

**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

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Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry
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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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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**