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## Brethren member investigated over abuse claims - report

NZPA | Friday, 20 April 2007

**A senior member of the Exclusive Brethren Church in New Zealand is under police investigation for allegedly molesting children over four decades, TV One News reported last night.**

The network said that after a six-month investigation it could reveal four women had laid complaints, claiming they were abused by the man when they were aged between five and 10.

The report said the church's Australia-based spokesman, Tony McCorkell, was in New Zealand to investigate the claims himself – although he was not willing to admit that.

Mr McCorkell arrived on Tuesday, announcing his presence and answering media questions about the latest row over political involvement by Brethren members.

Asked by reporter Ben Tornquist what the church was doing about the sexual abuse allegations, he replied: "I'm not aware of that. If you have evidence of that I'd be glad to see it."

Mr McCorkell said the church would never try to cover up such allegations.

But TV One News said two of the women, former members of the sect, had told church leaders about the abuse at the time it happened and were ignored.

One woman, who was not identified, said in an interview with Tornquist she believed there had been "multiple offenders".

"If I went and asked them now they would try and deny it because in there it's a huge guilt and fear thing," she said.

"A lot of people who perhaps have been involved in that sort of thing would not go outside the church for help."

Tornquist reported that the complainants believed children could have been molested as recently as last year.

He said the women had not known of each other's cases until recently, and came forward following previous TV One reports of sexual abuse.

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