

**TVNZ
2 May 2005**

**Webpage: <http://www.tvnz.co.nz/view/page/410940/529640/>
Abuse victims deprived of justice (Source:Sunday)**

Walter Lake was one of the leaders of the Presbyterian Support Services. He was an OBE, justice of the peace, World War II veteran and Sunday school teacher.

But there was another side to the respected pillar of society who died five months ago.

Lake, who ran the Berhampore orphanage for 20 years, has been revealed as a sexual monster who terrorised and preyed on small children in his care.

There are possibly dozens of victims who share dark secrets about being sexually abused by him. Aged between eight and 14, they were abused in his home, his car and at the Presbyterian Social Services offices.

Following a Sunday investigation last year, police began an inquiry into Lake and have revealed that they were going to arrest him - but he died before they could.

Now his victims are angry and feel deprived of justice.

One of Lake's victims, Kathleen Batchelor, broke the silence on the abuse but her cries to authorities were ignored for years.

"If they had acted way back then he would have been brought to justice, now he's gone we can't bring him to justice. But boy, will he suffer in the next life," Batchelor told Sunday.

Aged about 13 she tried to blow the whistle to a matron on Walter Lake's staff. Kathleen told her what happened and the matron said she didn't believe her.

"For many, many years I told different ones [matrons] trying to get this out in the open, to deal with it," Batchelor says.

She says she rang a national moderator of the Presbyterian Church.

"He said 'well it's your word against his'. He wasn't prepared to do anything," Batchelor says.

Twenty years ago Batchelor formally complained to police, but they believed Walter Lake, not her. She also told Presbyterian Support Services

about him a number of times -20, 15 and then four years ago, the third time backed up by another victim.

Batchelor was not the only one to come out against Lake.

Fourteen years ago the Presbyterian Church was warned not once, but three times about him by a member of its own clergy.

Mavis Van dalen, a deaconess who damns the way the Presbyterian's are handling the Walter Lake scandal, told the Presbyterian Church he was a sexual predator.

"I was just horrified. It hit me, this is happening in my church. I know it's happened in others, but this is the church that I belong to.

"I think it is absolutely deplorable that they are in denial," Van dalen told Sunday.

She was so alarmed she repeatedly phoned a former head of the Presbyterian Church, Duncan Jamieson, who said he would pass her warning on to a Presbyterian committee. To her knowledge nothing was done.

Another of Lake's victims Karen Millan rang Presbyterian Support last year. She was put onto a former counsellor who new Lake and was asked if she wanted counselling and if she wanted to plant a tree.

Millan was told if the victims wanted an apology they would have to put it in writing.

"Their attitude was that if we wanted counselling they would help. But if we wanted compensation the door would be shut, we'd have to go to court," Millan told Sunday.

Walter Lake was in charge of the Berhampore home and was head of Wellington's Presbyterian Social Services that has since morphed into Presbyterian Support Services.

The church is at pains to point out they are a separate organisation. But they do appoint board members to Presbyterian support services.

Frustrated at the response from Presbyterian authorities many of Lake's victims have hired Palmerston North barrister Gordon Paine.

Paine says that Presbyterian Support have sat on their hands and resisted any attempt to bring closure for the victims.

"I believe clearly they know and have known for some years what this is about and just turned a blind eye.

"They won't talk to them; they won't try and get around a table. They won't do any of the things that other religious institutions that have been the subject of claims like this have done," Paine says.

The church and Presbyterian Support were poles apart in responding to the victims' criticism.

Church spokeswoman Josephine Reading told Sunday they regret that it has taken so long for the complainants to have the issues resolved and worked through.

The church claims the same thing would not happen today.

"In 1991 our resources around sexual misconduct and matters of that nature weren't as robust as they are now," Reading says.

They say the responsibility though lies with the social agency Presbyterian Support.

"It is important to remember these incidents occurred in a home under the control and management of Presbyterian Support," says Reading.

Presbyterian Support says it has consistently told complainants to go to police.

But Walter Lake died before the complainants could get their day in court. Now Presbyterian Support's spokesman Trevor Roberts says if Lake's victims want to talk to them, they'll have to do it in a court room.

"There are avenues open to them that they should pursue, frankly it's now gone too far to indulge in warm fuzzy meetings," Roberts says.

He says it is about management of risk and finding the truth of the matter and the fact that police decided to charge Lake doesn't mean that he's guilty.

"I have to tell you that our own investigations into some of the matters where we have been able to investigate indicate that there are some quite considerable issues of credibility in respect of some of those complainants," Roberts says.

However police believed the victims.

Within weeks of the initial Sunday story screening police heard from many of Lake's victims.

Head of Wellington police's child abuse squad, Glenn Williams, says that in the first week of December last year they intended to approach Lake and they had enough evidence to put him before the court.

Police told victim Karen Millan and her family that he was a classic paedophile. They said they were sure there were lots of victims, who hadn't come forward, but they had 13 and that was enough. Police also told them Lake had been in the police system for a long time.

"There was certainly enough strong similarities in the complainants to cause the police to believe that he should be put before the court and believe the allegations of the complainants," Williams says.

Trevor Roberts was unaware of the scale of the police investigation into Walter Lake.

"I have to tell you that we are not aware that there are 13 potential complainants and if there are we don't even know who they are and some of them have certainly not even approached Presbyterian support. So as far as we are concerned, that is not an issue. As for the complainants we know about, they have embarked on a course of action and they should follow it," Roberts says.

Lake's victims now have to suffer further battles before they can receive the closure they need.