

REDRESS MATTERS – CROKER ISLAND MISSION

Introduction

In response to ASC minute 21.68.02, a meeting was convened on 15 February 2022.

21.68.02 request the General Secretary to convene a conversation with the Northern Synod regarding its resolution relating to redress responsibilities, and to report to the March 2022 ASC meeting on the outcomes. The conversation will include the General Secretaries of the Assembly and the Northern Synod, other relevant personnel and the National Director of UCA Redress Ltd.

Meeting held 15 February 2022

The following attended the meeting:

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| Stuart McMillan | General Secretary (interim) Northern Synod |
| Fleur Crowe | Northern Synod Operations Manager |
| Judy Orme | Northern Synod Redress Officer |
| Colleen Geyer | Assembly General Secretary |
| Rob Floyd | Assembly Associate General Secretary |
| Leo Iosifidis | Assembly National Director Strategic Finance & Admin |
| Lin Hatfield Dodds | Chair, UnitingWorld Board |
| Andrew Johnson | Deputy Chair, UnitingWorld Board |
| Sureka Goringe | National Director, UnitingWorld |
| Sarah Lim | National Director, UCA Redress Ltd |

The meeting was held to discuss redress and civil claim liability relating to applications by survivors from Croker Island Mission, which was run by the Methodist Overseas Mission prior to transitioning to the oversight of Somerville Homes.

Background documents were provided, as was a briefing from the Northern Synod and UCA Redress Ltd which included data collected relating to claims made to the National Redress Scheme.

The meeting reviewed the history of the Croker Island mission, including the operational responsibility and oversight by the Methodist Overseas Mission from 1941 – 1968 on Croker Island, oversight of the services when they moved to Darwin, and the subsequent services which were taken over by Sommerville Homes Incorporated in July 1971.

Liability for redress is shared with the Commonwealth Government.

Currently 6 claims for redress have been received by the National Redress Scheme, in addition to 2 civil claims received by the Northern Synod.

The meeting considered principles to guide future discussion, work and decisions. The following will be included:

- As the Uniting Church, we accept our responsibility for abuse that happened in our institutions
- We will find a way forward that is reasonable and fair, understanding the history of Croker Island Mission and where responsibility lies for providing funding for redress and civil claims

Following general discussion, the following actions were agreed:

- Develop principles to guide future discussion, work and decisions
- Map a timeline of Croker Island Mission, its history and associated matters, eg property
- Map potential liability with respect to data available in consideration of a provision that can be made
- Develop a proposed way forward that can be taken to the Assembly Standing Committee and the Northern Synod Standing Committee in March

The timeline has been developed and is at **Attachment 1**.

Redress Financial Liability

As stated above, to date there have been 6 claims for redress received by the National Redress Scheme, in addition to 2 civil claims received by the Northern Synod.

Three offers of redress have been accepted to a total of \$224 000 (inclusive of admin and legal fees). One resulted in a Notice of Non-liability, and two have yet to be determined.

Of the two civil claims, one was an insurance matter of which \$60 000 was paid as a percentage of the amount not covered by insurance. The other matter has not been finalised.

No modelling has been undertaken regarding the total potential liability, and this will need to be done.

Responsibility for Liability

As was the case for the Mogumber Mission in WA, Croker Island Mission was a mission of the Methodist Overseas Mission (MOM). Mogumber Mission and associated redress financial liability was deemed, by a decision of the ASC in 2012, to be the responsibility of the National Assembly due to the Methodist Overseas Mission being made part of the Commission for World Mission (CWM) at the time of union. CWM was a department of the Assembly established at union to have responsibility of the work of the uniting denominations concerned with overseas missions.

In previous work done for the ASC regarding Mogumber, it was on the available evidence that MOM assets were also transferred to the CWM. This led to the ASC decision in 2020, and subsequent decision by the UnitingWorld Board to share the redress payments for survivors of abuse in Mogumber Mission. This has led to redress payments for Mogumber being shared equally, with payments and amounts payable by 24 March 2022, totalling \$1 714 474.

With respect to the timeline provided at Attachment 1, it is proposed that the Assembly accept liability for matters related to redress and civil matters relating to child sexual abuse at Croker Island Mission from 1941-1968, with further negotiation to be undertaken with the Northern Synod relating to 1969-1972 when multiple groups had oversight of the services when they were moved to Darwin from Croker Island.

The method for apportionment of costs within the Assembly will need to be determined.

Proposals:

That the Assembly Standing Committee:

1. Receive the report.
2. Note the timeline at Attachment 1.
3. Accept the liability for redress and civil matters relating to child sexual abuse at Croker Island Mission from 1941-1968 on behalf of the Assembly Secretariat and other relevant Assembly Agencies.
4. Request the General Secretary to enter into further conversations with the Northern Synod re the liability for redress and civil matters relating to child sexual abuse at Croker Island Mission from 1969-1972.
5. Request the National Director, Strategic Finance & Admin to undertake modelling regarding total potential liability, and associated provision required to be made.
6. Note that redress payments for Mogumber Mission, while it was under the oversight and responsibility of MOM, are currently shared by the Assembly Secretariat and UnitingWorld.
7. Request the General Secretary to bring a report to the July 2022 ASC meeting on all matters in these proposals, including how the liability for redress and civil matters relating to child sexual abuse at Croker Island from 1941-1968 will be apportioned in the Assembly.
8. Request the General Secretary to have a conversation with the Chair, UnitingWorld Board and National Director, UnitingWorld regarding decisions made by the ASC in relation to these matters.
9. On the approval of Proposal 3, authorise the reimbursement of payments already made by the Northern Synod relating to the time period approved by the ASC, from Assembly funds.