

tvnz.co.nz**Ex-Brethren man charged with abuse**

Jul 12, 2007



A former senior member of the Exclusive Brethren Church has been charged with sexually abusing children.

The allegations date back several decades and the victims are all now adults, the eldest in her 60s.

ONE News can not reveal the identity of the accused.

"Police have laid summonses charging a 72-year-old local man with seven representative charges relating to sexual offending back to 1951," says Inspector Brian McGurk, acting Tasman district commander.

Four ex-Brethren members laid complaints with the police last year claiming the man sexually molested them when they were aged between five and 10.

McGurk says the summonses have been issued and they will be served on the defendant on Friday. He says the man is well aware of the charges and police met his solicitor on Thursday.

The alleged abuse stretches back decades, the eldest complainant is in her 60s and the youngest in her mid 20s.

A former Brethren member went to police on behalf of the four women nine months ago.

"It's just a great day for them that hopefully they'll be able to put this behind them," the former church member says.

When the scandal broke, church leaders said the accused was no longer part of the flock.

"The Exclusive Brethren doesn't have a culture that condones this. This is not a cultural issue within the church," Tony McCorkell, an Exclusive Brethren spokesperson said in April.

But some ex-members claim church leaders knew about it but didn't act.

"It was raised a long time ago of course, 20-odd years ago and nothing was followed up," says the former church member.

The Brethren could not be reached for comment on Thursday but have told ONE News previously the man at the centre of the allegations is no longer welcome at church.

The 72-year-old will appear in court later this month.

Source: One News

