



[NEW ZEALAND \(/NEWS/NATIONAL\)](#) / ...

## NZ Catholic Church to purge abusers' names from titles

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The Catholic Sacred Heart Cathedral in Wellington. Photo: Supplied/ CC BY-SA 2.0 - Gordon Haws

Abusers' names are to be removed from formal titles used in Catholic schools, parishes and clubs.

Leaders of the Catholic Church in New Zealand have requested their organisations audit any names they have adopted in titles for buildings, prizes and portraits, to ensure they were not named after abusers, or people who had turned a blind eye to abuse.

The request was made on Tuesday in a 10-point statement by NZ Catholic Bishops Conference president Cardinal John Dew, and Congregational Leaders Conference of Aotearoa president Father Thomas Rouse.

It comes after Dunedin high school Kavanagh College was renamed Trinity Catholic College earlier this month (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/463576/dunedin-college-to-be-renamed-after-sexual-abuse-cover-ups>).

The school's title was changed after an investigation found its namesake Bishop John Kavanagh did not take appropriate action (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/463576/dunedin-college-to-be-renamed-after-sexual-abuse-cover-ups>) after complaints of sexual abuse by priests.

The Catholic leaders also said they supported an independent entity (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/457962/royal-commission-inquiry-into-abuse-in-care-releases-interim-report-on-redress>) for reports of abuse and redress as part of the church's response to the ongoing Royal Commission of Inquiry on Abuse in Care (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/480100/repeated-and-catastrophic-failure-abuse-in-care-commissioner-says-as-study-published>).

"It is our expectation and requirement that every person working in the church, paid or voluntary, will adhere to the policies and procedures that have been established to foster a culture of safeguarding and support of survivors," the statement said.

"As a church, we remain committed to break the cycle of abuse so that all people may participate in churches and communities that are safe and which nourish them to grow to their potential..."



John Dew Photo: Supplied

"Much has been done, but we are still learning as we seek to continually improve. However, we cannot just wait while the government considers how to implement the royal commission's recommendations. We have heard and listened to survivors telling us they want us to change now."

The commitments made by the church are:

- to support establishment of an independent entity for survivors to report abuse and gain redress

- to support establishment of an independent entity to review and monitor the church's redress processes for survivors

- to support an independent process to review and monitor safeguard systems in church institutions

- to establish (or expedite) internal and external review processes for current church redress and safeguarding systems

- to work toward consistency in Catholic Church entities on redresses

- to support mandatory reporting of claims of abuse in care settings: for children, young people, and vulnerable people (however, the statement noted: "Significant work needs to be undertaken as to how, when and to whom reports are made. [And] exemptions will need to be made for some settings to protect legal, confessional, and therapeutic privilege.")

- to request school boards notify proprietors through a regular reporting mechanism when claims of inappropriate behaviour involving serious disciplinary matters arise (whether the behaviour was by a student, volunteer, employee, or teacher)

- to request proprietors of schools and school boards audit the names of buildings, prizes, honorifics, and the like named after bishops, clergy, religious or lay people connected to the Catholic community as well as photos and portraits on display at schools

develop policies to assist schools when naming buildings, prizes or other items after bishops, clergy and or religious figures, and displaying photos, portraits and honorifics (such as honour boards)

continue to audit (with parishes, clubs, other church organisations) buildings, awards, honorifics and similar named after bishops, clergy, religious or lay people connected to the Catholic community as well as photos and portraits on display

request a report on how to offer further survivor care and a support-focused approach to reports of abuse, prepared by the National Safeguarding and Professional Standards Committee (including how to respond more consistently to reports of abuse, better accountability for outcomes after reports of abuse, considering expanding the powers of the National Office for Professional Standards beyond sexual abuse by clergy and religious members - including resourcing, and considering setting up a role to actively monitor safety plans and outcomes of disciplinary actions).

"Our prayers are that all who have suffered from abuse find peace and hope, and that all people in our care are safe and free from harm," the statement said. "Please also pray for us, as church leaders, as we all continue on this road."