

From Prime Minister Dec 2002

Dear (edit)

We are writing to you personally on behalf of the Government of New Zealand to apologise for the treatment you received and may have witnessed in the Child and Adolescent Unit of Lake Alice Hospital during the 1970s. We are apologising to all those who were mistreated. We believe it is important to take this step, to enable us to move on from shameful practices in mental health care in New Zealand.

You may be aware that the events at the Child and Adolescent Unit of Lake Alice Hospital have been the subject of an investigation. As a government we have been determined to acknowledge what happened and to take what steps we can to put things right. We have publicly stated that, whatever the legal rights or wrongs, and whatever the state of medical practice at the time, whatever happened there was unacceptable. On behalf of the Government of New Zealand we sincerely apologise to you as a person fundamentally affected by what occurred in the Lake Alice Child and Adolescent Unit.

We hope that this apology will affirm to you that the incidents and events that you experienced and may have witnessed at the Child and Adolescent Unit of Lake Alice Hospital were not only inappropriate, even if judged by the standards of the day, but were also terribly unfortunate. They should not have happened. We very much regret that they did.

We know that this apology cannot change the past, but we do hope it will go some way towards enabling you to move on from your past experiences. In the same spirit we hope that the ex gratia payment the Government has made to you will be of some tangible help.

We wish you all the very best for the future.

Letter signed by Rt Hon Helen Clark, Prime Minister of NZ and Hon Annette King, Minister of Health