

State Board's position with the National Redress Scheme

Dear members of the Conference of Churches of Christ in SA and NT Inc.,

State Board have prayerfully and carefully considered the National Redress Scheme (Scheme) and its voluntary 'opt-in' status along with the findings and recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Abuse in 2015 and the 30 June 2020 deadline.

While the media and Federal Government are pushing hard for all organisations to join the Scheme we draw to your attention these quotes taken from the final report of the Royal Commission:

*"we recognise that, in some cases, religious institutions will need to provide other avenues for redress, including for survivors who approach them directly for particular outcomes or by ensuring reasonable access to a claim for civil damages."*¹

*"In that announcement Minister Porter said that any state, territory, church or charity that has responsibility in the area will be able to opt in to the scheme. Institutions would opt in on the basis that they fund the cost of eligible redress claims made in relation to that institution."*²

The responsibility to provide other avenues other than the Scheme and the option to opt-in to the Scheme are clearly stated. State Board believe that we have and are appropriately exercising our responsibilities with regard to historic child abuse cases. Responsibilities that exceed the minimum standards of the Scheme.

It is important for you to know that whilst we recognise that there may be an expectation for Churches of Christ in SA and NT Inc. to participate in the Scheme at this juncture, we are not. State Board, through the State Office stands ready (as it always has) to be held accountable where appropriate, with regard to injustices of the past and to provide much more than the three foundational components of redress that the Scheme offers. The State Office is open, ready and willing to receive any direct notification of historic or future accounts of child abuse, and to work with complainants towards appropriate outcomes - including:

- Any request for recognition of child abuse that occurred through one of our programmes;

- Any request for recognition of child abuse that occurred at, in, or on one of our affiliated Church premises or their programmes;
- Any case for redress as deemed appropriate through negotiation between the parties involved; and
- Any need for Counselling or support be it acute or chronic in nature.

Beyond the Scheme, State Board are committed to:

- Make personal and public apology in agreement with the substantiated victim(s) of Child Abuse;
- Hold any guilty offender accountable within our power and influence;
- Support any civil claim against a perpetrator when claims are substantiated;
- Participate in civil litigation with the victim were appropriate;
- Stand to public account if called into civil litigation;
- Un-ordain, Dis-endorse or remove Accreditation of Ministers found guilty of any Child Abuse related offences.

This remains our position with regard to reports of abuse of any sort. It is the belief of State Board that our own policy exceeds the scheme and seeks to provide a greater recourse for legitimate claimants of child abuse.

To be clear, it is our hope that the processing of a legitimate claim goes well beyond a simple acknowledgement of pain with possible redress such as the Scheme. State Board further reserves the right for applicants to pursue justice and in some cases be supported through our advocacy. We believe our commitment to addressing the wrongs of the past, can make a huge difference to victims' lives, and that redress alone cannot offer effective restoration of community or relationships that are essential for communal, mental and spiritual wellbeing and healing that all parties should commit to.

It is our view and hope that this very open avenue to a genuine and discerning form of redress will also provide a much greater sense of justice and restoration.

Yours sincerely,

Scott Combridge CEO



¹ page 504 - Final Report: Volume 16, Religious Institutions Book 3

² Page 505 - Final Report: Volume 16, Religious Institutions Book 3