

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**

AND

Faith Based Institutional Hearings (October 2022)

**WITNESS STATEMENT OF REVEREND TARA TAUTARI
ON BEHALF OF
METHODIST CHURCH OF NEW ZEALAND | TE HĀHI WETERIANA O AOTEAROA
IN RESPONSE TO NOTICE TO PRODUCE NO. 522, DATED 6 SEPTEMBER 2022**

Dated 30 September 2022

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WITNESS STATEMENT OF REVEREND TARA TAUTARI,**IN RESPONSE TO NOTICE TO PRODUCE NO. 522, DATED 6 SEPTEMBER 2022**

I, **REVEREND TARA TAUTARI**, of Christchurch Otautahi, General Secretary of The Methodist Church of New Zealand, Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa (“the Church”) say:

Mihi

1. Ko te Atua kei runga kei raro, koia te Kaihanga o te Rangi te Whenua me te ao katoa, tatū ki roto i te ngākau o te ira tangata, tapu tapu, oti atu.
2. Ngā rāranga maunga tū te ao tū te po. Ngā rāranga tangata mate i te ao i te po. Nō reira, koutou kua nunumi ki te ao wairua, whetūrangitia ki tua o te ārai hei maumaharatanga mō tātou ngā waihotanga o rātou mā. Haere mai, haere.
3. Ngā mihi ki te kaupapa o te wā. Ki te Kōmihana me ngā tini Kaiarahi e hapaitia nei i te hōhonutanga o tēnei Kaupapa tapu i runga i te rangimarie me te aroha.
4. Huri noa huri noa i roto i tēnei huihuinga.
5. Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa.

Introduction

6. I make this witness statement on behalf of the Church and in response to the Royal Commission’s Notice to Produce No. 522, dated 6 September 2022, addressed to the Church.
7. I have produced this statement with the assistance of former General Secretary, Reverend David Bush, who held the role for 12 years prior to my appointment.

Response to Notice to Produce**Looking Back**

From 1950 until present day, please explain:

Question 2 – 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?¹

8. In answering this question, I am primarily directing my answer to the Church's care settings relating to its former the Children's Homes and foster homes where the most significant mistakes have been made by the Church in relation to those in care with the Church.
9. These answers may in part also reflect observations about care settings at Wesley College, where children and young people were in the care of the College.
10. We consider that the past mistakes the Church has made within the former Children's home and former foster care arrangements that enabled abuse were:
 - (a) not recognising the need to have protection policies or procedures in place for children, young people and vulnerable adults across all its church-related organisations and/or entities.
 - (b) until 2008, no mandatory police vetting or background checks into criminal records of staff and/or ministers.
 - (c) not prioritising training in child protection for staff and/or ministers with requisite ongoing supervision; and
 - (d) not accepting and acting on reports of abuse from survivors. Whether reported to, or acted on, by Police or not, the Church had an obligation to investigate and determine whether a breach of professional boundaries and/or harm had occurred and to take disciplinary action against Ministers or members of the Church. It failed in this duty on multiple occasions over many decades with serious and long-lasting consequences for survivors.

¹ Question 1 sets out the *Definitions* for the purposes of the Notice.

11. In 1959, the Methodist Conference appointed a Commission to examine the Church's practice of care of children.² In particular, the Commission was to consider and investigate:³
 - (a) The whole basis and functioning of the Church's Orphanage work, with special reference to trends in New Zealand and overseas in the matter of accommodation, control and discipline of the children, and their integration into the life of the Church and community.
 - (b) Whether Children's Homes would be more efficiently administered as units of Social Service work under the direction of Central Missions.
12. The Commission reported to Methodist Conference 1961.⁴ Key recommendations included ensuring that those providing care for children were adequately trained and resourced. The resolution adopted by Conference accepted the recommendations in principle. The Commission was extended for a further year and a consultation was proposed in Wellington with key Government departments.
13. There is no further reference to the Commission in subsequent Annual Methodist Conferences. It is understood that the key changes were not implemented through any consistent and "all of Church" approach. At the time the Church was almost fully funding its Child Care services, with limited input from the State.
14. In hindsight, it is regrettable that both the Church and the State did not grasp the opportunity to address the shortcomings which had been so carefully identified.
15. In addition, the Methodist Church first received a formal redress request in 2010, from a Survivor, to address concerns over their time in Methodist Care. This came to the Church through the survivor's initial contact with the Confidential Listening and Assistance Service (CLAS). The Staff at CLAS provided significant assistance to help the Church in its response. In one case this

² 1959 Conference Yearbook, p168 [MET.04.00102].

³ At p168.

⁴ 1961 Conference Yearbook, p168 – p172 [MET.04.00103].

included CLAS enabling the Church to meet with the MSD Claims team to enable the Church to more properly understand the issues in a very complex claim. This meeting and the assistance from CLAS helped the Church bring resolution where an apology and restitution was made to the Survivor. CLAS provided external expertise which could be readily accessed by both survivors and the church.

16. The closure of CLAS was a significant loss to the Church as when further survivors came forward in subsequent years that independent sounding board was unavailable.
17. While there were complex and interrelated societal attitudes in play and State support-based impediments, the Church acknowledges that it carried the primary responsibility for ensuring the protection and wellbeing of those in its care. It failed in this responsibility and is determined to make amends.

Question 3 – With the benefit of hindsight, what are the biggest mistakes the Church has made in relation to responding to reports of abuse? Why were these mistakes not identified and addressed sooner?

18. The Methodist Church first received a formal redress request in 2010, from a Survivor, to address concerns over their time in Methodist Care. At that point the Church did not have a formal process of redress in place. The Methodist Church's formal redress process was not developed until 2018. In hindsight, it was a significant error that a formal process took so long to develop. Until 2018, claims were processed exclusively by the Church without recourse to external expertise and best practice.
19. The Methodist Church has evolved its redress process acknowledging that in former years it did not have the tools and/or knowledge about survivor-focussed processes which have now been developed.
20. The Methodist Church also recognises that there is no "one size fits all" approach to redress and continues to respond to the different needs of survivors. We expect that our redress response will continue to evolve as we gain a better appreciation through the work of the Royal Commission.

Looking Forward – Prevention/Response/Monitoring and Oversight

Question 4 – What are the most important changes that need to be made by the Church to protect children, young persons and vulnerable adults in the care of the faith from abuse?

a. How would you design and implement these changes?

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

c. What are the timeframes for such changes?

21. The most important changes that need to be made by the Church are to:
- (a) Raise awareness of the importance of safeguarding in all aspects of Church life, activities and work.
 - (b) Implement a safeguarding programme and structures to carry out safeguarding successfully throughout the Church.
 - (c) Train people in the safeguarding programme.
 - (d) Provide ongoing monitoring and review of safeguarding activities.
 - (e) Raise awareness of the appropriate use of Church disciplinary processes to address alleged misconduct related to Ministers, and other members of the Church, who properly should be subject to its disciplinary procedures.
22. I note that this learning is particularly important for our current care settings which include parishes, missions, and early childhood education (ECE).
23. In November 2022, the Conference of the Methodist Church of New Zealand will be asked to ratify a new Safeguarding Policy and process across the connexion. The safeguarding initiatives have been developed in consultation with Methodist Church-related organisations and entities. It is envisaged that the introduction of the new policy will be rolled out in 2023.

Question 5 – What are the most important changes that need to be made to the way the Church responds to reports of abuse?

a. How do you intend to design and implement these changes?

b. What changes are needed to ensure there is adequate monitoring and oversight of responses to reports of abuse?

c. What is the timeframe for such changes?

24. The Church is undertaking a review of its current redress and disciplinary processes, including the way in which it responds to reports of abuse. The review has included consultation with Māori and Pasifika constituencies and has focused on how best to incorporate tikanga Māori and Pasifika values to its process.
25. The new proposed approach will be presented formally to Conference in November 2022. However, this work is on-going and the Church will undertake further consultation throughout the Connexion in 2023.

Question 6 – What barriers to disclosure continue to stop survivors from reporting abuse? How do you intend to reduce or eliminate these barriers?

26. The barriers to disclosure the Church continues to encounter is a fear by some survivors that they will not be believed; feelings of shame and whakamā (for survivor and wider whānau); previous experience of a negative response to disclosure; difficulty in remembering, and communicating experiences of abuse as a child.
27. The Church seeks to reduce barriers by providing clear policies and processes for how reports of abuse will be managed, including a clear commitment of the Church to provide accompaniment and support throughout the redress process. The independent coordinator who works alongside survivors in the preparation of their applications is integral to this process.

Record Keeping

Question 7 – What issues, if any, have you identified with the Church’s record keeping policies and practice relating to reports of abuse? How do you intend to improve current record keeping policies and practice?

28. The Church has not had record keeping policies relating to reports of abuse and this is currently being developed.
29. The Church has a centrally managed Archives Office, this has ensured that most significant records have been securely and systematically maintained and are able to be produced. The Archives Office maintains strict confidentiality protocols. However, this system has not included separate record keeping in relation to a collated system of survivor complaints which will not be overlaid with the policy on retention of records relating to reports of abuse.

Question 8 – 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?

30. The Methodist Church recognises the importance of survivors’ ethnicities in developing an effective redress process. As at September 2022, the Church updated its redress process to include the capture of ethnicities in its application for redress.
31. In the past 12 months that I have been dealing with redress claims, I have noted that there is a trend in data gathered showing that a substantial proportion of redress claimants are Maori.

Question 9 – Does the Church 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?

32. At a national level the Methodist Church does not collect data about its church members who have a disability or mental health condition. The Missions and ECE settings do collect this data where it is relevant to their work.

33. The Methodist Church remains open to having a full-ranging discussion about the need for the collection of such data across Tauīwi, Te Taha Māori and ultimately at Conference.

Governance/Rangatiratanga

Question 10 – 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?

34. The Methodist Church has a responsibility to engage with and work with Māori to give effect to their rights as set out in Te Tiriti. Te Tiriti principles of partnership, participation and protection are integral to the Church forging strong relationships with Māori. This should not change whether or not the Church is exercising powers that the Crown has delegated to them or are funded by the Crown to deliver.
35. The Crown granted land to the Methodist Church under the Methodist Charitable and Educational Trusts Act 1911 (the **Act**). While reference is not made specifically to Te Tiriti in the Act, it does recognise that the purposes of the grant of land is to support and upkeep a multiracial boarding school, especially for the maintenance and education of as many Māori pupils as the Board considers “proper and expedient”.⁵

Question 11 – 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?

36. The Methodist Church is a bicultural Church and is committed to the Principles of Te Tiriti. Our Church policy is based on a model where Tauīwi (the people who came later and settled here) and Te Taha Māori (Tangata Whenua, the

⁵ Section 31, Methodist Charitable and Educational Trusts Act 1911.

people who are of the land) are equal partners. In this way, tino rangatiratanga is exercised by Māori directly in all decision-making and resource sharing activity.

37. The Methodist Church has adopted a process for the election of both the President and Vice President which involves both the Taiuiwi and Te Taha Māori groups selecting their own preferred candidates and using separate voting processes.⁶
38. The primary goal of the consensus decision-making process of the Conference is to enable Te Taha Māori and Taiuiwi, partners of the Methodist Church, to make decisions which demonstrate partnership.⁷
39. The Conference consensus decision-making process is guided by the following principles for making decisions in a manner which demonstrate the Church's Treaty Partnership, i.e., between Taha Māori and Taiuiwi:⁸
 - (a) The aim of the Conference decision-making process is to discern what is best for the Church.
 - (b) A decision is made only when both partners, i.e., Taha Māori and Taiuiwi can state that they can agree with the suggested decision.
 - (c) Taha Māori/Taiuiwi may caucus if this will enable their group to reach general agreement so a partnership decision can be explored.
 - (d) Partners may choose their own language for the discussion. (Taiuiwi will need to decide the language(s) appropriate for them).
 - (e) When the partners do not agree, no decision can be made. Instead, a process will be established which may lead to agreement in the future.
 - (f) The Council of Elders will monitor the process and may guide it.

⁶ See 2018 Conference Yearbook, p9 – p15 [MET.04.00104] and 2020 Conference Yearbook, p6 - p12 [MET.04.00105]

⁷ See 2018 Conference Yearbook, p10 [MET.04.00104] and 2020 Conference Yearbook, p7 [MET.04.00105]

⁸ See 2018 Conference Yearbook, p10 [MET.04.00104] and 2020 Conference Yearbook, p7 [MET.04.00105].

40. In addition, the Synods have been working to use Te Reo and Māori Tikanga in Synod and Parish activity.⁹ The Council of Conference:¹⁰
- (a) are committed to supplying resources for use by Synods, Rohe and congregations to develop knowledge of and use of Teo Reo and Tikanga Māori.
 - (b) encourage Synods and Rohe to develop more intentional partnerships and informal relationships.
41. The Council of Elders enables and assists the Church in its Bicultural Journey by seeking to model the equal partnership prefigured in Te Tiriti, and at Conference, specifically:¹¹
- (a) monitor and recommendations of all Conference Committees and Boards of the Conference,
 - (b) reflect and comment on the style, processes, work and priorities of all Conference Committees Boards, Conference discussion and decision making,
 - (c) refer back for further consideration any report or recommendation which the Council of Elders considers will hinder or divert the Church from its Bicultural Journey, and
 - (d) report each year to the Conference.

Statement of Truth

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

Dated: 30 September 2022

Signature:

GRO-C

Reverend Tara Tautari

⁹ See 2018 Conference Yearbook, pA-3 [MET.04.00104]

¹⁰ See 2018 Conference Yearbook, pA-3 [MET.04.00104].

¹¹ See 2018 Conference Yearbook, p15 [MET.04.00104] and 2020 Conference Yearbook, p12 [MET.04.00105].

SCHEDULE OF DOCUMENTS

Document ID	Description	Author	Date
MET.04.00102	1959 Conference Reports and Resolutions	MCNZ	1959
MET.04.00103	1961 Conference Reports and Resolutions	MCNZ	1961
MET.04.00104	2018 Conference Reports and Resolutions	MCNZ	2018
MET.04.00105	2020 Conference Reports and Resolutions	MCNZ	2020