

Kenny MacAskill: Alex Salmond did not block child abuse inquiry

Scotland's former justice secretary Kenny MacAskill has rejected claims he and Alex Salmond did not support an inquiry into the historical abuse of children in care when in government.

[By Gina Davidson](#)

The Scotsman; Thursday, 3rd December 2020, 7:00 am



Kenny MacAskill has rejected a claim by John Swinney that Alex Salmond did not want an inquiry into historical child sex abuse

Writing in *The Scotsman*, Mr MacAskill refuted the allegation of John Swinney. He accused the Deputy First Minister of breaching the ministerial code with his comments as well as using the issue of addressing historical child abuse as a “political football”.

Last week Mr Swinney told the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry there had been “division” among ministers in 2014 about holding an inquiry. Mr Swinney said it was only when Nicola Sturgeon became First Minister that it received the go-ahead.

He said: “There was a perfectly respectable debate among Cabinet, but there were two opinions.

“Mike Russell had engaged heavily with survivors and his view was we had to confront this issue as a country, to do justice for survivors to enable them to have their experiences documented, understood and reflected on, and for the state to accept responsibility for what happened to them.

“I supported him in that view in Cabinet. The inquiry was authorised in December after the change of First Minister had taken place.”

However, Mr MacAskill said that he needed to “set the record straight”, that there had been a commitment to make a decision on an inquiry by the end of 2014, and that the-then Lord Advocate, Frank Mulholland, had “very wisely pointed out some deficiencies” in Mr Russell’s inquiry plan “made to enhance, not detract, from government policy”.

He adds: “Given the nature, scale and indeed ongoing difficulties that had beset a similar inquiry south of the Border, care was understandably being taken.

“Addressing historic child abuse is a duty, not a political football.”

The latest phase of the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry is exploring reasons why calls between August 2002 and December 2014 for a public inquiry to be held were resisted by ministers.

Mr MacAskill also said the comments by Mr Swinney were a “flagrant breach” of the ministerial code, and referring to the ongoing inquiry into the government's handling of sexual harassment claims against Alex Salmond, he added: “It also flouts the supposedly sacrosanct nature of law officers’ advice, an idea which has seen two Holyrood votes to release information so far ignored.”