

UCA Redress Limited

Our work: 2020 – 2021



UCA Redress Limited is part of The Uniting Church in Australia.

We support victims and survivors of child sexual abuse suffered through the Church or its institutions.

Please be aware this document contains reference to accounts of child sexual abuse which may be distressing for some people. We recognise the significance of survivor stories and acknowledge the strength and resilience shown by survivors to bravely share their stories.

For support, please contact 000 (for emergencies), Lifeline 13 11 14 or Blue Knot Foundation 1300 657 380.

The quotes from survivors shared in this document are from narratives told to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our company is located and where we conduct our business in locations across the country.

We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past and present.

We are committed to honouring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children entrusted to the care of the Church did not always receive the care they deserved, and we acknowledge the enduring impact of those traumas that were experienced.

We acknowledge the ongoing trauma caused by the separation of children from families and communities.

We acknowledge the terrible breaches of trust which were experienced by individuals and communities and commit to learning from past mistakes to create a culture of safety in all settings of our organisation.

Contact us

ucaredress.org.au
info@redress.uca.org.au

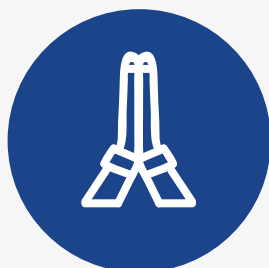
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Our commitment



We will hear and keep
the **stories**



We will **apologise**



We will make **change**

Through redress, we acknowledge and address past wrongs and bring change for our future through truth, justice and healing.

Redress takes us forward to...

- » a place of reconciliation with those who have suffered
- » a place where relationships are rebuilt and trust is restored in our Church, its leaders and agencies
- » a place where all can thrive as we learn from – and never forget – the past.

"I thought I was just coming to tell my story, but if any information I've given does go towards that bigger picture, which is so important ...

*"[It] doesn't matter which institution's in the spotlight really, it's changed all of them ... It's a different society now, because of the Royal Commission." **Melissa***

Who we are

UCA Redress Limited responds to and supports survivors of child sexual abuse suffered through the Uniting Church or its institutions, including by participation in a nationally consistent equitable redress scheme.

We are a national partnership of Synods and the Assembly and a company limited by guarantee established by the Uniting Church in Australia.

Our team of National Director and Administrator are advised by a five-member board of Church and independent representatives.

We work to principles of good redress - being restorative, survivor focussed, trauma-informed and culturally safe and appropriate.

Justice is part of our DNA, permeating our practice and lived out through our actions.

The Uniting Church in Australia commenced participation in the National Redress Scheme in March 2019.

The Scheme acknowledges that many children were sexually abused in Australian institutions. It holds institutions accountable for this abuse and helps people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse gain access to counselling, a direct personal response and a redress payment.

What we do

Our work includes:

- Facilitating the Church's participation in the National Redress Scheme
- Supporting Synods and institutions in providing direct personal response to survivors
- Contributing to awareness and understanding about redress, abuse and child safety
- Informing policy and decision making through data and learnings
- Evolving to meet the needs of Synods, the Assembly and other institutions of the Church, including national consistent practice.

*"The State took so much from me
... At the home, I was nothing, I
was no one, I was trouble, I was a
handful ... They just took so much
from us."*

Barbara hopes that general education of the public will transform the way sexual abuse is reported, and that adults will take more responsibility to action allegations made by children.

A message from our board



We know from survivors of institutional child sexual abuse that many survivors share their stories with the aim of ensuring their experiences cannot happen to another child.

As such, this year has been one of learning and reflection for UCA Redress Limited. We honour the voices and stories of survivors of abuse in each and every application to the National Redress Scheme. Every story we hear teaches us about the dynamics and risks of sexual abuse in the different contexts in which the Church operates. These learnings help to inform our approaches to the safety of children into the future, and we work collaboratively across the Church to share these learnings. We remain committed to responding well to survivors and to improving safety practice into the future.

The two-year review of the National Redress Scheme conducted in 2020-2021 has been a focus for UCA Redress Limited.

We know that the National Redress Scheme is not perfect. We know it takes too long and that some processes have not operated in a trauma-informed way. We were pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to the review of the Scheme and look forward to participating in further consultations. We want survivors to have the best possible experience of the Scheme. We will do our part in this by meeting statutory timeframes for responses to requests for information, unless unavoidable. COVID-19 related lockdowns have meant that there have been a small number of applications where we have not been able to access archives and record holdings within required timeframes, however we always prioritise these where it is safe for staff to do so.

We share the concerns raised by reviewer, Robyn Kruk AO, about the low uptake of the Direct Personal Response component of the National Redress Scheme. We strongly encourage survivors of abuse to reach out to us when they are ready to take this step. You will be welcomed into this supportive process.

I would like to thank the Board, members and staff of UCA Redress Limited. Your commitment to righting the wrongs of the past is evident in the way you approach the business of the company and always advocate for survivors and doing the right thing, balanced against sustainability to ensure fairness and equity for survivors into the future.

To survivors of abuse, we say, we hear you. And, as the years pass since the Royal Commission undertook its important work and delivered its final report, we will not forget.



Anne Cross AM, Chair

Melia Benn, Board appointed director

Colleen Geyer, Assembly General Secretary

Peter Roach, Property Trust member director

Robert Watson, Property Trust member director

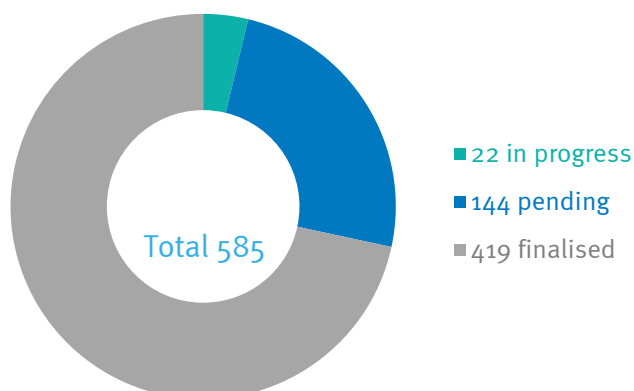
"I realise now I don't have anything to hide. I don't have to be embarrassed about it.....but to speak to other people around my age group who have gone through the same thing and realise that I can stand on my own two feet and be proud of who I am, and not feel scared or in fear of anything coming of it." Philip

The people we support

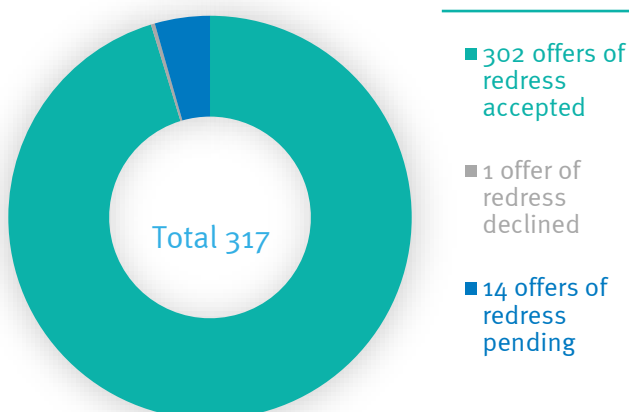
UCA Redress Limited Status Report as at 30 June 2021



Requests for Information (RFI)



Offers of Redress

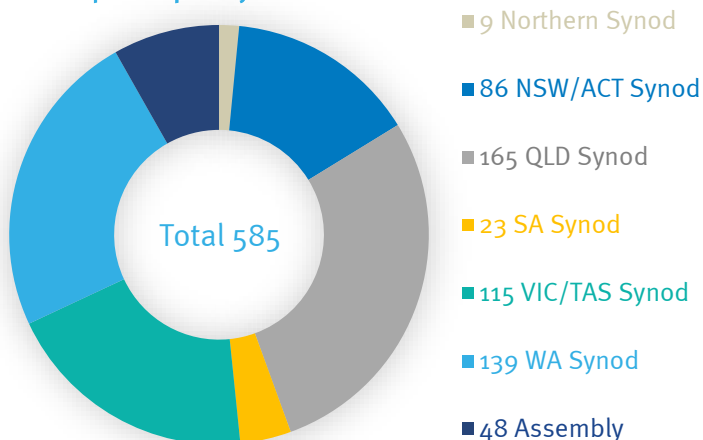


Within offers of redress accepted:

167 Direct Personal Response accepted

Direct personal response is a key element of the National Redress Scheme. It is an opportunity for a person to tell their story to us, receive an apology, and hear information about what the Uniting Church is doing to ensure children are safe in the future.

RFI requests per Synod



We know trauma from childhood sexual abuse can last a lifetime.

"I've failed to reach my full potential. I have complete and utter resentment towards authority. As a kid you have to trust people in your life, and when that trust is taken away there's not a lot left. When something so sinister has happened, it's difficult to trust again." **Vincent**

Data above is cumulative since commencement in National Redress Scheme in March 2019.

The work we have done

Strengthening engagement

Our practice adjusted to continue service and support as we live as a community with the impact of COVID-19.

Across the life of the Church, engagement continued with Synods and Assembly through governance and operational networks, including Standing Committees, schools, agencies, and staff involved in justice, redress, and child safety. These relationships are firming and maturing as UCA Redress Limited moves into its third year of operations.

Our connection with the **National Safe Church Unit** formalised as opportunities for collaboration were explored, including sharing insights to inform contemporary child safe practice within the Church.

Government and other institutions remain key to informing practice and to sharing insights to influence policy, action, and response. We continued to represent the Church into the Joint Select Committee on the Implementation of the National Redress Scheme and contributed to the legislated two-year review completed in March 2021. Analysis of this review will inform future activity.

UCA Redress Limited acts as the **nominal defendant** in some civil matters in Victoria.

Informing change

A key role for UCA Redress Limited is facilitating the Church's participation in the National Redress Scheme. This has included **understanding decisions and advocating for improvement** to ensure participation is sustainable and opportunities are sought for national consistency in all redress pathways.

Data and engagement over our first two years is creating a national picture of the occurrence of child sexual abuse in the Church, across all contexts, across time and across location. Understanding this **data and its translation into contemporary child safe practices** to strengthen the Church's culture of safety, has been a focus.

Survivor experience and data shared by UCA Redress Limited is fostering change within the Church through awareness, understanding and action. This is influencing safe church and redress **policy development and training**, including the Church's first nationally consistent training released mid-2021 by the National Safe Church Unit. Understanding was furthered through numerous online Direct Personal Response, vicarious trauma and trauma-informed practice training sessions for employees across the Church, by our National Director.



We acknowledge childhood sexual abuse can impact physical and mental health, relationships, education, social connection, sexuality, spirituality, identity, culture – every aspect of a person's life.

Russell described having difficulty over the years dealing with issues surrounding the sexual abuse. He married young and stood at the same altar where he'd been abused.

Forrest tried to disclose the abuse to his grandfather when he left the home. *"I told him, 'Bad things happened to me, Grandad'... He sort of brushed it aside."*

Forrest needed dozens of operations to fix his health problems. He worked in various jobs, but the operations eventually made it impossible for him to lift heavy objects and he is now on a disability pension. He also takes antidepressants.

Forrest also blames the abuse he suffered for a drinking problem he developed, though he has now given up alcohol. He still smokes marijuana to help relieve pain.

Anna was sexually abused at the home. She was also emotionally abused. Staff told her *"If I didn't behave, I wasn't going to heaven. My parents didn't want me back. I was worthless"*. In time Anna started to self-harm and threaten suicide. *"I became very violent, not towards other people, just to myself."*



Learning and never forgetting

The **telling of stories and never forgetting the past** is important for survivors of abuse, institutions, and communities, especially in the context of redress where lessons learned are vital in shaping safety practice and culture.

A key principle underpinning the National Redress Scheme is that it is **trauma-informed**; that it works with survivors of abuse to establish safety, trustworthiness, collaboration, choice and control, and empowerment. UCA Redress Limited continued to support Synods and institutions in Direct Personal Response, guiding action and recommending best practice process in supporting survivors.

UCA Redress Limited has incorporated survivor stories collected by the Royal Commission into training and other opportunities to aid understanding. **Survivor experience is foundational to our developing a toolkit to support trauma-informed practice** in different Church contexts for people who have experienced child sexual abuse. This is significant for the Church as there will be people in congregations, workforces, student bodies and agency client groups, who have experienced trauma.

We supported the Church in marking the anniversary of the **National Apology to survivors of institutional abuse**.

We acknowledge the betrayal of trust, by those who were supposed to care.

“He was someone I trusted who betrayed me, which virtually destroyed my faith in people and institutions.” **Gordon Peter**

We know that much abuse is preceded by grooming – of the child, families and organisations.

Abdi was ‘charismatic, beautiful teeth, great at soccer. Great hair, great look. You would have never dressed him up as somebody doing the wrong thing ... You thought you were in a relationship with him’.

When **Keira** was 15 years old, Abdi took the entire church group to a local swimming pool. He isolated Keira and took her into a private spa, where he fondled her sexually. She felt like this was how Abdi treated people he thought were ‘special’.

We need to listen to the voices of children and believe what they are telling us.

“Nobody ever spoke to us about the abuse again, it was just ‘go back to school, forget it happened’. We should have been protected, but we weren’t.” **Yvonne**

People in the Church community told her she was ungrateful. No one asked her why she was running away. *“They just kept taking me back. But I didn’t really say anything. By that time, I just didn’t care about life. Didn’t care about anybody. Who would believe me anyway, so what’s the point?”*

Marianne

Governance



Our board

Anne Cross AM **Board Chair**

[Bachelor of Social Work, Masters of Social Work, FAICD](#)

Anne is an independent company director having concluded her executive career as Chief Executive of UnitingCare Queensland, late in 2017. In addition to her role as Chair of UCA Redress Limited, Anne currently serves on the boards of St Vincent's Health Australia and Opera Queensland and is a member of the University of Queensland Senate. She is a fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and a member of the AICD National Board (from October 2019). She received recognition in the Queen's Birthday 2018 Honours List for significant service to the community through social welfare organisations, and to women. She was named Telstra's National Business Woman of the Year in 2014 and awarded the University of Queensland's Alumni Excellence Award in 2016.

Appointed 29 November 2018. Term ends 30 November 2023

Melia Benn **Board appointed director**

[Bachelor of Laws, Graduate Diploma of Legal Practice, Bar Practice Course](#)

Melia is a descendent of the Mamu and Gunggandji people. She was called to the Bar in 2018 and has a dual practice in Endeavour Chambers, Cairns and Griffith Chambers, Brisbane. She has worked as a Prosecutor for the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and as the in-house Counsel Assisting the Northern Coroner. Melia has a broad practice in criminal defence, anti-discrimination and class actions representing First Nations parties and other minority groups.

Appointed 7 April 2020. Term ends 7 April 2023

Colleen Geyer **Assembly Director**

[Bachelor of Theology, Graduate Certificate Executive Leadership, Diploma in Teaching, Cert IV WTA](#)

Colleen is the General Secretary (CEO) of the Uniting Church in Australia. She has worked in executive leadership roles across the community services of the Uniting Church for more than 10 years; and in leadership within the Uniting Church at state and national levels for 20 years, including on the Councils of the Church and numerous governance groups. Colleen has served on local and national boards. She has extensive experience in organisational strategy, leadership development, innovation, ethics and environmental sustainability, building programs for culture change and engagement.

Appointed 7 September 2018. Term ends 6 September 2024



Peter Roach
Property Trust member director

[Bachelor of Commerce, Master of Business Administration, Master of Letters](#)

Peter is a non-executive director of several trustee companies, not-for-profit foundations and private family groups. He was previously Chief Executive Officer of the Fairfax Family Office, Cambooya Pty Limited. He is a chartered accountant and fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Peter has served as a board member of the Knox Grammar School Council and was Chair from 2013 to 2018. He is currently a board member of Ravenswood School for Girls.

Appointed 23 October 2019. Term ends 23 October 2022

Robert Watson
Property Trust member director

[Bachelor of Social Work, units in Business \(Economics, Management and Accounting\), Divinity, AICD Company Directors Course](#)

Robert has held leadership roles in the Uniting Church, its agencies and other community services agencies for over 40 years. With a background in social work and business, he is strongly committed to child protection, social justice, robust governance and the community work of the Church. As a former Moderator of the Synod of Western Australia and a lay preacher, Robert has a deep connection to the Church and his local community. He is a member of the Uniting Church's National Task Group to respond to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and participated in decisions about the Church's participation in the National Redress Scheme and the establishment of UCA Redress Limited.

Appointed 23 October 2019. Term ends 23 October 2022

Leadership

Sarah Lim
National Director



[Bachelor of Arts/Laws \(Hons\), Graduate Diploma Legal Practice, Master of Laws, Graduate of Australian Institute of Company Directors, Graduate Certificate Leadership](#)

Following a career in social policy and legislation review and development in the Queensland Government, Sarah commenced with UnitingCare Queensland in 2013. Her role included monitoring and understanding the lessons coming out of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and their impact across the breadth of UnitingCare Queensland services. During this time, Sarah worked with many survivors of abuse seeking to engage with UnitingCare Queensland. Sarah is Chair of the Forde Foundation Board of Advice, a charitable trust established by the Queensland Government to provide micro-grants to Forgotten Australians and care leavers to assist them with their needs. Sarah is deeply committed to the needs of survivors of institutional abuse and restoration of relationships for survivors, the Church and the broader community.

Governance statement

Board composition

The UCA Redress Limited constitution requires the company to have five directors, comprising:

- Chair appointed by members
- One director appointed by the Assembly Member
- Two directors elected collectively by the Property Trust members
- One person appointed by the Board.

Board operations

The Board is committed to delivering excellence in governance and prioritises high standards of accountability, transparency and integrity. They guide and monitor the management of the company and are responsible for approving the company's strategic direction and governance.

The National Director provides the Board with updates in relation to:

- the strategic plan and financial reports
- progress against the business plan
- participation of the Uniting Church in Australia in the National Redress Scheme.

The Board meets regularly in scheduled meetings, with strategic planning and continuing education sessions undertaken at additional sessions.

Nominations Committee

The Board established this committee as required by the UCA Redress Limited constitution. This committee has terms of reference which set out the authority delegated to it by the Board and its operations.

The Committee comprises of three people; two, including the Chair, must be independent of the company. Members of the Committee, including the Chair, are appointed and removed by the Board.

National Director

This is a Board appointed position and is subject to an annual performance review by the Board. The National Director leads UCA Redress Limited, recommends strategic and policy direction for Board approval, and provides business and operational plans to deliver agreed outcomes.

Board appraisal and remuneration

A Board evaluation was undertaken in 2020. Board members are remunerated in accordance with a member policy.

	Eligible to attend	Attended	Fees
Anne Cross	6	6	\$30,000
Melia Benn	6	6	\$15,000
Colleen Geyer	6	5*	0
Peter Roach	6	6	\$15,000
Robert Watson	6	6	\$15,000

*unable to attend one meeting due to leave

Fees paid are inclusive of superannuation.

Employees of the Uniting Church in Australia are not paid Board fees.

Funding arrangements and financial statement

UCA Redress Limited is funded for its operations by contributions from its members. Participating institutions within a member's geographical or corporate area of responsibility contribute to this cost.

Payments made under the National Redress Scheme are passed to the Synods/Assembly, with cost recovery arrangements agreed locally.

UCA Redress Limited audited accounts are available on the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission website: www.acnc.gov.au

