

**ABUSE IN CARE ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY  
FAITH-BASED INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE HEARING**

**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

**Royal Commission:** Judge Coral Shaw (Chair)  
Dr Anaru Erueti  
Ali'imuamua Sandra Alofivae  
Paul Gibson

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Ms Rachael Schmidt-McCleave and Ms Julia White for the Crown

Ms Sally McKechnie and Ms Brooke Clifford for Te Rōpū Tautoko, the Catholic Bishops and Congregational Leaders

Mrs Fiona Guy-Kidd and Ms India Shores for the Anglican Church

Ms Maria Dew KC, Ms Kiri Harkess and Mr Lourenzo Fernandez for the Methodist Church and Wesley Faith

Mr Brian Henry, Mr Chris Shannon and Ms Sykes for Gloriavale

Ms Sarah Kuper and Mr Matthew Hague for the Presbyterian Church

**Venue:** Level 2  
Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry  
414 Khyber Pass Road  
AUCKLAND

**Date:** 18 October 2022

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**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

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**Hearing opens with waiata Pūrea Nei and karakia tīmatanga by Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei**

**[9.05 am]**

**CHAIR:** Tēnā tātou katoa, nau mai haere mai. Welcome to everybody to this second day this week of our hearings. Today we are focusing on the Methodist Church and its institution of Wesley College and we'll be dealing with that all day. As you see we're doing it talanoa-style because there is a distinct Pacific flavour to the events that we are investigating today. It will be more free-flowing, perhaps a little less formal than when we sit up there, and for that reason I'm going to ask you all to respect the space, respect the vā.

And there was an incident yesterday where some people were trying to evade some of the privacy orders that we have to make to protect our survivors in particular whose names they do not want to have published. So I do ask that you respect that when documents come up that just simply must not be publicised to protect those individuals, so I please ask you to respect that.

There's another aspect of respect, and that is that I'm told that yesterday there was some people who have colds and they were in the room and we would ask that if you have any symptoms at all of a cold, please would you wear a mask. It is for the benefit of those around you. Again it's a matter of respecting the vā, of making sure that everybody in the room is safe and so I would ask you that if you suffer from it in any way, just a little runny nose, please do that in the interests of the whole, so thank you for that.

So now I'm going to ask our counsel, and I'll call for appearances because I appreciate we've got new bodies in the room today in terms of lawyers, and we'll just make sure that everybody knows who is who. So we'll start with you Ms Sharkey, thank you.

**MS SHARKEY:** So, Madam Chair, just introductions first?

**CHAIR:** Yes.

**MS SHARKEY:** I am Tania Sharkey, Counsel Assisting the Inquiry and I am joined by Rachel Lilly, Kelly Curran and Rebecca Harvey-Lane in the front row. I could introduce the back row.

**CHAIR:** Why not.

**MS SHARKEY:** Alisha Castle, Richard Roil, Angee Nicholas and Jenna Johnson-Aufa'i.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

**MS DEW:** Tēnā koutou, ko Maria Dew ahau. I appear today as counsel for the Methodist Church and for Wesley College and I appear with my colleagues Ms Harkess and Mr Fernandez.

1 **CHAIR:** Thank you Ms Dew. All right, so we now know who's in the room. Are there any other  
2 counsel who are appearing? Ms McKechnie, you're here.

3 **MS McKECHNIE:** Yes ma'am, Ms McKechnie. We don't intend to take an active role today but  
4 we will be here for the rest of the week.

5 **MS SCHMIDT-McCLEAVE:** Ko Rachael Schmidt McCleave tōku ingoa, ko māua nei Ms  
6 Moore mō te Karauna. Again, I don't intend to take an active role but I'm here to observe.

7 **CHAIR:** Thank you.

8 **MS SCHMIDT-McCLEAVE:** Tēnā koutou.

9 **CHAIR:** All right, so we know everybody in the room so far.

10 Ms Sharkey, I invite you to start with the introductions, thank you.

11 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you Madam Chair. Tēnā koutou katoa, malo e lelei, my name is Tania  
12 Sharkey, I'm Counsel Assisting the Inquiry today. By way of visual introduction, I am a  
13 female of Tongan-Palagi descent, I am wearing a green puletaha which is a Pasifika dress  
14 with a black jacket and I have red glasses on.

15 I acknowledge all survivors who are present at this hearing today. I acknowledge  
16 the survivors who are joining us on the livestream. I acknowledge your supporters, families  
17 and friends and the community who have turned out in support at this hearing.

18 I specifically acknowledge survivors of abuse in the care of the Methodist Church  
19 of New Zealand and the survivors of abuse at Wesley College. I acknowledge William  
20 Wilson who is here today, he is the courageous Pacific survivor who bravely shared his  
21 experience of abuse at Wesley College at the Pacific Peoples public hearing in July 2001 at  
22 the Fale o Samoa in Māngere.

23 Whilst at the State institutional response hearing in August of this year we heard  
24 evidence from the Ministry of Education and Education Review Office regarding  
25 faith-based educational settings, including schools such as Wesley College. Today is also  
26 an extension of the Pacific Peoples public hearing; as representatives from the Methodist  
27 Church of New Zealand and Wesley College attend to publicly respond to abuse that  
28 happened at Wesley College to survivors like William Wilson and others who have since  
29 come forward.

30 The Pacific Peoples public hearing was called Tulou, Our Pacific Voices, Tatala e  
31 Pulonga. Tulou is a term commonly used in many Pacific languages to show courtesy  
32 when coming within another's personal space. It is used here to acknowledge the voice and  
33 personal spaces of our survivors, their supporters, friends and their families.

1 Tatala e pulonga is a Tongan metaphor meaning lifting the dark cloud. This  
2 metaphor is commonly used to demonstrate the lifting of darkness and in this context today  
3 a dark history of abuse in care. This is the spirit within which this hearing day is being  
4 conducted, it is why today's layout is different as we fofola e fala, roll out the mats  
5 figuratively speaking, and engage in talanoa as best we can in these circumstances,  
6 ensuring the survivor focus in receiving the responses of the Methodist Church and Wesley  
7 College and also observing that over 350 students are sitting in class today at the school in  
8 South Auckland, a school which is almost 75% Pasifika and 20% Māori.

9 The day will begin with Reverend Tautari, welcome, who is General Secretary of  
10 the Methodist Church of New Zealand. Since the scope was expanded to include other  
11 faiths including Methodist Church, this is the first time the Inquiry will hear publicly from  
12 the Methodist Church.

13 After the morning break we turn our focus to Wesley College. We will have two  
14 panel sessions focusing on themes relevant to historical, contemporary and future matters.  
15 We will hear from representatives of the Methodist Church and their boards. I have invited  
16 the Commissioners to take part with questions as we progress throughout the day.

17 In the afternoon sessions the Inquiry has invited a community voice to join the  
18 panel, Sekope Kepu is an old boy of Wesley College, a former prefect and now  
19 professional rugby player. He is a well-respected role model and leader in our Pasifika  
20 community, in particular our children and young people, and he is passionate about the  
21 prevention of bullying and violence in schools.

22 Finally, as the Methodist Church are inviting redress claims from survivors of abuse  
23 at Wesley College and other care settings under the Methodist Church, the final session  
24 today will focus on redress and recommendations.

25 I will leave my opening comments there, Madam Chair, as we have a lot to cover  
26 today. I will now hand matters over to Maria Dew KC to make her opening statement and  
27 introduce other witnesses.

28 **CHAIR:** Yes Ms Dew.

29 **OPENING STATEMENT BY THE METHODIST CHURCH AND WESLEY**  
30 **COLLEGE**

31 **MS DEW:** Thank you. Tēnā koutou ngā rangatira mā e huihui nei ki te kaupapa. Malo 'etau lava,  
32 talofa lava. Greetings Commissioners, and thank you on behalf of the Church and College.  
33 They are very much looking forward to today's process. I'll describe my appearance, I'm a  
34 female in her mid-50s with lightish hair and a red jacket on today.

1           So this morning, ma'am, we've been given the opportunity to make an opening on  
2           behalf of the church and on behalf of the College. I'm going to deal with opening matters  
3           because this is the first time that the Commission has had the opportunity to hear from, in  
4           person, the Methodist Church and the College, and then once I've finished opening, an  
5           opening submission, then Reverend Tara Tautari who is here in front of you today is going  
6           to also make an opening contextual statement, some acknowledgments and apologies on  
7           behalf of the church as well.

8           So I do have this opening submission of mine in writing. If you prefer a hard copy  
9           I'm happy to make these available and to Ms Sharkey also. Just while that's being  
10          distributed, I don't propose to read word for word all of this necessarily, but we want it to  
11          become part of the record and you'll also see attached at the back is a chronology, and it ca  
12          only be of some of the key events that we have selected, but we're hoping that this will be  
13          helpful for the talanoa that we're going to be doing this morning and this afternoon, just  
14          reminding ourselves of key dates of events, because --

15 **CHAIR:** That's really helpful, Ms Dew, we're grateful for that, thank you.

16 **MS DEW:** Yes, look I know myself when you're looking at such a mass of material sometimes to  
17          have a summary chronology, I hope we've done justice to it. We have certainly mentioned  
18          all of the survivor witnesses and the timing of their events at the school. So we hope that  
19          that will be of some assistance.

20          The green highlights, you just may notice, are matters where the College and the  
21          Church say these were efforts that were being made during the course of the abuse that was  
22          being experienced. So we'll take you to those in the course of matters.

23 **CHAIR:** Just before we go on, because we need a version that is accessible to everybody, has this  
24          been digitally sent through?

25 **MS DEW:** Yes, it has. I think we've just sent that this morning and there should be a copy online.  
26          My apologies to the Commissioners for that.

27 **CHAIR:** I wonder if somebody could make sure that Commissioner Gibson gets an e-mailed  
28          copyright now so that he's able to --

29 **MS DEW:** We'll make sure that a Word version is sent through now.

30 **CHAIR:** He needs to be able to follow it as we go.

31 **MS DEW:** Yes of course. My apologies, we probably should have done that yesterday. So would  
32          you like to wait for that to come through or are you happy for me to read in?

33 **CHAIR:** We don't want to make too much of a fuss but if you could do that as soon as you  
34          possibly can, that would be much appreciated.

1 **MS DEW:** It's on its way to you now.

2 **CHAIR:** Thank you.

3 **MS DEW:** So on the first page of opening submissions for the Church and College, the Church  
4 and College have asked me in short form to make some acknowledgments;  
5 acknowledgments that they have already made in a lot of the documentation produced to  
6 the Commission over the last two years, but acknowledgments that they want to make in  
7 public before the Commission, before survivors, and before all of those that might be  
8 listening online who want to understand the Church's position.

9 So on behalf of the church and College, they wish to openly acknowledge before  
10 this Commission to the public and to all survivors the pain and suffering of those who were  
11 abused whilst in the Church and Wesley College's care. To all survivors the Church and  
12 Wesley College boards wish to apologise unreservedly. These apologies will be provided  
13 by the General Secretary of the Church, Reverend Tara Tautari and by the General  
14 Secretary of Wesley College Trust Board, Mr Christopher Johnston who is also giving  
15 evidence later today.

16 The Church and College want to openly acknowledge those who have bravely  
17 provided evidence to assist the Commission and of course, as the Commission's rightly  
18 pointed out, we won't be naming any of those people, but we've been conscious of not  
19 grouping them together, so we wanted to specifically acknowledge individuals as best we  
20 can.

21 The former Wesley College students and parents who have come forward to the  
22 Commission and agreed to provide witness evidence. You are acknowledged today not as a  
23 group, but as 11 brave individuals. Those who have suffered abuse in the Church's former  
24 children's homes in Christchurch, Masterton and Auckland, you are equally acknowledged,  
25 not as a group, but as 18 brave individuals who have each shared your own history of abuse  
26 in care.

27 Those who have suffered abuse by a Minister or foster parents or in a parish setting,  
28 you are also acknowledged, not as a group, but as three brave individuals who have shared  
29 with the Commission the details of the abuse you've experienced.

30 Some of you are present today or are on the livestream. You are acknowledged.  
31 We particularly note the presence of two survivors today who are happy to be referred to as  
32 Ms M and Mr William Wilson who has already been named by my friend this morning and  
33 has provided evidence. You are both present today, the Church and College want to  
34 acknowledge your presence and bravery.

1           Finally, there are individuals who have not given evidence before the Commission  
2 but have come forward to the Church to seek redress or may be considering doing so. You  
3 are all acknowledged and encouraged to come forward to seek redress.

4           The Church will also deal with further particular acknowledgments of its failings to  
5 be made this morning by Reverend Tautari in her statement.

6           In terms of the hearing today, the Commission will hear today from the Church and  
7 College leaders who hold themselves responsible for the past and for the future change  
8 needed. Giving evidence today will be Reverend Tautari as General Secretary of the  
9 Church, who will give contextual evidence and then participate in both the looking back  
10 and looking forward parts of the talanoa. Etuini Talakai, Vice-President of the Methodist  
11 Church and a former student of Wesley College, will also participate in the Wesley College  
12 talanoa panels. And for the College, Reverend Ian Faulkner, former principal and Tumuaki  
13 of Wesley College from 2003 through to 2014, so a very significant period of leadership in  
14 the school. Reverend Faulkner will participate in the Wesley College looking back panel.  
15 And Mr Christopher Johnston is General Secretary of the Trust Board who's held that  
16 position since 2005 and has delegated authority to represent the board today. And finally  
17 Mr Brian Evans who is the current principal and Tumuaki of Wesley College, appointed in  
18 2018, Dr Evans will participate in the Wesley College looking forward panel this afternoon.

19           As I've said, today's hearing is the commissioners' first opportunity to hear directly  
20 from the representatives of the Church and College. They have provided a significant  
21 amount of material, as all of the churches have, over the period of 2021 and 2022. I have  
22 listed just more-- and I won't take you through them -- the more recent witness statements,  
23 joint witness statements, supplementary witness statements and also you'll note at the  
24 bottom of that paragraph the witness statement of Etuini Talakai who has been asked by the  
25 Commission to come forward into the talanoa panels, so he has produced a short statement,  
26 as has Reverend Ian Faulkner who's also been asked by the Commission to come forward  
27 and be part of the talanoa.

28           So those statements, whether you have been able to have -- we appreciate they've  
29 just been delivered in recent days, if you wish them to be read in the evidence for your  
30 benefit then we'd be happy to do that, perhaps you can just indicate after the break.

31           To assist the Commission, this opening statement also addresses in brief terms the  
32 Methodist beliefs, the structure and governance of the Church and the College, and the role  
33 of Te Tiriti o Waitangi; the nature and extent of the abuse in the Church and care settings,



1 and the Church and College's responses to that abuse, monitoring, oversight, safeguarding,  
2 complaints and redress.

3 The Church and College particularly look forward to today's talanoa. They  
4 acknowledge that this is not a frequent event, that it's specific to Pasifika and they feel very  
5 privileged to be able to take part in such a talanoa.

6 So dealing with the Methodist Church and its beliefs. We've set out, and I won't  
7 read all of that, but the Methodist history dates back to the 1740s and the renewal  
8 movement from England. We have, as a core to their structure of beliefs, is firstly do no  
9 harm, secondly doing good, and thirdly, by attending upon all the ordinance of God.

10 And while those belief sentiments have been modernised, fundamentally, they  
11 remain at the core of Methodist beliefs. Do no harm, do good, and attend to the ordinance  
12 of God. These principles underlie the laws and regulations of the Methodist Church, called  
13 the Law Book, which set out the beliefs of the Church and expectations of its members.  
14 And they're publicly available on the Methodist Church website, the laws and regulations.

15 As to the structure and governance, the Church was established under the Methodist  
16 Church of New Zealand Act 1911, so a little different from other churches in New Zealand,  
17 which created an autonomous New Zealand Methodist Church separating it from the  
18 Australasian Methodist Church. The Church in New Zealand operates as a national Church  
19 responsible to its own Methodist Conference.

20 Conference is the primary decision-making body of the Church. It is the final  
21 authority on all matters of the Church and exercises oversight over entities affiliated with  
22 the Church. When Conference is not in session, its powers are exercised by the President.  
23 So the Conference meets every two years and in the interim the President makes decisions,  
24 but ultimately all those decisions are taken back to Conference, and matters within the  
25 Methodist Church are very much done by consensus at Conference and they discuss until  
26 consensus is reached on significant decisions.

27 Entities and organisations associated with the Church such as the Methodist  
28 Missions, the Wesley College Trust Board and the former children's home have their own  
29 constitutions and governance structures, but they are responsible for their own day-to-day  
30 activities. However, they are connected to the Church through Conference and are bound  
31 by its decisions.

32 Te Tiriti o Waitangi. It has been almost 40 years since the Methodist Church began  
33 its journey to becoming a bicultural Church. In 1983 Conference established a joint  
34 working committee starting this journey. In 1989 Conference approved and committed to

1 principles of Te Tiriti as the covenant establishing the basis of the bicultural partnership  
2 between equal partners, te taha Māori and tauwi leadership within the Church. Under the  
3 leadership of the Church, Conference is required to act in a manner consistent and having  
4 regard to the principles of Te Tiriti and to make decisions which demonstrate partnership.  
5 Decision-making at Conference is by consensus, in accordance with Methodist practice and  
6 requires the agreement of both partners.

7 The partnership between te taha Māori and tauwi is also expressed through the  
8 Council of Conference which is its visioning body for the Church and comprises ten  
9 members appointed. And I'll take you over now to the Methodist Church care settings.

10 The primary care setting for the Methodist Church was formerly its three residential  
11 children's homes, South Auckland, Papanui children's home opened in 1914 and --

12 **CHAIR:** I think that's South Island not South Auckland.

13 **MS DEW:** Sorry, South Island, my apologies, 1914 to 1987. Masterton children's home, 1921 to  
14 1978 and Auckland's children's home, 1913 to 1975. So all of these children's homes are  
15 now closed, but over the time they were open, records show that 4,342 children were  
16 admitted to the homes between the 1950s and 1984. Those are records that have been  
17 provided, including repeated admissions.

18 Children were placed in the homes by their guardians and/or by the State. The  
19 homes each operated independently governed by boards and management committees that  
20 were responsible and reported to Conference. In the 1970s the Methodist Mission took  
21 over management of the homes and operated them as part of their regional community  
22 services.

23 From the 1950s to the early 1980s the homes were involved in arranging fostering  
24 placements for residents and other children with the assistance of the Methodist Mission  
25 social agency. The missions later became the primary provider of foster care services  
26 within the Church. Currently Wesley Community Action, Wellington Mission provides  
27 foster care and other social caregiving services under contracts with the Ministry of Social  
28 Development, now Oranga Tamariki.

29 As to the nature and extent of abuse, the Church acknowledges that some children  
30 were horribly abused and neglected while in its care at the children's homes in foster  
31 placements connected with the homes and in other foster placements arranged by the  
32 Church. The majority of its redress claims received by the Church, currently 20 out of 28  
33 redress claims that have or are in the process of being resolved. So 20 out of 28, obviously  
34 a very significant number, relate to the abuse in the children's homes, and/or are connected

1 to foster placements that involve sexual and/or physical abuse by adults against children, as  
2 well as emotional and psychological abuse, neglect and abuse of power by those adults.

3 The Church has received some abuse claims from residents of children's home  
4 involving abuse by other residents. The Church has received a small number of sexual  
5 abuse claims from survivors outside its formal care settings, but that involve ministers or  
6 other members of the Church. The Church accepts that it is likely that there are other abuse  
7 survivors who have experienced abuse in these settings.

8 As to monitoring, oversight and safeguarding, the Church exercised oversight of the  
9 homes and missions through Conference. The Church accepts that this was insufficient for  
10 the monitoring, oversight and safeguarding of those in its care and this enabled abuse to  
11 occur. The children's homes and missions operated their own vetting, monitoring and  
12 safeguarding processes. They were subject to legislative requirements, and State  
13 involvement in the care of children as that expanded.

14 A key moment for the Church in relation to the care of children in their homes was  
15 the Commission on Children's Homes Report delivered in 1961 to the Methodist  
16 Conference. In 1959 the Church had appointed a Commission to examine the Church's  
17 practice of care of children. Recommendations to the Conference included ensuring that  
18 those providing care for children were adequately trained and resourced. These key  
19 changes were not implemented through any consistent or 'All of Church' approach. This  
20 was, the Church recognises now, a material missed opportunity.

21 The Church accepts that protection policies and procedures were required across all  
22 its Church-related entities and should have been implemented earlier. In 2000 the Church  
23 implemented Being Safe, Keeping Safe, protocols designed to keep children safe across all  
24 Church-related entities. In 2008 the Church introduced mandatory Police vetting and  
25 background checks into criminal records of staff and ministers, young people, anyone that  
26 was working with young people and vulnerable adults, and the Police vetting every five  
27 years is a requirement for all Ministers. Ministers who do not consent may be removed  
28 from Ministry. Ministers are also required to have professional supervision.

29 The current position is that the Church, through the Methodist Alliance, provides a  
30 child protection policy template for parishes which is available on the website and the  
31 Church is consulting through the connection about an update to this child protection policy,  
32 and this is an agenda item for the Conference in November this year.

33 **CHAIR:** Ms Dew, I'm anxious about time, but I'm also anxious that this is the only opportunity  
34 the Methodist Church has to state its position. I think we've been through what has been a

1 very useful background with some important things about structure and where we're at etc.  
2 We're going to be dealing with redress at the end of the day, and I'm just wondering in the  
3 interests of time --

4 **MS DEW:** Absolutely, I'm conscious of that tension and I am mindful that there are the public  
5 listening today and I know that the Commission do know this material. Having said that,  
6 I take your point and --

7 **CHAIR:** It's a matter of summarising really if you can, and I think you will find, in fact I know  
8 you will find that through the examination of your witnesses and the others that this  
9 material will come out.

10 **MS DEW:** Yes, I'm happy to move forward to page 10 and perhaps just deal with Wesley College  
11 now by way of a brief opening.

12 **CHAIR:** Thank you, I hope you don't feel I'm closing you down.

13 **MS DEW:** Absolutely not.

14 **CHAIR:** Because I know it will come out through the talanoa process.

15 **MS DEW:** I'm comfortable that the opening is there for the record and --

16 **CHAIR:** Well read and will go on the website as well.

17 **MS DEW:** Thank you, I'll take you through to page 10 and Wesley College. The focus of much  
18 of today's hearing will relate to Wesley College, and I've referred to this chronology, we  
19 hope you'll find that helpful.

20 In terms of the structure and governance of Wesley College, it was established in  
21 1844 to cater for the education originally of Māori students. The College is New Zealand's  
22 oldest registered secondary school, it has a role of some 360 children, boys, year 9 to 13,  
23 girls year 11 to 13, it's a boarding and day school, and it is the only Methodist school  
24 Church in New Zealand.

25 And I've dealt with some of the structure and governance there, I won't take you  
26 through that, but I know from yesterday that you understood, through discussions with the  
27 Catholic Church, this process of integration of the privately owned schools into State  
28 integrated schools and Wesley College was one of the first colleges to take up the State  
29 integration and has been a State integrated school since that time.

30 **CHAIR:** With special character.

31 **MS DEW:** Absolutely, and I know that you understand that difference for these integrated  
32 schools, so I don't need to take you to that. But obviously we remain with a Proprietor  
33 Trust Board who owns and operates the property and the boarding house, and we also have  
34 a separate State operated School Board, and then the oversight of the Methodist Church.

1 Just over on page 11, the relationship with the Methodist Church, Wesley College is  
2 affiliated to the Methodist Church which provides oversight of the Trust Board through  
3 Conference. I will take you down further to paragraph 4.9 in relation to Te Tiriti o  
4 Waitangi for Wesley College.

5 In accordance with the Trust Board's original purposes and integration agreement,  
6 the board encourages Māori enrolment and achievement at the College. And we will hear  
7 from Reverend Faulkner about the significant work that he did to re-identify, re-shape and  
8 modernise the special character of the school in relation to the Methodist Church. And  
9 there are documents that have been produced to the Commission on that.

10 Over at page 12 at paragraph 4.12 is a snapshot of the three largest ethnic groups  
11 within the College. I just identify back in 1995 the ethnic composition of the school roll  
12 was 28% Māori, 12% Tongan, 4% Samoan, and a much larger group of Pākehā. By 2015  
13 the roll for Māori was 16%, 53% Tongan and 21% Samoan, and now in the current year the  
14 roll includes 20% Māori, 41% Tongan and 15% Samoan. So you can see the College has  
15 had a dedicated commitment to a school roll of Māori and Pasifika over its recent life and  
16 dating right back to its creation.

17 The nature and extent of the abuse, I just deal with the first paragraph and then I  
18 will leave it for the talanoa, but the College does not shy away from the difficult reality of  
19 the survivors' evidence to the Commission. Abuse has been an ongoing issue for the  
20 College. The College boards acknowledge that the physical, sexual, emotional and  
21 psychological abuse inflicted on some students in the care of the boards has had significant  
22 consequences for those students, their whānau and communities.

23 So you'll see in the chronology and in today's evidence that that abuse, there was a  
24 significant period from 1983 through to 1994 when there is this cluster of witness survivors  
25 who have come forward to the Commission. But the Church and the College do not shy  
26 away from evidence of abuse outside of that period. But the Commission has certainly  
27 received strong evidence of witness survivor accounts in this 1983 to 1994 period.

28 Over that period you had two different principals, Mr Cowley and Reverend  
29 Faulkner and they were both making efforts, but you've got Reverend Faulkner here today  
30 talking about significant efforts he made. But the College acknowledges that not all of that  
31 worked and part of this Commission's work is to understand why, because it's not simple,  
32 it's complex work that requires the minds and evidence before this Commission.

33 So at paragraph 4.18 I've just talked about that 11 year span where there is a cluster  
34 of nine survivor witnesses. You have a total of 12 survivor witnesses. We know there are

1 others, we know they exist around that period, but this is a particular cluster and a difficult  
2 period in the history of the College.

3 There are problems today. You have a witness statement from somebody from  
4 2022. So this is an ongoing challenge for the College and the Church. They acknowledge  
5 that.

6 So thank you, I will take you over to the final page, a summary. The Church and  
7 College have been engaged with this Commission for just over two years since the first  
8 Notice to Produce in September 2020. It has been a humbling experience for the College  
9 and the Church to gather in one place, for the benefit of the Commission and survivors, the  
10 evidence of how the Church and College have carried out their duties to care for children  
11 and young persons over the past 50 years. The failings, the faults and serious harm are all  
12 laid bare. The Church and College want to state clearly that they are committed to this  
13 work and the outcome of the Royal Commission, and to the survivors that have come  
14 forward and those who are still to come.

15 So thank you for indulging that opening on behalf of the Church and College. We  
16 now have Reverend Tautari who is --

17 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Counsel, sorry, can I just use this opportunity just quickly to get  
18 some information about the -- I just want to get a sense of the scale of the homes actually  
19 that provide services to Oranga Tamariki, the number of children that are in those homes,  
20 the scale of the foster care service.

21 **MS DEW:** Obviously you'll see from the opening that there aren't homes currently open, so it's  
22 just services through the Methodist Mission. I don't have the figures of that to hand, but  
23 happy to retrieve that in the break and we'll make sure we provide the number so you can  
24 understand the extent, I can understand your question.

25 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Appreciate it, thank you, thank you counsel.

26 **MS DEW:** So now I'm going to invite Reverend Tautari to deal with her opening statement. It is  
27 not new material, but it is a condensing of all of the statements and evidence that you've  
28 received and some reflections and acknowledgments on behalf of the Church. So Reverend  
29 Tautari -- does the witness need to be sworn in?

30 **CHAIR:** Yes, I'll ask Reverend to take the affirmation.

31 **REVEREND TARA TAUTARI (Affirmed)**

32 **MS DEW:** Just before we begin, I have hard copies of it for some of the Commission, we've also  
33 sent through a Word version for the Commissioner.

34 **CHAIR:** Is this evidence other than what has already been provided?

1 **MS DEW:** As I say it's a summary of the evidence that's already been provided.

2 **CHAIR:** So the three also different documents?

3 **MS DEW:** Yes, it's created as an opening statement, but obviously she's just sworn in to give this  
4 evidence. But it is considered to be a summary of all her evidence just to try and --

5 **CHAIR:** Thank you, it's good to have it all in one place.

6 **MS DEW:** Yes. So Reverend Tautari, have you got that opening statement in front of you?

7 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, I do.

8 **MS DEW:** Thank you. If you could commence, I understand you're going to do a short mihi and  
9 then commence reading your evidence thank you.

10 **CHAIR:** Are you going to read the entire?

11 **REV TAUTARI:** No, I'm not, I will read just the first couple of pages, including the  
12 acknowledgment and apology and that will be it.

13 **CHAIR:** Thank you so much, because we do have all your previous statements and we've read  
14 those, but again, I think the interests of everybody is we get into our discussion which  
15 would be great, so thank you so much for that.

16 **REV TAUTARI:** Tēnā koutou katoa. Kua tae tātou i runga i te reo karanga o tēnei rā. Ka tika me  
17 mihi ki ngā purapura ora, me wā koutou kaha ki te whai oranga, ahakoa te aha. Ka mihi  
18 hoki ki te Kōmihana a te Karauna, he kaupapa hōhonu tēnei. Nā reira, ka poto taku mihi kia  
19 tīmata ai tātou te kōrero.

20 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Tena koe.

21 **REV TAUTARI:** My name is Tara Tautari. I am a Māori woman in my early 50s. I have curly  
22 hair, I wear glasses and I am wearing a black dress.

23 On behalf of the Methodist Church of New Zealand, Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa,  
24 I acknowledge the pain and suffering of all those who were abused while in the care of the  
25 Methodist Church. The Church carries the primary responsibility for ensuring the  
26 protection and well-being of those in its care. We failed in this sacred duty and are  
27 determined to make amends.

28 On behalf of the Methodist Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, we apologise to  
29 every person who has been abused while in the care of the Church and its related  
30 institutions. The Church did not have safeguarding policies and processes in place and this  
31 led to unimaginable suffering of some children, young people and vulnerable adults. In  
32 some cases, the abusers were employees of Church related institutions; in others, the  
33 abusers were Clergy members. In some cases the abusers were students at our Methodist  
34 College.

1 In each case, there is no excuse for the abusive behaviour, nor for the harm inflicted  
2 on innocent people. Such abuse has no place in our faith and we apologise unequivocally  
3 to all those survivors. We thank all survivors who came forward to the Commission to  
4 share their experiences and acknowledge their courage in speaking the truth. And here  
5 I just want to give a mihi to William Wilson and to Ms M, I have not had the privilege of  
6 meeting William, but I greeted Ms M this morning. Thank you for your truth telling here.

7 In particular, we acknowledge the additional harm caused to survivors when the  
8 Church initially refused to believe them, sought to contest their concerns or looked to refer  
9 the complaint elsewhere and failed to recognise that the Church also needed to address the  
10 complaint. We apologise with sorrow and shame for the callousness of such treatment. It  
11 was wrong and should not have happened.

12 We acknowledge that the trauma experienced as a result of abuse has had long-term  
13 impacts on the lives of survivors and not only on survivors, but also on their whānau and  
14 their loved ones. We apologise unreservedly to all those who have witnessed and lived  
15 with the consequences of the trauma experienced by survivors. The Methodist Church of  
16 Aotearoa New Zealand commits itself to ensure that safeguarding policies and processes  
17 are in place in the Church and its related institutions.

18 In our Methodist way, our leadership, both Clergy and laity, will gather in  
19 Conference in November this year to share the stories and lessons learned from all  
20 survivors to further shape the processes and safeguards we put in place to ensure all people  
21 in our care are safe.

22 We are committed to hearing from all those who suffered abuse in our care and we  
23 encourage you to make contact. Information on our redress process can be found on our  
24 website. Kua takoto te mānuka i ngā purapura ora, mā mātou o te Hāhi e tauawhi te wero  
25 kua whārikihia. Tēnā tātou katoa.

26 **CHAIR:** Tēnā koe Reverend Tautari.

27 **MS DEW:** Thank you. Look at this point I don't have any questions for Reverend. I know that  
28 the Commission and Counsel Assisting and also the Church and College are keen to get  
29 into the talanoa, and to have questions asked of them. So the Church and College are ready  
30 to call forward the other witnesses for the first panel today, the looking back panel. So I'm  
31 going to invite Etuini Talakai --

32 **CHAIR:** Not just yet. I think the plan is, and I'll let Ms Sharkey do this. She'd like to ask --

33 **MS DEW:** Sorry, I appreciate sorry, I may have jumped ahead.

34 **CHAIR:** But we're grateful for the enthusiasm.



1 **MS DEW:** Very keen to get on with the talanoa but perhaps just a moment too soon, I'll leave it to  
2 my friend.

3 **CHAIR:** This is the beginning, so I'm going to invite Ms Sharkey to speak to,-- could I just ask  
4 you, what would you like us to call you?

5 **REV TAUTARI:** Tara.

6 **CHAIR:** Good, we'll call you Tara, that makes it a lot easier, thank you so much.

7 **MS SHARKEY:** It can be quite difficult for a Pacific person to address Clergy by their first name  
8 but I'll do my best.

9 **CHAIR:** It's hard for all of us, we're all brought up to be respectful, but if that's what you'd like to  
10 be called we'll honour that.

11 **MS SHARKEY:** Tara, mōrena, thank you. Look we did hear in opening from your counsel  
12 reference to the year 1743, the renewal movement and the Church's stated desire. The  
13 reason why I start there is because we heard reference to that in Dr Longhurst's comments  
14 at the opening ceremony of this faith-based hearing, and he noted that assurances from  
15 Church leaders to do no harm and to do good are nothing new and they are asking for  
16 faith-based organisations to be open, honest and transparent.

17 And in light of your opening statements, I'm just wondering, Tara, whether that is  
18 the spirit in which we are going to meet today in openness, honesty and transparency?

19 **REV TAUTARI:** Kia ora for your question, Ms Sharkey. I do listen to Dr Longhurst and heard  
20 the challenge that he presented to us and have spoken with others since then and reflected  
21 on the need for the Church to move beyond platitudes to demonstrable action, and so we  
22 come here in the spirit of honesty, openness and transparency to share and to learn together,  
23 but most importantly to hold ourselves accountable to survivors.

24 **MS SHARKEY:** Kia ora. So just confirming some comments, Reverend Tautari, in your  
25 statement that the Methodist Church of New Zealand is completely autonomous, so no  
26 external Methodist Church or any structure has any control or governance over any aspect  
27 of the Methodist Church of New Zealand.

28 **REV TAUTARI:** That is correct.

29 **MS SHARKEY:** I just want to bring up on Trial Director a document. It talks about a 1983  
30 power sharing workshop, and we're talking about Te Tiriti here, you'll see something  
31 magically appear on the screen in front of you -- well, it should. Power sharing workshop  
32 in Conference that results in the Methodist Church --

33 **CHAIR:** It's not up yet, Ms Sharkey, just give us a little moment.

1 **MS SHARKEY:** So the Methodist Church became a bicultural Church and it was to honour and  
2 apply Te Tiriti with an awareness that a number of Wesleyan missionaries were significant,  
3 you say in your statement amongst those who urged Māori to sign Te Tiriti.

4 This is a different structure to many other organisations we've seen and I just  
5 wanted to ask you if you could tell us or summarise what a bicultural Church looks like in  
6 operation. How do you see that expressed and demonstrated in your governance structures?

7 **REV TAUTARI:** For the Methodist Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, it is expressed in the way  
8 in which we take decisions together at every single level of governance, where you have  
9 taha Māori and tauwiwi taking decisions by consensus in the first instance. So nothing can  
10 be done or decided upon without the agreement of the two partners. And that is from rohe  
11 to synod to our highest governance levels which include, as was mentioned by Ms Dew, the  
12 Conference which is our ultimate governing body, number one.

13 Secondly, it takes expression through our own Trinity Theological College which  
14 has developed a theological curriculum for ministerial formation and lay formation that is  
15 embedded in the whenua here in Aotearoa, and takes cognisance of tikanga and Pasifika.  
16 And you will see that when you look at the curriculum and you have recourse to see that we  
17 have, for example, a full Moana Studies strand which is one of its only kind in Aotearoa  
18 today. Those are just two examples.

19 **MS SHARKEY:** Right, so this happens in 1983. Why do you think it took that period of time for  
20 the Church to make that, to take that step of becoming bicultural?

21 **REV TAUTARI:** Why did it take from the beginning to 1983?

22 **MS SHARKEY:** Was it leadership in earlier years? What really made the Methodist Church of  
23 New Zealand take that very, I guess in today's term, progressive, very strong step forward  
24 to make it a partnership with Māori?

25 **REV TAUTARI:** It took a long time because the Church did not understand what it meant to be  
26 partners, to share power, to share power in very real and tangible ways; for example,  
27 resource sharing, decision-making. These in former times were held by a small group of  
28 leadership that was largely patriarchal. And so our journey is just that, a journey of  
29 becoming more than that so we can live out a faith that is real here.

30 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you, Reverend Tautari, we're just moving on now to the different care  
31 settings, as we heard before, three children's homes which we are looking at this morning  
32 and later Wesley College. There is an acknowledgment in one of your statements that  
33 while there were complex and interrelated societal attitudes in play and State support based

1           impediments, the Church acknowledges that it carried the primary responsibility.

2           Remember that statement? We can bring it up if you'd like to.

3   **REV TAUTARI:** I remember it.

4   **MS SHARKEY:** I just wanted to ask about that first part, "complex and interrelated societal  
5           attitudes". What were those?

6   **REV TAUTARI:** In terms of the children's homes?

7   **MS SHARKEY:** Yes.

8   **REV TAUTARI:** I think we, in those times, were charged with the responsibility of care for  
9           children who themselves were coming from dysfunctional families, and this  
10          dysfunctionality has different reasons. And so when in our care we were dealing with very  
11          complex situations, and I don't think the Church understood that, the complexity of that. It  
12          had a one size fits all approach that did not allow it to look at children and care for them in  
13          a way that they should have been cared for.

14   **MS SHARKEY:** And you also reference "State support based impediments". Could I ask what  
15          those-,- what do you mean by that, "State support- -based impediments"?

16   **REV TAUTARI:** I think the State itself was unhelpful.

17   **MS SHARKEY:** In what ways?

18   **REV TAUTARI:** In its structure, in the way that it had itself deemed or designed a structure that  
19          did not allow for the complexity of children coming into their care, and once again they had  
20          a "one size fits all" approach. There was, from what I can see, very little monitoring and  
21          oversight and this contributed to the abuse and the impunity of people's actions.

22   **MS SHARKEY:** Okay, so from the documents we see that there wasn't much involvement from  
23          the State once a child was placed.

24   **REV TAUTARI:** Exactly.

25   **MS SHARKEY:** And then there's also reference to the funding, the funding that was primarily  
26          responsible by the Methodist Church of New Zealand. So was there inadequacy in the  
27          funding from the State?

28   **REV TAUTARI:** There was, it was -- very much so.

29   **CHAIR:** Can I just ask about that. It struck me when I was reading some of the documents that  
30          there seemed to be almost -- that the State was almost invisible in the earlier days of the  
31          care. Is that a right impression that I've got?

32   **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, I think that's a fair assessment. I think the State was -- and this is just my  
33          opinion -- the State was very clear about the need to move people along.

34   **CHAIR:** Through the process?

- 1 **REV TAUTARI:** Through the process, and to tick a box and then that was that.
- 2 **CHAIR:** So did that mean that the Church was largely cut adrift to manage the way that it dealt  
3 with these children etc, is that right? I appreciate you're talking from an historic point of  
4 view when you weren't there, so only comment if you can.
- 5 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, I believe the Church was cut adrift, to a certain degree. Yes, I think that's  
6 a fair assessment.
- 7 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** It's the children who are adrift, aren't they, it's not just the Church,  
8 it's that the children are there without the tamariki that are cut adrift essentially without the  
9 oversight of the State.
- 10 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, I think you're exactly right, Commissioner, because the price that is paid is  
11 always the children, they pay the price of these decisions and this type of structure and the  
12 lack of rigour when it came to monitoring and oversight, from both the Church and from  
13 State.
- 14 **MS SHARKEY:** And in some of the documents there were attempts by the Church to contact the  
15 State and let them know about the issues that you were facing, or the struggles and that you  
16 needed that assistance.
- 17 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, this was identified as well. I mean there are, as you say, there were  
18 attempts made to reach out to get the support that was needed, and unfortunately that didn't  
19 always work in the way that would have been most helpful.
- 20 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you. We're just going to now move along, unless the Commissioners had  
21 any further questions. I see Commissioner Erueti is thinking about anything?  
22 Commissioner, no?
- 23 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Just while he's thinking, malo le soifua ma le lagi mamā  
24 Fa'atalofa atu i lau susuga i le fa'afeagaiga. Reverend Tautari. (Greetings to your good  
25 health and wellbeing. A warm welcome to the reverend).
- 26 **REV TAUTARI:** Tēnā koe.
- 27 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Even back in the early days in terms of the Church, was there a  
28 deliberate planning by the Church around how you would care and nurture for these  
29 children that were coming into your --
- 30 **REV TAUTARI:** Not centrally, each of the homes had its own governance structure, and even  
31 though there were requirements to Conference, there wouldn't have been the intention to  
32 really drill down and have a comprehensive consolidated oversight right across the board.
- 33 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Would it be fair to say then that perhaps the Church also saw  
34 this as a form of revenue?

1 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, I believe you can say that. I think there were other variable -- I mean there  
2 are other things to be included in that, but that would definitely be one.

3 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** I haven't had an opportunity to think about the question. Tēnā koe  
4 whaea, e mihi ana ki a koe me tō kōrero mai i takoha mai ki mua i te aroaro o te Kōmihana,  
5 nau mai, nau mai. We'll probably come back to this later, but it's on the question of  
6 governance, to see in '83 that strong commitment to biculturalism.

7 But the question that we always have is to what extent is that reflected in the  
8 governance itself in terms of representation by Māori, by Tongan, Samoan, given the large  
9 numbers within the kura and that are impacted by the other services that are provided by the  
10 faith. You said that it was very patriarchal and small. Has that changed over time?

11 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, it has. It has changed because primarily the Church put a stake in the sand  
12 and said we want to shift now and we want to be seen to demonstrate what that means  
13 representationally. So for example, we refer to our Council of Conference which is one of  
14 our supreme visioning bodies, and there you have equal numbers of both Māori and tauwiwi.  
15 And this sees itself throughout the way in which we take decisions, the way we make  
16 connectional appointments, it's the same thing. We have Māori and tauwiwi represented  
17 equally.

18 So saying, though, it's important to know that I am the first Māori General Secretary  
19 in the history of the Church and we -- this year we celebrate 200 years of Methodism in  
20 Aotearoa and I think that's significant.

21 However, I would say that women in the Church and Māori women and tauwiwi  
22 women are very well represented in our decision-making bodies.

23 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** So if we start with -- it seems that the Conference is the governing  
24 body. To what extent are Māori and Pasifika reflected on that governing body?

25 **REV TAUTARI:** In the same way, is that there are no decisions taken at Conference without the  
26 agreement of te taha Māori and with tauwiwi. So they --

27 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Sorry, I don't mean to interrupt, I'm just trying to get to the nub of  
28 it. Are there 10 members on that ward or more?

29 **REV TAUTARI:** For example, our Conference is made up of representatives from all over the  
30 country, from the parishes, synods, Clergy, laity. And we will gather in November, there  
31 will be approximately 300 of us, but for us it's the not necessarily the numbers, it's about  
32 the power sharing around decision-making. So if you have, for example -- I just pull this  
33 out of the air -- 20 tauwiwi people and three taha Māori, the decision-making is still the

1 same. Nothing will be decided until you have the agreement of both. It is not numerical  
2 like that.

3 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Okay, I appreciate that. And so is there no governance body in  
4 addition to the Conference for making decisions?

5 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, Council of Conference.

6 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Okay, so Council of Conference, how many members?

7 **REV TAUTARI:** 10 Māori and 10 tauwiwi.

8 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** So 20 in total.

9 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes.

10 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** 10 Māori and 10 tauwiwi. So for tauwiwi Pasifika, what are the  
11 numbers of the Pasifika represented within that governing body?

12 **REV TAUTARI:** It fluctuates depending on who is nominated from the tauwiwi group. So it can  
13 be anywhere between half Pasifika, but it really changes according to who is nominated and  
14 the group is nominated every year.

15 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** So currently what's the composition of tauwiwi?

16 **CHAIR:** Do you want to get back to us on that?

17 **REV TAUTARI:** Okay, I will come back with a hard and fast answer.

18 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** If we could come to the kura itself just briefly. Again, the  
19 composition there in the Board of Trustees or the School Board I think they're called now,  
20 in terms of Māori and Pasifika, do you know the numbers there?

21 **REV TAUTARI:** No, I mean I will get that detail for you. But I would say that taha Māori is  
22 represented as are Pasifika on the board, but I will need to get you the specific numbers.

23 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Tēnā koe, thank you.

24 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Can I go back to the children as revenue, a potential source of  
25 revenue. We've heard from survivors who allege that money changed hands for them to  
26 leave the children's homes to go to people who were otherwise not vetted or had already  
27 been flagged for being potential abusers. Are you aware of that?

28 **REV TAUTARI:** I have heard those survivor statements and their experiences. I'm not aware of  
29 that in the way you are describing it in the Methodist Church.

30 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** I think it would be useful to know the downstream effects of some  
31 of these decisions was amongst the most horrific we've heard across the Inquiry.

32 **REV TAUTARI:** I agree with you. We, without naming names because -- we had come to a  
33 resolution of a redress claim and part of that was acknowledging that the money we had  
34 received in the years this survivor had been in the care of the Church had to be paid back.

1 And while we couldn't calculate that to the nth degree, we were careful to acknowledge that  
2 with a payment, and accepted the principle around that.

3 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Thank you. I think the impacts of some of these decisions really  
4 impacted on more families than those of the children that were just taken into care and left  
5 care, thanks.

6 **MS SHARKEY:** Reverend Tautari, I'm just moving along to survivor voice. You had  
7 acknowledged Ms M earlier. I just had a few questions around that. We've received some  
8 documents this morning from your counsel that I would like to discuss. I'm not sure  
9 whether you have those documents in front of you because they won't be in our Trial  
10 Director, we just received them this morning.

11 **REV TAUTARI:** Ka pai, it's okay.

12 **CHAIR:** Just looking at the top one, I note that there are lots of names of people in here that we  
13 haven't had a chance to redact or to get permission to use, so if everybody could take  
14 extreme caution in not -- and I'm sure you will Tara -- not to name names here.

15 The other thing is we need a Word version copy for Commissioner Gibson. Is that  
16 available to be sent to him?

17 **MS HARKESS:** They're quite old documents from the 1980s so we can see what we can do to get  
18 an alternative, but we don't have one at the moment.

19 **CHAIR:** All right, if you can see to that that would be helpful thank you. And so that  
20 means -- and it's important for the public as well, that anything that is referred to is read out  
21 as far as it can be safeguarding the identity, so if either of you are referring to parts of it, if  
22 you could read out the whole sentence or the whole paragraph that you're referring to.

23 **MS SHARKEY:** Reverend Tautari, I just have some questions around the documents we've  
24 received and really where I start is the attitude by a Reverend towards what happened to  
25 Ms M and her experience, and I'm looking at the page that has number 3 at the top. And  
26 some of the comments that -- it seems to be an extract from a letter to the Reverend  
27 Superintendent of that district from another Reverend. On the second paragraph it says:

28 "Now the vexed question of whether or not -- this Reverend has GRO-B  
29 through incest with the adopted daughter."

30 And Reverend Tautari, just looking at that comment and how this Reverend has  
31 described that experience of Ms M, who was sexually abused by this minister, yet it being  
32 referred to by this particular Reverend as something quite flippant. Can I just get your  
33 response in relation to that?

1 **REV TAUTARI:** I think it's disgusting. I think it's abhorrent. I think that this could even be put  
2 in a letter shows you the degree of freedom people felt to write like this and to have it  
3 distributed throughout the Church, to key connectional leaders.

4 **MS SHARKEY:** Then there's another comment towards the end of the page and it says:

5 "Thinking over the possible legal ramifications of the Church knowing and not  
6 telling, I doubt whether there would be any. If this girl is having counselling for whatever  
7 reason, then I think they will work out whether there is anything to tell and I don't think for  
8 one moment that the Church bears any responsibility to do this."

9 Reverend Tautari, it looks to be a complete disregard, as you said before, of this  
10 survivor's experience and a desire to, would you say, protect the reputation of the Church?

11 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, completely. It was all about protecting the reputation of the Church and  
12 also of powerful people in the Church, powerful people being Clergy.

13 **MS SHARKEY:** And in this particular situation -- this was 1989 -- and that Reverend continues  
14 to foster care for children, it's the survivor's experience. What are your comments in  
15 response to that when the Church knew in 1989?

16 **REV TAUTARI:** My comments are that the Church was complicit in enabling this abuse to  
17 continue, that it sent a message that Clergy could behave in this way and get away with it.  
18 And that it sent a message to women that they were not safe, even in our most sacred  
19 spaces.

20 **MS SHARKEY:** Were the Methodist Church aware that there were Ministers, Reverends who  
21 were fostering children in this situation?

22 **REV TAUTARI:** Can I just check, Ms Sharkey, when you say was the Church aware, do you  
23 mean --

24 **MS SHARKEY:** Were Conference aware, were senior leadership aware that some of the  
25 Reverends were also looking after children, foster children?

26 **REV TAUTARI:** No, Conference wasn't aware, Conference wasn't aware.

27 **MS SHARKEY:** Is that something they should have been aware of, what their Reverends were up  
28 to?

29 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, Conference should have been aware of what its Reverends were up to.

30 **MS SHARKEY:** And in that given Conference wasn't aware, there would have been no  
31 monitoring or oversight of those Ministers, those Reverends who were providing foster care  
32 for children?

33 **REV TAUTARI:** No.

34 **MS SHARKEY:** And whose responsibility is that? Where does the fault lie in that?



1 **REV TAUTARI:** I've thought about this. I've thought about it because, especially in reflecting on  
2 our own bicultural journey that we came from and have come from since 1983. What is  
3 apparent to me in my reading of the situation is that you had a very small group of key  
4 Church leaders taking decisions, sometimes disclosing, or a lot of times, how do you say,  
5 covering up, covering up the behaviour of Clergy and not sharing, not being transparent so  
6 that the whole Church could understand and know what was happening and therefore have  
7 a say in the protection of people.

8 **MS SHARKEY:** Right, yes. So in terms of Ms M and the failure to keep her safe, it is both  
9 acknowledged that not only did the Reverend bear that responsibility, but the Church, in not  
10 knowing what the Reverend was up to, not knowing that he was caring for children at the  
11 time.

12 **REV TAUTARI:** No.

13 **MS SHARKEY:** Sorry, were you going to carry on? No, that's it? Okay.

14 So just coming along to another theme we've got, Reverend Tautari, which is in  
15 relation to records and record-keeping.

16 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Ms Sharkey, can I just ask a question before you move on  
17 from that.

18 **MS SHARKEY:** Yes, you may.

19 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Reverend Tautari, so at that time in 1989 the Church did not  
20 have any safeguarding policies at that point?

21 **REV TAUTARI:** Not nationally, no.

22 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** But at the regional level, or I think you said the synod level,  
23 would there have been an expectation that behaviour like this would not have been  
24 tolerated?

25 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, very much so. And this is why I reflected on when a very small group of  
26 people are holding the power around decision-making in such a way as to exclude others  
27 from that and from the common reflection around that, then people can act with impunity.

28 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Thank you.

29 **MS SHARKEY:** Coming along to records and record-keeping, we can bring up the documents.  
30 I'll describe it as best I can, but we're looking at a situation where for a survivor, upon  
31 referral of a complaint from the Confidential Listening and Assistance Service, the  
32 Executive Director for the Church responded confirming that their records from the 1960s  
33 and 1970s were sparse. Do you know why that was?

1 **REV TAUTARI:** No, not in its totality I don't. I do know that from the document I'm seeing  
2 there that some of the records were lost during the earthquakes, but that doesn't actually  
3 address the question of why they were sparse in the first place.

4 From what I have seen as I've had to access the records from our churches and send  
5 them to survivors who come forward to us, there aren't very many documents. Sometimes  
6 a person can have two pieces of paper that constitutes a time in care. And many survivors  
7 who I've spoken with, this is a particular grievance with them, because their lives, of  
8 course, were so much more than two bits of paper. But that's all I could say looking back.

9 **MS SHARKEY:** And we too have seen the information that in the Christchurch earthquakes a lot  
10 of documents were destroyed. That was in 2011, so it doesn't explain why, I guess why  
11 weren't those records digitised or put on to some kind of electronic disk or something to  
12 save. Was it that it wasn't seen as that much of a priority?

13 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, that would be correct.

14 **MS SHARKEY:** And so in terms of the records that you do have now, is the Church beginning to  
15 future-proof records, so natural events?

16 **REV TAUTARI:** By digitising them?

17 **MS SHARKEY:** By ensuring that the records will be safe from natural events.

18 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes.

19 **MS SHARKEY:** In what way, what's being done now?

20 **REV TAUTARI:** So one of the things that we have recently been in discussion with is about  
21 digitising, as a result of the earthquake which very clearly showed our vulnerability in this  
22 area. We are engaged in developing a project for digitisation around that.

23 **MS SHARKEY:** And is that work starting now, or has started or where are things at with that?

24 **REV TAUTARI:** We have just recently employed new archivists and we are in discussion. Like  
25 they've just started a couple of weeks ago, so it is very new.

26 **CHAIR:** Before we leave that, just the question of survivors' reactions to the, sparse seems to be  
27 an inadequate word, but the real lack of records, just from their perspective you recognise  
28 that they have particular grievances about that, and I think we should name it. What, in  
29 your view, is the pain and hurt that-- what causes the pain and hurt of survivors when they  
30 know that these records weren't kept, what is it about that that is so painful?

31 **REV TAUTARI:** I'm not sure, because -- I mean I think each survivor is different. But I think at  
32 its heart there is a question about identity.

33 **CHAIR:** And value?

1 **REV TAUTARI:** And value, and believing that your experience means more than what you are  
2 seeing on a paper, and that that needs or should have been reflected in these things.

3 **CHAIR:** I think you're right, if I might say so from our experience, I think it's important to name  
4 those particular hurts, that mamae that is felt and why a piece of paper, or the lack of a  
5 piece of paper, is so important, so thank you for that.

6 **MS SHARKEY:** Because we have that statement from Cooper Legal that mentions all -- quite a  
7 number of survivors. And in respect of MA, there were no records and MF, no records  
8 found at all. And we've heard from survivors that this is how they piece together as well  
9 parts of their life, and to know where they were at which particular times and what their life  
10 might have been like. So for those survivors, having no records, detrimental impact. And  
11 you'd agree with that?

12 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes.

13 **MS SHARKEY:** In respect of the survivor that we were just briefly discussing before, there was  
14 an e-mail in the documents, and we can bring it up if you need to, but there was a question  
15 about whether there were staff records, and the e-mail says the comment, and I quote:

16 "Unfortunately no staff records were kept and it is difficult to find out the names of  
17 the individuals who worked at the home."

18 Why would no staff records be kept?

19 **REV TAUTARI:** I don't know, Ms Sharkey. I can only imagine and speculate that at that time it  
20 wasn't considered a necessary practice.

21 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you, Reverend, and I think that acknowledgment does actually assist. In  
22 your statement there is the comment with reference to the Methodist children's homes, "we  
23 do not hold information about disability status."

24 And I just wanted to ask if you know why that was the case. Is that the same?

25 **REV TAUTARI:** Yeah, I think it is the same. I think it wasn't considered necessary knowledge.  
26 I think it wasn't considered a priority to help understand how you might be able to better  
27 deliver care to people who had disabilities.

28 **MS SHARKEY:** Yeah, because you can't identify what support would have been needed and  
29 what was available to these children.

30 **REV TAUTARI:** Exactly, yes.

31 **MS SHARKEY:** And you mentioned in your statement that the Church doesn't hold that  
32 information on disability figures or stats for the Church, but that entities do; so ECE and  
33 missions hold that information, but the Church doesn't. And you said you remain open to a

1 discussion about whether -- would you like me to bring up to the document that refers to  
2 that?

3 **REV TAUTARI:** No, that's fine, I remember.

4 **MS SHARKEY:** You remain open to a discussion about that. What do you mean by that?

5 **REV TAUTARI:** Well, we are learning in this space and so we take our direction from -- a lot of  
6 what we are doing now has come as a result of the work of the Commission. But also  
7 because of the nature of who we are, you know, we are a very small Church and we have  
8 little parishes, often times small membership. And so, you know, when you're trying to roll  
9 out a new policy in our Church, because of the nature of who we are, our very first thing is  
10 to always kōrero about it and do some sharing around that. And that's why I have answered  
11 in that way. So I'm not rushing to say yes we will fix it and that's it. But it's to say yes, we  
12 are open and in our way we will learn from this and move accordingly.

13 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you Reverend. I don't have any further questions on that topic, I'm  
14 moving along to another one. And I'm just wanting to look at the reporting of abuse and  
15 survivors not being believed, and you had referenced this in your opening comments. MA,  
16 these survivors are in reference to the Cooper Legal statement. Would you like that  
17 brought up?

18 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes please, just the letters sometimes --

19 **MS SHARKEY:** Yes. So MA was beaten and kicked by the house father at Papanui when he  
20 attempted to report he was being sexually abused. MG was sexually abused by an older  
21 boy at Papanui. A female staff member walked in and MG was subsequently strapped by  
22 the house father for the behaviour. She was blamed for the abuse perpetrated on her and  
23 nothing further was done. There is another survivor who was sexually abused and when he  
24 disclosed the abuse to the house parents and a member of Clergy who they had invited to  
25 come and hear the disclosure, he was accused of just doing it for attention and making it up  
26 and nothing further was done about it.

27 And these are just a few of the examples. And here are children trying to get help,  
28 they did report their abuse but they weren't listened to, there was victim-blaming, and  
29 Reverend Tautari, what I'm wanting to do is just to unpack the ways in which these  
30 survivors were failed and invite a discussion about the inadequate supervision, amongst  
31 other things, and the failures of the Church to keep them safe. I can ask you questions, or if  
32 you'd like to reply that's fine.

33 **REV TAUTARI:** I think it's better you are ask me questions.

34 **CHAIR:** There were several aspects of that.

1 **MS SHARKEY:** I'll take you through that. So, as I said, there were survivors that were trying to  
2 get help, they were telling the people who were charged with their care what was happening  
3 to them.

4 So firstly, there was not adequate supervision by the Church, would you agree?

5 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, I agree.

6 **MS SHARKEY:** The level of monitoring and oversight, there was none?

7 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, I agree.

8 **MS SHARKEY:** And in terms of some of these staff, or the staff, there was no training in terms  
9 of trauma, especially for children from the backgrounds that they were coming from.  
10 Would you agree with that?

11 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, I agree there was no training in trauma-informed approaches, for sure.

12 **MS SHARKEY:** And if there had been oversight and safeguarding, if there had been supervision,  
13 some of this abuse could have been prevented.

14 **REV TAUTARI:** I believe so.

15 **MS SHARKEY:** You say in one of your acknowledgments that the Church didn't recognise the  
16 need to have protection policies or procedures in place for children, young people and  
17 vulnerable adults across all its Church-related organisations and/or entities. So there  
18 weren't any mandatory or policies in place back then, right?

19 **REV TAUTARI:** No.

20 **MS SHARKEY:** And just what work is being done on that now?

21 **REV TAUTARI:** I think what I want to say are two things about that. I think the Church had  
22 wanted to -- I mean the Church believed that people should be cared for. What the Church  
23 did not do was ensure they had mechanisms implemented in order to achieve that.

24 And so where we are now is that we are,-- we have some safeguarding in place, but  
25 we are going to Conference in November to talk about, as I say, a national set of policies  
26 and processes that will provide a comprehensive coverage for the Church and its related  
27 institutions when it comes to the issue of safeguarding.

28 **MS SHARKEY:** Okay.

29 **CHAIR:** If I can ask about that, and I don't have the document in front of me unfortunately, but in  
30 one of the briefing papers I notice that the Church did have,-- when I say the Church  
31 I mean -- I'm not sure which bit because I can't recall, but the Church did have very good  
32 policies about, for example, from memory doing all it could to ensure that children stayed  
33 with the family in the first place, that was one of the policies. I don't know, Ms Sharkey, if

1           you can recall which one that was, but there's a series of them in one of the responses to  
2           Notice to Produce.

3   **MS SHARKEY:** Yes.

4   **CHAIR:** There were good policies, they were ones that seemed to me to say that's good.

5   **REV TAUTARI:** I agree with you completely. And I think it goes back to what I heard in  
6           survivor statements. You can have all the policies you want, but unless they are  
7           implemented in such a way that you can then monitor them and ensure the outcomes you  
8           are expecting, then they become rather empty words.

9   **CHAIR:** Thank you, and that's the point, isn't it, yeah, that you can have whatever, develop  
10          whatever policies you like, but it's the turning them into action, I think you said that right at  
11          the beginning really, implementing them well. So thank you for acknowledging that.

12   **REV TAUTARI:** I just wanted to share one thing because I think it points to also our Treaty  
13          partnership, our bicultural partnership. We had hoped to take to Conference a whole suite  
14          of safeguarding policies and processes and to announce it as a done deal. And then our  
15          partner came to us and said this is not good enough, we actually need something that takes  
16          cognisance of this whenua, an understanding of tikanga and who we are. And so therefore  
17          we had to say okay, we now need to go back and kōrero more together.

18                 And I think this shows two things: Number one, where the Church wants to move  
19          very quickly, is that it can't always do that. Being in partnership takes time and it means  
20          that you have to proceed with a measured consideration of what you are trying to do.

21                 So we look forward to really having safeguarding then that really has the essence  
22          within it of Māori, Pasifika, and that they can see themselves in it and understand that they  
23          are part of what we are trying to achieve.

24   **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Thank you, Reverend, that was actually going to be my  
25          question around the difference in the world views and you've just answered that beautifully,  
26          thank you.

27                 But can I just go back to the looking back. Even in the absence of the policies in  
28          terms of your own theology, both social and doctrinal, there would have been an  
29          expectation at least around what love looked like in terms of caring for the children.

30   **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, because we hold to do no harm, we hold to reflecting love and the  
31          integrity of the people, and especially our young children and people throughout the  
32          Church. This is what we hold to, this is true. So theologically, doctrinally it is there. What  
33          we have failed in is matching that belief with the practical lived reality of how that then is  
34          experienced and nurtured in a very real and careful way.

1 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Fa'afetai.

2 **MS SHARKEY:** Reverend Tautari, just to segue us into the next part of this discussion, because  
3 we've got 15 minutes, I just want to bring in the survivor voice. It's not up on my screen  
4 yet but it's coming. He says:

5 "We need to learn the lesson that you can't just think that people are fundamentally  
6 good. For example, just because a person has a belief in a God that makes them somehow  
7 better and clever enough or smart enough to be put in a position of responsibility. You  
8 can't put children in the care of someone just because you think they're good. You can't  
9 take a damaged child, even if it's parents being split up, and throw them into this ball pit  
10 and they're just mashing altogether and hope it's the going to be okay. The damage that's  
11 been caused to some of these kids, they're going to then inflict this damage on other kids in  
12 the same way. We're not caring for them. We can't rely on faith being the thing that makes  
13 you a good or clever person. We've got to change this thinking when allowing people to  
14 care for young children. There has to be better training and vetting."

15 I just had to read that into evidence. So this particular survivor is talking about the  
16 training and the vetting, but also that because someone is a Reverend or a Minister or a  
17 member of Clergy you can't just assume that they're good.

18 What measures then do the Church take to ensure that someone has the character,  
19 the good character, how do you make sure that children are going to be safe? Firstly,  
20 would you agree with the survivor and what they're saying?

21 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, I agree. I agree wholeheartedly. It was interesting at the beginning of the  
22 conversation when you brought up "I feel we should use your title because" -- and my name  
23 is Tara. So I think this is something that is here in this space right now.

24 But the measures we take to ensure that there's a good character, apart from Police  
25 vetting, is that we have a year of discernment to really look at how people who are wanting  
26 to enter into Ministry and to look at their suitability around this. I do recall we had,  
27 listening to one of the survivors earlier on, who had said or recommended, I think,  
28 psychometric testing. I don't know what that is, but it seemed like it might be something to  
29 explore.

30 The thing is that, you know, when we're dealing with Māori and Pasifika people,  
31 and we talk about character, what that means might be different from Pākehā. So we can't  
32 just have this broad stroke or this one understanding.

33 But what it does mean, I believe for the Church, is that they need to engage in the  
34 discussion around safeguarding and around what this means in terms of our Ministers and

1 lay people who will be engaged in that space, and ascertaining what character means then  
2 and how that is married alongside our theological and doctrinal beliefs, as have been  
3 referred to. And this is a process. I'm not too sure if that's what -

4 **MS SHARKEY:** Yes, we will continue because I just want to bring in -- we're not naming this  
5 particular survivor, but in this situation this Reverend had fostered a survivor but no-one is  
6 able to locate the Reverend's application to be a foster carer, which should have come with  
7 references. There is a presumption by the archivist that it was because this Reverend was  
8 known personally to the mission and to the sister who was also the resident social worker.

9 So this Reverend didn't have to go through any of the vetting or the checks before  
10 becoming a foster parent, had no role in the homes, didn't live there, but given access to  
11 children and able to become a foster carer. I just wanted to ask, Reverend Tautari, your  
12 response to that in respect of the failings.

13 **REV TAUTARI:** I agree with the survivor statement that you had just read before. This is a  
14 prime example of where we took it for granted that this person was good because the  
15 person was known. And so therefore due diligence is put to the side because of so-called  
16 personal knowledge and also a deference to their standing and status. This is clear from  
17 this reading here.

18 **MS SHARKEY:** I think also the social worker who was a sister and the blurred, very blurred  
19 lines there in terms of that relationship, her knowledge of this Reverend and that  
20 assumption that he's a minister, he's a good person and then letting the children go.

21 **REV TAUTARI:** Exactly.

22 **CHAIR:** Could I just explore this notion of standing and status. I think you referred to it before,  
23 we talk about the deference to hierarchies and the like. One of the big lessons that we have  
24 been learning in the course of this Inquiry is the misuse of power. So starting with the  
25 assumption of power, which is done, and I'm not just talking here about faith-based  
26 organisations, I'm talking about right across society in relation to children and vulnerable  
27 people.

28 So first, I think we're building a picture here through your very frank answers, that  
29 we've got an assumption, first of all, that because somebody is a person of faith that they  
30 are somehow assumed to be good, and then also an assumption that because they are of  
31 Clergy or have a role in the Church, they have a certain power to which deference is given.  
32 Are you with me so far?

33 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, I'm with you.



1 **CHAIR:** So again naming it, putting it out there and saying what it clearly is. Do you agree that  
2 people in power run the very real risk of being in a position where they can abuse that  
3 power because of the power they hold?

4 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, I agree with it totally. I remember I was in my 20s before I ever chose to  
5 question a doctor.

6 **CHAIR:** Yes.

7 **REV TAUTARI:** Because I just deferred to a doctor's -- I would never ask any questions. Even  
8 now with our lawyers, and they're wonderful people, I defer to them because they have this  
9 expertise. And yet I will still question now because I have a great understanding of my  
10 own agency, and I can only imagine -- I can't imagine what it must have been like to have  
11 no agency and to be totally at the power, or at the --

12 **CHAIR:** At the mercy.

13 **REV TAUTARI:** At the mercy of this type of power that was given simply because of some  
14 letters in front of your name.

15 **CHAIR:** Thank you.

16 **MS SHARKEY:** Reverend Tautari, we heard mention about the Commission, 1959, the  
17 Methodist Conference appointed a Commission to examine the Church's practice of care of  
18 children. And the Commission reported to the Methodist Conference in 1961, and there  
19 were some recommendations made, including ensuring that those providing care for  
20 children were adequately trained and resourced. And the resolution adopted by Conference  
21 accepted the recommendations in principle. And as we heard, those changes weren't  
22 implemented and there wasn't an all of Church approach, as we heard. Why was that?

23 **REV TAUTARI:** I'm not entirely sure. I did see that there was a reflection on there not being  
24 resources to do that. But at the end of the day, it is primarily down to the willingness to  
25 make something happen. Conference had spoken. Conference was clear. Conference  
26 believed that something should be done. And yet it didn't happen. And I can only assume  
27 that there was a blockage somewhere, an obstacle at some level of decision-making that  
28 prevented that from happening.

29 **MS SHARKEY:** Okay, I just want to understand the role of the Church and the State in this.  
30 Because I think I had read consultation proposed in Wellington with government  
31 departments but that didn't happen, and at the time the Church was almost fully funding its  
32 care services with limited input from the State. So was that part of the reason why you  
33 couldn't implement those recommendations?

- 1 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, it's part of the reason, but I mean is that a reason? Is that a reason  
2 actually? If you make it your priority you make it happen.
- 3 **MS SHARKEY:** So you're taking responsibility --
- 4 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, yes.
- 5 **MS SHARKEY:** -- for what the Church failed to do?
- 6 **REV TAUTARI:** Very much so, that was a failure on our part. We had a window of opportunity  
7 to make a difference and that did not happen and that was our failure.
- 8 **MS SHARKEY:** Right, and then I guess separate to that is the State sending you children to care  
9 for you about not providing adequate funding and resourcing to do that?
- 10 **REV TAUTARI:** Exactly. This is clear. The State were happy to pass on the responsibility  
11 without the necessary supports in place.
- 12 **MS SHARKEY:** Madam Chair, my next part actually goes into part of the redress which I can  
13 save for this afternoon, and if there are no further questions we might stop there.
- 14 **CHAIR:** I'll just check with Commissioners.
- 15 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Tēnā koe Ms Sharkey, I did want to ask about the Wellington  
16 community action, the services provided there. I'm not sure, will there be an opportunity to  
17 talk about that later today or is now a good time to ask?
- 18 **MS SHARKEY:** Now is a good time.
- 19 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Whaea, I did find the data about the foster care services that were  
20 provided by this entity, and I just wonder if you could -- it does seem that it's quite  
21 extensive, the type of foster care services that are currently being provided by the Wesley  
22 Community Action Group based in Wellington. Is that a fair assessment?
- 23 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, that's a fair assessment.
- 24 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** I wondered about, because we're hearing this testimony about the  
25 homes that have since closed, but of course the Church is still quite closely involved  
26 through this entity and the provision of foster care, and we know from the hearings that  
27 we've had, from the testimony of survivors, about how this remains a site of great  
28 vulnerability for tamariki and rangatahi. So I just wonder if you talk about the checks, we  
29 don't have much time, but I suppose to cut to the chase, in this proposal that is going  
30 to your governance body in November.
- 31 **REV TAUTARI:** Conference.
- 32 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Conference, thank you very much, are there checks and balances  
33 there for protecting these -- ensuring that these tamariki are safe in terms of vetting, in

1 terms of monitoring of people, the very kaupapa we've just been talking about for the last  
2 hour and a bit?

3 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, there are. But what I would say in this particular case, there is already in  
4 place very rigorous safeguards and this is a mission that works closely with community,  
5 with hapū and whānau, that has a co-governance model itself, which means that it is  
6 required an accountability that goes right to the people with whom they work with on the  
7 ground, and are very close in the relationship with the State and with what they do together  
8 in that space.

9 This is a Mission that has built up a history of care in this space and because of that  
10 they have, I believe, a very good record in working with children, which is not to say that  
11 the Conference then leaves them, but they will be part of the safeguarding, but in many  
12 ways we learn from them now because they are already out there working.

13 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Whaea, are they large numbers of Māori and Pasifika tamariki  
14 affected by the service delivery?

15 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes.

16 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Do you have a rough idea of the numbers?

17 **REV TAUTARI:** I will get you the numbers.

18 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** When you say co-governance, is it governance with local tāngata  
19 whenua or other providers?

20 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, with local tāngata whenua.

21 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Ngāti Toa and Te Atiawa, okay, thank you for that. More might  
22 spill out this afternoon, but I appreciate the time, kia ora, thank you.

23 **CHAIR:** Kia ora, I think it's time we all had a cup of tea, so let's take 15 minutes and we'll come  
24 back after that, thank you.

25 **Adjournment from 11.01 am to 11.22 am**

26 **CHAIR:** Welcome back, everybody, talofa lava, and welcome to our panel members who have  
27 joined us. Welcome to the Commission and thank you for attending today. I'll just do a  
28 quick affirmation for you and then we'll get on with our conversation.

29 So we have here -- do you want to introduce your witnesses or shall I do it?

30 **MS DEW:** Thank you. So, firstly, to our right we have Tara, who you've obviously been hearing  
31 from this morning; we have Etuini Talakai who is the Vice-President of the Methodist  
32 Church; we have Chris Johnston who is the General Secretary for the Wesley College Trust  
33 Board and then we have Reverend Ian Faulkner who is the former principal of Wesley  
34 College between 2003 and 2014.

1 **CHAIR:** Thank you.

2 **REVEREND IAN FAULKNER, CHRIS JOHNSTON, ETUINI TALAKAI**  
3 **AND REVEREND TARA TAUTARI (Affirmed)**

4 **MS SHARKEY:** Madam Chair, I just wondered whether the witnesses wanted to give a visual  
5 introduction of themselves for those who might not be able to see them.

6 **CHAIR:** Yes, that would be much appreciated. So Mr Talakai.

7 **MR TALAKAI:** Malo, Madam Chair, I'm a Pacific Islander, middle-aged man, black hair with  
8 white streaks, I'm wearing white shirt and a navy blue jacket with red and black diamond  
9 tie. Malo.

10 **CHAIR:** Malo, and you Mr Johnston?

11 **MR JOHNSTON:** Kia ora, Commissioners. Chris Johnston, I'm a middle-aged white male in my  
12 early 50s, I have dark hair with grey streaks and some form of beard. Today I'm wearing a  
13 navy blue suit and a navy tie with a lighter blue shirt.

14 **CHAIR:** Thank you, and you are the lucky last, Reverend Faulkner.

15 **REV FAULKNER:** I am an older grey-haired man with European features. I am wearing a grey  
16 suit, white shirt and black and white tie. I wear glasses when I need to see something.

17 **CHAIR:** Thank you, I notice you're not wearing them now so maybe you don't need to see us.

18 **REV FAULKNER:** You're at a distance, you're fine.

19 **CHAIR:** All right, I understand. Thank you.

20 Thank you, Ms Sharkey.

21 **QUESTIONING BY MS SHARKEY:** Mōrena, and before we begin, just checking, did anyone  
22 want to make any opening remarks?

23 All right, thank you, Mr Johnston, we will start with you.

24 **MR JOHNSTON:** Ko Rangitoto tōku maunga, no Tamaki Makaurau ahau, ko Norman tōku  
25 matua, ko Davinia tōku whaea, ko Christopher, Chris, Johnston tōku ingoa. I do use  
26 glasses for reading, but when I am reading I can see my notes, but unfortunately I can't see  
27 you and vice versa when I'm without my notes.

28 It is a privilege to speak to the Royal Commission on behalf of the Wesley College  
29 as part of the talanoa and looking at the past, our present and our future.

30 To the 11 witnesses who have come forward to the Royal Commission, we  
31 acknowledge that you were abused at Wesley College when you should have been in a safe  
32 place that showed you care and respect.

33 You experienced one or more of physical, sexual, emotional and psychological  
34 abuse. We acknowledge you, William, for being present today. We also acknowledge that

1 there are likely others who are living with trauma of their experiences at Wesley College,  
2 those who have made redress claims directly to the College and church and those who have  
3 not yet come forward.

4 We specifically acknowledge the factors that enabled this abuse to occur:  
5 insufficient adult supervision in the hostels; students put in supervisory roles; and  
6 inadequate boarding facilities.

7 On behalf of both the Wesley College Trust Board and the Board of Trustees, we  
8 unreservedly apologise to those who have experienced trauma because of the abuse you  
9 suffered at Wesley College. We acknowledge that there are survivors who are still  
10 suffering or have difficulties in their lives as a result of what has happened.

11 For survivors and their whānau we appreciate that our acknowledgment of this  
12 abuse and our apology comes many decades too late.

13 Wesley's alumni, staff and community are encouraged to both accept and talk  
14 openly about the need for continued change. This sets an example to current and future  
15 students and flows on to our whānau and community. We are committed to removing all  
16 forms of abuse and lack of care within Wesley College and our hostels.

17 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you, Mr Johnston. Just checking, anybody else? No? Okay, we'll get  
18 underway with questioning now.

19 So, firstly, I just wanted to set the scene and the school's early mission statement  
20 which is there referenced in your statements. So Wesley College was established in 1844  
21 and formally opened in 1845. The purpose was "to establish a Wesleyan native institution  
22 to instruct a selected number of natives in English that they might become more efficient  
23 teachers of their countrymen in matters of religion and civilisation."

24 Then we have the legislation in 1911. The purpose for the land was "to create a  
25 multi-racial boarding school or as a multi-racial combined day and boarding school catering  
26 especially for the maintenance and education of as many Māori pupils, and of as many  
27 disadvantaged pupils, whether orphaned, needy, or otherwise disadvantaged and whether  
28 male or female as The board shall consider proper and expedient."

29 So I just had a couple of questions around Te Tiriti.

30 So if -- I'm directing my questions openly, if someone is able to answer,  
31 Mr Johnston, I'm probably looking at you, but during the scope period, if you're able to,  
32 what was the position, I guess, of each of the roles as it relates to Te Tiriti and Māori  
33 students at Wesley College?

34 **MR JOHNSTON:** The make-up of the roles of Wesley College at the time?

1 **MS SHARKEY:** Yeah.

2 **MR JOHNSTON:** It has changed over time, as you acknowledged in 1844, it was open for Māori  
3 students. I think in the 50s and 60s, because of the attraction of the agriculture and  
4 horticulture side there was quite a large European make-up of Wesley College. I know at  
5 former, as I read former minutes of the Wesley College Trust Board, they acknowledged  
6 that the Māori roll was too low and they discussed as a board ways of increasing the Māori  
7 roll, which also included subsidising some term fees, particularly for Māori.

8 Now we see that we have quite a small European roll now, Pasifika is our majority  
9 of current students and a moderate-sized Māori roll, I don't have the stats in front of me, but  
10 I think the stats (inaudible).

11 **MS SHARKEY:** Okay. And so when we were talking before about the Methodist Church  
12 embraces, 1983, the bicultural journey, and so from then on what does that look like for  
13 Wesley College?

14 **MR JOHNSTON:** I can only speak from the governance side.

15 **MS SHARKEY:** Yes, that's fine.

16 **MR JOHNSTON:** So we embrace the Methodist Church in the bicultural journey, we have  
17 representatives of te taha Māori on the Wesley College Trust Board, that's from the Board  
18 side, where we make decisions by consensus, that's important for the Board.

19 **MS SHARKEY:** Is that similar to what Reverend Tautari was talking about before?

20 **MR JOHNSTON:** Exactly, yes. I also have the make-up of the Wesley College Trust Board, is it  
21 time for that?

22 **MS SHARKEY:** Yes, that's fine.

23 **MR JOHNSTON:** So the current Wesley College Trust Board has three representatives of te  
24 Taha Māori, we have four Pasifika descent and six European descent.

25 **MS SHARKEY:** And so just looking at, you know, if there are Māori students at Wesley College,  
26 the obligation to honour Te Tiriti, what does that look like in the day-to-day running of the  
27 school as a former principal, Reverend Faulkner, what did that look like?

28 **REV FAULKNER:** Could I just ask, is it permissible for me to take off my jacket?

29 **CHAIR:** If you would like to take off your jacket, it is entirely up to you.

30 **REV FAULKNER:** Perhaps that request indicates some inner turmoil.

31 So, what does Te Tiriti look like in the day-to-day running of the school?

32 **MS SHARKEY:** Yeah.

33 **REV FAULKNER:** I would see it in my time as a relational question, how do people relate to  
34 each other, and to take every opportunity to check with each of the ethnic groups within the

1 school whether this is something they wish to continue talking about. That would be both  
2 at a student, a teacher, dorm parent and governors level. So to have continual conversations  
3 based on maintaining the best possible relationships between people.

4 **MS SHARKEY:** Would you say that during your time Te Tiriti principles were consciously  
5 observed? Was there a real understanding about it at that time?

6 **REV FAULKNER:** What I could say is that in 2003 I was aware that they were not. So there  
7 was a deliberate attempt for me to talk with, particularly the te Taha Māori representatives  
8 on the Trust Board to how can we bring this more into place and the first paper of mine,  
9 that I think you have before you, begins to unravel that.

10 **MS SHARKEY:** Right, okay, and we'll be coming towards that a bit later in the talanoa.

11 I now just want to look at pathways, pathways into Wesley College, and where  
12 some Wesley College students came from during the scope period and why or how they  
13 came to attend the school.

14 So we've got survivor voices who speak to coming from the children's homes, State  
15 care, through Pasifika and Māori scholarships, and some information that some students  
16 came from overseas.

17 And I just wanted to ask you some questions about that. Have I covered everything  
18 or did students come through to Wesley from other places? What was the understanding at  
19 the time of where the students were coming from, the entry points for them coming to  
20 Wesley College?

21 **REV FAULKNER:** During the scope period I cannot accurately count on because I was not  
22 there. I can only talk about 2003 onwards. Your pathways that were set out remained  
23 about the same during my time, with the exception that a number came from parents or  
24 communities that we already had contact with.

25 **MS SHARKEY:** Reverend Tautari.

26 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, perhaps I could just add, in addition to the groups you have mentioned, we  
27 had Māori coming from rural areas. For example, my uncles came from Whananaki, they  
28 weren't coming from care, they were living on a farm, and they were sent to Wesley  
29 College. In addition to that, we had Pasifika people coming from the Islands who'd been  
30 sent by their whānau because they'd heard that Wesley College was a good place to be in,  
31 and they weren't coming from any of the other categories you had mentioned, but they were  
32 being sent there deliberately for the opportunity that the College offered for their education.

33 **MR JOHNSTON:** Ms Sharkey, if I can comment. Also, in my time when the Board had  
34 recognised that there are Māori communities in rural areas that needed extra care, recruiters

1           were sent. So I was aware that there were recruiters sent down to the East Cape and also  
2           the far north, Panguru, Mitimiti, just trying to see if in these areas the students could be  
3           helped by Wesley College.

4   **MS SHARKEY:** Right, and that was all part of, I guess, observing and ensuring that you met  
5           what it was that you were trying to do in terms of Māori and Pacific and disadvantaged  
6           students, or those requiring special care, is that right, that was part of the recruitment  
7           strategy?

8   **MR JOHNSTON:** That is my belief.

9   **CHAIR:** Could I just ask quickly about that. Those students who came from rural areas,  
10          disadvantaged areas, who paid the fees, how were they financed?

11   **MR JOHNSTON:** Wesley College is quite fortunate in the set-up we have quite a large  
12          Investment Trust, and so with the fees, the boarding fees are assessed at the cost of what is  
13          a student's cost, but then financial assistance is reduced off that boarding fee. And families  
14          are assessed by their financial ability to pay these boarding fees, and 100% of the students  
15          had a reduction on the cost of what it cost to come could Wesley College.

16   **CHAIR:** So it's like a means test.

17   **MR JOHNSTON:** And then were given financial assistance. That's on the boarding school side.  
18          On the Board of Trustees side we don't charge a fee. Also those that have knowledge of  
19          integrated schools, the one compulsory fee which is called attendance dues, Wesley College  
20          does not charge.

21   **CHAIR:** Thank you for that.

22                 Can I just say, and sorry, I should have said it earlier, everything you're saying is  
23          being typed by our formidable dictaphone stenographer over there, please, if we can just  
24          keep an eye on the speed, there's also -- and we have signers behind me who I can't see who  
25          have to keep up as well. Thank you.

26   **MS SHARKEY:** The board meeting minutes from 1993 noted that the school has a policy of  
27          enrolling troubled students, some of whom are unacceptable to other schools. How did that  
28          work? What did that look like?

29   **REV FAULKNER:** I can only, again, speak from 2003 onwards.

30   **MS SHARKEY:** That's fine.

31   **REV FAULKNER:** But often an officer of the court or a support agency within the community,  
32          and the one I think of quite clearly now is a group from the Roskill area called Turn Your  
33          Life Around, would become involved with young men who were within the court system



1 and they would put together a package to provide care and control for them and they  
2 believed that Wesley College was a suitable place to begin that journey.

3 **MS SHARKEY:** Okay. And just, so we see reference to Māori and Pacific students and ethnicity  
4 recording, quite good ethnicity recording for those groups. Another priority group for this  
5 Inquiry is Disabled Peoples. So during your time, Reverend Faulkner, was that data  
6 captured that you recall?

7 **REV FAULKNER:** I would say probably not.

8 **MS SHARKEY:** Do you know why that might be?

9 **REV FAULKNER:** No.

10 **MS SHARKEY:** For the Trust Board. Mr Johnston?

11 **MR JOHNSTON:** I not aware of disability statistics being kept or being presented to the Board.

12 **MS SHARKEY:** Okay, and I guess if that's one of the gaps, that's something you would be  
13 looking at, now ensuring there is better data being captured for those students.

14 **MR JOHNSTON:** Going forward, yes, that can be done.

15 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Can I ask, the idea was to proactively recruit from Māori, Pacific  
16 and disadvantaged groups. Even if there was no data, was there some proactive recruitment  
17 of disabled students?

18 **MR JOHNSTON:** Not that I'm unaware of.

19 **REV FAULKNER:** No.

20 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** How, in general, would you define "disadvantaged" in the day that  
21 it was --

22 **MR JOHNSTON:** "Disadvantaged", in my definition, it could be all sorts, financially  
23 disadvantaged, could be in a family with -- where they do not have their own bed, I'm  
24 conscious of my speed, I'll slow down. They could be disadvantage because of the location  
25 of their house, they don't have access to good schooling in the area.

26 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Thank you.

27 **MS SHARKEY:** Reverend Faulkner, was there something you wanted to add to that? I just saw  
28 you nodding, just checking.

29 **REV FAULKNER:** It's certainly very clear there were numerous students who arrived with only  
30 the clothes that they were wearing and the College provided the rest of their clothing,  
31 provided their bedding, and for many it was the first time they had slept in their own bed.

32 **MS SHARKEY:** And so the reason for starting off here and looking at that objective, is because  
33 there were a number of students coming from very different pathways, some of which we  
34 have survivors who were coming from homes or State care, having already experienced

1 trauma in their childhoods, from the Islands, Pacific Islands without English, children  
2 leaving home for the first time coming into that environment. But would you agree that the  
3 supports in place at that time weren't ready to deal with the children who were coming from  
4 all these different pathways and being put together in this, what I would describe, pressure  
5 cooker situation?

6 **MR JOHNSTON:** I agree.

7 **MS SHARKEY:** What was in place?

8 **MR JOHNSTON:** I go back to what wasn't in place. The key, to me, is adult supervision and  
9 what was in place is there was a level of prefects that, senior prefects and dormitory  
10 prefects, so you have senior students who were charged with supervising junior students.  
11 We did have a night supervisor, we had a set-up of teachers that would do duties,  
12 cross-over duties. In my time we've also had a hostel manager and a girls' hostel manager,  
13 but we don't -- didn't have the number of supervision staff that we do have currently in  
14 place.

15 **MS SHARKEY:** Right, so you accept that there was the inadequate supervision, a lack of  
16 monitoring and oversight, but I just want to talk about care. Those responsible for caring  
17 for these children, is there an acceptance that back then one of the factors contributing to  
18 abuse is the level of care these children were receiving, these survivors were receiving?

19 **CHAIR:** When you talk about care, I think there's two parts to this, if I might interrupt. One is  
20 that we've already -- just in listing the diverse range of places these children came from, is  
21 that they all must have in that environment be seen to be suffering a disadvantage, if not a  
22 trauma, if not the need to be assisted into a new world. Were there any structures in place  
23 or resources in place to meet the needs of the children as they arrived so the child who  
24 hadn't had a bed or clothing, plainly coming from a difficult, deprived background,  
25 anything in place to deal with that child's needs on arrival so that they could then start to  
26 learn?

27 **REV FAULKNER:** What I can say is that it developed over time, so when I was at Wesley  
28 College as a boy, most of the outside of school time and during the weekends there was one  
29 adult in place for 200 students.

30 **CHAIR:** You were a student yourself?

31 **REV FAULKNER:** Correct, and that one adult may have been in one of the houses at the time,  
32 and some enterprising young man, as it was at that time, would go and find the adult, if the  
33 adult was deemed necessary. The rest of the time the management was by older students.

1 **CHAIR:** Thank you for that. Really what I'm getting at is, a child comes in with a traumatic  
2 background, was there anything in place to see to those needs, those immediate needs of  
3 that child at that time, in terms of emotional support, psychological support, maybe medical  
4 or physical needs like that, to set them on a pathway to learning?

5 **REV FAULKNER:** No.

6 **CHAIR:** I thought that was going to be the answer, I thought we just must break it into care of  
7 these pre-existing needs of these children and then through the school processes.

8 **REV FAULKNER:** I can speak of an older woman called "Matron" who you went to if you had a  
9 sore throat, or if you needed any form of medical care. That was clearly inadequate, yeah.

10 **CHAIR:** And that was it. Thank you.

11 **MS SHARKEY:** And that would extend -- we have a survivor from the late 60s who speaks to  
12 there being Māori and Pacific students back then. But there wouldn't have been the staff  
13 who had the training to deal with those cultural competency issues that would have been  
14 required; would that be fair to say? For these Pacific students, the relevant staff with that  
15 understanding of the culture?

16 **MR JOHNSTON:** That would be my belief.

17 **REV FAULKNER:** Yeah.

18 **MS SHARKEY:** We do have a survivor as well who spoke about having special needs and there  
19 being no support for that and having witnessed the treatment, he says, of ADHD children  
20 there wouldn't have been the level of professional training for those children either, would  
21 there?

22 **REV FAULKNER:** No.

23 **MR JOHNSTON:** I wouldn't think so in the hostels, and the school.

24 **REV FAULKNER:** In either the hostel or the school. So in the early 1960s many of the staff  
25 were ex-servicemen, they were untrained, they were a person who was deemed to be able to  
26 teach maths or physics or something like that because of their Army experiences.

27 **MS SHARKEY:** Just following on from that, Reverend Faulkner, just asking for your views in  
28 terms of there being staff, ex-servicemen. We've had a number of survivor voices talk  
29 about the military style. Could that be linked, is it possible that that could stem from that  
30 time back then when you had those staff from those areas responsible for the care of these  
31 students?

32 **REV FAULKNER:** So the whole place was very militaristic, apart from the fact that we did not  
33 carry guns because Methodists did not agree with that view of life, but we marched

1           everywhere, we were formed up in lines, we bowed, we did all those sorts of things that  
2           you would expect to happen in the Army.

3 **MS SHARKEY:** You wouldn't expect that to continue through the decades through to recent  
4           times during your time as principal?

5 **REV FAULKNER:** When was appointed principal there were still elements of that.

6 **MS SHARKEY:** We'll come into that.

7           Mr Johnston, just in one of the statements you've heard from some complainants  
8           already, you say some seven complainants who have come forward and you totally accept  
9           that these former pupils, and then I just pick up here "likely some others". And is that a bit  
10          light, "likely some others"? It would be "there are others".

11 **MR JOHNSTON:** The thing is there's a trend coming through in these witnesses' accounts and  
12          yes, it is likely that there are others that will come forward. Also, in our evidence, it talks  
13          about this code of silence that seemed to be in place, and, you know, my concern is if that  
14          remains that could still be a reason why a survivor may not come forward. We've got our  
15          process in place for redress that is also combining with the church's process but, you know,  
16          people themselves may have their own barriers to bringing forward their stories.

17 **MS SHARKEY:** Right. Yes, because, Reverend Tautari, your statement says:

18                 "The Church acknowledges that the information it held about violence at Wesley  
19          College shows that abuse by students against other students was a part of life, part of life at  
20          the College."

21 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, in some cases, in a lot of cases it was a daily experience.

22 **MS SHARKEY:** And a lot of the survivor statements refer to them witnessing abuse of other  
23          students. And in one survivor's situation he says that he spoke to his friend about coming  
24          forward and he said no way, he wants to leave that period of time in the past. Is it my  
25          understanding that both the Church and Wesley College are encouraging survivors to please  
26          come forward?

27 **MR JOHNSTON:** That is correct.

28 **MS SHARKEY:** There is an acknowledgment in the statement about the 90s, the 1990s. The  
29          College and the Trust Board were aware of violence at the College, it can be seen in the  
30          Trust Board's reports. But there is an acceptance that it wasn't just -- it's not just a 1990s  
31          issue.

32 **MR JOHNSTON:** Yes.

33 **MS SHARKEY:** Sorry, it just has to be read into evidence.

34 **MR JOHNSTON:** Sorry.

1 **MS SHARKEY:** I just want to talk about the scale of violence because that is something that is  
2 quite important to the survivors. William Wilson post-hearing there was a number of  
3 responses from the community and it's just important for some survivors that there's some  
4 acknowledgment about just how bad it really was, how much of an issue it was.

5 So for Mr DE, he says that he would witness abuse not only happening to him but to  
6 younger boys. Another survivor also confirms there were a few -- there was a lot of  
7 bullying and gang bashings. There was so much physical violence, sexual and mental  
8 abuse at the school that he and other students witnessed every day.

9 Mr TE talks about the bullying, violence and abuse that happened to many students.

10 Mr Lt talks about the parades that were for the new kids but there were 4th Formers  
11 who were singled out for beatings. Mr LT also says that "there are so many of us" and he  
12 thinks there are hundreds of ex-students who went through the same thing.

13 Mr WA also says the same thing, that it happened to him and other juniors.

14 Mr WB says juniors were assaulted daily. He witnessed other juniors having their  
15 fingers broken from these assaults.

16 William Wilson spoke about witnessing the beating of others.

17 And I just wanted to ask for those survivors that are watching, is it acknowledged  
18 by the school that the scale of bullying and violence at Wesley College happened over a  
19 number of decades and was very, very serious.

20 **MR JOHNSTON:** I acknowledge it is very, very serious. As I was saying earlier, the scope was  
21 hard to determine and did not come to Board level, we've got the principal here, may be  
22 able to help there, we also have former students here to Wesley College as well.

23 We acknowledge there was abuse and it's not acceptable and we acknowledge that  
24 it's not acceptable. The scope of the abuse, when we look at Wesley College and look at  
25 our old students and how our old students or former students do in society and how they,  
26 you know, their success and we've got a large number of students saying that they did not  
27 have the same experiences. But, you know, from the Board level yeah, we definitely  
28 acknowledge that there was a scale of abuse and it's unacceptable and also unacceptable in  
29 today's College.

30 **MS SHARKEY:** Reverend Faulkner.

31 **REV FAULKNER:** My response would be that if somebody deemed to be a survivor has written  
32 something, it happened.

1 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you. And also witnessing others, as you said, Mr Johnston, that you've  
2 spoken to others who haven't gone through that experience but that doesn't mean that other  
3 people didn't go through that.

4 **MR JOHNSTON:** That's correct.

5 **MS SHARKEY:** Right. I just wanted to clarify that.

6 Now I just wanted to talk about "the Wesley Way". It is something that survivors  
7 have repeatedly brought up in their statements: the severity of the abuse and the culture of  
8 silence. Now, there have been two acknowledgments that I wanted to refer to,  
9 Mr Johnston, from your joint statement.

10 You offer a very sincere apology for the failure of the College, the Wesley College  
11 Trust Board and the College's Board of Trustees to take steps to prevent the level of abuse  
12 that some former students encountered; is that correct?

13 **MR JOHNSTON:** We do.

14 **MS SHARKEY:** And in your opinion the primary barriers to reporting abuse of those in the care  
15 of Wesley College have been one, the ingrained culture of the Wesley Way and the  
16 Brotherhood, where some students whānau and staff accepted the violence between  
17 students, particularly by senior students against junior students, was part of life at the  
18 College and it included the culture of no narking and no snitching.

19 So for the benefit of survivors who are present and listening on the livestream, I just  
20 wanted to have a discussion about this. The social media backlash following William  
21 Wilson's hearing might be known to you or Mr Talakai. Some were saying, "That's just the  
22 way it was; it made me the man who I am today." Others said it was normalised violence;  
23 others, it wasn't that bad, it was schoolyard bullying. So that violence was down-played  
24 and normalised.

25 What is your understanding of the Wesley Way as defined by what these students  
26 are talking about? "That's the Wesley Way: the initiation, the beatings, the hidings, that's  
27 the Wesley Way?"

28 **MR TALAKAI:** Thank you, Ms Sharkey. For myself, I acknowledge the survivors admitting that  
29 the Wesley Way. For myself experiencing in Wesley College, the Wesley Way were  
30 different things. Either beating, but there was the other Wesley Way of being a better  
31 person, better student, better player in rugby, doing, succeeding in education. But I do  
32 acknowledge the survivors saying there's a Wesley Way, a beating, I acknowledge the  
33 abuse and trauma that has created and that sense of Wesley Way as they describe it.

1 **MS SHARKEY:** Because they're associating this level of violence and these beatings as being the  
2 Wesley Way, you know, and surely the school and the Church would say, "No, that's not,  
3 no that's not the Wesley Way." But an acknowledgment that these students took that to be,  
4 you know, the Wesley Way for them meant that this was a tradition. Is it acknowledged it  
5 was a tradition?

6 **REV FAULKNER:** Did you want to speak to that?

7 **CHAIR:** Tara, you wanted to say something about that?

8 **REV TAUTARI:** If I could, if that's all right.

9 **MS SHARKEY:** Sure.

10 **REV TAUTARI:** Absolutely this would not be what the Church understands to be the Wesley  
11 Way. But obviously, and undeniably, the culture of abuse had become so distorted as to  
12 then appropriate itself on to this term "Wesley Way", so that it became a pathway of some  
13 pseudo brotherhood that you had to buy into and be abused into, inculcated. So much so  
14 that you come out of the school with these types of comments that you've reflected on, "It  
15 made me the person I am", "It wasn't that bad", when absolutely it is abuse and a total  
16 distortion of what should be the Wesley Way, that being what Etuini spoke about.

17 So, therefore, you have two types of experiences holding the same term and yet we  
18 need to understand that "Wesley Way" as it is now used is one that has undertones of  
19 coercion, of abuse, in order to belong, and that is unacceptable by the Church and by  
20 Wesley College. **[Applause]**

21 **CHAIR:** Could I just ask, where did the term "Wesley Way" come from? Was it  
22 something -- you might know about this, Mr Faulkner, would you like to explain that?

23 **REV FAULKNER:** So a senior prefect, I think the year was 2008, who was an extremely good  
24 artist acquired a large piece of canvass and depicted the Wesley Way. It was young men  
25 with their arms around each other in a fraternal way, it was singing, it was joining in, it was  
26 playing rugby, the centre point was a rugby scrum. So what that senior prefect was wishing  
27 to show, in art form, was these are the positive things that we're here for.

28 I believe that he would be most distraught to hear that term being used as we've had  
29 it described today.

30 **CHAIR:** So it was a term that was used and borne out of a positive experience, but it's been taken  
31 by survivors -- is it then survivor voices who have used that term to encompass all these  
32 other negative things, is that what happened?

1 **REV FAULKNER:** So my memory is that it came out of another boarding school where the then  
2 principal talked about "This is, name of the school, Way", and he picked up on wanting to  
3 show what the Wesley Way should be. The term has been misappropriated.

4 **CHAIR:** That's really what I was trying to say, yes, I can see that, thank you very much. And  
5 thank you, Tara, for your explanation.

6 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Mr Faulkner, talofa lava.

7 **REV Faulkner:** Talofa lava.

8 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Can I just clarify then that the term has been misappropriated  
9 in a negative sense but it's a common term that would be used by students, the Wesleyan  
10 Way?

11 **REV FAULKNER:** That was not my experience. So the experience I heard of "the Wesley Way"  
12 was these are the things that we need to do to make us better people.

13 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Yeah, so it's a broad term used by all students but in different  
14 contexts it meant different things, I suppose is -- I'm just wanting to clarify that it wasn't  
15 just -- we're not sheeting it home to survivors who are using that phrase.

16 **REV FAULKNER:** I can see how survivors or anybody that suffered any form of abuse is able to  
17 use that term to describe what they believe the culture was.

18 **MS SHARKEY:** Because the survivor voices we have that go far back from 2008 talk about that  
19 actual term, "the Wesley Way" and that the Wesley Way was passed down through, from  
20 seniors on to juniors and when juniors became seniors they continued that on.

21 If there was a message to give to those who might consider that the Wesley Way is  
22 still one where you deliver beatings and hidings and initiations and physical violence, what  
23 would the message be to them, from both school, church?

24 I think it's actually quite important that a strong message is delivered, because what  
25 we can still see from engagement from the community is that form of the Wesley Way is  
26 still acceptable.

27 **REV TAUTARI:** "Wesley Way", you know, John Wesley is the founder of the Methodist  
28 Church. Can you imagine what it is to have the name of a founder associated with the most  
29 horrific abuse day after day after day, have that "Wesley Way" term distorted in such a way  
30 that it is now being appropriated to mean this type of abuse. It would be interesting to  
31 speak with students at Wesley and say, "What does the Wesley Way mean for you?"  
32 Because I very much doubt that they would be saying it means brotherhood, fraternity.  
33 Instead, what we have is now a term that has come to mean that abject subjection of  
34 innocent people, young people, and that is categorically unacceptable to the Church.



1 I say this to anyone who is listening, watching here in this space. We acknowledge  
2 this is wrong, it is unacceptable. And cannot continue.

3 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you, Reverend Tautari.

4 Mr Johnston, for the school?

5 **MR JOHNSTON:** For the Board.

6 **MS SHARKEY:** For the Board.

7 **MR JOHNSTON:** My position, I'm Secretary to the Board, but my main role is looking after the  
8 investment assets of the Wesley College Trust Board.

9 **MS SHARKEY:** That's fine, I'll ask Dr Evans in the afternoon.

10 **MR JOHNSTON:** Sorry.

11 **MS SHARKEY:** Is there anything you would like to say on behalf of the Trust Board?

12 **MR JOHNSTON:** A hierarchy where you've got students having control over other students and  
13 leading to abuse is appalling and it is not appropriate and not appropriate today in our  
14 school.

15 **MS SHARKEY:** And you had mentioned before about the no narking, the culture of no narking.  
16 There's an acknowledgment that students were in fear of retribution and reprisals. A  
17 culture of silence and some students talk about trying to disclose to those who were put in  
18 charge of them. A student talks about living in fear all the time, constantly in fear and that  
19 their education was deprived because of it. Is there an acknowledgment of that?

20 **MR JOHNSTON:** From my point of view, yes, very much so.

21 **MS SHARKEY:** Etuini, you had spoken about before, and I'm looking at your statement, you say:

22 "The abuse and behaviour described by the survivor witnesses has no place in  
23 Methodist or Tongan values and no place at Wesley College."

24 Those values that you talk about, what are they?

25 **MR TALAKAI:** Values?

26 **MS SHARKEY:** Maybe the golden pillars, those values.

27 **MR TALAKAI:** We mentioned today, Madam Chair, Commissioner, the vā.

28 **MS SHARKEY:** The vā.

29 **MR TALAKAI:** One of the vā, the space. There's a, for Tongan, there is the four 'Faa'i Kavei  
30 Koula 'a e Tonga', Four Golden Pillars of a Tongan. These Four Golden Pillars were  
31 identified by the Late Queen Salote Tupou III, and depicts being a core value of being a  
32 Tongan in society. It talks very much about the relationship, the vā, and the four pillars is  
33 faka'apa'apa, respect; feveitokai'aki, reciprocal respect; tauhi vā, or tauhi vaha'a, keeping  
34 space of relationship.

1           And those four core values, Ms Sharkey, I think that depicts being a Pacific Islander  
2           in the school. Having the mutual respect of tauhi vā and tauhi vaha'a, having to respect the  
3           spaces, as we've heard the statement from the survivors. And I think to have those values  
4           in Wesley College implemented will see the changes in the coming future and the work  
5           that's being done at the moment. But those are the four core values that depicts being a  
6           student.

7           I experienced myself for being a Tongan, from a Tongan family, most families in  
8           the Tongan society think of enrolling your child at Wesley College, enrolling your child at  
9           Wesley College, not only they will learn the four pillars, golden pillars that I've been  
10          talking about, but it will teach them the mind, mental, it will teach them spiritual, and the  
11          College will teach them physical.

12          In the Tongan context, in the dimension of 'atamai - mind and mental; spiritual –  
13          laumālie; and sino – physical; and when these are napangapanga mālie - it means in  
14          balance. And if these are potupotu tatau - all these elements in balance, this will be a  
15          wellbeing person. And that's the dream of being, from a Tongan family, Pasifika I'm sure  
16          are the same, of sending their children and their kids to Wesley College to attain these  
17          wellbeing that we're talking about.

18       **CHAIR:** Does that aspiration continue today? Do Tongan families still want to send their  
19          children to Wesley for those reasons?

20       **MR TALAKAI:** I'm sure, Madam Chair, because we can see from the statistics the last 10 years  
21          from 93 to 2015, there's been a change from being 26% of Tongans to 51%. So I'm sure  
22          statistics now --

23       **CHAIR:** They speak for themselves in a way, don't they?

24       **MR TALAKAI:** Correct, yes.

25       **CHAIR:** Thank you.

26       **MS SHARKEY:** And that's the importance of faith to the Pacific cultures. Another value,  
27          because what you're describing there is not what survivors have experienced at Wesley  
28          College, would that be correct?

29       **MR TALAKAI:** Correct.

30       **MS SHARKEY:** And for some students what we saw, especially with the backlash, mamahi'i  
31          me'a, you know, this -- how would you describe that? That fierce loyalty, this passion,  
32          from some students to protect the school if anyone is saying something bad about them.  
33          That value is not right in terms of promoting or supporting that kind of violence towards  
34          another student. Would that be right?

1 **MR TALAKAI:** That's right.

2 **MS SHARKEY:** In fact would it be fair to say it's really -- they've taken on their own  
3 interpretation of what loyalty and passion means for Wesley College.

4 **MR TALAKAI:** Correct.

5 **MS SHARKEY:** But the Church is saying no, that is not the value that we're talking about, and  
6 you're wrong.

7 **MR TALAKAI:** Correct. There's no place for that in the school.

8 **MS SHARKEY:** And I just wonder, we will have community voice in the afternoon, but there are  
9 a number of Pacific parishes. Is that message delivered through those parishes? These  
10 days we've got children who look up to leaders like the person we've got in the afternoon.  
11 But our parents and our generation still listen to the word, very closely the word of the  
12 church and what they say. And so are these messages of what our values really do stand for  
13 and look like, particularly at Wesley College, is that communicated to our parishes, those  
14 parents who are caring for these children who are going off to school, that Wesley Way  
15 tradition that we've been looking at here is not on, has no place at Wesley College. Is that  
16 something that is being communicated to our parents, or should be communicated to our  
17 parents?

18 **MR TALAKAI:** I think it should be communicated to the parents. Also the settings. When you  
19 say the parish, former students, not all the Tongan students at Wesley College is from a  
20 parish. It can be from different denomination rather than Methodist. So rather talking  
21 about the denomination it's more of a culture, we're just Tongan, being a Tongan. So, to  
22 answer, whether it's reached the parish for Wesley Methodist Church, yes, but I'm not too  
23 sure to the other denominations, will it reach the community, the Tongan community there.

24 **MS SHARKEY:** And it's a message that needs to continually be delivered. I guess another group  
25 I would be looking at is the old boys or the old students. What relationship does either the  
26 school or the Church have with that association?

27 **MR JOHNSTON:** We've got the Chair of the Old Students Association next to me.

28 **MS SHARKEY:** That's perfect.

29 **MR JOHNSTON:** I also attend the Old Students Association Executive Meetings. We have  
30 another Board member, one of our Board members on that Old Students Association. So  
31 that's our connection with the Association. The events, there was an event that the Old  
32 Students Association put on recently but it wasn't well attended, but whether that's a  
33 reflection of the Covid times or not, I'm not sure.

1 **MS SHARKEY:** Considering this Royal Commission and the work we're looking at, in particular  
2 Wesley College, what communication is there with the members of the Old Students  
3 Association? Because what we saw on social media is a number of those who fed back  
4 were old boys, with very, very strong views towards this information coming out into the  
5 light.

6 **CHAIR:** Do you mean protective of the school?

7 **MS SHARKEY:** Protective of the school, fiercely protective of the school?

8 **REV FAULKNER:** So the day-to-day -- wrong word again. The understanding of what life is  
9 within the current school is not at this point on the Old Students Association agenda. The  
10 old students group meets from time to time to plan opportunities to get together. It does not  
11 go beyond that. And if the Old Students Association was in some way to request attention  
12 to what is happening in the school at the moment that would need careful negotiation.  
13 Particularly in my case if I'm presenting the request, I have to be aware that I am not the  
14 current principal. So there is some tension there just in terms of how information is passed  
15 and received and looked to.

16 **MS SHARKEY:** Sorry, Reverend Faulkner, could you just take us through that a bit, I'm just  
17 trying to understand what the restrictions or limitations would be in saying to the Old  
18 Boys -- or Old Students Association, I should say, that we are an Inquiry who is looking  
19 into the abuse that occurred to students at Wesley College, and with messaging around  
20 what it is that we've heard from survivors and strong messaging about -- perhaps a reaction.

21 **REV FAULKNER:** In that point, there is no restriction. So the Old Students Association must  
22 consider what has been presented and how as an Old Students Association within the Old  
23 Students Association they consider the best way of addressing what has been heard. Does  
24 that make sense? No?

25 **MS SHARKEY:** Kind of.

26 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** May I, excuse me, Ms Sharkey, just ask a question, I just  
27 wondered, to provide a bit of focus, is the topic of historical redress, for example, about  
28 whether the Old Students Association has discussed the redress scheme and efforts to  
29 communicate, raise awareness of the scheme and encourage people, survivors, to come  
30 forward. Has that been a part of your agenda or mahi that you do within the association?

31 **REV FAULKNER:** No. So the Old Students Association will be unaware of consideration  
32 around redress and how it might be applied.

33 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Why is that? I see it's on your website, the church website  
34 historical redress, I'm not sure why there's no -- why there wouldn't be any awareness or

1 effort to encourage discussion and applications to the redress scheme through the Old  
2 Students Association, as a really important forum for disseminating information.

3 **REV FAULKNER:** So without being definitive, members of the Old Students Association who  
4 are Methodist, therefore would believe they should be often looking at the Church website  
5 are few. There would be myself -- I might be the only, if the word is "practising"  
6 Methodist, that's on the Old Students Association.

7 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** I can appreciate that there can be some tension between, say, the  
8 Old Students Association and wanting to protect the reputation of the kura and its legacy,  
9 some tension between that and disclosure about historical abuse and transparency about  
10 historical abuse, and survivors, old boys and girls coming forward and making disclosures  
11 and seeking redress. Do you see that tension in the work that you do as the head of the  
12 association?

13 **REV FAULKNER:** No. I see there is no tension between that. What I can say is that it has not  
14 been on the agenda of the Old Students Association.

15 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Could that just be representative of the tension, in that no-one is  
16 willing to come forward because of the risk of harming the reputation of the kura?

17 **CHAIR:** Or is it something that's just not been considered, really, as part of the Old Students  
18 Association kaupapa?

19 **REV FAULKNER:** Correct.

20 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** It's just difficult to conceive of it not being considered.

21 **CHAIR:** Yes, that's right.

22 **REV FAULKNER:** And also, again, I would suggest for me to consider, first of all, members, the  
23 Old Students Association is a very small group. We're talking about eight or nine 9 people  
24 that come to the meetings. And each of us would say our overall experience of Wesley  
25 College was a positive one. That's why we want to continue being part of this group.

26 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** I may misunderstand what the association is, so it's not  
27 representative of all the former pupils at the kura?

28 **REV FAULKNER:** It's those who choose to pay their \$100 to become a member.

29 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** So is there another association?

30 **CHAIR:** Excuse me, can I just remind everybody to listen in respectful silence and allow  
31 everybody, including the Commissioners, to ask questions and to respond to them, that's the  
32 only way we get value out of this process. Thank you.

1 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** We're coming up to the break, so I do want to just clarify where is  
2 the old boys, old girls, former students, there is a student, there is a body in addition to the  
3 body that you sit on?

4 **REV FAULKNER:** No.

5 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** There is no body?

6 **REV FAULKNER:** No.

7 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** I'm going to stop there, Ms Sharkey, thank you.

8 **MS SHARKEY:** What I would say is that there are a number of groups, then, who profess to be  
9 representative of some kind of Old Students Association or Old Boys Association,  
10 particularly on social media. And so perhaps, then, the school might look at sharing some  
11 information with them, because they are quite vocal in their views and position.

12 Mr Johnston.

13 **MR JOHNSTON:** Sorry, I'm not great on social media, but I see that's a logical path.

14 **MS SHARKEY:** I just had a question in terms of reflection. Because we know that corporal  
15 punishment was prohibited at Wesley College since 1991 or the early 1990s. A survivor  
16 from the late 60s talks about how a senior staff member would beat them to the extreme  
17 and told staff and senior students to do the same. He is our earliest registered survivor.

18 And then we have heard from survivors that they would also receive the same  
19 corporal punishment. And I just wanted to know or to have this discussion about when that  
20 stops, when corporal punishment is taken off, and then it becomes the responsibility of  
21 students to do that to other students, we have survivors saying it was promoted, encouraged  
22 by staff. Could that be, just a reflection, just something to have a discussion about, whether  
23 that law, that being ruled out, not being allowed to do that anymore, and then staff think,  
24 well, if we can't do this to the children anymore, we'll get others to do it. Could that have  
25 been one of the reasons why we've got survivors saying that it was the staff, it was the  
26 senior staff who promoted and encouraged the violence that happened to them?

27 It might not be in that's fair if you don't think that's relevant, but then why were  
28 staff telling these students to do that to other students?

29 **REV FAULKNER:** I cannot comment on that. What I can comment on, I was the principal of a  
30 secondary school, a different secondary school when corporal punishment was ruled out by  
31 the Government. And I did not see, I believe I did not see, any move to introduce physical  
32 punishment in another form, and by another authorised group of people. What I can say, as  
33 a student of Wesley College, is that corporal punishment was very much the only way of  
34 managing students.

- 1 **MS SHARKEY:** The only way?
- 2 **REV FAULKNER:** The only way. So in my time as a student, anything that moved was beaten.
- 3 **MS SHARKEY:** Right, right. So you're saying it wasn't the only option, it was just that was the  
4 punishment that was --
- 5 **REV FAULKNER:** It's the easy, most straightforward way of putting young people in their place.
- 6 **CHAIR:** Back in your day was it administered only by teaching staff or was it also administered  
7 by senior students the way it certainly came to be at least later?
- 8 **REV FAULKNER:** In my time it was only some staff, and there were other staff who were  
9 Christian pacifists who spoke out that there was to be no physical punishment, period. And  
10 there are historically periods in the school where there was no corporal punishment and  
11 then that influence moved on and it would have resumed.
- 12 **CHAIR:** It would revert, okay. Do you have any idea or does anybody know when this practice  
13 of encouraging senior students to take on the disciplining, when it began? Ms Sharkey has  
14 proposed a possible theory that it was when corporal punishment was outlawed, but does  
15 anybody have any idea? Do you have any idea?
- 16 **MR JOHNSTON:** No, I don't have any idea.
- 17 **CHAIR:** No, I'm talking to Etuini. You don't know?
- 18 **MR TALAKAI:** No, I don't.
- 19 **CHAIR:** In your day was it physical punishment by teachers or students or both?
- 20 **MR TALAKAI:** Sorry, Madam Chair, my day was only one year.
- 21 **CHAIR:** Only one year?
- 22 **MR TALAKAI:** I did not witness any...
- 23 **CHAIR:** You didn't witness any, okay, thank you.
- 24 **MS SHARKEY:** With that corporal punishment, would you agree that this demonstrated to  
25 students that that form of physical violence was acceptable?
- 26 **REV FAULKNER:** So are we referring to my time now as a student? Clearly everybody knew  
27 their place and if you stepped out of your place, that was the result.
- 28 **MS SHARKEY:** Are you wanting to -- I was just catching your eye? No, okay.  
29 Madam Chair, I understand that lunch might be at 12.30.
- 30 **CHAIR:** That was our aspiration and our hope and our desire. And tell me where you're up to and  
31 what you would like to do in terms of -- do you need more time if we came back earlier?  
32 How would you like to deal with it?
- 33 **MS SHARKEY:** So we're due to come back at...
- 34 **CHAIR:** 1.30.

1 **MS SHARKEY:** Can we make it a bit earlier than that?

2 **CHAIR:** Yes, we could, that's what I'm suggesting, maybe we come back at 1.15 if people can  
3 have lunch in that time. Does that suit you?

4 **MS SHARKEY:** Yes, definitely, all the time I can get would suit me.

5 **CHAIR:** You need every moment you can get. Thank you to the panel, and time for a  
6 well-deserved lunch break, we'll come back at 1.15.

7 **REV FAULKNER:** Thank you.

8 **Lunch adjournment from 12.33 pm to 1.24 pm**

9 **CHAIR:** Welcome back, everybody, it's good to see you are all engaged and excited about what  
10 has been and particularly about what is to come. Welcome to our new members of our  
11 panel and I'll get -- Ms Sharkey, who is going to introduce them?

12 **MS DEW:** Happy to introduce Dr Brian Evans who is the current principal of Wesley College.

13 **MS SHARKEY:** And we're also joined by Mr Sekope Kepu, who is a well-known Pacific person  
14 in our community. Mr Kepu does have some comments he would like to make. Just  
15 checking, Dr Evans, do you have some comments you would like to make to open with?

16 **DR EVANS:** Yes, just one --

17 **CHAIR:** Just before you do, so we'll just do the affirmation and then we'll launch into the  
18 proceedings.

19 **DR BRIAN EVANS and SEKOPE KEPU (Affirmed)**

20 **MS SHARKEY:** Dr Evans, you're welcome to make your opening comments.

21 **DR EVANS:** I just, firstly, want to acknowledge and apologise to all the survivors, including the  
22 ones up to my time, 2022. In particular I just want to acknowledge and thank William for  
23 coming forward and introducing himself to me just now, before. It took a lot of courage  
24 and I'm really proud of what William started and a lot of other people coming forward. So  
25 thank you, William, and I look forward to collaborating with you as we move forward.

26 **CHAIR:** Thank you for that.

27 Sekope.

28 **MR KEPU:** Tomu'a 'atu 'a e fakafeta'i mo ha fakamālō ki he Tu'i 'o e Langi, ko e 'uhingá ko  
29 'ene taulama hao mo 'ene tauhi 'etau mo'ui 'o tau a'usia 'a e 'aho fakakoloa ko 'ení. Ko  
30 hoku hingoá ko Sekope Kepu. Ko e Tonga au. Ko 'eku tangata'eiki mei Niuafou'ou pea ko  
31 'eku fa'ee mei Leimātu'a, Vava'u. Mālō e lelei everyone. My name is Sekope Kepu. I am  
32 Tongan, I was raised in New Zealand. My father comes from Niuafou'ou, a small outer  
33 island in Tonga, and my mother comes from Leimatu'a Vava'u. I live here in Auckland  
34 with my wife and four kids. I am 1.88 centimetres tall, I'm currently wearing a black tie



1 with a white shirt and a black tupenu, Tongan attire with a ta'ovala which is a mat that is  
2 wrapped around us.

3 Just a bit about my background. I am an Old Boy of Wesley College. I attended  
4 Wesley College from 1999 to 2004. I was a prefect in my last two years of school at  
5 Wesley College. I was also in the first XV team representing the school in inter-college  
6 sports. I was involved in the Tongan culture group and was a leader in that group in my  
7 final years at Wesley.

8 Today I just want to acknowledge the experiences of our survivors. My heart goes  
9 out to you guys and to you all wherever you are. For those who shared this experience,  
10 I acknowledge your courage for coming forward. I am here today to fully support you, my  
11 fellow brothers and sisters, that have been harmed in these various ways through their  
12 experience at Wesley College.

13 I have had the privilege of reading through your statements and I can see the hurt  
14 and the impact that it's had on you and the suffering over the many years of the abuse that  
15 you suffered. So from me to you, 'ofa lahi atu, mālō. (Love you a lot, thank you).

16 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you, Sekope. Just following on from your opening comments, you had  
17 support from your friends to appear in this Royal Commission?

18 **MR KEPU:** Yes, if I'm being brutally honest, a very nervous challenging time, not knowing the  
19 response of my fellow old students, fellow Old Boys. But if I'm being honest with myself,  
20 if I'm being rightful in what I believe in the living God, to always do what's right and yeah,  
21 to answer your question, the students that I did reach out to were fully supportive and I've  
22 encouraged some as well to come forward to talanoa, to have this discussion so that we do  
23 improve the school that we love dearly in a positive direction and in a positive way and lift  
24 all the dark cloud that we're trying to lift, this tatala of the pulonga that's been on our school  
25 for a long time now.

26 **MS SHARKEY:** Malo 'aupito Sekope. Just before we went to the break, there was some  
27 discussion, survivor experiences have talked to us about what staff knew at various periods  
28 throughout. And I just wanted to read some of these into evidence, survivors have asked us  
29 to share these experiences. One survivor says:

30 "The flat was where you were sent if teachers or the principal had an issue with you.  
31 Prefects were always in charge and were used by teachers to hand out punishments."

32 Another survivor, "Even when teachers were around, they would just walk away."

33 Mr WC said:

1 "Staff also shared the view that this was the way it had always been and they turned  
2 a blind eye to the violence and abuse. The system was viewed as a legitimate means of  
3 keeping the students in line."

4 Mr TE says that he disclosed his abuse to school staff on a number of occasions and  
5 in the end he was met with abuse by a prefect or a senior.

6 A survivor says they disclosed abuse to the school principal on two occasions.  
7 Another survivor says they went to the masters straight after being nudged to show them  
8 the evidence but they didn't want to see it.

9 William Wilson in his evidence spoke about school staff giving prefects the power  
10 and Mr DE reported abuse to a number of masters on duty but they dismissed his claims.

11 There are also survivor experiences of telling medical staff of there being other staff  
12 knowledge and even telling Methodist ministers at the school and nothing was done. And  
13 my question is, whether the school accept that they were aware of the violence and abuse to  
14 the children but failed to act.

15 If anyone can answer that question, on reflection or even in the recent years.

16 **DR EVANS:** On reflection, for me, I guess I've been there four and a half years and I would find  
17 it hard to believe that staff didn't know what was going on, whether it was condoned or not  
18 I don't honestly know, but yeah, it would be very apparent what was happening.

19 **CHAIR:** I think we need to clarify, Dr Evans, I don't think it's been stated but you are the present  
20 principal of Wesley College; is that correct?

21 **DR EVANS:** Yes.

22 **MS SHARKEY:** If survivor voices are to be believed then it's accepted that some staff at Wesley  
23 College did know that the abuse was happening.

24 **MR JOHNSTON:** That is to be accepted.

25 **MS SHARKEY:** We've already heard, and thank you, Mr Johnston, you acknowledged that there  
26 was inadequate supervision at the time. Just a question why?

27 **MR JOHNSTON:** I can speculate that it was due to finance. I know pre-integration, and  
28 integration for Wesley was in 1976, that the reason for integration was that Wesley College  
29 could not afford to maintain as a private school which is now referred to as independent  
30 schools. That's my speculation, you know, affording the additional staff.

31 **MS SHARKEY:** And so we'd touched on before the number of pathways these children coming  
32 from in terms of their homes, the backgrounds, overseas, they're put into this situation and  
33 there is no supervision, you could foresee that there were going to be some issues, surely.  
34 In hindsight, looking back.

1 **MR JOHNSTON:** In hindsight I don't disagree with you.

2 **MS SHARKEY:** And Reverend Tautari, for the Church, because this is a school, Church school,  
3 what learnings do you take from that?

4 **REV TAUTARI:** The learnings that I take are that when students come to Wesley they come as  
5 individuals with distinct needs which must be met with requisite support in place. And that  
6 these students need to feel secure in the care of the place in which they are in, and that this  
7 is what the Church would require of Wesley College.

8 **MS SHARKEY:** And so we've seen a number of, there are a number of documents we've all had  
9 to have a look at, and is it that the Church was disconnected from what was happening then,  
10 you didn't know that there was inadequate supervision? What was the situation?

11 **REV TAUTARI:** There were times when the church was very connected and had spoken up at  
12 Conference and said we need to address the issue, we need to ensure that there is support in  
13 place, but those times were so few as to not then bring about any sustained, enduring  
14 change, and that is evident in the statements coming from survivors who have completely  
15 other experiences.

16 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Ms Sharkey, may I just ask, following up there, just to go a little  
17 bit further about the needs of the students, given the pathways into the kura, just to explore  
18 what particular types of needs do you think the taurira needed?

19 Anyone's welcome to answer this question, but probably with those with experience  
20 from the time, really, reflecting back on, yeah, historically but up until -- I mean, it's  
21 relevant for present times too about whether those needs persist.

22 **DR EVANS:** I can speak for now. The needs of our students now are still really high, so if you  
23 meant the old language of deciles, a decile 1 boarding school is quite a unique thing, so we  
24 have a lot of kids coming from lower socio-economic backgrounds. I think we all know the  
25 rhetoric around students, reading, writing, so there can be learning needs, emotional needs,  
26 from challenging families.

27 So yeah, I guess now, and I can talk for now, we've gone to the Board and said if we  
28 want to run this sort of operation and live to the Methodist ethos, we need to fund it. So  
29 now the funding, I'm happy to say, there's a lot more funding for staffing, for support for  
30 students, and give them the care and attention they need.

31 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Thank you, so my question is recognising that it is a problem and  
32 then what are you doing in response to it? So you talked about emotional needs there,  
33 could be trauma, there could be learning disabilities, it's identifying those particular needs  
34 for individual students and making sure the services are there. So you're saying now that

1           yes, recognising the extent of needs and addressing them with more resources being  
2           provided; is that right?

3 **DR EVANS:** Yes, so counsellors, teacher aides, just more staff around the dormitories and so on.

4 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** But historically, can anyone speak to that?

5 **REV TAUTARI:** Historically it would have been like Reverend Faulkner spoke of. Students  
6           coming together from very different backgrounds and being put in a one-size-fits-all box  
7           and you are expected to get along and to do well. And in that context your own specific  
8           needs were not catered for, nor even, I would hazard a guess, were even understood. What  
9           does it mean when Māori students come already with intergenerational trauma? We didn't  
10          even have the language of that then to process. So how do we understand that then?

11                 So these are some of the things that very clearly were lacking, and as Dr Evans has  
12          said, have now shifted.

13 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Tēnā koe. At what period of time do you think the changes have  
14          been made, in recent years?

15 **MR JOHNSTON:** I first started at Wesley in 1996, in the position of bursar which is the  
16          accountant to the school, and I've seen the principals, past principals, Graeme Cowley when  
17          I started, then Reverend Ian Faulkner, then Steven Hargreaves and then Brian, so I've seen  
18          the change has come across with every single principal in my time.

19 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Incrementally --

20 **MR JOHNSTON:** Incrementally.

21 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** -- it's changed since the 2000s onwards?

22 **MR JOHNSTON:** I'd agree to that.

23 **CHAIR:** Did you wish to say something?

24 **MR KEPU:** Yeah, I guess speaking from the past and as a past student, for as far as I remember  
25          there was no counsellors available for each individual. As Reverend Ian Faulkner referred  
26          to, we were just pretty much thrown in there and had senior students looking after us.

27 **CHAIR:** Sekope, would you remind me of the years you were at the school, I didn't note it down.

28 **MR KEPU:** 1999 to 2004.

29 **CHAIR:** Thank you.

30 **MR KEPU:** So yeah, we were, you know, a word that was used before was "vetted". Students  
31          weren't vetted, you know, there were no background checks on certain individuals coming  
32          from orphanages or care, care homes. So as a parent now, I would carefully navigate that  
33          space because -- and with all love and respect, it's knowing who my children go to school

1 with, interacting with their parents, knowing their children, and we go to the terminology of  
2 "community", raising a child, it takes a village to raise a child.

3 Anyways, I want to come back to those resources weren't provided, and I ask the  
4 question if it is still there, is it being done today, because I'm passionate about this change,  
5 and we need this change, ever so desperately, you know, like, because we need these  
6 individuals all catered for, 41% or 50% Tongan, that cultural understanding of our Tongan  
7 background and culture, what our actual four pillars are that Etuini has referred to. Because  
8 our Tongan students have lost that and they don't know that. So we need to really delve  
9 back into that.

10 But yeah, in saying that, no, there was no resources and I believe that's a massive  
11 part. We need to provide those social workers, the people to aid and help -- and help our  
12 kids. I remember back now to some students that have come from broken homes. I didn't  
13 understand anything about where they came from, I just knew they came from up north,  
14 down the line. But we interacted and, yeah, and it was -- now I'm a parent and I see my  
15 children, you know, for the safety of our children and for the future, that's what I want.  
16 Thank you.

17 **CHAIR:** Included amongst those resources, I take it from what you've said, people with cultural  
18 background, deep cultural knowledge who can transmit those values that you're talking  
19 about, that they might not be able to get from their own families for whatever reason; is that  
20 something you're talking about as well?

21 **MR KEPU:** Yeah, definitely. Again, I refer to catering for everybody. Not everybody comes  
22 from sustainable homes or from safe homes. So understanding and as they come through  
23 the gates all their application has been taken, noting it, providing the services for that,  
24 allowing the qualified people to assist to that.

25 **CHAIR:** Yes, thank you.

26 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you, Sekope. So we just finished on also the lack of supervision and we  
27 are now just about to play a video and I'll just signal that for those who are on the  
28 livestream it's about to go blank. We will be back in approximately 15 minutes.

29 **CHAIR:** Unfortunately we can't transmit this video over the livestream, I'm sorry about that. But  
30 perhaps for the audience you could explain what it is so that they know.

31 The audience will see it, the people in the room will see it, but for the purposes of  
32 those who are watching online, could you just briefly describe. It's a TVNZ programme.

1 **MS SHARKEY:** Yes, it's a TVNZ programme that shared an experience of a survivor from the  
2 early 90s, and it's a two-part series shortly after his experience and then the impacts,  
3 long-term consequences three years later.

4 **CHAIR:** Thank you. Just a warning, that this may disturb some people, so if you need help,  
5 please ask for it. Thank you. **[Video played].**

6 I understand there's been an interruption and you weren't able to see it in the  
7 back -- is that right? I am very sorry about that. And I've been told to stop because the  
8 whole livestream seems to have gone down. So we will give it half a minute, we might  
9 have to abandon ship for a moment while it gets fixed.

10 Let's have a break until it's fixed and let's hope it's not too long.

11 **Adjournment from 2.00 pm to 2.15 pm**

12 **CHAIR:** Let's hope our technical problems have been resolved, I understand we're going to  
13 readjust the timing just a little bit, Ms Sharkey, is that right?

14 **MS SHARKEY:** Yes. We just watched that video from the TVNZ episode in 1991 and 1994 and  
15 the reason for showing that, a number of reasons, we're looking at impacts as well. As well  
16 as a comment that was made at the end, and it was that the response of the school was that  
17 that particular survivor was in the care of his mother, not the school.

18 So if, firstly, I could start about impacts, that is something very real to our  
19 survivors, and I'm just asking for the response of both the Church and the Trust Board, or,  
20 and the College.

21 Perhaps, Reverend Tautari, we'll start with you, just identifying those impacts, what  
22 were the impacts for these survivors? As we've seen, I think there are many survivors who  
23 are watching and present today who want to understand that both the school, the boards and  
24 the church appreciate the significance of the impacts they are suffering today.

25 **REV TAUTARI:** Thank you, Ms Sharkey. I can see that the impact on the survivor went well  
26 beyond physical. It incorporated the psychological well-being, his wairua which had been  
27 wounded immeasurably by this, his capacity to do the things that he wanted to do to  
28 achieve his own aspirations, for example his mother reflected on his ability to hold down a  
29 job.

30 We heard how he had been this promising rugby player and from one day to the  
31 next that was taken away.

32 The impacts, as we heard from the video, are lifelong lasting. They continue day  
33 after day after day. When this happened to him I was 21. Now I am a mother of a son near  
34 his age. As I reflect on my own son and my aroha for him, I can only feel the courage of

1 this mother to be there for her son every step along the way. And I can only reiterate what  
2 I said at the beginning, which is in diametric opposition to what we heard in the video. The  
3 Church had responsibility, primary responsibility for those in its care and that includes this  
4 young man or his whānau. And Wesley College had a responsibility as well and so I now  
5 hand it over to Wesley to speak about the impacts.

6 **MR JOHNSTON:** Watching that incident and the horrific assault, and that was an assault on a  
7 young boy, you're right, the principal reflected on the perpetrator but the care and attention  
8 should have been on the victim. The victim was under Wesley's care. So, to me, there was  
9 a priority. So sure, there was a perpetrator in this, but what was there, what was the support  
10 to the victim who was here at Wesley College and what was Wesley College doing to  
11 protect the students at Wesley College?

12 And to me it's wider because I notice that the perpetrator, who was convicted in  
13 court, also brought fellow students in, rallied it up. But if the culture was that violence is  
14 not appropriate, then the ones that were rallied should have been helping protect the victim,  
15 that's my thoughts and my beliefs.

16 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you, Mr Johnston. Dr Evans, do you have any comments you'd like to  
17 make?

18 **DR EVANS:** It's hugely upsetting watching it as an educator and a parent, and I've read all the  
19 statements. I've also been approached at school by other ex-pupils that have had similar  
20 experience and sat down with them and talked through their stories and it causes a sense of  
21 shame, to be honest, as the current leader. Yeah, it's horrific.

22 **MS SHARKEY:** So you identified some of those impacts being beyond physical, psychological.  
23 Having read the statements, you would agree that many students talk about being deprived  
24 of an education as that survivor was. And you would have seen a common theme in the  
25 survivor statements as well, and them struggling with addictions right at this present day.  
26 Is that acknowledged by the Church and the school?

27 **MR JOHNSTON:** It is acknowledged.

28 **DR EVANS:** Absolutely.

29 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, the Church acknowledges this.

30 **MS SHARKEY:** Reverent Tautari, I'm just coming to a couple of comments in your statement,  
31 and it was the last comment there about that survivor being in the care of his mother at the  
32 time and I note your statement:

1 "The Church acknowledges its role in relation to the care of students at the boarding  
2 houses. The Church's role has been and is to oversee and provide guidance to the Trust  
3 Board through its connection with the Colleges and Methodist school".

4 So this part I'm really wanting to talk about the relationship between the Church, the  
5 Trust Board and the College, if we might. Because what I understand the Church saying is  
6 that boarding school is it, is that where you hold, you know, primary responsibility for the  
7 students at Wesley College, and to the Trust Board. I'm just trying to understand the  
8 relationship so the Commissioners can understand as well. Anybody's fine.

9 **MR JOHNSTON:** The Wesley College Trust Board, that is the affiliation to the Methodist  
10 Church, owns the land and runs the hostels. During the day, the students attend a Crown  
11 entity which is run by the Wesley College Board of Trustees. So that's where we're talking  
12 about the care. The Wesley College Trust Board, as a proprietors' board, does have four  
13 representatives on the Board of Trustees that help run the day school.

14 So I think when the Church is saying, you know, the boarding school, that's the area  
15 of the Church that the Wesley College Trust Board and the Church has a direct influence; is  
16 that what you're asking?

17 **MS SHARKEY:** Yes, well, in one example a house parent has complained to the Board of  
18 Trustees, the Board of Trustees said the issue should be taken to the Trust Board and not to  
19 the Board of Trustees. So these are the relationships we're trying to understand, because  
20 there are a number of documents that talk about complaints being made. But those  
21 complaints or people being told, "Actually, no, you don't come here, you go over there."

22 **MR JOHNSTON:** It's strange because they are two clear, separate legal entities. But our most  
23 senior person, our principal, actually works for both entities, so they both have their own  
24 complaints procedures, but they pretty much mirror each other. But it depends what it is.

25 So, say, if it's a complaint about a teaching staff member, they're not employed by  
26 the Wesley College Trust Board, they're employed by the Wesley College Board of  
27 Trustees. And so if it's a complaint about a hostel staff member, then it is in the realm of  
28 the Wesley College Trust Board and not the Wesley College Board of Trustees.

29 **MS SHARKEY:** Right, so if something happens to a child during the day, 9 to 3, does the Trust  
30 Board have a say, anything to do with anything?

31 **MR JOHNSTON:** The Trust Board through its representatives on the Board of Trustees, it's that  
32 realm, but also, as I mentioned, the principal, who is our, I use the term "CEO", our head  
33 person, is employed by both boards.



1 **MS SHARKEY:** Right, so there's no reason why something that happens to a student during the  
2 day wouldn't be of interest, or you wouldn't care about it?

3 **MR JOHNSTON:** The Trust Board would care about it and would be interested in it.

4 **MS SHARKEY:** Okay, all right. Thank you, Mr Johnston.

5 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Mr Johnston, so just for a point of clarity, so even though the  
6 school Trust Board that owns the property, even though you have reps that are sitting on the  
7 Board of Trustees, when they're sitting on that board of trustees, are they representing the  
8 Trust Board or are they simply there as trustees?

9 **MR JOHNSTON:** They are representing the Trust Board, they are what is called a proprietor's  
10 representative on the Board of Trustees.

11 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Thank you.

12 **MR JOHNSTON:** Under the Act they do have certain powers as well.

13 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** So that's the link where the Board of Proprietors or the Trust  
14 Board can speak directly into the Board of Trustees?

15 **MR JOHNSTON:** That is correct.

16 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Thank you.

17 **MS SHARKEY:** And Reverend Tautari, could you just explain your role as you see it, or the  
18 Church's role, I should say.

19 **REV TAUTARI:** The Church's role is because of the word "Methodist" and the special character  
20 of the school, which has as one of its drivers the Methodist ethos. And so we have a moral  
21 responsibility inasmuch as possible to influence how the school is able to effect those right  
22 relationships that we purport to believe in as Methodists. We do that by ensuring that there  
23 are Methodist membership on the board, and we've talked about taha Māori and tauiwi  
24 members. We do that by holding the College accountable to Conference, by confirming  
25 their appointments to boards. And we do that by owning then the whakamā of abuse before  
26 us and for saying we stand alongside Wesley to effect meaningful change.

27 The Church as a legal entity does not have a direct power on day-to-day operations.  
28 This one we don't have.

29 **MS SHARKEY:** But I take it from what you had said before in terms of moral obligations, the  
30 Methodist Church are actually taking a keen interest in what happens to the students during  
31 the day?

32 **REV TAUTARI:** Very keen, very keen. And so therefore we are engaged fully with Wesley  
33 College to look at how we go about bringing about a culture, we talked about

1 re-appropriating the term "Wesley Way", so that it has meaning in its correct form for  
2 students there, so that students feel safe and secure, etc.

3 **CHAIR:** Could I ask -- thank you for that -- does that ownership of influencing the way the  
4 school runs, does that go to also owning some of the responsibility for what went on in the  
5 past?

6 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, I believe it does. I believe there were windows of opportunity that  
7 Conference could have intervened and moved in a different direction.

8 **CHAIR:** Yes, thank you for that.

9 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Just to follow up on that question, so in cases of historical abuse at  
10 the College, they come to the Church rather than -- they come to a redress scheme currently  
11 offered by the Church, is that correct, rather than by the school?

12 **REV TAUTARI:** That's correct and that came just recently. We had a kōrero and we said we are  
13 together, we have a redress scheme, we want to align our efforts and energies in this space  
14 and to show that this is the Methodist redress scheme.

15 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Kia ora.

16 **MS SHARKEY:** Because parents who send their children to Wesley are sending them there  
17 because they're going to get a Methodist education or a Methodist school, right? A lot of  
18 our Pacific community understand that the Church would be involved overall, right, not just  
19 for this one part, but across the day as well?

20 **REV TAUTARI:** That is correct. You will see, for example, that the chaplain, the role of  
21 chaplain at Wesley College is a connexional appointment. That means it is an appointment  
22 that has come about because of, and all our connexional appointments are by 4 plus 4  
23 process where we have four taha Māori members, four tauīwi members coming together  
24 and to appoint key positions that we perceive to be important to us as Church. One of those  
25 is the position of chaplain at Wesley College.

26 **MS SHARKEY:** And you rely on the reports that come from the Trust Board to Conference?

27 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, we do, we do.

28 **MS SHARKEY:** And I just wanted to touch on that and perhaps, Mr Johnston, this is your area,  
29 because we've had a look at the annual Conference, some of them are 700 pages long, but  
30 we're zoning in on the information that is reported back to Conference by the Trust Board.  
31 And there are a number of documents.

32 What I would like to talk about is from what we've seen, 1992, it was silent on the  
33 issue of any violence. 1993, we're going to bring up just a comment on Trial Director,  
34 "Wesley College is not a more violent institution than others nor is there more casual

1 violence. We do, however, as all institutions, have some violence which is openly  
2 discussed with staff'. And in 1998 there is some mention of what's happening at Wesley.

3 I just wanted to get your comments on that, because it doesn't seem that there was  
4 the level of reporting we would want to see in respect of what was actually happening at  
5 Wesley College. Can you comment on that?

6 **MR JOHNSTON:** I can speculate, I wasn't around at the time, but yeah, Conference should be  
7 keeping Wesley to account and, you're right, Wesley College in its reports should be saying  
8 what is happening in the current Wesley College environment.

9 The Conference receives a report from Wesley, but also the senior staff and  
10 Chairperson of the board are there in person at Conference presenting their report. And so  
11 the floor is open to Conference to be questioned about all sorts of things. But why such a  
12 significant thing at that time was left out, I couldn't tell you.

13 **MS SHARKEY:** I thought you were moving towards the microphone, that's fine Reverend  
14 Tautari, thank you.

15 In 1993 the information shows that the president and vice-president of the  
16 Methodist Church attended a Trust Board meeting to discuss the concerns that had arisen,  
17 and the bullying and the violence, and that would show -- does that happen often, or does  
18 that show the seriousness of the issue at the time? Would you agree?

19 **MR JOHNSTON:** I think it shows the seriousness of the issue at the time. What I have read is,  
20 and particularly the Holmes programme which you showed, did bring attention and, rightly,  
21 attention of the Church back to Wesley College. And those two key positions, the president  
22 and the vice-president coming to the Wesley College Trust Board showed the importance  
23 and the care of the Church.

24 **MS SHARKEY:** In the notes it says that:

25 "The principal at the time thanked the president for his attendance and stated that in  
26 his five years of leadership bullying and violence probably at its lowest."

27 And I would say that that is incorrect. Would you agree with that?

28 **MR JOHNSTON:** Reading the witness statements, yes, I would.

29 **MS SHARKEY:** And that survivor we saw, as well as William Wilson, had happened during that  
30 period of time as well.

31 **CHAIR:** Sekope, did you want to say something about that?

32 **MR KEPU:** Yes. May I add, as you mentioned before, and I want to go back to it, I know about  
33 our parents sending us to Wesley, about my parents sending me to Wesley, first and  
34 foremost for our faith, because we come from a Methodist Wesleyan background. But my

1 question would be to ask with the faifekau or the Reverend, this person with so much  
2 power, and a title, title brings power, how much -- do they know how much power and  
3 authority they have from -- given from our parents unofficially when they do send us to  
4 Wesley? How much of that power do they know and authority they hold over us as  
5 students.

6 So it's important, I think, that we educate them, our staff, but it's also it's important  
7 that we educate our parents so they know that they're okay in this day and age to come  
8 forward, they don't have to feel inferior or lower than anybody to question that authority,  
9 just because they're not as qualified. And in our Tongan culture, respect, tauhi vā,  
10 faka'apa'apa. Faka'apa'apa is respect; you respect that teacher, that Reverend, that principal,  
11 that staff member, because that is their title, that is their job, that is their role at the school.

12 So I think before, when you raised it, that sort of jumped to my mind, and I just  
13 thought I'd share that because it's vital in this movement forward, that these people are  
14 made aware of.

15 **MS SHARKEY:** And you raise a good point and I'm going to your next door neighbour, Edwin,  
16 because it's about educating our parents, whether that's through Church. We've just heard  
17 what Sekope is saying about the importance of doing that and I just wondered, upon  
18 reflection or listening to what he had to say, what are your comments to that?

19 **MR TALAKAI:** Thank you, Ms Sharkey, I do support the comments from Sekope, that it's  
20 imperative to have the voices of the survivors that we have read and mention to the parents.  
21 As we know, for Pasifika parents when you invite them to come for parents' evening you  
22 hardly get them there, especially if it's an education evening. But then if you have a  
23 cultural evening, it's packed, you won't find any seats in the theatre.

24 So it's a movement, maybe that's the way to inform our parents through that medium  
25 rather than through the Church, because they're different, you know, from the Church point  
26 of view we might have the capacity to know that's been informed, parents have been  
27 informed. But from my view it's imperative to make the information be heard and be  
28 known to the parents.

29 **MS SHARKEY:** Yeah, that's correct. Pacific parents turn out in force to cultural events, they  
30 know that space, they've got a strength in their culture in that space, and perhaps some  
31 evenings where they're going to a different forum where they're not comfortable, they don't  
32 feel able to speak up; would that be correct?

33 **MR TALAKAI:** That is correct, what Sekope mentioned, it's the trust, the trust and the respect  
34 that the parents bring. From the Pasifika lens they bring their child to the front gate of the

1 school and expect the school to take over the child. They don't have the expertise to be on  
2 the other side to look after the child. That's the high model of trust of the Pasifika parents.  
3 They stand in the background and never come forward until you tell them to come forward.

4 It's more -- like what Sekope's mentioned, it's more educating our parents as well to  
5 have the understanding and trust, the trust.

6 **MS SHARKEY:** But it is important that it comes from the Church, because like with the  
7 Covid-19 response, it was the Church that was sending out that message to our  
8 communities and they responded. Would that be fair?

9 **MR TALAKAI:** Yes.

10 **MS SHARKEY:** So if you have 200 people in a congregation on a Sunday and you're sharing  
11 certain messages, they would listen to the Church, to the members of Clergy because of that  
12 hierarchy Sekope was talking about. Would that be fair to say?

13 **MR TALAKAI:** That's correct, yes. And now we've got the medium of social media we can do  
14 that from the point of the Church leaders.

15 **MS SHARKEY:** Okay, all right.

16 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Ms Sharkey, can I just comment in this space to Edwin and  
17 Sekope. Thank you very much for that, because what you're really highlighting there is a  
18 Pasifika world view. So it's not just the Tongan perspective, you could apply it to  
19 Samoans, you could apply it to maybe Cook Islanders, Niueans and others from our Pacific  
20 nations, in that the high trust model is something that I think Palagi don't always understand  
21 that, like the clericalism and the level of clericalism in the Church. We heard about this  
22 yesterday in the Catholic faith.

23 But now in 2022 when 'ua o'o mai i le malamalama', we're now in the light. And  
24 you see the value of your world view and your perspective actually being able to influence  
25 in a way that it's never been able to be heard before, because in many respects it was  
26 invisible because of the cultural -- Palagi would say they're cultural barriers; Pasifika, I'm  
27 hearing you, you are saying it's actually just a form of respect.

28 But when Pasifika communities migrated here it really was because you are the  
29 hope for the future, you're the children of the diaspora, we all are. So what we've heard,  
30 again and again and again from our survivors, is they just don't want this to happen again,  
31 so it's a rally call, it's a rally call. And I hear what our current principal said, Dr Evans, that  
32 you find it hard that the school did not know that abuse was happening. We see a  
33 documentary like this and it just re-affirms how could they not have known.

1           And so it's about how do you then use, using really strong respected role models  
2 like yourselves, how do you then turn the tide so that we know what a healthy Methodist  
3 Church school community looks like? I guess that's just what I want to put out there,  
4 because often, you know, when you talk about socially imagining a new way, how do you  
5 then take the strength of your cultures to be able to pull your school community into the  
6 light? And I'm thinking of all of your students and their parents that might be watching  
7 today, and the message that your presence here actually serves.

8 **MS SHARKEY:** Sekope?

9 **MR KEPU:** Thank you very much for clarifying that, the Pasifika way, it works for everybody  
10 and knowing the demographic of our school allows us to wrap our arms around and provide  
11 those services and resources.

12           For example, 41 odd % is of Tongan heritage, and so on and so forth. So again,  
13 going back to my point of catering for everybody, for a child, and the way we talanoa, or  
14 we fakalelei or we tauhi vā respecting the space in between the bully and the survivor, or  
15 the victim. Solution, if we're thinking of how we do it in the Tongan culture, if anything  
16 happens within the village or the community so to speak, the school, that vā has been  
17 broken so it needs to be mended. And the way you mend that is you bring not just the  
18 parents, grandparents hold significance in children's lives, the carers that might be involved,  
19 the Churches, our uncles and aunties, and deal with it as a community and you build that  
20 vā, and if you think about this day and age, if you sit two students together with their  
21 families, they're going to feel a little bit embarrassed.

22           And you build those connections and those, "Oh, so you actually work here and  
23 there, my neighbour is", for example. So then you're building those connections, and you  
24 become just one big family, one big community instead of an institution where we're  
25 referring to at the moment.

26           So I think -- I thank you for clarifying that about our Pasifika people and I think  
27 we've got to really provide in that space and the platform so that this bullying is knocked  
28 out, full stop.

29 **CHAIR:** Sekope, that's very interesting and it strikes me that that, which I think Palagi would  
30 refer to it almost as a restorative justice process, but you're talking about it in terms of your  
31 culture but it's bringing whānau, community together. It also strikes me that it is an  
32 educative process as well, so that as well as the healing, the healing of the vā, of the pain  
33 and the rest, you're almost demonstrating there's another way of resolving conflict. Do you  
34 agree with that?

1 **MR KEPU:** I definitely agree with that, yes.

2 **CHAIR:** So such an approach, we talk about the impacts of abuse, there may be even impacts of a  
3 healing process that go well beyond the actual event that caused it, but ripples out as well in  
4 a positive way.

5 **MR KEPU:** Yes.

6 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** And Sekope, there's still got to be the protection and the  
7 honouring of the one that was hurt, the survivor, the victim, and actually their well-being  
8 first and foremost needs to be almost the driver of the process.

9 **MR KEPU:** Yeah.

10 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** So if they want to engage, all good and well, but if they don't  
11 want to engage then that needs to be honoured too. But I think you're right, it's the  
12 perpetrator perhaps being held accountable to their own families of their behaviours,  
13 because if you think about the talanoa, 'O lau tautala, o lau savali, o lau tu' it's how you  
14 walk, it's how you talk, it's how you hold yourself, that's the stature of the family name that  
15 you carry, that's what the disrespect, that's what's been disrespected, yeah.

16 **MR KEPU:** Yeah, I totally agree. In one of the statements the mother talks about kicking the  
17 child out, the bully out, isn't going to resolve anything, he will then go and carry that on.  
18 But dealing to him and the issues that he's facing. A lot of the time bullies are going  
19 through their own trauma, they've got their own -- and so, like we said, talanoa 'a kāinga  
20 (family talks), sitting down fofola the fala (roll out the mat) ... and we are having that  
21 discussion as a whole, as a community, would really be a powerful tool in our Pasifika way  
22 to try and stomp that out.

23 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Fa'afetai.

24 **MS SHARKEY:** And in that situation you were talking about, that mother is saying she wanted to  
25 have some kind of coming together and a meeting, and it's not about -- these survivors, they  
26 don't want to shut the school down, but they want this issue resolved once and for all.

27 **MR KEPU:** Yeah, 100%. I think, if you listen to that, you read that mother's passion for the  
28 school, my parents have the same love and passion for the school, and it's important, and  
29 my question would be, and after listening to the Trust Board and the Board of Trustees, the  
30 separate entities, whatever it might be, the way I see it in the organisations I've been a part  
31 of, if you're not unified at the top, don't expect anything at the bottom to operate, and if  
32 you've lost a changing room, so to speak, in rugby terms, then it's very hard to get that  
33 respect, that mana, everything back, that faka'apa'apa.

1           So my question is, how -- and the term has been used today, how is the alignment,  
2           the transparency, the unified, you know, from the Church down to the Board to the  
3           principal, to the head of department, it might be the head of the four houses that we have at  
4           Wesley College, and then, my view would be to empower our younger -- older students to  
5           be great leaders, teach them the ropes, the right way, give them responsibilities, give  
6           them -- delegate to be great leaders, because we have it in us, we have a history of great,  
7           yeah, Pasifika people. And this is something that has been buried for a long time and I feel  
8           like we need to really look at ourselves and hold ourselves accountable to all of this that we  
9           talk about.

10           Because again, I say it, there needs to be a line of communication, alignment,  
11           everything needs to travel up and down, whatever happens at the bottom, you go to your  
12           relevant leaders, that travels up the chain and it's dealt to accordingly. But I feel like my  
13           years at Wesley, that wasn't relevant, that wasn't evident.

14           So yeah, that's all I've got say.

15   **CHAIR:** Sekope, that, in Māori terms, is a wero, a challenge to the Church and to all the  
16           organisations and I just wonder if -- you've directed it out, but I just wonder if you're also  
17           talking to the people on the panel with you in this talanoa, and I wonder if any of you  
18           would like to comment on that and to maybe reflect where the Methodist Church in all its  
19           iterations is at today in terms of that high aspiration that Sekope has laid out for us.

20   **MR JOHNSTON:** If I may. In the past the two boards haven't been aligned and that has been  
21           acknowledged in the history in the minutes of Wesley College. I witness now very good  
22           alignment of both boards. Every year there is scheduled two meetings that combine both  
23           boards, the Board of Trustees and the Trust Board so that they can align. You know, as  
24           I look out there, the Chair of the Board of Trustees is sitting next to the Chair of the Trust  
25           Board in this forum, and with great interest in what is happening in our school, our college.

26   **MS SHARKEY:** And, when you -- sorry, Dr Evans, just quickly. When you talk about not  
27           aligned, from the documents we've spent some time trawling through, there was some  
28           serious dysfunction at various periods, would you agree with that?

29   **MR JOHNSTON:** I very much agree with that.

30   **MS SHARKEY:** And it was almost, everyone was so consumed by these issues, and no-one was  
31           really focused on what was really happening at Wesley College and the level of violence  
32           and bullying. Would that be fair?

33   **MR JOHNSTON:** I agree, they were just distracted from what they should have been paying  
34           attention to, yes.



1 **MS SHARKEY:** Dr Evans, I'll come to you, you are nodding your head.

2 **DR EVANS:** Thank you. From my perspective when I arrived that's exactly what I saw with the  
3 boards but for me on the ground it was also staff, so the Trust Board staff, dorm parents,  
4 people in the kitchen and the school staff, it was like working with two different groups,  
5 and it was straight away a little bit alarming because I thought, "We've got some challenges  
6 here, we're never going to solve them unless we're a team." So we have worked really hard  
7 at bringing everyone together and being successful with it as well. It was even simple  
8 things like inviting all the staff to the same function on the same day, doing some planning  
9 with everybody involved, and then -- that was the surface stuff, but then just getting people  
10 so we've got staff from the school side crossed over into the dorms, sharing data around  
11 students, and the growth has been awesome in terms of dorm parents suddenly being  
12 engaged with the students' academic progress or their well-being, because we're sharing all  
13 this information, you know, the place, it should be a gold mine with everyone working  
14 together for the students.

15 So I'm happy with how we've started working together over the last few years, but  
16 we've still got work to do in that area. But yeah, it's just interesting hearing these  
17 conversations because it did remind me of a few years ago and the staff almost didn't talk to  
18 each other and yet our dorm parents spend more time with the students than we do in the  
19 school. So it was crucial to bring it all together and work as a team for the sake of the  
20 students. And then also to address some of these problems we're talking about, where  
21 everyone's distracted, doing their own thing, not focusing on problem-solving.

22 **MS SHARKEY:** Right, and that relationship between all these different parts that are so relevant  
23 to the students, the students are in the middle, that board dysfunction, that goes back a very  
24 long time, Mr Johnston, would you agree?

25 **MR JOHNSTON:** It was pre my time.

26 **MS SHARKEY:** Yes, that's how far back it goes.

27 **MR JOHNSTON:** Yes. Going back pre-1976 there was only one board, so it's also  
28 post-integration.

29 **MS SHARKEY:** And in the state institutional response hearing we discussed ERO reports and  
30 between 1995 and early 2000s there was, well, actually, it goes through a pattern of  
31 dysfunction, those ERO reports talk about it. Is there anything you would like to say about  
32 that?

1           We heard the evidence in the state institutional response hearing. I think in  
2           particular we're looking at the response of Wesley to some of those ERO reports, because  
3           some of that wasn't accepted.

4 **MR JOHNSTON:** Sorry, I have read the ERO reports, I'm just not sure of the questioning.

5 **MS SHARKEY:** Okay, so for example, ERO give an unconfirmed report and it comes to the  
6           school and they have a look and they're like, "No, we don't agree with that, and in fact we're  
7           going to look at initiating some form of court proceedings because we're not happy with  
8           what it says." But at this period of time there were issues of violence and bullying in the  
9           school. So I guess my questioning is about why that attitude, why that approach when the  
10          school knew there were significant problems happening at Wesley College?

11 **MR JOHNSTON:** Sorry, Ms Sharkey, I don't know why that approach.

12 **MS SHARKEY:** Could it be a desire to protect the reputation of the school?

13 **MR JOHNSTON:** It's possible, I'm speculating, that's a possibility.

14 **MS SHARKEY:** Dr Evans, in reflection, would you have any thoughts?

15 **DR EVANS:** None to be honest, I can't answer it, why the information wasn't acted on.

16 **MS SHARKEY:** And why ERO, who were just doing their job, reporting what they heard, the  
17          information that they saw, the people that they spoke to, and they put it into a report, but for  
18          some reason those in management, the boards of Wesley College weren't happy with that  
19          and wanted to dispute it. Were you not aware of any of that at the time, Mr Johnston?

20 **MR JOHNSTON:** I've read the board minutes, but I don't -- in my period there was not a board  
21          discussion on questioning an Educational Review Office report.

22 **MS SHARKEY:** Right.

23 **MR JOHNSTON:** I saw in the evidence there was a letter from the Chairperson of the Board.  
24          Now, whether that was seeking clarification on what's coming out, my personal beliefs, and  
25          my -- part of what I do in my work is auditing of our accounts.

26 **MS SHARKEY:** So you're the money man?

27 **MR JOHNSTON:** Yes. So the Education Review Office is like an auditor and when an auditor  
28          picks something up, and something that needs improvement, then we take it on and say,  
29          right, can we change our processes? And my thoughts is, you know, with an audit from an  
30          Education Review Office, it's giving guidance to the management of the school on a  
31          process that could be refined. But I don't understand the response in that situation.

32 **MS SHARKEY:** Okay. All right. Because we've got March 2002 there was an ERO letter to  
33          MOE saying that "Wesley College unwilling to accept the findings and have delayed their  
34          responses". Board of Trustee minutes from 2008, the advice regarding the unconfirmed

1 ERO report, "The Board advised ERO they would take High Court proceedings if report  
2 published". Board of Trustees in 2010, "Unconfirmed ERO report and outlines  
3 disagreement Wesley College regarding the ERO report."

4 And is what you're saying that, one, you're not aware of this, it doesn't come up to  
5 your space?

6 **MR JOHNSTON:** I work solely for the Proprietor's Board, so if there was discussions in the  
7 Board of Trustees, though they're public minutes, I'm not aware of them, sorry.

8 **MS SHARKEY:** Right. And so where is the connection there in terms of you hearing what is  
9 going down on this end, is it just some of the Trust Board who know?

10 **MR JOHNSTON:** The four proprietor's representatives on the Board of Trustees do report back  
11 to a full board of the Wesley College Trust Board. I am actually -- I'm not on the Board  
12 although I attend board meetings, so I'm the secretary to the Board.

13 **MS SHARKEY:** It still seems a little bit disconnected.

14 **CHAIR:** Can I ask Dr Evans, this is probably not the first principalship you've ever had, is that  
15 right?

16 **DR EVANS:** That's correct.

17 **CHAIR:** So you've been principal in other schools?

18 **DR EVANS:** Yeah.

19 **CHAIR:** Have you ever experienced this phenomenon where a school, presumably it's the board  
20 who's not accepting the ERO report, and would that be the board in conjunction with the  
21 principal or the senior staff? How does that work?

22 **DR EVANS:** I'm happy to say I've never experienced it, so --

23 **CHAIR:** Yes, but in a usual situation the ERO report comes in, it's discussed by the board, by the  
24 Board of Trustees?

25 **DR EVANS:** Yes, it's normally presented to the Board and the principal first, a draft to discuss  
26 and suggest any changes you might want to make to it, anything you don't agree with.  
27 After that, the ERO may make a few changes or they may say no, it stands, and you  
28 normally just accept it.

29 **CHAIR:** So you haven't experienced this challenge or failure to accept in any other schools  
30 you've worked in?

31 **DR EVANS:** No, pleased to say I've always had good ERO reports.

32 **CHAIR:** That's possibly why you've never had to have them challenged. But it is an unusual  
33 phenomenon, isn't it?

34 **DR EVANS:** Yeah.

1 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Could I also clarify, the ERO report, do they identify as part of  
2 their recommended reforms, identify the split between the two boards and see that as a  
3 contributing problem?

4 **MR JOHNSTON:** I don't recall reading that --

5 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** That wasn't an issue? Okay. Could you just clarify for us the  
6 reasons for the dysfunction, just to be clear in my mind about the reasons why the boards  
7 weren't talking to one another and how it had that silo effect down to the bottom?

8 **MR JOHNSTON:** What I believe historically, there was a case of a senior staff member at  
9 Wesley College that went through the courts and I believe one board was supporting the  
10 senior staff member and the other board was supporting the principal, and I think at that  
11 time it caused a division within the College, again, pre my time, but I started as bursar of  
12 Wesley College on the tail end of that proceeding, I think.

13 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** It seemed this endured for a long time. And you keep referring to  
14 your time, can you remind me what your time was?

15 **MR JOHNSTON:** I started as bursar in 1996.

16 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** And this continued, this division, from the 90s all the way through  
17 to, I think when you started as principal, sir, is that right?

18 **DR EVANS:** I didn't see too much of a division between the boards then, but I could see a  
19 division between the employees of the Trust Board and the School Board. So I never felt  
20 any grievance between the actual boards in my dealings, my meetings.

21 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** It might have dissipated by then, the tensions. Can you remind me  
22 when you started?

23 **DR EVANS:** 2018.

24 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Thank you.

25 **MS SHARKEY:** And so before you, Mr Johnston, your family have had a long involvement with  
26 the school?

27 **MR JOHNSTON:** That is correct.

28 **MS SHARKEY:** And so your father was involved in some way for how long?

29 **MR JOHNSTON:** My father has been involved with Wesley College for 52 years.

30 **MS SHARKEY:** 52 years, right. And so, I guess, as a family you've had a lot to do with Wesley  
31 College for a very long time?

32 **MR JOHNSTON:** That is correct.

1 **MS SHARKEY:** Just on that comment before about the reason for that dysfunction, could it -- in  
2 looking at the documents, that wasn't just the sole reason, that issue with the other senior  
3 staff member, there were other issues with perhaps the principal as well on other matters?

4 **MR JOHNSTON:** That is possible, yes.

5 **MS SHARKEY:** So there were a number of things going on at Wesley College that contributed to  
6 the board dysfunction over a very long time?

7 **MR JOHNSTON:** I believe so.

8 **MS SHARKEY:** And Reverend Tautari, does that get fed up through the Conference report in the  
9 presentation by the Trust Board at Conference? When does it reach -- when does that  
10 information reach you?

11 **REV TAUTARI:** That the boards are dysfunctional? From my memory when I had looked at  
12 previous Conference reports I saw no evidence of that being stated.

13 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you. Thank you for that, Reverend Tautari. I'm just about to move on to  
14 another topic, if you want to take the next break.

15 **CHAIR:** Yes, we're on to redress now, is that where you are going?

16 **MS SHARKEY:** Yes.

17 **CHAIR:** So it's a natural break so let's take our break. My goodness, we're early for once. Highly  
18 commended, Ms Sharkey.

19 **MS SHARKEY:** Don't hold your breath.

20 **CHAIR:** No, I won't, but we will go and have a break for some refreshments and we'll come back  
21 at 20 past 3?

22 **MS SHARKEY:** Yes.

23 **Adjournment from 3.06 pm to 3.23 pm**

24 **CHAIR:** Welcome back for the last session of the day, everybody, particularly our members of  
25 the talanoa panel. Yes, Ms Sharkey.

26 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you. Dr Evans, I'm just bringing up an apology letter that came out  
27 following the Pacific People's hearing. Can you see that or do you need to zone in? You  
28 say there that --

29 **CHAIR:** Before you do, just remember we need to orient the whole room about the date and from  
30 and to.

31 **MS SHARKEY:** Yes, the date is 27 July 2021 and it's from Dr Evans on behalf of Wesley  
32 College and you're saying to those who were reading this letter -- was that to the  
33 community -- was that through your school website, it's not specifically addressed to  
34 anyone. We did see it on your website. Did it go to anybody else?

1 **DR EVANS:** No, I think it was published on the school website for our school community.

2 **MS SHARKEY:** Right, and you say that on behalf of the College -- and you liaised with the  
3 Chairperson of the Board of Trustees and issued a public apology?

4 **DR EVANS:** Yes.

5 **MS SHARKEY:** And now you've met with William and you say:

6 "It's time for our community to understand that people in New Zealand are calling  
7 out anyone responsible for bullying, sexual harassment and other such behaviour. You  
8 only need to see or hear media stories where almost every day a school, organisation,  
9 including religious groups, business or an individual, is being named and shamed. In part,  
10 some of these behaviours have been around for so long that it seems a very small disruptive  
11 group of people forget about the victims and set about challenging the school on how these  
12 matters are being handled. When young people see this it heightens the perception that no  
13 matter what wrong you do, if you create a diversion you might get away with it. Anyone  
14 who thinks a tradition that some call 'the Wesley Way' of handing out punishment, bullying  
15 or harassing fellow students should have a place in our school are wrong. It has no place at  
16 Wesley College and is not a tradition to be proud of."

17 I just had to read that into the evidence. So I've got a couple of questions. You say  
18 that "some of these behaviours have been around for so long, a very small disruptive group  
19 of people forget about the victims". Can you elaborate on that, please?

20 **DR EVANS:** Yes, it was a direct message to some of our whānau that, you know, parents  
21 advocate for their children, I get that, but in my experiences, which are pretty vast, in  
22 Pasifika/Māori schools, if you have an incident with a student and you call the parents in,  
23 they'll generally cooperate and say, what can we do, how can we fix this, and you can do  
24 restorative practices and so on.

25 In my first year or so at Wesley I found it was quite different, that if a child was in  
26 trouble the parents would challenge left, right and centre rather than face the actual issue.  
27 And I felt it was really wrong for the kids who'd been the victim of bullying or whatever  
28 the issue was, and I needed the parents to get on board if we wanted to change our school  
29 and keep moving forward. I needed the parents -- of course they can advocate and  
30 challenge in the right way, but sometimes it was done in a way that the child is almost  
31 sitting there feeling "I'm off the hook." And I felt it was really wrong.

32 And I have noted a big change in the school now with the parents, they're far  
33 more -- and I am generalising, it wasn't all the parents, but it was something for me  
34 personally I'd not come across, where particularly Pasifika/Māori parents would almost

1 challenge the system back and try and question my authority or the evidence or even if their  
2 children admitted doing it, they would try and find a way around the issue.

3 And I think at Wesley that did not help the problem we had, our challenge of getting  
4 rid of all the bullying. So that's what it was directed at.

5 **MS SHARKEY:** Okay. And so just on these issues that you've identified, some survivors have  
6 spoken about them feeling a small group population of Palagi students picked on by other  
7 larger ethnic groups and wanting that acknowledged, and would it be fair to say that that is  
8 an issue?

9 **DR EVANS:** Looking at the data, yes, there would be Palagi and Māori students, certainly in my  
10 time being the victims, yes.

11 **MS SHARKEY:** And so part of the discussion we're having today about cultural issues is in order  
12 to have that solutions focussed and try and find a way forward, and part of that is talking  
13 about our culture. That would be helpful, I guess?

14 **DR EVANS:** Absolutely. My feeling is, though, that no parent sends their son or daughter to  
15 school to behave like this, I don't think it's attributable to any culture, I don't believe for one  
16 minute in Tongan or Samoan culture that this is how the parents -- I'm married to a Samoan  
17 so I've got a little bit of experience, and I'm sure it's not something that the parents at home  
18 are engaging with or encouraging.

19 **MS SHARKEY:** Right. And so then it comes back, and I'm going to talk to Edwin and Sekope  
20 here, because it comes back to those values that we're hearing, you're saying that no parent  
21 sends their child to school or would in fact approve of some of the bullying and violence  
22 we're seeing. So what is it, what is the issue?

23 **MR KEPU:** May I speak? I think it's the understanding. First and foremost, if we look at our,  
24 speaking from experience, our Tongan students, our Pacific Island, you almost -- you're a  
25 different person at home and you're a different person in school. So it's about parents  
26 aligning with teachers, teachers aligning with students, students aligning with students, and  
27 again, I speak about the alignment, the transparency, the understanding first and foremost  
28 as a parent what my -- the actions of my child, finding out why he's behaving in these ways,  
29 why is he inflicting that, whether it be intergenerational where it's been -- he was a junior,  
30 his senior dealt to him with the Wesley Way that we're describing it, and I totally agree  
31 with that Wesley Way, because that is not the way that I vouch and I stand for, first and  
32 foremost.

33 If we look to our motto, "fide litteris labore", that should be where we hold our  
34 values, that should be our true north where we align to and we come back to in whatever

1 we do, whether it be reviews, whether it be standards in the classrooms, there may be  
2 values that are at school that I'm not aware of, but it's on the school charter that our, you  
3 know, it's "Fide Litteris Labore", by faith, by learning, and by hard work. Those are the  
4 three meanings.

5 And for our child to understand our culture, our four pillars, to understand the  
6 culture that they're walking into, and then inflicting anything on our Palagi brothers, and  
7 understanding where they've come from, the suffering that they've already been through, or  
8 whatever it might be. Or the other individual, the other child. But that understanding needs  
9 to be at the forefront of everything that we do.

10 So I really do think that we go back to our community, we go back to the talking  
11 that we do, the talanoa, the sit down and everybody talks. And everybody is -- the scene  
12 has been set that we're made comfortable, we're making parents feel comfortable to walk in  
13 and to talanoa and that respect is there. If you're having these talanoas and these meetings,  
14 or whatever it might be, these occasions where everyone is talking, then there should be  
15 no -- you'll agree to disagree at times, but the most important thing is growing the school  
16 and pulling it in the right direction.

17 **MS SHARKEY:** And because if those solutions aren't found, those ways to address these issues,  
18 as we heard from William Wilson in his evidence, he grew a deep hatred towards Pacific  
19 Islanders because of what abuse he suffered. So these are the things that we need to look  
20 at, right, urgently, and address those issues, yeah?

21 Would you agree with that, Edwin?

22 **MR TALAKAI:** Definitely, there's no place in the school for bullying and that's the  
23 understanding that we communicate to our parents and our whānau to understand once the  
24 child is in the kura, the school, they're safe, not only that but they inflict no harm to other  
25 students.

26 **MS SHARKEY:** So we're just going to now really come into the -- we've seen the apology, right,  
27 and it would be fair to say that in terms of redress from Wesley College to survivors, it's  
28 something that is fairly recent, that's just really been started up -- Dr Evans, would that be  
29 right? Now the Church have, I guess, said, "We will be responsible for that." How did that  
30 come about? What was that, you know, discussion in terms of the church saying,  
31 "Actually, no, we'll be responsible for the abuse that happened to students at Wesley  
32 College"?



1 **REV TAUTARI:** So the Church said, "Let us do this together." We have a redress scheme and  
2 we know that Wesley, we knew that Wesley had -- did not have a formal mechanism in  
3 place. So we said, "Let us do this together," and that is what happened.

4 **MS SHARKEY:** And Dr Evans, if I can just come back, in terms of the students at the school,  
5 when an issue of bullying or violence occurs, there was one student that we saw, there was  
6 a group of Year 11 boys stood down for threatening behaviour, I'm not sure if you're  
7 familiar with the situation that I'm talking about, or trying to describe, but the student's  
8 grandmother complained about the process and lack of support for parents and families of  
9 those who were stood down and the lack of commitment to Māori students despite the  
10 Church's bicultural commitment. I just wanted to ask, what does that look like now?

11 **DR EVANS:** We're making some really good progress in that area. I think sometimes our  
12 systems haven't been as good as they should be, and our support and wrap-around for  
13 victims, but also the students that are perpetrating it. One of the big challenges we've  
14 talked about at the moment is some cultural appropriation for our Māori students.

15 So, over the last few years, you know, they're up to 22% now of our school, yet  
16 they're probably a very quiet bunch of students. Academically they're flying, doing really,  
17 really well, way above national averages, but just the last few years I noticed the leadership  
18 roles or their standing in the school wasn't as prominent as it should be. So we're going to  
19 do a lot of work around that, we've got a Māori Advisory Committee set up and it's got  
20 local hapū on it from Ngāti Tamaoho guiding us and driving it and what that's going to look  
21 like in the next few years, because I think that's a real opportunity for the school to  
22 re-engage with our Māori families.

23 **MS SHARKEY:** So when we heard evidence from Nicholas Pole for ERO, and I'm not sure  
24 whether you were able to watch that, but one of the challenges he identified was exclusions,  
25 stand downs. What does that look like for Wesley College?

26 **DR EVANS:** Our stand downs and exclusions have dropped dramatically over the last few years.  
27 So I'm not a huge believer in exclusions, it doesn't solve a heck of a lot for students. So  
28 we've worked really hard at engaging students, keeping them in school. Sometimes a  
29 student, you know, needs to pathway out and then there's ways of doing it with some  
30 dignity, you know, good courses, work experience and so on. So the last few years, we  
31 were getting probably below double figures in terms of stand downs and exclusions.

32 It's not solving anything, it's trying to find ways of making the environment better  
33 for the students and getting them to buy in, like, so Kepu's mentioned around faith,

1 learning, hard work, this is what we're here for, and giving students the tools and  
2 opportunities to succeed.

3 **MS SHARKEY:** How does that look in practice? If you've got someone who's perpetrated  
4 violence against another student then what happens?

5 **DR EVANS:** If a student, if it's a one-off for instance, and that's where restorative practices and  
6 getting all the whānau around the table and giving the student some really strict conditions  
7 about how they're going to move forward in the school. Unfortunately, like all schools,  
8 there is a point where if the student just keeps on re-committing the same sort of issue,  
9 then, you know, it becomes a Board issue. But I think, you know, from experience,  
10 throwing kids out on the street is not necessarily the answer, it's -- the long hard road is  
11 changing them and getting them to be the leaders of the change in our school.

12 **MS SHARKEY:** So if there's an incident in the dorms, boarding houses and a student is stood  
13 down, do they attend day school where the victim may be attending?

14 **DR EVANS:** That's a really curly thing that I found extremely challenging when I started. So yes,  
15 that a student could, you know, assault someone in the evening but because it was a  
16 different set of laws, if you like, they could still legally attend school. And I felt very  
17 uncomfortable with that. So we looked at some different changes around how we could do  
18 it. And now it doesn't happen.

19 **MS SHARKEY:** What doesn't happen?

20 **DR EVANS:** Students, we've kind of established some protocols where if there is -- if it's a  
21 violent issue then they can't come to school either and we've got the parents to agree into  
22 that.

23 **MS SHARKEY:** So because it is, you know, just thinking about the victim, the survivor, having  
24 to see their bully at school during the day would be very, very difficult, I'll say, but much  
25 more than that, it would be scary, you wouldn't be safe.

26 **DR EVANS:** Yes, and like I say, when I started I hadn't worked with a hostel before and I was  
27 quite shocked that that situation could eventuate where the perpetrator could be on site the  
28 very next day, so we looked at ways of addressing it and making it clear. It's not necessary  
29 if it's another type of issue with a student, they can be sent from the dorms for a few days  
30 and still attend school, but if it's around violence or physical assault and so on, then no.

31 **MS SHARKEY:** We've heard a little bit before about staff having the adequate training,  
32 trauma-informed, being culturally informed. Staff now, do they have that education, do  
33 they have that training?

1 **DR EVANS:** I think we're getting there, I don't think it's an end point at all, but we've done an  
2 awful lot of work into it.

3 **MS SHARKEY:** What training do they have?

4 **DR EVANS:** We've done training around a Ministry programme called Positive Behaviour for  
5 Learning, so rather than just doing it in the school we included all our dorm parents as well,  
6 so they can understand behaviours and managing behaviours. I know they've done some  
7 specialist stuff around self-harm and suicide thoughts and so on.

8 A lot of PD even around student learning and ways of learning. We do some really  
9 great testing now with our new students, not only the academic but also the emotional  
10 well-being data, and we can share that with the dormitory parents as well. So it's really  
11 useful powerful stuff about how kids feel about school, how they're feeling. We've done a  
12 lot of anti-bullying stuff with the dorm parents in the school.

13 But it is ongoing. You have to keep doing it and doing it and keep working at it.

14 **MS SHARKEY:** So when you came into Wesley you still identified an issue with that culture still  
15 being there?

16 **DR EVANS:** Of bullying?

17 **MS SHARKEY:** Yes.

18 **DR EVANS:** Yes.

19 **MS SHARKEY:** I think there's a comment where you've said, "It's a culture that seems prevalent  
20 at night time, not so much during the day but it would take some time to unpack."

21 **DR EVANS:** Yeah, when I started, the day, the school is very calm and learning and results are  
22 great, but it was mainly in the evenings, around the dormitories where it was -- it almost  
23 sort of would change at night time, I would see some students during the day, and in the  
24 evening they were quite different people to me. So I could see the work that we needed to  
25 get into.

26 **MS SHARKEY:** Okay. And so we talked about the training and the skills that you hope your  
27 staff will obtain. How connected are we with the community and what Sekope is talking  
28 about?

29 **DR EVANS:** Not that the well connected at the moment. Although I'm feeling now it's really  
30 growing. We set up a Parents Committee around bullying, specifically around bullying,  
31 and we had over 60 parent sign up, which was a really good message in a small school of  
32 380. Some of the parents now come on site and do duty with us, they meet -- we have  
33 talanoa around what can we do next, what sorts of activities, things can we do to keep on

1 improving the school. And I feel -- with our Māori parents, as well, we're having a hui next  
2 term when we get back, so I feel there's some really good connection going on.

3 Interestingly enough, talking about parent/teacher meetings, the old model, we've  
4 got a model where we all have a small group of students, about ten students, so I've got a  
5 group of ten students and we meet them every -- twice a week for half an hour and we do  
6 our parent meetings like that. So I spend 20 minutes, half an hour with the parent of the  
7 child, we get all the information, and it's been a really good way of engaging our parents,  
8 we've gone from sort of 20% attendance to 80% attendance, and that's a fantastic way of  
9 drawing them in, because they seem more comfortable to sit with one person and get all the  
10 information about their child.

11 **MS SHARKEY:** Just picking up on something you had said earlier about how you notice the  
12 change at night time. So having a look at the hostels, what do you think it is about that that  
13 creates that environment that has the children then change from what they were during the  
14 day?

15 **DR EVANS:** I think some really simple things. So we had a lot more active duty from our dorm  
16 parents, so rather than just sitting in the dorm and talking to a handful of kids, you're out  
17 moving around, so we set up a roster, just moving around the school, so -- in a vest. So,  
18 you know, the students can see people, they're not feeling they're out in the dark wandering  
19 around. Activities. We introduced an activity evening on a Wednesday night to get all  
20 students, the boys and the girls in different year levels all mixing and mingling and  
21 creating, hopefully, some really positive relationships.

22 We've got teaching staff around the dorms and around the prep which is like a  
23 homework centres, and I think one of the key things is the sharing of information. So  
24 empowering a lot of our dorm parents to feel the role is just bigger than looking after some  
25 kids at night time, they're really invested in how their credits are going, how their reading's  
26 going, some of them have been brilliant at poring over all the data we give them and asking  
27 questions and I think that's made a huge difference connecting the school and the dormitory  
28 and that idea of the village raising the child now.

29 **MS SHARKEY:** Right. But we do have that mother of the student just this year, her son and  
30 another boy were taken somewhere, surrounded by a group of boys, he was told to cover  
31 his face and he was beaten by a large number of -- large group of boys whilst they chanted  
32 "The Wesley Way". And that is this year. So there is still that element, still that culture  
33 there at the school. Would you agree?

1 **DR EVANS:** There's absolutely still the culture there. It's a big challenge. And, you know,  
2 referring to "The Wesley Way" and "The Brotherhood", it's been hijacked and turned into  
3 something it's not, and we now have to take it back and redefine what "The Wesley Way"  
4 is, what a real brother looks like.

5 So, you know, there's lots of programmes we're running, there's lots of -- we use the  
6 term "cultural renovation" a lot, so rather than change, because the students probably don't  
7 want to hear about you're changing our school, it's like, no, I want to take all the good  
8 things, we keep all the good, but there's some things we have to improve in our College.  
9 And I will talk to them probably every week without fail about it and they don't like it, but  
10 it needs to be driven and driven and driven and we have a lot of really wonderful students,  
11 but there is work to be done for sure.

12 **MS SHARKEY:** Right, because this mother's experience in, I guess, redress, what she was  
13 hoping to see in response from the school, was not adequate, was it?

14 **DR EVANS:** Mmm.

15 **MS SHARKEY:** In what ways do you think it could have been done better? I'm aware that she is  
16 listening by livestream.

17 **DR EVANS:** I think we need to communicate better and maybe investigate and dig deeper into  
18 what she's looking for. I welcome any of the parents to come and see me if they're not  
19 happy with what's happened in different areas. My door's open. And I want parents to talk  
20 to me because that's how we can improve things, if we get the information. We're not  
21 perfect, and we want to be as good as we can be for everybody.

22 It's -- if one child is still getting bullied, we still have a challenge.

23 **MS SHARKEY:** And this was serious, you can call it bullying, but it's more than that, it was  
24 serious physical violence by students against her son and another boy, and she was wanting  
25 to hear from the school but that level of communication wasn't there, and in fact when the  
26 school first contacted her, it didn't really sound that serious. Similar to what we saw on that  
27 clip, the information from the school to her first off didn't really highlight the seriousness of  
28 what had happened to her son. Would that be fair to say?

29 It wasn't you, Dr Evans, who of course dealt with that situation, we can see that  
30 from the statement, but --

31 **DR EVANS:** Yeah, it is me, though, at the end of the day. Yeah, it's disappointing and we need  
32 to be better and I want my teams to be better. I believe we've improved a lot, and we're  
33 getting better all the time, but yeah, as I've said, there's still work to be done.

1 **MS SHARKEY:** And one of the things that she points out is a desire for the school to work with  
2 the Pacific community. She thinks that that is what needs to happen and that's what's  
3 missing, and would you agree with that?

4 **DR EVANS:** I do. But like I say, we've got parents on board now, and we're talking to them  
5 about, you know, what does it look like to actually do that? And it's something we can  
6 develop, moving forward.

7 **MS SHARKEY:** Right. Because with a predominantly Pacific population, at that age in that  
8 generation from what we're seeing with social media etc, its role models, similar to Sekope,  
9 that they will actually really listen to. Would you agree with that?

10 **DR EVANS:** Absolutely. Yeah, there's a gap in our school community at the moment with our  
11 past pupils, to be honest. And listening to Sekope, I can't wait for him to come into school  
12 and start this work, because that's who we need, particularly with the young men. I talk to  
13 some of them every single day and clearly the message does not get through. But I think if  
14 some of their recent younger role models who they've seen out succeeding in life tells the  
15 message, then we will get progress faster than we probably are at the moment.

16 **MS SHARKEY:** I just had a question about the state of the dorms. I'm aware that -- I  
17 think -- was it the school, something was sold, nothing was sold, something was bought?  
18 I'm looking at you, Mr Johnston, you're nodding and shaking your head.

19 **MR JOHNSTON:** The farm land that was owned by the school was sold into a charitable  
20 company which Wesley College Trust Board did own half of it, and now owns 44% of it.  
21 That's been developed into a residential town, but the school itself exists on the same site,  
22 it's still owned by the Wesley College Trust Board.

23 **MS SHARKEY:** And is there an intention to move or what's the story, because we -- I think there  
24 was a review that you had commissioned Dr Evans, I think, and it was by the previous  
25 headmaster of another school and comments that came through that report said the state of  
26 the hostels are disgusting. So if kids are going to be in that environment it needs to be well  
27 kept, somewhere where they would want to live.

28 Can I just ask for you to comment on what's the state of play at the moment?

29 **MR JOHNSTON:** We have two newer hostels, Taina and Maia and they are nice hostels. The  
30 older hostels, which are Denton Hall, Caughey Hall and Harding Hall are older hostels.  
31 The previous principal was instrumental in taking down the number of students in some of  
32 these hostels. I think the Denton Hall hostels, I think they had up to 15 students in this spot  
33 and I think they're down to 12 or smaller. But the idea is with the profits of the

1 development of the Wesley College farm coming back to Wesley as a full rebuild of  
2 Wesley College.

3 Now, there was two decisions, whether to utilise the current Wesley College site or  
4 start a greenfield, and there was a desire for the Board to set up new and fully re-design  
5 Wesley College on a new site, that is not happening anymore, we're now looking at our  
6 current site, but expanding the site to the south to rebuild where we are.

7 **MS SHARKEY:** Is there anything you wanted say? I'm just assuming, because you're looking at  
8 me.

9 **MR KEPU:** No, sorry, I'm just interested to know what's actually happening, which is great.

10 **MS SHARKEY:** Right, and that's because the old boys want to know what's happening with the  
11 school, the plans in respect of whether they're moving or they're staying where they are?

12 **MR KEPU:** Yeah, I think that's a question that's asked a lot in our -- in the forums that the  
13 ex-students talk about, is what's actually happening and there's all these stories, but to hear  
14 it first-hand is pretty cool. But in saying that, I think with the old boys and we speak about  
15 the -- Mr Faulkner has gone now, but the Old Boys Association can definitely have an  
16 impact and influence in terms of more of a hands-on approach if we're looking to support,  
17 again, our victims, our survivors, rather than sitting behind a desk or publishing something  
18 through online, actually come through the right channels and let's have a talanoa and talk  
19 about this and grow the school.

20 And yeah, in terms of the dormitories, yeah, I definitely think that -- I left almost 20  
21 years ago and it's the still the same and I believe that should be changed massively. I mean,  
22 that's -- yeah.

23 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Ms Sharkey, could I just ask a question here. Thank you for  
24 your responses earlier, Dr Evans, around what's currently happening and the culture that's  
25 still in the school. But I'd just like to understand where the school and the Church board  
26 and the community are at, because I think when survivors hear, and Ms Sharkey alluded to  
27 it, we talk about bullying and violence in quite extremes, but if we use another Palagi  
28 phrase, it actually equates -- it equals an assault, very, very bad, ugly, violent assaults. And  
29 in the context of this land, there's legislation that applies if you cross a particular threshold  
30 in terms of charges. I'd really just like to kind of understand, and I know your students may  
31 well be listening, around the tolerance levels of the school around that stuff, because I think  
32 everyone in this room is a parent, or an uncle or an aunt or a sister or a brother, and so I'm  
33 just -- I'd just like to understand that, if you're able to give a reflection or a thought around  
34 the tolerance levels today in 2022 around that issue.

1 **DR EVANS:** The phrase "zero tolerance" is what we use for violence. However, people  
2 sometimes think that's an automatic exclusion, but it's not, zero tolerance to me means we  
3 do not tolerate that type of behaviour and then the actions or the consequences we take will  
4 be in line with, you know, the student's behaviours beforehand, what they've also done on  
5 their record, how they're tracking; the response of the family is really important as well, if  
6 we can get them around the table and use restorative practices.

7 Yeah, so it's kind of measuring each event as it happens and hopefully not  
8 measuring too many of them anymore. But it is still happening, yes.

9 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** But it wouldn't stop a young person who'd been bullied or  
10 assaulted actually taking that next step to the Police if they so wanted to?

11 **DR EVANS:** Absolutely, and at times we've encouraged parents, if that's the road you want to go  
12 down then please do so. It's very rare, most parents are reasonable about wanting to resolve  
13 issues. It's quite a change at the College in the last year or so. Some parents have come in  
14 with their son, the perpetrator, and said, "That's it" and they just remove them before we do  
15 anything. Because I think the messaging's getting clearer and clearer that we don't tolerate  
16 it.

17 But yeah, if they want to use the Police then that's -- absolutely.

18 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Is it a line that the school might go down to send a clear  
19 message to the students around the zero tolerance of violence in the school?

20 **DR EVANS:** Yes, absolutely. I've suggested it at times, that we will get the Police involved.

21 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Thank you.

22 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Sir, I just wonder whether you had the opportunity -- because a  
23 few weeks back now we had the State accountability hearing and we had the Chief  
24 Executive of ERO come and give evidence, and I thought it was really enlightening, and he  
25 talked about one of their reports which focused squarely on bullying which had a number  
26 of, I don't know if you've had an opportunity to read that, but talks about the different  
27 methods for addressing a culture of bullying within the school. But he said even when they  
28 are applied to the letter, bullying continues, and he said -- his words were, I think, "We  
29 need a national conversation on bullying."

30 So it's a real problem that's deeply embedded in our culture. So I just wanted to  
31 mention that, it might be worth -- we have the clips of evidence on our -- and I think also  
32 the transcripts on our website.

33 **DR EVANS:** What we're trying to attempt to do, as I said a few years ago with the staff, was, we  
34 need something game changing. We need something that gets us into the national media



1 for all the good reasons, that we've done this spectacular programme or set up this amazing  
2 resource in our school. And that's what we're trying to work on. So we're working on a lot  
3 of student leadership initiatives, we'd be one of the few schools in the country that's got a  
4 student-coaching-student set-up, so the older students being trained to be coaches and then  
5 picking up a junior, so we're trying to break down all these barriers, so it is a bigger version  
6 of peer mentoring and more powerful.

7 Yeah, training a lot of students in different areas of leadership and not just picking  
8 the leaders, picking a lot of students that possibly aren't the leaders but they're leading other  
9 things and trying to pull them over on to our team, and trying to break the cycle that some  
10 of the kids have got themselves into with the, you know, oh, it's tradition, this is how it's  
11 done here, trying to eradicate those conversations.

12 But I've got give them -- I need to replace that with something and it's got to be big  
13 and something really engaging for the students, because talking just "Don't bully, don't  
14 bully, don't bully" invariably does not work that well after a while. It does for students in  
15 the low hanging fruit, as they say, you know, they pick up those messages but for some of  
16 our kids who are hearing this from past pupils and feeling -- one student described it, he  
17 said, "It's not a tradition, sir, it's a curse, what's happened at our school over 30, 40 years",  
18 and I think that's a really apt description, they feel almost a burden of this to understand it.  
19 They need to understand, and hopefully the past pupils can come in and correct them and  
20 say, "Actually, no, it's not a tradition, it doesn't belong in a Christian school."

21 Yeah, so it's trying to be really bold in our thinking and not just use -- we have  
22 anti-bullying programmes for sure, but we're going bigger, going much wider than that, and  
23 it's an opportunity, I think, for the school, a really exciting opportunity.

24 One of the key things for me for Pacific and Māori is academic achievement. So,  
25 you know, if kids are getting UE and level 3, their minds are not so focused on that other  
26 stuff. And so our results, my teaching staff have been outstanding, like we're right up there  
27 now, way beyond -- you know, we're up with the top schools in New Zealand and we keep  
28 driving that as part of the change as well.

29 **MS SHARKEY:** Nothing further? Thank you, all right.

30 **CHAIR:** Carry on.

31 **MS SHARKEY:** Just a question on the -- we were looking in the information, we couldn't see any  
32 information -- questions -- information about disability numbers for students at Wesley.

33 Are there disabled students at Wesley College?

34 **DR EVANS:** Define disability, sorry, in terms of physical disability or...?

- 1 **MS SHARKEY:** Well, Dr Evans, yes, physical, but also special needs. I mean, I know it  
2 encompasses a wide definition, but generally understood, are there children with disabilities  
3 at Wesley College?
- 4 **DR EVANS:** Absolutely, and probably academically high numbers.
- 5 **MS SHARKEY:** And just wondering why we're not able to -- we weren't able to see that  
6 information. Is it collected?
- 7 **DR EVANS:** Yes, we've got a really strong learning department, support learning department, so  
8 I'm happy to share that.
- 9 **MS SHARKEY:** Right, okay. And so in terms of disabled peoples who are in the hostels, is  
10 that -- there are students, current students?
- 11 **DR EVANS:** Yes.
- 12 **MS SHARKEY:** And accessibility wise, everything on form, everything provided for these  
13 students from a Trust Board, I guess, property perspective?
- 14 **DR EVANS:** That's a good question. I would say there's some work to do there with accessibility  
15 and things like that.
- 16 **MS SHARKEY:** What work is that? Because we did -- it was information that we noted was  
17 absent. What work needs to be done?
- 18 **DR EVANS:** Parts -- probably most of the school would be fit for purpose, but there would be  
19 older parts that aren't.
- 20 **MS SHARKEY:** And that would require what in terms of accessibility for disabled students?
- 21 **DR EVANS:** Wheelchair ramps, things like that.
- 22 **MS SHARKEY:** And from the Trust Board's perspective, what is your response to that?
- 23 **MR JOHNSTON:** The Trust Board is more than happy to resource that if it is requested. The  
24 newer dorms have the lifts in place for accessibility. I know the renovations to the main  
25 office has got a ramp. If the request does come for additional disability resources, that  
26 resource is -- that financial resource is there for it.
- 27 **MS SHARKEY:** Right. So I think you're about to get a request for more, right, okay.  
28 Referrals for learning support or to learning support for -- is that from the Ministry  
29 of Education?
- 30 **DR EVANS:** Some will come from the Ministry. We have our own internal system where if  
31 we're working with a student and you notice perhaps lack of reading or they're not  
32 progressing then you can refer them to our learning support staff.
- 33 **MS SHARKEY:** Okay. What level of support does the Ministry of Education give you?
- 34 **CHAIR:** Do you mean to cater to the needs of -- perhaps for neurodiversity, FASD.

- 1 **DR EVANS:** I think pretty good, to be fair, now. Certainly the last few years with Covid going  
2 on we've had access to some really good pools of funding which have been hugely useful  
3 to, more staff basically, more teaching staff, some programmes we've been able to run for  
4 students. So it's pretty good. Obviously you always want more.
- 5 **MS SHARKEY:** Right, okay. And just before we really get into redress, Nicholas Pole, ERO,  
6 had a number of recommendations. I'm not sure whether you were able to see -- we've  
7 got -- sorry, Rachel, can we go to 11.11.
- 8 **CHAIR:** Just give us the date, this is an ERO report of what date?
- 9 **MS SHARKEY:** Yes. It is the NTP response to...
- 10 **CHAIR:** It's the date of the recommendations that we need, if that's possible.
- 11 **MS SHARKEY:** Yes. 27 June 2021.
- 12 **CHAIR:** So last year? Right.
- 13 **MS SHARKEY:** Can you see that, Dr Evans?
- 14 **DR EVANS:** Yes.
- 15 **MS SHARKEY:** So they've noted that the Royal Commission should "consider the following  
16 possible recommendations". I just want you to go through that, are there any there that you  
17 would certainly agree with?
- 18 Mandatory requirement to report incidents, disclosure and suspicion of child abuse  
19 is a big one.
- 20 **DR EVANS:** Yes, and we would have policies in place for that.
- 21 **MS SHARKEY:** Yes, okay. And The development of national child protection policy  
22 guidelines?
- 23 **DR EVANS:** Yeah, policies for that.
- 24 **MS SHARKEY:** Yeah. And establishing a national registration requirement, code of practice for  
25 all school employees?
- 26 **DR EVANS:** Definitely.
- 27 **MS SHARKEY:** Supported that or you've got policies in place?
- 28 **DR EVANS:** We'll have a register set up.
- 29 **MS SHARKEY:** We don't need to worry about (d). Establishment of an independent complaints  
30 and advocacy service for parents and learners?
- 31 **DR EVANS:** I don't think it would be independent. We've got a complaints process.
- 32 **MS SHARKEY:** Would you support the establishment of an independent complaints and  
33 advocacy service?
- 34 **DR EVANS:** Yes, I would.

1 **MS SHARKEY:** And the last one is enhancing the system by obligating agencies to share  
2 information.

3 **DR EVANS:** Yeah, that would largely be taking place already.

4 **MS SHARKEY:** Okay. And in the information you refer to a stymie app. What is that?

5 **DR EVANS:** Stymie's an app, again it's a measure to encourage students to speak up about what  
6 they're seeing, so they can confidentially go on their phone, send a message it, only goes to  
7 a couple of people, the counsellor, I think my DP and maybe a dean, so they can send a  
8 message if they've seen students bullying, they can send it anonymously as a tip off, they  
9 can send information even if they're concerned about a student's well-being, so self-harm  
10 and so on, and then they can refer themselves on it as well, if they are not feeling particularly  
11 well at the time.

12 **MS SHARKEY:** And when did you bring that in?

13 **DR EVANS:** We brought that in this year.

14 **MS SHARKEY:** And what has the response been?

15 **DR EVANS:** It's been good, students have been using it. We were a little concerned they might  
16 use it a bit randomly to start with for a bit of fun, but they haven't, they've taken it  
17 seriously, and we've picked up some really good information from it.

18 **MS SHARKEY:** Do you know if many schools are using that app?

19 **DR EVANS:** There's a few around New Zealand using it, I believe it's an Australian company,  
20 and I --

21 **MS SHARKEY:** Just a few, or many schools using the app?

22 **DR EVANS:** I don't know exactly.

23 **MS SHARKEY:** Right, okay. Is it something that you think should be done by other schools?

24 **DR EVANS:** A lot of schools will have not necessarily an app but will have ways of  
25 communicating confidentially, like a box somewhere where you can drop it in. I like the  
26 app because I think that's what students these days, you know, on their phones are probably  
27 really comfortable with.

28 **MS SHARKEY:** Given the use of iPhones or technology by students, it would be quite easy and  
29 efficient for them, an efficient way for them to communicate that or to disclose what's  
30 happening to them as opposed to taking in a piece of paper and putting it in a box, in case  
31 someone sees them, for example; right?

32 **DR EVANS:** Yeah, personally I think it's great idea and it's worked well for us so far.

33 **MS SHARKEY:** Sorry, just up on the screen there you've got the last two recommendations from  
34 Nicholas Pole and it's really just (g) that we're looking at. The evaluating of bullying and

1 prevention and response policies, programmes and procedures, and this is where he was  
2 talking about a national conversation. So you would agree with that?

3 **DR EVANS:** Absolutely, and that is definitely a challenge for us with the culture of not speaking,  
4 not telling on your brother and so on. It's something we're working really hard on with  
5 students to open up. But part of the challenge sometimes is we can't get the information to  
6 stop things happening, you know, so --

7 **CHAIR:** It's known as the "no narking culture".

8 **DR EVANS:** Yeah, the students won't speak.

9 **CHAIR:** It's a hard one to break, isn't it?

10 **DR EVANS:** Very hard. So I guess that's why the programmes we're running around leadership,  
11 and self-enhancement and so on, making kids confident to be able to talk about it. We've  
12 just started also exit interviews with students, any student that leaves, so trying to, if they're  
13 more comfortable because they're leaving, if we can get some information from them or  
14 even their parents and we nominate a person we think the student would talk to, to do the  
15 interview.

16 **MS SHARKEY:** And that culture of silence, you would have seen the backlash, all the social  
17 media comments when William Wilson spoke out. That contributes to that culture of  
18 silence, right?

19 **DR EVANS:** Yes, it does and it does not help us trying to solve this challenge. It just -- it's  
20 disgusting to read but just so disappointing, because these people at my school are young  
21 people and, you know, they're easily influenced and if they see adults behaving like that,  
22 for them, you know, it's almost vindicating, like, what's wrong. So yeah, I would like to  
23 close down every one of those Facebook pages if I could.

24 **MS SHARKEY:** Right. And you would have seen the social media response as well, Edwin and  
25 Sekope, and we'd asked before about a message to the community about that kind of  
26 messaging. You weren't on the earlier panel, Sekope, but what would your message to the  
27 community be about that?

28 **MR KEPU:** I think, firstly, if we refer back to the abuse and everything that did happen at the  
29 school, everyone experienced it at different levels, different -- and everyone took it or saw  
30 it in different ways. Everyone receives information and these things differently. So, to  
31 one, that's commenting, stating whatever he did, he may not have, the way he felt towards it  
32 was it was okay it didn't happen to him or, you know, like, so everybody experienced it in  
33 different ways and digested it and took it in in different ways, and all I could say and all I  
34 would say is we need to stand together and we need to -- the evidence is there, our

1 survivors are here, and we need to stand together. If we're being honest about our values at  
2 our school, if we're being honest that faith is our massive pillar that stands above  
3 everything, and was partly the reason why a lot of us went there.

4 So we need to wrap our arms around each other, stand together, come together and,  
5 yeah, I mean, much respect to you, William, and the work that you've done. That's bravery,  
6 that's -- it takes courage and massive, massive courage to come out and speak. Your voice  
7 is heard and this Inquiry is because of those voices, and I appreciate that.

8 And so if we can have that talanoa, we come together, we embrace each other, we're  
9 active in our school, we say we're the Wesley Way, we say we love the school, but we need  
10 to be more active if we want change. And if we want this school to move in the 21st  
11 century in that direction and be up to where we are.

12 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Sekope, you talked about "we all experienced this at school."

13 You're a leader.

14 **MR KEPU:** Yes.

15 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** You were a school leader back in the day, you're 1.88, rugby  
16 captain, international experience, what was your experience back in the day? What did you  
17 see yourself? What did you experience yourself? And what would you expect of young  
18 leaders in the school these days, what role could they play, what should they be doing, for  
19 those who at school these days?

20 **MR KEPU:** Thank you very much. I guess if I may share about an experience, psychological  
21 bullying that I experienced at my time at Wesley, as a young 13-year-old, taken by my  
22 parents, my father went to Toloa, which is the equivalent of Wesley College in Tonga. So  
23 the tradition was to take us there, and as a 13-year-old going there, excited about what that  
24 school needed to offer me and the great things that you saw and you heard.

25 And if I'm being honest and brutally honest about my first year at Wesley College,  
26 it was gruelling at times, and to put it in perspective, everyone would go to bed at night,  
27 8.30 lights out, a chip packet would rattle or someone would whisper and the dorm prefect  
28 at the time would call out my name, "Sekope, get to the middle." And at the time you sort  
29 of roll with it, you go with that, but then it happened night after night, the night watchman  
30 would come in and he would then ask me, "What are you doing? What are you doing now  
31 that you're in the middle? You're here parading by yourself." And I couldn't say anything.

32 And so obviously that went on, Sundays was the biggest dread for me coming back.  
33 And it was only recently that I shared with my mother and my parents about this experience

1 and they were livid, purely because they loved the school so much and they thought that it  
2 taught me the values that I carry with me now.

3 And so Sundays would be going to church, go to youth and then my old man would  
4 be there parked in the driveway of the house we're having youth, and then I'd be like, "Man,  
5 I don't want to leave you" because I didn't look forward to that. And then over the years,  
6 you know, you grow through and you come through, you know, your time sort of gets  
7 easier. But that vision of me standing there by myself and not knowing why, not knowing  
8 why me, why did he do this to me? Like -- and I still question it.

9 I guess I'll never know, but I do feel the pain to some certain extent and I just don't  
10 want that to happen to anybody. And I see my sons now that are 10 and 9, no way would  
11 I ever want them to go through that experience as a 13-year-old. Who knows what, you  
12 know, like and that's why I am so passionate about this, because I have boys, I have  
13 children, I have a daughter, and I want them to never experience any of that. Thank you.

14 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Thank you.

15 **CHAIR:** Thank you. Did anybody stand up for you, Sekope? Did anybody feel able to, of your  
16 peers or slightly older boys, to say, "Hey, it's the wrong, stop doing it to him?" And if not,  
17 why not, do you think?

18 **MR KEPU:** I don't believe so. No-one, and to put it in more perspective, to paint the picture a bit  
19 more, my older brother was a prefect in the flat above, and I had -- my mother had just told  
20 him the other night that this is -- this whole talanoa that I'm about to take part in. And I  
21 was -- I never told him, the code of silence, and I never knew, it just happened, I just never  
22 told him, I never told my parents and I never said anything to anybody. But those -- I feel  
23 the effects and they affect me up until now that I still, you know, I've played rugby for a  
24 long time now and I'm still hobbling along, but I deal with it, and I'm trying, you know, and  
25 I can only imagine, you know, that was -- that is a rice grain compared to the severity of  
26 what our survivors have gone through.

27 And yeah, I just thought I'd share that and, yes.

28 **CHAIR:** We acknowledge that and we salute you for your bravery in coming forward in such a  
29 public environment to share that deeply personal and moving account and, well, it speaks  
30 volumes for your bravery, but I'm sure it also adds comfort to many of the other men,  
31 young men who are sitting silent wondering what they might do. And so many thanks for  
32 what you've just shared with us.

33 **MR KEPU:** Malo.

34 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you, Sekope.

1           Now we are getting into redress. And Reverend Tautari I'll direct some of these  
2           questions to you. And we're having both a looking back and looking forward discussion.  
3           Because looking back at the Church's redress process, which is fairly new, so just how it  
4           was dealt with before: The process was to hold investigation whilst a Police investigation  
5           was underway?

6           **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, that's correct.

7           **MS SHARKEY:** And the result of that were significant delays for survivors?

8           **REV TAUTARI:** Yes.

9           **MS SHARKEY:** In some situations survivors had no choice but to take the matter to court to have  
10           it dealt with.

11           **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, that's correct.

12           **MS SHARKEY:** So the process was overly legalistic, right, it was a lot for a survivor to then  
13           have to go and get a lawyer and then go through that process of filing in the High Court.

14           **REV TAUTARI:** I agree.

15           **MS SHARKEY:** And you acknowledged that it would have created further trauma, them having  
16           to share their story again and again with different people just to get the redress that they  
17           were after.

18           **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, I acknowledge that.

19           **MS SHARKEY:** And in some cases, and we're talking about MG, who was in the Cooper Legal  
20           statement, in some cases survivors just gave up.

21           **REV TAUTARI:** Yes.

22           **MS SHARKEY:** And so my question was, we're going to look at parts of MG's experience. But  
23           what would you say to MG or survivors that are watching who were put off by that process  
24           of being told, no, we're not dealing with it until you go through the Police?

25           **REV TAUTARI:** That is neither redress nor resolution. That is the Church acting contrary to  
26           what it believes. That does not offer any pathway to wholeness and healing and that it  
27           should not have happened in that way.

28           **MS SHARKEY:** So when the -- that was the Methodist Mission in MG's situation that was  
29           dealing with it. But that wouldn't happen now, would it be the Methodist Church that deals  
30           with it?

31           **REV TAUTARI:** The Methodist Church would deal with it.

32           **MS SHARKEY:** And so what Cooper Legal, if you can look at paragraph 109, Cooper Legal had  
33           pointed out that they had worked through issues with other churches and they were happy  
34           to do so with the Methodist Mission. So what they were saying is, Police investigations



1 didn't hold us up in these situations, it shouldn't hold you up, but despite that knowledge,  
2 the Methodist Mission response was, "No, we're not doing it."

3 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, that's correct.

4 **MS SHARKEY:** And so what is the process now?

5 **REV TAUTARI:** The process now is that no Police, potential Police investigation holds up any  
6 claim.

7 **MS SHARKEY:** And there was a document in the bundle, and it's a -- even the insurers were a  
8 little bit confused, and the insurers say you can deal with this claim, you don't have to wait  
9 for the Police investigation. What were your thoughts when you read that?

10 **REV TAUTARI:** My thoughts were that the Church should then have dealt with the claim.

11 **MS SHARKEY:** But the response was, the rationale given was that the Church has followed this  
12 course of action for two reasons. One, if it endeavoured to reach some settlement with a  
13 complainant before such investigations were carried out, it could be responding to claims  
14 that were incorrect, poorly formed or malicious; and two, if it did carry out its own  
15 investigations in advance of any Police investigation, it could be accused of preventing a  
16 proper criminal investigation or more seriously looking to prevent such an investigation  
17 from happening.

18 So what are your thoughts about that, that that's not correct?

19 **REV TAUTARI:** That's not correct.

20 **MS SHARKEY:** So where does the shift come in? Is it leadership, is it your leadership coming in  
21 to the Church and saying no, this isn't how we're going to approach this anymore. What  
22 changes? Because it is a big change from this situation, which isn't that historic.

23 **CHAIR:** No, if we could just have the date of that last response, is it 2015?

24 **MS SHARKEY:** Yes.

25 **REV TAUTARI:** It certainly didn't come about because of my leadership. The Church shifted in  
26 its understanding of how it wanted to approach redress. It also came about because of  
27 knowing that the work -- I mean, this is dated 2015, our redress scheme came in 2018, and  
28 it really reflects a change in the thinking of those key leaders who were driving the claims  
29 at the time and the need for redress, the culmination of which came with our redress  
30 scheme in 2018.

31 I think also understanding that the work of the Commission was on the horizon at  
32 the time, would have been quite a major factor in encouraging the Church to move  
33 accordingly. The Church also was becoming -- was learning more about how to respond to

1 claims of abuse, and to move away from an overly legalistic approach to one that actually  
2 was more reflective of what we believed in and therefore were to develop into a scheme.

3 **MS SHARKEY:** You do say in your statement:

4 "In hindsight it was a significant error that a formal process took so long to develop.  
5 Until 2018 claims were processed exclusively by the Church without recourse(?) to external  
6 expertise and best practice."

7 And Reverend Tautari, would you agree that it was more than an error; for some  
8 survivors it's a failure to act?

9 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, exactly.

10 **MS SHARKEY:** Then just looking at the amounts of payments that were given by the Church.

11 Would you agree that in the past they have been low? I'm looking at MA. We can bring it  
12 up -- MA and MJ are the two that I'm really --

13 **REV TAUTARI:** It's okay, they were all low in the past, so yes.

14 **MS SHARKEY:** So that is acknowledged.

15 **CHAIR:** Before we go any further, and tell me if you're going to go into this, but I'd just like to  
16 know what the scope of the redress scheme is, what does it cover and for what periods of  
17 time?

18 **MS SHARKEY:** Yes, we can do that right now.

19 **CHAIR:** Okay, thank you.

20 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Also, when we say "low" just to give us an estimate of what the  
21 mean amount was.

22 **CHAIR:** Once we get to the numbers, yeah.

23 So when you opened the redress scheme, who was it for? Who were you inviting to  
24 come forward to the redress scheme? Not you personally but who was the Church inviting?

25 **REV TAUTARI:** We were inviting all those people who had suffered abuse while in the care of  
26 the Church and in particular children's homes, and people who had already -- who had also  
27 experienced historic abuse within churches. And we followed largely the guidelines that  
28 were given by the Commission in interpreting that.

29 Where we were a little different from the Commission in that we didn't hold to the  
30 1999 cut-off date.

31 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** So does that continue through to contemporary claims?

32 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes.

33 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** So in the context of schools for contemporary, but also with the  
34 Wellington community action with its foster care delivery service?

- 1 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, and just, by the way, we found the numbers, there are five children in care,  
2 three Māori, one Pasifika, and one Pākehā.
- 3 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Thank you, appreciate that.
- 4 **CHAIR:** Before we give you back to Ms Sharkey, did the Church at any time in relation to claims  
5 of abuse in schools, ever say, well, we won't be dealing with that because that's a matter for  
6 the School Board because that's a Government entity or an independent entity? Or did you  
7 always say everything would be within the redress scheme?
- 8 **REV TAUTARI:** I'm sorry I don't have that information.
- 9 **CHAIR:** Right.
- 10 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes. I don't know what the initial thinking of the Church had been in terms of  
11 including --
- 12 **CHAIR:** I'll frame it more -- do you know if there were any restrictions on the type of claims that  
13 that redress scheme was going to hear, provided it was abuse and it was within the  
14 Methodist setting?
- 15 **REV TAUTARI:** To my knowledge, no.
- 16 **CHAIR:** Thank you, I'll leave it to you now, Ms Sharkey.
- 17 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you. So when we're talking about low, as Commissioner Erueti was  
18 talking about before, MA, for example, the first offer was 5,000 and then it was increased  
19 to 7 and a half, plus reimbursement for Legal Aid. And there is another -- well, actually,  
20 for MJ the claim was settled for 15,000. But it was reviewed after that. So if we look at the  
21 first one, let's just focus on low settlements. Was that about the average, 5 to 7 and a half,  
22 from what you know?
- 23 **REV TAUTARI:** From what I know, yes.
- 24 **MS SHARKEY:** And your view, because we've had -- we've seen some settlements recently  
25 reviewed, is that -- that was far below what should have been paid?
- 26 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes.
- 27 **MS SHARKEY:** And so for MJ, it was increased --
- 28 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes.
- 29 **MS SHARKEY:** -- by \$60,000?
- 30 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes.
- 31 **MS SHARKEY:** On what grounds does the Methodist Church review past settlements? So how  
32 did MJ's situation come about?
- 33 **REV TAUTARI:** It came about because I was contacted by Cooper Legal and I was asked if I  
34 would be prepared to review the case and I said "yes".

- 1 **MS SHARKEY:** And there's been another survivor whose claim was settled for 18,000, plus  
2 contribution to Legal Aid, and has been told that a review of that settlement will also take  
3 place in light of the Methodist Church's new approach. So this is MB.
- 4 **REV TAUTARI:** And we have recently concluded that and have reviewed it. And then I said to  
5 Cooper Legal, if you have anything else that you require to be reviewed we are open to  
6 that.
- 7 **MS SHARKEY:** Right, so in MA's situation, that case could potentially be reviewed?
- 8 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes.
- 9 **MS SHARKEY:** And what would you say to survivors who have dealt with the Church before it  
10 introduced its new redress process and the increased amounts, who feel that the  
11 contribution was inadequate or that the redress amount was inadequate, I should say?
- 12 **REV TAUTARI:** I would agree with them and I would say come back to us. We have shifted in  
13 our position.
- 14 **MS SHARKEY:** And then just turning to apologies. The redress report that was released by the  
15 Inquiry, have you been able to have a look at that?
- 16 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes.
- 17 **MS SHARKEY:** Because one section in that report talks about apologies and apology letters, and  
18 we had a case study that talked about what survivors could deem to an adequate apology.  
19 And I just wanted to ask Reverend Tautari for you to reflect on this.  
20 Can you see that?
- 21 **REV TAUTARI:** Sorry, my glasses aren't so good.
- 22 **CHAIR:** Mine are and I can't see it very well either.
- 23 **MS SHARKEY:** Maybe if we could --
- 24 **CHAIR:** Could we highlight the relevant portion?
- 25 **MS SHARKEY:** Yes. Is that better?
- 26 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, that's much better, thank you so much.
- 27 **MS SHARKEY:** It's really what I'm wanting to look at here is the language, Reverend Tautari,  
28 because you say, "You have told us that you believe --
- 29 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes.
- 30 **MS SHARKEY:** -- that your adoption has had a negative effect on your life." And then it says,  
31 "Yes, your complaint to us is new ground", but then there are comments in there about the  
32 advice received and that they played a limited role. And I just -- you can read that letter,  
33 Reverend Tautari, I'll give you some time.
- 34 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, thank you.

1 **MS SHARKEY:** Apart from the initial introduction, the Church would have had a limited role to  
2 play. So it's the information that's said in there. Would you agree that it lacks a personal,  
3 meaningful apology?

4 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, I would agree with that.

5 **MS SHARKEY:** And putting it on the survivor about "what you told us you believe"?

6 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes.

7 **MS SHARKEY:** So in reflection, what would change between -- this is 2020, to now?

8 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes.

9 **MS SHARKEY:** What would change in terms of, you know, survivors being told what legal  
10 advice you had, we heard in the redress report was actually quite harmful to them and quite  
11 traumatic. So what learnings do you take from a letter like this?

12 **REV TAUTARI:** The learnings I take is that for an apology to be meaningful it must  
13 acknowledge what the Church did in letting people down. It must identify and specify  
14 exactly why that was. It must thank survivors for coming forward and sharing their story,  
15 their experience and shedding light on the truth, that the Church accepts that unequivocally  
16 and offers its apology.

17 **MS SHARKEY:** Because then when looking at that next page, Reverend Tautari, it's "we are  
18 advised that due to the limited part played by the Church," etc, etc. "The Methodist Church  
19 does not have any potential legal liability." So it's that legal terminology that, for survivors,  
20 is quite harmful. It's almost like a sorry, not sorry. Would you agree with that?

21 **REV TAUTARI:** I agree with that. I agree with that. You know, just to share in the spirit of  
22 talanoa, when I began, so in November it will be two years since I began this position.  
23 When I began and inherited the redress scheme, I just took everything that was given and I  
24 was sending out, not an apology like this, but it was something that was pretty standard. It  
25 wasn't until I undertook specific training in trauma-informed approaches to pastoral care  
26 that I was able to reflect more and learn more having not been naturally in this space  
27 before. And I believe that is where we are shifting. I myself have learned and the Church  
28 will continue to learn as we move in this space.

29 **MS SHARKEY:** And talking about that, the learnings that you're taking from what we're hearing  
30 in the Inquiry, in order for a survivor to make a claim, is it that they go on to the website  
31 and -- what happens from there? Just trying to understand the mechanics of that.

32 **REV TAUTARI:** So if a survivor is a making a claim themselves and not going through a lawyer,  
33 they can access the information on our website. What usually happens is that they will  
34 reach out to us and say, look, we have -- actually, they usually say we want to see our file,

1 we want to see our records. And so that's what we do, we share the record. When the  
2 intention is stated "we want to make a claim", we offer them the possibility of  
3 accompaniment through an independent coordinator who is not from the Church and who  
4 works in the space of trauma and of counselling and who works alongside them to help  
5 them clearly articulate in the way they want to their experiences as part of a claim to the  
6 Church. And that may come as a half-page, one-page, two-page document. There's no  
7 template for it, although there are key questions that help to direct what is being asked for.

8 The claim then comes into the office of the General Secretary who then convenes a  
9 meeting of the review panel, of three people usually, and they then consider the claim and  
10 the accompanying documentation.

11 They then make recommendations to the Church about redress and it's at that point  
12 that we then contact the claimant, the survivor, with the proposed redress from the Church.

13 That is how it stands now on the website, but doesn't include a couple of key  
14 changes that I've made and will, how I say, affirm or have them approved -- not approved  
15 but get them affirmed by Conference in November.

16 **MS SHARKEY:** Key changes?

17 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes.

18 **MS SHARKEY:** Those are?

19 **REV TAUTARI:** Those are that everyone who comes is met kanohi ki te kanohi by myself and/or  
20 the president of the Church. So that means, practically speaking, in the last six months I  
21 have met with 11 survivors going to where they are, where they want to meet, and saying to  
22 them, "We thank you for coming forward, we honour you coming to us and the bravery that  
23 it took for that to happen, we commit ourselves to be on a journey with you along this  
24 pathway to resolution and redress, and we felt it necessary to show our face to you so that  
25 you can see that we hold ourselves accountable, not only to the process of resolution and  
26 redress, but also to the relationship that that then infers."

27 **MS SHARKEY:** And if a survivor isn't feeling like they can meet with you face-to-face, how  
28 does that -- that doesn't impact or lessen the quality of their claim?

29 **REV TAUTARI:** Not by any means, not by any means. I would say, though, that not one  
30 survivor has said "I do not want to meet face-to-face."

31 **MS SHARKEY:** Well, if I was hoping to get something out of a redress claim I would probably  
32 come and meet you too. It's not that -- there would be barriers for some survivors, right, in  
33 being able to come and bring their whole self into that space when we had this discussion

1 about hierarchy and being re-traumatised and meeting with the head of the Church, those  
2 are issues that are very real to survivors.

3 **REV TAUTARI:** Very real, and so we often preface the meeting with an understanding that we  
4 are not here to go through the detail or to interrogate the detail of what has happened, we  
5 are here to listen and we are here to show our personal accountability and because, you  
6 know, this is tikanga Māori, kanohi ki te kanohi, therefore the inferred relationship that  
7 comes out of that is one that needs to be sincere and honest and real.

8 **MS SHARKEY:** And so this applies also to survivors of abuse at Wesley College?

9 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, it does. It also applies to survivors of abuse who are overseas. For  
10 example, I've met with three people by Zoom who are residing in Australia. And so there's  
11 no barrier other than that which may be required -- I mean, if a survivor feels  
12 uncomfortable to meet they're not in that space, we are happy with that, there's no problem.

13 **MS SHARKEY:** So they would lead that process and what it looks like?

14 **REV TAUTARI:** Very much so.

15 **MS SHARKEY:** In terms of Wesley College, a number of survivors are concerned that this is it,  
16 this is the last kind of look at what's happened to Wesley College, and you'll see in some of  
17 the statements some of them have asked for an independent investigation, and I just wanted  
18 to ask what the response was to that.

19 **REV TAUTARI:** I've met with three survivors from Wesley and their statements are here. I have  
20 one more to meet with in the coming weeks and I'm sure many more will come in. I'd like  
21 to say also that I don't meet alone with Wesley College survivors. I always have a senior  
22 member of the Trust Board with me, from the College. It is very important that we are  
23 together. The person I visited our last two survivors with is here in this room.

24 And so -- to your question of a separate mechanism?

25 **MS SHARKEY:** Something that continues to look at what has happened at Wesley College in the  
26 past very long time, the decades before, I think what survivors are saying is: This is not it,  
27 this is not it, this can't be the last call for survivors to come forward, that the Church and  
28 Wesley College continue to look and understand that what has happened in the past and as  
29 we were talking about before, lift that darkness, that dark cloud in the history of Wesley  
30 College so that it's not forgotten and it's truly unraveled, unveiled.

31 Because we're here but we're not here for a long time. So the momentum, I guess  
32 the concern for survivors is that the momentum will stall.

33 **REV TAUTARI:** I think that's a very real concern. We have seen commissions come and go in  
34 the past in Aotearoa and momentum is gained and lost. But for us here, the reality is that

1 we recognise that there's nowhere else to go but towards wholeness and healing. And  
2 whatever comes after this we have put ourselves on a journey. I mean, listening to  
3 Dr Evans, such a passionate commitment to change, bringing in practical examples that  
4 make sense for the context of Wesley. It is not to be underestimated.

5 The challenge for the Church remains to ensure its own leadership takes a key role  
6 in that.

7 Commissioner Erueti referred to one of the witnesses' desire to have a national  
8 conversation around bullying. I agree completely. We should have a national conversation  
9 around abuse. We should have a national conversation that understands that abuse doesn't  
10 happen out of a vacuum, that it comes by the language we use, by our understanding of  
11 toxic masculinity, what it means to have LGBTQ people feeling safe and secure in  
12 communities and in the Church, and we need a faith that when we use words like "love" we  
13 understand theologically and biblically what that means, where that will take us, it takes us  
14 out of our own comfort zones, our own cultural comfort zones, what we were taught as we  
15 grew up was acceptable or unacceptable, who was in, who was out, who was included, who  
16 was excluded. And unless the intersection between colonialism and gender and racism is  
17 understood, and finds a translation in what we teach in schools and how we teach it and the  
18 language we use to teach it in, I guess what I'm saying is that this is a collective effort, and  
19 when the Commission goes, collectively we will need to carry it on, and the Church has a  
20 significant part to play, especially and particularly with regards to Wesley College.

21 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you, Reverend Tautari. Just to confirm from our discussion before. It  
22 wouldn't just be claims from Wesley College students who experienced abuse after hours in  
23 hostels, it's throughout.

24 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, you are correct.

25 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you.

26 Mr Johnston, there was one survivor's experience that was mentioned in the bundle  
27 and they were -- had reached out directly, Dr Evans or Mr Johnston, you'll be able to  
28 answer this. And he contacted you directly and there was a discussion or a meeting with  
29 him and he was reimbursed the school fees, I think, that his parent had paid for him. Was  
30 he told about the redress process through the Church?

31 **DR EVANS:** My Board chairman dealt with the repayment part of it. I know they met and had a  
32 conversation. I met with him purely around the school site and talked with him, went for a  
33 walk and so on. I'm pretty sure I did say, "You do realise you can go to the Church, to the  
34 website and look into it further if you want."



1 **MS SHARKEY:** It would be important that that information is given to all people that make  
2 approaches to Wesley College, because the reimbursement of school fees seems a little bit  
3 light.

4 **DR EVANS:** I agree. That was his request, he was really open about what he wanted was a  
5 meeting, and that was his idea about repaying the fees. He just felt it was a way of moving  
6 forward. He'd had -- it's a traumatic story as well.

7 **MS SHARKEY:** Very traumatic.

8 **DR EVANS:** Years of drug addiction and issues, and that was his suggestion. He said, when he  
9 e-mailed he just said, like, I don't want a whole lot of money, I want my fees repaid that my  
10 parents paid to go there and I want to come in and meet. And so hopefully we had a  
11 positive meeting. I don't think it erases the past but he left a bit happier.

12 **MS SHARKEY:** But you don't know what you don't know, so it's constant messaging across to  
13 everybody who will now approach either Wesley College or the Church to be given the  
14 same information about the redress process.

15 **DR EVANS:** Yeah. Actually, I'm happy to go back, I've been in communication with him a few  
16 times, I'm happy to go back and reiterate that.

17 **MS SHARKEY:** I'm mindful that we're almost at time. I have one more thing.

18 **CHAIR:** Please do. We don't want to break the habit of going over time; it's something we've  
19 become used to.

20 **MS SHARKEY:** We were on a good thing there for a while.

21 **CHAIR:** You've got some brownie points in the bank, Ms Sharkey.

22 **MS SHARKEY:** If I could bring up just some recommendations that a survivor has made in one  
23 of her statements. Just while we're looking at that, what is the level of, I guess, discussion  
24 across faiths? Are there conversations with other churches or other faith-based  
25 organisations about the Inquiry or what the learnings are or redress, for example? Is there  
26 any kind of coming together and having progressive discussions?

27 **REV TAUTARI:** To my knowledge no, but I mean, that doesn't mean there weren't any and  
28 maybe I wasn't invited or there.

29 **MS SHARKEY:** I hope you would be invited.

30 **REV TAUTARI:** But I think certainly anecdotally from conversations, other faiths are carefully  
31 following the work of the Commission and there have been a couple of meetings with  
32 survivor networks that have drawn or invited leadership from other faiths to attend, and to  
33 be part of discussions, which I understand were anticipated at least to help shape some of  
34 the thinking to put before the Commission.

1 **MS SHARKEY:** Right, okay.

2 **CHAIR:** Before we leave that point, and arising from it: You will be aware that at the end of  
3 last year we produced a large volume called Pūretumu Torowhānui. Two issues arising out  
4 of that.

5 The first is that those words mean holistic redress, so it was a recognition of  
6 survivor evidence and learnings and experts who persuaded us that redress is more than just  
7 the handing of a cheque and an apology letter and that for somebody properly to be restored  
8 you had to meet their individual needs, whatever that was, whatever that looked like,  
9 whether that was counselling, assistance in some social service way, whatever.

10 Has the Methodist Church as a whole looked at redress or considered other types of  
11 redress other than, or as well as money and an apology letter that might fulfil some of that  
12 holistic approach?

13 **REV TAUTARI:** Thank you for your question, because it's something that has occupied some of  
14 our thinking. Yes, we had read that in the report and took it seriously, and had moved in  
15 that direction. And so we're making suggestions about counselling and other wrap-around  
16 services and budgeting etc, and then got pushback and was told, "but about isn't that  
17 another type of paternalism?"

18 **CHAIR:** Pushback from whom?

19 **REV TAUTARI:** From our members, one of our members on our review panel, a Māori, who  
20 said, "Why are you deciding what people need? They have their own agency."

21 **CHAIR:** That's true, of course, isn't it?

22 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes. "And why are you writing that into an agreement? Isn't it better to have a  
23 conversation with people and have a kōrero?"

24 And so where once we would say, look, we give you this in compensation and X  
25 amount for counselling and on a couple of occasions we said and this towards driving  
26 lessons and you've identified this and this and that. Now we take the total in one and say  
27 this is what we want to give you, having heard some of the needs, but it is entirely up to  
28 your own agency.

29 **CHAIR:** As a package.

30 **REV TAUTARI:** As a package.

31 **CHAIR:** Thank you for that. That leads me to the second question which is a bigger one. In that  
32 report we made some recommendations about the setting up of an independent redress  
33 scheme for both faith and State-based -- abuse in both faith and State institutions, so an  
34 independently-run redress scheme and that our major recommendations were that this

1 should be done, this should be set up only with and in partnership with Māori and with  
2 survivors. And that it should be done in a collaborative way.

3 We anticipated in there that that would happen and work we know is going on, but  
4 my question for you is have you been approached by the people who are working to set up  
5 that scheme, as a significant player in the faith-based space, to assist or to have your views  
6 about a redress scheme put to you?

7 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, I do believe there was an initial round of consultation last year -- is that  
8 what you're referring to, Commissioner?

9 **CHAIR:** No, it wouldn't have been last year because our recommendations were last year.

10 **REV TAUTARI:** So the Crown response agency?

11 **CHAIR:** The Crown Response Unit, yes, have you heard from them?

12 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, we have heard from them. I think they're finding it a little difficult to get  
13 everyone around the table.

14 **CHAIR:** Right. Are you prepared to go to the table, is the Methodist Church prepared to go to the  
15 table on this?

16 **REV TAUTARI:** Very much so. We have -- but I will need to speak with people at Conference.

17 **CHAIR:** Yes, I'm not asking you to make a commitment today but it is important to us to know  
18 what's happening with our recommendations.

19 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, yes. I mean, in principle we have absolutely no problem. The only thing  
20 is I would say from just the short time I've been involved in this, that it takes -- that it's so  
21 important, the relational aspect, and I would hope that any independent mechanism would  
22 be able to deliver that in a way that honours the survivor, number one.

23 Number two, you know, I just think of things like ACC.

24 **CHAIR:** The bureaucracy?

25 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, and I know that -- I mean, we aren't exempt from this, Ms Sharkey has  
26 clearly outlined where we failed and made things harder and longer for people to gain  
27 justice. But we have changed and we have been able to be quite efficient usually in the  
28 timings. I would hope that any mechanism could be that same way.

29 **CHAIR:** Yes, I think that is shared by people who gave evidence of certainly faith-based  
30 institutions who gave evidence to us last year when we were discussing this, you know, we  
31 value the relationship between our need to meet kanohi ki te kanohi to accept personal or a  
32 church's responsibility, so we are aware of those dynamics, but it is also important that  
33 work continues so that some way can be seen through this and it's important, I think, that  
34 the churches are at the table with the conversation.

1 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes. I mean, I think so too. You know, I'm also aware that if -- I worry about  
2 sometimes if we set this up independent mechanism that then the Church isn't held as  
3 accountable as it should be because we have something else.

4 **CHAIR:** You're at arm's length.

5 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, and here you see with Wesley and us, we are aligned and together and  
6 working together. And the last thing I would say, is that -- and what we have now included  
7 in our apologies, is that we have said after the kōrero with the person as well, "And if you  
8 need anything else in the future, we are here." And I wonder if an independent mechanism  
9 can deliver that in the same way. That's only -- that's my only --

10 **CHAIR:** That's something we did recommend. But, you see, all my point is here, is that these are  
11 things that I think the Crown Response Unit needs to hear in developing their policies and  
12 if you're not at the table, you're not being able to convey that. So I'm just -- my  
13 encouragement is that they engage with you and you engage with them so that they can  
14 hear this. So there's no hard and fast lines here, it's about partnership, it's about  
15 collaboration, it's about sharing, it's about talanoa, about these very important issues.  
16 Thank you.

17 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Can I just add to that, because I did see from your brief that you  
18 were proposing to provide survivors with the choice of going to the National Redress  
19 Scheme or coming to your redress scheme. And I understand the sentiment about  
20 providing choice, but we heard that from all the faiths who came and gave evidence. What  
21 we also heard strongly from survivors, and we've been listening for -- doing this for several  
22 years now, three years on redress, is that they wanted an independent redress scheme, they  
23 didn't want to go back to the institutions that perpetrated the abuse, basically.

24 And while it's up to the collectives, the Māori collectives and survivors to engage  
25 with the Crown to create this redress scheme, for we know the full details, that was such a  
26 strong principle.

27 So I note from your evidence about, you know, you want to maintain that, you don't  
28 want to be arm's length, you want to provide, say, pastoral support and care, you might  
29 want to provide a direct kanohi ki te kanohi apology and those things can still be  
30 accommodated as we saw them within this new National Redress Scheme. But really, the  
31 independence had to be with that scheme with the faiths contributing in that way as and  
32 when survivors wanted that direct personal response from the Church.

1           So I really encourage you just to, with the redress report, because it's all laid out  
2           about the rationale and argument for independence, to engage with it before you go to  
3           November to meet with the --

4     **REV TAUTARI:** Conference.

5     **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** -- Conference, thank you.

6     **REV TAUTARI:** Thank you very much. Yes, I hear what you're saying. At the same time  
7           because we are Māori, the question of tikanga comes in. Tikanga about a hara that has  
8           occurred, a wrongdoing, and what that means for us as Māori and the restoration of right  
9           relationships and the ea(?), the balance. And it seems to me that if that is outsourced to an  
10          independent mechanism, then how does the Church and its members have that same  
11          sensitivity about that?

12                 I'm not saying no, I have to go to Conference and speak and I have to speak with te  
13          taha Māori and one of our senior leaders who's been following here today and speak with  
14          tauwiwi, but when we begin to speak tikanga, then we have to go tikanga and go deep into it  
15          and be clear. So I'm not saying "no".

16     **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** No, no, I appreciate that. And, of course, there's a rich discussion  
17          about tikanga and the principles that should drive the redress scheme. But, as I say,  
18          ultimately this is -- we've provided some navigation lights, but ultimately it's for Māori, the  
19          collective, that we recommended, and other survivor collectives, to engage with the Crown  
20          to decide on this, it's empowering survivor voice, that's where it lies.

21                 Just to be clear, I just noticed that you said that your redress scheme wasn't limited  
22          to 1999. We haven't recommended that either in the redress scheme. It's just in our terms  
23          of reference it talks about us focusing between 1950 and 1999. But even then, we're able to  
24          look at matters beyond 1999 to inform our recommendations to the future.

25                 But I do wish you the best with your discussions within your faith, it's very  
26          challenging kaupapa for you. But we've really grappled with this, so I just, again,  
27          encourage you to engage with that report and good luck for the future.

28     **REV TAUTARI:** Kia ora.

29     **MS SHARKEY:** All right, there is something on the screen there, Reverend Tautari, or there  
30          should be, and I just wanted to get your thoughts on what this survivor is saying in terms of  
31          the recommendations, because that first one would require there to be some kind of  
32          cross-faith discussion.

1 **CHAIR:** Just to be clear, these are recommendations not just relating to redress, but for the future  
2 and for the -- that survivors want the Commission to look at as making in their final  
3 recommendations. So they're broad, wide-ranging recommendations.

4 **MS SHARKEY:** A formal move by churches to ensure proper checking of credentials not just  
5 Police checks. That would need to involve formal arrangements to exchange information  
6 between diocese and denominations and a discussion at church leaders level. Any thoughts  
7 on that?

8 **REV TAUTARI:** To some -- I agree with that. To some degree it happens already, in that if a  
9 minister is moving from one church to another, that there is a request of their good standing  
10 and that usually involves ensuring that there are no disciplinary procedures in place  
11 currently. But from what I see here in the paragraph, it is requesting something a lot more  
12 robust and in-depth and we would agree with that.

13 **MS SHARKEY:** Okay. The development of understanding that forgiveness of sexually abuse of  
14 ministers does not have to include giving them back the power they have abused.

15 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, I agree.

16 **MS SHARKEY:** So in a situation where that has happened, a Reverend has committed, you  
17 know, against a survivor, sexual nature, what is the Church's policy? Is he dismissed?  
18 What happens?

19 **REV TAUTARI:** He or she --

20 **MS SHARKEY:** Sorry, my apologies, he or she.

21 **REV TAUTARI:** No worries. They go through our own disciplinary procedures. But if it's an  
22 issue of sexual abuse, then that is regarded in a different way.

23 **MS SHARKEY:** If a survivor is sharing an experience that involves conduct of a sexual nature,  
24 then is that still the same? What exactly entails sexual abuse? Does it have to be the  
25 physical action, it can be the way that they've been talked to, messaging, all those  
26 examples, does that come within that definition of sexual abuse? Or is that something you  
27 would have to have a look at?

28 **REV TAUTARI:** I would need to have a look at. What we have seen today, and especially from  
29 the example in the morning, we saw how ministers who have abused have enjoyed  
30 impunity and so if we are to extend that to things like sexual harassment, which I think  
31 you're alluding to, then the Church would have to take a clear position on that. We do have  
32 procedures in place, but what I'm hearing you say is that something stronger is needed, one  
33 that doesn't allow people to continue in their positions, because by then they are very  
34 clearly unfit for ministry, and should be out of the Church.

1 **MS SHARKEY:** And I think that's what, part of what the survivor is saying at the bottom,  
2 allowing abusing ministers to resign or take early retirement is a way for churches to avoid  
3 the responsibility of standing with the victims/survivors in a clear way, a dismissal would  
4 be a clear message to all parties about where the Church stands.

5 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, I agree.

6 **MS SHARKEY:** You agree with that.

7 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes.

8 **MS SHARKEY:** I've now come to the end, but before I pass it over to the Commissioners, I did  
9 want, for any final comments by the witnesses, and Dr Evans, could we start with you  
10 perhaps. We've definitely gone a bit over time, my apologies.

11 **DR EVANS:** Just thank you for the opportunity and I want to make an assurance to the survivors  
12 and our current school community that this will definitely not be the end, this is the  
13 beginning of the work we want to achieve at the College.

14 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you, Dr Evans. Mr Johnston.

15 **MR JOHNSTON:** Yeah, I agree this is a journey, thank you for the platform that we have today.  
16 I've seen numerous principals and a lot of work put in, things that they've done that hasn't  
17 worked and it is a continual journey. The Board is behind the Principal and wants the  
18 cultural change which is important for the safe Wesley College that we desire.

19 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you. Reverend Tautari.

20 **REV TAUTARI:** Kia ora, tēnā koutou katoa. Just to say thank you to the Commission for  
21 allowing us to be in this space and a special mihi to our survivors here who came to speak  
22 with me and with others in the breaks, and it is through this continual engagement and  
23 kōrero that we are able to move forward, without which we become faceless and voiceless,  
24 and that is not what we want to see. So thank you very, very much.

25 **MS SHARKEY:** And encouragement to other survivors to please feel free to come forward.

26 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, please feel free to come forward. What's wonderful is that Dr Evans has  
27 said, "Come to me, as principal", and I say as the General Secretary, "Come to me, please  
28 come, we are here for you."

29 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you.

30 **MR TALAKAI:** Kia ora. Thank you, Madam Chair, talofa lava, kia ora. Greetings, thank you  
31 very much for the opportunity that you have given us, the Methodist Church and the  
32 Wesley College, hearing our voices and not only our voices but our survivors' voices, and  
33 we do stand together to speak out to our survivors out there who still have the pulonga on  
34 them. To have more courage and step forward. The invitation is there from the General

1 Secretary. You either contact the principal or the General Secretary and we're more than  
2 happy to walk alongside you so that we can tatala e pulonga and lift the -- so that we can  
3 see the light, kia ora.

4 **MR KEPU:** Malo 'aupito. First and foremost, I just want to thank the Commission, again, for  
5 having us here and as we've said here, allowing us this platform to share, to talanoa, for the  
6 greater good of our great Church and our College. I want to thank the survivors for the  
7 courage again for coming forward and I encourage, like Etuini has said, please set  
8 yourselves free and allow yourself to heal by giving and showing that bravery. Our great  
9 College we love so much, and if we want to see those changes we've got to make those  
10 changes. We can't keep doing the same things and expecting different results.

11 So I encourage those that need the help to seek the help, the help is there. And as  
12 the principal and the General Secretary have said, they are there for you guys and they are  
13 there to support anybody. So thank you again for having me, such a humbling experience  
14 and I'm very grateful to be part of this, so thank you very much, malo 'aupito.

15 **MS SHARKEY:** And you'll be involved in any anti-bullying work moving forward maybe?

16 **CHAIR:** That was a direction not a request.

17 **MS SHARKEY:** Possibly, possibly.

18 **MR KEPU:** Yeah, I'd love to, happy to help, yes.

19 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you. Thank you, Sekope, I don't have any further questions.

20 **CHAIR:** Thank you. So we're going to end, we've got two minutes before our stenographer's  
21 fingers fall off, and so I'm going to invite my fellow Commissioners now just to say a very  
22 few words in closing.

23 We'll start with you, Paul. Thank you.

24 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Thank you for honouring us with your presence today and through  
25 the talanoa, and respecting the vā. I think we need a national talanoa across schools, across  
26 faiths, about bullying, violence, abuse, the role that racism, ableism, clericalism, sexism  
27 play in these things. It needs to be led from school assemblies, teachers at the front of  
28 classrooms, pulpits, and it needs to be honest conversations about the role that faiths have  
29 played and the role that education institutions have played in bullying, abuse, violence in  
30 our society. It needs to be both an honest but a courageous and visionary conversation, and  
31 an aspirational conversation about what better can look like for the next generations.

32 And a bit of a challenge as well alongside the gift that you've given us. I admire the  
33 focus towards disadvantage, but I think there are still some groups which remain invisible



1 and that invisibility further creates risk of harm. I think with disabled kids, like all kids, we  
2 need mana and support so that they can both achieve and be kept safe.

3 So the challenge is there as well, and for me to feel reassured, I want to hear that the  
4 overcoming of the invisibility of these groups amongst our societies, amongst our faiths,  
5 amongst our schools, thank you again for honouring the vā today, kia ora.

6 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Ko te mihi tuatahi ki ngā purapura ora e whakauru mai ana e  
7 mātakitaki mai ana i te pouaka whakaata, me koutou mā kua huihui mai ki te tautoko tēnei  
8 kaupapa i tēnei rā, tēnā koutou katoa. Tēnā koutou ki te tēpu, te Hāhi me ngā rangatira o te  
9 kura.

10 I just want to thank you, everyone, today, it's been a great talanoa I think today,  
11 we've learned a lot. And I think it's in large part because you've come with so much  
12 goodwill and in keeping with those -- I think of those four principles, and I'm thinking  
13 about those three principles you talked about at the start of today that guides the Church,  
14 that openness, do no harm, do good.

15 And thank you, Mr Kepu, too for coming, I think it's really encouraging to hear  
16 about the initiatives from the kura, support from the Church, but also that there are leaders  
17 like you out there that -- and I mean no harm, Dr Evans, but that are a bit hipper than the  
18 principal of the kura at the moment, that the young rangatahi can identify with, but under  
19 your leadership.

20 It's been a great day, so thank you so much, ngā mihi nui mahana ki a koutou.

21 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** I le ava ma le fa'aaloalo lava e momoli atu le fa'afetai. E  
22 momoli atu le fa'afetai i le tou loto toa, i le tou loto tele, i le tou loto maualalo. Vi'ia le  
23 atua i le tou fa'asoa. (I extend gratitude with all due respect. I am grateful of your bravery,  
24 courage, humility, and praise the Lord with what you have shared.) I just want to take this  
25 opportunity to really express our gratitude, my gratitude as someone from the Pasifika  
26 community, but also a Commissioner who's been around the motu and who has heard from  
27 lots of communities, including our Pasifika communities. When it comes to the faith, the  
28 message that I get really loud and clear, that they literally pummel into me, is  
29 "Ali'imuamua, do not demonise the faith", because it means so much to our communities,  
30 Māori, Pasifika, Palagi, Asian, across the motu.

31 And whilst there is a focus on the faith and on the schools, there was some really  
32 ugly ungodly behaviour that went on and that's what we're addressing. And I hope that you  
33 receive that in terms of your presence here today.

1           And so with my fellow Commissioners, I too honour you for the way you have  
2 respected and continuously honoured our survivors both online and who are physically  
3 present here today, and the hara and the harm that for us is a big navigational light.

4           So I guess my message really is around use your cultural competencies, capabilities,  
5 because you have it in spades. And now in the 21st century more so than ever we require  
6 our young, amazing leaders to stand up and take your rightful place in driving those  
7 conversations to bring about social change.

8           So schools are on display this week, but our message is the same to all of them. We  
9 had courageous -- we heard from courageous survivors from Silverstream yesterday,  
10 Wesley today, we have the rest of the week we're looking at other schools as well and other  
11 faith organisations. And I just want to say loto tele, loto toa, it's not easy work, but if  
12 I refrain back to you, "by faith, by learning and by hard work", which is your motto, which  
13 you wear proudly as your badge of courage, continue to sow into your harvest field,  
14 because you will see, you will see the good works from your heart service. And that's what  
15 I think we want to see and understand when this Commission is gone, what does a healthy  
16 Wesleyan community look like, what does a healthy Methodist Church look like in the faith  
17 space around abuse in care? Malie.

18 **CHAIR:** Thank you, Sandra. Ngā mihi mahana ki a koutou katoa. We've come to the end of our  
19 day, and you've heard fulsomely from my colleagues, and I echo everything that's been  
20 said.

21           When we started the day we were in a faith-based institutional hearing, which  
22 sounds pretty ghastly actually, when you think about it, it sounds bureaucratic. But what  
23 we had today was much more than that.

24           So we heard about the bureaucracy and the levels and the channels and the  
25 committees and the etc. But we also heard far more potently than that the emotion. We've  
26 had tears shared with the table. We've had emotion that has been felt. Some survivors  
27 might not accept that, they might be still sceptical, because this is -- that vā that has been  
28 broken is a difficult one to repair. But I hope that survivors who have been affected by  
29 abuse in this Church have watched and learned and perhaps learned a little more about the  
30 attitude of the Church.

31           Above all, we've received a personal and unsolicited account of a personal  
32 experience of abuse which we honour and salute for the courage that it took to be on  
33 personal display. Sekope, thank you very much for that.

1           The last thing I want to say, I think some of you have echoed this already. This  
2 Commission will vanish in a puff of smoke at the end of June 2023. Our work will be over,  
3 our words will be on paper. But the work must go on, and for that, not for this  
4 Commission, but for the kaupapa and for the survivors, the work, the kaupapa needs  
5 champions, and we look to leaders of all of the faith-based institutions to be champions for  
6 the future so that as we say, e kore ano, never again.

7           And so your contribution today in this relaxed, nice talanoa form has been deeply  
8 appreciated by all of us, thank you very much indeed.

9           And on that note I think it's appropriate that we end with karakia. Kei a koe matua.  
10 Kei a koe te tikanga.

11 **KAUMATUA NGĀTI WHĀTUA:** It is with great honour to pass on our aroha to everybody  
12 here today. The tēpu, I have decided to sing our Ki a Tau ki a Tātou Katoa, a himene  
13 which relates to all of us through the grace of -- through the Lord Jesus Christ, through the  
14 love of God, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the fellowship of all mankind, may we be  
15 blessed, all of us, today. Nō reira ki a koutou, that is our waiata. We've changed the tune  
16 slightly, jazzed it up to give a bit of spirit for us to enjoy the rest of the day. So if you  
17 know the words, if you know the tune, kei te pai, sing up, blow the roof off this house,  
18 because my voice is not too good, I'll turn this off when we start singing.

19           The other thing is, as I was driving past the marae today, I saw three of our kuias  
20 tidying up the marae, so I invited them to come for a ride and I'll buy them an ice cream.  
21 They didn't know I was coming here. When we got in here I said I'll have to give you an  
22 ice cream after we finish. Hei aha, so they're going to help me sing this waiata, join us  
23 please. (Waiata kia tau ki a tātou). (Karakia).

24           **Hearing adjourned at 5.33 pm to Wednesday, 19 October 2022 at 9 am**