



Rev Wayne Matheson

Assembly Executive Secretary
Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand
Corelogic House, Level1, 275 Cuba Street
PO Box 9049, Wellington 6141
E AES@presbyterian.org.nz
W www.presbyterian.org.nz
M 027 569 1971
DDI 04 801 8285
Office 04 801 6000
Fax 04 801 6001

27 March 2024

Subject: Update from the AES on Church investigation into claims of historic abuse

Greetings

Back in November 2022 I wrote to you concerning a serious matter that had come to our attention when the Church appeared before the Royal Commission into Abuse in Care.

That appearance by the Presbyterian Church was on 19 October 2022. Earlier that day, the Commission had heard from some of the Presbyterian Support organisations, including Presbyterian Support Otago (PSO).

Presbyterian Support Otago was questioned by the Commission regarding a witness who alleged that when she was child residing in PSO's Dunedin Glendining Presbyterian Children's Homes in the 1950s she was the victim of a paedophile ring involving Presbyterian church parishioners.

This utterly distressing information came as a complete shock as we did not know of these heart-breaking allegations prior, and nor did our Southern Presbytery. We first heard of them via the Royal Commission.

The sexual abuse of children is completely abhorrent and is a crime. It is damaging and devastating abuse of trust.

In response to these very troubling allegations, the Church acted. Our Council of Assembly undertook an independent investigation into the claims of a paedophile ring involving Presbyterian church members in Dunedin – parishioners, ministers, staff.

In November 2022 we appointed Kirsty McDonald, KC to lead this independent investigation. It has been an investigation that could not be rushed.

Kirsty has now reported to the Council of Assembly. Regrettably the investigation has neither been able to confirm or deny the allegations made. We acknowledge how incredibly upsetting this non-conclusive outcome must be for the witness who made the allegations. We assure you that we will continue to investigate if and when further information comes to light.

With that in mind, can I ask that if you have any information related to this matter to please share it, initially please email the Complaints and Disputes Manager ComplaintsandDisputesManager@presbyterian.org.nz or free phone 0800 244 357. If you prefer to share information with the independent investigator directly, you can phone the Complaints and Disputes Manager who has a confidential process whereby you will not have to identify yourself.

I know that some of you will have questions regarding this update on the outcome of the investigation. For reasons of confidentiality, we are unable to share further details. You can read the Church's earlier media release concerning the investigation [here](#).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wayne Matheson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial 'W'.

Rev Wayne Matheson
Assembly Executive Secretary
Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand