



Uniting Church in Australia

Joint statement – UCA President; National Director UCA Redress Ltd; Director, National Safe Church Unit

Anniversary of apology to survivors of institutional child sexual abuse

October 22 marks the fifth anniversary of the National Apology to Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse.

Marking this event each year gives the Uniting Church the opportunity to reaffirm its apology to survivors, to reflect on the wrongs of the past and to recall our commitment to be vigilant in providing safe environments for children into the future.

“As time passes, we cannot forget the lessons taught to us by the Royal Commission and by every survivor who has engaged with us since,” said Ms Sarah Lim, National Director of UCA Redress Ltd. “It is important that we continue to mark the anniversary of the apology into the future.”

The Uniting Church continues to put improvements in place to safeguard children in all our contexts, responding to legislative changes across jurisdictions and working across the Church to implement safe practice.

“Children deserve safe and supportive places to worship and participate in the life of the Church,” said Rev John Cox, Director, National Safe Church Unit.

“Child safeguarding is a complex legal space, but prioritising the safety of children is not complex at all,” said Rev Cox.

As we mark the anniversary, Uniting Church President Rev Sharon Hollis lamented the wrongs of the past and the harm done to those who have suffered abuse while in our care.

“We are sorry for our failure to provide a safe place and for the times we have not listened to survivors of abuse.”

Rev Hollis reminded Uniting Church members that safeguarding children should be part of every congregation’s life and service. “As adults, we have a responsibility to ensure the safety of children who are part of our Church. Children should feel safe and recognised. Every adult must be vigilant in ensuring children are safe, in every context where we offer ministry.”

“This includes being ready to listen when someone comes to us with concerns or discloses abuse to us. This means believing someone even when the abuse has taken place in a setting that has been safe for others.”

“Not only is it the law, but our faith in Jesus, and our commitment as a Uniting Church demands that we uphold the safety and dignity of all people.”

“I’m pleased that we are again sharing a liturgy of lament for use across the Church,” Rev Hollis said. “I encourage congregations to explore the liturgy together and use it to reflect on how they are living out the lessons of the past in the way we work with children.”

Resources to support a liturgy of lament are available at <https://uniting.church/apology-anniversary-and-liturgy-2023/>