

**Witness Name:** John Atcherley Dew

**Statement No.:** 5

**Dated:** 4 October 2022

**ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE**

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**FIFTH WITNESS STATEMENT OF JOHN ATCHERLEY DEW**

**FILED ON BEHALF OF  
THE BISHOPS AND CONGREGATIONAL LEADERS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN  
AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND**

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I, Cardinal John Atcherley Dew, say as follows: -

### **Introduction**

1. My full name is John Atcherley Dew. I am the Archbishop of Wellington and the Metropolitan of New Zealand, serving in these roles since 2005. I was appointed Cardinal in 2015.
2. I have previously submitted witness statements dated 23 September 2020, 1 February 2021, and 16 September 2022. I also provided evidence dated 18 July 2022 in my capacity as Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Palmerston North.

### **Background**

3. I was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Wellington (Archdiocese) in May 1976 and served in St Joseph's Parish Upper Hutt until the beginning of 1980. I then served for three years in the Diocese of Rarotonga. In January 1983, I returned to Wellington and worked in Youth Ministry for five years, while at the same time serving as Chaplain to the Cook Island Catholic Community.
4. In 1988, I began a four-year term at Holy Cross College, Mosgiel (the National Seminary for Diocesan candidates for the priesthood). My role there was as the Formation Director for First Year Seminarians, guiding them in spiritual, human and pastoral formation. From August 1991 until June 1992, I studied at the Institute of St Anslem, Kent, England; this was to enhance the kind of work I had already been doing at the Seminary. For the rest of 1992 I did a Scripture course at St George's College, Jerusalem, and then did voluntary work in India for four months.
5. From February 1993 until April 1995, I served as the parish priest of St Anne's Parish in Newtown, Wellington. In May 1995, I was appointed the Auxiliary Bishop of Wellington and served in that position until I was appointed the Archbishop of Wellington in March 2005. In February 2015, I was appointed as a Cardinal.

### **What my evidence covers**

6. I am making this written statement in response to the Inquiry's request for evidence, as set out in Notice to Produce No. 520 (**Notice**). Specifically, this statement provides my evidence in response to the questions set out at paragraphs 2 and 3 of Schedule A (**Looking back**), and paragraphs 10 and 11 (**Governance/Rangatiratanga**).

7. I am able to speak to a long personal history and involvement in the New Zealand Catholic Church, especially as a priest and bishop. My evidence cannot be taken to represent the views of the entire Catholic Church. My evidence is first and foremost a diocesan perspective, given in my role as Archbishop of Wellington. While I am able to speak from my experiences in the Archdiocese, I acknowledge that each of the six dioceses has its own experiences on the matters I discuss. Beyond that, each of the congregations and other Catholic entities that have a presence (or previously had a presence) in New Zealand will have its own experience that I am not in a position to comment on or speak on behalf of.

### **Looking Back**

8. This section of my evidence addresses the Inquiry's questions in relation to past mistakes, both in relation to mistakes that have enabled abuse to continue and mistakes in responding to reports.
9. Over the course of the work I have done and listening to survivors' stories, I have had time to reflect on past mistakes, and how we can learn from them.
10. I absolutely acknowledge that significant mistakes have been made. Nonetheless, my overwhelming experience has been that the Church's response to these issues is one of continuing learning. The Church has learnt much, is always learning and must continue to learn. My evidence below provides examples where I consider the Church has learnt from how it has dealt with issues.

*With the benefit of hindsight, what are the biggest mistakes the Church has made that enabled abuse against children, young people and vulnerable adults in the care of the faith to occur? Why were these mistakes not identified and addressed sooner?*

11. In my experience there have been a number of factors that have contributed to abuse occurring. I will focus particularly on the factors contributing to abuse committed by clergy.
12. The first is that clergy (ordained priests) have historically been held in high regard. In many people's eyes (both within and outside of the Church), there was a perception that clergy could do no wrong.

13. As a practical matter, this high level of regard/trust meant that clergy were able to have close and unsupervised access to youth and other vulnerable individuals. Priests were able to supervise youth that volunteered at the local parish, as well as in schools and classrooms.
14. I also believe that due to the high regard for priests, individuals who were abused were less likely to report the abuse. We have heard examples from survivors where they have shared that they were frightened to make a complaint against someone who was in a position of power, and unfortunately, some survivor's experiences confirm that victims were not believed when they reported abuse.
15. Secondly, there was limited awareness on the importance of safeguarding training. Historically, there was no training on the importance of boundaries and training regarding appropriate behaviour for those preparing for the religious life or priesthood. Nor was there the safeguarding training, or safeguarding policies that are now a key part of our church. The obvious place for such training to take place would be in seminaries and during formation. But such training was not provided at any other stage either.
16. Training for priesthood also failed to provide adequate mental health tools for the role of priests. Priesthood can be an isolating and demanding role, and until recently, there was no training on how to deal with loneliness and stress. I believe that historically many individuals within the Church may have been ill equipped to deal with mental health issues and loneliness which may have contributed to their actions in harming others. There is now training
17. This is one such area where the Church has continued to learn. We now have safeguarding policies and training for the seminary and in novitiates. Our processes in this respect are externally reviewed by NOPs.
18. Thirdly, until recently the Church has had limited knowledge of the psychology of paedophilia. We now know that paedophilia is a pathological condition, and that someone who exerts such behaviour once (whatever the seriousness) is likely to commit abuse in the future. However, prior to the Church (and society in general) having such knowledge, complaints of abuse were dealt with in an unsatisfactory manner, which enabled perpetrators to continue to have access to vulnerable people. For example, if an allegation was put to the offending priest, without an understanding of paedophilia, it was much easier to believe that the priest would not offend again if they appeared sincerely apologetic.

19. This lack of understanding of recidivism meant that sometimes, responsible individuals considered that an acceptable response would be to transfer a priest that was subject to a complaint. If the person dealing with the complaint did not consider it possible that the priest would re-offend, this may have presented as an viable solution, as it is one that removes the offender from proximity with the person who made the complaint.

*With hindsight, what are the biggest mistakes the Church made in relation to responding to reports of abuse? Why were these mistakes not identified and addressed sooner?*

20. Some of my responses to the above question equally apply here. The high regard that those within the Church had for clergy meant that reports of abuse were unlikely to be believed. In earlier days, mostly before my time, it just would not have been thought possible that such abuse could occur.
21. This failure to believe individual reports of abuse meant that at a systemic level, the Church had no understanding of the scale of abuse that was occurring. Consequently, this meant that the Church had no understanding of the wider harm, beyond the immediate abuse, that was occurring. Through the Church's more recent complaints process, and through this Inquiry as well, the Church continues to learn of the impact of abuse.
22. As stated above, the lack of understanding about the recidivist nature of sexual abuse offending meant that offenders were often not removed from proximity to vulnerable individuals because it was believed that even though they may have abused one person, that they could stop this from occurring again simply by acknowledging the wrongdoing and repenting for it.
23. Another aspect is that prior to the 1990s, formal processes had not yet been established for responding to reports of abuse. In my time I have seen the evolution from complaints being dealt with within a community, to provincial protocol committees being established to manage complaints processes, to the situation now, where a national office has been established to manage complaints.
24. When communities or parishes dealt with complaints internally, this would have often resulted in the person responsible for dealing with the complaint knowing, personally, the accused. I imagine this would have been particularly so in rural areas. It is a good that this is no longer the case, and there is a much larger degree of separation between the accused and people within NOPS.

25. Diocesan protocol committees were put in place when A Path to Healing was first written. But even though those committees were often made up with people that had a range of experience, much reliance was put on the goodwill of those who put their hand up to volunteer.
26. With few exceptions, complaints of abuse made under A Path to Healing are now dealt with by NOPS. In my opinion this evolution to a centralised organisation has been a good thing. It provides an independent and far more robust process for hearing and responding to complaints, than when complaints were dealt with at a community level.

### **Governance/Rangatiratanga**

*What do you consider is the role and responsibility of faith-based governance and management bodies in ensuring that Māori can exercise their rights as guaranteed by Te Tiriti o Waitangi in Aotearoa New Zealand? Does the answer change if faith-based governance and management bodies are exercising powers that the Crown has delegated to them or are funded by the Crown to deliver?*

27. I have consulted with Māori Catholic leaders on my response to these questions. The unique identity of the Church in Aotearoa New Zealand within the global Church flows, as it always has, from the presence of Māori, who have been part of the Church since the time of Bishop Jean Baptiste Pompallier.
28. Bishop Pompallier from Lyon, France, arrived in Aotearoa New Zealand in 1838 and set about establishing mission stations among Māori in both Te Ika-a-Māui and Te Waipounamu (the North and South Islands). In time, Māori priests and deacons were ordained, religious nuns, sisters and brothers worked among their people alongside missionaries from other countries. It is noted that the mission to Māori communities was initially delegated to Māori Missioners (Diocesan Clergy and Religious) for more than 100 years. The character of Māori Catholicism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was influenced by positive relationships between clergy, katekita (lay leaders) hapū and iwi. In recent years dioceses have taken on the role of ministry with Māori communities. However, with the diminishing number of priests and religious, the number of priests and religious available to service and mission to Māori communities is also apparent.
29. The Catholic Church was present at Waitangi at the time of the discussions and signing of Te Tiriti, in the person of Jean Baptiste Pompallier, Vicar Apostolic of

Western Oceania and later Bishop of Auckland. Along with the support of many Māori leaders, he insisted that a clause be added to the Treaty which would guarantee the right of religious freedom for all and of free and equal protection to Māori and other religious customs. On the 155th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1995, the Catholic Bishops wrote:

*[J]ustice has not been done and that the partnership, signified by the two languages at Waitangi, has not been honoured. Confiscated or appropriated land continues to be a cause of conflict in parts of the country; tino rangatiratanga has not been recognised; frustration at the lack of progress has deepened.*

30. In the same statement, the Bishops reaffirmed the Church's commitment to promote bicultural relationships in our multicultural society. The commitment to a bi-cultural church, inclusion of the Māori voice at governance level, the inclusion of Māori perspectives and Māori participation at all levels of church life continues to be a key focus.
31. This commitment does not change if bodies are exercising powers that the Crown has delegated to them or a funded by the Crown to deliver, although there is an additional perspective in regard to Crown and Māori partnership, to consider. It may also mean difference guidance for bicultural governance, such as on a school board.

*To what extent can tino rangatiratanga be exercised by Māori in the Church's governance structure? What needs to change to ensure that Māori can fully exercise their rights as guaranteed by Te Tiriti in the governance and management of faith-based institutions that care for children and vulnerable adults? How should such change be led and implemented?*

32. Māori communities have always had and continue to have the facility to celebrate Mass and receive Catechetical resources in te reo Māori. There has been a renewed emphasis on the call for lay Maori leadership and the institution of *katekite katekita, kaikawe karakia, minita a iwi* and the diaconate by some diocese. Māori communities have traditionally gathered in Māori Mass Centres. But many belong to general parish communities. Te reo Māori and liturgy is actively promoted by the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference to be used throughout the country. The dioceses, NZCBC, and congregations have various practices for the appointment of Māori to different boards, with varying degrees of representation as is typical of

hundreds of various entities some of which are wholly unconnected. With more time, we can offer examples of different governance practices in regards to Te Tiriti that might look at a diocese, a congregation, a school board, or a parish. Overall, anecdotal evidence suggests Church governance bodies are not reflective of the demographic make-up of the faithful. However, governance bodies of Māori entities, like Māori boarding schools, are governed by majority Māori. *Te Rūnanga o te Hāhi Katorika o Aotearoa* is the national Māori advisory group appointed by the bishops with representation from each diocese. Their work is advising the Bishops Conference and NZCBC agencies.

33. Unquestionably, the Church is still on a journey to ensuring Māori have the opportunity to fully exercise the rights Te Tiriti guaranteed. For the Church, this is also unpinned by our faith-based commitment to the human dignity of all, as well as guided by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the teachings of Pope Francis. The commitment of Church leadership to a bicultural Church must be unfaltering and at the forefront of decision- and policy-making to see continued progress which looks like the inclusion of the Māori voice at governance level, the inclusion of Māori perspectives and Māori participation at all levels of church life. The question of Māori having tino rangatiratanga is complex and runs deep, given tino rangatiratanga is the unqualified exercise of chieftainship (mana). The Church continues on its journey.

*The Archdiocese's commitment to Māori*

34. The Archdiocese is committed to a bicultural Church, through various initiatives. I have hoped that by revitalising, strengthening and supporting the vision of the following initiatives that the diocesan partnership with Māori is strengthened and Māori are able to have expression in the Church
35. Miha or Mass in te reo Māori is celebrated in some parishes throughout the Archdiocese of Wellington. Importantly within the Archdiocese we have *Te Pariha o Te Ngākau Tapu*, the personal parish for Māori. It was opened in 1999 by Cardinal Williams. *Te Pariha o Te Ngākau Tapu* is in the grounds of Bishop Viard College in Porirua. A 'personal' parish means one founded for a specific group or need but it is not geographically limited. Thus, any Māori Catholic can belong to it, anywhere in the Archdiocese. The idea was to give Māori an equal footing in the Archdiocese. This parish matters a great deal to the Archdiocese and to Catholic Māori in Wellington.



36. *Te Kahu o te Rangī* is the Māori Pastoral Council in the Archdiocese of Wellington and is a representative body of Catholic Māori in the Wellington Archdiocese. Membership of *Te Kahu o te Rangī* is open to all Catholic Māori and their communities within the Archdiocese. It was originally set up in September 1992, following an approach to the Māori Chaplaincy team by Cardinal Tom Williams seeking their views on addressing Māori Catholic pastoral issues. The Council is an advisory body for me and, articulates the needs, concerns and gifts of Catholic Māori in the Archdiocese and it strengthens and support education-in-faith opportunities for Māori katekita and young people. It is in effect, the interface between Māori Catholic and the Archdiocese. One of the main activities for members is to report back to *Te Kahu o te Rangī* on initiatives in their particular parish and rohe.
37. We also have a Māori Pastoral Care team that provides advice and support for Māori and faith communities within the Archdiocese of Wellington
38. Finally, we have Te Kainga which is a gathering point and community for urban Māori.

### **Acknowledgement and apology**

39. I want to end this statement by repeating my previous acknowledgement of harm.
40. On behalf of the Catholic Church I would like to offer my sincere and unconditional apologies to the victims and survivors who have suffered abuse while in our care.
41. As I have previously noted, I have been shocked and horrified at the way people have been treated and how their trust has been betrayed by clergy and religious, to our great shame. I simply cannot understand how this could have occurred.
42. As a Church, we are committed to our ongoing journey of change, and we see our involvement with the Royal Commission's as an opportunity for further reflection and improvement. We hope that this process will help us in addressing complaints with justice and compassion, so that we can continue to listen and learn, and to be accountable, transparent and responsible in all that we do.
43. We are also committed to the safeguarding of the vulnerable and preventing this harm happening in the future. Much work has been done, but our journey has a long way to go.

**STATEMENT OF TRUTH**

This statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and was made by me knowing that it may be used as evidence by the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care.

**Signed:**

**GRO-C**

**GRO-C**

John Atcherley Dew

**Dated:**

4 October 2022