

ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

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**

**RESPONSE TO NOTICE TO PRODUCE NO. 521
PURSUANT TO SECTION 20 OF THE INQUIRIES ACT 2013
GLORIAVALE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY**

29 September 2022

Duncan Cotterill
Solicitor acting: Chris Shannon
PO Box 5, Christchurch 8140

Phone +64 3 379 2430
chris.shannon@duncancotterill.com

Introduction

1. These answers are in response to the Royal Commission's Notice 4521 to Gloriavale Christian Community (**Gloriavale**) dated 6 September 2022.

Looking back

From 1950 until present day, please explain:

(Q2) With the benefit of hindsight, what are the biggest mistakes Gloriavale Christian Community 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?

2. Historically, we responded to allegations of abuse by seeking to create repentance from the offender and forgiveness from the victim. Repentance and forgiveness are both Biblical requirements for salvation. On the one hand, a person who has sinned needs to repent of their sin by completely changing their life around. For a liar, it means to stop telling lies and gain a reputation for honesty, for a thief, it means to stop stealing and to make up for their wrong. In the past, when we have dealt with offenders of sexual abuse, they were expected to keep their hands to themselves, to treat people with respect, avoid situations where can offend, and prove their change of behaviour. As for forgiveness, the Bible teaches plainly that if we are forgiven our sins, we must forgive those who sin against us. We have seen people consumed by a lack of forgiveness and its resulting bitterness, and it brings them no joy.
3. We thought that this would be sufficient as people moved on with their lives in faith, but we did not understand that sexual abuse offenders often find it difficult, if not impossible, to fully repent of their behaviour, and we found that victims often took years to overcome their resultant trauma, if they were able to, even if they were dealing with it in faith. While we kept victims' names confidential to protect victims, and handled these issues discretely, offenders were not known to the congregation and abuse continued without the knowledge of the leadership. We only recognised the extent of the problem in 2020 with Operation Minneapolis run by the police. That revealed that some victims of historical abuse had now become offenders themselves.

4. In relation to why these mistakes were not identified and addressed sooner:
 - a. We had not realised the extent of the problem until about 2020. Through observation of the methods of the police and Oranga Tamariki (OT), we realized that our investigating methods were totally inadequate for the job and that their expertise and assistance was needed to deal with allegations of sexual or physical abuse.
 - b. Leadership: up until the mid-1990s, Gloriavale founder Hopeful Christian dealt with complaints and confessions of sexual abuse or physical abuse. Police prosecuted him and he was convicted of indecent assault. He died in 2018. It was after the leader changed that there became greater engagement with authorities and other professionals in tackling sexual abuse issues.

(Q3) With the benefit of hindsight, what are the biggest mistakes Gloriavale Christian Community has made in relation to responding to reports of abuse? Why were these mistakes not identified and addressed sooner?

5. In the past, our beliefs about not taking Christians to court kept us from reporting abuse to the authorities such as police or OT, and we tried to deal with issues according to the examples set out in scripture. The rise of the #MeToo movement made us more aware of the extent and effects of abuse and we determined to seek counselling for victims and offenders.
6. See paragraph 4 above in relation to why these mistakes were not identified and addressed sooner.

Looking forward - prevention/response/monitoring and oversight

(Q4) What are the most important changes that need to be made by Gloriavale Christian Community to protect children, young persons and vulnerable adults in the care of the faith from abuse?

7. To understand what changes may be needed it is necessary to understand the changes that have already been made as set out in the Response to Notice to Produce No. 460 dated 4 July 2022. In summary, our focus has been on the Community and has included changes in the areas of:
 - a. Policies;

- b. Education; and
- c. Providing greater time for family life.

Policies

8. With advice and help from outside agencies, Police, OT, Safeguarding Children, Start Stop, ACC, Education, Health, Empowerment Trust, and Interlead, we have had prepared a Child Protection, Safety and Well-Being policy, and a Bullying, Harassment, and Sexual Harassment policy.
9. The Child Protection Policy we have adopted is one of the strictest policies in the country. It provides a level of protection for children that would be difficult to implement for many families. With help from OT and Safeguarding Children we set up a child protection leads group, here in the community, consisting of three men and four women plus two young people. The senior child protection lead is a social worker from OT. We have a meeting every week with a worker from OT who consults with our Child Protection Leads about complaints or matters of concern. OT is then able to direct whether a matter needs to be investigated by police and/or OT, or we can deal with it through counselling and discussion.
10. Gloriavale members are encouraged to engage with Police and Oranga Tamariki by Howard Temple and leadership, school teachers, and ECE centre teachers and to work with any agency to create a safe place to live.

Education

11. The following steps have also been implemented with the guidance of outside agencies or of the Community's own initiative:
 - a. The Community has advisors from the STOP and START programmes – the STOP programme is aimed at children, teenagers or adults who are demonstrating risky behaviours around children. It is an intervention programme which provides assistance to those who have engaged in or demonstrate harmful or concerning sexual behaviour. It also educates those in the community on signs of abuse in children that they should be alert to. START provides specific counselling of victims and is currently running 'parent's

evenings' educating parents and answering their questions, all parents are encouraged to attend. START is supported by ACC and Oranga Tamariki.

- b. The Police Youth Education officers have been working with the community and the school to make it clear to those that live here what is acceptable and what is not and how to report issues;
- c. The Community has engaged the Empowerment Trust to assist with education of our adults and young people. The Empowerment Trust works with potential victims and perpetrators of violence (including sexual violence) to prevent situations from escalating;
- d. OT has appointed a social worker to the Community, who is on site every week. OT has engagement with specific families in the community. There are safety plans in place for some of the children;
- e. The Police have addressed all parents in the community about steps to take when they have concerns about behaviour – either when their child is a possible victim or perpetrator;
- f. Parents participate in the "Incredible Years" programme. The aim of the programme is to prevent and treat behaviour problems and promote social, emotional and academic competence in children;
- g. There are two counselling rooms specifically set aside in a quiet and private area where any person can speak in confidence to visiting specialists;
- h. An organisation called Safeguarding Children has been engaged to assist with Community policies and procedures and to provide specific support to leaders, teachers and parents on their responsibilities.

Greater family time

- 12. It is expected that parents will have oversight of their own children and will look out for their welfare, just as in the outside world. There is no restriction on families seeking help for their children. We have made a number of changes in recent years to provide greater time for family life. These include

lowering working hours in our early childhood centres, there is more time on Saturdays in particular for men to spend with their families, we have outsourced some of our clothing manufacturing to China which frees up some women, and we have provided additional kitchen resources. We have also shifted to evening meals being served in the hostels, rather than being eaten communally. This gives families more time together in a smaller group rather than in the much larger communal dining areas.

Further changes

13. The next steps are obtaining reviews and feedback from community members, and agencies as to what works well, what does not, and improvements. Our general approach is to continue to rely on expert advice and continuous education, and involving authorities.

(Q4a) How would you design and implement these changes?

14. See above. The Child Protection Policy was designed with input from police, OT and Safeguarding Children. Our general approach is to continue to rely on expert advice and continuous education, and involving authorities.

(Q4b) What changes are needed to ensure there is adequate monitoring and oversight to ensure relevant safeguarding policies and practices are delivering the intended outcomes?

15. See answer for Q 4. The Child Protection Policy is among the documents submitted to the Royal Commission. Sufficient ongoing education and leadership involving expert advice and authorities is needed.

(Q4c) What are the timeframes for such changes?

16. The Child Protection Policy is reviewed annually. We will review the policy in November. A number of our own people are making submissions to the Trust, which drew up the original policy. The trustees will consider these submissions and modify the policy as they can to make it more practical.

(Q5) What are the most important changes that need to be made to the way Gloriavale Christian Community responds to reports of abuse?

17. See the answer to Q4 above. As per the Child Protection Policy, anybody in the community can raise a concern about abuse to the Child Protection Leads or go straight to the police or OT. Continuing education and leadership to ensure that the Policy is being widely embraced within the Community is an ongoing task.

(Q5a) How do you intend to design and implement these changes?

18. The policy has been in place since 2021 and people have been taught how to use the reporting procedures. So far, we have dealt with several issues satisfactorily.

(Q5b) What changes are needed to ensure there is adequate monitoring and oversight of responses to reports of abuse?

19. See above

(Q5c) What is the timeframe for such changes?

20. See above

(Q6) What barriers to disclosure continue to stop survivors from reporting abuse? How do you intend to reduce or eliminate these barriers?

21. One of the potential issues for disclosure is power dynamics, which could be due to age or perceived status. For example a child may not feel confident complaining about someone who is an adult of status.
22. For those reasons we have tried to stress the role of the family (as a child may be more likely to tell a parent about issues), education (so that people know what behaviour is unacceptable and the support for victims available) and ready availability of supportive people. This is part of building a track record of systems working. We recently set up an online survey tool where people can raise issues anonymously. Written disclosures can be posted in a box in the community dining room, and there are several CPLs on site to discuss issues. By continuing with such measures we intend to reduce the barriers.

Record keeping

(Q7) What issues, if any, have you identified with Gloriavale Christian Community's record keeping policies and practice relating to reports of abuse? How do you intend to improve current record keeping policies and practice?

23. The record keeping policies will be reviewed shortly.

(Q8) There has been poor recording of ethnicity of survivors reporting abuse by faiths (and the State). What changes are you planning to make in relation to recording survivors' ethnicity?

24. We will record ethnicity when abuse is reported.

(Q9) Does Gloriavale Christian Community collect data about its members who have a disability or mental health condition? If not, what changes are you planning to make in relation to collection and/ or recording of such data?

25. Individual families keep such medical records.

Governance/Rangatiratanga

(Q10) 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?

26. We have few families left in the community who identify as Māori., Gloriavale is not a State agency so is not bound by Treaty principles. However, in the education setting Gloriavale has acknowledged the growing importance of te Tiriti o Waitangi in school and early children education settings since about 1996. Regardless of ethnicity, we try to provide equal opportunities in all walks of life for children, young people and vulnerable adults. Also, our school achievement over the years has shown that our students with Māori ancestry have performed as well as, or better than those of other races. As an independent Church we are not exercising power delegated by the Crown.

(Q11) To what extent can tino rangatiratanga be exercised by Māori in Gloriavale Christian Community'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?

27. We have few families left in the community who identify as Māori. We try to allow equal opportunity to Māori and non-Māori. A person of any race who becomes part of our governance would exercise such authority from a Biblical perspective, and could consider their customs or tikanga.