

**UNDER**

**THE INQUIRIES ACT 2013**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

**The Royal Commission of  
Inquiry into Historical Abuse in State Care and in the Care  
of Faith-based Institutions**

**AND**

**Faith Based Institutional Hearings (August 2022)**

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**WITNESS STATEMENT OF REVEREND TARA TAUTARI  
ON BEHALF OF  
METHODIST CHURCH OF NEW ZEALAND | TE HĀHI WETERIANA O AOTEAROA  
Dated 1 July 2022**

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Next Event Date: 15 August 2022

**WITNESS STATEMENT OF REVEREND TARA TAUTARI,****IN RESPONSE TO NOTICE TO PRODUCE NO 452, DATED 24 MAY 2022**

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

**Mihi**

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

**Acknowledgement and apology**

6. On behalf of the Methodist Church of New Zealand, Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa, I acknowledge the pain and suffering of all those who were abused while attending Wesley College.
7. The Church apologises unreservedly to those survivors who endured physical violence, sexual and emotional abuse experienced at Wesley College. This abuse has had long lasting effects on the wellbeing of both survivors and their whānau, and we acknowledge that for some, they have been unable to share their experiences, such was the trauma they suffered.
8. We regret our inability to act effectively to prevent such abuse, and we remain committed to addressing the wrongs of the past, as well as the challenges of

the present as we continue to work to implement policies and practices that uphold the dignity of all.

### **Introduction**

9. I make this witness statement on behalf of the Church and in response to the Royal Commission's Notice to Produce No 452 dated 24 May 2022, addressed to the Church.
10. My statement responds to Questions 8 to 12 of the Notice to Produce no 452, regarding the Church's relationship with Wesley College, between the 1950's until the present day.
11. The Notice to Produce Questions 1 to 7, have been answered in the Church's Statutory Declaration Response dated 1 July 2022.
12. I have produced this witness statement with the assistance of the former General Secretary, Reverend David Bush, who held the role for 12 years prior to my appointment. In the time available, since receiving the Notice, we have attempted to provide full answers where possible, but within the bounds of our knowledge, often based on our review of documents.

### **My background**

13. I am the General Secretary of the Methodist Church of New Zealand Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa ("the Church") I have held this position since November 2020. I was General Secretary Elect of the Church from November 2019. My term of office is 10 years.
14. I have grown up in the Church and my spiritual and faith formation has been nurtured by my parents in the first instance, as well as by key connexional leaders in Te Hāhi.
15. Until my most recent appointment, all my work in the Church has been in a voluntary capacity.
16. As a young rangatahi, the Church invested heavily in my leadership development and placed me in positions of influence at an early age. For example in 1994, I served on the first iteration of the Council of Conference,

the supreme visioning body of the Church. In the intervening years, I have served on various key connexional committees and boards of the Church including the Hui Poari of Te Taha Māori.

17. In my professional life, I have a background in education and community engagement and have worked extensively with individuals and groups both here in Aotearoa and overseas, in areas of advocacy, capacity building and education and training.
18. My early career included work in policy development and implementation of the Mahi-a-Iwi strategy for the Community Employment Group of the Department of Labour, before pivoting to education which has always been a particular love of mine.
19. In 2001, with the blessing of my Church, I began a 14-year period of work with the World Council of Churches in Geneva, Switzerland, working with member churches globally in the area of capacity building and education and training.
20. After returning to Aotearoa, I began a period of discernment which led to my eventual ordination and after a selection process, induction as General Secretary of the Church in November 2020. I am the second woman and first Māori to hold the role of General Secretary.

### **Role of General Secretary of the Methodist Church**

21. The General Secretary is a Connexional and Resource Appointment, appointed by Conference.<sup>1</sup> The General Secretary is directly responsible to the Conference on matters indicated in the Law Book as being the direct responsibility of the General Secretary. Regarding all other matters, the General Secretary is accountable to the Conference through the Board of Administration, as its Executive Officer. These are two distinct roles.
22. My responsibilities as General Secretary include being the Secretary of the Conference, planning, leading and managing the activities of the Administration Division, and implementing the Board of Administration's vision

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<sup>1</sup> Laws and Regulations of the Methodist Church 2021 (**Law Book**), section 6, clause 7.2 [MET.04.00001].

and strategic plan, promoting Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the Bicultural Journey within the life of the Church and to promote the vision and mission of the Church in society.

23. I currently administer the Church's disciplinary process and manage the Church's Complaints and Redress Scheme regarding abuse in the Church's care.

### **Response to Notice to Produce – Question 8 – Wesley College**

**Question 8 (a) Explain the respective roles of the head of the Methodist Church in Aotearoa, the Wesley College Principal, the Wesley College School Trustees Board and the Proprietor in ensuring the safety of students attending and/or residing at Wesley College?**

#### **Role of head of Methodist Church**

24. The head of the Methodist Church is the President, elected at the Annual Conference. However, the Conference is the primary governance body of the Methodist Church of New Zealand | Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa.
25. The Council of Conference is the visioning body of the Church. It is formed from Te Taha Māori and Taiwi members in our partnership as a Connexional Church.
26. The President exercises the Conference's powers and functions when it is not in session. The Conference meets annually to review significant reports and make all significant appointments and decisions on behalf of the Church.
27. The President and the Conference do not have a day-to-day role in ensuring the safety of students attending or residing at Wesley College.
28. Conference's role in relation to Wesley College is oversight and guidance to the Wesley College Trust Board for the spiritual and pastoral care of the students and staff of the College. The Church's affiliation with Wesley College is also through appointment of the Wesley College Trust Board members and the Wesley College Chaplain. Conference does not provide day to day pastoral care of the students and staff, which is the responsibility of the College.

29. Conference requires the Trust Board to report annually at each Conference. The Wesley College Chaplain is a connexional appointment and a senior role within the Methodist Church.
30. The Wesley College Trust Board reports to the Conference annually. This report is published in the Reports and Decisions of the Annual Conference. This report provides the Church with a broad update on activities of the Trust Board and the College. This update generally includes a review of the strategy vision for Wesley College Trust Board as related to the special character of the College, an update on educational progress and academic results, the College roll including data on numbers of students, gender and ethnicity. This reporting also includes an update on the Wesley College Trust Board management of assets held by it.
31. The Conference formally appoints the members of the Wesley College Trust Board.
32. The Conference does not appoint members to the Wesley College Board of Trustees. However, under the Integration Agreement between the Wesley College Trust Board and the Crown, the Wesley College Trust Board (Proprietor) may appoint four of its members to the Wesley College Board of Trustees.

**The role of the Wesley College Principal, Wesley College Trust Board (Proprietor) and Wesley College Board of Trustees**

33. The Church considers that the Wesley College Trust Board and the Wesley College Board of Trustees, together with the Principal, each have roles in ensuring the safety of students in respectively, the hostel and at the school.
34. I understand that Wesley College witnesses are giving evidence of their roles as requested by the Commission. My statement is limited to matters within the Methodist Church's responsibility and knowledge.

**Question 8 (b). Explain the governance relationship between the Methodist Church, Wesley College Trust Board, Wesley College Board of Trustees including strategic, pastoral care and the daily operations of the College?.**

35. I address the governance relationship between the Methodist Church and the Wesley College Trust Board.
36. I understand the Wesley College witnesses are addressing the relationship between the Wesley College Trust Board and the School Board of Trustees in their witness statement.

#### **Wesley College Trust Board**

37. The Wesley College Trust Board is affiliated with the Methodist Church and reports to Conference. However, it is an autonomous organisation which governs its own strategic direction, pastoral care and daily operations.
38. The Methodist Church has oversight of the Trust Board by the Conference, or the President when the Conference is not in session.
39. The governance relationship arises through Conference's power of appointment of Trust Board members under the Methodist Charitable and Educational Trusts Act 1911. The Conference has the power under s 5 of this Act to appoint the Chair of the Wesley College Trust Board. Section 8 of the Act provides that Conference appoints all Wesley College Trust Board members.
40. Conference exercises its power of appointment of board members to ensure the board membership is appropriate and the Wesley College Trust Board is fulfilling the purposes of its trust.
41. In 1984, the Conference asked Wesley College Trust Board to consult with various Committees of the Church with a view to having more equitable representation in its members. The Conference considered that the Board should have equitable representation of women, Māori, Tongan and Samoan members.<sup>2</sup>
42. In 1997, when Conference was concerned about renewal of board membership and ensuring diversity. As a result, it instructed the Board to:<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> 1984 Conference Yearbook, p649 [MET.04.00041].

<sup>3</sup> 1997 Conference Yearbook, p775 [MET.04.00042].

- (1) review its membership and discharge all members who had completed more than 25 years' service.
  - (2) prepare new membership in consultation with the District Superintendents of the Auckland, Manukau and Samoan Synods, Tongan and Fiji Advisory Committees and Te Taha Māori, to be approved by the President.
43. The Conference can also exercise oversight by directing attendance at Trust Board meetings. In 1998, as part of the Church's bi-cultural journey, Conference directed that a representative of the President's Consultative Committee attend all Wesley College Trust Board meetings.<sup>4</sup>
44. The President may also attend Wesley College Trust Board meetings as an ex-officio board member. This happened prior to Conference in 1993, when the President received the Trust Board's report about violence at the College.

#### **Conference matters related to Wesley College**

45. As discussed above, matters relating to Wesley College are part of the official work of the Conference as ordinary business.<sup>5</sup> Wesley College Trust Board provides a report to Conference which usually covers matters such as the College roll, academic performance, student activities, financial and property matters, the Chaplaincy and board membership.<sup>6</sup> The Trust Board may also propose resolutions for approval by Conference, for example authorising it to enter into the Integration Agreement (discussed below).
46. Conference may pass resolutions affecting Wesley College in relation to other aspects of its work and in exercising oversight over the Trust Board and the College. For example:
- (1) The Church opposed corporal punishment and Conference expressed its stance on this to Wesley College Trust Board at the 1986 and 1992 Conferences.

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<sup>4</sup> 1998 Conference Yearbook, p652 [MET.04.00043]

<sup>5</sup> Law Book, section 7, clause 29 [MET.04.00001].

<sup>6</sup> Conference Yearbooks are published to members and available on the website.

- (2) 1992 Conference asked Wesley College to report to Conference 1993 on “the steps the College had taken to eliminate violence, institutional and casual, from the life of the College”.<sup>7</sup> The Trust Board provided this report to the 1993 Conference.<sup>8</sup>
- (3) 1994 Conference asked the College to reaffirm its commitment to give priority to Māori education and explore the ways in which the priorities and ethos of the Methodist Church can be made evident in its life.<sup>9</sup>
- (4) 1997 Conference reaffirmed that Wesley College is a Methodist School in partnership between Crown and Church through the integration agreement and affirmed the work of the Trust Board in ensuring that the College continued to reflect its special character.<sup>10</sup>
- (5) 2007 Conference, at the request of the College, asked the Council of Conference to consider Wesley College’s special character statement and what that meant for the contemporary relationship between the College and the Church.<sup>11</sup>
47. In between Conference, the President, General Secretary (either personally or through Committees) may also seek information from the Trust Board relevant to the Church’s oversight and the Trust Board is expected to report significant matters. However, the President and General Secretary would not become involved in the Trust Board or the College’s daily operations.
48. The Wesley College Trust Board could also seek support or assistance from the Church in between Conference. This happened in 1997, when Wesley College Trust Board wrote to the Council of Conference suggesting a review of the role and effectiveness of Wesley College as a Methodist Church school. The Council of Conference supported this proposal.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> 1992 Conference Yearbook, p705 [MET.04.00044].

<sup>8</sup> 1993 Conference Yearbook, p150 - 152 [MET.04.00009].

<sup>9</sup> 1994 Conference Yearbook, p756-757 [MET.04.00045].

<sup>10</sup> 1997 Conference Yearbook, p775 [MET.04.00042].

<sup>11</sup> Report to the Conference 2008 [WC.01.00004].

<sup>12</sup> 1997 Conference Yearbook, p301 [MET.04.00042].

49. It appears that this request led to Wesley College Trust Board engaging Jan Hill and Kay Hawk of Educational Research and Development Centre of Massey University to carry out a Review of the College. I have not been able to locate a copy of Jan Hill's 1998 report in the Methodist Church records. The Church also made a request of Jan Hill's office in preparing this statement. A copy has not been located. However, the Trust Board summarised Jan Hill's 1998 report to Conference 1998.<sup>13</sup> Conference received the report and asked Wesley College Trust Board to implement the recommendations of the Review (and the ERO report) as quickly as possible and report annually on progress to Conference.<sup>14</sup>

**Question 8(b)(i) - The impact of historical and political influences on this relationship?**

50. I do not consider I am qualified to answer question 8(b)(i) of the Notice to Produce No 452.
51. This question could be answered by those with a deeper knowledge of the relationship between the Church and Wesley College, including Rev Dr Ian Faulkner, who was the Principal of the College from 2003 to 2014, and is currently the President of the Wesley Historical Society. His March 2011 reports and reflections on the history and life of the College, are produced to the Commission together with this response to the Notice to Produce.<sup>15</sup>

**Question 8(b)(ii) The level of the Methodist Church's oversight of the College (including the boarding houses)?**

52. I have explained the level of the Methodist Church's oversight of the Wesley College Trust Board above in answer to question 8(b) of the Notice.
53. Except as I have outlined above, the Methodist Church does not oversee the College or its boarding houses.

**Question 8(b)(iii) - Any agreements or legislation impacting on this relationship?**

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<sup>13</sup> 1998 Conference Yearbook, p131 [MET.04.00043].

<sup>14</sup> 1998 Conference Yearbook, p776 [MET.04.00043].

<sup>15</sup> Sabbatical Report – Special Character Education in a Methodist / Wesleyan Context, Ian Falkner, March 2011 [WC.01.00005].

54. The Wesley College Trust Board was established by the Methodist Charitable Trust and Educational Act 1911.
55. On 30 November 1976, the Wesley College Trust Board entered a Deed with the Crown, through the Minister of Education, for Wesley College to become an Integrated School under section 7(2) of the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act 1975. The Integration Agreement includes the supplementary agreements referred to in the Deed.
56. The Wesley College Board of Trustees is the Controlling Authority of the school constituted under the Education Act.

**Question 8(b)(iv) – The impact of Methodist Church teachings and policies on the College’s Special Character and what that means for the Church’s oversight over the College?**

57. Wesley College was the first Private School to integrate in the State Education system under the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act 1975.
58. Methodist Church teachings and values are experienced at the College through its special character, which was originally described in the Integration Agreement clause 4 as:

Wesley College is a multi-racial school which while being non-sectarian has a direct affiliation with the Methodist Church of New Zealand and with the strength and support of this church affiliation provides education based on the beliefs and philosophies of the Christian faith. This includes religious observances.

In addition to religious education the College also supplies industrial (which term includes agricultural training) and an emphasis on instruction in the English language.

Wesley College has a special obligation to provide education for students of Māori descent, students of Pacific Island descent and orphans or otherwise disadvantaged students. It aims to provide a school at which students of all races can receive their education and learn to live and work together in harmony.

59. At the 1976 Conference, Conference passed resolutions authorising the Wesley College Trust Board to enter into the Integration Agreement with the Crown and to empower the President to approve any other action on the part

of the Board which may become necessary between Conference, to give effect to integration.<sup>16</sup>

60. Wesley College's special character is for the Wesley College Trust Board to determine; however it is important to Conference. Conference would expect to have input into any changes to Wesley College's special character. Although it is not referred to in the Conference Yearbook, I understand the special character would have been discussed at Conference before Wesley College entered into the Integration Agreement with the Crown.
61. Conference minutes show the influence of the Methodist Church on the College's special character.
62. 1994 Conference asked the College to reaffirm its commitment to give priority to Māori education and explore the ways in which the priorities and ethos of the Methodist Church can be made evident in its life.<sup>17</sup> A similar resolution was passed at the 1995 Conference as part of the Church's bicultural journey.<sup>18</sup>
63. The Trust Board and College reviewed the College's special character in 1998/1999 following Jan Hill's 1998 review and reported back to the 1999 Conference about this work, acknowledging the bicultural journey of the Church and the methodology of learning reflected in Methodist thinking.<sup>19</sup>
64. The 2010 amendments to Wesley College's special character followed a period of reflection in the Church and College about what the special character statement meant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the 2000s, following the appointment of Rev Dr Ian Faulkner, the Trust Board and College focused on developing a culture at the College which reflected the ideals expressed in the special character and Methodist ethos. Rev Dr Ian Faulkner's Sabbatical Report on the Special Character explains the process undertaken by the College and the

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<sup>16</sup> 1976 Conference Yearbook, p254 [MET.04.00047].

<sup>17</sup> 1994 Conference Yearbook, p756-757 [MET.04.00045].

<sup>18</sup> 1995 Conference Yearbook, p158 [MET.04.00048].

<sup>19</sup> 1999 Conference Yearbook, p79 [MET.04.00049].

Church between 2006 and 2010 to review the special character and its Methodist/Wesleyan context at the College.<sup>20</sup>

65. The 2010 amendments reflect this work and show the impact of the Methodist Church teachings and policies as the changes expressly refer to the Methodist Church's commitment to a bi-cultural power-sharing partnership between Te Taha Māori and Taiwi:<sup>21</sup>

Wesley College is a multi-ethnic school that has direct affiliation with the Methodist Church of New Zealand Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa. The Methodist Church of New Zealand Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa is a treaty-based Church that expresses its governance in a bi-cultural, power sharing partnership between Te Taha Māori and Taiwi.

This has historical and contemporaneous relevance that is expressed within the College as:

- Treasuring our Christian heritage and learning to express it relevantly. This includes religious observances.
- Openness to the future and to new insights, experiences and people.
- Support for values that respect the integrity of persons and communities.
- Consideration of the needs of others, especially the marginalised.
- Use of language and images that are inclusive and which express equality.
- Provision of safe environments in which students can learn to live and work together in harmony.
- Opposition to cultures of violence and to systems of domination and exclusion.
- Processes for dealing with conflict, harassment, abuse and violation.

Wesley College seeks to provide a broad-based education with special attention to numeracy, literacy and other key competencies. This emphasis on a broad-based education is expressed in the College motto: Fide, Litteris, Laboure – Faith, Letters, (learning) and Labour (hard work).

Wesley College has a special obligation to provide education for students of Māori and Pacific Islands descent and students whose family and personal circumstances required special care.

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<sup>20</sup> Sabbatical Report – Special Character Education in a Methodist / Wesleyan Context, Ian Falkner, March 2011 [WC.01.00005].

<sup>21</sup> Wesley College Trust Board Report to Conference 2010 [WC.01.00003].

66. The 2009 Conference affirmed this special character statement in its resolutions of conference.<sup>22</sup>

**Question 8(b)(v) - Provision of ministers, counsellors or any other persons associated with the Methodist Church for the purposes of spiritual formation or guidance at the College and whether this has influenced the relationship between the Methodist Church and the College?**

67. The Methodist Church provides the Wesley College Chaplain to the College. This is a senior position of importance to the Methodist Church. The Chaplain is appointed by and accountable to Conference.<sup>23</sup> This role is certainly a reflection of the special character of the College and the relationship of the Church and College.
68. In recent years, the Chaplain has been funded by the College.
69. In the 1990s it was difficult for the Church to fill the appointment. The 1994 report to Conference, by the Wesley College Trust Board noted that the College had been without a permanently appointed Chaplain for 9 of 14 terms since 1990 and the importance of this role to the College.<sup>24</sup>
70. The current Chaplain is Rev Ali'itasi Aoina-Salesa, Superintending Chaplain and Dean. She has held this role since 2015. Rev Aoina-Salesa has been Head of Department of Life and Faith at Wesley College since 2005. The Chaplain leads religious observances and instruction at the College and carries out a pastoral and spiritual role for students and staff.
71. The Chaplain to Wesley College prior to Rev Aoina-Salesa, was Rev Sylvia 'a Akauola, who served in that role between 2005 and 2015.

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<sup>22</sup> Minutes of Conference 2009 (excerpt) [MET.04.00055]

<sup>23</sup> Law Book, Section 6, clause 7.2 [MET.04.00001].

<sup>24</sup> 1994 Conference Yearbook, p90 [MET.04.00045].

**Question 8(c) - Legislative relationship between the Methodist Church and the College, with reference to the Methodist Charitable and Educational Trusts Act 1911?**

72. The Wesley College Trust Board is established by the Methodist Charitable and Educational Trusts Act 1911. The Act incorporated, as a body corporate, the trustees (and their successors) of the pieces or parcels of land specified in the Act such as the Board of the Wesley Training College, which is now known as the Wesley College Trust Board.
73. The Act gives Conference the power to appoint the Chair of the Wesley College Trust Board, or if Conference does not make the appointment, permits the Board to appoint the Chair with Conference's consent (s 5). New members of the Board are appointed by resolution of the Conference (s 8).
74. Prior to integration in 1976, Conference had the power to appoint the Principal or delegate this to the Wesley College Trust Board.
75. The Act sets out the Board's powers. In 1976, the Act was amended to give the Board the power to enter into an integration agreement (s 28A).
76. The Act also specifies the trusts and purposes for which the Board holds the lands on trust, with reference to the College's objects of providing a multi-racial education with a focus on catering for Māori students and disadvantaged students (s31(1)):

the support and upkeep of the institution as a multiracial boarding school or as a multiracial combined day and boarding school catering especially for the maintenance and education of as many Māori pupils and of as many disadvantaged pupils (whether orphan, needy, or otherwise disadvantaged and whether male or female) as the Board shall consider proper and expedient:

**Question (8)(d) - Information and data relating to any allegations of abuse which occurred in the Wesley College boarding houses, while students were in the joint care of the Wesley College Trust Board and the Methodist Church?**

77. The Church acknowledges its role in relation to the care of students at the boarding houses. The Church's role has been, and is, to oversee and provide guidance to the Wesley College Trust Board in the spiritual and pastoral care of

students and staff of the College, through its connection with the College as a Methodist School.

78. The Church does not provide residential care of students residing in the boarding houses. Students residing at the boarding houses are in the residential care of the Wesley College Trust Board.
79. The Methodist Church does not, in the ordinary course of daily operations, receive information or data from Wesley College or the Trust Board relating to allegations of harm or abuse occurring in the College boarding houses. Information or data relating to allegations of abuse occurring in the boarding houses is held by the Wesley College Trust Board and/or the Wesley College Board of Trustees.
80. In the time available to respond to this Notice, I have not been able to conduct an exhaustive search of all Methodist Church records relating to allegations of abuse at Wesley College.
81. I have reviewed the Conference yearbooks for reports of abuse at Wesley College between 1990 and 1999.<sup>25</sup> I have not identified any specific allegations of abuse at Wesley College boarding houses reported to the Church, but the annual Conference reports include general reference to concerns about violence and physical abuse at the College:
- (1) The 1993 Conference received a report from the Wesley College Trust Board on the steps that it was taking to eliminate violence, institutional and casual from the life of the College. The 1992 Conference requested this report.<sup>26</sup> The Trust Board's report refers to a "1991 incident".<sup>27</sup> Conference received the Trust Board's 1993 report in the Conference Minutes, but I have not identified any other response.

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<sup>25</sup> There may be other Conferences where abuse at the College is reported but I have considered this period of 10 years (1990-1999) for this witness statement. This is a period of concern identified by some former Wesley College Student who have provided information to the Commission.

<sup>26</sup> 1992 Conference Yearbook, p705 [MET.04.00044].

<sup>27</sup> 1993 Conference Yearbook, p150 [MET.04.00009].

- (2) The 1995 Conference received the Trust Board's report to Conference which says:<sup>28</sup>

"the stated mission of the board to cater for a high proportion of students at social risk. The board takes its responsibilities in this area seriously and has taken steps to strengthen the support services for students. It has had to deal with serious incidents of violence and has developed strategies to promote a safe environment. The school will be taking part in the Special Education Services anti-violence programme as part of the overall board strategy.'

Conference received this report in the Conference Minutes, but I have not identified any other response.

- (3) The 1997 Conference received a report from Wesley College Trust Board which stated that:

There has been a large amount of publicity recently concerning the importance of ensuring that pupils are in a safe and caring environment in boarding school situations. The Trust Board is continually reviewing all its hostel supervisory procedures and personnel levels, endeavouring to provide a level of safe care, The hostel and school administrations recognise the right of every individual pupil and staff member to live and work in an environment without the fear [or] threat of physical or verbal abuse.

- (4) Wesley College Trust Board's 1998 report to Conference, refers to greatly reduced incidence of violence at the College. The Trust Board also reported on the Jan Hill 1998 Review of the College, which refers to reports by students of violence at the College. The summary provided to Conference says that senior students said that physical violence had lessened over the last two years, whereas junior students said they were still exposed to violence.<sup>29</sup> Conference responded to the Trust Board's 1998 report and Jan Hill's 1998 report, by asking the Trust Board to implement the changes recommended as quickly as possible and encouraging the Board of

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<sup>28</sup> 1995 Conference Yearbook, p198 [MET.04.00048].

<sup>29</sup> 1998 Conference Yearbook, p131 [MET.04.00043].

Trustees, staff and pupils to implement the changes recommended in the reports as well.<sup>30</sup>

### 2000-2012

82. The Trust Board's reports to Conference in the 2000s refer to the work being done by the College to develop a culture that reflected the ideals expressed in the special character statement and Methodist ethos. However, there were still reports about concerns of violence in the boarding houses.
83. In 2003 the Board reported that it was participating in the Ministry of Education's Eliminating Violence programme. In 2007 the Board acknowledged that challenges remained in the management of boarding houses.
84. In 2008 the Board reported that an ERO supplementary report had identified issues of concern for student safety at the boarding houses. The Board engaged an external consultant to review governance of boarding houses, which led to the establishment of the Hostel Council in 2008, with its prime function being student health and safety.
85. In 2012 the Trust Board reported that the Hostel Council was achieving the majority of its objectives and the hostel (and day school) was a more settled environment with anti-social behaviours in the hostel being minimised.<sup>31</sup>

### Current knowledge

86. I am aware of William Wilson's evidence to the Royal Commission about the abuse that he suffered and witnessed whilst a student at the College and residing in the hostel in 1991 and 1992. The College and the Church have made a written acknowledgement and apology to Mr Wilson on 4 November 2021, produced to the Royal Commission in response to Mr Wilson's July 2021 evidence to the Commission.

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<sup>30</sup> 1998 Conference Yearbook, p776 [MET.04.00043].

<sup>31</sup> See Trust Board annual reports to the Conference 2003 and 2005-2012 [WC.01.00006], [WC.01.00013], [WC.01.00007], [WC.01.00008], [WC.01.00009], [WC.01.00004], [WC.01.00010], [WC.01.00003], [WC.01.00011],

87. I am informed by the Wesley College Trust Board that following the Royal Commission hearings in 2021, the College received direct communications from two former students alleging they had suffered abuse at the College:
- (1) **GRO-B-1**: The Principal of the College received an email from **GRO-B-1** in November 2021, alleging abuse whilst he was a student in the late 1970s.<sup>32</sup> The College has not been able to identify who **GRO-B-1** is.
  - (2) **GRO-B-2**: On 23 April 2022, Mr **GRO-B-2** contacted the Principal regarding physical abuse he suffered from other students whilst at the school, in 1992.<sup>33</sup>
  - (3) In June 2022, the College also received a records request from solicitors acting for **GRO-B-3** (see below).
88. The following information is confidential as it relates to applications for redress received by the Methodist Church through the Church's independent redress scheme. On 23 June 2022, I received applications for redress from three former students of Wesley College in respect of abuse they suffered as students at the College:
- (1) **GRO-B-3**: Mr **GRO-B-3** attended Wesley College in 198**[REDACTED]** Mr **GRO-B-3**'s summary of facts details the sexual, physical and psychological abuse he suffered from senior students/prefects in the hostel.<sup>34</sup>
  - (2) **GRO-B-4** aka **GRO-B-4** who attended Wesley College from **GRO-B** in the eighties. **GRO-B** Mr **GRO-B-4**'s summary of facts details the physical abuse and bullying from dormitory prefects that he suffered and witnessed in the hostel.<sup>35</sup>
  - (3) **GRO-B-5** who attended Wesley College **GRO-B** in the nineties. **GRO-B** Mr **GRO-B-5**'s summary of facts details the

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<sup>32</sup> [WC.01.00001].

<sup>33</sup> [WC.01.00002].

<sup>34</sup> See Summary of Facts [MET.04.00050] and records for Mr **GRO-B-3** [MET.04.00051].

<sup>35</sup> See Summary of Facts [MET.04.00052].

abuse he suffered from prefects and senior students, including physical, psychological abuse, bullying and sexualised behaviour.<sup>36</sup>

89. The Methodist Church is responding to these claims through our redress process.

**Question 8(e) - Explain how the Special Character of Wesley College is impacted by its connection to the Church and how this may/may not have affected the governance, day to day management or disciplinary functions of the College and/or boarding houses?**

90. I refer to my answers above to question 8(b) in which I address and acknowledge the Methodist Church's governance and oversight of the Wesley College Trust Board and the Church's influence on the College through the provision of the Chaplain and the College's special character.

91. The Church is not involved in the College or the boarding houses' day-to-day management or disciplinary functions. Therefore, I consider this is a question that is best answered by the Wesley College witnesses.

**Question 8(f) - All ways in which the Methodist Conference and/or Connexion Office have impacted and (if relevant) continue to impact on the strategic and day to day decision making processes of Wesley College?**

92. I refer to my answers to question 8(b) above, in which I have explained the ways in which the Methodist Conference and/or Connexion office have impacted and continue to impact Wesley College's decision-making processes.

93. The primary way in which the Church may impact Wesley College's decision-making is through resolutions at Conference directed to the Wesley College Trust Board. I have given examples in my answers above of the ways in which Conference has sought to influence Wesley College on material issues relating to the Special Character of the College, through decisions affecting the Wesley College Trust Board.

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<sup>36</sup> See Summary of Facts [MET.04.00053].

94. In addition, Conference (or the President when it is not in session) may impact Wesley College Trust Board's strategic decision-making processes and indirectly the day-to-day decision making, through:
- (1) Giving guidance on the expectations of behaviour and ethics, in accordance with the Law Book and the Laws and Regulations.
  - (2) Confirming appointments of the Wesley College Trust Board members.
  - (3) Appointment of the Wesley College Chaplain.
  - (4) Reviewing Wesley College Trust Board annual reports and/or seeking additional information from the Trust Board.
  - (5) The influence of the special character of the College.
  - (6) Exercising discipline over Church members in accordance with the Laws and Regulations.
95. The President and Vice President may also impact Wesley College Trust Board's decision-making processes by attending Wesley College Trust Board meetings as ex-officio members.

**Question 8(g) - Please provide all communications between the College and the Methodist Church regarding reported instances of abuse. Please include whether the Methodist Church was informed of:**

**i. Demographic data of those who experienced abuse?**

**ii. The nature of the abuse being reported?**

**iii. How the abuse allegations were dealt with?**

**iv. The response to those allegations or proven instances of abuse by the Methodist Church?**

96. I refer to my answer to Question 8(d) above. In the time provided to prepare this witness statement, I have not identified any other specific communications between the College and the Methodist Church falling within Question 8(g).
97. I address below the Church's response to reports of violence at the College during the 1990s and 2000s.

98. The Methodist Church responded to reports of violence at the College in 1991/1992 by asking the Trust Board to report to the 1993 Conference on the steps it was taking to reduce violence at the College. The Methodist Church received further reports from the Trust Board which referenced violence at the College at the 1995 Conference, 1997 Conference and 1998 Conference.
99. The Methodist Church responded to the Trust Board's 1998 report and the Jan Hill Review by asking the Trust Board to implement the changes recommended in Jan Hill's report and the ERO report as quickly as possible and to encourage the Board of Trustees, staff and pupils to adopt the changes.
100. The Trust Board's reports to Conference in the 2000s include general references to violence at the College and the steps the College was taking to address this.
101. In 2003 the Board reported that it was participating in the Ministry of Education's Eliminating Violence programme.
102. In 2006 the Board reported that it had increased levels of staff supervision in the hostels, had introduced "house parents" who resided in the hostels and was providing professional qualifications and training for staff.
103. In 2008 the Board reported that the ERO had identified issues of concern for student safety at the boarding houses. In response, the Board reviewed the governance structures of the hostels and established the Hostel Council. The College established a Deputy Principal of Boarding role to support the hostels.
104. In 2012 the Board reported that it had made progress and the hostels were a more settled environment.<sup>37</sup>
105. The Church is cognisant of the cultural makeup of the College. It has sought to positively impact the College environment through the work on the Special Character, and to ensure that decisions were made in a bicultural way by ensuring representation of the Board. The Church was and is intentional about

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<sup>37</sup> See Trust Board annual reports to the Conference 2003 and 2005-2012 [WC.01.00006], [WC.01.00013], [WC.01.00007], [WC.01.00008], [WC.01.00009], [WC.01.00004], [WC.01.00010], [WC.01.00003], [WC.01.00011],

appointing senior members of Te Taha Māori and Pasifika members onto the Trust Board.

### **Current position**

106. The Methodist Church responded jointly with Wesley College and Wesley College Trust Board to Mr Wilson’s evidence to the Royal Commission. On 5 November 2021, the Methodist Church provided a joint written apology to Mr Wilson through the Royal Commission and offered to meet Mr Wilson to make the apology to him in person.
107. In June 2022, I asked the College to include on its website a link to the Methodist Church website page with information on the Methodist Church’s response to historical abuse claims, so that former Wesley College student with claims of abuse may seek redress through the Church’s redress scheme if they wish.
108. The Church did not receive any redress claims for abuse suffered at Wesley College until 2022. I have referred those claims to the Methodist Church’s Independent Review Panel for consideration. I have also asked to meet with each of the complainants as the starting point for the redress process, which is part of the newly developing Methodist Church’s Tikanga Māori approach for redress.

**Question 8(h) - Provide a summary of the systems (policies, procedures and practices) by the Methodist Church and/or Wesley College to prevent abuse of students at the College. Where such systems have changed over time, please describe the changes and the reasons for such changes.?**

109. In 2000 the Church prepared the “Keeping ourselves safe” policy, which is a general policy in relation to prevention of abuse.<sup>38</sup> This was made available to the Wesley College Trust Board as all parts of the Church were provided with the policy.

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<sup>38</sup> [MET.04.00007].

110. The Methodist Church does not have systems (policies, procedures and practices) specifically directed to prevent abuse of students at the College. These have been treated as operational matters for the Trust Board and the College. The Methodist Church does not manage operational policies for organisations for Wesley College Trust Board, which was established under its own independent legislation.<sup>39</sup>

**Question 8(i) -Summarise what is known by the Methodist Church about the nature and extent of abuse at the College, including changes over time and the perceived reasons for the changes in the period 1950 up to the present?. If the Church has not been aware of abuse at Wesley College, explain why that is the case.?**

111. I answer this question in relation to:

- (1) Wesley College Trust Board's reports to Conferences in the 1990s and 2000s. In the time I have had available to prepare this statement, I have not identified any other records that relate to the Methodist Church's knowledge of abuse at Wesley College.
- (2) Redress claims made to the Church, regarding abuse at Wesley College.
- (3) The Church's current knowledge about the nature and extent of abuse at the College has been answered above and is further detailed below.

### **1992 Conference**

112. The 1992 Conference asked Wesley College to report to Conference 1993 on the steps the College had taken to eliminate violence, institutional and casual, from the life of the College.<sup>40</sup> The Trust Board provided this report to the 1993 Conference. I have not been able to identify what, if any, specific incident or incidents prompted Conference to request this report.

### **1993 Conference**

113. The 11 November 1993, Minutes of the General Purposes Committee record that the President had received a number of 'representations' received over

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<sup>39</sup> Methodist Church Charitable and Educational Trusts Act 1911 [MET.04.00054].

<sup>40</sup> 1992 Conference Yearbook, p705 [MET.04.00044].

the course of the year which because they were 'raising significant issues he chose to attend the meeting of the Wesley College Trust Board. He also invited the incoming President to attend with him.

114. The 1993 Conference (commencing 13 November 1993) then considered Wesley College Trust Board's report on violence.<sup>41</sup> It was agreed that on behalf of the Church that the Wesley College Trust Board and the Staff would work on this matter as a matter of priority.
115. I understand that the former Wesley College Trust Board members and the President Elect at the time do not recall what precipitated these steps. and I have not been able to identify what specifically the Conference knew about the nature and extent of abuse at the College at this time.

#### **1995 Conference**

116. Wesley College Trust Board's 1995 report to Conference states that the Board has had to deal with serious incidents of violence and has developed strategies to promote a safe environment. The Board says the school will be taking part in the Special Education Services anti-violence programme as part of the overall board strategy.

#### **1997 Conference**

117. At the 1997 Conference Wesley College Trust Board reported to that it was continually reviewing all its hostel supervisory procedures and personnel levels, endeavouring to provide a level of safe care and that the hostel and school administrations recognise the right of every individual pupil and staff member to live and work in an environment without the fear [or] threat of physical or verbal abuse.

#### **1998 Conference**

118. Wesley College Trust Board's 1998 report to Conference refers to a greatly reduced incidence of violence at the College and attributes this to leadership

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<sup>41</sup> 1993 Conference Yearbook, p149 [MET.04.00009].

training for prefects, effective counselling teams, anti-violence programmes and heightened awareness among all staff.<sup>42</sup>

119. The Trust Board's summary of the Jan Hill's review acknowledged that there had been a culture of physical and emotional violence and that the (then) principal, Graham Cowley had made significant positive changes to address this. The review found that senior students said violence had lessened over the last two years, but junior students were still exposed to violence. There were remnants of a "tradition" in the school which supported continued senior power in the college. The review recommended that the non-violence programme be continued, and that the College review its practices which place senior boys in control of or in a disciplinary role over junior students. The report also identified concerns about the way the College and hostels deal with serious student behaviours and recommended a discipline committee was established.

### **2000-2012**

120. The General Secretary of the Methodist Church who served from 2009 to 2020 did not receive any notifications of abuse occurring at the College from students or the Trust Board.
121. The Church was aware of violence occurring at the College in the 2000s through the Trust Board's reports to Conference in the 2000s, which I have discussed above in my answer to questions 8(d) and (g). It appears the safety of students at the hostel remained an issue. It's evident from the reports that work was ongoing to address this. The Wesley College witnesses will give further evidence of this.

### **Acknowledgement**

122. I acknowledge that abuse that has occurred at Wesley College is not limited to the 1990s and 2000s events, which I have referred to in my statement.

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<sup>42</sup> 1998 Conference Yearbook, p127 [MET.04.00043].

123. The Church acknowledges that the information it held about violence at Wesley College shows that abuse by students against other students was a part of life at the College. Survivors tell how senior students physically, emotionally and in some instances sexually abused junior students.
124. The fact that the 1992 Conference called for a report from the College on what it was doing to eliminate violence demonstrates to me that this was a matter of serious concern to the Church.

**8j. Explain how the Methodist Church has responded to reports of abuse at Wesley College; and**

125. I refer you to my answer to question 8i above.
126. The Church's response to the information it received about violence at Wesley College has been to support and provide guidance to Wesley College Trust Board, and through the Board the College, to make changes and address concerns about violence at the College when they came to our attention. We acknowledge the Church's efforts did not bring about the change that was needed at the College.
127. The Church is committed to working with survivors of abuse at Wesley College to listen and learn from their experiences. We are committed to a redress process with Wesley College.

**8ji. To the extent responses have changed over time, describe the changes and the reasons for such changes**

128. The Methodist Church is currently reviewing its processes for responding to reports of abuse and redress claims, taking into account the Royal Commission's recommendations in its Redress Report, a survivor-led approach, the need for a Tikanga Māori approach and the Methodist Church's Mission.
129. The Church is also reviewing its disciplinary processes and code, recognising that it has not held perpetrators to account in the past.

**8jii. In relation to all responses to reports of abuse, what have been the advantages and disadvantages of the responses by the Church (especially during periods where the Church had a direct governance role over the College)**

130. The Church and Wesley College were operating in a governance structure where it provided oversight and guidance, and Wesley College Trust Board was responsible for operating the College. In this context the Church's message to the Trust Board was clear and consistent regarding its expectations that the College would address the issues relating to culture and violence.

131. The advantages of the Church's response were that there was a consistent messaging and a respect for the governance/operational divide between the Church and the Trust Board. The disadvantage of the Church's response was that this did not bring about the change that was needed at Wesley College.

**8jiii. Describe any particular considerations, processes or steps taken when responding to reports or complaints of abuse received from Māori or Pacific Island peoples.**

132. I consider that processes for responding to reports or complaints are matters for Wesley College witnesses to respond to.

**8k. Explain how the Methodist Church and/or the leadership of Wesley College and/or the Trust board have implemented the Methodist Church's commitment to the Principles of Te Tiriti at the College in relation to:**

- **Prevention of abuse**
- **Response to abuse**

133. The Methodist Church is a bicultural Church and is committed to the Principles of Te Tiriti. The Methodist Church seeks to embody the Treaty of Waitangi in a bicultural partnership. Tauīwi and Te Taha Māori are equal partners.

134. Wesley College has been part of the Church's bicultural journey, recognising its special character in providing education for Māori students. However, the implementation of Te Tiriti principles within the College is a matter for the Wesley College Board of Trustees and the Wesley College Trust Board.

**Question 8(l). Describe your understanding of the culture relating to all forms of abuse at the Wesley College boarding houses and to the extent that the culture has changed over time describe the change in culture and the reasons for those changes? Please provide an explanation of how the Methodist Church has attempted to mitigate or change the culture of violence within the boarding houses or at the College?**

135. I do not consider I am qualified to answer question 8(l). I do not have enough detailed knowledge of the current environment or history of the College to consider myself qualified to answer this question. I am also conscious that this question is likely to require a level of expertise in the understanding of abuse in educational settings that I am not qualified to comment on. I understand the Wesley College past and current Principals are better placed to answer this question.
136. I have explained above the steps that the Methodist Church took in relation to concerns about violence at the College. The Methodist Church did not to my knowledge have direct operational involvement in Wesley College's attempts to mitigate or change the culture of violence.

**Question 9 - Please explain the role of the Methodist Church plays in the oversight, consultation and review of instances of abuse at the College?**

137. I have explained the Methodist Church's role in relation to its concerns about violence at Wesley College in my answer to question 8 above.
138. The Methodist Church does have an expectation that serious incidents of abuse, or concerns about systemic abuse should be reported by the Trust Board to the President or General Secretary.
139. I have also directed the Wesley College Trust Board to refer claimants to the Methodist Church's redress process and provide information about the Church's redress process in its website.

**Question 10 - Outline your understanding of the reasons for the nature and extent of abuse at Wesley College and its boarding houses?**

140. I have answered this question above, to the extent that I am able to. Otherwise, I do not have enough detailed knowledge of the College's current and historical environment to answer question 10.

**Question 11. Outline your understanding of all barriers to reporting abuse of those in the care of Wesley College?**

141. I do not consider I am qualified to answer question 11 as I do not have expertise in understanding the nature of abuse in educational settings that I am not qualified to comment on.

**Question 12. What more could or should be done by the Church either together with or as an associated entity to Wesley College to prevent abuse at Wesley College and to improve the response to reports of abuse?**

142. The Church and Conference wholeheartedly support the work of the Commission. We will be guided by the Commission's findings and recommendations in what further actions the Church and the College can take to prevent abuse at Wesley College and to improve our response to reports of abuse. These will be decisions for Conference in consultation with the Wesley College Trust Board.
143. In the meantime, the Methodist Church is engaging with the Trust Board and the College to accompany them in their efforts to ensure that students at Wesley College are safe and survivors are supported.

**Statement of Truth**

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

**Dated:** 1 July 2022

GRO-C

**Signature:**

Reverend Tara Tautari