



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT**  
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA



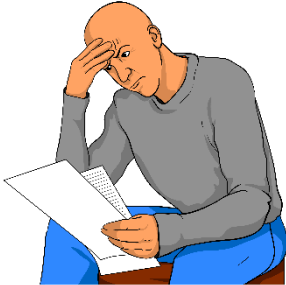
# **Abuse in Care public apology: Ministry of Social Development**



**Debbie Power**  
**Chief Executive**

**Published: November 2024**

## Before you start



This Easy Read document talks about abuse.



This information may upset some people when they are reading it.

This information is not meant to scare anyone.



If you are upset after reading this Easy Read document you can talk to your:



- whānau / family
- friends.



You can contact the Survivor Experiences Service for support.

In New Zealand you can **phone:**

**0800 456 090**



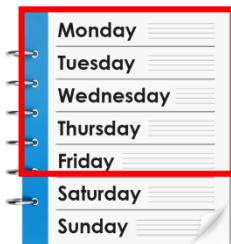
If you are calling from Australia you can **phone:**

**1 800 456 032**



You can call this number:

- between **8:30 am** and **4:30 pm**
- from **Monday** to **Friday**.



These times are for the New Zealand time zones.



You can also send a **text** to the Survivor Experiences Service.



In New Zealand you can send a **text** to:

**8328**



If you are texting from Australia you can send a **text** to:

**+61 438 384 957**



It does not cost any money to call / text the Survivor Experiences Service.



You can also send the Survivor Experiences Service an **email** at:

**[contact@survivorexperiences.govt.nz](mailto:contact@survivorexperiences.govt.nz)**

# About this document



On 12 November 2024 different parts of Government made a **public apology** to people who had been abused while in:

- state / government care
- faith-based care.



A **public apology** is when someone says sorry to a group of people in a way that means everyone can be a part of what is said.



This Easy Read is a **summary** of the public apology made by the Chief Executive of the Ministry of Social Development.



## A summary:

- is shorter than the original message
- tells you what you need to know.



Debbie Power is the **Chief Executive** of the Ministry of Social Development.



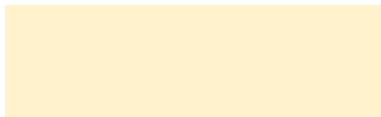
A **Chief Executive** is the person in charge of an organisation.



This document includes some **quotes** from Debbie Power.



A **quote** is an exact copy in writing of what someone has said.



The quotes are in yellow boxes like this.



The quotes are **not** in Easy Read.



You can read the full apology on the Ministry of Social Development **website** at:

<https://msd.govt.nz>

# Apology from Ministry of Social Development



The apology begins with Debbie Power speaking in te reo Māori to:

- greet everyone
- introduce herself.

Debbie Power says:



“Tēnā koutou katoa. Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa.

Ko Debbie Power tēnei e mihi ana.”



Debbie Power also says that she is the Chief Executive of the Ministry of Social Development.





Debbie Power says that she understands how important it is that she makes the apology.



She says sorry to everyone who was abused in state care.

Debbie Power says:



“We should have looked after you and kept you safe as a young person in our care.”



She says that the state:

- thought it was keeping people safe

**but**

- often it harmed people instead.



Debbie Power says:



“We did not always protect you.

For that, I am deeply sorry.”



Debbie Power says she is also sorry that the state did not:

- listen to survivors when they told people what was happening to them
- do anything to stop the abuse.



Debbie Power says sorry for the way the Ministry of Social Development treated survivors when they tried to get **redress** for what happened to them.

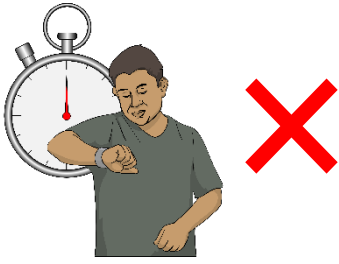


**Redress** means someone:

- agrees that something bad has happened
- does something to try to:
  - put things right
  - make up for any harm that has been done.

Redress can be things like:

- saying sorry
- giving money as a way of saying sorry
- giving other kinds of support like counselling.



Debbie Power says she understands that the redress system often:

- took too long
- upset survivors
- tried to use laws / the legal system to get out of doing things it should have done.

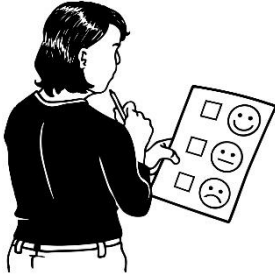


About the redress system Debbie Power says:



“Based on your **feedback** we have made changes to the redress system over the years and, following the Royal Commission’s recommendation, we have introduced **rapid payments**.

We will continue to make the redress process better.”



**Feedback** is when someone says what they think about something.



**Rapid payment** is money given quickly to survivors so they do not have to wait a long time to get it.



Debbie Power says to disabled survivors that she **acknowledges** the harm that was done to them.



**Acknowledge** means you:

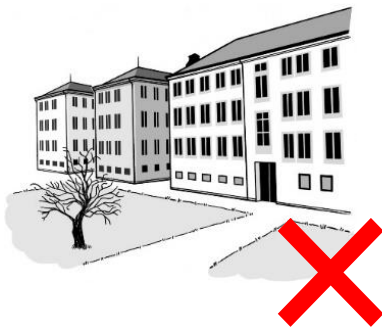
- say you know that something happened
- understand something is true.



Debbie Power says that the state did not think about the harm it could do by putting children in care who were:

- disabled
- Deaf
- in mental distress.

The state harmed these children by:

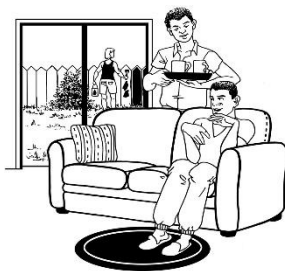


- putting them in care when it was not the right place for them
- taking them away from:
  - their whānau / families
  - their communities
  - other people.

On supporting disabled people in the future Debbie Power says:



“As the Chief Executive now responsible for the delivery of **Disability Support Services**, I want to make sure that we have the systems in place to ensure this doesn’t happen again.”



**Disability Support Services** means things like:

- money the government gives you to pay for things you need because of your disability
- equipment you need because of your disability
- living in a home for disabled people.



Debbie Power says that survivors did not get **culturally appropriate** care.



**Culturally appropriate** means something that is important to the way you do things:

- in your life
- with other people in your culture / group.



Debbie Power says:



“For Māori, we **failed** to ensure te reo Māori, connection to **whakapapa**, **tikanga** and **mātauranga** were present in the places where you were in care.

For Pacific people, you were separated from your **Kainga**, your communities, and your culture.”





Here **failed** means someone / an agency did not do things they should have done.

These things are called **failures**.



**Whakapapa** is about how people are connected to:

- the land they live in
- the people who are part of their whānau / family.



**Tikanga** is Māori ways of doing things.



## Mātauranga is:

- Māori ways of knowing things
- information Māori have known for a very long time.



## Kainga means your:

- home / where you are from
- community.



Debbie Power says she knows the failures have caused **ongoing** pain to:

- survivors
- people close to survivors like their:
  - whānau / families
  - communities.





**Ongoing** means something that is still happening.

Debbie Power says:



“I know no apology can make up for the lost years and hurt the abuse has brought to you, as a child and into adulthood.”



Debbie Power acknowledges that the failures mean some children of survivors have also been harmed.

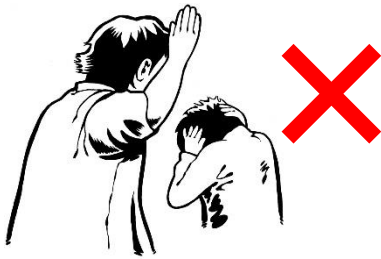
Debbie Power says she hopes her apology can give **closure** to the survivors.



Here **closure** means feeling like something bad has come to an end so you can move on with your life.



Debbie Power thanks survivors for sharing their experiences with the Royal Commission.



Debbie Power also acknowledges that survivors are not to blame for anything that happened to them.

Debbie Power says:



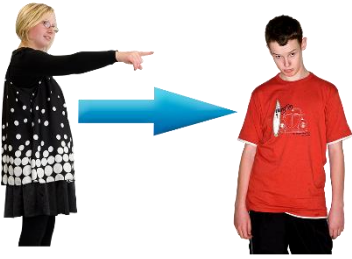
“What happened to you was not your fault.

None of the blame can be **attributed** to you, or anything you did.

It should never have happened.

We should have had better systems in place to protect you.”





**Attributed** means something happened because of something a person / agency did.



Debbie Power says more work needs to be done to:



- make things better for people who need to use support services
- find ways to show people that they can trust the state
- support people to live the lives they want.



She says work will be done with other government agencies to make sure:



- everyone is working well together
- things that went wrong in the past never happen again.

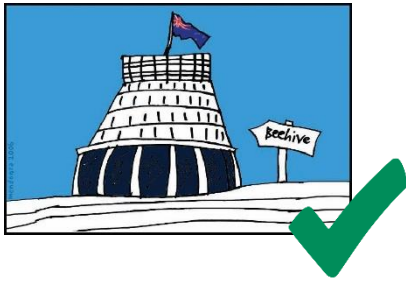




Debbie Power says there will be important work done to make the care system better.



She ends her apology by thanking the survivors for listening to her.



She also thanks survivors for challenging the government to do better.

Debbie Power says:



“We cannot change the past but thank you for the **courage** and **perseverance** you and your families have **demonstrated** which has led to today.”



**Courage** means someone is:

- very brave
- mentally strong which means being strong in your mind.



**Perseverance** means someone keeps doing something even though it is hard / challenging for them to do.



**Demonstrated** means someone did / showed something.

**Make it Easy**  
Kia Māmā Mai



This information has been written by the Ministry of Social Development.

It has been translated into Easy Read by the Make it Easy Kia Māmā Mai service of People First New Zealand Ngā Tāngata Tuatahi.

**People First NZ**  
Ngā Tāngata Tuatahi



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