



mylathina takila-ti Le:wun tunk-ungai tuldangk tunk-ungai
Ola ma tumau i le alofa' 사랑 안에서 살기 Tinggal di dalam Kasih
Nofoma'u i he Ofa 愛中合居



B17 UCA REDRESS LTD

1. INTRODUCTION

UCA Redress Ltd was registered as a company limited by guarantee in September 2018. Members of the company are the Synod Property Trusts and the Assembly. The company has its own Board, chaired by Anne Cross AM, with two directors appointed by the Property Trusts, one director appointed by the Assembly, and a board appointed director. The Assembly General Secretary is the Assembly's nominee director. Details about the company can be found at [UCA Redress – UCA Redress](#).

UCA Redress Ltd commenced operations in March 2019 and, since then, through the company, the Uniting Church in Australia has been participating in the National Redress Scheme for Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse (the NRS).

There are three components to the NRS:

- A redress payment (up to \$150,000)
- Counselling and psychological care (up to \$5,000)
- A direct personal response from the institution

The NRS is administered by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services. UCA Redress Ltd is the conduit between the NRS and the UCA, with almost 4000 UCA institutions (currently operating and defunct) represented into the NRS.

2. DATA – NATIONAL REDRESS SCHEME (TOTAL)

Latest data from the NRS (as at 15 January 2021):

- had received 9,232 applications
- had made 4,620 payments made
- had made 589 offers of redress, which are currently with applicants to consider
- average payment \$83,300

Other information about the NRS (all institutions) includes:

- Average time to finalise applications 11.5 months
- Complexity of applications
 - 77% of applications involved more than one institution
 - Almost 20% of applications involve more than 4 institutions
 - half of applicants identify as having a disability
 - 23% of applications found shared responsibility between government and non-government institutions
- Applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
 - 25% of applications (70% NT, 58% WA, 35% Qld)
 - Inconsistent treatment of payments to stolen generations reported
 - Cultural appropriateness and safety of NRS being reviewed
- Low numbers of applications compared to modelling undertaken by the Royal Commission

3. DATA – UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

As at 28 February 2021

- 522 requests for information (roughly equates to individual applications)
- 242 offers of redress accepted
- 125 offers of direct personal response accepted
- Average payment \$50,617
- 41 RFIs relate to Assembly institutions (Mogumber, Coen, Normanton)

4. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS OF UCA REDRESS LTD SINCE MARCH 2019

- Well-functioning systems for participation in the NRS implemented across Synods and institutions
- Governance of company established, with ongoing compliance, sound governance and stable staffing
- Engaged and active Board directors who are strong advocates for survivors of abuse and the sustainability of the UCA's participation in the NRS
- Robust data collection, analysis and dissemination
- Development of a Direct Personal Response toolkit and ongoing regular training for staff across the Church
- Extensive nationwide engagement across the Church to raise awareness of the work of the company and to improve responses to survivors of abuse
- Coordinating development of a Liturgy for each Anniversary of the National Apology to survivors of institutional child sexual abuse (22 October) and marking other significant days across the country
- Participation in and advocacy to the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee inquiry into the Implementation of the NRS and the two year legislated review of the NRS
- Ongoing refinement of lists of UCA and predecessor institutions participating in the NRS (almost 4,000 institutions)
- UCA Redress Ltd Strategic plan 2020-2022 developed
- Understanding and analysis of decisions being made under the NRS and seeking information and follow up where there may be issues with decisions
- Company acting as nominal defendant for civil litigation relating to child sexual abuse in Victoria
- Raising awareness with UCA aged care providers about the needs of survivors of abuse as they age and may face re-institutionalisation
- developed productive and positive relationships with the governments and other non-government institutions participating in the Scheme.

5. OPPORTUNITIES AND PRIORITIES FOR 2021-2022

For the first time, we are getting a national picture of the occurrence of child sexual abuse in the Uniting Church and its predecessor Churches. While the majority of allegations relate to abuse in out-of-home care, we also see a number in schools and congregations. The data we are collecting allows us to see some specific risk areas across these different contexts and identify points where grooming or offending may be prevented or detected earlier. UCA Redress Ltd strives to have strong links with the National Safe Church Unit and those working in safety teams across the Church to ensure that what we are learning through redress strengthens current child safe practice across the Church. Engagement with a wide-range of groups across the Church will enhance the culture of safety across the Church.

Supporting the Church in the delivery of high quality Direct Personal Responses (DPRs) to survivors of abuse will continue to be a key activity of UCA Redress Ltd. There is considerable expertise in survivor engagements across the Church, but also many new leaders and others

with thirst to know more, prepare well and ensure positive experiences for survivors. UCA Redress Ltd works collaboratively to harness the sharing of expertise and offers training and resources to the benefit of survivors and our people working in this difficult area. We are also working on some tools to support trauma-informed practice in a range of areas in which we work.

We will continue to have strong, proactive engagement in the NRS to assist in understanding decisions, advocating for improvements with a view to making sure participation is sustainable. We will closely monitor reviews of the NRS and connect with those working with survivors and our counterparts in other institutions in order to improve experiences of the NRS for survivors and institutions.

Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of Church staff engaged in dealing with issues relating to abuse must be a key priority. The potential for vicarious trauma is real and its impact cannot be underestimated. UCA Redress Ltd will be convening a network of practitioners across the Church to support safe practice, informal debriefing processes and to share resources and learnings. The NRS will operate until 2028 so the safety of leaders and staff is critical to the sustainability of the UCA's participation in the NRS.

We will seek to strengthen engagement and partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the work of UCA Redress Ltd. The company wants to make sure it is operating in a culturally safe way and consistent with the commitment and ethos of the UCA in covenant with First Nations peoples, and will seek a strong partnership with Congress. We will also seek to influence the operation of the NRS to ensure it is culturally safe and accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

6. ISSUES FOR ASSEMBLY

- Possible increasing numbers of redress applications into the future, especially with increased awareness among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Likely growth in civil litigation into the future, especially with increasing amendments to legislation which remove barriers to pursuing litigation
- Preparation for direct personal responses and trauma-informed engagements and responses to redress applicants and plaintiffs in civil litigation – e.g training, systems, processes, approach
- Equipping and supporting Uniting Church personnel who are managing and responding to abuse and redress issues across the Church

7. THANKS

UCA Redress Ltd is thankful to the Assembly and its teams and staff for supporting the work of the company. We seek to work in partnership and collaboration and to add value across the Church where it is appropriate to do so. We acknowledge people's openness to learning and improvement, and commitment to righting the wrongs of the past.

We look forward to the ongoing work with the Assembly and the Assembly Standing Committee.

Sarah Lim
National Director
UCA Redress Ltd.