

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR SYNOD TASK GROUPS RESPONDING TO THE ROYAL COMMISSION

1. Conduct an audit of the processes used for responding to instances of past abuse which have come to the attention of the Synod, Presbyteries, congregations, schools, UnitingCare or other agencies with particular reference to
 - a. The policies and processes of responding to allegations
 - b. The opportunity provided for survivors to tell their story
 - c. Any ex-gratia payments or other forms of redress offered.
 - d. Provision of access to documentation
 - e. Maintenance of records relating to processes
 - f. Responses to alleged / proven perpetrators
 - g. Any practices which may have impeded the reporting of and response to allegations
 - h. Evidence of past improvement in processes and changes in policies.

2. Conduct an audit of **current practice** within congregations, UnitingCare, schools, and other agencies with particular reference to the following:
 - a. The frameworks that the church (in its various forms) has in place to prevent the sexual abuse of children? (For example "Safe Church" policies; Working with children checks; complaints processes, etc)
 - b. The robustness with which these frameworks are applied
 - c. Any entities within the church where there are no frameworks in place
 - d. The effectiveness of monitoring processes
 - e. Practices which are / are not in place to continually raise awareness of the prevention of and response to child sexual abuse

3. Identify areas of **future improvement** with particular reference to
 - a. Policies and processes which may need updating
 - b. The removal of any institutional processes which are an impediment to the reporting, investigating and responding to complaints of child sexual abuse.
 - c. The support provided to survivors
 - d. The support provided to church entities and their staff

4. Identify previous and current inquiries and share with the Royal Commission where use of their work will assist in avoiding duplication

5. To **monitor the issues** being raised in the work of the Commission and
 - a. identify if any response is required by the Synod
 - b. receive advice from the National Engagement and Response Task Group
 - c. provide input to the National Engagement and Response Task Group on implications for its work

6. To **communicate** with congregations, UnitingCare, schools and other agencies concerning
 - a. The UCA response to the Royal Commission
 - b. Who can assist with how to respond to the commission
 - c. Protocols for responding to the Commission
 - d. Who needs to be contacted when a party is summoned to the Commission
 - e. Advice on the format and content for written submissions

7. To provide the **Assembly Task group with regular updates** on
 - a. Outcomes of the audits conducted as per 1 and 2
 - b. Any steps identified, proposed or implemented for improving current practice
 - c. The processes being undertaken
 - d. Any requests received from the Commission and the Synod's response
 - e. Any other direct involvement of which the Synod becomes aware

8. To ensure that as far as possible, the Synod is ready to respond to any Notice from the Commission, and in particular to ensure:
 - (i) policies and procedures applicable over the past fifty years* are accessible;

- (ii) details of the review and amendment of policies and procedures is documented;
 - (iii) details of complaints and actions taken are documented and accessible;
 - (iv) details of the synod's past and present insurance arrangements are documented.
 - (v) governance arrangements in place at various times have been identified and recorded;
 - (vi) there is a record of steps taken to access documents that have not been located.
9. To ensure that within their synod arrangements are put in place so that in the event that the Uniting Church or any of its officers or entities is called to appear at a Public Hearing of the Commission:
- (i) Legal representation is available, and appropriately briefed;
 - (ii) Arrangements are in place for any officers of the synod or other persons called to appear to be appropriately prepared;
 - (iii) Arrangements are in place for those who need to appear before the Commission to be debriefed after their appearance and supported afterwards;
10. To provide advice, as requested, to the national Task Group on submissions made by the Uniting Church to the Commission through responses to Issues Papers, contributions to Forums and other opportunities provided by the Commission to make representations on issues identified in the Commission's Letters Patent, such as:
- How to better protect children against child sexual abuse;
 - How to achieve best practice in reporting and responding to incidents or risks of child sexual abuse;
 - Alleviation of the impact of past present and future child sexual abuse, including the provision of redress

Endorsed by the Assembly Standing Committee, March 2014