



Wesley College

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27 July 2021

Re: Royal Commission of Inquiry Hearing

Kia ora, Talofa lava, Mālō e lelei, Ni Sa Bula Vinaka, Fakaalofa lahi atu and warm Wesleyian greetings.

You may have seen or heard in the news that a Wesley College former pupil from the 1990s era appeared before the Royal Commission of Inquiry hearing *Tulou - Our Pacific Voices: Tatala e Pulonga* (lifting the dark cloud).

I attended the hearing and listened as the former pupil described in graphic detail the physical abuse he suffered at the hands of his fellow students, including prefects; people who had been chosen to be leaders. He called some of his beatings as the “Island Respect hiding”, it was horrifying to listen to his suffering. I have checked the school’s records and confirm he did spend the time in the medical centre as he described.

On behalf of Wesley College both the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, Mr David McGeorge and I have publicly apologised to this man and have offered to meet with him.

We have also promised that Wesley College will do better; that bullying, and any other form of harassment has no place and is not an acceptable in our school.

Wesley College is currently in an amazing place with truly wonderful students. The roll is full, with a waiting list. NCEA and UE results have never been better and student life is full of leadership and opportunity. Our stand down and exclusion rates have plummeted over the past few years.

It is time for our community to understand that people in New Zealand are calling out anyone responsible for bullying, sexual harassment, and other such behaviour. You only need to see or hear media stories where almost every day a school, organisation (including religious groups), business, or an individual is being named and shamed.

In part, some of these behaviours have been around for so long that it seems a very small, disruptive group of people forget about the victims and set about challenging the school on how these matters are being handled. When young people see this, it heightens the perception that no matter what wrong you do, if you create a diversion you might get away with it.

Anyone who thinks a tradition that some call “the Wesley Way” of handing out punishment, bullying, or harassing fellow students should have a place in our school, are wrong. It has no place at Wesley College and is not a tradition to be proud of.

Everyone in our school community should focus on making sure every student feels safe and is able to achieve academic success that will set them up for their adult lives.

Wesley has excelled at sports. Top sports people are disciplined and demonstrate great self-control. Any All Black, for example, that does not have self-discipline has a short career in the team.

Wesley College is now showing that all its students can achieve excellent, national level academic results. You do not achieve good grades by not being self-disciplined around study.

This is not about cultures. This is about life in New Zealand society in 2021. Society constantly changes and that means some traditional practises are no longer relevant to our young people. For our students to thrive in the world today they must understand how to fit in that world.

This is an opportunity to rid our wonderful college of this horrifying unwanted behaviour once and for all.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'B. Evans', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kind regards
Dr Brian Evans