

# Chapter Nine

## 2019–2023

Headmaster Dan Reddiex  
and Board chair Aaron Snodgrass

### Introduction

- 9.1 The Inquiry is not aware of any sexual or serious physical abuse perpetrated by a staff member since 2018,<sup>1115</sup> and the Inquiry has received no registrations from students who have made complaints of serious physical abuse or sexual abuse by staff from that date to today.
- 9.2 There has been a major and concerted effort by the Board, in particular its chair Mr Aaron Snodgrass, and by school leadership to change the school culture to comply with international best practice for the protection of children living in residential educational institutions. The programme they have implemented is discussed in chapter 10.
- 9.3 The Board as of May 2023 comprises four members: Mr Snodgrass (appointed to the Board in 2013 and chair from 2018), Mr Peter Alexander (appointed March 2017), Mr Jonathan Mason (appointed March 2019) and Mr Leo Foliaki (appointed February 2022). There are two vacancies.
- 9.4 Since Mr Dan Reddiex took over as headmaster, complaints have been made against two teachers for historical abuse. The school leadership and Board were first made aware of complaints against these staff members during Mr MacLean's era.

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<sup>1115</sup> The abuse involved the sending of explicit sexual online messages to a student by a non-teaching staff member: Response by Dilworth School to Notice to Produce No 1, 31 March 2020.

## Dan Reddiex as headmaster

- 9.5 Mr Reddiex started as headmaster in April 2019 after working at three state boys' secondary schools, the last of which was King's High School, Dunedin, where he was headmaster for 11 years. The first two schools he taught at had boarding facilities.
- 9.6 Mr Reddiex told the Inquiry that the Board had disclosed the fact of historical abuse at Dilworth as part of the interview process and that the school's ongoing response was a key component of his work as headmaster when he started and has remained a major part of his duties. Mr Reddiex said the message to both the current school community and former students has been that the school wanted to lead with values of transparency and honesty.<sup>1116</sup> The Inquiry has heard from members of both groups that his actions have been consistent with this message.
- 9.7 In chapter 10, we discuss the significant amount of safeguarding policy and procedure work done by the school under the Board's leadership during this period. We also discuss feedback from current students and families and whānau about the change they have seen in the school under Mr Reddiex's leadership. All of those we spoke to were positive about his leadership, with several parents pointing to this as the single most significant positive change for the school.

## School response to complaint of abuse during this period

- 9.8 The school received one complaint of student-on-student abuse in this period, and we are satisfied that the manner in which this difficult complaint was managed was appropriate. The complaint was promptly referred to police, and both students were well supported. While inevitably they will be seriously affected by this matter, the school acted impartially and with both boys' interests at the forefront of its actions.

## School response to historical complaints

- 9.9 Between March 2019 and January 2023, about 18 complaints of historical sexual abuse and six of historical serious physical abuse were made to the school or the Board.<sup>1117</sup> Former students have been offered the chance to meet Mr Reddiex or Mr Snodgrass in person, and on one occasion the Board.<sup>1118</sup> Former students have been referred to the Listening Service and, as far as we can ascertain, offered an apology for their experiences made by the school representative.

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<sup>1116</sup> Dan Reddiex Inquiry interview.

<sup>1117</sup> The data was drawn from several different documents with limited information recorded as to the nature of the complaint in some cases. We were advised of complaints up to 11 January 2023.

<sup>1118</sup> As at November 2022, five former students have taken Mr Reddiex up on the offer to meet in person: D Reddiex Inquiry interview. Student DY met with the Board in August 2019.

- 9.10 The Inquiry received correspondence that was critical of the school response to one former student in this period. He had written an email to the headmaster in March 2021 disclosing the abuse he had suffered at school and criticisms of how the school had handled the situation. Mr Reddiex responded immediately. He offered to speak to the former student as well as referring him to the Listening Service.<sup>1119</sup> The former student responded and asked that his email be passed on to the Board.
- 9.11 There was no response from the Board for three months, apparently due to absences. When Mr Snodgrass responded on behalf of the Board he apologised for the delay and advised that the Board wanted to respond to the former student in a “way which will best acknowledge his experiences while at school and apologise”.<sup>1120</sup> He offered the Listening Service. The student interpreted the response as pro forma and it triggered his trauma at how the school handled his initial complaint when he was a student, causing considerable distress.
- 9.12 While the school was in uncharted territory in managing the fallout from Operation Beverly and did its best, there was an unfortunate time gap in the Board response. In hindsight, recognising how vulnerable and fragile some former survivors of abuse will always be, the Board could have ensured a nominated trauma-qualified person was available promptly to talk with former students. In this instance, this person was already registered with the Listening Service. It was the Board, not the school or the Listening Service, that he wanted a response from.

## Events leading to the school making a police referral in June 2019

- 9.13 Before Mr Reddiex’s appointment, on 29 January 2019, Reverend John Payne and another church official met with the Dilworth general manager to advise that they had become aware that a group of former students had been abused at the school between 2004 and 2005 at the hands of, or through the involvement of, Mr Ross Browne, and that the boys in the group, all of whom were of Māori descent, were suffering. A second meeting was held to discuss how the school might be able to assist the former students. The school offered the former students access to the confidential Listening Service. This was reiterated in a letter from the chair of the Board, Mr Snodgrass.<sup>1121</sup> It was also at this second meeting that the school was advised that Mr Browne was working as a vicar in a parish in Manurewa.

<sup>1119</sup> The student had been referred to the Listening Service before this email and went on to receive 19 individual sessions of therapy with a clinical psychologist.

<sup>1120</sup> Letter to former student. Further details omitted to prevent identification.

<sup>1121</sup> Letter from Aaron Snodgrass to church representative, 8 March 2019.

- 9.14 Mr Snodgrass met with Bishop Ross Bay in February and March 2019 to discuss the issues raised by Reverend Payne. There was further contact in May 2019 when Mr Snodgrass became aware that Mr Browne was still involved as a director of the Gang Show, a Scouts production.
- 9.15 The church took the view that as Mr Browne had been placed in St Lukes' parish with knowledge of events leading to his resignation from Dilworth, it would need a new or further complaint of criminal behaviour to remove Mr Browne from his position.<sup>1122</sup> Bishop Bay also stressed that, as vicar, Mr Browne "did not interact with children or have direct supervision of them".
- 9.16 On 17 June 2019, Mr Snodgrass wrote to the bishop, outlining the previous contact between them. In essence, the school, having previously dealt with Mr Browne in 2006 on the basis that his actions did not constitute criminal offending, had now reached a different assessment. Mr Snodgrass advised the bishop that Dilworth was not comfortable waiting until a further complaint was made, and the school would be bringing its concerns to the attention of police and Oranga Tamariki.<sup>1123</sup>
- 9.17 On the same day, on behalf of the Board, the general manager wrote a letter addressed to Oranga Tamariki and police registering Dilworth's concern that a child or young person may have been or was likely to be at risk of harm. The letter outlined the circumstances of Mr Browne's resignation from Dilworth following complaints of "serious sexual misconduct", which had then been notified to the Teachers' Council.<sup>1124</sup> The letter was accompanied by the staff file of Mr Browne and a report that had been prepared by the independent clinical psychologist retained by the Board to advise it.
- 9.18 The letter records the school's concern that Mr Browne had been employed as a vicar in the Manurewa parish in 2009, despite Bishop John Paterson's knowledge of the circumstances surrounding his resignation from Dilworth and that he remained in that position. The school also noted its disquiet that Mr Browne had retained an ongoing involvement as a director in the Gang Show.<sup>1125</sup>

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1122 As advised to Mr Snodgrass in the May 2019 meeting and restated in letter from Bishop Ross Bay to Aaron Snodgrass, 26 June 2019.

1123 Letter from Aaron Snodgrass to Bishop Ross Bay, 17 June 2019.

1124 Letter from the Dilworth general manager to New Zealand Police and Oranga Tamariki, 17 June 2019.

1125 A Gang Show is a theatrical performance by members of Scouts Aotearoa.

- 9.19 The letter was also sent to Bishop Bay. Bishop Bay's response to all parties observed that the church had not been advised in 2006 by the school of "complaints of serious sexual misconduct" in relation to Mr Browne.<sup>1126</sup> The school had in fact described Mr Browne's conduct in 2006 as "complaints of professional misconduct which were not of a criminal nature, had taken place some time ago and did not appear to have been repeated since".<sup>1127</sup>
- 9.20 Bishop Bay advised that based on the information held by the church, he had not considered there was sufficient cause to remove Mr Browne from his current position. He sought any further information held by Dilworth, New Zealand Police and Oranga Tamariki on the detail of the complaints against Mr Browne, which would bear on Mr Browne's fitness to hold office, but received no further information.<sup>1128</sup>

## Establishment of the Listening Service

- 9.21 On 10 September 2019, a letter was sent to former students<sup>1129</sup> and posted on the Dilworth Old Boys' Association website, acknowledging the school's awareness of historical abuse and apologising for it. The school also advised that it "had taken constructive and positive steps to address the wrongs of the past and to ensure that the students of today and tomorrow are cared for in a safe environment".<sup>1130</sup> Former students were advised that a listening service had been established, providing and paying for psychological therapy by an independent clinical psychologist for any former student.
- 9.22 The letter was followed by a meeting, held just before the school's centenary celebrations, with former students who wished to attend. At the meeting, Mr Snodgrass and Mr Reddiex apologised for the historical abuse that had occurred and they, together with Dr Fred Seymour, a member of the Listening Service panel, discussed the steps being taken by the school and the support available to former students through the Listening Service.<sup>1131</sup>

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1126 Letter from Bishop Ross Bay to Oranga Tamariki and New Zealand Police, 26 June 2019, and a separate letter to Dilworth Trust Board chair Aaron Snodgrass, 26 June 2019.

1127 Citing the letter from Dilworth Trust Board chair John Potter to Bishop John Paterson, 6 March 2006.

1128 Letter from Bishop Ross Bay to Oranga Tamariki and New Zealand Police, 26 June 2019. The church also told the Inquiry that Bishop Bay's subsequent written and oral requests to Dilworth for information about Mr Browne were declined. The Bishop said Dilworth advised him it could not disclose the information because of the confidentiality of complainants. The information was also, therefore, not available for consideration in the church's 2022 inquiry into Mr Browne's conduct.

1129 The school advises it was sent to all students for whom contact details could be located.

1130 Covering letter to Dilworth's response to the Royal Commission of Inquiry Notice to Produce No 2, 1 August 2020.

1131 Dilworth School: Response to Notice to Produce No 2, Schedule A(1), 25 May 2020.

## Operation Beverly

- 9.23 Following the school's notification and provision of Mr Browne's file and information collated by it, a preliminary investigation commenced into complaints about Ross Browne. In April 2020, police began an investigation, named Operation Beverly, into historical sexual offending when it became clear that there had been multiple offenders operating at Dilworth.
- 9.24 On 14 September 2020, the first round of arrests of five former staff and one Dilworth scout volunteer was announced publicly. By the beginning of 2023, 11 former staff members and one Dilworth volunteer had been charged in relation to 56 former students.<sup>1132</sup> This does not include earlier charges laid against Mr Ian Wilson, Mr Keith Dixon, Staff Member RZ, Staff Member TS and Mr Peter Taylor for abuse of other students.

## Dilworth response

- 9.25 Over the last five years, the Board has had a major, overarching challenge to manage its response to the historical sexual abuse notifications.
- 9.26 The Inquiry was told that at the beginning that the Board instructed several consultants. On the basis of their advice, a decision was made to establish an independent inquiry and an independent redress programme. The Board has also continued to fund the independent listening service. The decision to establish both responses is admirable. The Board has fully funded them and in doing so, has shown a real commitment to attempting to understand what went wrong and to make amends for its past failures.
- 9.27 For the duration of the Inquiry, the Board's primary consultants appear to have been a psychologist with expertise in the incidence and impact of sexual abuse, a law firm led by a lawyer with a background in commercial law and in some faith-based redress programmes, two barristers and a public relations company.

## Independent Inquiry

- 9.28 The terms of reference for the Inquiry were negotiated between the Board's lawyers and four law firms acting for some of the former abused students. We were advised by both the school and the law firm acting pro bono for the 130 survivors who are part of the class action, that relationships between them had been fraught at times during this negotiation.
- 9.29 This Inquiry started its work on 1 July 2022.

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<sup>1132</sup> Information provided by New Zealand Police, 26 January 2023.

## Inquiry–Board relationship

9.30 Despite this being an independent inquiry, it has been fully funded by the Board and the contracts of the Inquirers and those contracted to assist the Inquiry are with the Board, although Inquiry staff are answerable to the Inquirers. Apart from some difficulties in obtaining access to documents, the Inquiry has been well supported by the Board. In its early stages, it received efficient, cooperative and expert support from the Former Dilworth response director.<sup>1133</sup> She enabled the smooth creation of employment contracts, funding, budgeting and the design of the wellness support unit. The Inquiry has received ongoing ready facilitation of its support requirements, enabling it to focus on the task it was given.

## Establishment of a redress scheme

- 9.31 Work started on establishing the Dilworth Independent Redress Programme in early 2021. The programme was launched on 29 August 2022. Mr Snodgrass told the Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry that the work was substantially informed by the Royal Commission’s report *He Purapura Ora, he Māra Tipu*,<sup>1134</sup> as well as consideration of programmes in overseas jurisdictions.
- 9.32 Draft terms of reference were created by Dilworth’s advisors and circulated to some groups of survivors for comment. A revised version was then placed on a website and wider feedback invited.
- 9.33 The process of formal consultation started on 15 March 2022 and feedback was accepted through until the end of April 2022.
- 9.34 Further changes were made to the terms of reference before they were publicly released on 4 August 2022.
- 9.35 The next chapter describes and discusses the policy developed and the changes made since 2018 to the culture of the school. The Board, led by its chair, Mr Snodgrass, has initiated a process that has and will transform the way in which the school manages its responsibilities to the students, current and future. The headmaster, staff and parents have shown real commitment to supporting the Board to bring about many significant improvements. This has meant a massive workload, particularly for the headmaster and Mr Snodgrass who led the Board response to Operation Beverly, to address the many issues that have arisen at the same time as embarking on a major undertaking to radically change the culture of the school to ensure current and future students are protected from abuse. The headmaster, in addition to his regular duties, has been heavily involved in implementing the many innovations.

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1133 Former Dilworth Response director Brigid Inder is an expert in the international justice sector in peace building, peace negotiations and reparations.

1134 Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry, *He Purapura Ora, he Māra Tipu: From Redress to Pūretumu Torowhānui* (vols 1 and 2), 2021.

- 9.36 The Board and its chair are to be commended for their energy, commitment and willingness to assume weighty, unexpected responsibilities since the fallout from Operation Beverly and their achievements in this short period are creditable. We have made recommendations about what additional work needs to be done, particularly at Board level, to ensure the Board failings of the past are not repeated. It is our view that, in addition to the school's student safety programme, only with the changes we recommend, will the school be able to move into the future unencumbered by the tragic events that occurred in much of its previous 70 years.