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# Survivors of abuse in care celebrate 'validating' name change



Sinead Gill | THE PRESS

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Abuse in care survivors (from left) Peter Wall, Eddie Marriott, Adam Powell and advocate Matt Ashton feel validated by the local community board, which has agreed to change the name of a reserve and a street.

**KAI SCHWOERER / THE PRESS**

For the men who survived “evil” sexual and physical abuse in a Catholic boys' home in Christchurch, last week was the first time authority figures gave them a reason to smile.

The reserve and street named after Marylands School is being renamed Validation, in recognition of the decades it took for abuse survivors to be believed.

The school was run by St John of God, a Catholic order, from 1955 until 1984 for boys with learning difficulties - or “naughty boys”, as survivor Eddie Marriott puts it.

He and several other survivors spoke to the Waihoru Spreydon-Cashmere-Heathcote Community Board on Thursday in favour of getting rid of the name Marylands. After the board unanimously agreed, the room broke into applause.

Marriott, Peter Wall and Adam Powell told *The Press* they had not dared to expect the vote to succeed, after years of horrific abuse and then decades of being ignored by authority figures.

But standing in the reserve on a bright Sunday, surrounded by trees and people walking their dogs, Powell said he felt like he could finally begin healing.

“Moving forward, it starts here,” he said.



A 1973 aerial image of Marylands School and St John of God Orphanage in Christchurch.

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They were grateful towards the community board leaders, but also acknowledged [the efforts of John Borlase](#) who led the investigation that resulted in a prosecution against members of the Christian Brothers Catholic order.

The men were just three of countless boys who faced horrific abuse at the hands of Catholic leaders, including Bernard McGrath, who was convicted on more than 100 cases of child sexual assault both in New Zealand and Australia.

Marriott said the abuse happened every second day, sometimes every day, and what they experienced was “evil”.

Wall said the name change was important, but he hoped there could be a plaque or something the public could read to educate themselves on what happened at Marylands.

“I don’t think it can be forgotten. I don’t think it can be 100% forgiven,” he said.

The name change - [which was years in the making](#) - was first requested in March 2021 by the relative of someone who was abused at the school.

The school was investigated by the [Abuse in Care Royal Commission](#) and victims were heard in 2022. The final report has been delayed, but is due to be released in late June and is expected to contain how the Catholic church intend to redress the abuse.

Of the 537 boys who attended Marylands, 118 reported abuse. However, the commission’s preliminary report said the true number was likely to be much higher.

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