



**Te Kaunihera Tapuhi o Aotearoa**  
**Nursing Council of New Zealand**

# Nursing Council of New Zealand's public apology to survivors of abuse in State and Faith based care

Haere mai rā, e ngā mōrehu o te mamae,  
Haere mai rā, ki te aroaro o te whakapāha.  
Ka tangi te whenua, ka tangi te ngākau.  
Haere mai rā, e te hunga kaha, e te hunga tapu.  
Haere mai rā e.  
Whakatau mai rā e te iwi, i runga i taumata kōrero o te hunga mate e.

**To the children of Lake Alice Child and Adolescent Unit** - I stand before you today as the Chairperson of Te Kaunihera Tapuhi o Aotearoa, the Nursing Council of New Zealand to offer an unreserved apology for the role nurses and the Nursing Council played in the torture, abuse and consequent harm that was inflicted on you.

With sorrow and humility, we acknowledge the role that nurses played in the abuse, torture, and lifelong harm that was inflicted on the children of Lake Alice. We acknowledge that nurses were not only complicit, but active participants in acts of cruelty perpetrated on you. Others stood by and did nothing. That failure to act, to protect, to speak out, was a betrayal of the very essence of nursing.

We are also here to take responsibility for our own inaction. Once we became aware of the torture, abuse and harm that occurred at Lake Alice, we failed to take action. Our silence made us complicit. And for that, we are sorry.

We understand that this harm did not end in the past. It lives on in bodies, minds, and lives. It has been carried across generations, affecting whānau and communities in deep and painful ways. We know that many children from Lake Alice are still in the health system today, carrying the weight of what was done by nurses who were meant to care.

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The accounts shared by survivors are harrowing and we acknowledge the truth of what survivors have told us - that nurses were responsible for acts of cruelty and torture that caused devastating pain and suffering. This included:

- Electric shocks to the temples, to the limbs, torso, and genitals and often without anaesthetic.
- Painful and immobilising injections of paraldehyde, not as a treatment, but as a drug to abuse and torture.
- Solitary confinement, where children were locked away, isolated, afraid and alone, sometimes for days or weeks on end.
- Widespread and relentless sexual, physical, cultural, and emotional abuse.
- Cruel and dehumanising language used in nursing records. Words that continue to wound survivors today as they are made aware of what was written about them.

We recognise, with profound grief, the unique horror of Lake Alice. It was, and remains, the worst healthcare crime in Aotearoa New Zealand's history. It was a betrayal of everything healthcare is meant to stand for, and at the centre of this atrocity were nurses, who were responsible for actions that shattered lives.

**To all other survivors of abuse in state and faith-based care, I also offer an unreserved apology.**

We know that nurses played a role in the abuse and harm inflicted on children and young people across State and Faith-based care settings. We also acknowledge that our silence allowed this harm to continue, and deepened the pain experienced by survivors. For that, we are truly sorry.

To all survivors – you were part of a system that devalued certain lives, especially Māori, Pasifika, and disabled children. It was a system that tore people from their whakapapa, their communities, and their sense of self.

We recognise that the nurses who took part in and perpetrated the torture and abuse on innocent children were never held accountable for this horrific and dehumanising treatment.

This was, and remains, utterly unacceptable.

The actions inflicted were not only dehumanising and cruel, they were utterly indefensible. And for this, we are deeply and wholeheartedly sorry.

We acknowledge the immense abuse endured, abuse that was carried out or enabled by nurses who were entrusted to care, to protect, and to uphold dignity. That trust was erased when some nurses inflicted pain, fear, and humiliation. It was further eroded by other nurses who stood by in silence, failing to act and failing to protect. We understand that this betrayal of care caused deep and lasting harm impacting survivors' physical and mental health, as well as their emotional, psychological, cultural, and spiritual wellbeing.

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We are sorry for the actions of the nurses who caused harm.

We are sorry for the inaction of the nurses who stood by and did nothing.

We have been silent for too long.

That silence has caused harm. It has echoed through the lives of survivors, their whānau, and their communities. It allowed abuse to continue, and it denied the recognition and justice deserved. For that, we are truly sorry.

We also know that apologies must be followed by action. Survivors have told us what they need. And we are listening.

We are committed to:

- Embedding trauma-informed care into nursing education.
- Strengthening our Code of Conduct to ensure nurses are equipped and expected to speak out.
- Creating a dedicated contact to help survivors engage safely with the Council.
- Continuing to listen to survivors and include them in shaping our future work.

We will continue to walk alongside survivors and their whānau, listening and doing all we can to ensure this never happens again. We will ensure your voices shape our path forward. This apology is part of an ongoing journey, one of accountability and change.

Kia tau te rangimarie ki runga i a tātou katoa,  
Kia tau te māramatanga, te aroha, me te kaha.

Whakamārie ngā ngākau e tangi ana,  
Whakamāmā ngā wairua e mamae ana.

Haere tonu te ara tika, te ara ora, te ara mātauranga.

Kia ū, kia mau, kia manawanui.

Haumi ē! Hui ē! Tāiki ē!