

Response from NZCommunity Living to statement of Margaret Priest (providing evidence regarding Irene Priest)

By way of initial comment, NZCare has recently merged with Geneva Community Living to form NZCommunity Living, a division of New Zealand Health Group. We therefore respond to this statement as NZCommunity Living.

At the outset, we wish to acknowledge both Irene and Margaret Priest. The matters raised in the statement were serious and concerning, and we wish to apologise for any harm and stress caused to Irene (as the person we support) and to Margaret as Irene's support and advocate throughout this process.

Although the statement refers to events that occurred some time ago, from our understanding of these matters we can confirm that we took the issues seriously. When we were informed of the abuse allegations in 2006 we informed the Police, performed an internal investigation, commissioned an independent review of the homes referred to and also underwent external audits. The recommendations stemming from the review and audits were implemented at the time and appropriate Human Resources processes implemented.

At NZCommunity Living our mission is to provide, in partnership with people with disabilities and their family/whānau and advocates, a lifestyle for people that promotes choice, rights, culture, dignity and learning. Our Disability Support Services reflect our belief that all New Zealanders deserve to live fully, have equal opportunities and achieve their ambitions. We aim to provide the very best service to the people we support

We emphasise that we take all claims of abuse we receive seriously and conduct an internal investigation in response to each claim. If a claim involves, or has the potential to involve, the conduct of a staff member, we involve the New Zealand Police Services as appropriate. In these situations, we work actively with the Police and rigorously apply our own Human Resources policies regarding abuse outside of the Police investigation. We do not, and will not tolerate any form of abuse in our services, and we continue to encourage and support any person to inform us if they have concerns about our services.