



Culture of Safety

Executive Officer: Culture of Safety

Culture of Safety Officer

Culture of Safety Research Officer

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Vision statement: A Safe Church for Everyone.

Mission statement: To promote a culture of safety within the Uniting Church so that everyone can feel safe and belong.

IMPACT OF COVID 19

Like all other areas of the WA Synod and Presbytery work there was a distinct change in priorities and focus for our team once Covid 19 measures were put in place. Reflecting on how these restrictions impacted on our work we found both negative and positive outcomes some of which will influence our ongoing strategies and direction.

The main impacts included:

Cessation of face to face Safe Church Awareness and Refresher workshops

- Decision not to take Safe Church Workshops on-line/virtual without the time for adequate preparation and adaptation of the National Council of Churches Australia (NCCA) course materials.
- Outcome is ministry agents, lay leaders and church members due for their three year Refresher training have not had access to it yet.

Culture of Safety team collaborated with the WA Presbytery team to provide comprehensive Covid 19 health and safety guidelines on a weekly basis as the pandemic conditions and measures changed constantly.

- This new focus meant we also had time to field many questions and requests from concerned church members as they strove to respond safely to the changing Covid landscape.
- The outcome of these more frequent/renewed connections with congregations was very positive and we want to continue to foster them.

Lack of ready access to Redress applicants/survivors' records held in the Battye library which are required by us to respond to the Requests for Information (RFIs) set deadlines.

- For those survivors who are sick or in urgent need of their Applications progressed this would have caused them further distress.
- The Archivist and other members of our team were prompted to be creative using records/information we had collected over time and to explore other retrieval options with Battye library staff.

Working from home meant a steep learning curve for our team to get up to speed with the remote access technology and virtual meeting platforms and as we were learning to pass on what we knew to colleagues to continue to communicate and work effectively.

- Cessation of interstate travel required all national Synod/Assembly meetings to be held via Zoom which resulted in reduced costs in terms of time and money and an increase in interactions.



- This will have lasting benefits for the National Safe Church Unit (NSCU) Collaboration and Advisory Group (CAG) reps from each Synod, including from WA, as the Unit is planning to have only one face to face meeting per year (when possible) and the rest via Zoom.

MAJOR WORK AND OUTCOMES:

The Culture of Safety (CoS) Team's Strategic Work plan reflects the following four focus areas and where possible aligns with most of the UCA's four Strategic Directions.

I. Reconciliation and Redress

The current continued focus is on responding to complaints and claims, by and for survivors, of historical child abuse – particularly child sexual abuse .

Our work is driven by both applications from the National Redress Scheme, and civil litigation claims in many cases now made possible by the State legislative changes to the Statute of Limitations for Child Sexual Abuse claims.

The Team continues to work and *communicate openly* with UCA congregations, schools, colleges and agencies about how we can be part of the whole reconciliation and healing process required by the Uniting Church towards survivors and impacted communities across Australia.

Key outcomes:

- This table gives a quick snapshot of the National Redress Scheme (NRS) Requests for Information (RFIs) we have received, Redress payments made and expected and also the civil liability claims we have been working on.

| | Total | WA Synod Sister Kate's | WA Synod Other* | Assembly Mogumber | Uniting WA Mofflyn | Colleges /Schools |
|---|----------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| NRS applications - total RFIs received | 99 | 46 | 6 | 28 | 16 | 3 |
| NRS applications finalised – offer accepted | 23 | 11 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 0 |
| NRS applications – Direct Personal Responses (DPRs) requested | 13 | 7 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 0 |
| Redress payments invoiced (Oct-Dec 2019) | \$1,001,239.44 | \$582,695.18 | \$265,919.26 | Nil | \$152,625.00 | Nil |
| Redress offers accepted not yet invoiced | \$724,294.91 | \$332,307.72 | \$25,000.00 | \$182,500.00 | \$184,487.19 | |
| Redress offers made, not yet accepted | \$1,199,097.83 | \$565,250.00 | \$52,500.00 | \$574,500.00 | \$6,847.83 | |
| Total Redress payments made and yet to make to 14 Jul 2020 | \$2,924,632.18 | \$1,480,252.90 | \$343,419.26 | \$757,000.00 | \$343,960.02 | |
| Civil Liability claims | 16 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 10 | 2 |

* Other includes: a UCA Congregation; Benmore (1947-62) and Burnbrae (1938-56) (both were Presbyterian Church Children's Homes).

- Direct Personal Response (DPR) training undertaken by UCA WA heads of organisation including the General Secretary, Uniting WA CEO, two UCA College Principals and the CoS team members who will provide support and logistics around DPR arrangements. Due to Covid 19 DPR training scheduled for June 2020 for the Moderator, Moderator Elect, the Chair and Vice Chair of Uniting WA was cancelled.
- In response to Direct Personal Responses requested by survivors from Mogumber Mission the UCA Redress director Sarah Lim and CoS Executive Officer recently conducted specific

DPR training for Assembly heads of organisation (3 Presidents and General and Associate General Secretaries). The WA legislative context for Mogumber and treatment of First Nations people during that era was a focus of the training.

2. Safe Church Awareness Programme and Safe Church Policy Implementation

This focus area aligns with the two UCA strategic directions of *community engagement* and *open communication*. The Uniting Church in WA is a member of the National Council of Churches Australia (NCCA)'s Safe Church Training Agreement.

There are currently three Safe Church Awareness Presenters endorsed by the NCCA to run Safe Church (SC) Workshops and Refresher sessions. We are keen to recruit more Presenters and will seek interested church members in the coming months through News and Notes and at our next few Safe Church training sessions.

The Executive Officer: Culture of Safety is also a representative on the National Safe Church Unit (NSCU)'s Collaboration and Advisory Group (CAG) and continues to meet with the national Safe Church Framework Implementation Network (SCFIN) members via Zoom and email to ensure that Safe Church and Child Safe policies, practices and training aligns across Synods.

Two CoS team members sit on the Disability Royal Commission Synod Task Group.

Key outcomes:

- Safe Church Awareness Workshops from August 2019 to July 2020:
 - 2 Workshops and 2 Refreshers presented before Covid 19 hit WA
 - 12 different congregations plus the CEDAL Cert IV students participated
 - 62 participants including ministers, retired ministers, lay leaders; chaplains, children's ministry leaders, volunteers, church council members and congregation members
- National Safe Church Unit is a church-wide resource, created to undertake the work required to implement the recommendations of the Child Abuse Royal Commission, harmonise safe church and child safe practices across the Synods and to deliver on the Church's commitment to be a safe place for all people. It has been a major focus of the safe church/child safe work for the CoS representative on the CAG this year. The Unit was established last April and since then has set up and worked collaboratively with the NSCU Governance Committee and the CAG Synod reps on:
 - Reviewing and revising the National Child Safe Policy Framework
 - National Person of Concern Policy Framework and Safety Agreement
 - UCA Annual Child Safe Practices Report 2019 for the Commonwealth Government's National Office of Child Safety
 - Producing a Collaboration Framework to underpin the work of the Unit
 - Professional Standards project to harmonise the Code of Ethics training and Ethical Ministry Workshop materials across Synods
 - National Education and Training strategy collaborating jointly with the CAG reps and the SCFIN members to create national, harmonised Safe Church/Child Safe training resources
- CoS and Uniting WA met with the Deputy Ombudsman and her team to hear about a Reportable Conduct Scheme they are introducing in WA by 2021.

3. Professional Standards

The current focus continues to encourage best practice and commitment to various Professional Standards requirements by ministry agents and lay leaders in the WA Synod. This is in line with the UCA's strategic direction, *training for ministry leadership*, and

particularly to review and, if needed, to introduce and maintain appropriate training and leadership development strategies. We are aiming to communicate to all ministry agents and lay leaders that responding to and completing the required professional standards training helps to create a culture of safety which they can promote to others within the Uniting Church and safeguard those from the local community participating in our ministry programmes.

A case in point is the Ethical Ministry Workshops which after a review was delivered differently in 2019. The course reading material/workbook was accessed via an on-line platform and/or via email and all relevant ministry agents were asked to complete the required case study/reflection work to satisfy this Professional Standards training. They could then choose to attend a face to face, peer lead or Synod run Workshop.

Key outcomes

- Development of the Ethical Ministry Workshop course reading materials, case studies and reflective exercises
- Communication to all Ministry agents and lay leaders regarding the second Semester 2019 Ethical Ministry Workshop delivery method and information to them on how to register and access the on-line materials.
- Follow up and communication with many participants in relation to the on-line registration, new delivery method and queries about their need to do the training. The Sentries on-line platform caused confusion and problems with self-registration so this year an alternative platform is being explored and time given to ensure it all works properly before we roll it out
- CoS was involved in a consultation with Department for Communities about the change in legislation requiring ministers of religion to become mandatory reporters.

4. Managing the Uniting Church Archives and Request for Records

Up until April 2020 the Archivist and CoS team continued to work co-operatively to access and retrieve the required records from the Uniting Church archives and the Battye Library. Once the Battye Library was closed due to Covid 19 and we were all working from home the usual processes and ways of working together needed to be adapted and changed.

Key outcomes

- Archivist and CoS team worked out a new system for researching and gaining access to record information
- Archivist and CoS Research Officer liaised with the Battye Library staff and negotiated a way to access critical records that would allow us to respond to Redress RFIs which were urgent

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