

**ABUSE IN CARE ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY
FAITH-BASED INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE HEARING**

Under The Inquiries Act 2013

In the matter of The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Historical Abuse in State Care and in the Care of Faith-based Institutions

Royal Commission: Judge Coral Shaw (Chair)
Dr Anaru Erueti
Ali'imuumua Sandra Alofivae
Paul Gibson

Counsel: Mr Simon Mount KC, Ms Kerryn Beaton KC, Ms Katherine Anderson, Ms Tania Sharkey, Mr Michael Thomas, Ms Kathy Basire and Ms Alisha Castle for the Royal Commission

Ms Rachael Schmidt-McCleave and Ms Julia White for the Crown

Ms Sally McKechnie and Ms Brooke Clifford for Te Rōpū Tautoko, the Catholic Bishops and Congregational Leaders

Mrs Fiona Guy-Kidd, Mr Jeremy Johnston and Ms India Shores for the Anglican Church

Ms Maria Dew KC, Ms Kiri Harkess and Mr Lourenzo Fernandez for the Methodist Church and Wesley Faith

Mr Brian Henry, Mr Chris Shannon and Ms Sykes for Gloriavale

Ms Sarah Kuper and Mr Matthew Hague for the Presbyterian Church

Ms Helen Smith and Ms Sarah Kuper for Presbyterian Support Central

Mr Sam Hider for Presbyterian Support Otago

Mr Andrew Barker and Ms Honor Lanham for Dilworth School and Dilworth Trust Board

Mr Karl van der Plas, Mr Jaiden Gosha, Ms Rachael Reed and Ms Ali van Ammers for the Dilworth Class Action Group

Venue: Level 2
Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry
414 Khyber Pass Road
AUCKLAND

Date: 21 October 2022

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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7 **Adjournment from 10.51 am 11.05 am**

8 **CHAIR:** Welcome back, everybody. We now invite the Gloriavale leavers, and particularly Ms
9 Overcomer. Welcome back, Ms Overcomer.

10 **CLOSING STATEMENT BY GLORIAVALE LEAVERS' TRUST**

11 **MS OVERCOMER:** Hi, thank you. I am here on behalf of the Gloriavale Leavers' Trust but also
12 as an ex-member of Gloriavale. Why is Gloriavale part of this Inquiry? How does the
13 Government neglect to do their job and therefore neglect hundreds of children and
14 vulnerable? What corruption was in the system that allowed Hopeful Christian, a convicted
15 man, back into our community as the senior leader?

16 I've recently come across letters written to me by Hopeful while he was in prison.
17 Who let Hopeful send those letters to a 10-year-old girl? He was still very much in charge
18 and running Gloriavale from prison. Those letters were him making sure even the children
19 who he groomed stayed loyal. Somehow our Government let us down.

20 Centrepoint was a similarly notorious community run by Bert Potter in Auckland.
21 When there was to be a Police investigation it was stopped by a senior officer who was
22 later convicted as a sex offender himself.

23 The question is, who was or is stopping Government action to protect the children
24 of Gloriavale?

25 I was seven years old in 1993 when the Police raided Springbank and Gloriavale.
26 We had already been taught in school not to talk to the Police. We had been told to run
27 away, to hide, if we saw the Police approaching. Not the normal reaction to Police a child
28 in New Zealand would be taught.

29 I can vividly remember reciting in school "I am not obliged to answer any of your
30 questions." This was what we were supposed to say should we not be able to run away fast
31 enough.

32 When the Police did raid, we were taken away on walks to harvest willow out in the
33 paddocks and kept well away from Police personnel.

1 The prison service didn't do their job. One of the service officers would come and
2 stay at Gloriavale regularly. Another joined for a period of eight months.

3 What We Believe was written in 1989. It was revised in 2018 with no material
4 change. To hear their lawyer in closing say this is a historic document was disappointing
5 and untrue. The new 2022 version was not known by the Gloriavale women who gave
6 evidence to the Employment Court last month. All they have done is deleted their
7 interpretation of the King James Bible.

8 Every society has the risk of sex offenders. They are leopards who do not change
9 their spots. The child protection lead teams are chosen by the very leaders who have failed
10 the victims to date.

11 So, unfortunately, due to past experience, I am not holding my breath that there is
12 meaningful change happening. I left nine years ago, but the same leaders lead. Once
13 identified, the Government has the responsibility to protect children from their abuse.
14 Neville Cooper was identified, convicted, imprisoned, yet the Government agencies
15 knowingly watched him set up an isolated encampment where I as a child, together with my
16 sisters, my brothers, my friends were sentenced to be victims.

17 The Leavers' Trust has not brought any litigation against Gloriavale. Leavers have.
18 What they forgot to tell you in closing is that they have already lost the first case, the labour
19 court holding that they were operating sometimes violent and illegal labour practices.

20 The girls' case is halfway through a ten-week hearing, again, brought by a group of
21 leavers, not the Gloriavale Leavers' Trust.

22 There needs to be a full Royal Commission Inquiry as to how the Government let
23 hundreds of girls and boys live with such a dangerous leadership. The abuse has not
24 stopped with Hopeful, and documents do not change a deeply ingrained culture of abuse
25 and mistreatment of victims.

26 I have very clear recollection of victims having to forgive their abuser in public
27 before the whole community. The denial, in closing, shows nothing but a document facade
28 has changed. The current leadership are no better. When I got engaged, my now husband
29 said to me, "Keep away from those creepy old men."

30 An example of creepy old men is a letter I received from Howard Temple, then a
31 Shepherd, now the Overseeing Shepherd:

32 "Dearest sweet Rosanna. My favourite girlfriend. God bless you, sweetheart. And
33 I hope you are enjoying yourself tonight. And I wish I was there to do what I could do to

1 make it an enjoyable night. You are very precious to me and I would miss you terribly if I
2 were not to see you again."

3 Hardly appropriate from a spiritual leader to a 15-year-old girl.

4 I ask the Government to act. There are 400 children under the control of these men
5 as we speak. The system has to be held accountable.

6 **CHAIR:** Thank you, Ms Overcomer, thank you. As I said when you appeared before, you have
7 got such a good name for overcoming and we know that it's been a difficult thing for you to
8 appear on behalf of all your people and we respect you and honour you for your courage.
9 So thank you very much.

10 **MS OVERCOMER:** Thank you very much.

11 **CHAIR:** And thank you to all the other members of the Trust who are probably watching in --

12 **MS OVERCOMER:** Yes, they are.

13 **CHAIR:** -- and participating, thank you.

14 **MS OVERCOMER:** And members here today too.

15 **CHAIR:** And some of them are here today?

16 **MS OVERCOMER:** Yes. Thank you very much.

17 **CHAIR:** So now we're going to stop again, because there needs to be a re-set of the room and we
18 will depart, you will probably all have to stand up and move around, but when we come
19 back we will finish with the closing statements from our Survivor Advisory Group, SAGE.
20 Thank you.

21 **Adjournment from 11.14 am to 11.30 am**