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National Story

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# Exclusive Brethren leader leaves New Zealand

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The world leader of the secretive Exclusive Brethren left Auckland yesterday after a week-long visit to New Zealand, but church members deny he was on any political mission.

It was Elect-Vessel Bruce Hales' second visit to the church's 7000 New Zealand followers and culminated in meetings with 2000 of them at services in Mangere.

Mr Hales' spokesman, Tony McCorkell, yesterday told the *Herald* the visit was concerned only with spiritual matters and had nothing to do with "the current political issues".

"He's met with no politicians; there's been nothing political whatsoever."

The Exclusive Brethren have copped flak in this country following their controversial \$1 million anti-Green, anti-Labour pamphlet campaign leading up to the 2005 election. The campaign was bankrolled by seven leading members who are businessmen.

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