

Council News



Presbyterian Church
of Aotearoa New Zealand

Council of Assembly met on Wednesday 31 July.

Among other matters it considered the Abuse in Care Report from the Royal Commission: [*Whanaketia – Through pain and trauma, from darkness to light. Whakairihia ki te tihi o Maunqārongo.*](#)

The report is the culmination of six years' work, and it contains harrowing stories of abuse in state and faith-based organisations, including the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand. It is difficult to read but we encourage you to do so.

Council is grateful for the [*pastoral letter to the Church from the Moderator.*](#)

Council noted the Commission's *Recommendation 3* concerning public acknowledgement for historic abuse should be made to survivors, their whanau and support networks and that our Moderator of the General Assembly, Rt Rev Rose Luxford, is to undertake this on our behalf.

We welcome the opportunity to give a meaningful apology that will be developed and agreed with a representative group of survivors.

Council noted two recommendations in particular from the Commission's 138 recommendations. Recommendations 130 and 131 concern transparency and public accountability for implementing the inquiry recommendations. They state:

- *Tūtohi | Recommendation 130*

The government and faith-based institutions should publish their responses to this report and the Inquiry's interim reports on whether they accept each of the Inquiry's findings in whole or in part, and the reasons for any disagreement. The responses should be published within two months of this report being tabled in the House of Representatives.

This will include specific findings relating to the Presbyterian Church.

- *Tūtohi | Recommendation 131*

The government and faith-based institutions should issue formal public responses to this report about whether each Recommendation is accepted, accepted in principle, rejected or subject to further consideration. Each response should include a plan for how the accepted Recommendations will be implemented, the reasons for rejecting any Recommendations, and a timeframe for any further consideration required. Each response should be published within four months of this report being tabled in the House of Representatives.

To assist it in this important work, Council has moved quickly and approved a task group on behalf of the Presbyterian Church, who will fully consider the report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care, including recommendations 130 and 131. They will identify the matters that need attention by the Church, recommend to the Council of Assembly steps to be taken by the Church to attend to those matters, monitor initial progress in implementing necessary steps, and report regularly and in a timely way to the Council of Assembly. This process will ensure the Church meets all deadlines for reporting. The Task Group is to communicate, consult, and take advice as it sees fit.

The task group will be convened by Rev Dr Bonnie Robinson - Research and Justice Stream Lead and Director of the Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit, Salvation Army and the members are Dr Jean Mitaera - Chief Advisor, Centre for Pacific Health & Social Practice, WelTec and Whitieria; Associate Professor Dr Anna High – lecturer in law at Otago University; Rev Tamiana Thrupp – Moderator Te Aka Puahou; Rev Mitch Jarman - Amorangi Te Aka Puahou and Dr Michelle Egan-Bitran - Safeguarding Consultant for Safeguarding Children.

The group will report to Council so that it can consider their advice and respond to both the findings and recommendations in a timely manner.

Our responses will be shared with the wider Church and published.

Let us continue to hold in our prayers those who have been so badly impacted by actions from within our denomination, and all survivors, also the members of the Commission, government agencies and those who take this forward.

Council invites congregations in their gathered church worship services to use the [litany](#) provided by our Moderator.



Mrs Kat Solomona
Convener
Council of Assembly