

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE NATIONAL ENGAGEMENT AND RESPONSE TASK GROUP RE THE ROYAL COMMISSION INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

The National Engagement and Response Task Group was established by the Assembly Standing Committee (ASC minute 12.65.02) and is responsible to it.

Primary Purpose

The National Engagement and Response Task Group has responsibility to develop a National Response Framework to assist the Church, its Councils, Ministers, Agencies and Schools to respond to the Royal Commission into child sexual abuse which was established by the Commonwealth Government in November 2012.

Particular Responsibilities

1. The development of a clear statement of Uniting Church values and how these should guide responses from across the life of the Church.
2. Identifying the range of Church bodies (ie Councils, Agencies, Schools, etc) and Ministers to which the National Framework will apply.
3. Identifying the resources that the Church will require to support
 - (a) survivors, and
 - (b) staff / volunteers and organisations with their participation in the Royal Commission.
4. Auditing current practices, processes and ways of dealing with reports of historic sexual abuse and current allegations of sexual abuse across the life of the church; with particular reference to appropriate processes to support survivors to tell their story and to support staff / volunteers in organisations that are the subject of allegations.
5. Identifying areas where improvement in processes is possible and instigate a process for system improvement.
6. Identifying possible areas where there is a risk that abuse may have occurred and was not reported or handled appropriately.
7. Offering guidance to church leaders, Ministers, staff and its agencies on the kind of information that the Commission may require.
8. Determining parameters within which responses will be made to the Royal Commission.
9. Providing advice on the way in which responses should be prepared for and made to the Commission; including the development of protocols around
 - what processes are appropriate for handling such a situation, in various contexts
 - who needs to be contacted when a party is summoned to the Commission
 - advice on the format and content for written submissions
10. Developing advice on options for legal representation – legal counsel, who is eligible, how managed, support through legal processes.
11. Developing advice on relevant insurance matters.
12. Offering advice on who are the appropriate spokespersons for particular situations.
13. Offering advice on key media messages based on the statement of Uniting Church values.
14. Such other roles consistent with the general purpose of the Task Group that become clear once the Terms of Reference of the Royal Commission are declared.

Approved by the Assembly Standing Committee, March 2013