



On Air Now: Kerre Woodham

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PM denies formal Brethren meetings

19/04/2007 16:16:02

The Prime Minister denies she ever formally met with the Exclusive Brethren.

The church has sent its official spokesman Tony McCorkell from Australia to New Zealand, where he has attempted to distance the sect from seven members who had behind the scenes involvement in the last election, funding a leaflet campaign critical of National's opponents.

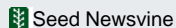
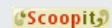
Mr McCorkell claims Helen Clark met with Exclusive Brethren members in 2003 and requested a copy of a strategy document after the meeting. The document was released by Labour Party President Mike Williams yesterday. He claims it is evidence the seven Exclusive Brethren businessmen were acting for the church, not as individuals.

A spokesman for the Prime Minister is adamant there were never ever any formal meetings between Helen Clark and the Exclusive Brethren. He says members of the church approached Miss Clark on two occasions around 2004; once in Nelson and the other at Parliament.

Mr McCorkell says he has clarified the church's position on statements with the seven members, and says the men have assured him they will not speak on behalf of the Exclusive Brethren again.

He is unhappy the religion of the men was made into an issue, saying they came out as a group of concerned taxpayers, but got into trouble simply because they did not say what church they belonged to.

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