



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

22 July 2024

Subject: Update from the AES on upcoming release of Royal Commission into Abuse in Care report

Greetings

I write to you to update you on the work of the Royal Commission into Abuse in Care - a Commission that the Presbyterian Church asked to be included in, welcomed, and has fully cooperated with.

The Commission's work has now concluded, and its final report will be made public when it is tabled at Parliament on Wednesday 24 July at 4pm; it will not be debated that day.

While our Church will not see the report prior, we know it is a substantial document at 16-volumes and covers the Commission's work since 2018. We also know that it will contain appalling, harrowing, challenging and deeply saddening accounts of abuse and failure of care. We cannot stress enough that the sexual abuse of children is completely abhorrent, utterly distressing, and is a crime. As a Church we have a policy of zero tolerance of abuse by representatives of the Church. We know that over the years this has not been consistently and thoroughly applied. For this we are deeply sorry. I can assure you that as far as we have been able, we have apologised directly to those we have failed, and we will continue to offer support. We are learning and have taken steps to do better and prevent abuse in our churches.

When the Commission's report is released, the Council of Assembly will carefully digest it and bring its full attention to any recommendations and learnings the Commission has for the Presbyterian Church.

We will not rush into any hurried responses; we will give the report the respect and careful, thoughtful consideration it deserves. We will keep you fully updated during this process.

As a Church we sincerely thank the Commission for its important work. We give our heartfelt thanks to all those who had the courage to come forward to the Commission and share the terrible betrayal of trust they suffered and are still suffering from.

The conclusion of the Commission reminds us that our work to remain vigilant and prevent all forms of abuse in the Church continues.

We encourage anyone who has experienced abuse involving our Church, or who knows of such abuse, to contact us - see our [Historic Abuse](#) website page and our [Complaints](#) website page for details.

In this time as we wait for the report to be made public, our Moderator Right Rev Rose Luxford has prepared a prayer for our Church:

God of eternity - God of grace - at this time in the life of our country, waiting for the report from the Royal Commission on Abuse in Care, we feel the heaviness of what has happened in the past, and see how that has had ripple effects that have permeated our society. Damage, woundedness, pain, confusion, distrust, anger and brokenness have mis-shaped the lives of individuals and in turn mis-shaped the communities in which we live. Although it will be very difficult and challenging to hear all of what has happened, we are grateful that this work has been done, so that there may be acknowledgement of past wrongs and actions taken to prevent such things happening again. We know it must have taken a lot for people to come forward and share their stories of what has happened to them. Traumatic happenings that have left their mark. We give thanks for their courage. We find it so hard and difficult to bear that churches have been part of this dark stain on our country as it goes against all that Jesus modelled and taught - of all people having worth and dignity. God, help us in the church to face the past with honesty, to dwell in the present with humility, and to work for a future that has integrity and promise.

Let there be justice, healing and hope we pray, in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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