

**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**

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**WITNESS STATEMENT OF ETUINI POLUTO TALAKAI  
Dated 14 October 2022**

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**Next event date:** 18 October 2022

Faith-Based Institutional Response Hearing – *The Methodist  
Church and Wesley College*

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## WITNESS STATEMENT OF ETUINI POLUTO TALAKAI

I, **ETUINI POLUTO TALAKAI**, of Pule'anga Fakatu'i 'o Tonga, Vice President of The Methodist Church of New Zealand, Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa ("the Church") say:

### Greeting

1. Tapu ki he 'Otua Mafimafi, ko e toitoi'anga 'a e to'utangata mo e to'utangata,  
Te'eki fokotu'u 'a e ngaahi mo'unga pe fanau'i 'a e langi' mo mamani,  
'Io, Talu mei mu'a 'o lauikuonga, ko e 'Otua pe 'a e 'Afiona.'
2. Fakatulou atu ki he Sea Komisiona, Tapu ki he kau komisiona hono kotoa,  
Tapu ki he Tangata Whenua o Aotearoa,  
Tapu atu ki he kau fakafofonga kotoa 'oku tau lōnuku he fale ni.
3. Fakafeta'i he 'iai ha fa'unga mahu'inga hangē ko 'eni.  
Ke ongona e ngaahi le'o kuo nau ikuna'i 'a e ngaahi fakamamahi mo e faingata'a'ia 'i he 'enau mo'ui.  
Tauange, ke hā'elea pea mo nofo'ia 'ehe laumālie kitautolu he 'aho ni.

### Introduction

4. I am the Vice President of the Methodist Church of New Zealand Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa ("**the Church**"). I have held this position since November 2020. I was Vice President Elect of the Church from November 2018. My term of office is two years.
5. I was previously the Secretary for Vahefonua Tonga O Aotearoa, a national synod of the Methodist Church (2010- 2018).
6. I have also served as Secretary of the Auckland Manukau Methodist Parish since 2010. I currently serve on several committees and boards for the Parish, Vahefonua Synod and the National Connexional Church.
7. I am a member of the Dominion Rd Tongan Methodist Congregation under the Auckland-Manukau Tongan Methodist Parish. I have been involved with the

Tongan congregation from my youth, volunteering in a number of roles including as a youth leader, Worship musician, choir conductor and choir member, young families group leader, church trustee member and a lay preacher. I have been an accredited lay preacher since 1997.

8. I grew up in a Church environment where leaders have mentored and encouraged me into leadership and to serve the Church and the Church community.
9. In my professional life, I have a background in Information Technology and education and worked as the National Corporate Service Manager in IT. I have also established companies and charitable foundation services that provide education support for parents and students from ECE level to Tertiary, with a particular focus on Pacific students.

### **Wesley College**

10. I attended Wesley College (“**the College**”) for one year in 1989, for the final year of my high school education. I attended the College on a rugby scholarship and played for the College’s 1<sup>st</sup> XV. I was a fulltime boarding student at the College.
11. I have been distressed and saddened to read the witness statements of former students at Wesley College who have come forward to the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care to share their experiences of abuse at the College.
12. The abuse and behaviour described by the survivor witnesses has no place in Methodist or Tongan values and no place at Wesley College.

**Dated:** 14 October 2022

**Signature:**

GRO-C

Etuini Talakai