

# Te Rōpū Tautoko

## *Catholic Support Group for the Royal Commission into Abuse in Care*

28 June 2019

### **Message of Support for the Royal Commission into Abuse in Care from Te Rōpū Tautoko on behalf of the Catholic Bishops and Religious Congregational Leaders**

#### **Background**

The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Historical Abuse in State Care and in the Care of Faith-based Institutions held a preliminary hearing on Tuesday 25 June 2019.

The Catholic Bishops and Religious Congregational Leaders of the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand offer their full support to the principles and aims of the Commission outlined in the Hearing. The Church's leaders will actively cooperate with the Commission having supported the need for the Inquiry and advocated for the inclusion of faith-based institutions.

The Inquiry is a chance for the Church's leadership to accept that there have been failures to put victims first. It is a chance to recommit to care, to apologise, and to do better.

#### **What is Te Rōpū Tautoko?**

Te Rōpū Tautoko (*Support Group*), referred to as 'Tautoko', has been established to coordinate and manage cooperation between the Commission and the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Through Tautoko, the Bishops and Congregational Leaders of the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand will participate in the processes of the Inquiry.

#### **Survivor participation**

As part of the ongoing Inquiry process, the Commissioners strongly encouraged survivors of abuse, who feel that they are able, to come forward and engage with the Royal Commission. Survivors can engage with the Inquiry by registering on the website: [www.abuseinstatecare.royalcommission.govt.nz](http://www.abuseinstatecare.royalcommission.govt.nz). Tautoko fully supports and encourages survivors to engage with the Commissioners.

We acknowledge that the Inquiry process may be difficult or may be impossible for some. For those who don't feel that they are able to participate in the Inquiry, there are other ways to share and get support:

- There are several survivor support groups around the country that can be located online.
- The New Zealand Police publish advice for victims of crime on their website: [www.police.govt.nz/advice/victims](http://www.police.govt.nz/advice/victims)
- The Church has a specialist team to support those making complaints about abuse in the Church and to investigate instances of abuse or safeguarding concerns. The National Office for Professional Standards can be contacted on 0800 114 622.
- People can contact any bishop or religious congregation directly to discuss issues, make complaints, and/or share their experiences.

Te Rōpū Tautoko recognises that the way to learn lessons for today and the future is to examine, understand and address what has occurred. The Church will take the opportunity to listen to the survivor voice of the Inquiry process, to learn, and grow from the process. We must all, collectively, work towards healing and transformation.

Catherine Fyfe  
Chair  
Te Rōpū Tautoko



# Update

Welcome to the third Te Rōpū Tautoko ('Tautoko') newsletter. You are receiving this update to provide you with both information and guidance on the process currently underway through the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Historical Abuse in State Care and Faith-based Institutions ('the Commission').

Established by the Catholic bishops and religious congregational leaders in New Zealand, Tautoko has been created to ensure a coordinated and cooperative response to the Commission from the many parts of the Church. Through the process of the Commission, supported by Tautoko, the Church wishes to learn and continue to work towards healing, so that abuse of any kind in the Church never happens again.

## Update on the Commission

The Commission has continued its large task with a recent focus on starting private meetings with survivors and a preliminary Public Hearing to launch the public side of the Commission.

The preliminary Public Hearing on 25 June 2019 was held to introduce the Commissioners, to set out progress the Commission has made to date, and to summarise the way the Commission will go about the work of the Inquiry.

## Preliminary Public Hearing

While the preliminary Public Hearing had many themes, some key messages were:

- This Inquiry is unlike any other ever established in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- The Terms of Reference are wide ranging and include State and Faith-based Institutions
- The Commissioners expect to engage with thousands of both state and faith-based survivors over the course of the Inquiry.

- The Inquiry has a very clear survivor-focus and Commissioners want to hear from as many survivors as possible, including those from traditionally hard to reach groups and communities.
- There is an expectation that recommendations from the Commission will be considered and implemented as and when they are made.
- Recognition that these issues and therefore the Commission's focus is not just historical.
- The Commissioners' eyes are firmly on the present and future and they have a vision to transform care with the Inquiry being a "turning point in the history of care".
- The Chair, Sir Anand Satyanand, stated: "It will not be easy; it will not be quick. But it is necessary for us as a nation to move forward. This is your Commission. We need the support of New Zealanders in order for the Commission to make a mark and transform how we care for our children."

## Support for the Commission

Tautoko Chair, Catherine Fyfe, has written a message of support for the work of the Commission and this is enclosed with this newsletter. Tautoko, on behalf of the Catholic Bishops and Congregational Leaders, offer full support for the work of the Commission.

## How will the Commission work?

The Commission will work in four ways:

- (i) Private sessions,
- (ii) Public hearings and round tables
- (iii) Research and policy
- (iv) Outreach and community engagement

All public Hearings will be broadcast live on the Commission Website:

[www.abuseinstatecare.royalcommission.govt.nz](http://www.abuseinstatecare.royalcommission.govt.nz)

The preliminary Public Hearing recording and transcripts of the presentations can be found on this website now.

The Commission will base its work on 8 Pou (Pillars) for investigations and public hearings:

1. Voice
2. Circumstances of going into care
3. Extent of abuse
4. Impact of abuse
5. Systemic factors
6. Redress and rehabilitation
7. Transformation of how we care
8. Te Tiriti o Waitangi

The first time the Commission will hear from Tautoko and the Church will be at a Hearing scheduled for August. This will be an opportunity for those organisations that the Commission determines are Core Participants to address any issues of concern and generally express support of the Commission to them publicly.

At this point we will need to explain the structure of the Catholic Church in Aotearoa. There will be a lengthier hearing in October/November 2019. Details of this are yet to be announced.

## Information gathering & retention

We have completed the process of gathering initial information to Tautoko on the scope of care in “in-scope” institutions run by dioceses and congregations between 1950 and 1999. We have received information on over 130 Catholic Institutions that are likely to be in-scope at this stage.

Thanks to all the dioceses and congregations for responding. We are also aware that other Catholic institutions and contexts are potentially to be the matter of the Commission’s focus. Over time, this will become clearer.

The next stages of the Information Gathering Project will be:

- a) to identify gaps in the data and how to fill those,
- b) seek more details on in-scope institutions,
- c) continue to build the general picture of

Catholic institutions in preparation for the August Hearing, and;  
d) gain more information on where and how clergy and religious were formed and trained.

We remind all organisations that it is vital to retain all records that might have relevance to the Commission’s Inquiry. In this early stage of review and collation, please be very mindful of keeping any and all records secure, particularly that of personal information, in observance of the Privacy Act 1993.

## Communications

As we start on this very important work, it will be critical that information between agencies within the Church and the Commission is as timely and comprehensive as possible. Tautoko members have agreed to principles of communication which will ensure transparency, responsiveness and integrity throughout this process.

Please be in contact with the Tautoko Project Manager, David Mullin, if you have any questions or need clarification. David can be contacted at [davidm@tautoko.catholic.org.nz](mailto:davidm@tautoko.catholic.org.nz)

## Next steps

The Commissioners and their team have started their important work and Tautoko continue to prepare the ground for a thorough, transparent, and timely response from the Church.

The work of Tautoko for the next two months will be focused on listening to the voices of survivors as the Commission shares the History, preparing for the August and October/November Hearings, and preparing for a further Tautoko meeting in August, where members will consolidate our knowledge and experiences into a response that calls us all to change, do better, and to “transformation”.

Let us pray for the Commission and for those they committed to listen to and respond to - those wounded in the care of the Church, other Faith-based institutions, in State care, and in the community.