

**Clark denies meeting with Brethren**

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Prime Minister Helen Clark has denied she ever formally met with the Exclusive Brethren.

The church 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.



McCorkell says in the past the Brethren have gone to government to represent policies they favour and he believes it will continue.

He is unhappy the religion of the seven men who campaigned against the government at the last election was made into an issue.

McCorkell says they came out as a group of concerned taxpayers but have got into trouble simply because they did not say what Church they belonged to.

Prime Minister Helen Clark has been strident in her criticism of the Church since the 2005 election.

But McCorkell says Clark actually met with Brethren members in 2003 and requested a copy of one of their strategy documents after that meeting.

The document in question is the one released by Labour Party President Mike Williams on Wednesday where he claimed it was evidence the Brethren businessmen were acting for the church, not as individuals.

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

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.

Source: Newstalk ZB