

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. As at the time of drafting this report, UCARL is awaiting advice on a new Assembly's nominee director, following the conclusion of the service of the former General Secretary. Details about the company can be found at <https://ucaredress.org.au/>.

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.

The NRS will run until 30 June 2028, with final applications to be made by 30 June 2027.

2. DATA – NATIONAL REDRESS SCHEME

Latest data from the NRS (as at 2 February 2024):

- had received 36,424 applications
- had made 14,230 payments made
- average payment \$89,037

Other information about the NRS (all institutions) includes:

- Average time to finalise applications - 12 months
- Complexity of applications, with high numbers of applications involving more than one institution
- Half of applicants identify as having a disability
- 40% of applicants are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Low take up of Direct Personal Response is common across all institutions

3. DATA – UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

As at 26 February 2024

- 1087 requests for information (roughly equates to individual applications)
- 580 offers of redress accepted
- 277 requests for information not eligible/not liable/withdrawn
- 343 offers of direct personal response accepted
- Average payment \$55,483
- 107 RFIs relate to Assembly institutions (Mogumber, Croker Island, Coen, Normanton)

4. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS OF UCA REDRESS LTD

- Well-functioning systems for participation in the NRS implemented across Synods and institutions
- Governance of company operating smoothly, with ongoing compliance, sound governance and stable staffing, within budgets
- Scaling to respond to changing need
- 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 three toolkits - Direct Personal Response; Vicarious Trauma; and Trauma Informed Practice, and regular training for staff across the Church
- Supporting refresh 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 Standing Committee into the Implementation of the NRS and the two year legislated review of the NRS. A legislated 8 year review of the NRS will be undertaken.
- Ongoing refinement of lists of UCA and predecessor institutions participating in the NRS
- UCA Redress Ltd Strategic plan 2022-2025 developed
- Understanding and analysis of decisions being made under the NRS and seeking information and follow up where there may be issues with decisions; including requests for waiver where there appears to be an error in application of the law
- Developed productive and positive relationships with NRS teams and other non-government institutions participating in the Scheme
- Development of a Statement on Reconciliation which was endorsed by the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress

5. OPPORTUNITIES AND PRIORITIES FOR 2024-2025

We will continue to have strong, proactive engagement in the NRS to assist in understanding decisions and 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 continue to be a key priority. The potential for vicarious trauma is real and its impact cannot be underestimated. UCA Redress Ltd meets quarterly with redress contacts across the Church to support safe practice, informal debriefing processes and to share resources and learnings.

Staff of UCA Redress Ltd are well supported, with robust processes in place to manage wellbeing.

The company is turning its mind to processes that will need to be put in place in relation to archiving records following closure of the NRS in 2028. The company is also cognisant of succession planning for staff and directors.

In its final report in September 2023, the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability made recommendations that institutions should develop their own redress processes to respond to harm to people with disability. UCA Redress Ltd is well placed to support institutions of the Church to develop such processes. The company is working with the UCA's Disability Royal Commission Taskforce on taking forward this recommendation.



6. ISSUES FOR ASSEMBLY

- Possible increasing numbers of redress applications into the future
- Ongoing increase in civil litigation into the future is possible
- Preparation for direct personal responses and trauma-informed engagements and responses to redress applicants and claimants in civil litigation, noting that many are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and engagements must be culturally safe and appropriate
- 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 ongoing 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

Anne Cross AM
Chair
UCA Redress Ltd

