was taken there to Cootamundra with many other girls from the mission.

Some time after she had been there, Granny Mag and Grandfather Henry got word from the place in Cootamundra that Aunty Margaret was coming home for a holiday on the train. So they went by gig, horse and gig, into the Echuca railway station to meet Aunty Margaret. Aunty Margaret didn't get off the train, but her bag was put off on to the station, and Granny Mag and Grandfather recognised the bag. Finding out later that Aunty Margaret had passed away and that she had been buried up there somewhere. And they had never been told any of this. Never were they told that their daughter had passed away and that she had been buried.

And it disturbs me even today, and I'm sure it disturbs many other people in our family that we still don't know what she died of and where she's buried. And I'm hoping - and I've spoken to Nick about this - I'm hoping that one day we can find that out and have some closure and be able to go and visit where she's laid to rest. Because we don't know this. How cruel. How cruel can people be? And doesn't it highlight how racist people can be that they don't think it's important for Aboriginal people to know these things, that they can just do these things and get away with it.

So I hope one day we can have closure by finding out where she's laid to rest so that we can go and visit, have a ceremony with her, sit on the ground with her and talk to her. I'm sure she will be able to talk back to us in some way. Yeah. I hope that can happen.

MS McLEOD: I hear that there's a possibility that you have a - we might have in time for today a tape of your grandmother talking in language. Have you heard that tape?

FAY CARTER: Yes, I have. And that tape was made back in the 60s by a researcher called Elizabeth Hercus. Luise Hercus. I - she - the Yorta Yorta had a language book developed and established, and Margaret Wirrpanda and I, we wanted to know how this linguist came by so much of the Yorta Yorta language. So we asked to meet with her. And, yeah, she agreed to meet with us, and we sat down and we asked her the question, "How did you come by so much of the Yorta Yorta language for this book to be established?"

And she said, "Oh, research. I did lots and lots of research. I got a lot of tapes from the Institute of Aboriginal Studies in Canberra." And she leaned down and pulled out of her bag three tapes. And she put them on the table and she said, "As a matter of fact, I've got three tapes here with me that helped us with the language." And I said, "Who's on the tapes?" And one of them was my grandmother, who I had never heard speak language ever, ever.

So it was a very emotional time for me, to hear that tape. So she could see how emotional it made me and she said, "Here, you have the tape." She probably had another half a dozen in her bag, but that was -- she gave me that one. I think Aunty Gerry and Uncle Selly, Lois' mother and father, I think they are on a tape, they've got a tape, and I can't recall who the third one was.

MS McLEOD: That's okay. If we can't organise it in time today, we can make sure it makes - it forms part of your evidence later on. Okay. We can tender that later.

FAY CARTER: Thanks for that, Fiona.

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MS McLEOD: How is it - is there a difference, listening to your grandmother speaking in language, from how she used to speak to you in English?

FAY CARTER: A big difference. It was so noticeable to me because Nanny had a very - what could I call it - gruff sort of strong voice, you know. Making you sit up and take notice and hear what she was saying. And so she spoke in that sort of way. But on this tape, hearing her speak language, it was this soft, soft, soft voice we could hear. Just so different, you know, how she spoke language.

15 MS McLEOD: Do you - did you have some - some words here and there of language growing up from the old - the old people?

FAY CARTER: Yeah, yeah. Like we refer to, you might have heard 'doma nyini yalka' my precious baby, precious one, precious something. That's very, very much a used - still used. Even young people have come up with that now. And I'm pleased to hear them say that. Referred to one another as 'doma nyini yalka'. Meat, 'djitiga'. Yeah -- sorry.

MS McLEOD: Are you okay to continue, Aunty?

25 FAY CARTER: Yes.

MS McLEOD: So you talked about the reason you think the old people didn't speak language to you as children. What about practice of culture?

FAY CARTER: The same thing. They didn't want us to get into trouble. But, gosh, we have revived so much of that song and dance in a cultural way. We have revived - revived that language. Dja Dja Wurrung have got a language committee now. So that's - that's good. And it's - it sort of really gets to me that, you know, how we as old people we teach young people? Now the young people are teaching us language. So that's very - that's good to hear, really. But it sort of shakes you up a bit.

MS McLEOD: You mentioned also that the kids would pull the pillows off the bed and make - make drums out of the pillows. You mentioned that?

40 FAY CARTER: Yeah.

MS McLEOD: So did they also do ceremony?

FAY CARTER: Oh, they would have, yes.

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MS McLEOD: And did they have to do that in secret or - - -

FAY CARTER: Oh, gosh, yes, out in the bush, yes. Like, there's a whole story that Wayne could tell very well of Grandfather James, who taught school on the mission, and they weren't allowed to teach longer than grade 3. And if he could see young Aboriginal people with

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potential, he built what they called little scholars' hut in - way, way, way out in the bush. And he used to take young Aboriginal people who he see had potential into that scholars' house at night-time and teach them further education. Yeah.

5 MS McLEOD: What happened if they were caught teaching language? Speaking in language or teaching culture?

FAY CARTER: Well, as I mentioned before, it was to do with taking rations off them, taking things of value off them that they valued, that sort of - yeah, that sort of punishment.

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MS McLEOD: What's happened to the land at Cummeragunja? Was it still there, the whole land area?

FAY CARTER: No, no. It was very much decreased. Particularly after the war, when part of Cummeragunja was cut up into land parcels and given to the returned soldiers. And, of course, we had Aboriginal soldiers who returned from war, but they weren't given - given any land. They weren't considered for that. So Cummeragunja lost a lot of land through - through that, giving away. And I can remember Grandfather James was given - because he worked for the Education Department teaching school, when he retired, he was given a parcel of land

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MS McLEOD: Who was he given that by?

FAY CARTER: The Education Department because of his services to - to Cummeragunja's education.

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MS McLEOD: But that was not related to any war service?

FAY CARTER: No, no. That was just given to him. I can remember when we first walked off the mission, we camped across there on grandpa's land for a while before we moved down to the Flats.

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MS McLEOD: Tell us about Uncle Doug Nicholls and his role on the mission.

FAY CARTER: We always referred to Uncle Doug as the policeman on the mission, actually, because he used to make sure that everything was followed by the law. And - but because children were being taken away in those days, he would watch, he would watch for Welfare - the big black Maria, we called it, that used to bring the Welfare people down to the mission. He had a white horse and he used to ride the horse around the mission keeping an eye on everything.

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And if he seen that black Maria coming, he would then warn people on the mission, 'barramandain coming, barramandaincoming.' That mean the police, the Welfare coming, so they would hide the children, swim them across the river so that the Welfare wouldn't take the children away.

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MS McLEOD: And was he successful warning the kids?

FAY CARTER: I think so. Not in every case, probably. But mostly. Yeah.

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MS McLEOD: Just coming back to the topic of racism, what have you learnt in terms of keeping things clean from that - from your early experiences?

5 FAY CARTER: Yeah. I guess you can call them - I'm a cleaner from way back, really. I
clean, clean, clean. It's very important to me to clean and have things clean. And I always say
that, psychologically, I think it comes from something that happened to me as a child. Going
10 to school in Mooroopna, we used to go as a big group, you know. We would keep together as
a group and walk up to the school and stay together. And on the - on the fence would be a
group of non-Aboriginal children and they would be chanting, "Here come the dirty blacks
from the Flats." And I think - I always say, psychologically, I think that stuck in my head.
Nobody is going to call me, a dirty black, ever, ever again. That's why I clean, clean, clean.

MS McLEOD: Do you believe racism is still alive and well?

15 FAY CARTER: Sure is. It's alive and well, but it's more covert. It's harder to find. But I tell
you what, us old people, we can read it like a book. We can find it. But it is - it's hard for
young people to - to understand and see and find out, "Oh, that's being racist. That's not how
it should be." But they get away with it more these days as - because it's covertly practised.
It's not out in the open like it used to be. Like, you know, putting you on the veranda to be
20 cared for and all that sort of stuff, you know. That was more out in the open. Now it's not. It's
more undercurrent.

MS McLEOD: Do you want to share the story about your nephew Luke and his daughters coming back to Australia from America? And being educated?

25 FAY CARTER: Their daughter, Zoe.

MS McLEOD: Mmm.

30 FAY CARTER: Yeah. So my sister Marlene's son, Luke, and his wife, when they came
back - and Luke, can I tell you, is a heart specialist. How wonderful is that, you know, to
have that in our family? But anyway, him and his wife and two little girls, the youngest one,
Zoe, came back to live in Melbourne for a while, and Luke worked at the Royal Melbourne
while he was here, actually, as a heart specialist. Cardiologist, I think they call them.

35 And so his little girl Zoe had an incident at school which was very, very traumatic for her,
with, where she got up and said she was Aboriginal, she was Yorta Yorta, Dja Dja Wurrung,
and she was told to sit down by the teacher and almost said, "Don't tell lies in class." This
really upset Zoe. She went home and told her father. Of course, her father got upset as well.
40 He went to his mother, Marlene, told her, and she got upset. Yeah. Because she's like me
here, look, strong.

So she went to the school and she gave them a serve and a half. And so
Murrundindi - Murrundindi, heard. Murrundindi Hunter, the Wurundjeri cultural man, does a
45 lot of cultural programs. Marlene got in touch with him and told him what had happened to
Zoe at the school. Would he go to the school? So he did. He went to the school, and he
provided a cultural program for the school. And Marlene was really pleased with that and
thanked him very much for doing that.

But why should he have had to do that? If that teacher - if teachers had been taught not to be racist in their training - why should we have to, after they've been trained, give them cultural programs? It should come as part of their training when they are being taught in - as teachers, as doctors, as nurses, as lawyers, anybody that's going through the Education Department should have a component of Aboriginal cultural history and awareness built into their training. Not go through their training, then come out and expect Aboriginal people to provide them with cultural awareness. Isn't that back to front? You know.

5

I hope that can change, I really do. Because it's - it's a wrong way to go about it. I mean, if you are going to learn - if you're going to be taught, be taught properly. And our history at the moment is being taught in little raggy components, taught by a teacher that maybe is sensitive towards Aboriginal people and she will include a program in her class. But it will be about one little thing about Aboriginal people.

10

Our history needs to be told from start - from the very beginning through to now. It should be done properly in - what's that word I'm looking for?

15

MS McLEOD: Sequence or chronological order?

FAY CARTER: Chronological, yeah. It should be told right from the very beginning, right through, so that it - and it should be told and taught to these people who are - who are being educated for all these different things we have to do with, like teachers, doctors, nurses, lawyers - yeah. It should - it should be built in and it should be built into schools too. You know, our history is not in the curriculum? It is - to this very day, our history is not in the curriculum.

20

25

It needs to be compulsory. It needs to be written into the curriculum of the Education Department. I wished I was younger that I could sort of fight more for these sorts of things.

MS McLEOD: Just on that, you have fought for a long time in a number of different roles, and I want to just touch on those now, if I may. In the 1980s, you were working with the Aborigines Advancement League, and could you tell the Commission what role - what role you had and what the sort of - what that work involved?

30

FAY CARTER: Well, it was welfare, welfare support. And so there was three of us employed as what they call field officers in those days. Me and two other men. And the Aborigines Advancement League didn't just cover welfare support within the metropolitan area. They covered the whole of Victoria. And so as field officers, we had to travel around the whole of Victoria to give welfare support and respond to requests for welfare in all sorts of areas.

35

40

Families looking for food, families looking for transport to get to a funeral or get to a loved one's sick bed or all that sort of welfare support we gave. I covered - not only in those days - and I'm talking about the, you know, late 70, early 80s that we were field officers doing that sort of work around Victoria, but all throughout my life, I've - I've worked in the those sorts of situations. And as a matter of fact, in April 2019, I received the Order of Australia Medal for my services to the Victorian Aboriginal community.

45

And it's there in my bag somewhere. I don't sort of show it off. I feel a little bit - well, that I am showing off if I wear it. But it's an acknowledgment, really, of - yeah, of the work that I've done throughout my life.

5 MS McLEOD: An acknowledgment, Aunty, of decades of service.

FAY CARTER: Yeah, that's what it is. That's what it says in the write up, yeah.

10 MS McLEOD: And are you still connected to those offering those services to Aboriginal people?

15 FAY CARTER: Gosh, in a way, yes, without knowing it. You know. You still get - because I've been involved in community for so long, I think people still see me as being able to help with some sort of welfare support, because that's - that's been my role, you know. And I will do that, if I can, you know. Look, two years ago now, I had a knock on my door, 10 o'clock at night. A young woman standing there at my door, I won't mention any names.

20 She said, "Aunt, the Department have taken my two children off me." She had a little boy and a little girl, toddlers. The little girl, she was still, you know, very, very young. And she said, "And they've taken them away." And I said, "Okay, why - what happened?" She was living with a non-Aboriginal - young non-Aboriginal chap and they got on the ice and she quite openly telling me this. She said, "We got on the ice and we played up and we started arguing and throwing things around, and neighbours could hear what was going on. They rang the

25 And so the police came, and the first thing the police did was take the children, for safety, I guess. And she said, "Will you help me get my children back?" And I said, "Well, I will tell you what I will do. I will talk to the Department, and I will work with you for a couple of weeks and just see if you are prepared to behave yourself, really, and look after your children properly." So 11 o'clock that night, the Department turned up to my house with two little toddlers and a cot and a bottle and, you know, some babies' food. 11 o'clock at night.

35 So I took those two children, and I looked after them for two weeks. And I let the mother come, and we talked through all this, and, look, I could see, just witness how she cared for those children and how they loved her, that she was a good mother. She had just been caught up with something that it got her into trouble. And I just felt - I just felt it so clearly in - within myself that she would not do that again. That she would be a good mother and look after her children.

40 So I talked the Department into - for those reasons I talked the Department into giving her children back, which they did do. And to this very day - I mean, they are nearly teenagers now - no, they are not really. They are big kids now, okay. So, yeah, every now and again, I will get something that requires I respond in some way, if I can. Batjalan. People look for batjalan all the time. 'Batjalan' in Yorta Yorta language is money. Yeah. People look for a bit

45 of a handout - hand up. Yeah.

MS McLEOD: How is it for you, reflecting back on those decades working in welfare?

50 FAY CARTER: How?

MS McLEOD: How is it for you? What's the - what's the impact on you of that work over decades?

5 FAY CARTER: It is - it becomes stressful at times, depending on the - on the case, depending on the situation of how - and how you let it affect you. But if you take on that sort of role and that sort of work, you've got to become strong enough to deal with it and not - not let how you feel interfere with what you are going to or have to give. You have to be strong enough to do it without falling to bits, you know.

10 MS McLEOD: Just on a couple of other things, you were involved in the Native Title negotiations for the Dja Dja Wurrung traditional owners?

FAY CARTER: Mmm.

15 MS McLEOD: You served a couple of terms on ATSIC as a counsellor?

FAY CARTER: Yeah, that's way, way back.

20 MS McLEOD: And you have also heard various roles on advisory committees and boards.

FAY CARTER: Yes.

MS McLEOD: Could you tell us the story about the repatriation of the Jaara baby?

25 FAY CARTER: Yeah. Well, it's another sad story. The Jaara baby was found by a wood chopper. And, of course, in those days, they used to bury - mainly children, I think, up in trees, high - high up in trees. And this wood chopper chopped down a tree - and he was actually on Dja Dja Wurrung country - chopped down a tree and Jaara baby fell out of the tree in a possum skin cloak. Very dilapidated possum skin cloak. And so he picked her up
30 and took her to the police station, and the police station ended up taking her to the Museum, the Melbourne Museum.

35 She was put in a metal drawer. She laid in that drawer for nearly 100 years until we found out what had happened to the Jaara baby. So we went to the Museum and, yeah, we put on a dance up and down, bang, bang, bang. And - to get the baby back and rebury her. And so we were - after some time of negotiating with the Museum, we were able to get them to agree to give her back to us. And she must have been very important because, in her wrapping, there was a number of little items that had been wrapped with her - gifts, which made us think, gee, she must have been important to get these sort of gifts.

40 And so we said - the Museum said, "Oh, you can take the baby but you can't take the gifts. We need to keep them in the Museum for show, and we haven't finished investigating, researching them." And we said, "Look, that would be like stealing from her. That would be like stealing her lovely gifts from her if you don't allow us to let her keep them." They ended
45 up agreeing after some time to let us keep the gifts with the baby.

50 So because the possum skin she had been wrapped in was very dilapidated, we got another good possum skin, and Lillian Tamiru and I went to the museum, and we rewrapped her. We rewrapped her with her goods in the new possum skin. And we were able to take her back to country, and we found the tallest tree that we could find that was very similar to the one that

had been chopped down, and, luckily, the people who owned that property were very nice, sensitive, understanding people, and they allowed us to use one of these trees.

5 We had to get a cherry picker out there, because we wanted to put her as high as we possibly could, and so that's what we did. We had a ceremony around the tree, a group of us Dja Dja Wurrung people, and we placed the Jaara baby back in the tree. And there she rests. And we are entitled, by the people who own the property, to go at any time and spend some time at that tree. Yes.

10 MS McLEOD: The Commissioners have heard many stories about people dying away from country in places that are not known or places that are unmarked as graves. Could you just tell us how important it is for people to be returned to marked graves or marked places of rest and to be taken back to country?

15 FAY CARTER: It's very important to go back to country. It's the same as when you're alive, walking country, that you can now rest in country. That's where you will find perfect peace, to be laying in country. It's about all I can say about it, that it's just so important that we do that. Some people cannot always take people back to country, but I've just got a feeling that if you don't - if you don't be placed on country, that you never have total peace.

20 And when you've got, like I have, two connections, Yorta Yorta and Dja Dja Wurrung, you have to make a decision, then, you know, which country will I go to. But they are both very important to me, because they both belong to grandparents. Those two countries belong to grandparents and family. And so I don't think it matters which country you go on, as long as you feel - I've told my family where I want to go. It's - it's a cemetery where I think I counted up I've got some 12, 13 family members buried in there. So I feel as though I'm going back with them and - yeah.

25 MS McLEOD: How important is it for you to remember the past - the stories of the past?

30 FAY CARTER: It's very important, really. Your past is your future. So you've got no future if you don't remember your past. It's - and you - you have to remember your past, otherwise you leave your ancestors behind, your old people behind. You've got to remember your past and your stories. That's who you are. And you can't be who you are without remembering your past.

35 MS McLEOD: Aunty, it's just about lunchtime. There's a few other things I wanted to ask you, but we should have a conversation over lunch about some sensitive evidence you want to give when we come back. Okay.

40 FAY CARTER: Okay.

45 MS McLEOD: So we will have a break for lunch now, if that's a convenient time? And when we come back, we will let the Commission know how we want to hear that sensitive evidence, Okay.

FAY CARTER: Okay. Thank you.

50 <ADJOURNED 12:31 PM

<RESUMED CLOSED SESSION 2:00 pm.>

<RESUMED PUBLIC SESSION 2:19 pm. >

5 MS McLEOD: Thank you Aunty for sharing those things with us in private. The live streaming has started again now so things you say now are public again, okay? Is there anything you would like to reflect on that you were starting to say about sharing those stories and family?

10 FAY CARTER: Yeah. Yeah, I would just like to add that it's very painful for us to relive this part of our lives. And I look at Marlene over there and I look at Wayne, and I think to myself it must be painful for them as well - what I've just spoken about. But what I also said, that even though it's been so painful for us, we've got through it because we had one another and we've loved and supported one another. I think it made us strong in that way.

15 And I also say that having family is the greatest assets in our lives. It's better than all the wealth and material things that you could possibly gather. To have family is - is one of the greatest assets; I always say that, and I feel sorry for people that haven't got that. But we've got it and we've kept it going. And we will continue to keep it going because we know that it makes us stronger people, make us proud people, makes us overcome diversities. So yes.
20 That's what I wanted to say.

MS McLEOD: Thank you, Aunty. Just to finish off, I wanted to ask you a couple of questions about things you would like to see happen, and the first is around cultural awareness. What would you like to see happen to make people aware of Aboriginal people and culture in the community?
25

FAY CARTER: Probably a number of things. One thing, I would like my story to get out there without including this private piece that we've spoken about, because I said - I think a lot of things that I've said in there is making people culturally aware of who we are, what we are all about. I would like, you know, to firstly say that. But also I mentioned before that I think it's important that all the professional people around us who deal with us professionally in some way need to be - have cultural awareness included in their basic training.
30

It needs to be built in there, cultural awareness. Not wait until after they have been educated and trained and they come out into the workforce to deliver their services and then call on Aboriginal groups through the community to come and make them culturally aware; it's back to front. It's not how it should be. And I would like to see something happen out of the Commission or Yoorrook to put that in there to the educating places, for them to include Aboriginal culture within their training from the very beginning before they come out into the community. Yeah, I would like to see that happen.
35
40

MS McLEOD: In terms of connection between the generations, what would you like to see for families? For example, you know who you are, you know who your family, and you've spoken strongly about that. What about those who have been removed? Those members of the Stolen Generation, those who don't know who their family are?
45

FAY CARTER: Well, if I talk to young people who don't know, you know, your question, and say, "Where do you come from? Where is your family?" And if they don't know, I then really strongly try to encourage them to start researching where they come from. Do a family

tree. If you draw a tree and you find out who sits on that limb, that limb, this limb, you will then collate a picture for yourself of where you fit in a family - in a family tree.

5 And knowing your roots, finding out your roots - and you can do that these days quite easily - tracing and finding out your roots and your history, that makes you a stronger person. It gives you the strength in your Aboriginality. And I always try to encourage young people to do that.

10 MS McLEOD: You also mentioned about being on country as being healing. In a speech you gave last year during NAIDOC Week, you said it heals you to be on country: "It heals you. If you heal country, you heal people. It goes hand-in-hand. Healing country is healing people." And you've said that to us this morning. Is there anything that you want to add about connecting with culture and healing?

15 FAY CARTER: That's for us as Aboriginal people, I'm talking about. That if we heal country, we heal ourselves.

MS McLEOD: Yes.

20 FAY CARTER: But then I think, as Aboriginal people, we should put our hand out to non-Aboriginal people and encourage them to come on to country and walk country with us. Walking country helps you talk country. They go in hand-in-hand as well. Walking country, you can talk country. And if you've got Aboriginal people who are looking to find out more about us, encouraging them to come and walk with us is one way for them to learn about us.
25 And, oh, let me tell you, walking country, feeling as though you are walking in the footsteps of your ancestors is the most spiritual, spiritual thing.

MS McLEOD: With Rodney's help, we have managed to obtain the tape of your grandmother talking language. We would like to play some of that now, and then I will ask
30 you about what that means to you. Okay?

FAY CARTER: Okay. Thank you.

MS McLEOD: So it's an audio tape which will be included as part of the tender with this
35 statement.

(Audio tape of Mrs Priscilla Mackray plays)

(Audio tape stopped)

40 MS McLEOD: We have stopped that recording now, and that will be part of - the whole of the record will be part of your statement. Hopefully the transcript will pick it up where we couldn't quite hear it on the speakers. Just to ask you - do you know who was there speaking to your grandma?
45

FAY CARTER: Luise Hercus was interviewing. She was the linguist.

MS McLEOD: There was somebody laughing.

FAY CARTER: It was a man - a man and a lady in the background, who I'm not aware of who they are. Can you tell me, Wayne?

MS McLEOD: We might follow up and see if we can - - -

5

COMMISSIONER ATKINSON: Aunty Luise Hercus, who was the linguist recording.

FAY CARTER: Yeah.

10 MS McLEOD: That story about the nasty woman telling the children to lean into the fire, have you heard that before?

FAY CARTER: No. But I understand it.

15 MS McLEOD: Yes.

FAY CARTER: That fire was a bit of a punishment, in a way. In the very, very early days, they would hold children by their feet over the fire to smoke them, you know. That was before my time, actually, but we heard stories about that. Waka nini yana is, you know, asking people where they are going. But I couldn't understand a lot of that, listening on the - yeah. But just hearing my grandmother's voice, it's such a wonderful feeling to hear her voice today. But I'm so pleased that the contents of that tape will be included in, because I think there's a lot in there that can be clarified in - in the script.

20
25 MS McLEOD: Thank you, Aunty. In a moment I'm going to ask the Commissioners if they have any questions for you. I might just check with Wendy and Rodney to see if there's anything you asked them to remind you that you wanted to say.

FAY CARTER: Rod has his own transcript here.

30

MS McLEOD: That's good.

FAY CARTER: Yeah, Rodney is prompting me, yes.

35 MS McLEOD: That's okay. Yes.

FAY CARTER: They are my words, but he's prompting me about some things to reiterate, I guess.

40 MS McLEOD: That's fine. Yes.

FAY CARTER: How I spoke about how lucky I was, but I also wanted to explain my achievements are against all diversities that I've also had to experience. It doesn't stop you from crying, and it's never completely healing. And I deserve to be here. It's not luck. It's deserving to be here and tell my stories, and I have agreed for those stories to go out there to the public. I can't talk about making people culturally aware and educating people and then say, "No, you can't put my story out there."

45
50 Because I think - and, Paul influenced me here, very strongly about that, that my story is going to be part of providing cultural awareness that we are all talking about. You can't talk

about it and not do it, you know. So that's what I'm going to agree to, apart from my Mummy's story, which I want to - don't want that to be public. But apart from - the rest of my story, I would like it to go out there to help educate people and to help them become more culturally aware of what is happening in our lives.

5

And I don't think I can stress enough how important it is not to look at our colour, but to look at what we are doing and believe in what we are doing culturally. That's what I want people out there to believe, not to look and say, "Well, how come they are Aboriginal? They are not black. Their features are the same." You've got to understand that it's changed through history, and most of it's not our fault. Most of it's not our fault. It's just so happened.

10

But our family are still here as a family, the greatest asset you can have, and that's how we will remain. And I have to take that back and throw it back to what a wonderful mother we had that's instilled that into us, what a wonderful grandmother I've had and what wonderful ancestors we've had. So we are a very proud people, very strong because of that, and we will continue to instill that in our grandkids and hopefully their kids, cousins around us. I've got hundreds of cousins, you know, and, oh, there's - yeah, there's so much you can talk about that I can't quite put together at the moment. Sorry.

15

20 MS McLEOD: Thanks, Aunty. We might ask the Commissioners if they have some questions, and if there's anything else you want to say at the end, please do.

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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MS McLEOD: Thank you, Commissioner. Commissioner Walter.

COMMISSIONER WALTER: Thank you for your generosity what you have shared today. I want to take us back to something that you have talked about quite a lot today which is the need for cultural awareness amongst professionals working with Aboriginal people. As you know, most professionals receive training through the university system and university degrees. You also probably know that, you know, there's been, probably for 20 years now, teachers have had in their - to be accredited you need to have undergone cultural awareness in your training.

25

So my question is, cultural awareness comes in all sorts of qualities. Not all cultural awareness is equal. And as in - we have talked privately today, in some cases, there are many people - some people who claim Aboriginality but without a connection to country. So if we were to do a recommendation about sort of ensuring or increasing or improving cultural awareness within university training of professionals, do you have any thoughts on how we could ensure that the quality of that cultural awareness was what is required, rather than risk actually people getting poor quality cultural awareness that might end up doing more harm than good? So I just wanted your thoughts on that. I know I've sprung it on you out of the blue, but just be interested in your thoughts.

35

FAY CARTER: I think the point you make about quality of cultural awareness is important. The quality. And you can only get quality from the people who are experiencing - yeah, experiencing adverse, you know, situations in their life. Experiencing racism in whatever form, to whoever in the family, including yourself. You can only get quality from listening to those people who have experienced all this. Otherwise, it becomes just part of the education system where educators will educate as they see fit.

40

So it needs to come from the people who have experienced it, who have lived through it. It's the only way I believe that you can get quality, is coming from those who have lived it, experienced it. Otherwise, it just becomes part of the education system where educators will put it in the context of how they see fit. So I think the quality has to come from the people themselves.

45

COMMISSIONER WALTER: Thank you.

50

MS McLEOD: Thank you, Aunty. I have a message from Commissioner Hunter, who you can see on the screen there but her microphone doesn't seem to be working. So if I could read that out for Commissioner Hunter. She said:

5 ** *"Can I say thank you for your courage and generosity. I wanted to ask you why you wanted to tell the truth but you've answered it so generously, and that is to give it to others, to learn. So thank you again."*

FAY CARTER: Thank you.

10

MS McLEOD: That is the evidence of Aunty Fay Carter. I tender her statement, which will be Exhibit 3-0. There are a number of Annexures, 3-1 through to 3-8, which includes the sound file now of Grandmother and the three videos.

15 CHAIR: Thank you, Counsel. Those documents will be entered into the next part of that data. Thank you very much.

<EXHIBIT 3-0 STATEMENT OF FAY CARTER

20 **<EXHIBITS 3-1 THROUGH TO 3-8 ANNEXURES TO THE STATEMENT OF FAY CARTER**

CHAIR: Now, we have one more thing to do before we finish.

25 SPEAKER: We have some gifts --

CHAIR: I just want to say how I feel thank you is inadequate. You have spoken with such grace and dignity.

30 FAY CARTER: Thank you, my darling.

CHAIR: A pelt for you.

FAY CARTER: Wow.

35

CHAIR: And for Rodney and Wendy, the clapsticks with the markings. Thank you and thank you to all of your family. It's beautiful to see you here and to feel the love. Yes.

FAY CARTER: There is plenty of that.

40

MS McLEOD: Thank you, Chair. We are not sitting tomorrow, so we will adjourn until Wednesday morning.

45 **<ADJOURNED 2:53 pm. UNTIL WEDNESDAY, 4 MAY 2022 AT 10AM**