

**UNDER** the Inquiries Act 2013  
**IN THE MATTER** of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Historical Abuse  
in State Care and in the Care of Faith-based Institutions

---

**ROYAL COMMISSION INTO ABUSE: MĀORI HEARING**

**OPENING STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF  
THE BISHOPS AND CONGREGATIONAL LEADERS OF THE CATHOLIC  
CHURCH IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND**

---

**7 March 2022**

---

 **Simpson Grierson**  
Barristers & Solicitors

Sally McKechnie  
Telephone: +64 4 499 4599  
Email: [sally.mckechnie@simpsongrierson.com](mailto:sally.mckechnie@simpsongrierson.com)  
Wellington

James Meager  
+64 3 968 4061  
[james.meager@simpsongrierson.com](mailto:james.meager@simpsongrierson.com)

**To:** The Chair and Commissioners

**Tuia ki te rangi, tuia ki te whenua, tuia ki te here tangata. Tēnā tātou katoa.**

*Bind it to the heavens, bind it to the land, bind it to all people. Greetings.*

**Ka haere ngā mihi ki a Ngāti Whātua Ōrakei kua whakatau nei i a mātou.**

*I send greetings to Ngāti Whātua Ōrakei who have “settled”(welcomed) us.*

**E mihi ana ki ngā Kaikomihana e whakahaere ngā ahuatanga o to tātou huihuinga.**

*Greetings to the Commissioners who preside over these proceedings.*

**Ka nui rawa ngā mihi ki ngā purapura ora me te tino mihi i to rātou kaha, māia, manawatīti hoki ki te whakatokoto i a rātou korero kia mōhio whānuitia mai i o rātou mamae.**

*[Generous/great] greetings to the survivors, especially acknowledging their courage to share their stories so that their hurt may be made known.*

**Nei rā te mihi o ngā Pīhopa o te Hāhi Katorika me ngā Kaiarahi o Ngā Rōpū Whakapono ki Aotearoa, e kīia nei ko “Te Rōpū Tautoko”**

*I bring the greetings of Te Rōpū Tautoko, the Catholic Bishops and Congregational Leaders of New Zealand.*

**Ko James Meager ahau, ko ahau tētahi o ngā roia mō te Te Rōpū Tautoko.**

*I am James Meager, counsel for Te Rōpū Tautoko*

**Nō reira tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.**

*Greetings, greetings, greetings.*

1. Commissioners, my name is James Meager and I appear as counsel for Te Rōpū Tautoko, on behalf of the Catholic bishops and congregational leaders of Aotearoa New Zealand. We acknowledge Commissioners, survivors and their whānau, survivor networks, Counsel Assisting, fellow counsel, and all those watching elsewhere on the livestream.

2. We acknowledge that this hearing is being held during troubling times for our country. COVID-19 has impacted the ability for this hearing to physically take place on marae, and it has impacted the ability for survivors and advocates to be physically present to take part in this hearing.
3. COVID-19 has also restricted the ability for representatives of the Catholic Church to be present in person and to bear witness to survivor experiences. Please be reassured that the leadership of the Church are watching these proceedings through livestream and are listening to what survivors have to say.
4. Commissioners, while the Catholic Church will be playing a relatively minor role in this hearing, it acknowledges that many Māori were, in a variety of ways, in the care of representatives of the Catholic Church since the first Catholic missionaries arrived in New Zealand from the early 1800s. To the Church's great shame and sorrow, Māori are among those subject to harm and abuse while in the care of the Church.
5. The Catholic Church has a long history of working with Māori. Many of the first missions to New Zealand were for the express purpose of supporting Māori women, for example. Many Māori share the Catholic faith, and there is a great sadness felt that the Church has failed Māori in its care, leading to loss of faith and identity.
6. The Church sought to participate in this hearing in order to tautoko this kaupapa, acknowledge the mana of Māori survivors, and to continue to encourage survivors to come forward.
7. The Church acknowledges that a lack of information about the whakapapa of children who were placed into its care means we will likely never know the extent of harm suffered by Māori within the Catholic Church.
8. And we do know that harm did occur, not just physical, sexual, or emotional, but also cultural harm. The lack of recognition of whakapapa in itself is a cause of trauma. This has been a theme of previous hearings of this Inquiry. The Church hopes that through this dedicated Māori hearing, it can continue to learn how to respond to complaints of abuse

in a culturally appropriate way which enhances and respects the mana of survivors.

9. Finally, the Church acknowledges all survivors and especially those survivors who will share their experiences of harm in Catholic institutions. Church leaders and others involved with these institutions will be watching and listening to their testimony. As is appropriate, the Church will not be asking any questions of survivors, but that should not be seen in any way as reducing the Church's commitment to listening to these voices, and all survivor voices.

**Ko te pae tawhiti, whaia kia tata. Ko te pae tata, whaia kia tina.**

*May we seek far horizons, that we might draw near. For those that are near, may they be cherished.*

**No reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.**

Date: 7 March 2022

---

S V McKechnie / J R Meager

Counsel for Te Rōpū Tautoko, on behalf of the Bishops and Congregational Leaders of the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand