

# Lake Alice Psychiatric Hospital Children were Tortured, Government Inquiry Finds

*New Zealand report exposed 50 years of psychiatry and government agencies covering up children being tortured with electroshock. Survivors and CCHR vindicated.*

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, January 3, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The recognition that children were tortured in a psychiatric facility was a huge vindication for survivors. The New Zealand government recently released the findings of its investigation into how children in the 1970s were tortured with electroshock, including to their genitals, and given injections of paraldehyde, a central nervous depressant as punishment.[1] In a ground-breaking decision, the New Zealand Solicitor-General Una Jagose said the "treatment" given to children met the legal definition of torture. The [Citizens Commission on Human Rights International](#), a mental health industry watchdog, praised its New Zealand branch for tenaciously fighting for nearly 50 years for this recognition and says it could have a global impact, including in the U.S., where children are still being electroshocked, including those in a Massachusetts facility that uses it as punishment for behavioral control.[2]

In 2020, the New Zealand government held a Royal Commission Inquiry into the treatment of children between 1972 and 1980 at the now-closed Lake Alice psychiatric hospital. It found a "litany of failings by state agencies," to protect the children and that they ignored the seriousness of their psychiatric abuse.[3]

The report called "Beautiful Children: Lake Alice Inquiry into the Lake Alice Child and Adolescent Unit" describes the facility as a "shameful chapter in the history of Aotearoa [Māori] New Zealand." Further, "The abuse was completely unjustified, both by today's standards and the



A New Zealand report exposed 50 years of psychiatry and government agencies covering up children being tortured with electroshock and drugs. Survivors and the mental health watchdog, CCHR, are vindicated. The report could prevent psychiatric torture in the US

standards of the time,” NZ Minister of Internal Affairs Jan Tinetti added.[4]

CCHR always knew it was torture. So did the survivors. The Royal Commission validates this and acknowledged CCHR’s long-term work stating that “This investigation and report would not have been possible without the persistence of the advocates and investigators who worked tirelessly over decades to seek justice for survivors.”

The recognition of torture is important to the ongoing abuse of children in psychiatric facilities today and is not limited to New Zealand, but also the U.S., states Jan Eastgate, president of CCHR International.

Jagose’s testimony to the commission was that torture had three elements—(1) the infliction of severe pain and suffering, (2) by a person acting on behalf of the State, (3) for the purpose of punishment. She said she had no doubt or question that the first two elements had been met at the Government-run institution.[5]

Eastgate says the same definition could easily apply to the use of skin electroshocks for behavior modification at a special-needs facility in Massachusetts. In 2021, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration lost an appeal against its decision to ban a device used at the facility which applies electroshock to the skin of intellectually challenged or disabled-mentally “ill” individuals, including autistic children to punitively modify their behavior. Jennifer Msumba, an autistic woman who received shocks “almost every day” told CBS News, “I would get five or ten shocks for just doing one thing,” meaning a minor behavioral infraction. “That was like being underground in hell. I would ask God to make my heart stop.”

In 2010 and 2013, UN Special Rapporteurs on Torture sent urgent appeals to the U.S. government, urging an investigation into the shock device and students being subjected to electric shock in violation of the UN Convention against Torture.[6] However, that torture continues today.

Extrapolating from the NZ Inquiry report, CCHR says the definitions of torture exemplify how draconian and punitive the U.S. courts are to allow the ongoing use of electroshock for psychological behavior modification, Eastgate said. “As in NZ, too many psychologists and psychiatrists in the U.S. have remained silent about this.”

The NZ report states: “The torture survivors experienced included electric shocks, often without anesthetic, applied not just to the temples but to the limbs, torso and genitals. They were given excruciatingly painful and immobilizing injections of paraldehyde, administered by staff as punishment or as an improper form of aversion therapy, not for legitimate medical reasons. Children and young people were held in solitary confinement and deprived of their liberty, sometimes for days and weeks on end.”

Seclusion and potentially lethal restraint use are common in the U.S. “troubled teen” treatment

industry, CCHR adds.

CCHR NZ and a Lake Alice survivor brought the Lake Alice torture to the attention of the UN, which pressured the government to hold the royal commission. The report acknowledges CCHR as playing “a significant role in bringing the public’s attention to allegations of abuse at the unit” leading to the Lake Alice unit’s eventual closure.

Further, CCHR is a “non-profit mental health watchdog. It was co-founded by the Church of Scientology and an emeritus professor of psychiatry named Dr. Thomas Szasz.... CCHR has remained involved in advocating for survivors of the unit and bringing attention to what went on there.”

In CCHR NZ’s closing remarks to the Royal Commission its executive director, Mike Ferriss said that the penalty for failing to report child abuse in psychiatric facilities must be made much higher—i.e., criminal penalties. He called for electroshock “treatment” to be banned.

We must “ensure the mental health system is made accountable....,” Ferriss said.

Eastgate adds that this applies also to the U.S. and globally.

[Read the full article here.](#)

[1] “Beautiful Children: Lake Alice Inquiry into the Lake Alice Child and Adolescent Unit” Royal Commission Inquiry findings report, New Zealand, 15 Dec. 2022

[2] Ric Stevens, “Royal Commission of Inquiry into state care finds Lake Alice children were tortured,” NZ Herald, 14 Dec. 2022, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/royal-commission-of-inquiry-into-state-care-finds-lake-alice-children-were-tortured/ZB3EVQL765ATLMDKSX6XHSTXEA/>

[3] Ibid.

[4] Andrew McRae, Jimmy Ellingham, “Royal Commission into Abuse in Care inquiry details suffering of adolescent Lake Alice Psychiatric Hospital patients,” RNZ, 15 Dec. 2022, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/480825/royal-commission-into-abuse-in-care-inquiry-details-suffering-of-adolescent-lake-alice-psychiatric-hospital-patients>

[5] Op. cit., NZ Herald, 14 Dec. 2022

[6] <https://www.cchrnt.org/2021/07/20/cchr-wants-ban-on-electroshock-conversion-therapy-extended-to-all-ect/>, citing Ellen McGirt, “Electric shock devices—they’re putting disabled children and adults in danger,” Fortune magazine, 13 July 2021, <https://fortune.com/2021/07/13/electric-shock-device-judge-rotenberg-center-disability/>; “Drugs, Electroshock to 0-17 Year-Olds and Pregnant Women Needs Urgent Change,” CCHR International, 29 Sept. 2020,

<https://www.cchrint.org/2020/09/29/cchr-drugs-electroshock-to-0-17-year-olds-and-pregnant-women-needs-urgent-change/>, citing: <https://mindfreedom.org/kb/ect-autism-case-study/>

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