

# Pānui newsletter about the Crown response to the Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry

17 September 2025

This pānui/newsletter is from the Crown Response Office, a government agency established to coordinate, monitor and report on the government’s response to the Royal Commission. The office is hosted by the Public Service Commission.

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Alternate formats of the pānui newsletter can be found on the Crown Response Office website, short address to type into a website is here: <https://tinyurl.com/24mbbs9c>

In this newsletter you will find updates on the:

* Appointment of the Ministerial Advisory Group
* Appointment of Survivor Experiences Board member

## Appointment of members to a Ministerial Advisory Group

Members of a Ministerial Advisory Group have been appointed to provide the Lead Coordination Minister and other relevant Ministers with independent advice on the Crown’s response to abuse in care.

The members of the group are: Alana Ruakere (Chair), Gary Williams KSO MNZM (Ngati Porou), Dr Valerie Tan JP, Paul Gibson QSO, Helen Leahy, David Crichton, Frances Tagaloa KSO, Linda Surtees MNZM.

### Biographies for Ministerial Advisory Group Members

Alana Ruakere, Chair

Alana Ruakere is currently Pou Tū Kūrae (Chief Executive) of Tui Ora, Taranaki’s largest Māori health and social service provider where she leads integrated services across mental health, primary care, disability, and whānau wellbeing. As a former Director of the Crown Response Unit, Alana led the initial government response to the Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry, coordinating across agencies.

David Crichton, Member

David Crichton is a survivor of State and faith-based care, drawing on over 50 years of lived experience to inform national work on redress, survivor engagement, and care reform. He contributed to the Royal Commission’s public hearings and was appointed by Hon Andrew Little to the Redress Advisory Group. David has previously advised on survivor engagement, record-keeping, listening services and the public apology design. He contributes to the SAGE group on faith-based redress and Oranga Tamariki’s CPIU Steering Group.

Valerie Tan, Member

Dr Valerie Tan JP is a clinical psychologist, academic, and governance leader with expertise in trauma, mental health, and equity. She works across Te Whatu Ora, private practice, and the University of Otago, focusing on complex trauma and abuse recovery. Valerie holds ministerial appointments to the NZ Psychologists Board and Film and Literature Board of Review and serves as a judicial Justice of the Peace. She is a co-founder of the Asian Psychology Collective Aotearoa and has led community advocacy through Shakti and the Dunedin Multi-Ethnic Council. Valerie has also recently been appointed to the Human Rights Review Tribunal.

Gary Williams, Member

Gary Williams KSO MNZM (Ngati Porou) is a tangata whaikaha survivor of abuse in care with over 50 years’ experience navigating and challenging care systems, he brings deep insight into institutional harm and the transformations needed for a safer, more accountable future. He served on the Survivor Advisory Group of Experts to the Royal Commission and the Redress Design Group selection panel, contributing a lived, strategic perspective to system reform. He is also a member of the Survivor Experiences Board.

Paul Gibson, Member

Paul Gibson QSO served as a Commissioner on the Abuse in Care Royal Commission (2018–2024) and was New Zealand’s first Disability Rights Commissioner, where he initiated the call for the inquiry. Paul has chaired multiple ministerial and human rights groups, including the CRPD Monitoring Mechanism and NZ Disability Strategy working groups, and is past Chief Executive of Visable, and works on projects preventing and responding to the abuse of disabled adults.

Helen Leahy, Member

Helen Leahy is a former Chief Executive of the South Island Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency (Te Pūtahitanga o Te Waipounamu) and is now leading Ngā Waihua o Paerangi (Ngāti Rangi). Helen’s governance record spans key ministerial panels including the Modernising Child, Youth & Family Expert Panel, Oranga Tamariki Māori Design Group, and Energy Hardship Expert Panel. Helen has driven innovative commissioning models that translate Māori aspirations into measurable social impact. Her work blends strategic insight with on‑the‑ground leadership across health, education, justice, and social services

Frances Tagaloa, Member

Frances Tagaloa KSO is a survivor of abuse in Catholic care. She was the first survivor to testify in the Catholic Church hearing of the Royal Commission and served on its Survivor Advocacy Group of Experts (SAGE). Frances brings strong governance and operational leadership through her roles as Chief of Staff for Campus Crusade for Christ and Chief Operating Officer with Tandem Ministries. She co-chairs the Survivor Experiences Services Board and serves on the board of Te Roopu Toiora.

Linda Surtees, Member

Linda Surtees MNZM is a nationally recognised leader in child protection and caregiving, with over 20 years’ experience in frontline care, policy reform, and sector leadership. As CEO of Caring Families Aotearoa, she has led national initiatives including the introduction of National Care Standards and advocacy to raise the age of care, grounded in her early work as a carer to over 100 tamariki and rangatahi. Linda has contributed to multiple ministerial and strategic groups, including the Extraordinary Care Fund Panel, Financial Assistance Reform group, and National Care Strategy Reference Group.

## Appointment of new Board member to Survivor Experiences Service Board

Gary Williams KSO MNZM (Ngati Porou) has also been appointed as the newest member of the Survivor Experiences Board. Gary will join Frances Tagaloa KSO who is the current Co-Chair of the Board and a new member to the Ministerial Advisory Group as well.

**End of: Pānui newsletter about the Crown response to the Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry**

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