



The Royal  
Australian &  
New Zealand  
College of  
Psychiatrists



# Lake Alice Child and Adolescent Unit – Apology by The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists



**Published: February 2024**

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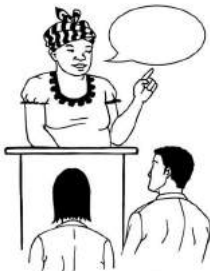
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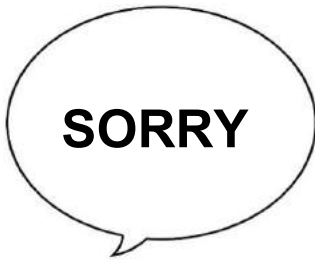
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## Before you start



This document talks about abuse.

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



This information is not meant to scare / hurt anyone.



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

- whānau / family
- friends.





You can also contact Need to Talk by:

- calling 1737
- texting 1737



It does not cost any money to call / text 1737.

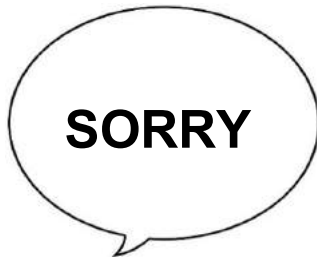
## What this Easy Read document is about



This Easy Read document is an **apology** from The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists.



The apology is for abuse that happened to people in care at Lake Alice Child and Adolescent Unit.



An **apology** is saying sorry for what happened.



The information about what abuse in care means is on **pages 7 to 10**.



A note about the words used in this Easy Read.

In this Easy Read document:



- **The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists** will be called **the RANZCP**



- **Lake Alice Child and Adolescent Unit** will be called **the Lake Alice unit.**



In this document **we** means the RANZCP.



In this document we call people who have been though abuse in care **survivors.**

## What happened at the Lake Alice unit



The Lake Alice unit was a care unit for:

- children
- **adolescents.**



**Adolescents** means young people aged 18 years and younger.

The Lake Alice unit was set up to treat children and young people who had:

- mental distress
- mental illness.







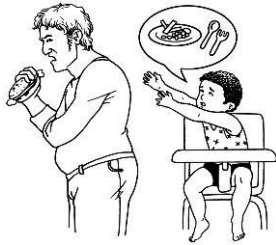
**Abuse in care** happened at the Lake Alice unit between:

- 1972
- and
- 1980.



**Abuse** can be:

- **physical** – a person kicking or hitting you
- **sexual** – a person doing sexual things to you that you do not want them to like:
  - touching your body or private parts
  - kissing you
  - making you have sex with them – this is called rape.



**Abuse** can also be:

- **emotional** – a person yelling or saying things to you that are not nice
- **neglect** – a person not giving you the things or care you need.

Being **in care** means that the Government is in charge of looking after you.

The abuse was led by a **psychiatrist** called Dr Selwyn Leeks who worked at the Lake Alice unit.

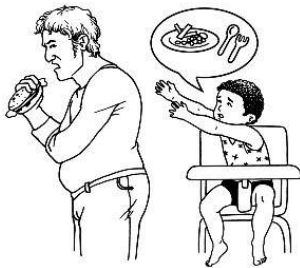


A **psychiatrist** is a doctor who is supposed to assist people with their mental health.

This means supporting people to feel better in their minds when they are having trouble.



For many children and young people the Lake Alice unit was a place of **tūkino**.



**Tūkino** means:

- misery
- neglect
- terror
- torment.

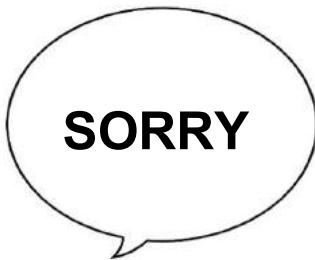


## How did the RANZCP make the apology?



To work out what we wanted to say in the apology we:

- looked at many apologies made in the last 20 years
- asked survivors what they thought could be said better.



We put what was shared with us into our apology.

We hope it is accepted in **good faith**.



**Good faith** means doing something in an honest way.



We know an apology is not the end of what has happened.



We know an apology is 1 step towards things getting better.

## What is the RANZCP doing to talk about the Lake Alice unit?



We know people might forget about what happened at the Lake Alice unit.

We do not want this to happen.



We must do lots of work to teach psychiatrists in the **future**.



The **future** is a time / years yet to happen.



We are doing this work so what happened at the Lake Alice unit never happens again.



We have already started doing this work.



1. We did a talk at the RANZCP New Zealand conference in 2023.

The talk was about:

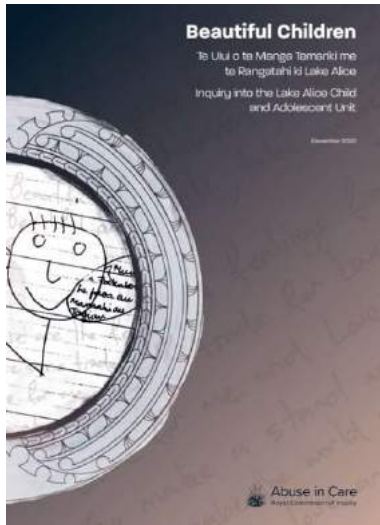
- the Lake Alice unit
- **Tamariki Ātaahua - Beautiful Children** report made about the Lake Alice unit.



**Tamariki Ātaahua - Beautiful Children** report was made by the **Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care** in 2022.

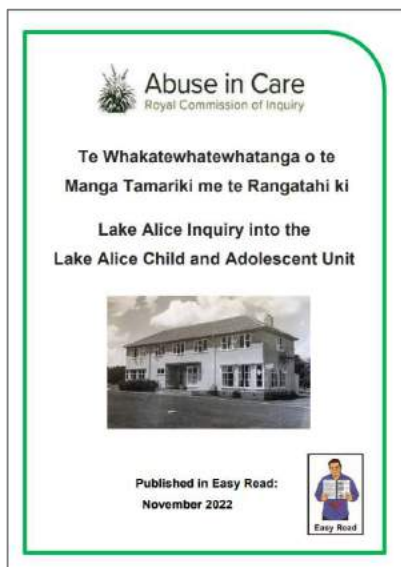


The **Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care** is looking into abuse that happened to people in care.



You can find the Tamariki Ātaahua - Beautiful Children report on the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care **website**:

<http://tinyurl.com/nynjjued>



You can also find an Easy Read translation of the report on the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care **website**:

<http://tinyurl.com/4ahd9eap>





2. We will do a talk at the RANZCP Congress in May 2024.



A **congress** is a type of meeting where people talk about lots of different things to do with their jobs.



This will include talking about the final report from the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care which comes out in March 2024.



3. An article about what happened at the Lake Alice unit was published in the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry in August 2023.

## What will the RANZCP do to make care better?



It is good that doctors now work closely with the people who need mental health care.



This is so they can work out the best treatment together.

The RANZCP will soon be using a new **Lived Experience Strategy**.



The **Lived Experience Strategy** will make sure more people who have been in psychiatric care are invited to work on RANZCP committees in:

- New Zealand
- Australia.

We will make sure what was learned about the Lake Alice unit will be used to train psychiatrists in the future.

## What the apology says

**SORRY**



The apology is for:

- people who were abused at the Lake Alice unit
- people who were tortured / hurt by Dr Selwyn Leeks
- survivors
- whānau / families / friends
- descendants of those who suffered like children or grandchildren
- those who died.

The RANZCP offers a full apology.



You were failed.



We know that young people were ignored when they tried to talk about problems.



We know harm was done to the people of these iwi:

- Ngā Wairiki
- Ngāti Apa.



Their uri / descendants still live with the problems it caused.



We know many agencies failed you many times.

We know our part in this.



We know some people allowed  
Dr Selwyn Leeks to avoid proper:

- investigation which means people finding out what happened
- punishment.

This happened because of:



- what those people did
- and
- what those people did not do.



Your trust was broken.



We want people to get the best mental health care.



This is guided by:

- what we know
- skill.



The horrible abuse Dr Selwyn Leeks did at the Lake Alice unit was not proper mental health care.



It is terrible this harm happened at all.

We know people said the abuse was not happening.





Saying the abuse was not happening meant lots of bad decisions were made.



The RANZCP has been asking for an investigation of the abuse done by Dr Selwyn Leeks since the 1990s.



The RANZCP's own rules meant it could not take any action until an investigation was done.



The Tamariki Ātaahua - Beautiful Children report in 2022 was the first time Dr Selwyn Leeks was properly blamed for the abuse he did.



The Royal Australian & New Zealand College of Psychiatrists

The RANZCP took away the membership Dr Selwyn Leeks had in our organisation straight away.





We know this happened too late for many people.

We apologise for our part in the failure to bring Dr Selwyn Leeks to **justice** as early as possible.



Bringing someone to **justice** means making sure someone goes to court for a crime that has been done.



What happened at the Lake Alice unit must never happen again.



The way we work now means psychiatrists work in teams:

- when training
- so other psychiatrists can check on how they are going
- when working on their skills.



This way we know what is going on.

We have ways to keep watch on everything that goes on with:

- the people we work with
- our teams
- our communities.





There are safe ways to make reports about what we do.



Complaints are not:

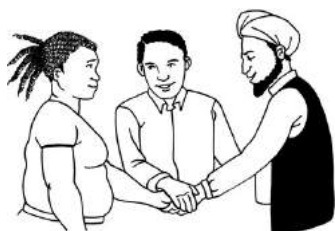
- lost
- ignored.



We want to work with people with lived experience of mental illness.



We use lived experience of mental illness as part of what we do at the RANZCP.



We will work together to figure out the best ways to give people mental health care.



This apology does not change what happened before.

This apology is given to say:



- we know we made mistakes
- and**
- we know how that hurt people for a long time.



We will listen to what the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care says should be done.

We will do this so what we do next:



- means something
- becomes a good part of our work
- is done by working together.

## Where to find more information



You can read the full apology from the RANZCP on this **website**:

**[www.ranzcp.org](http://www.ranzcp.org)**



This is not in Easy Read.



This information was written by The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists.



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



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