

From: Ray Carter <ray@carterproperties.com.au>
Date: 28 December 2022 at 08:54:55 AEDT
To: admin@stewardsfoundation.com.au
Subject: The Act

Attention Phil Weldon

Hello Phil

George Hawke suggested I send my contentions to you. I do so for no reason but that I believe, apart from my respect for the good people of the Open Brethren, that given the inability of anyone except a majority of the people for whom a Church Trust law was written ie the Assemblies or Assemblies simply **styled** as an Assembly of Christian Brethren (not necessarily even Christian) can cause a review of their Act.

This is sufficient for any minority, (especially a minority consisting of those considering leaving an Assembly Organisation for whom there is “no *specific provision*” (as put to me in response to my letters to the NSW AG , by the DCJ,) to dissuade them from even contemplating causing a review of the Act. (If indeed they even know their church or cult operates or could operate under the Act which facilitates for an Assembly Organisation the benefit all Australian Privacy Laws.)

I would understand that you are capable of looking after those you have immediate care for and I will endeavour to do so for those in addition under the Act.

There the matter lies and may we each contemplate the love Christ intended to pervade the earth, giving it opportunity to reach into every part, including the words of legislation as per Matthew 12:37

Best regards
Ray Carter



31 May 2024

Mr L. Christie and Mr R. Carter

By email: lancechristie7@gmail.com
admin@carterproperties.com.au

Dear Mr Christie and Mr Carter

False claims concerning Stewards Foundation of Christian Brethren

We refer to an email sent by a Mr Trevor Gunter to the Stewards Foundation on 26 May 2024.

Mr Gunter wrote to advise, in supportive terms, of Mr Christie's efforts to "cult bust" aspects of the Exclusive Brethren Church, especially in relation to some of the financial arrangements that Bruce Hales and others from the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church had engaged in. His email included Mr Christie's website.

The website published an article headed "*The Repeal of the New South Wales Stewards Foundation of Christian Brethren Act 1989, a proposal by Ray Carter of NSW and supported by Lance J. Christie*" (**Article**).

We have also sighted on the website another article headed "*Why the outrage regarding the Stewards Foundation of Christian Brethren Act*" (**Second Article**).

During our consideration of the two Articles, we have also come across a video uploaded to YouTube apparently in April 2024 entitled "*Lance attempts to unscramble the NSW Stewards Foundation of Christian Brethren Act, 1989*" (**YouTube Video**).

We were unaware of the website, the 2 Articles and the YouTube Video prior to receiving Mr Gunter's email.

A. Opening observations

The allegations about the Stewards Foundation of Christian Brethren Act, 1989 (**the Act**) and the Stewards Foundation of Christian Brethren (**Foundation**) contained in the Articles and the YouTube video are entirely false. There is not one skerrick of truth in them.

In the course of making the allegations you refer to "corruption" and "fraud" and "evil intent". In the confused way that both communications proceed, any observer could only conclude that you were asserting that the Foundation was a party to such misconduct.

Stewards Foundation

Suite 301, Level 3, 29 George St Burwood NSW 2134

P: 8775 3105 www.stewardsfoundation.com.au

PO Box 260 Burwood NSW 1805

ABN: 57 246 942 907

In so doing, both communications are clearly libellous. They have the real prospect of damaging the Foundation's reputation. They may adversely impact on the Foundation's ability to raise funds which, in turn, may reduce the ministry-related services and support it can provide.

They are also manifestly unfair to the many men and women who have worked in and through the Foundation (and its corporate predecessor) for a combined period of nearly 60 years in the advance of the gospel.

It is embarrassing how wrong these claims are. They involve a completely erroneous understanding of the provisions of the Act. They can't have been made after taking legal advice. They can't have been made as a result of any research. They reflect a complete ignorance about the practical working of the organisation (and its predecessor).

Clearly you have not consulted with this organisation. Had you raised your concerns with anyone from the Foundation, you would have quickly been informed how groundless they were.

As people who purport to show concern for the welfare of believers it is so unfortunate that you have embarked on a campaign to malign a ministry (and, by necessary implication, those involved in it) without approaching the ministry beforehand.

The fact that the Foundation (and its predecessor) have never been accused of the allegations brought by you in the 60 years of their operation ought to cause reflection on your part.

The proposal to repeal the Act is fundamentally misconceived because it proceeds on the basis of completely false allegations, including the fundamentally incorrect premise that the Plymouth Brethren are connected with the Foundation.

In **Section B**, below, we will comment on the Article and will make a brief remark about the Second Article in **Section C**, below. We will respond to the YouTube Video in **Section D**, below.

B. The Article

There are so many errors of significance in the Article, especially the main premise of the Article that the Plymouth Brethren are connected with the Stewards Foundation.

B.1 Connection between the Foundation and the Exclusive Brethren

The opening sentence of the Article, namely, *"This Act is the foundation of all the Plymouth Brethren business affairs"* is completely wrong. If that is based on the *"response of Justice New South Wales"* then that organisation is completely wrong. There is no truth in it at all.

In casting the activities of the Plymouth Brethren as corrupt or fraudulent, the Article is impliedly, if not expressly, saying that the Foundation is a party to that corruption or fraud. As we stated earlier, that is totally libellous and unfair.

The Act and the Foundation established under it has **no** connection whatsoever with the business dealings of the Plymouth Brethren, or any other connection for that matter. It never has.

The Foundation has no connection or dealings with the public company, Plymouth Brethren Christian Church (ABN 42 158 542 075). No one involved with the Foundation has ever met or had dealings with that organisation, the PBCC Committee, the PBCC Committee's Universal Business Team or any

Stewards Foundation

Suite 301, Level 3, 29 George St Burwood NSW 2134

P: 8775 3105 www.stewardsfoundation.com.au

PO Box 260 Burwood NSW 1805

ABN: 57 246 942 907

member of Bruce Hales' family.

The Act and the Foundation are concerned (only) with a completely different and separate religious tradition, namely the Christian Brethren tradition.

Appendix One hereto sets out the factual background which shows emphatically that the Foundation has never had any constitutional, commercial or operational link of any kind with the Plymouth Brethren generally or the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church in particular, and that any activities of the Plymouth Brethren take place outside the Foundation.

There is an important historical observation of which you ought to be aware. Those associated with the Exclusive Brethren tradition have never sought fellowship with the Christian Brethren. They have assiduously avoided it. The Article notes that the Plymouth Brethren maintain that *"there is a great high wall of separation between the PBCC and the Open Brethren"* and that the gulf between the two traditions is *"the deepest ditch in Christendom"*.

Despite your obvious cynicism about that, the reality is that the two traditions don't deal with each other in any way. That is certainly the case for the Foundation. The Foundation has nothing to do with the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church or any of its related entities.

The **only** thing that the Foundation has in common with the Plymouth Brethren generally (or Plymouth Brethren Christian Church and its related entities in particular) is that the word "Brethren" is found in their names. Of course, that is of no consequence where the same word has completely different meanings depending on the organisation in view.

B.2 Legal position

Appendix Two sets out the legal position under the Act in some detail.

It shows that the Act is effectively the constitution of the Foundation and thus determinative of what the Foundation is lawfully able to do. Under the Act, the entities which the Foundation are to serve and support are identified with the Christian Brethren - and the Christian Brethren **only**.

The Act makes no reference to the Plymouth Brethren or any other Christian tradition for that matter. The Foundation is therefore not authorised to provide trustee services, lend money or other support or services to persons or organisations associated with the Plymouth Brethren or Plymouth Brethren Christian Church or its related entities. End of story.

The property held on trust by the Foundation on behalf of the Assemblies (not Assembly Organisations) is held *"primarily for the purpose of a chapel"* (refer s.10 (1) of the Act). The Act's trust provisions do not permit the Foundation to act as trustee in relation to the business or commercial activities of any Assembly or Assembly Organisation and certainly, in practice, the Foundation does not do so.

Given the way the Act works, and given the policy of the Committee, there is no practical prospect of any person associated with the Plymouth Brethren becoming involved in the membership of the Foundation or the leadership of the Foundation (given that membership of the Foundation is a constitutional pre-requisite to membership of the Committee). Even if, for some inconceivable reason, the Committee changed its policy and admitted Plymouth Brethren individuals to membership of the Foundation to a point where such members controlled the organisation, nothing would change. The

Stewards Foundation

Suite 301, Level 3, 29 George St Burwood NSW 2134

P: 8775 3105 www.stewardsfoundation.com.au

PO Box 260 Burwood NSW 1805

ABN: 57 246 942 907

Foundation would still not be able to serve and support assemblies, corporations or organisations associated with the Plymouth Brethren (including the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church or its related entities) whilst the Act was in its present form.

The Article makes comments about the effect of the Act that are without the slightest legal merit. Frankly, they are nonsensical.

C. Second Article

Frankly, the Second Article is not worthy of a proper response.

The concluding paragraph includes the words:

“The tale of the Stewards Foundation of Christian Brethren and its thirty five year aftermath, is a tale of mind blowing tearful betrayal, suicidal fears and lasting multi generational sadness, rather than momentary bloody excitement on the streets..”

No doubt there has been much personal trauma suffered by some individuals in dealing with the Plymouth Brethren, but all credibility is lost when the statement links that history to the Act. It’s a link that is completely unrelated to reality.

D. YouTube Video

While is difficult to follow the logic and reasoning of what was said in the Video, the overwhelming impression sought to be conveyed in the Video (reinforced by its title) was that the Act facilitates the financial and other abuses by the Plymouth Brethren. In so doing, what is said in the Video is not just completely wrong- it is, frankly, staggering in terms of the conclusions drawn.

Spurred on by Mr Bruce Hale’s assertion that the Plymouth Brethren acted strictly within the law (despite *“being so stinking rich”* in Mr Carter’s judgement), Mr Carter apparently investigated matters and jumped to the conclusion, without the slightest justification for same, that this meant that the Plymouth Brethren operated under the framework created by the Act and through the Foundation. He was *“amazed at the scope it gave to anybody sliding under the auspices or the reputation of the Open Brethren Church....”*

There is so much that is wrong, objectionable and, frankly, bizarre in the things said about the Act and the Foundation in the Video. They include:

- By inference, through the Act the Plymouth Brethren *“are wielding almighty power. It’s unbelievable”*;
- It’s all a *“Machiavellian”* idea;
- Because of the Act:
 - the Plymouth Brethren *“have their own trusts”*;
 - the Plymouth Brethren *“have hidden trusts that are not open to scrutiny”*;
 - the Plymouth Brethren have trusts which *“can be changed willy nilly to put investigators off the scent”*;

Stewards Foundation

Suite 301, Level 3, 29 George St Burwood NSW 2134

P: 8775 3105 www.stewardsfoundation.com.au

PO Box 260 Burwood NSW 1805

ABN: 57 246 942 907

- the ability of the Plymouth Brethren to change trusts was unique amongst businesses and religions in global terms;
- The provisions of the Act are open to other religions (*“What happens if the Catholics and the Muslims and other religions, cults take advantage of this provision. It is utterly ridiculous. It will cause the collapse of the whole tax system, legal system, I believe of New South Wales and consequently around the world..”*)
- What the Plymouth Brethren have got is *“like a parallel universe.”*
- What was done to Mr Christie (*“the complete soiling and spoiling of my life”*) *“was done purposefully with evil intent backed by the ...Act.”*
- The Act *“performs no purpose but to ruin and destroy lives and legalises it from New South Wales”*

There is not the slightest truth in any of those allegations. None of them are grounded in reality. The Act does not operate in any of the ways suggested in the Video. The Foundation has no connection whatsoever with the Plymouth Brethren. The allegations therefore fail completely to provide any justification for the repeal of the Act.

E. Accountability of the Foundation

The activities of the Foundation are the subject of regular review and accountability to a number of external organisations:

1. The Foundation’s auditor, StewartBrown Chartered Accountants;
2. The Australian Taxation Office;
3. The Australian Securities and Investments Commission;
4. The Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits Commission; and
5. The Australian Financial Complaints Authority.

At no time in the history of the Foundation have any of those organisations:

- a. raised queries;
- b. made allegations; or
- c. made findings

which are remotely similar to the allegations set out in the 2 Articles or the Video.

F. Australian Taxation Office investigations

The Article refers to the Australian Taxation Office’s investigation into the activities of the Plymouth Brethren.

The fact that the ATO has never approached the Foundation in relation to those activities demonstrates that its investigations to date have not identified any connection between the Foundation and the Plymouth Brethren.

The Foundation has never lodged a tax return on behalf of a Plymouth Brethren assembly or organisation, nor has been required to do so.

Stewards Foundation

Suite 301, Level 3, 29 George St Burwood NSW 2134
 P: 8775 3105 www.stewardsfoundation.com.au
 PO Box 260 Burwood NSW 1805
 ABN: 57 246 942 907

If the Foundation is a trust vehicle through which many Plymouth Brethren activities are conducted, then it is inconceivable that the Foundation has never received an approach from the ATO as part of its investigations into those activities.

G. Conclusion

The above shows emphatically that:

1. The Foundation was established under the Act to provide support and services to the religious tradition known as “Christian Brethren”, “Open Brethren” or (more latterly) “Christian Community Churches of Australia” **only**;
2. The Foundation is **not** permitted under the Act to provide support and services to the religious tradition known as the “Exclusive Brethren” or “Brethren” or (more latterly) “Plymouth Brethren”;
3. Contrary to your assertions, there is no means whatsoever by which the Exclusive Brethren, (including Plymouth Brethren Christian Church and its related entities), could utilise the Act to further their objectives; and
4. In practice, the Foundation has never had any connection of any kind, nor dealings of any kind with the Exclusive Brethren (including Plymouth Brethren Christian Church and its related entities).
5. The allegations made in the 2 Articles and the YouTube Video are baseless, libellous and, frankly, irrational.

It follows that the Article’s major claim that *“the Act is the foundation of all Plymouth Brethren business affairs”* is completely untrue. There is not one shred of truth in it.

Since the reasoning behind the proposal to repeal the Act is so fundamentally flawed, the justification for the proposal falls away completely.

H. Formal Request

In light of the above, we formally request that:

1. the Article and the Second Article are removed from Mr Christie’s website;
2. the YouTube video is taken down from YouTube;
3. you cease making any further representations to any person that the Foundation has any connection with the Plymouth Brethren;
4. you cease making any statements which suggest that the Foundation is part of the corrupt activities of the Plymouth Brethren or is connected in any way with fraud or has acted with evil intent; and
5. you cease agitating for the repeal of the Foundation on the basis of its alleged connection with the Plymouth Brethren.

Stewards Foundation

Suite 301, Level 3, 29 George St Burwood NSW 2134

P: 8775 3105 www.stewardsfoundation.com.au

PO Box 260 Burwood NSW 1805

ABN: 57 246 942 907

We understand that you may be meeting with a politician on June 5 and potentially conducting a meeting or rally on that same date. You must not convey the incorrect matters in the Article relating to the Foundation in either forum.

I. Communication with others

Apart from the website being communication to the public at large, it is evident that in the course of your campaign you:

- wrote to the then NSW Attorney-General Mark Speakman in 2021;
- contacted Sue Higginson MLC.

Apparently, Ms Higginson wrote to Michael Daley the current NSW Attorney-General in 2023.

We advise that we shall write to Mr Daley and Ms Higginson and provide a copy of this letter.

J. Final reflection

We appreciate that the campaign you have embarked on against the Plymouth Brethren arises out of the real trauma of separation from family because of their exclusivist practices. We understand that you are motivated by a real concern for the welfare of those caught up in the Plymouth Brethren tradition. We have genuine sympathy for your cause.

However, it doesn't help your cause if, in the process of attacking the Plymouth Brethren, you make totally false claims about the Foundation and unnecessarily call for the repeal of the Act - and the Foundation with it.

If your arguments about the Act and the Foundation are seen to have no credibility, then it may undermine the overall credibility of your campaign.

K. Offer to meet

We believe it would assist your understanding if we were to meet. It would be an opportunity for us to elaborate on these matters and for you to seek clarification of anything arising from this letter.

To that end, we extend an invitation for you to meet with Stewards management after 5 June 2024 at our office in Burwood or, if more convenient, virtually (by Zoom or Teams).

Please advise by email or phone if that is of interest and I will arrange a meeting at a mutually convenient date and time.

Yours faithfully

Phil Weldon

Head of Legal & Property Services
0438 899 966

Stewards Foundation
Suite 301, Level 3, 29 George St Burwood NSW 2134
P: 8775 3105 www.stewardsfoundation.com.au
PO Box 260 Burwood NSW 1805
ABN: 57 246 942 907

Appendix One

A. General Background

The following needs to be understood by way of general background:

1. The first half of the 19th century saw the development in Britain of a non-conformist Christian movement which was sometimes identified as Plymouth Brethren since it had commenced in the English city of Plymouth.
 2. In 1848 the movement split into two distinct traditions:
 - a. The Open Brethren tradition led by George Muller and others; and
 - b. The Exclusive Brethren tradition led by John Darby.
 3. Consequently, the Open Brethren in Australia (and possibly elsewhere) became known as “Christian Brethren”.
 4. Those in the Exclusive Brethren tradition were never called Christian Brethren. Typically, they referred to themselves simply as “Brethren”.
 5. Approximately two decades ago, a number of Christian Brethren assemblies chose to re-brand as “Christian Community Churches of Australia”. This occurred because:
 - a. the name “Brethren” was perceived to be an antiquated term which was no longer used in general parlance; and
 - b. it was to help differentiate themselves from the Exclusive Brethren in the minds of the general public.
 6. A number of organisations have been established at the Federal and State level to facilitate fellowship amongst Christian Community Churches including:
 - a. Christian Community Churches of Australia Limited (ABN 98 153 513 814) (**CCCAust (Australia)**);
 - b. CCCAust (NSW) (ABN 12 219 031 757).
 7. Neither CCCAust (Australia) nor CCCAust (NSW) have Plymouth Brethren assemblies, organisations or corporations affiliated with them.
 8. In the past decade or so, the Exclusive Brethren appear to have formally adopted the name “Plymouth Brethren”. The public company Plymouth Brethren Christian Church (ABN 42 158 542 075) appears to have had its origins in 2012.
 9. The corporate predecessor to the Foundation was Stewards’ Foundation of Christian Brethren, a company limited by guarantee (**Stewards Company**).
 10. No individuals or organisations associated with the Exclusive Brethren tradition were involved in the membership or governance of the Stewards Company.
2. The Stewards Company **never**:
 - a. acted as a trustee for any assembly associated with the Plymouth Brethren;
 - b. lent any money to any assembly or organisation associated with the Plymouth Brethren tradition; or
 - c. provided support or services to any assembly or organisation associated with the Plymouth Brethren.
 3. The Explanatory Note to the Stewards' Foundation of Christian Brethren Bill as introduced into Parliament stated *“The Stewards' Foundation of Christian Brethren Bill is a company limited by*

Stewards Foundation

Suite 301, Level 3, 29 George St Burwood NSW 2134

P: 8775 3105 www.stewardsfoundation.com.au

PO Box 260 Burwood NSW 1805

ABN: 57 246 942 907

guarantee, incorporated in New South Wales. The main function of the company is to hold property in trust for Assemblies of Christian Brethren throughout Australia. The object of this Bill is to reconstitute the Foundation and to facilitate the exercise of its functions."

4. Under paragraph 1(1) of Schedule 5 to the Act, *"the rights and liabilities of the Company become rights and liabilities of the Foundation to be exercised and discharged in accordance with the Act"*.
5. Under paragraph 1(2) of Schedule 5 to the Act, *"the obligations of the Company become obligations of the Foundation to be performed in accordance with the Act"*.
6. When the Stewards' Foundation of Christian Brethren Bill was initially debated in Parliament, it was made clear that the Act, and the Foundation proposed to be established under it, related to the Christian Brethren or Open Brethren tradition.

B. History of the Foundation

The following history of the Foundation needs to be recognised:

1. Since its inception in 1989, the Foundation has **only**:
 - a. solicited applications for membership of the Foundation from individuals or organisations from the Christian Brethren or CCCAust churches;
 - b. received applications for membership of the Foundation from individuals or organisations from the Christian Brethren or CCCAust churches;
 - c. had members from the Christian Brethren or CCCAust churches;
 - d. had Committee members from the Christian Brethren or CCCAust churches;
 - e. been a trustee of Christian Brethren assemblies or CCCAust churches;
 - f. lent money to organisations identified with the Christian Brethren or CCCAust churches; and
 - g. provided services to organisations identified with the Christian Brethren or CCCAust churches.
2. No persons associated with the Plymouth Brethren have ever been involved as staff, consultants or advisers to the Foundation.
3. It follows from item 1 above, that since its inception, the Foundation has **never**:
 - a. solicited applications to become members of the Foundation from individuals or organisations from the Plymouth Brethren;
 - b. received applications to become members of the Foundation from individuals or organisations identified with the Plymouth Brethren;
 - c. had a member from the Plymouth Brethren;
 - d. had a Committee Member from the Plymouth Brethren;
 - e. been a trustee of a church or organisation associated with the Plymouth Brethren or in relation to the property of such entities;
 - f. lent any money to the Plymouth Brethren; and
 - g. provided any services to the Plymouth Brethren.

Stewards Foundation

Suite 301, Level 3, 29 George St Burwood NSW 2134

P: 8775 3105 www.stewardsfoundation.com.au

PO Box 260 Burwood NSW 1805

ABN: 57 246 942 907

Appendix Two

Legal Position

The legal position is clear:

1. The Act not only establishes the Foundation; it is the document which governs its ongoing activities.
2. As such, the Act is the constitution of the Foundation which sets out the obligations and of the Foundation and, in the process, limits its activities.
3. The Act can't be amended at the determination of the Foundation. It requires the approval of the NSW Parliament.
4. By its own terms, the Act deals with Christian Brethren assemblies or organisations, whether incorporated or otherwise.
5. Under section 3 (1) of the Act:
 - a. "Assembly" is defined to mean *"all the members of a congregation of a church in Australia known or styled as an Assembly of Christian Brethren"*; and
 - b. "Assembly corporation" is defined to mean *"an Assembly organisation which is a corporation; and"*
 - c. "Assembly organisation" is defined to mean *"an organisation, corporate or unincorporate, whether in New South Wales or not:
(a) the functions of which are not inconsistent with the general functions of the Foundation, and
(b) each member of which is a member of an Assembly, and
(c) the directors or other officers of which are members of an Assembly."*
6. Therefore, the entities which the Foundation are to serve and support are those in the Christian Brethren tradition- and the Christian Brethren only.
7. The key functions of the Foundations relate to Assemblies and Assembly organisations only (refer s.5 of the Act)
8. The Foundation may act as a trustee in relation to property held by an Assembly only (refer ss.9 and 10 of the Act).
9. The loans by the Foundation are to be made to Assemblies and Assembly organisations only (refer s.11(2) and (3) of the Act).
10. The Act makes no reference to the Plymouth Brethren or Exclusive Brethren or any other Christian tradition for that matter.
11. Contrary to the assertion in the Article, members of a Plymouth Brethren Christian Church cannot form an "Assembly organisation" for the simple reason that they are not Christian Brethren.
12. Under the Act, the Foundation has no legal right or obligation to provide services or support to the Plymouth Brethren churches, corporations or organisations.
13. In practice, those associated with the Plymouth Brethren are not able to be involved with the Foundation let alone be in a position to control it.
14. Only persons involved in a Christian Brethren assembly are automatically able to become a member of the Foundation (refer paragraph 1(3) of Schedule 1 to the Act). Any other person (for

Stewards Foundation

Suite 301, Level 3, 29 George St Burwood NSW 2134

P: 8775 3105 www.stewardsfoundation.com.au

PO Box 260 Burwood NSW 1805

ABN: 57 246 942 907

- example, a person associated with the Plymouth Brethren) can only become a member if the Committee admits the person to membership (refer paragraph 1(2) of Schedule 1 to the Act).
15. As a matter of policy, the Committee will not admit to membership of the Foundation a person associated with the Plymouth Brethren or any other church tradition.
 16. To be eligible to be on the governing body of the Foundation, the Committee, a person must be a member of the Foundation.
 17. Even if there was a change in policy, whereby the Committee allowed an influx of members associated with the Plymouth Brethren, it would alter nothing – even if those persons effectively had control of the Foundation, the Foundation would still be restricted to acting as trustee for supporting or providing services to Christian Brethren assemblies or organisations, and no other.
 18. The following statements in the Article are simply wrong as a matter of law and have no basis in reality at all:
 - a. *“This Act is an Act that cancels out NSW Trust law”;*
 - b. *“in the deeper recesses of the Act there is provision for its use by Assembly Organisations which includes the Plymouth Brethren as an Assembly Organisation”;*
 - c. *“The Act subverts and replaces the normal law of Trusts in the State of NSW”;*
 - d. *“An Act that created power over their financial affairs.” ;*
 - e. *“The Act endows power over PBCC members’ affairs beyond the normal law of the State to the extent of the creation of documents not available to the members or indeed to a Court.”;*
 - f. *“The Act allows the PBCC which is an Assembly Organisation not a Company like the Open Brethren Foundation is, to sail under the Privacy Laws of Australia.”;*
 - g. *“The Stewards Foundation of Christian Brethren Act 1989 enables extraordinary privileges for PBCC Trusts to minimise tax with internal untouchable documents supporting putting paid to transparency.”*
 - h. *The Stewards Foundation of Christian Brethren Act is a wealth creation device enabling creation of documents that cannot be required in a court of law.”;*
 - i. *“The Act undermines cherished democratic values”;*
 - j. *“Despite the obvious closeness of the Open Brethren and the Plymouth Brethren, joined together in the Stewards Foundation Act...”*
 - k. *“The Act thereby facilitates humongous international deals done by untraceable companies /Trusts with minimal fuss or interference from Government Authorities, let alone Courts which leaves journalists stumbling.”*
 - l. *“The PBCC Assembly Organisation Committee can, by virtue of the Act, have branches anywhere in the world...”*
 - m. *“It is clearly this Act that the PBCC branch in Leeds, England, used to determine that there were irreconcilable differences between the Committee and Lance. This enabled the Committee to carry out their nefarious plan.”*
 - n. *“At 24 of the Stewards Foundation of Christian Brethren Act, the Committee of the PBCC can make By laws consistent with the abnormal trusts not just the Chapels held under normal NSW Trust law.”*
 - o. *“The Act allows the Assembly Organisation of the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church to*

Stewards Foundation

Suite 301, Level 3, 29 George St Burwood NSW 2134

P: 8775 3105 www.stewardsfoundation.com.au

PO Box 260 Burwood NSW 1805

ABN: 57 246 942 907

have no "specific" responsibility in regard to ex-members".

19. How can a piece of NSW legislation designed to establish a statutory entity have the impacts you state without the Act stating anything to that effect? How can a state act have any impact on obligations imposed by Federal legislation such as tax and privacy? How can a state act provide protections in relation to overseas activities?
20. Further to point 18(n) above, the reference to the Committee in s. 24 of the Act is a reference to the Committee of the Foundation, not to the Committee of PBCC.

Stewards Foundation

Suite 301, Level 3, 29 George St Burwood NSW 2134

P: 8775 3105 www.stewardsfoundation.com.au

PO Box 260 Burwood NSW 1805

ABN: 57 246 942 907

From: Phil Weldon <phil.weldon@stewardsfoundation.com.au>
Date: 7 June 2024 at 3:07:55 PM AEST
To: Ray Carter <ray@carterproperties.com.au>
Cc: Lance Chrisie <ljc3721@gmail.com>
Subject: RE: The Act

Mr. Carter

I will respond more fully later to your email later but, for now, will only make a few comments.

I have no recollection of ever seeing your email of 28 December 2022. It wasn't sent to my email address. The "admin@stewardsfoundation" address was the address for another Phil at Stewards— Phil Adams. I've checked my records and there is no record of it being onforwarded to me. It was sent during the Christmas/New Year break when the whole office was on leave.

Upon reading it now, your email is, frankly, difficult to follow. It certainly does not convey the impression that you were embarking on a campaign to repeal the Stewards Foundation of Christian Brethren Act or the basis for doing so

When I had a discussion with Lance Christie, John Wallis and you after the meeting on Wednesday, it was obvious to me that we were talking past each other and were diametrically opposed to each other in terms of what was being said about the use of the Act by the PB's.

When I said it was "our Act" I was referring to the fact that it was the act which set up the Foundation for which I worked. Of course, I wasn't saying that we "owned" the Act!

Before you joined the conversation, I had been speaking to John Wallis. He said he had proof that the PB's used our Act for their business dealings. I invited him to send me that proof and

I promised to read it. Please remind him of that promise.

The Stewards Foundation strongly re-iterates the position conveyed in my letter of 31 May 2024 and rejects out of hand your assertions that the PB's take advantage of the Act.

I will write to you formally when I have sighted what the Greens asked of the Attorney-General and what the Attorney-General said in response.

The material on the website referred to that information.

I asked you on 5 June if you would send that material to me. You still haven't provided me with a copy of Ms Higginson's request. You told me to contact Miss Higginson for a copy of the Attorney's response. Why can't you send it to me?

After the meeting to which I was denied access, I asked one of Ms Higginson's staffers for copies of those documents. He said he would provide them. He is yet to do so.

When I receive the response from him or you, I will write to you.

Please also send to me what you have received from Law Reform and Justice.

No meeting was scheduled for 5 June because I didn't hear from you. If there is to be a meeting - it should not occur until after I have written to you.

I have now left Sydney and won't be returning till Monday evening. It will be difficult for me to be able to write again till Tuesday 11 June.

Kind Regards

Phil Weldon

**Head of Property Services
0438 899 966**



This email and any attachments may contain privileged and confidential information and are intended for the named addressee only. If you have received this e-mail in error, please notify the sender and delete this e-mail immediately. Any confidentiality, privilege or copyright is not waived or lost because this e-mail has been sent to you in error. It is your responsibility to check this e-mail and any attachments for viruses

From: Ray Carter <ray@carterproperties.com.au> **Sent:** Thursday, June 6, 2024 9:31 PM **To:** Phil Weldon <phil.weldon@stewardsfoundation.com.au> **Cc:** Lance Chrisie <ljc3721@gmail.com> **Subject:** Re: The Act

Dear Mr Weldon

I've waited for the formal response you said late Tuesday evening would be forthcoming on yesterday. However it has not appeared. Your actual email of yesterday does not appear to be that formal response.

You said on Tuesday evening "In so doing, you have implicitly accepted the truth of the position we put in our letter of 31 May."

to which I properly take offence as it is a thing that I could say equally applies to you of not responding to my email to you on 28 December 2022 but did not. Instead however I again, out of courtesy, say no more about that, just as I do not in any way as you infer, concede that that there is as you say, any truth of or in the position that you put in your letter of 31 May. In any case I made all of that abundantly clear when we spoke yesterday in the parliament foyer with Lance Christie and John Wallis, including that I made clear that your many contentions are highly questionable and will in due course will be proven by many contentions to come other than me, to be plain wrong.

It was out of courtesy that I had Lance take down the stuff

his and mine at H in your email. Nothing more !

Yesterday when I was pointing out quite strongly to cause you to understand that all the many errors of your position will lead nowhere as good as using your time to promote your believed innocence in the court , in the hope that you may leave time to consider common sense and indeed belatedly look to the well being of your church members as I suggested in December 2022.

Your contention that somehow you had been thwarted by me from achieving justice in the NSW parliament because you were not made welcome in our little meeting with the just one member of the parliament (and a cross bench Green at that), however the one who has given us a proper hearing, is a bit ludicrous wouldn't you agree on reflection, especially when you, like anyone in our democracy are welcome to get in all their joint parliamentary ears, just as much or as little as you like.

As far as I was concerned you could and should have been made welcome at that Greens meeting though in the end it was a Greens meeting ! The misunderstanding as to why you were not, lay in the Greens not comprehending that you were Open Brethren as they, I found out latter, thought you were Plymouth brethren and a practicing one at that for some reason. They should be forgiven for this however, because the Hon Fred Nile MLC in his prime in 1989 , in Hansard had the same problem. The good thing now is that my acting with deferential courtesy to you in taking down my learned contentions until I run them past you again sometime, which was to be as I saw it at the meeting you proposed for today , but didn't follow up with. This was the meeting where I wanted to do that.

I will now courteously because I am in Bathurst and trying to run multiple businesses, give you breathing space to participate properly in the democratic process and properly learn who actually owns the laws of NSW, a matter I surprisingly had to help you with yesterday after you said it was "your" Act, implying we had no right to discuss your Act without your presence, which seems a bit outlandish.

You should try to get from Law Reform and Justice a written direction to counter what they wrote me if you have hope to leave the Act as it is, meaning without provision for ex members. This you must do if you want to win the hearts of the MPs / MLCs , left and right of the spectrum. Hopefully my courtesy has motivated you to do the same to others at last to properly get on with your responsibilities to the wonderful people of your church as should have occurred back in December 2022, because all you seem to have done to date as I see it, is as Shakespeare said , protest too much and if the Plymouths have been using your Act as you seem to have inferred ; without your knowledge since 1989 , let them be found out please for reasons Lance and I heard in District court on Tuesday, where the Judge made it abundantly clear that he was not impressed by the doings of those people which hopefully one day we can share with you.

Best regards
Ray Carter

From: Ray Carter <ray@carterproperties.com.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 5 June 2024 10:15 AM

To: Phil Weldon <phil.weldon@stewardsfoundation.com.au>

Subject: Re: The Act

Mr Weldon

1- The Greens including Ms Sue Higginson made up their own mind in regard to the adequacies or otherwise of the Act. I actually like their stronger than mine , opinion.

2- You would have to with Ms Higginson's office to obtain a copy of the AG Daley

letter of 25/12/23. It say much except his need for more evidence in regard to consequences of the Act which is the reason behind today's meetings at which there will be many positions put.

As to anything you believe may still be truly offensive to you I will willingly take down on your demand.

You could still be or could have representative attend the meeting at 12-30 at the parliament house to counter arguments of others

In addition to this I have already asked for what you wanted taken down that you properly identify as offensive.

The parliament is the proper place for this matter to be aired

Regards
Ray Carter

Sent from my iPhone

On 5 Jun 2024, at 9:19 AM, Phil Weldon
<phil.weldon@stewardsfoundation.com.au> wrote:

Mr Carter

Please send to me a copy of:

1. The question asked in Parliament by Ms Sue Higginson MLC on 7 December 2023; and
2. The Attorney-General's response on 15 December 2023.

Kind Regards

Phil Weldon

Head of Property Services
0438 899 966
<image001.png>

This email and any attachments may contain privileged and confidential information and are intended for the named addressee only. If you have received this e-mail in error, please notify the sender and delete this e-mail immediately. Any confidentiality, privilege or copyright is not waived or lost because this e-mail has been sent to you in error. It is your responsibility to check this e-mail and any attachments for viruses

On 4 Jun 2024, at 11:00 PM, Phil Weldon
<phil.weldon@stewardsfoundation.com.au> wrote:

Mr Carter

I will formally respond tomorrow to your email of yesterday, the contents of which were approved by Mr Christie.

Suffice to say for now, we are pleased that the 2 articles in the YouTube video have been removed from Mr Christie's website. In so doing, you have implicitly accepted the truth of the position we put in our letter of 31 May.

We understand that tomorrow you might be meeting with a politician and other individuals in relation to your ongoing campaign concerning the Plymouth Brethren.

We again require that you do not make claims similar to those in the offending Articles or the Video in that forum or, indeed in any subsequent forum.

As I said, I will formally respond to your email tomorrow. A number of statements made in your email need to be addressed.

Kind Regards

Phil Weldon

Head of Property Services
0438 899 966
<image001.png>

This email and any attachments may contain privileged and confidential information and are intended for the named addressee only. If you have received this e-mail in error, please notify the sender and delete this e-mail immediately. Any confidentiality, privilege or copyright is not waived or lost because this e-mail has been sent to you in error. It is your responsibility to check this e-mail and any attachments for viruses

From: Ray Carter <ray@carterproperties.com.au> **Sent:** Monday, June 3, 2024 10:12 AM **To:** Phil Weldon <phil.weldon@stewardsfoundation.com.au> **Cc:** Lance Chrisie <ljc3721@gmail.com> **Subject:** Fwd: The Act

Hello Phil.

phil.weldon@stewardsfoundation.com.au

Both Lance Christie and my office staff forwarded me your email of last Friday morning.

On Friday night I requested that Lance remove all of the material you mention at H, your Formal Request, from his website. I daresay at the meeting you suggested for this Thursday he will put to you replacement on his site that which cannot be construed as offensive to yourself. Please let Lance and myself know if the removal was done to your satisfaction, to my proper email address ray@carterproperties.com.au, the email address used to contact you on 28 December 2022. (attached) It is a shame that you did not enter into correspondence or talks back then. I see that email as appropriate now as it was back then however the arena is now the NSW Parliament. Understand that the Greens in the NSW parliament have already formally requested of the NSW Attorney General that the Stewards Foundation of Christian Brethren Act 1989 be repealed, not reviewed as I initially requested in September of last year, they seeing repeal the best course of action for the NSW parliament and have not resiled from that course.

Understand also that on extensive representations to the NSW police the matter of how the Stewards Foundation of Christian Brethren bill was passed through the NSW Parliament, namely for whom it made provision, the police agreed on giving the complaint an Event Number and to take action which I would understand includes whether it is a crime scene as presented. This investigation has yet to be completed.

The representations I made to members of the NSW Parliament were concerning Assembly Organisations that merely have according to the Act be “styled” after the Open Brethren’s Foundation. No office has contradicted that the Plymouth Brethren are such an Assembly Organisation including Justice and Law Reform which recognised that there exists no provision for ex members, a thing that should appall you.

My representations to ATO and the Charities Commission over the years included caution that the Act allows super slick and quick use of trusts created under the Act and a special seal that might require similar investigation. What occurred in March of this year did not surprise me one bit.

As for how the Open Brethren / FSCB use the Act I observe that it is cleanly not in combination with way out extremist biblical doctrines, however that is the thing you need to deal with, that and the fallout from public scrutiny on how close the Open and Plymouth Brethren actually are. This would / will occur no matter how gently the Act is reviewed, replaced or repealed by proper democratic process in the NSW Parliament in which you as I am able to take part.

Best Regards

Ray Carter

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:**From:** Ray Carter

<ray@carterproperties.com.au>

Date: 28 December 2022 at 8:54:55 AM AEDT**To:**

admin@stewardsfoundation.com.au**Subject: The**

Act

Attention Phil Weldon

Hello Phil

George Hawke suggested I send my contentions to you. I do so for no reason but that I believe, apart from my respect for the good people of the Open Brethren, that given the inability of anyone except a majority of the people for whom a Church Trust law was written ie the Assemblies or Assemblies simply **styled** as an Assembly of Christian Brethren (not necessarily even Christian) can cause a review of their Act.

This is sufficient for any minority, (especially a minority consisting of those considering leaving an Assembly Organisation for whom there is “no *specific provision*” (as put to me in response to my letters to the NSW AG , by the DCJ,) to dissuade them from even contemplating causing a review of the Act. (If indeed they even know their church or cult operates or could operate under the Act which facilitates for an Assembly Organisation the benefit all Australian Privacy Laws.)

I would understand that you are capable of looking

after those you have immediate care for and I will endeavour to do so for those in addition under the Act.

There the matter lies and may we each contemplate the love Christ intended to pervade the earth, giving it opportunity to reach into every part, including the words of legislation as per Matthew 12:37

Best regards

Ray Carter



25 November 2024
Ms. S. Higginson MLC
Parliament House
6 Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Ms Higginson

False allegations about Stewards Foundation of Christian Brethren Act, 1989

We refer to your office's email dated 14 June 2024 and write generally in relation to the above matter.

A. Introduction

Some months ago, we were made aware of a campaign by Mr Lance Christie and Mr Ray Carter in relation to the Stewards Foundation of Christian Brethren Act, 1989 (**Act**) and the Stewards Foundation of Christian Brethren (**Foundation**).

Material on a website of Mr Christie conveyed numerous false allegations about the Act and the Foundation. The central allegation was that the Act and the Foundation facilitated the business and other dealings of the Plymouth Brethren Church in Australia and overseas. The Act, and by necessary implication, the Foundation were painted as being party to the "corruption", "fraud" and "evil intent" of the Plymouth Brethren.

On 31 May 2024, we sent the attached letter to Mr. Christie and Mr. Carter (**31 May Letter**) rejecting out of hand the many claims made on the website and requiring that Christie and Carter cease making any similar claims in the future. Within two hours of receiving our letter, the offending material had been removed from the website, a plain acknowledgement by Christie and Carter of the truth of our position. Notwithstanding that, Christie and Carter, who are copied into this correspondence, have continued to make similar allegations despite our repeated rejections of same (including in our letter of 13 September 2024, copy attached). They have written to us as late as this month.

B. Your involvement

In reviewing the material from Christie and Carter we became aware of your advocacy for the rights of former members of the Plymouth Brethren Church, in the course of which you had requested the Attorney General of New South Wales, the Hon Michael Daley to consider repealing the Act. We can only presume that your position in relation to the Act was informed in part by the representations of Christie and Carter.

In response to our request, we note that on 14 June 2024 we received from your office a copy of your letter dated 24 October 2023 in which you made the relevant request of the Attorney-General (**October 2023 Letter**). We were already in possession of a copy of the response of the Attorney

Stewards Foundation

Suite 301, Level 3, 29 George St Burwood NSW 2134
P: 8775 3105 www.stewardsfoundation.com.au
PO Box 260 Burwood NSW 1805
ABN: 57 246 942 907

General dated 15 December 2023 (**Attorney-General Letter**). We note that you have hosted at least one meeting of ex-Plymouth Brethren members at Parliament House. That occurred on 5 June 2024.

C. False claims

The allegations made by Christie and Carter are entirely false. There is not one skerrick of truth in them. They are libellous, slanderous and grossly unfair to the Foundation and to the men and women involved in the Foundation.

They are also, frankly, ridiculous. No one with the slightest knowledge of our organisation would make them. No one who has read the Act properly could draw the legal conclusions they have. In the long life of our Foundation, **no one** has ever made the claims similar to those made by Carter and Christie. There is a reason for that; the claims are completely unrelated to reality.

At **Appendix 1**, hereto, we set out why the claims are false and at **Appendix 2**, hereto, we respond to the assertions made in the **October 2023 Letter**. At **Appendix 3**, hereto, we make some brief observations about the activities of the Foundation.

Christie and Carter have sought to draw us into their fight with the Plymouth Brethren Church. We have great sympathy for those who have suffered through their association with the Plymouth Brethren Church but neither they nor the Plymouth Brethren Church have anything to do with us. We are not involved in any way.

D. Conclusion

We trust that the matters set out in this letter show conclusively that neither the Act nor the Foundation established by it has, or indeed can, empower the Plymouth Brethren in any way. Since the reasoning behind the proposal to repeal the Act is so fundamentally flawed, the justification for the proposal falls away completely.

E. Your response

In light of the above, we invite you to acknowledge that the Act and the Foundation have nothing to do with the Plymouth Brethren, retract the allegations made in the October 2023 Letter and cease advocating for the repeal of the Act.

We advise that we shall be writing to the Attorney-General to set out our position.

F. Meeting

If it is of interest, we would be willing to meet with you or your staff to respond to any questions you may have or to provide any further information you seek.

Yours faithfully

Phil Weldon

Head of Legal & Property Services

0438 899 966

**Cc: Mr Lance Christie
Mr Ray Carter**

Stewards Foundation

Suite 301, Level 3, 29 George St Burwood NSW 2134

P: 8775 3105 www.stewardsfoundation.com.au

PO Box 260 Burwood NSW 1805

ABN: 57 246 942 907

APPENDIX 1

(Falsity of the claims by Christie and Carter)

To summarise the key points made more fully in the 31 May Letter:

1. The Act and the Foundation expressly deal with the “Christian Brethren”, a Christian tradition historically referred to as the “Open Brethren”, with some churches in this tradition now identifying as “Christian Community Churches”.
2. This is an entirely separate and different religious tradition from the tradition identifying as “Plymouth Brethren Christian Church”. That tradition used to be known as “the Exclusive Brethren” or simply as “the Brethren”.
3. The traditions may have had a common root but have been separate since 1848.
4. For over 175 years there has been **no** connection between the traditions. As one of the offending website articles admits, the gulf between the 2 traditions is *“the deepest ditch in Christendom”*.
5. The Foundation has no connection whatsoever with the business or other dealings of the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church, its committees or related entities (collectively, **PB Entities**).
6. No one involved with the Foundation has ever met, or had dealings with, the PB Entities or Mr Bruce Hales or his family.
7. No person associated with the PB Entities has ever been involved in the governance of, or worked for, or advised the Foundation.
8. When the Stewards Foundation of Christian Brethren Bill was introduced into the Parliament in 1989 it was made clear that the proposed legislation related to the Christian Brethren and **not** the Plymouth Brethren. During the second reading:
 - a. The Hon. Ted Pickering stated *“The Stewards Foundation of Christian Brethren oversees certain activities of the religious bodies known as the Assemblies of Christian Brethren”*;
 - b. The Hon Fred Nile said:
 - i. *“The original Christian Brethren grew into two wings: the Closed Brethren or Exclusive Brethren, and the Open Brethren. This legislation deals with the Open Brethren”*; and
 - ii. (In referring to the 19th century split into the 2 religious traditions) *“The Darby group broke away and became the Exclusive Brethren. They thought that the group should have no contact with other people, and should maintain high standards in the sense of not becoming involved with the world or worldly activities. That is why they adopted the name Exclusive Brethren or Closed Brethren. The group dealt with by this bill is the Open Brethren.”*
9. The Act makes the following clear:
 - a. The Act only authorises the Foundation to act with Christian Brethren assemblies or organisations (collectively **CB Entities**);
 - b. The Foundation may only act as a trustee for, lend money to; or provide services to CB Entities;
 - c. It follows from paragraph 9b that the Foundation is not authorised to act as a trustee for, lend money to; or provide services to PB Entities.
10. Certainly, the Plymouth Brethren have never acknowledged that they have any connection with the Christian Brethren, the Act or the Foundation.

Stewards Foundation

Suite 301, Level 3, 29 George St Burwood NSW 2134

P: 8775 3105 www.stewardsfoundation.com.au

PO Box 260 Burwood NSW 1805

ABN: 57 246 942 907

APPENDIX 2 (Response to October 2023 Letter)

In the October 2023 Letter you ask the Attorney-General to consider the repeal of the Act because of the way it empowers Plymouth Brethren *“to exploit and abuse its members”*. You say, *“in practice, the Act has empowered the Plymouth Brethren to carry out coercion and control over its members”*.

For reasons that have been outlined at great length above, and in the 31 May Letter, we trust that you will see that that is simply **not** the case. We respectfully say that your request to repeal the Act proceeds on a fundamentally flawed premise.

The Act and the Foundation created by it has **not**, and cannot, have anything to do with the Plymouth Brethren. Even the most cursory review of the Act shows it concerns, and can only concern, the Christian Brethren tradition.

Under the Act, the Foundation is to act for, or provide services to one or more of the following:

- a. an *“Assembly”*;
- b. an *“Assembly corporation”*; or
- c. an *“Assembly organisation”*.

The definition of those terms in section 3(1) of the Act make it clear that they relate only to entities associated with the Christian Brethren tradition. As the Attorney-General Letter states, *“The Stewards Foundation Act provides that the Foundation may acquire and hold property on trust for Assemblies of the Christian Brethren.”*

The 2 traditions have had **nothing** to do with each for 175 years.

The **only** thing that they have in common is the word *“Brethren”*. Christie and Carter and perhaps your office have seen the word *“Brethren”* in our name and jumped to the conclusion that this includes the Plymouth Brethren.

Apart from the erroneous interpretation of the Act, upon what evidence did you form the view that, in practice, the Act was used by the Plymouth Brethren?

We respectfully submit that it would have been better had you approached the Foundation before you sought the abolition of the Act from the responsible minister.

Given that the October 2023 Letter proceeds on a fundamentally erroneous basis, in one sense it seems unnecessary to comment on the specific assertions made in the Letter. For completeness, though, we make the following comments:

- a. It is simply wrong to say the Act *“empowers the (Foundation) to hold and deal with property for the members of the Brethren Churches (Assembly)”*.

What provision of the Act supports that proposition?

The Act can deal with the property of an *“Assembly”* being the *“congregation of a*

Stewards Foundation

Suite 301, Level 3, 29 George St Burwood NSW 2134

P: 8775 3105 www.stewardsfoundation.com.au

PO Box 260 Burwood NSW 1805

ABN: 57 246 942 907

church” (and only a restricted class of that property at that – refer next 2 paragraphs below). The Act does **not** permit dealing with the assets of the members forming the Assembly. It deals with the assets of the congregation, **not** those of its individual members.

We note that the Attorney-General Letter states, *“The Stewards Foundation Act does not provide that the personal property of Assembly members is subject to the Act or otherwise automatically vests in the Foundation”*;

- b. Contrary to what your letter states, the Committee does **not** act as trustee. The Foundation is the trustee of the trusts permitted under the Act. The Committee is the governing body of the Foundation;
- c. The trusts under the Act relate to the holding of **chapels** (i.e. church buildings) and **not** the business or other assets of Assemblies or Assembly organisations;
- d. The trusts under the Act have **nothing** to do with the assets of the members and, therefore, the Act did **not** need to deal with the rights of ex-members;
- e. While you admit Reverend Fred Nile said the Act would apply to the Open Brethren, the October 2023 Letter says, *“but in practice, the Act has empowered the Exclusive Brethren to carry out coercion and control of its members.”* (emphasis ours)

Respectfully, how does it do so “in practice”? What evidence is there for your contention? As we have said above and in the 31 May Letter, there have **never** been any dealings of any kind with the Plymouth Brethren “in practice”. We note that the Attorney-General Letter issued the invitation, *“If you have further information or details around how the Foundation, the Committee or the Stewards Foundation Act are allegedly being used to divest ex-members of Assemblies of their personal property, please forward this information to my office.”*

If you have you done this, would you please forward a copy of any material you have sent to the Attorney.

Since the Act does **not** deal with the Plymouth Brethren or the assets of Plymouth Brethren members, your comments about the Act being used for malevolent purposes such as:

- a. *“to entrap members”*, or
- b. *“for holding all assets and stripping members of their assets”*; or
- c. *“(empowering) the Plymouth Brethren to carry out coercion and control of its members”*; or
- d. *“(empowering) the Plymouth Brethren to carry out abuse and coercion of its members”*

all fall away as being totally misdirected.

Stewards Foundation

Suite 301, Level 3, 29 George St Burwood NSW 2134

P: 8775 3105 www.stewardsfoundation.com.au

PO Box 260 Burwood NSW 1805

ABN: 57 246 942 907

APPENDIX 3

(Activities of the Foundation)

The purpose statement of the Foundation is *“To provide for support and services for Community Churches and associated organisations to grow and flourish.”*

We say that the Foundation (and its corporate predecessor) has quietly and, at the risk of being immodest, successfully gone about a ministry of supporting Christian Brethren assemblies and organisations for the last 60 years. The Foundation has never been accused of any wrongdoing in all its dealings with the Christian Brethren.

The Stewards Foundation Disaster Relief Fund provides support to churches and individuals across Australia when they are affected by natural disasters such as floods, droughts and fires.

The Foundation has contributed substantial funding to support other organisations involved in food distribution and NDIS services.

The Foundation is a charity registered with the ACNC. We attach an extract from the ACNC register.

If you are interested, we would be happy to provide you with more information about the activities of the Foundation.

Stewards Foundation

Suite 301, Level 3, 29 George St Burwood NSW 2134

P: 8775 3105 www.stewardsfoundation.com.au

PO Box 260 Burwood NSW 1805

ABN: 57 246 942 907



26 November 2024

The Hon M. Daley MP
Attorney General
Parliament House
6 Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Attorney

False allegations relating to Stewards Foundation of Christian Brethren Act, 1989

We write to you in your capacity as the minister with oversight of the Stewards Foundation of Christian Brethren Act, 1989 (**Act**). We, of course, are the Foundation established under the Act.

A. Reason for writing

For over a year, the Act and this organisation have been the subject of false allegations about our connection with the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church. These allegations almost certainly prompted a call to you in October last year seeking the repeal of the Act, which, of course, would lead to the abolition of this organisation. Thankfully, you did not accede to that request.

Our only purpose in writing is to set out our response to these allegations. We are **not** seeking any action on your part other than to note our position.

B. Background

In May this year, we were first made aware of a campaign by Mr Lance Christie and Mr Ray Carter in relation to the Act and the Foundation.

Material on a website of Mr Christie conveyed numerous false allegations about the Act and the Foundation. The central allegation was that the Act and the Foundation facilitated the business and other dealings of the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church in Australia and overseas. The Act, and by necessary implication, the Foundation were painted as being party to what they referred to as the "corruption", "fraud" and "evil intent" of the Plymouth Brethren.

On 31 May 2024, we sent the attached letter to Mr. Christie and Mr. Carter (**31 May Letter**) rejecting out of hand the many claims made on the website and requiring that Christie and Carter cease making any similar claims in the future. Within two hours of receiving our letter, the offending material had been removed from the website, a plain acknowledgement by Christie and Carter of the truth of our position. Notwithstanding that, Christie and Carter, who are copied into this correspondence, have continued to make similar allegations despite our repeated rejection of same (including in our letter of 13 September 2024, copy attached). They have written to us as late as this month.

Stewards Foundation

Suite 301, Level 3, 29 George St Burwood NSW 2134
P: 8775 3105 www.stewardsfoundation.com.au
PO Box 260 Burwood NSW 1805
ABN: 57 246 942 907

C. Involvement of Ms Higginson MLC

In reviewing the material from Christie and Carter we became aware, again for the first time, that the Greens MLC, Ms Sue Higginson had, in the course of advocating for the rights of former members of the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church, written on 24 October 2023 asking you to consider repealing the Act. We presume that her position was informed in part by the representations of Christie and Carter.

We are grateful that your letter of 15 December 2023 did not agree to her request but explained the connection of the Act to the Christian Brethren. Following the continuing campaign of Christie and Carter, we wrote to Ms Higginson yesterday. We attach a copy of our letter dated 25 November 2024.

D. False claims

The allegations made by Christie and Carter are entirely false. There is not one skerrick of truth in them. They are libellous, slanderous and grossly unfair to the Foundation and to the men and women involved in the Foundation.

They are also, frankly, ridiculous. No one with the slightest knowledge of our organisation would make them. No one who has read the Act properly could draw the legal conclusions they have. In the long life of our Foundation, **no one** has ever made claims similar to those made by Carter and Christie. There is a reason for that: the claims are completely unrelated to reality.

We have great sympathy for those who have suffered through their association with the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church but neither they nor the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church have anything to do with us. We are not involved in any way. The Christian Brethren (often styled these days as “Christian Community Churches”) is an entirely different Christian tradition from the Plymouth Brethren. The only thing they have in common is the name “Brethren”.

At **Appendix 1**, hereto, we set out why the claims are false and at **Appendix 2**, hereto, we respond to the assertions made in Ms Higginson’s letter of 24 October 2023. At **Appendix 3**, hereto, we make some brief observations about the activities of the Foundation.

E. Conclusion

We trust that the information in this letter shows that neither the Act nor the Foundation has, or indeed can, be used by the Plymouth Brethren in any way. We are, of course, grateful that you have not sought to repeal the Act. Our position, which you appear to share, is that the reasoning behind the proposal to repeal the Act is so fundamentally flawed that it provides no justification for the proposal.

As stated above, we would be grateful if our position on these matters is noted. We would also be grateful if you would advise us if you receive a similar request to repeal the Act in the future. Please advise if you seek any clarification on the above or if you require any further information.

Yours faithfully

Phil Weldon

Head of Legal & Property Services

0438 899 966

Cc: Mr Lance Christie and Mr Ray Carter

Stewards Foundation

Suite 301, Level 3, 29 George St Burwood NSW 2134

P: 8775 3105 www.stewardsfoundation.com.au

PO Box 260 Burwood NSW 1805

ABN: 57 246 942 907

APPENDIX 1

(Falsity of the claims by Christie and Carter)

To summarise the key points made more fully in the 31 May Letter:

1. The Act and the Foundation expressly deal with the “Christian Brethren”, a Christian tradition historically referred to as the “Open Brethren”, with many churches in this tradition now identifying as “Christian Community Churches”.
2. This is an entirely separate and different religious tradition from the tradition identifying as “Plymouth Brethren Christian Church”. That tradition used to be known as “the Exclusive Brethren” or simply as “the Brethren”.
3. The traditions may have had a common root but have been separate since 1848.
4. For over 175 years there has been **no** connection between the traditions. As one of the offending website articles admits, the gulf between the 2 traditions is *“the deepest ditch in Christendom”*.
5. The Foundation has no connection whatsoever with the business or other dealings of the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church, its committees or related entities (collectively, **PB Entities**).
6. No one involved with the Foundation has ever met, or had dealings with, the PB Entities or Mr Bruce Hales or his family.
7. No person associated with the PB Entities has ever been involved in the governance of, or worked for, or advised the Foundation.
8. When the Stewards Foundation of Christian Brethren Bill was introduced into the Parliament in 1989 it was made clear that the proposed legislation related to the Christian Brethren and **not** the Plymouth Brethren. During the second reading:
 - a. The Hon. Ted Pickering stated *“The Stewards Foundation of Christian Brethren oversees certain activities of the religious bodies known as the Assemblies of Christian Brethren”*;
 - b. The Hon Fred Nile said:
 - i. *“The original Christian Brethren grew into two wings: the Closed Brethren or Exclusive Brethren, and the Open Brethren. This legislation deals with the Open Brethren”*; and
 - ii. (In referring to the 19th century split into the 2 religious traditions) *“The Darby group broke away and became the Exclusive Brethren. They thought that the group should have no contact with other people and should maintain high standards in the sense of not becoming involved with the world or worldly activities. That is why they adopted the name Exclusive Brethren or Closed Brethren. The group dealt with by this bill is the Open Brethren.”*
9. The Act makes the following clear:
 - a. The Act only authorises the Foundation to act with Christian Brethren assemblies or organisations (collectively **CB Entities**);
 - b. The Foundation may only act as a trustee for, lend money to; or provide services to CB Entities;
 - c. It follows from paragraph 9b, that the Foundation is not authorised to act as a trustee for, lend money to; or provide services to PB Entities.
10. Certainly, the Plymouth Brethren have never acknowledged that they have any connection with the Christian Brethren, the Act or the Foundation.

Stewards Foundation

Suite 301, Level 3, 29 George St Burwood NSW 2134

P: 8775 3105 www.stewardsfoundation.com.au

PO Box 260 Burwood NSW 1805

ABN: 57 246 942 907

APPENDIX 2

(Response to Sue Higginson's letter dated 24 October 2023)

In her letter dated 24 October 2023 (**October 2023 Letter**) Ms Higginson asked you to consider the repeal of the Act because of the way it empowered Plymouth Brethren *“to exploit and abuse its members”*. She said, *“in practice, the Act has empowered the Plymouth Brethren to carry out coercion and control over its members”*.

For reasons that have been outlined at length above, and in the 31 May Letter, we trust that you will see that that is simply **not** the case and that the request to repeal the Act proceeds on a fundamentally flawed premise.

The Act and the Foundation created by it has **not**, and cannot, have anything to do with the Plymouth Brethren. Even the most cursory review of the Act shows it concerns, and can only concern, the Christian Brethren tradition.

Under the Act, the Foundation is to act for, or provide services to one or more of the following:

- a. an *“Assembly”*;
- b. an *“Assembly corporation”*; or
- c. an *“Assembly organisation”*.

The definition of those terms in section 3(1) of the Act make it clear that they relate only to entities associated with the Christian Brethren tradition. As your letter of 15 December states, *“The Stewards Foundation Act provides that the Foundation may acquire and hold property on trust for Assemblies of the Christian Brethren.”*

As stated earlier, the 2 traditions have had **nothing** to do with each for 175 years. Christie and Carter (and apparently Ms Higginson) have seen the word “Brethren” in our name and jumped to the conclusion that this includes the Plymouth Brethren.

It is a matter of regret that Ms Higginson did not approach the Foundation before she sought the repeal of the Act.

Given that the October 2023 Letter proceeds on a fundamentally erroneous basis, in one sense it seems unnecessary to comment on the specific assertions made in the Letter. For completeness, though, we make the following comments:

- a. It is simply wrong to say the Act *“empowers the (Foundation) to hold and deal with property for the members of the Brethren Churches (Assembly)”*.

There is no provision of the Act that supports that proposition. The Act can deal with the property of an *“Assembly”* being the *“congregation of a church”* (and only a restricted class of that property at that – refer next 2 paragraphs below). The Act does **not** permit dealing with the assets of the members forming the Assembly. It deals with the assets of the congregation, **not** those of its individual members.

Stewards Foundation

Suite 301, Level 3, 29 George St Burwood NSW 2134

P: 8775 3105 www.stewardsfoundation.com.au

PO Box 260 Burwood NSW 1805

ABN: 57 246 942 907

We note that your letter states, *“The Stewards Foundation Act does not provide that the personal property of Assembly members is subject to the Act or otherwise automatically vests in the Foundation”*;

- b. Contrary to what Ms Higginson’s letter states, the Committee does **not** act as trustee. The Foundation is the trustee of the trusts permitted under the Act. The Committee is the governing body of the Foundation;
- c. The trusts under the Act relate to the holding of **chapels** (i.e. church buildings) and **not** the business or other assets of Assemblies or Assembly organisations;
- d. The trusts under the Act have **nothing** to do with the assets of the members and, therefore, the Act did **not** need to deal with the rights of ex-members;
- e. While Ms Higginson admits the Reverend Fred Nile said the Act would apply to the Open Brethren, her letter says, *“but in practice, the Act has empowered the Exclusive Brethren to carry out coercion and control of its members.”* (emphasis ours)

That statement is made without any evidence to support it. As we have said above and in the 31 May Letter, there have **never** been any dealings of any kind with the Plymouth Brethren “in practice”.

We note that your letter of 15 December 2023 issued the invitation, *“If you have further information or details around how the Foundation, the Committee or the Stewards Foundation Act are allegedly being used to divest ex-members of Assemblies of their personal property, please forward this information to my office.”*

We would assume that no such further information was provided.

Since the Act does **not** deal with the Plymouth Brethren or the assets of Plymouth Brethren members, the MLC’s comments about the Act being used for malevolent purposes such as:

- a. *“to entrap members”*, or
- b. *“for holding all assets and stripping members of their assets”*; or
- c. *“(empowering) the Exclusive Brethren to carry out coercion and control of its members”*; or
- d. *“(empowering) the Exclusive Brethren to carry out abuse and coercion of its members.”*

all fall away as being totally misdirected.

Stewards Foundation

Suite 301, Level 3, 29 George St Burwood NSW 2134

P: 8775 3105 www.stewardsfoundation.com.au

PO Box 260 Burwood NSW 1805

ABN: 57 246 942 907

APPENDIX 3

(Activities of the Foundation)

The purpose statement of the Foundation is *“To provide for support and services for Community Churches and associated organisations to grow and flourish.”*

We say that the Foundation (and its corporate predecessor) has quietly and, at the risk of being immodest, successfully gone about a ministry of supporting Christian Brethren assemblies and organisations for the last 60 years. The Foundation has never been accused of any wrongdoing in all its dealings with the Christian Brethren.

The Stewards Foundation Disaster Relief Fund provides support to churches and individuals across Australia when they are affected by natural disasters such as floods, droughts and fires.

The Foundation is a charity registered with the ACNC. We attach an extract from the ACNC register.

If you are interested, we would be happy to provide you with more information about the activities of the Foundation.

Stewards Foundation

Suite 301, Level 3, 29 George St Burwood NSW 2134

P: 8775 3105 www.stewardsfoundation.com.au

PO Box 260 Burwood NSW 1805

ABN: 57 246 942 907

From: lance christie <ljc3721@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, 13 January 2025 2:16 PM
To: Phil Weldon <phil.weldon@stewardsfoundation.com.au>; Admin <admin@stewardsfoundation.com.au>
Subject: Appeal to the governors of the NSW Stewards Foundation of Christian Brethren

FAO Mr Philip Weldon
cc Mr Peter Weldon

Dear Phil,

On reading the letters you sent to Sue Higginson of the parliamentary Greens and to Attorney General Daley, I cannot for an instant understand how you can leave the diabolical instrument that is the Stewards Foundation of Christian Brethren Act without review, when it is you the governing body alone who can cause that review as per the NSW bipartisan Church Legislation Policy

The Act explains everything that Bruce Hales and the PBCC (read cult) has done to categorically ruin every facet of my life, spiritually, family and financial. I am probably the prime example of what Bruce Hales meant in saying, "leave and you might as well eat rat poison." Every day you procrastinate or, worse, refuse to recognise that all of this is of your continuance, is a sad day indeed for Christianity.

You are the one who knows most the ignorance of PBCC Assemblies of all that is behind that which causes their constant sorrows. You have said that you did not know that the Plymouth Assemblies use the Act which means you are of full recognition of the outcomes, the principal one affecting my life to the extent of being the intruder which came between my wife and I, then my family, church brothers and sisters and colleagues, enticing the most cherished of them all to dupe me financially in the vesting and other processes that your Act facilitates.

Please help put my mind at ease one way or another such that I can either write you out of my mind or, as Christian love should dictate, go forward with you as a brother in Christ.

In anticipation of your urgent response

Lance J Christie

From: Phil Weldon <phil.weldon@stewardsfoundation.com.au>

Date: 13 January 2025 at 12:54:58 GMT+7

To: lance christie <ljc3721@gmail.com>, Admin
<admin@stewardsfoundation.com.au>

Subject: RE: Appeal to the governors of the NSW Stewards Foundation of Christian Brethren

Mr Christie

Unfortunately, there is no point in having any further dialogue in this matter.

How many times do I have to state that the claims made by you and Mr Carter about the use of the Stewards Foundation of Christian Brethren Act by the PBCC are totally untrue and without any basis in reality?

Frankly, the claims are a nonsense. Worse than that, insofar as you continue to maintain that the PBCC's use of the Act has brought misery into the lives of many people you are, by necessary implication, perpetuating a terrible libel about this Christian organisation.

Kind Regards

Phil Weldon
Head of Property Services
0438 899 966

This email and any attachments may contain privileged and confidential information and are intended for the named addressee only. If you have received this e-mail in error, please notify the sender and delete this e-mail immediately.

Any confidentiality, privilege or copyright is not waived or lost because this e-mail has been sent to you in error. It is your responsibility to check this e-mail and any attachments for viruses