



**The Archbishops and Primates  
of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia**

**RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION**

**1. Introduction**

The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia asked to be included within the scope of the Royal Commission's Inquiry, recognising that the Church would have much to learn from the work of the Inquiry and that our own failures would be revealed.

As we make this initial response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission we again acknowledge and take full responsibility on behalf of the Church for our failures, failures that those who have been in our care had a right to expect never to have occurred. Our apology before the Royal Commission to survivors of abuse was heartfelt and genuine. We fully acknowledge the expectation of survivors that our words of apology will be backed by meaningful action.

We come to this response as a church which is called by God to treasure and protect the incomparable value and worth of every person. We believe that all our responses to the Royal Commission recommendations must be viewed through this lens and those who are most vulnerable must remain at the forefront of our vision.

We are committed to continuing the transformation of the culture of our Church, wherever necessary to adopt new practices and policies that reflect the expectations of survivors of abuse, and ensure that the findings of the Royal Commission are fully addressed across our whole Province, namely Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific. While some policies and programs already exist, we are undertaking a comprehensive and renewed approach to safeguarding, informed by the recommendations of the Commission.

To this end, we have established a working group tasked with overseeing this transformation. This group is forming teams for specific reviews and implementation tasks. Many schools and charitable bodies affiliate with our Church, but their governance lies outside the direct control of our governing bodies. We will make every effort to include these organisations in our work and encourage them to adopt the new policies and practices we believe are necessary.

**2. Identification of recommendations**

We have identified the following 7 key themes and 2 other specific recommendations within the 138 recommendations made by the Commission which apply to our Church and which call us to action:

**The Anglican Church**

in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia

**1. That all responses to the recommendations of the Royal Commission should be consistent with te Tiriti o Waitangi**

Recommendations 39(d),90,91,118,126,127

**2. That all responses to the recommendations of the Royal Commission should uphold the rights of Maori, Pacific and disabled persons & offer efficacy to affected persons**

Recommendations 39(a)(b)(c)(d)(f),89,90,91,118 & 126,127

**3. That there should be consistency of policies, principles and strategies for safety developed across the Church with adequate resource supplied to deliver those policies, procedures and strategies and provide for robust accountability and oversight**

Recommendations

39(e)(k)(l),89,90,91,50,51,53,54,55,56,75,78,80,82,89,92,95,96,102,109,127,133

**4. That there should be proper handling of complaints and proper redress processes for survivors of abuse**

Recommendations 1,15,1639(i),89,90,91,65,66,67,94,97,101,103,104,105,106,107,108 and the 95 recommendations of the Poretumu Whānui Report

**5. That there should be sound vetting and accreditation for all who work with children and vulnerable adults**

Recommendations 39(g),89,90,91,57,59,60,62,64,90

**6. That there should be comprehensive training for safety at every level of the Church**

Recommendations 39(g)(h),89,90,91,63,64,93,98,99,100,128

**7. That the Church should adopt best practice in data collection and record-keeping**

Recommendations 52,81,83,110

**8. Other**

There are also two further specific recommendations which apply to the Church in relation to review of memorials (5) and assistance to police in historical abuse investigations(7).

**3. Report on our response**

We therefore give our initial response to these recommendations as follows:

**1. That all responses to the recommendations of the Royal Commission should be consistent with Te Tiriti o Waitangi**

We accept and agree that the Church's responses align with Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles.

We are the Church of Te Tiriti o Waitangi—a commitment Anglicans began in the early 1800s and remain dedicated to fulfilling. In 1992, General Synod/Te Hīnota Whānui adopted a revised constitution, *Te Pouhere*, to embed a Te Tiriti framework that reflects the principles of partnership and bicultural development.

This revision created the Three Tikanga model—Tikanga Māori, Tikanga Pākehā, and Tikanga Polynesia—allowing each to express their unique Anglican identity and participate equally in decision-making within General Synod. This co-governance approach is a forward-thinking response to the legacy of colonialism.

For Māori Anglicans, decision-making is led by Tikanga Māori under Te Pīhopatanga o Aotearoa. This iwi construct works closely with hapū, iwi, and Māori organisations, upholding tikanga and tino rangatiratanga, enabling Māori Anglicans to thrive within their culture and heritage.

Our theology schools continue to prepare a new generation of theologians with a strong understanding of Te Tiriti and Te Pouhere.

Despite these foundations, we acknowledge that we have not yet fully lived into this potential. There are still inequities between Tikanga, inconsistencies in how Te Tiriti principles are applied, and uneven training has created gaps across Dioceses and Hui Amorangi.

To address these challenges, we will standardise Te Tiriti o Waitangi and safeguarding training across dioceses, Hui Amorangi, and theology schools. We will also integrate Te Tiriti principles into leadership, decision-making, and complaints processes through the Ministry Standards Commission. Additionally, we will advocate for adopting international frameworks like the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to General Synod.

## **2. That all responses to the recommendations of the Royal Commission should uphold the rights of Maori, Pacific and disabled persons & offer efficacy to affected persons**

We fully accept and agree that all responses to the recommendations of the Royal Commission must uphold the rights of Māori, Pacific, and disabled persons.

Our Disability Commission works to create a more inclusive and accessible community for disabled people, guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the New Zealand Disability Strategy.

In 2018, General Synod/Te Hīnota Whānui reinforced this commitment by encouraging churches to create accessible and inclusive environments. It supported the Disability Small Working Group within the Social Justice Commission, funded resources to help parishes improve accessibility, and promoted theological reflection on disability. The church has also backed training, conferences, and initiatives like Social Justice Week to build understanding and inclusion.

Our Three Tikanga streams allow for culturally appropriate practices and holistic care for Māori and Polynesians. As discussed above, we will advocate for General Synod to adopt the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We will continue to work with each Tikanga and the Disability Commission to uphold the rights of Maori, Pacific and disabled people.

### **3. That there should be consistency of policies, principles and strategies for safety developed across the Church with adequate resource supplied to deliver those policies, procedures and strategies and provide for robust accountability and oversight**

We accept and agree with the emphasis in the recommendations upon the need for robust safeguarding policies that protect against abuse. We agree that these policies should cover prevention, response mechanisms, and support systems for survivors and include stricter reporting and accountability measures, including regular audits and public reporting on safeguarding practices.

Up until now, the individual Dioceses and Hui Amorangi which together make up our Province have been responsible for their own policies. With 13 separate bodies involved we recognise the risks of both inconsistency and also variability in capacity for oversight inherent in that system.

During 2025 we will undertake a thorough review of all safety policies across the Church. We believe a province-wide approach is needed. We are working initially to develop a unified set of safety principles and from there ensure policies reflect cultural contexts of the respective Tikanga. Clear communication of these policies will be a priority.

We believe that achieving consistency across the 13 entities in the Core Church will set a standard for all the schools and Social Service agencies which, although independent of the Core Church, seek to use the name of the Anglican Church. We will take advice on the degree to which we can impose requirements on those bodies, many of which are independent charitable trusts.

### **4. That there should be proper handling of complaints and proper redress processes for survivors of abuse**

We accept and agree with the recommendations in that they urge the establishment of independent committees or partnerships with external agencies to ensure accessibility, transparency and accountability in handling complaints, especially abuse allegations, and applications for redress.

We have made changes to our complaints processes over recent years but we have recognised that the most effective response to both complaints and claims for redress will be provided by a body that is independent of the power structures of the church. Accordingly further change is needed. We also recognise that at present there is not a consistent approach across the church to applications for redress.

Improving our response to complaints and claims for redress by survivors of abuse is a high priority for the Church.

We are currently identifying and contracting with such an independent service which will be accessible by email, post, and a 24-hour free telephone service. That independent service will be operational by the first quarter of 2025.

We are awaiting a Government decision whether a state run redress scheme will be introduced and whether that scheme will be compulsory. Pending the Government's decisions in that regard that independent service will receive both complaints and redress claims, provide pastoral care for those approaching the Church and provide assessment and investigation of both complaints and redress claims.

In relation to our response to redress claims following independent assessment we will develop a consistent process for negotiation of restorative outcomes with survivors (including monetary redress payments). Our objective in these situations is to ensure justice within a context which is trauma informed and which prioritises the voice of the survivor.

We will undertake review and amendment of church legislation if needed to embed a more independent disciplinary tribunal process for complaints which relate to misconduct and provide more clarity and accountability in respect of outcomes for occurrences of unsatisfactory conduct.

Data in relation to numbers and types of complaints and redress requests received and outcomes will be regularly reported to our governance body, General Synod, enabling oversight and informed decision-making to improve safeguarding practices.

We will actively promote use of the same independent service by all bodies affiliated to the Church

## **5. That there should be sound vetting and accreditation for all who work with children and vulnerable adults**

We accept and agree with the recommendations which are emphasising the need for thorough and regular vetting of all people who are responsible for ministry to and care of children and vulnerable people and for vetting systems which enable both audit and access to vetting data as people move from place to place.

At present we do not have a consistent and auditable approach to vetting across the whole church.

Given the nature of Christian ministry and our commitment as a church to always be ready to serve all people, including the most vulnerable, we believe that a comprehensive and consistent vetting regime will need to include not only all clergy, paid or unpaid, but also all in lay ministry positions of any kind who minister directly to any age group from children to adults and all volunteers who by reason of their role appear in any way to be clothed with authority or placed in position by the church.

We are currently investigating contracting an independent provider to implement this process. We are conducting trials with the intention that a single background screening and vetting service will be in place by mid-2025.

Given the significant number of volunteers in our Church, we will take a phased approach, prioritizing those in higher-risk roles.

We will strongly encourage our affiliated schools and social care providers to review and strengthen their vetting processes, in line with government requirements and relevant recommendations.

We will also welcome any state run accreditation programme which can provide reliable input into our vetting regime.

## **6. That there should be comprehensive training for safety at every level of the Church**

We accept and agree with all the recommendations which represent best practice in training.

Up until now, individual Dioceses and Hui Amorangi have been responsible for training for ministry and in relation to safety. There has been no provincial oversight of the content or depth of delivery of training.

We recognise in a disaggregated church organisation like the Anglican Church the need for and challenge of achieving consistency in both development of content and delivery of training.

We are committed to review the development of all the training offered across the church to implement these recommendations and will report regularly and specifically as to our progress in this regard.

## **7. That the Church should adopt best practice in data collection and record-keeping**

We accept and agree with the recommendations which promote the creation of full, accurate and accessible data systems which are properly maintained.

Currently our data and record keeping in relation to personnel, disciplinary issues, complaints and matters of concern is held within each Diocese and Hui Amorangi across our Church and is often in poorly indexed forms, meaning that access to data and records can both difficult and unreliable.

We are therefore committed to centralising collection and analysis of data on abuse and misconduct. Centralised record keeping will support the identification and management of risks posed by individuals in religious or pastoral roles, ensuring proactive responses to safeguarding concerns.

We will adopt best practice guidelines for record-keeping and data sovereignty. We recognize the importance of creating and maintaining full, accurate, and objective records that reflect incidents and responses related to abuse, neglect, and overall wellbeing.

These records will be stored securely, indexed logically, and maintained to ensure the integrity and accessibility of information over time. We will also prioritize individuals' rights to access, amend, or annotate their own records and will establish procedures to retain records of abuse and neglect for at least 75 years to allow for delayed disclosures and facilitate claims for redress or civil litigation.

We have begun by ensuring that all contemporary complaints, and redress settlements are recorded centrally. In the case of complaints of Misconduct that are upheld these decisions are publicly notified. Gradually other records such as Clearances for Safe Ministry and Professional Standards training records for lay and ordained ministers of our Church will be centrally maintained.

## **8. Other Recommendations**

### **a) Church related Recommendations**

There are two further specific recommendations which apply to the Church in relation to review of memorials and assistance to police in historical abuse investigations.

We will circularise all churches and schools along with those care institutions still operating which are affiliated to the Anglican Church asking them to review all memorials and other means of remembrance of names of people associated with their own history or the history of the Church.

We will give every assistance we can to the police within the five legal jurisdictions (Aotearoa New Zealand and across Polynesia) in which the Church operates in any investigations of historical abuse.

### **b) Recommendations in relation to Government action**

We note the significant number of recommendations of the Royal Commission which call for a wide range of specific Government actions. Some of the Government's decisions in relation to those recommendations will directly impact upon churches, faith-based schools and other parts of the charitable sector affiliated to our church who serve children, young people and vulnerable adults.

We acknowledge and affirm the overarching intention of those recommendations to create a safer environment across our whole society, including within faith based settings. We await the Government's decisions in relation to those recommendations. We cannot respond to them without seeing the detail of the measures intended to be implemented.

We do ask that the government specifically consider the large numbers of volunteers involved within the charitable sector, schools, and churches as it determines the regulatory requirements it imposes.

We also ask that there is greater clarity provided through careful work in definitions so that bodies such as the Church and its affiliated schools and organisations can identify where the Government's requirements will impact upon them. Specifically we ask for clarity of the extent and scope of the term "in care".

We note that recommendation 8 of the Puretumu Torowhanui Report emphasises that the Crown should consult with those whom its actions will impact. We are more than willing to participate in any consultation process.

## **9. Conclusion**

This response marks the beginning of a long journey towards transformation. We are committed to ensuring that our Church becomes a place where all people—precious in the sight of God—can flourish in safety and dignity.

We will continue to report on our progress, demonstrate our commitment to implementing the recommendations, and work towards a Church that upholds the highest standards of care and accountability.

We acknowledge the serious flaws in our past, but we are resolute in our commitment to create a safer, more accountable future for all those in our care.

**Archbishop Don Tamihere**

**Archbishop Justin Duckworth**

**Archbishop Sione Ulu'ilakepa**