

**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'imua Sandra Alofiavae
Paul Gibson

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

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

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

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

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

Ms Sarah Kuper and Mr Matthew Hague for the Presbyterian Church

Venue: Level 2
Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry
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AUCKLAND

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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

27 Sekope.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

33 Mr WC said:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

21 **DR EVANS:** Yes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

19 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Incrementally --

20 **MR JOHNSTON:** Incrementally.

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

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

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

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

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

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

29 **CHAIR:** Thank you.

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

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

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

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

16 Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

28 **DR EVANS:** Absolutely.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

11 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Thank you.

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

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

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

16 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

15 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Kia ora.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

9 **MR TALAKAI:** Yes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

8 **MS SHARKEY:** Sekope?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5 **MR KEPU:** Yes.

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

9 **MR KEPU:** Yeah.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

22 **MS SHARKEY:** Right.

23 **MR JOHNSTON:** I saw in the evidence there was a letter from the Chairperson of the Board.

24 Now, whether that was seeking clarification on what's coming out, my personal beliefs, and
25 my -- part of what I do in my work is auditing of our accounts.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

18 **DR EVANS:** Yeah.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

34 **DR EVANS:** Yeah.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

23 **DR EVANS:** 2018.

24 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

16 **MS SHARKEY:** Yes.

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

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

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

22 **MS SHARKEY:** Yes.

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

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

26 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you. Dr Evans, I'm just bringing up an apology letter that came out
27 following the Pacific People's hearing. Can you see that or do you need to zone in? You
28 say there that --

29 **CHAIR:** Before you do, just remember we need to orient the whole room about the date and from
30 and to.

31 **MS SHARKEY:** Yes, the date is 27 July 2021 and it's from Dr Evans on behalf of Wesley
32 College and you're saying to those who were reading this letter -- was that to the
33 community -- was that through your school website, it's not specifically addressed to
34 anyone. We did see it on your website. Did it go to anybody else?

1 **DR EVANS:** No, I think it was published on the school website for our school community.

2 **MS SHARKEY:** Right, and you say that on behalf of the College -- and you liaised with the
3 Chairperson of the Board of Trustees and issued a public apology?

4 **DR EVANS:** Yes.

5 **MS SHARKEY:** And now you've met with William and you say:

6 "It's time for our community to understand that people in New Zealand are calling
7 out anyone responsible for bullying, sexual harassment and other such behaviour. You
8 only need to see or hear media stories where almost every day a school, organisation,
9 including religious groups, business or an individual, is being named and shamed. In part,
10 some of these behaviours have been around for so long that it seems a very small disruptive
11 group of people forget about the victims and set about challenging the school on how these
12 matters are being handled. When young people see this it heightens the perception that no
13 matter what wrong you do, if you create a diversion you might get away with it. Anyone
14 who thinks a tradition that some call 'the Wesley Way' of handing out punishment, bullying
15 or harassing fellow students should have a place in our school are wrong. It has no place at
16 Wesley College and is not a tradition to be proud of."

17 I just had to read that into the evidence. So I've got a couple of questions. You say
18 that "some of these behaviours have been around for so long, a very small disruptive group
19 of people forget about the victims". Can you elaborate on that, please?

20 **DR EVANS:** Yes, it was a direct message to some of our whānau that, you know, parents
21 advocate for their children, I get that, but in my experiences, which are pretty vast, in
22 Pasifika/Māori schools, if you have an incident with a student and you call the parents in,
23 they'll generally cooperate and say, what can we do, how can we fix this, and you can do
24 restorative practices and so on.

25 In my first year or so at Wesley I found it was quite different, that if a child was in
26 trouble the parents would challenge left, right and centre rather than face the actual issue.
27 And I felt it was really wrong for the kids who'd been the victim of bullying or whatever
28 the issue was, and I needed the parents to get on board if we wanted to change our school
29 and keep moving forward. I needed the parents -- of course they can advocate and
30 challenge in the right way, but sometimes it was done in a way that the child is almost
31 sitting there feeling "I'm off the hook." And I felt it was really wrong.

32 And I have noted a big change in the school now with the parents, they're far
33 more -- and I am generalising, it wasn't all the parents, but it was something for me
34 personally I'd not come across, where particularly Pasifika/Māori parents would almost

1 challenge the system back and try and question my authority or the evidence or even if their
2 children admitted doing it, they would try and find a way around the issue.

3 And I think at Wesley that did not help the problem we had, our challenge of getting
4 rid of all the bullying. So that's what it was directed at.

5 **MS SHARKEY:** Okay. And so just on these issues that you've identified, some survivors have
6 spoken about them feeling a small group population of Palagi students picked on by other
7 larger ethnic groups and wanting that acknowledged, and would it be fair to say that that is
8 an issue?

9 **DR EVANS:** Looking at the data, yes, there would be Palagi and Māori students, certainly in my
10 time being the victims, yes.

11 **MS SHARKEY:** And so part of the discussion we're having today about cultural issues is in order
12 to have that solutions focussed and try and find a way forward, and part of that is talking
13 about our culture. That would be helpful, I guess?

14 **DR EVANS:** Absolutely. My feeling is, though, that no parent sends their son or daughter to
15 school to behave like this, I don't think it's attributable to any culture, I don't believe for one
16 minute in Tongan or Samoan culture that this is how the parents -- I'm married to a Samoan
17 so I've got a little bit of experience, and I'm sure it's not something that the parents at home
18 are engaging with or encouraging.

19 **MS SHARKEY:** Right. And so then it comes back, and I'm going to talk to Edwin and Sekope
20 here, because it comes back to those values that we're hearing, you're saying that no parent
21 sends their child to school or would in fact approve of some of the bullying and violence
22 we're seeing. So what is it, what is the issue?

23 **MR KEPU:** May I speak? I think it's the understanding. First and foremost, if we look at our,
24 speaking from experience, our Tongan students, our Pacific Island, you almost -- you're a
25 different person at home and you're a different person in school. So it's about parents
26 aligning with teachers, teachers aligning with students, students aligning with students, and
27 again, I speak about the alignment, the transparency, the understanding first and foremost
28 as a parent what my -- the actions of my child, finding out why he's behaving in these ways,
29 why is he inflicting that, whether it be intergenerational where it's been -- he was a junior,
30 his senior dealt to him with the Wesley Way that we're describing it, and I totally agree
31 with that Wesley Way, because that is not the way that I vouch and I stand for, first and
32 foremost.

33 If we look to our motto, "fide litteris labore", that should be where we hold our
34 values, that should be our true north where we align to and we come back to in whatever

1 we do, whether it be reviews, whether it be standards in the classrooms, there may be
2 values that are at school that I'm not aware of, but it's on the school charter that our, you
3 know, it's "Fide Litteris Labore", by faith, by learning, and by hard work. Those are the
4 three meanings.

5 And for our child to understand our culture, our four pillars, to understand the
6 culture that they're walking into, and then inflicting anything on our Palagi brothers, and
7 understanding where they've come from, the suffering that they've already been through, or
8 whatever it might be. Or the other individual, the other child. But that understanding needs
9 to be at the forefront of everything that we do.

10 So I really do think that we go back to our community, we go back to the talking
11 that we do, the talanoa, the sit down and everybody talks. And everybody is -- the scene
12 has been set that we're made comfortable, we're making parents feel comfortable to walk in
13 and to talanoa and that respect is there. If you're having these talanoas and these meetings,
14 or whatever it might be, these occasions where everyone is talking, then there should be
15 no -- you'll agree to disagree at times, but the most important thing is growing the school
16 and pulling it in the right direction.

17 **MS SHARKEY:** And because if those solutions aren't found, those ways to address these issues,
18 as we heard from William Wilson in his evidence, he grew a deep hatred towards Pacific
19 Islanders because of what abuse he suffered. So these are the things that we need to look
20 at, right, urgently, and address those issues, yeah?

21 Would you agree with that, Edwin?

22 **MR TALAKAI:** Definitely, there's no place in the school for bullying and that's the
23 understanding that we communicate to our parents and our whānau to understand once the
24 child is in the kura, the school, they're safe, not only that but they inflict no harm to other
25 students.

26 **MS SHARKEY:** So we're just going to now really come into the -- we've seen the apology, right,
27 and it would be fair to say that in terms of redress from Wesley College to survivors, it's
28 something that is fairly recent, that's just really been started up -- Dr Evans, would that be
29 right? Now the Church have, I guess, said, "We will be responsible for that." How did that
30 come about? What was that, you know, discussion in terms of the church saying,
31 "Actually, no, we'll be responsible for the abuse that happened to students at Wesley
32 College"?

1 **REV TAUTARI:** So the Church said, "Let us do this together." We have a redress scheme and
2 we know that Wesley, we knew that Wesley had -- did not have a formal mechanism in
3 place. So we said, "Let us do this together," and that is what happened.

4 **MS SHARKEY:** And Dr Evans, if I can just come back, in terms of the students at the school,
5 when an issue of bullying or violence occurs, there was one student that we saw, there was
6 a group of Year 11 boys stood down for threatening behaviour, I'm not sure if you're
7 familiar with the situation that I'm talking about, or trying to describe, but the student's
8 grandmother complained about the process and lack of support for parents and families of
9 those who were stood down and the lack of commitment to Māori students despite the
10 Church's bicultural commitment. I just wanted to ask, what does that look like now?

11 **DR EVANS:** We're making some really good progress in that area. I think sometimes our
12 systems haven't been as good as they should be, and our support and wrap-around for
13 victims, but also the students that are perpetrating it. One of the big challenges we've
14 talked about at the moment is some cultural appropriation for our Māori students.

15 So, over the last few years, you know, they're up to 22% now of our school, yet
16 they're probably a very quiet bunch of students. Academically they're flying, doing really,
17 really well, way above national averages, but just the last few years I noticed the leadership
18 roles or their standing in the school wasn't as prominent as it should be. So we're going to
19 do a lot of work around that, we've got a Māori Advisory Committee set up and it's got
20 local hapū on it from Ngāti Tamaoho guiding us and driving it and what that's going to look
21 like in the next few years, because I think that's a real opportunity for the school to
22 re-engage with our Māori families.

23 **MS SHARKEY:** So when we heard evidence from Nicholas Pole for ERO, and I'm not sure
24 whether you were able to watch that, but one of the challenges he identified was exclusions,
25 stand downs. What does that look like for Wesley College?

26 **DR EVANS:** Our stand downs and exclusions have dropped dramatically over the last few years.
27 So I'm not a huge believer in exclusions, it doesn't solve a heck of a lot for students. So
28 we've worked really hard at engaging students, keeping them in school. Sometimes a
29 student, you know, needs to pathway out and then there's ways of doing it with some
30 dignity, you know, good courses, work experience and so on. So the last few years, we
31 were getting probably below double figures in terms of stand downs and exclusions.

32 It's not solving anything, it's trying to find ways of making the environment better
33 for the students and getting them to buy in, like, so Kepu's mentioned around faith,

1 learning, hard work, this is what we're here for, and giving students the tools and
2 opportunities to succeed.

3 **MS SHARKEY:** How does that look in practice? If you've got someone who's perpetrated
4 violence against another student then what happens?

5 **DR EVANS:** If a student, if it's a one-off for instance, and that's where restorative practices and
6 getting all the whānau around the table and giving the student some really strict conditions
7 about how they're going to move forward in the school. Unfortunately, like all schools,
8 there is a point where if the student just keeps on re-committing the same sort of issue,
9 then, you know, it becomes a Board issue. But I think, you know, from experience,
10 throwing kids out on the street is not necessarily the answer, it's -- the long hard road is
11 changing them and getting them to be the leaders of the change in our school.

12 **MS SHARKEY:** So if there's an incident in the dorms, boarding houses and a student is stood
13 down, do they attend day school where the victim may be attending?

14 **DR EVANS:** That's a really curly thing that I found extremely challenging when I started. So yes,
15 that a student could, you know, assault someone in the evening but because it was a
16 different set of laws, if you like, they could still legally attend school. And I felt very
17 uncomfortable with that. So we looked at some different changes around how we could do
18 it. And now it doesn't happen.

19 **MS SHARKEY:** What doesn't happen?

20 **DR EVANS:** Students, we've kind of established some protocols where if there is -- if it's a
21 violent issue then they can't come to school either and we've got the parents to agree into
22 that.

23 **MS SHARKEY:** So because it is, you know, just thinking about the victim, the survivor, having
24 to see their bully at school during the day would be very, very difficult, I'll say, but much
25 more than that, it would be scary, you wouldn't be safe.

26 **DR EVANS:** Yes, and like I say, when I started I hadn't worked with a hostel before and I was
27 quite shocked that that situation could eventuate where the perpetrator could be on site the
28 very next day, so we looked at ways of addressing it and making it clear. It's not necessary
29 if it's another type of issue with a student, they can be sent from the dorms for a few days
30 and still attend school, but if it's around violence or physical assault and so on, then no.

31 **MS SHARKEY:** We've heard a little bit before about staff having the adequate training,
32 trauma-informed, being culturally informed. Staff now, do they have that education, do
33 they have that training?

1 **DR EVANS:** I think we're getting there, I don't think it's an end point at all, but we've done an
2 awful lot of work into it.

3 **MS SHARKEY:** What training do they have?

4 **DR EVANS:** We've done training around a Ministry programme called Positive Behaviour for
5 Learning, so rather than just doing it in the school we included all our dorm parents as well,
6 so they can understand behaviours and managing behaviours. I know they've done some
7 specialist stuff around self-harm and suicide thoughts and so on.

8 A lot of PD even around student learning and ways of learning. We do some really
9 great testing now with our new students, not only the academic but also the emotional
10 well-being data, and we can share that with the dormitory parents as well. So it's really
11 useful powerful stuff about how kids feel about school, how they're feeling. We've done a
12 lot of anti-bullying stuff with the dorm parents in the school.

13 But it is ongoing. You have to keep doing it and doing it and keep working at it.

14 **MS SHARKEY:** So when you came into Wesley you still identified an issue with that culture still
15 being there?

16 **DR EVANS:** Of bullying?

17 **MS SHARKEY:** Yes.

18 **DR EVANS:** Yes.

19 **MS SHARKEY:** I think there's a comment where you've said, "It's a culture that seems prevalent
20 at night time, not so much during the day but it would take some time to unpack."

21 **DR EVANS:** Yeah, when I started, the day, the school is very calm and learning and results are
22 great, but it was mainly in the evenings, around the dormitories where it was -- it almost
23 sort of would change at night time, I would see some students during the day, and in the
24 evening they were quite different people to me. So I could see the work that we needed to
25 get into.

26 **MS SHARKEY:** Okay. And so we talked about the training and the skills that you hope your
27 staff will obtain. How connected are we with the community and what Sekope is talking
28 about?

29 **DR EVANS:** Not that the well connected at the moment. Although I'm feeling now it's really
30 growing. We set up a Parents Committee around bullying, specifically around bullying,
31 and we had over 60 parent sign up, which was a really good message in a small school of
32 380. Some of the parents now come on site and do duty with us, they meet -- we have
33 talanoa around what can we do next, what sorts of activities, things can we do to keep on

1 improving the school. And I feel -- with our Māori parents, as well, we're having a hui next
2 term when we get back, so I feel there's some really good connection going on.

3 Interestingly enough, talking about parent/teacher meetings, the old model, we've
4 got a model where we all have a small group of students, about ten students, so I've got a
5 group of ten students and we meet them every -- twice a week for half an hour and we do
6 our parent meetings like that. So I spend 20 minutes, half an hour with the parent of the
7 child, we get all the information, and it's been a really good way of engaging our parents,
8 we've gone from sort of 20% attendance to 80% attendance, and that's a fantastic way of
9 drawing them in, because they seem more comfortable to sit with one person and get all the
10 information about their child.

11 **MS SHARKEY:** Just picking up on something you had said earlier about how you notice the
12 change at night time. So having a look at the hostels, what do you think it is about that that
13 creates that environment that has the children then change from what they were during the
14 day?

15 **DR EVANS:** I think some really simple things. So we had a lot more active duty from our dorm
16 parents, so rather than just sitting in the dorm and talking to a handful of kids, you're out
17 moving around, so we set up a roster, just moving around the school, so -- in a vest. So,
18 you know, the students can see people, they're not feeling they're out in the dark wandering
19 around. Activities. We introduced an activity evening on a Wednesday night to get all
20 students, the boys and the girls in different year levels all mixing and mingling and
21 creating, hopefully, some really positive relationships.

22 We've got teaching staff around the dorms and around the prep which is like a
23 homework centres, and I think one of the key things is the sharing of information. So
24 empowering a lot of our dorm parents to feel the role is just bigger than looking after some
25 kids at night time, they're really invested in how their credits are going, how their reading's
26 going, some of them have been brilliant at poring over all the data we give them and asking
27 questions and I think that's made a huge difference connecting the school and the dormitory
28 and that idea of the village raising the child now.

29 **MS SHARKEY:** Right. But we do have that mother of the student just this year, her son and
30 another boy were taken somewhere, surrounded by a group of boys, he was told to cover
31 his face and he was beaten by a large number of -- large group of boys whilst they chanted
32 "The Wesley Way". And that is this year. So there is still that element, still that culture
33 there at the school. Would you agree?

1 **DR EVANS:** There's absolutely still the culture there. It's a big challenge. And, you know,
2 referring to "The Wesley Way" and "The Brotherhood", it's been hijacked and turned into
3 something it's not, and we now have to take it back and redefine what "The Wesley Way"
4 is, what a real brother looks like.

5 So, you know, there's lots of programmes we're running, there's lots of -- we use the
6 term "cultural renovation" a lot, so rather than change, because the students probably don't
7 want to hear about you're changing our school, it's like, no, I want to take all the good
8 things, we keep all the good, but there's some things we have to improve in our College.
9 And I will talk to them probably every week without fail about it and they don't like it, but
10 it needs to be driven and driven and driven and we have a lot of really wonderful students,
11 but there is work to be done for sure.

12 **MS SHARKEY:** Right, because this mother's experience in, I guess, redress, what she was
13 hoping to see in response from the school, was not adequate, was it?

14 **DR EVANS:** Mmm.

15 **MS SHARKEY:** In what ways do you think it could have been done better? I'm aware that she is
16 listening by livestream.

17 **DR EVANS:** I think we need to communicate better and maybe investigate and dig deeper into
18 what she's looking for. I welcome any of the parents to come and see me if they're not
19 happy with what's happened in different areas. My door's open. And I want parents to talk
20 to me because that's how we can improve things, if we get the information. We're not
21 perfect, and we want to be as good as we can be for everybody.

22 It's -- if one child is still getting bullied, we still have a challenge.

23 **MS SHARKEY:** And this was serious, you can call it bullying, but it's more than that, it was
24 serious physical violence by students against her son and another boy, and she was wanting
25 to hear from the school but that level of communication wasn't there, and in fact when the
26 school first contacted her, it didn't really sound that serious. Similar to what we saw on that
27 clip, the information from the school to her first off didn't really highlight the seriousness of
28 what had happened to her son. Would that be fair to say?

29 It wasn't you, Dr Evans, who of course dealt with that situation, we can see that
30 from the statement, but --

31 **DR EVANS:** Yeah, it is me, though, at the end of the day. Yeah, it's disappointing and we need
32 to be better and I want my teams to be better. I believe we've improved a lot, and we're
33 getting better all the time, but yeah, as I've said, there's still work to be done.

1 **MS SHARKEY:** And one of the things that she points out is a desire for the school to work with
2 the Pacific community. She thinks that that is what needs to happen and that's what's
3 missing, and would you agree with that?

4 **DR EVANS:** I do. But like I say, we've got parents on board now, and we're talking to them
5 about, you know, what does it look like to actually do that? And it's something we can
6 develop, moving forward.

7 **MS SHARKEY:** Right. Because with a predominantly Pacific population, at that age in that
8 generation from what we're seeing with social media etc, its role models, similar to Sekope,
9 that they will actually really listen to. Would you agree with that?

10 **DR EVANS:** Absolutely. Yeah, there's a gap in our school community at the moment with our
11 past pupils, to be honest. And listening to Sekope, I can't wait for him to come into school
12 and start this work, because that's who we need, particularly with the young men. I talk to
13 some of them every single day and clearly the message does not get through. But I think if
14 some of their recent younger role models who they've seen out succeeding in life tells the
15 message, then we will get progress faster than we probably are at the moment.

16 **MS SHARKEY:** I just had a question about the state of the dorms. I'm aware that -- I
17 think -- was it the school, something was sold, nothing was sold, something was bought?
18 I'm looking at you, Mr Johnston, you're nodding and shaking your head.

19 **MR JOHNSTON:** The farm land that was owned by the school was sold into a charitable
20 company which Wesley College Trust Board did own half of it, and now owns 44% of it.
21 That's been developed into a residential town, but the school itself exists on the same site,
22 it's still owned by the Wesley College Trust Board.

23 **MS SHARKEY:** And is there an intention to move or what's the story, because we -- I think there
24 was a review that you had commissioned Dr Evans, I think, and it was by the previous
25 headmaster of another school and comments that came through that report said the state of
26 the hostels are disgusting. So if kids are going to be in that environment it needs to be well
27 kept, somewhere where they would want to live.

28 Can I just ask for you to comment on what's the state of play at the moment?

29 **MR JOHNSTON:** We have two newer hostels, Taina and Maia and they are nice hostels. The
30 older hostels, which are Denton Hall, Caughey Hall and Harding Hall are older hostels.
31 The previous principal was instrumental in taking down the number of students in some of
32 these hostels. I think the Denton Hall hostels, I think they had up to 15 students in this spot
33 and I think they're down to 12 or smaller. But the idea is with the profits of the

1 development of the Wesley College farm coming back to Wesley as a full rebuild of
2 Wesley College.

3 Now, there was two decisions, whether to utilise the current Wesley College site or
4 start a greenfield, and there was a desire for the Board to set up new and fully re-design
5 Wesley College on a new site, that is not happening anymore, we're now looking at our
6 current site, but expanding the site to the south to rebuild where we are.

7 **MS SHARKEY:** Is there anything you wanted say? I'm just assuming, because you're looking at
8 me.

9 **MR KEPU:** No, sorry, I'm just interested to know what's actually happening, which is great.

10 **MS SHARKEY:** Right, and that's because the old boys want to know what's happening with the
11 school, the plans in respect of whether they're moving or they're staying where they are?

12 **MR KEPU:** Yeah, I think that's a question that's asked a lot in our -- in the forums that the
13 ex-students talk about, is what's actually happening and there's all these stories, but to hear
14 it first-hand is pretty cool. But in saying that, I think with the old boys and we speak about
15 the -- Mr Faulkner has gone now, but the Old Boys Association can definitely have an
16 impact and influence in terms of more of a hands-on approach if we're looking to support,
17 again, our victims, our survivors, rather than sitting behind a desk or publishing something
18 through online, actually come through the right channels and let's have a talanoa and talk
19 about this and grow the school.

20 And yeah, in terms of the dormitories, yeah, I definitely think that -- I left almost 20
21 years ago and it's the still the same and I believe that should be changed massively. I mean,
22 that's -- yeah.

23 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Ms Sharkey, could I just ask a question here. Thank you for
24 your responses earlier, Dr Evans, around what's currently happening and the culture that's
25 still in the school. But I'd just like to understand where the school and the Church board
26 and the community are at, because I think when survivors hear, and Ms Sharkey alluded to
27 it, we talk about bullying and violence in quite extremes, but if we use another Palagi
28 phrase, it actually equates -- it equals an assault, very, very bad, ugly, violent assaults. And
29 in the context of this land, there's legislation that applies if you cross a particular threshold
30 in terms of charges. I'd really just like to kind of understand, and I know your students may
31 well be listening, around the tolerance levels of the school around that stuff, because I think
32 everyone in this room is a parent, or an uncle or an aunt or a sister or a brother, and so I'm
33 just -- I'd just like to understand that, if you're able to give a reflection or a thought around
34 the tolerance levels today in 2022 around that issue.

1 **DR EVANS:** The phrase "zero tolerance" is what we use for violence. However, people
2 sometimes think that's an automatic exclusion, but it's not, zero tolerance to me means we
3 do not tolerate that type of behaviour and then the actions or the consequences we take will
4 be in line with, you know, the student's behaviours beforehand, what they've also done on
5 their record, how they're tracking; the response of the family is really important as well, if
6 we can get them around the table and use restorative practices.

7 Yeah, so it's kind of measuring each event as it happens and hopefully not
8 measuring too many of them anymore. But it is still happening, yes.

9 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** But it wouldn't stop a young person who'd been bullied or
10 assaulted actually taking that next step to the Police if they so wanted to?

11 **DR EVANS:** Absolutely, and at times we've encouraged parents, if that's the road you want to go
12 down then please do so. It's very rare, most parents are reasonable about wanting to resolve
13 issues. It's quite a change at the College in the last year or so. Some parents have come in
14 with their son, the perpetrator, and said, "That's it" and they just remove them before we do
15 anything. Because I think the messaging's getting clearer and clearer that we don't tolerate
16 it.

17 But yeah, if they want to use the Police then that's -- absolutely.

18 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Is it a line that the school might go down to send a clear
19 message to the students around the zero tolerance of violence in the school?

20 **DR EVANS:** Yes, absolutely. I've suggested it at times, that we will get the Police involved.

21 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** Thank you.

22 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Sir, I just wonder whether you had the opportunity -- because a
23 few weeks back now we had the State accountability hearing and we had the Chief
24 Executive of ERO come and give evidence, and I thought it was really enlightening, and he
25 talked about one of their reports which focused squarely on bullying which had a number
26 of, I don't know if you've had an opportunity to read that, but talks about the different
27 methods for addressing a culture of bullying within the school. But he said even when they
28 are applied to the letter, bullying continues, and he said -- his words were, I think, "We
29 need a national conversation on bullying."

30 So it's a real problem that's deeply embedded in our culture. So I just wanted to
31 mention that, it might be worth -- we have the clips of evidence on our -- and I think also
32 the transcripts on our website.

33 **DR EVANS:** What we're trying to attempt to do, as I said a few years ago with the staff, was, we
34 need something game changing. We need something that gets us into the national media

1 for all the good reasons, that we've done this spectacular programme or set up this amazing
2 resource in our school. And that's what we're trying to work on. So we're working on a lot
3 of student leadership initiatives, we'd be one of the few schools in the country that's got a
4 student-coaching-student set-up, so the older students being trained to be coaches and then
5 picking up a junior, so we're trying to break down all these barriers, so it is a bigger version
6 of peer mentoring and more powerful.

7 Yeah, training a lot of students in different areas of leadership and not just picking
8 the leaders, picking a lot of students that possibly aren't the leaders but they're leading other
9 things and trying to pull them over on to our team, and trying to break the cycle that some
10 of the kids have got themselves into with the, you know, oh, it's tradition, this is how it's
11 done here, trying to eradicate those conversations.

12 But I've got give them -- I need to replace that with something and it's got to be big
13 and something really engaging for the students, because talking just "Don't bully, don't
14 bully, don't bully" invariably does not work that well after a while. It does for students in
15 the low hanging fruit, as they say, you know, they pick up those messages but for some of
16 our kids who are hearing this from past pupils and feeling -- one student described it, he
17 said, "It's not a tradition, sir, it's a curse, what's happened at our school over 30, 40 years",
18 and I think that's a really apt description, they feel almost a burden of this to understand it.
19 They need to understand, and hopefully the past pupils can come in and correct them and
20 say, "Actually, no, it's not a tradition, it doesn't belong in a Christian school."

21 Yeah, so it's trying to be really bold in our thinking and not just use -- we have
22 anti-bullying programmes for sure, but we're going bigger, going much wider than that, and
23 it's an opportunity, I think, for the school, a really exciting opportunity.

24 One of the key things for me for Pacific and Māori is academic achievement. So,
25 you know, if kids are getting UE and level 3, their minds are not so focused on that other
26 stuff. And so our results, my teaching staff have been outstanding, like we're right up there
27 now, way beyond -- you know, we're up with the top schools in New Zealand and we keep
28 driving that as part of the change as well.

29 **MS SHARKEY:** Nothing further? Thank you, all right.

30 **CHAIR:** Carry on.

31 **MS SHARKEY:** Just a question on the -- we were looking in the information, we couldn't see any
32 information -- questions -- information about disability numbers for students at Wesley.

33 Are there disabled students at Wesley College?

34 **DR EVANS:** Define disability, sorry, in terms of physical disability or...?

- 1 **MS SHARKEY:** Well, Dr Evans, yes, physical, but also special needs. I mean, I know it
2 encompasses a wide definition, but generally understood, are there children with disabilities
3 at Wesley College?
- 4 **DR EVANS:** Absolutely, and probably academically high numbers.
- 5 **MS SHARKEY:** And just wondering why we're not able to -- we weren't able to see that
6 information. Is it collected?
- 7 **DR EVANS:** Yes, we've got a really strong learning department, support learning department, so
8 I'm happy to share that.
- 9 **MS SHARKEY:** Right, okay. And so in terms of disabled peoples who are in the hostels, is
10 that -- there are students, current students?
- 11 **DR EVANS:** Yes.
- 12 **MS SHARKEY:** And accessibility wise, everything on form, everything provided for these
13 students from a Trust Board, I guess, property perspective?
- 14 **DR EVANS:** That's a good question. I would say there's some work to do there with accessibility
15 and things like that.
- 16 **MS SHARKEY:** What work is that? Because we did -- it was information that we noted was
17 absent. What work needs to be done?
- 18 **DR EVANS:** Parts -- probably most of the school would be fit for purpose, but there would be
19 older parts that aren't.
- 20 **MS SHARKEY:** And that would require what in terms of accessibility for disabled students?
- 21 **DR EVANS:** Wheelchair ramps, things like that.
- 22 **MS SHARKEY:** And from the Trust Board's perspective, what is your response to that?
- 23 **MR JOHNSTON:** The Trust Board is more than happy to resource that if it is requested. The
24 newer dorms have the lifts in place for accessibility. I know the renovations to the main
25 office has got a ramp. If the request does come for additional disability resources, that
26 resource is -- that financial resource is there for it.
- 27 **MS SHARKEY:** Right. So I think you're about to get a request for more, right, okay.
28 Referrals for learning support or to learning support for -- is that from the Ministry
29 of Education?
- 30 **DR EVANS:** Some will come from the Ministry. We have our own internal system where if
31 we're working with a student and you notice perhaps lack of reading or they're not
32 progressing then you can refer them to our learning support staff.
- 33 **MS SHARKEY:** Okay. What level of support does the Ministry of Education give you?
- 34 **CHAIR:** Do you mean to cater to the needs of -- perhaps for neurodiversity, FASD.

1 **DR EVANS:** I think pretty good, to be fair, now. Certainly the last few years with Covid going
2 on we've had access to some really good pools of funding which have been hugely useful
3 to, more staff basically, more teaching staff, some programmes we've been able to run for
4 students. So it's pretty good. Obviously you always want more.

5 **MS SHARKEY:** Right, okay. And just before we really get into redress, Nicholas Pole, ERO,
6 had a number of recommendations. I'm not sure whether you were able to see -- we've
7 got -- sorry, Rachel, can we go to 11.11.

8 **CHAIR:** Just give us the date, this is an ERO report of what date?

9 **MS SHARKEY:** Yes. It is the NTP response to...

10 **CHAIR:** It's the date of the recommendations that we need, if that's possible.

11 **MS SHARKEY:** Yes. 27 June 2021.

12 **CHAIR:** So last year? Right.

13 **MS SHARKEY:** Can you see that, Dr Evans?

14 **DR EVANS:** Yes.

15 **MS SHARKEY:** So they've noted that the Royal Commission should "consider the following
16 possible recommendations". I just want you to go through that, are there any there that you
17 would certainly agree with?

18 Mandatory requirement to report incidents, disclosure and suspicion of child abuse
19 is a big one.

20 **DR EVANS:** Yes, and we would have policies in place for that.

21 **MS SHARKEY:** Yes, okay. And The development of national child protection policy
22 guidelines?

23 **DR EVANS:** Yeah, policies for that.

24 **MS SHARKEY:** Yeah. And establishing a national registration requirement, code of practice for
25 all school employees?

26 **DR EVANS:** Definitely.

27 **MS SHARKEY:** Supported that or you've got policies in place?

28 **DR EVANS:** We'll have a register set up.

29 **MS SHARKEY:** We don't need to worry about (d). Establishment of an independent complaints
30 and advocacy service for parents and learners?

31 **DR EVANS:** I don't think it would be independent. We've got a complaints process.

32 **MS SHARKEY:** Would you support the establishment of an independent complaints and
33 advocacy service?

34 **DR EVANS:** Yes, I would.

1 **MS SHARKEY:** And the last one is enhancing the system by obligating agencies to share
2 information.

3 **DR EVANS:** Yeah, that would largely be taking place already.

4 **MS SHARKEY:** Okay. And in the information you refer to a stymie app. What is that?

5 **DR EVANS:** Stymie's an app, again it's a measure to encourage students to speak up about what
6 they're seeing, so they can confidentially go on their phone, send a message it, only goes to
7 a couple of people, the counsellor, I think my DP and maybe a dean, so they can send a
8 message if they've seen students bullying, they can send it anonymously as a tip off, they
9 can send information even if they're concerned about a student's well-being, so self-harm
10 and so on, and then they can refer themselves on it as well, if they are not feeling particularly
11 well at the time.

12 **MS SHARKEY:** And when did you bring that in?

13 **DR EVANS:** We brought that in this year.

14 **MS SHARKEY:** And what has the response been?

15 **DR EVANS:** It's been good, students have been using it. We were a little concerned they might
16 use it a bit randomly to start with for a bit of fun, but they haven't, they've taken it
17 seriously, and we've picked up some really good information from it.

18 **MS SHARKEY:** Do you know if many schools are using that app?

19 **DR EVANS:** There's a few around New Zealand using it, I believe it's an Australian company,
20 and I --

21 **MS SHARKEY:** Just a few, or many schools using the app?

22 **DR EVANS:** I don't know exactly.

23 **MS SHARKEY:** Right, okay. Is it something that you think should be done by other schools?

24 **DR EVANS:** A lot of schools will have not necessarily an app but will have ways of
25 communicating confidentially, like a box somewhere where you can drop it in. I like the
26 app because I think that's what students these days, you know, on their phones are probably
27 really comfortable with.

28 **MS SHARKEY:** Given the use of iPhones or technology by students, it would be quite easy and
29 efficient for them, an efficient way for them to communicate that or to disclose what's
30 happening to them as opposed to taking in a piece of paper and putting it in a box, in case
31 someone sees them, for example; right?

32 **DR EVANS:** Yeah, personally I think it's great idea and it's worked well for us so far.

33 **MS SHARKEY:** Sorry, just up on the screen there you've got the last two recommendations from
34 Nicholas Pole and it's really just (g) that we're looking at. The evaluating of bullying and

1 prevention and response policies, programmes and procedures, and this is where he was
2 talking about a national conversation. So you would agree with that?

3 **DR EVANS:** Absolutely, and that is definitely a challenge for us with the culture of not speaking,
4 not telling on your brother and so on. It's something we're working really hard on with
5 students to open up. But part of the challenge sometimes is we can't get the information to
6 stop things happening, you know, so --

7 **CHAIR:** It's known as the "no narking culture".

8 **DR EVANS:** Yeah, the students won't speak.

9 **CHAIR:** It's a hard one to break, isn't it?

10 **DR EVANS:** Very hard. So I guess that's why the programmes we're running around leadership,
11 and self-enhancement and so on, making kids confident to be able to talk about it. We've
12 just started also exit interviews with students, any student that leaves, so trying to, if they're
13 more comfortable because they're leaving, if we can get some information from them or
14 even their parents and we nominate a person we think the student would talk to, to do the
15 interview.

16 **MS SHARKEY:** And that culture of silence, you would have seen the backlash, all the social
17 media comments when William Wilson spoke out. That contributes to that culture of
18 silence, right?

19 **DR EVANS:** Yes, it does and it does not help us trying to solve this challenge. It just -- it's
20 disgusting to read but just so disappointing, because these people at my school are young
21 people and, you know, they're easily influenced and if they see adults behaving like that,
22 for them, you know, it's almost vindicating, like, what's wrong. So yeah, I would like to
23 close down every one of those Facebook pages if I could.

24 **MS SHARKEY:** Right. And you would have seen the social media response as well, Edwin and
25 Sekope, and we'd asked before about a message to the community about that kind of
26 messaging. You weren't on the earlier panel, Sekope, but what would your message to the
27 community be about that?

28 **MR KEPU:** I think, firstly, if we refer back to the abuse and everything that did happen at the
29 school, everyone experienced it at different levels, different -- and everyone took it or saw
30 it in different ways. Everyone receives information and these things differently. So, to
31 one, that's commenting, stating whatever he did, he may not have, the way he felt towards it
32 was it was okay it didn't happen to him or, you know, like, so everybody experienced it in
33 different ways and digested it and took it in in different ways, and all I could say and all I
34 would say is we need to stand together and we need to -- the evidence is there, our

1 survivors are here, and we need to stand together. If we're being honest about our values at
2 our school, if we're being honest that faith is our massive pillar that stands above
3 everything, and was partly the reason why a lot of us went there.

4 So we need to wrap our arms around each other, stand together, come together and,
5 yeah, I mean, much respect to you, William, and the work that you've done. That's bravery,
6 that's -- it takes courage and massive, massive courage to come out and speak. Your voice
7 is heard and this Inquiry is because of those voices, and I appreciate that.

8 And so if we can have that talanoa, we come together, we embrace each other, we're
9 active in our school, we say we're the Wesley Way, we say we love the school, but we need
10 to be more active if we want change. And if we want this school to move in the 21st
11 century in that direction and be up to where we are.

12 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Sekope, you talked about "we all experienced this at school."

13 You're a leader.

14 **MR KEPU:** Yes.

15 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** You were a school leader back in the day, you're 1.88, rugby
16 captain, international experience, what was your experience back in the day? What did you
17 see yourself? What did you experience yourself? And what would you expect of young
18 leaders in the school these days, what role could they play, what should they be doing, for
19 those who at school these days?

20 **MR KEPU:** Thank you very much. I guess if I may share about an experience, psychological
21 bullying that I experienced at my time at Wesley, as a young 13-year-old, taken by my
22 parents, my father went to Toloa, which is the equivalent of Wesley College in Tonga. So
23 the tradition was to take us there, and as a 13-year-old going there, excited about what that
24 school needed to offer me and the great things that you saw and you heard.

25 And if I'm being honest and brutally honest about my first year at Wesley College,
26 it was gruelling at times, and to put it in perspective, everyone would go to bed at night,
27 8.30 lights out, a chip packet would rattle or someone would whisper and the dorm prefect
28 at the time would call out my name, "Sekope, get to the middle." And at the time you sort
29 of roll with it, you go with that, but then it happened night after night, the night watchman
30 would come in and he would then ask me, "What are you doing? What are you doing now
31 that you're in the middle? You're here parading by yourself." And I couldn't say anything.

32 And so obviously that went on, Sundays was the biggest dread for me coming back.
33 And it was only recently that I shared with my mother and my parents about this experience

1 and they were livid, purely because they loved the school so much and they thought that it
2 taught me the values that I carry with me now.

3 And so Sundays would be going to church, go to youth and then my old man would
4 be there parked in the driveway of the house we're having youth, and then I'd be like, "Man,
5 I don't want to leave you" because I didn't look forward to that. And then over the years,
6 you know, you grow through and you come through, you know, your time sort of gets
7 easier. But that vision of me standing there by myself and not knowing why, not knowing
8 why me, why did he do this to me? Like -- and I still question it.

9 I guess I'll never know, but I do feel the pain to some certain extent and I just don't
10 want that to happen to anybody. And I see my sons now that are 10 and 9, no way would
11 I ever want them to go through that experience as a 13-year-old. Who knows what, you
12 know, like and that's why I am so passionate about this, because I have boys, I have
13 children, I have a daughter, and I want them to never experience any of that. Thank you.

14 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Thank you.

15 **CHAIR:** Thank you. Did anybody stand up for you, Sekope? Did anybody feel able to, of your
16 peers or slightly older boys, to say, "Hey, it's the wrong, stop doing it to him?" And if not,
17 why not, do you think?

18 **MR KEPU:** I don't believe so. No-one, and to put it in more perspective, to paint the picture a bit
19 more, my older brother was a prefect in the flat above, and I had -- my mother had just told
20 him the other night that this is -- this whole talanoa that I'm about to take part in. And I
21 was -- I never told him, the code of silence, and I never knew, it just happened, I just never
22 told him, I never told my parents and I never said anything to anybody. But those -- I feel
23 the effects and they affect me up until now that I still, you know, I've played rugby for a
24 long time now and I'm still hobbling along, but I deal with it, and I'm trying, you know, and
25 I can only imagine, you know, that was -- that is a rice grain compared to the severity of
26 what our survivors have gone through.

27 And yeah, I just thought I'd share that and, yes.

28 **CHAIR:** We acknowledge that and we salute you for your bravery in coming forward in such a
29 public environment to share that deeply personal and moving account and, well, it speaks
30 volumes for your bravery, but I'm sure it also adds comfort to many of the other men,
31 young men who are sitting silent wondering what they might do. And so many thanks for
32 what you've just shared with us.

33 **MR KEPU:** Malo.

34 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you, Sekope.

1 Now we are getting into redress. And Reverend Tautari I'll direct some of these
2 questions to you. And we're having both a looking back and looking forward discussion.
3 Because looking back at the Church's redress process, which is fairly new, so just how it
4 was dealt with before: The process was to hold investigation whilst a Police investigation
5 was underway?

6 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, that's correct.

7 **MS SHARKEY:** And the result of that were significant delays for survivors?

8 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes.

9 **MS SHARKEY:** In some situations survivors had no choice but to take the matter to court to have
10 it dealt with.

11 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, that's correct.

12 **MS SHARKEY:** So the process was overly legalistic, right, it was a lot for a survivor to then
13 have to go and get a lawyer and then go through that process of filing in the High Court.

14 **REV TAUTARI:** I agree.

15 **MS SHARKEY:** And you acknowledged that it would have created further trauma, them having
16 to share their story again and again with different people just to get the redress that they
17 were after.

18 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, I acknowledge that.

19 **MS SHARKEY:** And in some cases, and we're talking about MG, who was in the Cooper Legal
20 statement, in some cases survivors just gave up.

21 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes.

22 **MS SHARKEY:** And so my question was, we're going to look at parts of MG's experience. But
23 what would you say to MG or survivors that are watching who were put off by that process
24 of being told, no, we're not dealing with it until you go through the Police?

25 **REV TAUTARI:** That is neither redress nor resolution. That is the Church acting contrary to
26 what it believes. That does not offer any pathway to wholeness and healing and that it
27 should not have happened in that way.

28 **MS SHARKEY:** So when the -- that was the Methodist Mission in MG's situation that was
29 dealing with it. But that wouldn't happen now, would it be the Methodist Church that deals
30 with it?

31 **REV TAUTARI:** The Methodist Church would deal with it.

32 **MS SHARKEY:** And so what Cooper Legal, if you can look at paragraph 109, Cooper Legal had
33 pointed out that they had worked through issues with other churches and they were happy
34 to do so with the Methodist Mission. So what they were saying is, Police investigations

1 didn't hold us up in these situations, it shouldn't hold you up, but despite that knowledge,
2 the Methodist Mission response was, "No, we're not doing it."

3 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, that's correct.

4 **MS SHARKEY:** And so what is the process now?

5 **REV TAUTARI:** The process now is that no Police, potential Police investigation holds up any
6 claim.

7 **MS SHARKEY:** And there was a document in the bundle, and it's a -- even the insurers were a
8 little bit confused, and the insurers say you can deal with this claim, you don't have to wait
9 for the Police investigation. What were your thoughts when you read that?

10 **REV TAUTARI:** My thoughts were that the Church should then have dealt with the claim.

11 **MS SHARKEY:** But the response was, the rationale given was that the Church has followed this
12 course of action for two reasons. One, if it endeavoured to reach some settlement with a
13 complainant before such investigations were carried out, it could be responding to claims
14 that were incorrect, poorly formed or malicious; and two, if it did carry out its own
15 investigations in advance of any Police investigation, it could be accused of preventing a
16 proper criminal investigation or more seriously looking to prevent such an investigation
17 from happening.

18 So what are your thoughts about that, that that's not correct?

19 **REV TAUTARI:** That's not correct.

20 **MS SHARKEY:** So where does the shift come in? Is it leadership, is it your leadership coming in
21 to the Church and saying no, this isn't how we're going to approach this anymore. What
22 changes? Because it is a big change from this situation, which isn't that historic.

23 **CHAIR:** No, if we could just have the date of that last response, is it 2015?

24 **MS SHARKEY:** Yes.

25 **REV TAUTARI:** It certainly didn't come about because of my leadership. The Church shifted in
26 its understanding of how it wanted to approach redress. It also came about because of
27 knowing that the work -- I mean, this is dated 2015, our redress scheme came in 2018, and
28 it really reflects a change in the thinking of those key leaders who were driving the claims
29 at the time and the need for redress, the culmination of which came with our redress
30 scheme in 2018.

31 I think also understanding that the work of the Commission was on the horizon at
32 the time, would have been quite a major factor in encouraging the Church to move
33 accordingly. The Church also was becoming -- was learning more about how to respond to

1 claims of abuse, and to move away from an overly legalistic approach to one that actually
2 was more reflective of what we believed in and therefore were to develop into a scheme.

3 **MS SHARKEY:** You do say in your statement:

4 "In hindsight it was a significant error that a formal process took so long to develop.
5 Until 2018 claims were processed exclusively by the Church without recourse(?) to external
6 expertise and best practice."

7 And Reverend Tautari, would you agree that it was more than an error; for some
8 survivors it's a failure to act?

9 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, exactly.

10 **MS SHARKEY:** Then just looking at the amounts of payments that were given by the Church.

11 Would you agree that in the past they have been low? I'm looking at MA. We can bring it
12 up -- MA and MJ are the two that I'm really --

13 **REV TAUTARI:** It's okay, they were all low in the past, so yes.

14 **MS SHARKEY:** So that is acknowledged.

15 **CHAIR:** Before we go any further, and tell me if you're going to go into this, but I'd just like to
16 know what the scope of the redress scheme is, what does it cover and for what periods of
17 time?

18 **MS SHARKEY:** Yes, we can do that right now.

19 **CHAIR:** Okay, thank you.

20 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Also, when we say "low" just to give us an estimate of what the
21 mean amount was.

22 **CHAIR:** Once we get to the numbers, yeah.

23 So when you opened the redress scheme, who was it for? Who were you inviting to
24 come forward to the redress scheme? Not you personally but who was the Church inviting?

25 **REV TAUTARI:** We were inviting all those people who had suffered abuse while in the care of
26 the Church and in particular children's homes, and people who had already -- who had also
27 experienced historic abuse within churches. And we followed largely the guidelines that
28 were given by the Commission in interpreting that.

29 Where we were a little different from the Commission in that we didn't hold to the
30 1999 cut-off date.

31 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** So does that continue through to contemporary claims?

32 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes.

33 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** So in the context of schools for contemporary, but also with the
34 Wellington community action with its foster care delivery service?

1 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, and just, by the way, we found the numbers, there are five children in care,
2 three Māori, one Pasifika, and one Pākehā.

3 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Thank you, appreciate that.

4 **CHAIR:** Before we give you back to Ms Sharkey, did the Church at any time in relation to claims
5 of abuse in schools, ever say, well, we won't be dealing with that because that's a matter for
6 the School Board because that's a Government entity or an independent entity? Or did you
7 always say everything would be within the redress scheme?

8 **REV TAUTARI:** I'm sorry I don't have that information.

9 **CHAIR:** Right.

10 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes. I don't know what the initial thinking of the Church had been in terms of
11 including --

12 **CHAIR:** I'll frame it more -- do you know if there were any restrictions on the type of claims that
13 that redress scheme was going to hear, provided it was abuse and it was within the
14 Methodist setting?

15 **REV TAUTARI:** To my knowledge, no.

16 **CHAIR:** Thank you, I'll leave it to you now, Ms Sharkey.

17 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you. So when we're talking about low, as Commissioner Erueti was
18 talking about before, MA, for example, the first offer was 5,000 and then it was increased
19 to 7 and a half, plus reimbursement for Legal Aid. And there is another -- well, actually,
20 for MJ the claim was settled for 15,000. But it was reviewed after that. So if we look at the
21 first one, let's just focus on low settlements. Was that about the average, 5 to 7 and a half,
22 from what you know?

23 **REV TAUTARI:** From what I know, yes.

24 **MS SHARKEY:** And your view, because we've had -- we've seen some settlements recently
25 reviewed, is that -- that was far below what should have been paid?

26 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes.

27 **MS SHARKEY:** And so for MJ, it was increased --

28 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes.

29 **MS SHARKEY:** -- by \$60,000?

30 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes.

31 **MS SHARKEY:** On what grounds does the Methodist Church review past settlements? So how
32 did MJ's situation come about?

33 **REV TAUTARI:** It came about because I was contacted by Cooper Legal and I was asked if I
34 would be prepared to review the case and I said "yes".

- 1 **MS SHARKEY:** And there's been another survivor whose claim was settled for 18,000, plus
2 contribution to Legal Aid, and has been told that a review of that settlement will also take
3 place in light of the Methodist Church's new approach. So this is MB.
- 4 **REV TAUTARI:** And we have recently concluded that and have reviewed it. And then I said to
5 Cooper Legal, if you have anything else that you require to be reviewed we are open to
6 that.
- 7 **MS SHARKEY:** Right, so in MA's situation, that case could potentially be reviewed?
- 8 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes.
- 9 **MS SHARKEY:** And what would you say to survivors who have dealt with the Church before it
10 introduced its new redress process and the increased amounts, who feel that the
11 contribution was inadequate or that the redress amount was inadequate, I should say?
- 12 **REV TAUTARI:** I would agree with them and I would say come back to us. We have shifted in
13 our position.
- 14 **MS SHARKEY:** And then just turning to apologies. The redress report that was released by the
15 Inquiry, have you been able to have a look at that?
- 16 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes.
- 17 **MS SHARKEY:** Because one section in that report talks about apologies and apology letters, and
18 we had a case study that talked about what survivors could deem to an adequate apology.
19 And I just wanted to ask Reverend Tautari for you to reflect on this.
20 Can you see that?
- 21 **REV TAUTARI:** Sorry, my glasses aren't so good.
- 22 **CHAIR:** Mine are and I can't see it very well either.
- 23 **MS SHARKEY:** Maybe if we could --
- 24 **CHAIR:** Could we highlight the relevant portion?
- 25 **MS SHARKEY:** Yes. Is that better?
- 26 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, that's much better, thank you so much.
- 27 **MS SHARKEY:** It's really what I'm wanting to look at here is the language, Reverend Tautari,
28 because you say, "You have told us that you believe --
- 29 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes.
- 30 **MS SHARKEY:** -- that your adoption has had a negative effect on your life." And then it says,
31 "Yes, your complaint to us is new ground", but then there are comments in there about the
32 advice received and that they played a limited role. And I just -- you can read that letter,
33 Reverend Tautari, I'll give you some time.
- 34 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, thank you.

1 **MS SHARKEY:** Apart from the initial introduction, the Church would have had a limited role to
2 play. So it's the information that's said in there. Would you agree that it lacks a personal,
3 meaningful apology?

4 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, I would agree with that.

5 **MS SHARKEY:** And putting it on the survivor about "what you told us you believe"?

6 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes.

7 **MS SHARKEY:** So in reflection, what would change between -- this is 2020, to now?

8 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes.

9 **MS SHARKEY:** What would change in terms of, you know, survivors being told what legal
10 advice you had, we heard in the redress report was actually quite harmful to them and quite
11 traumatic. So what learnings do you take from a letter like this?

12 **REV TAUTARI:** The learnings I take is that for an apology to be meaningful it must
13 acknowledge what the Church did in letting people down. It must identify and specify
14 exactly why that was. It must thank survivors for coming forward and sharing their story,
15 their experience and shedding light on the truth, that the Church accepts that unequivocally
16 and offers its apology.

17 **MS SHARKEY:** Because then when looking at that next page, Reverend Tautari, it's "we are
18 advised that due to the limited part played by the Church," etc, etc. "The Methodist Church
19 does not have any potential legal liability." So it's that legal terminology that, for survivors,
20 is quite harmful. It's almost like a sorry, not sorry. Would you agree with that?

21 **REV TAUTARI:** I agree with that. I agree with that. You know, just to share in the spirit of
22 talanoa, when I began, so in November it will be two years since I began this position.
23 When I began and inherited the redress scheme, I just took everything that was given and I
24 was sending out, not an apology like this, but it was something that was pretty standard. It
25 wasn't until I undertook specific training in trauma-informed approaches to pastoral care
26 that I was able to reflect more and learn more having not been naturally in this space
27 before. And I believe that is where we are shifting. I myself have learned and the Church
28 will continue to learn as we move in this space.

29 **MS SHARKEY:** And talking about that, the learnings that you're taking from what we're hearing
30 in the Inquiry, in order for a survivor to make a claim, is it that they go on to the website
31 and -- what happens from there? Just trying to understand the mechanics of that.

32 **REV TAUTARI:** So if a survivor is a making a claim themselves and not going through a lawyer,
33 they can access the information on our website. What usually happens is that they will
34 reach out to us and say, look, we have -- actually, they usually say we want to see our file,

1 we want to see our records. And so that's what we do, we share the record. When the
2 intention is stated "we want to make a claim", we offer them the possibility of
3 accompaniment through an independent coordinator who is not from the Church and who
4 works in the space of trauma and of counselling and who works alongside them to help
5 them clearly articulate in the way they want to their experiences as part of a claim to the
6 Church. And that may come as a half-page, one-page, two-page document. There's no
7 template for it, although there are key questions that help to direct what is being asked for.

8 The claim then comes into the office of the General Secretary who then convenes a
9 meeting of the review panel, of three people usually, and they then consider the claim and
10 the accompanying documentation.

11 They then make recommendations to the Church about redress and it's at that point
12 that we then contact the claimant, the survivor, with the proposed redress from the Church.

13 That is how it stands now on the website, but doesn't include a couple of key
14 changes that I've made and will, how I say, affirm or have them approved -- not approved
15 but get them affirmed by Conference in November.

16 **MS SHARKEY:** Key changes?

17 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes.

18 **MS SHARKEY:** Those are?

19 **REV TAUTARI:** Those are that everyone who comes is met kanohi ki te kanohi by myself and/or
20 the president of the Church. So that means, practically speaking, in the last six months I
21 have met with 11 survivors going to where they are, where they want to meet, and saying to
22 them, "We thank you for coming forward, we honour you coming to us and the bravery that
23 it took for that to happen, we commit ourselves to be on a journey with you along this
24 pathway to resolution and redress, and we felt it necessary to show our face to you so that
25 you can see that we hold ourselves accountable, not only to the process of resolution and
26 redress, but also to the relationship that that then infers."

27 **MS SHARKEY:** And if a survivor isn't feeling like they can meet with you face-to-face, how
28 does that -- that doesn't impact or lessen the quality of their claim?

29 **REV TAUTARI:** Not by any means, not by any means. I would say, though, that not one
30 survivor has said "I do not want to meet face-to-face."

31 **MS SHARKEY:** Well, if I was hoping to get something out of a redress claim I would probably
32 come and meet you too. It's not that -- there would be barriers for some survivors, right, in
33 being able to come and bring their whole self into that space when we had this discussion

1 about hierarchy and being re-traumatised and meeting with the head of the Church, those
2 are issues that are very real to survivors.

3 **REV TAUTARI:** Very real, and so we often preface the meeting with an understanding that we
4 are not here to go through the detail or to interrogate the detail of what has happened, we
5 are here to listen and we are here to show our personal accountability and because, you
6 know, this is tikanga Māori, kanohi ki te kanohi, therefore the inferred relationship that
7 comes out of that is one that needs to be sincere and honest and real.

8 **MS SHARKEY:** And so this applies also to survivors of abuse at Wesley College?

9 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, it does. It also applies to survivors of abuse who are overseas. For
10 example, I've met with three people by Zoom who are residing in Australia. And so there's
11 no barrier other than that which may be required -- I mean, if a survivor feels
12 uncomfortable to meet they're not in that space, we are happy with that, there's no problem.

13 **MS SHARKEY:** So they would lead that process and what it looks like?

14 **REV TAUTARI:** Very much so.

15 **MS SHARKEY:** In terms of Wesley College, a number of survivors are concerned that this is it,
16 this is the last kind of look at what's happened to Wesley College, and you'll see in some of
17 the statements some of them have asked for an independent investigation, and I just wanted
18 to ask what the response was to that.

19 **REV TAUTARI:** I've met with three survivors from Wesley and their statements are here. I have
20 one more to meet with in the coming weeks and I'm sure many more will come in. I'd like
21 to say also that I don't meet alone with Wesley College survivors. I always have a senior
22 member of the Trust Board with me, from the College. It is very important that we are
23 together. The person I visited our last two survivors with is here in this room.

24 And so -- to your question of a separate mechanism?

25 **MS SHARKEY:** Something that continues to look at what has happened at Wesley College in the
26 past very long time, the decades before, I think what survivors are saying is: This is not it,
27 this is not it, this can't be the last call for survivors to come forward, that the Church and
28 Wesley College continue to look and understand that what has happened in the past and as
29 we were talking about before, lift that darkness, that dark cloud in the history of Wesley
30 College so that it's not forgotten and it's truly unraveled, unveiled.

31 Because we're here but we're not here for a long time. So the momentum, I guess
32 the concern for survivors is that the momentum will stall.

33 **REV TAUTARI:** I think that's a very real concern. We have seen commissions come and go in
34 the past in Aotearoa and momentum is gained and lost. But for us here, the reality is that

1 we recognise that there's nowhere else to go but towards wholeness and healing. And
2 whatever comes after this we have put ourselves on a journey. I mean, listening to
3 Dr Evans, such a passionate commitment to change, bringing in practical examples that
4 make sense for the context of Wesley. It is not to be underestimated.

5 The challenge for the Church remains to ensure its own leadership takes a key role
6 in that.

7 Commissioner Erueti referred to one of the witnesses' desire to have a national
8 conversation around bullying. I agree completely. We should have a national conversation
9 around abuse. We should have a national conversation that understands that abuse doesn't
10 happen out of a vacuum, that it comes by the language we use, by our understanding of
11 toxic masculinity, what it means to have LGBTQ people feeling safe and secure in
12 communities and in the Church, and we need a faith that when we use words like "love" we
13 understand theologically and biblically what that means, where that will take us, it takes us
14 out of our own comfort zones, our own cultural comfort zones, what we were taught as we
15 grew up was acceptable or unacceptable, who was in, who was out, who was included, who
16 was excluded. And unless the intersection between colonialism and gender and racism is
17 understood, and finds a translation in what we teach in schools and how we teach it and the
18 language we use to teach it in, I guess what I'm saying is that this is a collective effort, and
19 when the Commission goes, collectively we will need to carry it on, and the Church has a
20 significant part to play, especially and particularly with regards to Wesley College.

21 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you, Reverend Tautari. Just to confirm from our discussion before. It
22 wouldn't just be claims from Wesley College students who experienced abuse after hours in
23 hostels, it's throughout.

24 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, you are correct.

25 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you.

26 Mr Johnston, there was one survivor's experience that was mentioned in the bundle
27 and they were -- had reached out directly, Dr Evans or Mr Johnston, you'll be able to
28 answer this. And he contacted you directly and there was a discussion or a meeting with
29 him and he was reimbursed the school fees, I think, that his parent had paid for him. Was
30 he told about the redress process through the Church?

31 **DR EVANS:** My Board chairman dealt with the repayment part of it. I know they met and had a
32 conversation. I met with him purely around the school site and talked with him, went for a
33 walk and so on. I'm pretty sure I did say, "You do realise you can go to the Church, to the
34 website and look into it further if you want."

1 **MS SHARKEY:** It would be important that that information is given to all people that make
2 approaches to Wesley College, because the reimbursement of school fees seems a little bit
3 light.

4 **DR EVANS:** I agree. That was his request, he was really open about what he wanted was a
5 meeting, and that was his idea about repaying the fees. He just felt it was a way of moving
6 forward. He'd had -- it's a traumatic story as well.

7 **MS SHARKEY:** Very traumatic.

8 **DR EVANS:** Years of drug addiction and issues, and that was his suggestion. He said, when he
9 e-mailed he just said, like, I don't want a whole lot of money, I want my fees repaid that my
10 parents paid to go there and I want to come in and meet. And so hopefully we had a
11 positive meeting. I don't think it erases the past but he left a bit happier.

12 **MS SHARKEY:** But you don't know what you don't know, so it's constant messaging across to
13 everybody who will now approach either Wesley College or the Church to be given the
14 same information about the redress process.

15 **DR EVANS:** Yeah. Actually, I'm happy to go back, I've been in communication with him a few
16 times, I'm happy to go back and reiterate that.

17 **MS SHARKEY:** I'm mindful that we're almost at time. I have one more thing.

18 **CHAIR:** Please do. We don't want to break the habit of going over time; it's something we've
19 become used to.

20 **MS SHARKEY:** We were on a good thing there for a while.

21 **CHAIR:** You've got some brownie points in the bank, Ms Sharkey.

22 **MS SHARKEY:** If I could bring up just some recommendations that a survivor has made in one
23 of her statements. Just while we're looking at that, what is the level of, I guess, discussion
24 across faiths? Are there conversations with other churches or other faith-based
25 organisations about the Inquiry or what the learnings are or redress, for example? Is there
26 any kind of coming together and having progressive discussions?

27 **REV TAUTARI:** To my knowledge no, but I mean, that doesn't mean there weren't any and
28 maybe I wasn't invited or there.

29 **MS SHARKEY:** I hope you would be invited.

30 **REV TAUTARI:** But I think certainly anecdotally from conversations, other faiths are carefully
31 following the work of the Commission and there have been a couple of meetings with
32 survivor networks that have drawn or invited leadership from other faiths to attend, and to
33 be part of discussions, which I understand were anticipated at least to help shape some of
34 the thinking to put before the Commission.

1 **MS SHARKEY:** Right, okay.

2 **CHAIR:** Before we leave that point, and arising from it: You will be aware that at the end of
3 last year we produced a large volume called Pūretumu Torowhānui. Two issues arising out
4 of that.

5 The first is that those words mean holistic redress, so it was a recognition of
6 survivor evidence and learnings and experts who persuaded us that redress is more than just
7 the handing of a cheque and an apology letter and that for somebody properly to be restored
8 you had to meet their individual needs, whatever that was, whatever that looked like,
9 whether that was counselling, assistance in some social service way, whatever.

10 Has the Methodist Church as a whole looked at redress or considered other types of
11 redress other than, or as well as money and an apology letter that might fulfil some of that
12 holistic approach?

13 **REV TAUTARI:** Thank you for your question, because it's something that has occupied some of
14 our thinking. Yes, we had read that in the report and took it seriously, and had moved in
15 that direction. And so we're making suggestions about counselling and other wrap-around
16 services and budgeting etc, and then got pushback and was told, "but about isn't that
17 another type of paternalism?"

18 **CHAIR:** Pushback from whom?

19 **REV TAUTARI:** From our members, one of our members on our review panel, a Māori, who
20 said, "Why are you deciding what people need? They have their own agency."

21 **CHAIR:** That's true, of course, isn't it?

22 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes. "And why are you writing that into an agreement? Isn't it better to have a
23 conversation with people and have a kōrero?"

24 And so where once we would say, look, we give you this in compensation and X
25 amount for counselling and on a couple of occasions we said and this towards driving
26 lessons and you've identified this and this and that. Now we take the total in one and say
27 this is what we want to give you, having heard some of the needs, but it is entirely up to
28 your own agency.

29 **CHAIR:** As a package.

30 **REV TAUTARI:** As a package.

31 **CHAIR:** Thank you for that. That leads me to the second question which is a bigger one. In that
32 report we made some recommendations about the setting up of an independent redress
33 scheme for both faith and State-based -- abuse in both faith and State institutions, so an
34 independently-run redress scheme and that our major recommendations were that this

1 should be done, this should be set up only with and in partnership with Māori and with
2 survivors. And that it should be done in a collaborative way.

3 We anticipated in there that that would happen and work we know is going on, but
4 my question for you is have you been approached by the people who are working to set up
5 that scheme, as a significant player in the faith-based space, to assist or to have your views
6 about a redress scheme put to you?

7 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, I do believe there was an initial round of consultation last year -- is that
8 what you're referring to, Commissioner?

9 **CHAIR:** No, it wouldn't have been last year because our recommendations were last year.

10 **REV TAUTARI:** So the Crown response agency?

11 **CHAIR:** The Crown Response Unit, yes, have you heard from them?

12 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, we have heard from them. I think they're finding it a little difficult to get
13 everyone around the table.

14 **CHAIR:** Right. Are you prepared to go to the table, is the Methodist Church prepared to go to the
15 table on this?

16 **REV TAUTARI:** Very much so. We have -- but I will need to speak with people at Conference.

17 **CHAIR:** Yes, I'm not asking you to make a commitment today but it is important to us to know
18 what's happening with our recommendations.

19 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, yes. I mean, in principle we have absolutely no problem. The only thing
20 is I would say from just the short time I've been involved in this, that it takes -- that it's so
21 important, the relational aspect, and I would hope that any independent mechanism would
22 be able to deliver that in a way that honours the survivor, number one.

23 Number two, you know, I just think of things like ACC.

24 **CHAIR:** The bureaucracy?

25 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, and I know that -- I mean, we aren't exempt from this, Ms Sharkey has
26 clearly outlined where we failed and made things harder and longer for people to gain
27 justice. But we have changed and we have been able to be quite efficient usually in the
28 timings. I would hope that any mechanism could be that same way.

29 **CHAIR:** Yes, I think that is shared by people who gave evidence of certainly faith-based
30 institutions who gave evidence to us last year when we were discussing this, you know, we
31 value the relationship between our need to meet kanohi ki te kanohi to accept personal or a
32 church's responsibility, so we are aware of those dynamics, but it is also important that
33 work continues so that some way can be seen through this and it's important, I think, that
34 the churches are at the table with the conversation.

1 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes. I mean, I think so too. You know, I'm also aware that if -- I worry about
2 sometimes if we set this up independent mechanism that then the Church isn't held as
3 accountable as it should be because we have something else.

4 **CHAIR:** You're at arm's length.

5 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, and here you see with Wesley and us, we are aligned and together and
6 working together. And the last thing I would say, is that -- and what we have now included
7 in our apologies, is that we have said after the kōrero with the person as well, "And if you
8 need anything else in the future, we are here." And I wonder if an independent mechanism
9 can deliver that in the same way. That's only -- that's my only --

10 **CHAIR:** That's something we did recommend. But, you see, all my point is here, is that these are
11 things that I think the Crown Response Unit needs to hear in developing their policies and
12 if you're not at the table, you're not being able to convey that. So I'm just -- my
13 encouragement is that they engage with you and you engage with them so that they can
14 hear this. So there's no hard and fast lines here, it's about partnership, it's about
15 collaboration, it's about sharing, it's about talanoa, about these very important issues.
16 Thank you.

17 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Can I just add to that, because I did see from your brief that you
18 were proposing to provide survivors with the choice of going to the National Redress
19 Scheme or coming to your redress scheme. And I understand the sentiment about
20 providing choice, but we heard that from all the faiths who came and gave evidence. What
21 we also heard strongly from survivors, and we've been listening for -- doing this for several
22 years now, three years on redress, is that they wanted an independent redress scheme, they
23 didn't want to go back to the institutions that perpetrated the abuse, basically.

24 And while it's up to the collectives, the Māori collectives and survivors to engage
25 with the Crown to create this redress scheme, for we know the full details, that was such a
26 strong principle.

27 So I note from your evidence about, you know, you want to maintain that, you don't
28 want to be arm's length, you want to provide, say, pastoral support and care, you might
29 want to provide a direct kanohi ki te kanohi apology and those things can still be
30 accommodated as we saw them within this new National Redress Scheme. But really, the
31 independence had to be with that scheme with the faiths contributing in that way as and
32 when survivors wanted that direct personal response from the Church.

1 So I really encourage you just to, with the redress report, because it's all laid out
2 about the rationale and argument for independence, to engage with it before you go to
3 November to meet with the --

4 **REV TAUTARI:** Conference.

5 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** -- Conference, thank you.

6 **REV TAUTARI:** Thank you very much. Yes, I hear what you're saying. At the same time
7 because we are Māori, the question of tikanga comes in. Tikanga about a hara that has
8 occurred, a wrongdoing, and what that means for us as Māori and the restoration of right
9 relationships and the ea(?), the balance. And it seems to me that if that is outsourced to an
10 independent mechanism, then how does the Church and its members have that same
11 sensitivity about that?

12 I'm not saying no, I have to go to Conference and speak and I have to speak with te
13 taha Māori and one of our senior leaders who's been following here today and speak with
14 tauwiwi, but when we begin to speak tikanga, then we have to go tikanga and go deep into it
15 and be clear. So I'm not saying "no".

16 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** No, no, I appreciate that. And, of course, there's a rich discussion
17 about tikanga and the principles that should drive the redress scheme. But, as I say,
18 ultimately this is -- we've provided some navigation lights, but ultimately it's for Māori, the
19 collective, that we recommended, and other survivor collectives, to engage with the Crown
20 to decide on this, it's empowering survivor voice, that's where it lies.

21 Just to be clear, I just noticed that you said that your redress scheme wasn't limited
22 to 1999. We haven't recommended that either in the redress scheme. It's just in our terms
23 of reference it talks about us focusing between 1950 and 1999. But even then, we're able to
24 look at matters beyond 1999 to inform our recommendations to the future.

25 But I do wish you the best with your discussions within your faith, it's very
26 challenging kaupapa for you. But we've really grappled with this, so I just, again,
27 encourage you to engage with that report and good luck for the future.

28 **REV TAUTARI:** Kia ora.

29 **MS SHARKEY:** All right, there is something on the screen there, Reverend Tautari, or there
30 should be, and I just wanted to get your thoughts on what this survivor is saying in terms of
31 the recommendations, because that first one would require there to be some kind of
32 cross-faith discussion.

1 **CHAIR:** Just to be clear, these are recommendations not just relating to redress, but for the future
2 and for the -- that survivors want the Commission to look at as making in their final
3 recommendations. So they're broad, wide-ranging recommendations.

4 **MS SHARKEY:** A formal move by churches to ensure proper checking of credentials not just
5 Police checks. That would need to involve formal arrangements to exchange information
6 between diocese and denominations and a discussion at church leaders level. Any thoughts
7 on that?

8 **REV TAUTARI:** To some -- I agree with that. To some degree it happens already, in that if a
9 minister is moving from one church to another, that there is a request of their good standing
10 and that usually involves ensuring that there are no disciplinary procedures in place
11 currently. But from what I see here in the paragraph, it is requesting something a lot more
12 robust and in-depth and we would agree with that.

13 **MS SHARKEY:** Okay. The development of understanding that forgiveness of sexually abuse of
14 ministers does not have to include giving them back the power they have abused.

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

16 **MS SHARKEY:** So in a situation where that has happened, a Reverend has committed, you
17 know, against a survivor, sexual nature, what is the Church's policy? Is he dismissed?
18 What happens?

19 **REV TAUTARI:** He or she --

20 **MS SHARKEY:** Sorry, my apologies, he or she.

21 **REV TAUTARI:** No worries. They go through our own disciplinary procedures. But if it's an
22 issue of sexual abuse, then that is regarded in a different way.

23 **MS SHARKEY:** If a survivor is sharing an experience that involves conduct of a sexual nature,
24 then is that still the same? What exactly entails sexual abuse? Does it have to be the
25 physical action, it can be the way that they've been talked to, messaging, all those
26 examples, does that come within that definition of sexual abuse? Or is that something you
27 would have to have a look at?

28 **REV TAUTARI:** I would need to have a look at. What we have seen today, and especially from
29 the example in the morning, we saw how ministers who have abused have enjoyed
30 impunity and so if we are to extend that to things like sexual harassment, which I think
31 you're alluding to, then the Church would have to take a clear position on that. We do have
32 procedures in place, but what I'm hearing you say is that something stronger is needed, one
33 that doesn't allow people to continue in their positions, because by then they are very
34 clearly unfit for ministry, and should be out of the Church.

1 **MS SHARKEY:** And I think that's what, part of what the survivor is saying at the bottom,
2 allowing abusing ministers to resign or take early retirement is a way for churches to avoid
3 the responsibility of standing with the victims/survivors in a clear way, a dismissal would
4 be a clear message to all parties about where the Church stands.

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

6 **MS SHARKEY:** You agree with that.

7 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes.

8 **MS SHARKEY:** I've now come to the end, but before I pass it over to the Commissioners, I did
9 want, for any final comments by the witnesses, and Dr Evans, could we start with you
10 perhaps. We've definitely gone a bit over time, my apologies.

11 **DR EVANS:** Just thank you for the opportunity and I want to make an assurance to the survivors
12 and our current school community that this will definitely not be the end, this is the
13 beginning of the work we want to achieve at the College.

14 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you, Dr Evans. Mr Johnston.

15 **MR JOHNSTON:** Yeah, I agree this is a journey, thank you for the platform that we have today.
16 I've seen numerous principals and a lot of work put in, things that they've done that hasn't
17 worked and it is a continual journey. The Board is behind the Principal and wants the
18 cultural change which is important for the safe Wesley College that we desire.

19 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you. Reverend Tautari.

20 **REV TAUTARI:** Kia ora, tēnā koutou katoa. Just to say thank you to the Commission for
21 allowing us to be in this space and a special mihi to our survivors here who came to speak
22 with me and with others in the breaks, and it is through this continual engagement and
23 kōrero that we are able to move forward, without which we become faceless and voiceless,
24 and that is not what we want to see. So thank you very, very much.

25 **MS SHARKEY:** And encouragement to other survivors to please feel free to come forward.

26 **REV TAUTARI:** Yes, please feel free to come forward. What's wonderful is that Dr Evans has
27 said, "Come to me, as principal", and I say as the General Secretary, "Come to me, please
28 come, we are here for you."

29 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you.

30 **MR TALAKAI:** Kia ora. Thank you, Madam Chair, talofa lava, kia ora. Greetings, thank you
31 very much for the opportunity that you have given us, the Methodist Church and the
32 Wesley College, hearing our voices and not only our voices but our survivors' voices, and
33 we do stand together to speak out to our survivors out there who still have the pulonga on
34 them. To have more courage and step forward. The invitation is there from the General

1 Secretary. You either contact the principal or the General Secretary and we're more than
2 happy to walk alongside you so that we can tatala e pulonga and lift the -- so that we can
3 see the light, kia ora.

4 **MR KEPU:** Malo 'aupito. First and foremost, I just want to thank the Commission, again, for
5 having us here and as we've said here, allowing us this platform to share, to talanoa, for the
6 greater good of our great Church and our College. I want to thank the survivors for the
7 courage again for coming forward and I encourage, like Etuini has said, please set
8 yourselves free and allow yourself to heal by giving and showing that bravery. Our great
9 College we love so much, and if we want to see those changes we've got to make those
10 changes. We can't keep doing the same things and expecting different results.

11 So I encourage those that need the help to seek the help, the help is there. And as
12 the principal and the General Secretary have said, they are there for you guys and they are
13 there to support anybody. So thank you again for having me, such a humbling experience
14 and I'm very grateful to be part of this, so thank you very much, malo 'aupito.

15 **MS SHARKEY:** And you'll be involved in any anti-bullying work moving forward maybe?

16 **CHAIR:** That was a direction not a request.

17 **MS SHARKEY:** Possibly, possibly.

18 **MR KEPU:** Yeah, I'd love to, happy to help, yes.

19 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you. Thank you, Sekope, I don't have any further questions.

20 **CHAIR:** Thank you. So we're going to end, we've got two minutes before our stenographer's
21 fingers fall off, and so I'm going to invite my fellow Commissioners now just to say a very
22 few words in closing.

23 We'll start with you, Paul. Thank you.

24 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Thank you for honouring us with your presence today and through
25 the talanoa, and respecting the vā. I think we need a national talanoa across schools, across
26 faiths, about bullying, violence, abuse, the role that racism, ableism, clericalism, sexism
27 play in these things. It needs to be led from school assemblies, teachers at the front of
28 classrooms, pulpits, and it needs to be honest conversations about the role that faiths have
29 played and the role that education institutions have played in bullying, abuse, violence in
30 our society. It needs to be both an honest but a courageous and visionary conversation, and
31 an aspirational conversation about what better can look like for the next generations.

32 And a bit of a challenge as well alongside the gift that you've given us. I admire the
33 focus towards disadvantage, but I think there are still some groups which remain invisible

1 and that invisibility further creates risk of harm. I think with disabled kids, like all kids, we
2 need mana and support so that they can both achieve and be kept safe.

3 So the challenge is there as well, and for me to feel reassured, I want to hear that the
4 overcoming of the invisibility of these groups amongst our societies, amongst our faiths,
5 amongst our schools, thank you again for honouring the vā today, kia ora.

6 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Ko te mihi tuatahi ki ngā purapura ora e whakauru mai ana e
7 mātakitaki mai ana i te pouaka whakaata, me koutou mā kua huihui mai ki te tautoko tēnei
8 kaupapa i tēnei rā, tēnā koutou katoa. Tēnā koutou ki te tēpu, te Hāhi me ngā rangatira o te
9 kura.

10 I just want to thank you, everyone, today, it's been a great talanoa I think today,
11 we've learned a lot. And I think it's in large part because you've come with so much
12 goodwill and in keeping with those -- I think of those four principles, and I'm thinking
13 about those three principles you talked about at the start of today that guides the Church,
14 that openness, do no harm, do good.

15 And thank you, Mr Kepu, too for coming, I think it's really encouraging to hear
16 about the initiatives from the kura, support from the Church, but also that there are leaders
17 like you out there that -- and I mean no harm, Dr Evans, but that are a bit hipper than the
18 principal of the kura at the moment, that the young rangatahi can identify with, but under
19 your leadership.

20 It's been a great day, so thank you so much, ngā mihi nui mahana ki a koutou.

21 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** I le ava ma le fa'aaloalo lava e momoli atu le fa'afetai. E
22 momoli atu le fa'afetai i le tou loto toa, i le tou loto tele, i le tou loto maualalo. Vi'ia le
23 atua i le tou fa'asoa. (I extend gratitude with all due respect. I am grateful of your bravery,
24 courage, humility, and praise the Lord with what you have shared.) I just want to take this
25 opportunity to really express our gratitude, my gratitude as someone from the Pasifika
26 community, but also a Commissioner who's been around the motu and who has heard from
27 lots of communities, including our Pasifika communities. When it comes to the faith, the
28 message that I get really loud and clear, that they literally pummel into me, is
29 "Ali'imuamua, do not demonise the faith", because it means so much to our communities,
30 Māori, Pasifika, Palagi, Asian, across the motu.

31 And whilst there is a focus on the faith and on the schools, there was some really
32 ugly ungodly behaviour that went on and that's what we're addressing. And I hope that you
33 receive that in terms of your presence here today.

1 And so with my fellow Commissioners, I too honour you for the way you have
2 respected and continuously honoured our survivors both online and who are physically
3 present here today, and the hara and the harm that for us is a big navigational light.

4 So I guess my message really is around use your cultural competencies, capabilities,
5 because you have it in spades. And now in the 21st century more so than ever we require
6 our young, amazing leaders to stand up and take your rightful place in driving those
7 conversations to bring about social change.

8 So schools are on display this week, but our message is the same to all of them. We
9 had courageous -- we heard from courageous survivors from Silverstream yesterday,
10 Wesley today, we have the rest of the week we're looking at other schools as well and other
11 faith organisations. And I just want to say loto tele, loto toa, it's not easy work, but if
12 I refrain back to you, "by faith, by learning and by hard work", which is your motto, which
13 you wear proudly as your badge of courage, continue to sow into your harvest field,
14 because you will see, you will see the good works from your heart service. And that's what
15 I think we want to see and understand when this Commission is gone, what does a healthy
16 Wesleyan community look like, what does a healthy Methodist Church look like in the faith
17 space around abuse in care? Malie.

18 **CHAIR:** Thank you, Sandra. Ngā mihi mahana ki a koutou katoa. We've come to the end of our
19 day, and you've heard fulsomely from my colleagues, and I echo everything that's been
20 said.

21 When we started the day we were in a faith-based institutional hearing, which
22 sounds pretty ghastly actually, when you think about it, it sounds bureaucratic. But what
23 we had today was much more than that.

24 So we heard about the bureaucracy and the levels and the channels and the
25 committees and the etc. But we also heard far more potently than that the emotion. We've
26 had tears shared with the table. We've had emotion that has been felt. Some survivors
27 might not accept that, they might be still sceptical, because this is -- that vā that has been
28 broken is a difficult one to repair. But I hope that survivors who have been affected by
29 abuse in this Church have watched and learned and perhaps learned a little more about the
30 attitude of the Church.

31 Above all, we've received a personal and unsolicited account of a personal
32 experience of abuse which we honour and salute for the courage that it took to be on
33 personal display. Sekope, thank you very much for that.

1 The last thing I want to say, I think some of you have echoed this already. This
2 Commission will vanish in a puff of smoke at the end of June 2023. Our work will be over,
3 our words will be on paper. But the work must go on, and for that, not for this
4 Commission, but for the kaupapa and for the survivors, the work, the kaupapa needs
5 champions, and we look to leaders of all of the faith-based institutions to be champions for
6 the future so that as we say, e kore ano, never again.

7 And so your contribution today in this relaxed, nice talanoa form has been deeply
8 appreciated by all of us, thank you very much indeed.

9 And on that note I think it's appropriate that we end with karakia. Kei a koe matua.
10 Kei a koe te tikanga.

11 **KAUMATUA NGĀTI WHĀTUA:** It is with great honour to pass on our aroha to everybody
12 here today. The tēpu, I have decided to sing our Ki a Tau ki a Tātou Katoa, a himene
13 which relates to all of us through the grace of -- through the Lord Jesus Christ, through the
14 love of God, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the fellowship of all mankind, may we be
15 blessed, all of us, today. Nō reira ki a koutou, that is our waiata. We've changed the tune
16 slightly, jazzed it up to give a bit of spirit for us to enjoy the rest of the day. So if you
17 know the words, if you know the tune, kei te pai, sing up, blow the roof off this house,
18 because my voice is not too good, I'll turn this off when we start singing.

19 The other thing is, as I was driving past the marae today, I saw three of our kuias
20 tidying up the marae, so I invited them to come for a ride and I'll buy them an ice cream.
21 They didn't know I was coming here. When we got in here I said I'll have to give you an
22 ice cream after we finish. Hei aha, so they're going to help me sing this waiata, join us
23 please. (Waiata kia tau ki a tātou). (Karakia).

24 **Hearing adjourned at 5.33 pm to Wednesday, 19 October 2022 at 9 am**