

**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 REVEREND IAN FAULKNER  
Dated 17 October 2022**

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**Next event date:** 13-21 October 2022

Faith-Based Institutions Response Hearing

18 October 2022 – *The Methodist Church and Wesley College*

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## **WITNESS STATEMENT OF REVEREND IAN FAULKNER**

I, **REVEREND IAN FAULKNER**, of Auckland, New Zealand, Presbyter of the Auckland Methodist Central Parish, The Methodist Church of New Zealand, Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa say:

### **Introduction | Background**

1. I am currently a Presbyter appointed by the Methodist Church of New Zealand Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa (**Church**) to the Auckland Methodist Central Parish. I have held this position since February 2020. I have also been President of the Wesley Historical Society (NZ) Inc. from November 2020.
2. I was previously a member of the Auckland Secondary Schools' Heads Association, representing South Auckland Schools, and President of the Bay of Plenty Principals' Association.
3. In January 2003 I was appointed Principal and Tumuaiki of Wesley College (the **College**). I held this role until December 2014. I attended the College as a fulltime boarding student from 1963 to 1967.
4. Prior to my appointment at the College, I held roles as Principal of Reporoa College (from 1990 to 2002), Deputy Principal of Opononi Area School, Northland (from 1986 to 1990) and Dean, Head of Department at Mangere College (from 1972 to 1986).

### **Wesley College**

#### **Special Character**

5. In January 2004, I published a review of the special character in the daily life of the College.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of the review was to update the special character to reflect the contemporary emphases of the Church and determine whether this was evident and consistently demonstrated in the College's day-to-day life, in both the College and the hostels; and to state this to both teaching and hostel

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<sup>1</sup> Review of the Special Character in the Daily Life of Wesley College (**WCT0001319**).

staff, and to the Boards, in a way that expressed the Special Character statement as a living document.

6. The review acknowledged the Church's commitment to a bicultural journey as a priority for the College, including support for the Treaty of Waitangi, justice for Māori, and a process of decolonisation. It also noted this commitment needed to be reflected in the daily life of the College, underpinning all activities.
7. In 2007, Conference, at the College's request, asked the Council of Conference to consider the College's special character and what that meant for the contemporary relationship between the College and Church.
8. In October 2008, I published a report on the Methodist Ethos and educational style and its relationship to the College's special character.<sup>2</sup>
9. This process culminated in the 2010 amendments to the Agreement.<sup>3</sup> The 2010 amendments reflect the process undertaken by the College and the Church between 2006 and 2010 to review the special character and its Methodist/Wesleyan context at the College.<sup>4</sup> In particular, the Agreement was amended to expressly refer to the College's commitment to a bi-cultural power-sharing partnership between Te Taha Māori and Taiwi.
10. In March 2011, I published a paper reflecting on this journey.<sup>5</sup> This paper was widely shared within the Church.

#### Safety of students

11. Following my appointment, I prioritised the provision of a safe emotional environment at the College. I introduced changes aimed at reducing the hierarchical culture at the College, for example stopping the practices where junior students cleaned the shoes and rooms of senior students and where

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<sup>2</sup> Sabbatical Report – Special Character Education in a Methodist / Wesleyan Context, March 201, Appendix 3 (MCC0001885).

<sup>3</sup> Integration Agreement (WCT0000455).

<sup>4</sup> See discussion in my Sabbatical Report – Special Character Education in a Methodist / Wesleyan Context, March 2011 (MCC0001885).

<sup>5</sup> Sabbatical Report – Special Character Education in a Methodist / Wesleyan Context, March 2011 (MCC0001885).

senior students had priority in the dining hall. Students were responsive to these changes.

12. Inadequate supervision was a significant factor in the safety issues at the hostels. Senior students were responsible for supervising junior students and there was not sufficient adult supervision overnight. I introduced changes to these practices, removing dormitory prefects, further appointing resident house parents and employing separate hostel staff, and professionalising hostel staff. From early 2003, the matron was required to call me if any call to a parent was made regarding a student's welfare, or if an ambulance was called for any reason.
13. The College and Trust Board also undertook work to improve the physical environment of the dormitories so that boarders had more privacy and space.
14. The College also introduced changes as a result of ERO reviews, as detailed in the reports and which I comment on below.
15. The 2004 Education Review Office (ERO) report into Wesley College notes that the initiatives taken by the College were contributing to improving students' understanding of appropriate behaviour. It refers to the Eliminating Violence programme, which was rolled out to all schools at the direction of the Ministry of Education and the introduction of peer support. In my view the Eliminating Violence Programme was not effective.<sup>6</sup> It was a complicated programme for staff, which made it difficult to get buy-in from staff and any traction in the College. Other initiatives taken at the College were more effective.
16. In response to the 2004 ERO Report, the College strengthened its pastoral care team and shifted emphasis from discipline to pastoral care. I worked to establish a chaplaincy team to embed a staff and student culture of respect and eliminate the use of violence and to support students and staff in this process. My work on the application of the special character in the daily life of the College was part of this process.

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<sup>6</sup> ERO Report, 24 May 2004 (WCT0001289).

17. The College introduced induction training for prefects, which required them to sign a document outlining the values that underpinned the College, their role as prefects, and confirming that they were willing to buy-in to these values.
18. The ERO's July 2007 report identified serious concerns about safety of students in the hostels and bullying in the College. ERO recommended the Trust Board take urgent steps to address violence in the boys hostels.<sup>7</sup> The ERO said it would review the hostels within 12 months. The ERO carried out its further review in April 2008.
19. I met with Ministry of Education representatives in February 2008 to discuss the safety of the hostels. After the ERO's April 2008 review, the Trust Board received a letter from the ERO expressing serious concerns about the safety of students at the hostel and non-compliance of the hostels with the Hostel Regulations. The ERO provided the unconfirmed report to the Board of Trustees and the Trust Board. I understood this to be a watershed moment for the College.
20. The College engaged Paul Diver and Associates to carry out an external review into the management and staffing structure of the hostels and the Trust Board's governance structure. The College received the Diver report in November 2008. This review led to the establishment of the Hostel Council and a restructure of the governance and management of the hostel operations, including the appointment of a Deputy Principal Boarding to give oversight to all hostels, and implementation of further professional development and training for hostel staff.
21. Hostel staff were required to meet KPIs, to follow standard operating procedures to ensure consistency of operation, and to complete a Duty of Care Certificate. To ensure I was directly informed about the hostels, I instructed the Duty Manager to gather information from House Parents daily, reporting to me on how many people were in the hostels each night, and any incidents that occurred.
22. In 2009, the College engaged Margaret Thorsborne to conduct a restorative practices workshop with all hostel staff and deans. Following Mrs Thorsborne's

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<sup>7</sup> ERO Report, 10 July 2007 (**WCT0001290**), at 005.

workshop, the College established a Restorative Practices approach to conflict resolution and discipline within the College.<sup>8</sup> The College aimed to move from a punitive approach to restorative practices, to be implemented at all levels, including between staff and students and student-student, and whanau meetings. The restorative practices methodology reflected the College's Methodist Ethos and opposed cultures of violence. I believed that it had growing acceptance and success in the hostels and for day students.

### Conclusion

23. Looking back, I consider the changes implemented following the ERO's 2007 and 2008 reports were a step in the right direction. They provided the impetus for the provision of resourcing the levels of staffing and facilities to enhance boarder / student safety; and the coordination of hostel and school procedures to mutually support each entity.
24. However, I acknowledge that even after these changes, the Boards' disciplinary committees continued to receive reports of assaults and serious bullying incidents during my principalship. I regarded each occasion as a personal failure. I felt a sense of frustration that we continued to experience the same problems.

Dated: 17 October 2022

Signature:

GRO-C

Reverend Ian Faulkner

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<sup>8</sup> See discussion in my Sabbatical Report – Special Character Education in a Methodist / Wesleyan Context, March 2011 (MCC0001885).