

Theme Three: Assisting Recovery from Historical Abuse

Recommendation No.3: Collaborate with survivors.

“We recommend that the Dilworth Trust Board consults widely and collaborates with abused former students and families and whānau of deceased former students who were or are suspected of having been abused, and works with them to identify what steps are needed to supplement the current redress programme and to help them and the wider Dilworth community to heal and move forward.”

Progress to date

In 2018, the Board made a commitment to address issues of historical abuse openly and honestly. Following this in 2019, the Board established the independent Listening Service for former students and others affected by the abuse. The Listening Service has offered fully funded professional psychological support for former students and, in some cases, their family members who have been impacted.

In early 2022, the Dilworth Trust Board established Dilworth Response, resourcing an executive team to support a thorough response to historical abuse.

A survivor-informed and survivor-focused framework was employed for the design of the independent Dilworth Redress Programme, which began its work in August 2022. The design work, which began in 2021, incorporated feedback amongst others from former students, including those who were abused, the wider Dilworth community, and local and international experts in sexual abuse. It is the first programme of its type in New Zealand. The team of Redress Facilitators who support former students through the redress process have a background in social work with decades of experience working with survivors of abuse. Go to: <https://dilworthredress.org.nz/>.

In September 2023, the Trust Board resourced Dilworth Response to continue to provide alternative support pathways to all former students who suffered abuse, including those whose experience may not sit within the Terms of Reference of the independent Redress Programme, or who may not wish to engage with the Programme. This redress pathway is available by emailing: support@dilworthresponse.org.nz

In addition, the Redress Programme has established and recruited a new Programme Care & Support role, adding another experienced practitioner who is a New Zealand registered social worker with sexual abuse support experience, to supplement the team of Redress Facilitators working in support of the wellbeing of the applicants and their families.

Next steps

The Dilworth Trust Board will continue to encourage former students who suffered abuse to consider accessing the independent Redress Programme, as well as alternative support pathways. It will also continue to support the Listening Service for all former students who need support.

Dilworth Response will work with all interested survivors and former students to listen to and acknowledge what they have to say about how best to engage with the Trust Board to address the matters set out in Recommendations 3 and 4.

Recommendation No.4: Heal rifts within the former students' community.

“We recommend that the Dilworth Trust Board works to improve its relationship with all former students of the school.”

Progress to date

The Dilworth Trust Board reviewed its processes for relating to all former students in 2022 and instigated a number of initiatives.

This included support for the Dilworth Old Boys' Association (DOBA) which, while independent of the Trust Board, receives financial support from the Board as well as access to School facilities from time to time.

In 2022 the Trust Board appointed a Young Alumni Officer who will continue to work with recent former students, and in May 2023 appointed a Director of Advancement with a remit for developing alumni relations. The new Director of Advancement has commenced building relationships with DOBA and other members of the Dilworth community. The goal is to bring a more professional, long term approach to Dilworth's engagement with its alumni community into the future.

Dilworth Response also continues to ensure there is active engagement with former students who were abused, through these and other informal channels.

Next steps

Dilworth is committed to supporting the building of bridges between the various communities of former students, and engaging more comprehensively with all those who wish to remain involved with their School.

The Board will work with the former student community in scoping and designing what this relationship might look like. A strategic stakeholder engagement framework under development will play an important role in this work.