

New Zealand ex-worker jailed for 13 years

WINGS Note:

Bill Easton was a worker in the following areas:

1967 Hauraki Plains

1968 Waikato

1969 South Taranaki

1970 Auckland

1071 Central Otago

1972 Auckland

1973 Southland

1974 South Canterbury

1975 Wellington

Willie Phyn and Nathan McCarthy were the senior workers at the time Easton left the work with the advice “in strong terms to marry quickly and start a family.” Church members were not advised why Easton was removed from the work.

Northland man jailed for 13 years over historic sexual abuse of six boys

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/535890/northland-man-jailed-for-13-years-over-historic-sexual-abuse-of-six-boys>

5:01 pm on 6 December 2024 [Amy](#)

[Williams](#), Journalist amywilliamsnz amy.williams@rnz.co.nz



William Stephen Easton, known as Bill Easton, in the dock at the Kaikohe District Court today. Photo: RNZ / Amy Williams

- **A former minister of an underground sect has been sentenced to 13 years in prison after pleading guilty to multiple charges**
- **The charges are of historical child sex abuse spanning four decades**
- **The religious group known as the Two by Twos, or The Truth, is also under investigation by the FBI for historical child sexual abuse**

Warning: This story covers sexual abuse of multiple victims.

A Kerikeri man who abused six boys in repeated, premeditated offending while he was part of an underground sect has been sentenced to 13 years in prison.

William Stephen Easton, known as Bill Easton, has been sentenced in the Kaikohe District Court on 55 charges related to historic sexual offending against children.

The 80 year old was a minister of the Two by Twos, also known as The Truth, a secretive Christian sect.

Judge Brandt Shortland told Easton the level of his offending was “unprecedented”.

“It was very serious offending over a long period of time. The aggravating features are clear, the premeditation, the vulnerability of the young people, the absolute betrayal of trust of...children of people who looked up to you, that admired you, that respected you, because of your position in your church.”

Judge Shortland said the fact there were six victims and the offending happened consistently over many years indicated how serious it was.

Easton’s offending spanned four decades and took place around the country, involving six victims who were boys at the time. The youngest was seven.

“The predatory nature that was consistent over a long period of time and the consistency of the offending can’t be overlooked,” Judge Shortland said.

He said there was a clear power imbalance, so much so that one of the survivor’s parents did not believe them when they disclosed the abuse because of the position Easton held.

After the sentencing, the police’s lead investigator for the prosecution Detective Constable Mark Reid acknowledged the victims and their families and the ordeal they have been through.

“While the man responsible for the offending has been sentenced, police understand that no conviction will ever take back what has happened,” he said.

“He was a well-known figure in his community for many years and in continual contact with children and young people.”

Easton’s lawyer Doug Blaikie said his client acknowledged the victims and the harm his offending had caused.

He read out Easton’s apology letter in court, which said he had “deep and heartfelt regret” for his actions that caused harm he now understood.

“I can never forgive myself for this; all I can say is I’m sincerely sorry. Every day I face remorse and regret...and now face the consequences.

“I know my actions were wrong but I failed to acknowledge and understand how wrong.”

Blaikie said Easton’s offending occurred in the context of a young man growing up in a church and society that regarded homosexuality as “deviant”.

He said Easton left the position of minister of the church in his early 20s because he could see his actions were not consistent with the church’s teachings.

Blaikie said he sought counselling from the church which “today would be regarded as totally inappropriate” because Easton was advised in strong terms to marry quickly and start a family.



William Stephen Easton during an earlier court appearance. Photo: RNZ/Peter de Graaf

Easton was emotionally conflicted as a person of homosexual disposition but that did not excuse his behaviour.

“There was clearly a power imbalance between Mr Easton and all of his victims and he exploited that power imbalance for his own sexual gratification.”

Judge Shortland acknowledged his guilty plea and letter of apology.

“There’s nothing mitigating about this offending. In many respects there was no other place but to be honest about what has been said and I appreciate that.”

‘It has caused me emotional harm for most of my life’ – survivor

It was a harrowing morning in court for the six victims and their families, as four victim impact statements were heard – all chose not to read these aloud themselves.

Before the victim statements were read, Judge Shortland said this would be an emotional day and difficult for many.

For much of the sentencing, Easton sat with his head in his hands.

One survivor who is now in his 70s said he had been abused by Easton from the age of 12 at his parents' home.

"My relationship to the offender was no more than that he was a minister of religion who often stayed in my childhood home where he was held in high regard by my parents," said his statement.

"I told my parents but they did not believe me, instead accusing me of telling dreadful lies of this highly revered young man."

The survivor said the sexual abuse had taken away his innocence and left him imprisoned by memories for 50 years.

He said he constantly required company, otherwise, he was tormented by flashbacks and became suicidal.

"I fear how this may have ended up if the authorities and other victims hadn't helped us bring Bill to justice."

Another survivor whose statement was read in court said he was 22 years old when Easton sexually abused him nearly 50 years ago and it had burdened him ever since.

"It has caused me emotional harm for most of my life with some days being worse than others."

Easton was a person of trust whom he looked up to and should have known better.

Another survivor, now in his 50s, said he was a young high school student when Easton offered him a school holiday job that he was initially pleased about.

But he said that "quickly turned to fear and anxiety" when he realised Easton had taken him to an isolated area to sexually abuse him.

"What possessed you to take advantage of a young vulnerable boy with realistically nowhere to escape to?"

The survivor said from that time forward his life changed, he self-harmed and tried to run away from home to escape the abuse which continued for two and a half years.

He said he feared he may have contracted AIDS and for the following decade, would donate blood so that it would be tested.

He disclosed the abuse to police in September 2023.

"Explaining what you had done to me was hard. Hard to relive those experiences, but not hard to provide facts, when, where, what. I can never forget what you did to me."

The survivor said he was open to restorative justice in the future.

Another survivor, in his 60s, said he was a young, shy, naive 15 year old when Easton sexually abused him.

"You were a member of our church ministry and had just been released from duty. As children we were taught to respect, trust and look up to our church ministers," his statement said.

"You began taking an interest in me, taking me for drives in your vehicle...it was at this time that the abuse started."

The survivor said he did not disclose the abuse at the time and still got flashbacks when he felt “abhorrent” about what happened to him and that had affected his ability to form close friendships.

“I feel that you have taken advantage of my naivety when I was young, when I was learning to find my own way in life. Instead you took away my ability to trust others.”

The offender and the sect

Easton was a minister of the Two by Twos, also known as The Truth, an underground Christian sect, from 1966 until he was removed from the group’s leadership in 1976.

However, insiders have told RNZ that Easton remained part of the group, attending meetings in members’ homes, until last year.

He was also listed until recently as a real estate agent on the Harcourts Bay of Islands website.

In September its director, Scott Cousins, said Easton was no longer with the company.

“Bill Easton advised us of the historic charges against him, which occurred prior to his association with our company. He immediately left our organisation. We were shocked and appalled by these charges and this remains the case,” he said.

Easton was arrested as part of an investigation into accusations of sex offending by members of the Two by Twos.

The group is being investigated by the FBI.

Police initially charged him with 17 indecent assault and sexual violation offences that occurred between 1964 and 1981, involving four victims.

A further 38 charges were laid in September relating to two more victims.

The Two by Twos have about 2500 members and 60 ministers in New Zealand.

It is not registered as a charity and had no official name or church buildings.

A hallmark of the group is that its itinerant ministers travel in pairs and stay in members’ homes.