

# **Public Service Commissioner Sir Brian Roche’s apology to survivors of abuse in care**

Firstly, I acknowledge the survivors of state abuse and your whānau and supporters gathered here today and those who have passed.

As the Public Service Commissioner, I unreservedly apologise for the abuse and harm inflicted on you by the State. I acknowledge that this harm disproportionately affected Māori and Pacific people and disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori, Deaf and Turi Māori.

The organisation I lead failed you. It is our duty, in fact our core mission, to ensure the standards of integrity and conduct of public servants are upheld, and to enforce them. The Commission is also the employer of Public Service Chief executives and the organisation responsible for holding them to account. I regret that we did not always deliver on these responsibilities.

 I acknowledge the fault of the Public Service that I lead. Our public service should have kept people in its care safe and protected. Complaints of abuse and neglect in care should have been responded to appropriately and abusers held to account. I deeply regret our failure to do this.

Agencies have not always communicated with each other and this meant we sometimes failed to help and safeguard children, young people and adults in care, as well as their families and communities.

I also acknowledge that we should have done more to ensure that timely and appropriate redress was made available to survivors.

As a Public Service we haven’t represented the diversity of the people we are meant to serve or been as inclusive as we should have been. We also haven’t always focused enough on ensuring the public service can effectively engage with Māori and understand Māori perspectives. The Commission has a leadership role in ensuring these things are prioritised by the Public Service and I acknowledge we didn’t get it right.

As the Public Service Commissioner, I accept responsibility for these failings, and I deeply regret that you suffered the harm and abuse these failings allowed. I apologise for that.

I know nothing I say today can ever fix these wrongs. What we can and must do, however, is make changes that will ensure that those who are in state care now and in the future are kept safe from harm.

To ensure that coordinated action is taken and that agencies are held to account for making the necessary changes, the Commission is taking a number of steps:

* We have established a Crown Response Office within the Commission with its own Chief Executive – this is a key recommendation from the Inquiry. A Statutory Deputy Public Service Commissioner is now chairing a Board of responsible Chief Executives to coordinate their actions in responding to the recommendations.
* We are working with agencies to provide assurance that claims of individual public servant misconduct made in the report are addressed. We are reinforcing and strengthening the standards of integrity and conduct that are expected of all public servants and the avenues for speaking up through a public service wide integrity programme.

I know that the Public Service must do better. And it’s my commitment to you all that we will do better.

This is just the beginning; there is much more to do.

End of information: **Public Service Commissioner Sir Brian Roche’s apology to survivors of abuse in care**

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