



Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Taskforce

To the Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs



10 December 2020

The Honourable Leanne Linard MP Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs Locked Bag 3405 BRISBANE QLD 4001

Dear Minister

On behalf of the Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Taskforce (the Taskforce), I am pleased to present the 2020 Annual Report, that is provided in line with the Terms of Reference that the Taskforce operates under.

The Taskforce has been established for two years and in this time has heard from individuals, their supports and service providers on the impacts of institutional child abuse. We are guided by six priority areas of work that have been developed by Taskforce members and we are pleased with the progress made in addressing these areas.

While 2020 has proved challenging for our work, with many activities that were planned being placed on hold due to COVID-19, the Taskforce has continued to provide advice to the Queensland Government on the implementation of the ongoing reforms recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (the Royal Commission).

The Taskforce remains committed to its workplan and we are privileged to have been appointed for the first term of the Taskforce. While there is more work to be done on ensuring the 'books of the Royal Commission' are heard and the recommendations implemented, members of the Taskforce are proud of what has been achieved to date. It is our hope that the priority areas of work identified by the Taskforce continue and hearing from people with lived experience of institutional child abuse is prioritised. It is through these encounters that we hear of the impacts of institutional child abuse and the need for change to occur.

On behalf of the Taskforce, I would like to extend our congratulations on your appointment to the role of Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs. The Taskforce wish you all the best for your work as Minister and look forward to working with you. Should you wish to discuss this report, or the work of the Taskforce further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Mr Robert (Bob) Atkinson AO APM

Chair

Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Taskforce

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1. Background

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (the Royal Commission)

During five years of detailed inquiry, the Royal Commission revealed widespread and systemic failings in protecting children and responding to institutional child sexual abuse. The Royal Commission also revealed that institutional child sexual abuse is not a problem of the past but continues in institutions today.

On 15 December 2017, the Royal Commission delivered its final report consisting of 17 volumes, containing 189 recommendations. The final report added to three other reports already released by the Royal Commission including Working with Children Checks (August 2015), Redress and Civil Litigation (September 2015) and Criminal Justice (August 2017). In total, the Royal Commission made 409 recommendations directed at federal and state and territory governments as well as institutions, including religious institutions.

Establishment of the Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Taskforce

The Queensland Government response committed the former Minister for Child Safety, Youth and Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence to establishing the Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Taskforce (the Taskforce) as a priority.

The Taskforce was established by the Queensland Government on 3 September 2018, to provide advice to the Queensland Government on implementing the reforms arising from the Royal Commission. It is also the role of the Taskforce to provide advice on a grants program for activities that contribute to truth, healing and reconciling histories.

On 14 December 2019, in accordance with changes to the Civil Liability and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2019 and the removal of the statutory limitation period for serious child physical and psychological abuse, the Premier expanded the Terms of Reference for the Taskforce to include all forms of institutional child abuse.

In accordance with its Terms of Reference, the Taskforce is required to provide an annual report to the Minister each year.

Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Taskforce

Acknowledgements

The Taskforce acknowledges all that has come before and led us to where we are now.

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as our First Nations and Traditional Owners of the land.

We acknowledge all people with lived experience of institutional child abuse.

We also acknowledge:

- · the Stolen Generations
- the Forgotten Australians and Child Migrants whose experiences were recognised through the 1999 Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions, known as the Forde Inquiry
- people who as children in the care of the State of Queensland were inappropriately placed in adult mental health facilities
- people who experienced physical, psychological and sexual abuse while in out-of-home care
- people affected by policies and practices that led to forced adoptions.

We recognise the lifelong impact of childhood abuse in institutional settings on the quality of life and limited opportunities experienced by many in the past, and are committed to keeping this at the forefront of our work.

Vision and purpose

Our vision is for a Queensland where children are protected, safe and supported to reach their full potential.

Our purpose is to raise awareness of institutional child abuse and its impacts, to drive changes that will protect children, and provide a holistic response to support, justice and healing for people with lived experience across Queensland.

Membership

Our Terms of Reference state that membership of the Taskforce will include:

- four representatives of people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse, including at least one representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and one representing people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse in an institutional setting other than residential or home-based care
- two representatives of services that support people who have experienced institutional child abuse
- · one representative of care providers
- one representative of religious institutions and religious schools.

Our purpose is to raise awareness of institutional child abuse and its impacts, to drive changes that will protect children, and provide a holistic response to support, justice and healing for people with lived experience across Queensland.

Taskforce members

Current membership of the Taskforce includes:

- Mr Robert (Bob) Atkinson AO, APM Chair
- Mrs Joan Isaacs
- · Ms Diane Carpenter
- · Mr Mike Wragge
- · Ms Mary E Adams
- · Ms Helena Holdaway
- · Ms Karyn Walsh
- · Mr David Baker

To find out more about our members go to page 13.

2. Priorities of the Taskforce

In its two years of operation, the Taskforce has proudly worked on six key priority areas of work. These priorities were established in the beginning of 2019 and have guided the work of the Taskforce. Priorities include:

- Increasing community awareness and getting out and talking to people this includes educating the public about the work of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and its 409 recommendations, and giving those with lived experience of institutional child abuse an opportunity to voice their concerns, provide input and feedback.
- Legislative reform taking an active role in examining institutional child abuse reforms, raising questions, discussing ideas and providing feedback to the government on these reforms.
- National Redress Scheme –including providing advice to the Queensland Government about their participation in the National Redress Scheme.
- Support services compiling a comprehensive list of support services and websites for people with lived experience of child abuse and their families.
- Access to records providing information about how people can access records of their time in care.
- Engagement across all levels of the Queensland community the Taskforce will continue to grow its profile in the community through engagement with people with lived experience, services and organisations and government.

3. Taskforce meetings

As everyone across the world has experienced, the health pandemic of COVID-19 has challenged the way we work, with many events that the Taskforce had planned for 2020 placed on hold. In the absence of face-to-face engagements, the Taskforce remained committed to hearing from people with lived experience of institutional child abuse.

The Taskforce held seven formal meetings in 2020. Two meetings occurred in February, with other meetings held in May, June, August, September and November. This is an additional three meetings than what is required, with the additional meetings held during the height of the pandemic in Queensland, where meeting face-to-face was not an option. The additional meetings were held over the phone and were shorter in duration. This allowed for the Taskforce to continue to work on areas of priority and to draft projects that will continue to hear from people with lived experience of institutional child abuse and their supports.

Topics that were discussed at meetings throughout the year included, but were not limited to:

- · The National Redress Scheme
- Children's Rights and Voices Project Review of the Child Protection Act 1999
- · National Centre for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse
- Information and support for children and young people in out-of-home care
- Implementation of the Royal Commission recommendations including criminal justice recommendations.

While there is no requirement for Taskforce members to work in between meetings, we aim to be responsive to opportunities to influence the implementation of Royal Commission related reforms.

4. Highlights for 2020

Presentation at the National Indigenous Youth Empowerment Summit

The first presentation for the year was in February at the National Indigenous Youth Empowerment Summit in Cairns. Over 150 people were in attendance from around Australia and from various organisations. It was a unique opportunity for Bob and Joan from the Taskforce to present on the Royal Commission and the work of the Taskforce.

While in Cairns, Bob and Joan spoke to staff at the North Queensland Regional Office, of the former Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women (DCSYW) and shared their reflections and learnings of the Royal Commission.

Toowoomba Community Forum

The first forum, as part of the Taskforce's 'Listening Tour' across Queensland, was held in Toowoomba in February 2020. Over 60 people attended, including people with lived experience and a range of service providers, some travelling a long distance to attend.

An overview of the Royal Commission and the implementation of the Royal Commission recommendations in Queensland was provided, along with a presentation and discussion on the National Redress Scheme by knowmore Legal Service.

The Taskforce looks forward to continuing its 'Listening Tour' in 2021.

Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety

One of the priorities for the Taskforce is the support and services provided to people with lived experience and their families. In this context, aged care has been identified as a key issue for people with lived experience of institutional care and institutional abuse, returning to institutional care.

The Taskforce provided a submission to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety in June 2020, based off what members have heard from people with lived experience of institutional child abuse and their concerns relating to aged care.

The submission from the Taskforce explored the impact of child abuse in institutional settings, and how this may affect people with lived experience of institutional child abuse, when required to enter an aged care facility.

The Taskforce expressed concern over the design of aged care facilities and suggested consideration of:

- · accessibility and affordability of aged care institutions
- following the needs and wishes of the person with lived experience as much as possible by providing choice and control over their own circumstances
- providing trauma-informed services that take into consideration the cumulative harm experienced by many with a lived experience of institutional abuse
- · ensuring adequate staff training and support
- adoption of a 'do no further harm' approach
- · ensuring services are diverse, flexible and responsive to individual needs
- maintaining connections to reduce social isolation.

It is the hope of the Taskforce to raise awareness of how the impacts of institutional child abuse can affect people who have experienced institutional child abuse, when entering an aged care environment.

Presentation to Sport and Recreation staff, Department of Housing and Public Works

Bob, as Chair of the Taskforce was invited, alongside staff from the Redress Coordination/Secretariat Unit, Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs (DCYJMA), to present to Sport and Recreation in August 2020. Bob provided insight and specific information on the findings of Volume 14 of the Royal Commission, related to Sport and Recreation.

Act for Kids Academy Launch

Bob was pleased to speak on behalf of the Taskforce at the launch of the Act for Kids Academy in October 2020. The training program discusses how organisations can become child safe, with activities on how to identify if a child is disclosing abuse and how to report it. Bob spoke of the importance of programs such as this, to continue to educate the community on how better to respond to children and young people.

Changing Futures Queensland Forum

Bob presented to the Daniel Morcombe Changing Futures Queensland Forum in November 2020, covering the Royal Commission and the findings relating to harmful sexual behaviours. Additionally, Bob discussed the role of the Taskforce, and how government and non-government stakeholders can work together to ensure the recommendations of the Royal Commission are implemented in Queensland.

5. Achievements

Towards the end of 2020, Taskforce members reflected on the year that has been. Key achievements that were identified included:

- ongoing advice to the former department, now DCYJMA on the operation of the National Redress Scheme in Queensland, particularly in relation to Direct Personal Responses and Counselling and Psychological Care
- supporting the training of Queensland Government senior executives responsible for delivering Direct Personal Responses
- engagement with the newly appointed Director-General, DCYJMA, Deidre Mulkerin
- providing advice to the Minister in response to the First Interim Report of the Joint Select
 Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme, April 2020
- contributing to the design of the National Centre for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse (recommendation 9.9), led by the Commonwealth
- receiving briefings on the proposed amendments to the Child Protection Act 1999
- receiving briefings and the opportunity to provide feedback from the Department of the
 Premier and Cabinet on the 2019 Queensland Government second annual progress report
 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

- participating in briefings from DCYJMA and Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG) on the implementation of Royal Commission recommendations
- participating in presentations from the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions,
 Queensland Police and Victim Assist Queensland
- participating in cultural capability training to assist in informing our work in Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander communities

6. Contact with people with lived experience

While restrictions of COVID-19 resulted in the Taskforce meeting virtually and having limited face-to-face contact with people with lived experience for half of the year, this has not stopped the people with lived experience of institutional child abuse in making contact to discuss their experiences, concerns and issues. While the role of the Taskforce does not extend to advocating for individuals, it is important that we hear from people with lived experience as it contributes to the work undertaken by the Taskforce and shapes the advice we provide to the Minister.

The Taskforce hopes to connect with people with lived experience, their supports and service providers throughout 2021. The Taskforce is privileged to have this engagement and is committed to listening to people with lived experience of institutional child abuse.

7. In our own words

Below, our members with lived experience Joan, Mary, Mike and Diane share their thoughts on the year the Taskforce has had.



My highlights for this year began back in 2019, when the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice presented the Criminal Code (Child Sexual Offences Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 to Queensland Parliament. This Bill was an important step forward in the implementation of the Royal Commission recommendations and for me personally. It was a monumental moment in history, with the Bill being passed on the 8 September 2020.

The Taskforce had great plans for 2020. It was going to be a big year of 'taking the Royal Commission to the people.' This was a very exciting prospect and we got off to a good start with our Toowoomba forum.

Many people came along with some travelling from country New South Wales to attend. I thoroughly enjoyed the day and looked forward to the further forums which had been planned across Queensland. Unfortunately, this was the one and only for the year with the arrival of COVID-19.

Early in the year the Taskforce undertook cultural capability training and while I found some of the topics confronting at times, it helped me to develop an appreciation of the unique circumstances and issues that our Indigenous people have had to, and continue to, confront.

In late February I travelled to Cairns for the National Indigenous Youth Empowerment Summit, where we presented on the Royal Commission and the work of the Taskforce. The session was well received by those who attended and the organisers of the conference.

Although the year did not turn out the way we anticipated because of COVID-19, the Taskforce was not idle. We continued to have updates on:

- · the National Redress Scheme
- the government's implementation of the Royal Commission recommendations, including the criminal justice system
- the support and response provided by the former DCSYW to children and young people in outof-home care who have been sexually abused.

I found these updates to be important to the ongoing work of the Taskforce. While it hasn't been the year that I, or others expected, the Taskforce has continued to provide valuable advice on the Royal Commission recommendations and their implementation in Queensland. I look forward to the Taskforce continuing its activities in 2021.



Our year on the Taskforce has been made somewhat difficult with the COVID-19 obstacles in place, but regardless of this, our workplan has been ongoing and we have been productive in providing advice on issues that need to be taken into consideration.

As a member of the Taskforce with lived experience, I have found working with the various departments implementing the Royal Commission recommendations has been advantageous. I feel that the contributions I make, which reflect the things I hear from others who have a lived experience, are heard and valued and taken into consideration when the Taskforce provides advice.

I endeavour, as a member of the Taskforce, to highlight the experiences of many others who have lived through the past failures of institutions. It is through those who have a lived experience, that the lessons from our time are heard and reflected on, in order to improve the institutions charged with the responsibility of providing care to children today.

I believe that for reforms to take place and for the implementation of the Royal Commission recommendations to be adhered to, we must learn from the past transgressions, so that our past history and trauma does not repeat itself.

The Taskforce would not be a success without our chair, Bob and the dedication that each member of the Taskforce has in ensuring the Queensland Government receives the best advice when it comes to implementing the reforms recommended by the Royal Commission. Thank you to the Queensland Government for listening and working alongside the Taskforce.



It has been a privilege to be involved in the Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Taskforce, since its establishment in 2018. The past twelve months has certainly been challenging yet rewarding. The range of activities and events that members of the Taskforce participated in were well attended and supported by various stakeholders across the state.

The Taskforce have done some great work in addressing policy and procedural issues associated with the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and child safety matters. The coordination, inclusiveness and success associated with the work of the Taskforce would have been extremely difficult to manage if not for the support and teamwork provided by the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs.



This year has been a challenge with the COVID-19 pandemic and it is now, more than ever that we need to protect our most vulnerable, our children.

For me personally it was good to see that more people have accessed the National Redress Scheme and that applications have been processed. Another success of 2019 was the Criminal Code (Child Sexual Offences Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 being passed in Parliament.

The Taskforce have begun to host forums which are a great way of letting communities know what the Taskforce is about. It is also an opportunity for the Taskforce to hear concerns that people have.

8. The year ahead

It is hoped that the Taskforce will continue to focus on increasing community awareness of institutional child abuse by getting out and talking to people through our 'Listening Tour' across Queensland.

Additionally, the Taskforce hopes to release an online questionnaire to complement its 'Listening Tour' to hear directly from people with lived experience, their supports and service providers.



The Taskforce is committed to:

- hosting forums across Queensland to hear from people with lived experience, communities and organisations
- · continuing to provide advice to support the Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Grants Program
- connecting with people with lived experience of institutional child abuse
- providing advice to the Queensland Government on the implementation of the Royal Commission recommendations.

The Taskforce look forward to working alongside the Queensland Government on continuing to implement the Royal Commission reforms. It is our hope that while the Royal Commission came to an end after five years, that the legacy of such an inquiry continues to shape policies, procedures and practices by those who are committed to improving the responses to those impacted by institutional child abuse.

9. Getting in touch with the Taskforce

The Taskforce is supported by the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs can be contacted via Ms Kelly Lotz, Principal Advisor or on 07 3097 5793 Taskforce.Secretariat@csyw.qld.gov.au

The Taskforce website can be accessed via www.csyw.qld.gov.au/thr-taskforce

Taskforce Members

Robert (Bob) Atkinson AO, APM

Bob commenced public service with the Queensland Police Service in 1968, serving as Commissioner of the Queensland Police Service for 12 years from 2000 until his retirement in October 2012.

In a 44-year career with the Queensland Police Service, Bob served throughout Queensland from Goondiwindi to Cairns. Bob oversaw reforms after the Fitzgerald Inquiry from 1990 as well as the recommendations of the Public Sector Management Commission review of the Queensland Police Service in 1993.



Following his retirement from the Queensland Police Service, Bob was appointed as one of six Commissioners of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Bob served as one of the six Royal Commissioners during the five-year inquiry from 2013 to 2017.

In 2018, Bob was appointed as the Chair, Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Taskforce. In 2019, Bob was appointed as Co-Chair of the Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Council.

Bob's lifelong dedication to public service was recognised through a Queensland Great Award in 2019.

Joan Isaacs

Joan is a wife, mother and doting grandmother. At the age of 14 she was groomed and sexually abused by the chaplain at her school. Despite her abuse, Joan went on to be a teacher.

Silenced by her abuser and later by the Catholic Church through their Towards Healing program, Joan was finally able to speak in 2013 when she gave evidence at the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

In 2016, Joan released her book *To Prey and To Silence*, to expose the truth and to encourage others who have experienced similar challenges. In 2017, her book was a finalist in the Queensland Literary Awards – People's Choice.





Diane Carpenter

Diane is a proud Aboriginal woman, mother and grandmother from the Mitakoodi people, who lives in Brisbane with her husband and 2 blue cattle dogs. Diane grew up in St Joseph's Orphanage, Neerkol.

Diane courageously provided evidence to the 1999 Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Queensland Institutions (the Forde Inquiry) and in 2004 to the Senate Inquiry into children in institutional care, later known as the Forgotten Australians Report.



Many years later in 2015, Diane again provided evidence to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse about her experiences in Neerkol.

On leaving Neerkol, Diane spent many years working as a nurse. Diane has coordinated a shelter for women experiencing domestic and family violence in Mornington Island and was a community health facilitator at the Townsville Migrant Resource Centre. Here she supported people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to access mainstream health services. With the other community facilitators, one of her achievements at the Migrant Resource was the introduction of the interpreter's card.

Mike Wragge

Mike is a proud Wakka South West Queensland man, born in Cherbourg Aboriginal community. Mike was institutionalised at the age of 5 and placed with his 4 brothers and 1 sister in the Cherbourg Boys home. Mike left the Cherbourg Boys Dormitory in 1973 and stayed with his mother and various other family members around South East and Western Queensland.



Mike began his working career in Cherbourg before moving to Brisbane in 1983 to take up a position as a community worker with the

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Services. It was around this time that Mike started his affiliation with many of the Indigenous organisations and the Murri community in the Brisbane region.

Mike has had the opportunity and privilege to work closely with many good community workers, such as the Brisbane Council of Elders, which has given him great insight into their experiences and knowledge. Mike has been an active member of the Indigenous community in Brisbane since 1983.

In 1988, Mike commenced work with the federal Department of Social Security which is now the Department of Human Services, where he is still employed.



Mary E Adams

Mary was a resident of Queensland institutions for over 16 years. Mary became a qualified Enrolled Nurse in 1972 prior to completing a number of post-graduate courses. Mary has spent time travelling overseas and working in third world countries as a nurse, nanny, English teacher and within a non-government organisation in the area of community services.



Mary has long been a strong advocate for people with lived experience of institutional abuse. In 1997, Mary held the role of Secretary and Treasurer of the Neerkol Action Group, the first support group established in Queensland to recognise the needs of former residents of institutional care. In 1998, Mary advocated to the 1999 *Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions* (the Forde Inquiry) about issues that needed to be addressed for former residents. Following the Forde Inquiry, Mary was appointed by the Honourable Anna Bligh, the then Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services as a member of the Forde Monitoring Committee.

Mary has provided her personal account of living in St Joseph's Orphanage, Neerkol as evidence to the Forde Inquiry, the 2004 Senate Inquiry into children in institutional care, later known as the Forgotten Australians Report, and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

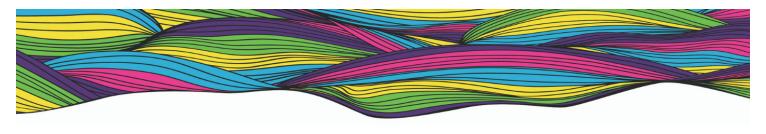
Helena Holdaway

Helena has more than 20 years of experience in the social and community services sector and has held a range of senior roles in Australian and UK not for profit organisations as well as government.

In her current role as the State Director for Queensland, Life Without Barriers, Helena has responsibility for a wide range of service provision, including services specific to children and young people in care



Helena is passionate about ensuring that children and young people that access services are well cared for, supported, protected from abuse and respected as they should be.



Karyn Walsh

Karyn Walsh is the Chief Executive Officer of Micah Projects, a notfor-profit organisation in Brisbane committed to social justice. Since the mid-1990s, Karyn has been supporting people with lived experience of institutional abuse.

Karyn has supported people through the Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions (the Forde Inquiry), Senate Community Affairs Committee inquiries including Lost Innocents: Righting the Record – Report on child migration and Forgotten Australians and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.



For over 20 years Karyn has advocated alongside the Historical Abuse Network to recognise the needs of people with lived experience of institutional child abuse. Achievements include: the establishment of Lotus Place—the first peer support and resource centre with Forgotten Australians and former Child Migrants; the 2007-2010 redress scheme; and the establishment of the Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Taskforce.

In 2016, Karyn was awarded a Doctor of Social Work and Nursing honoris causa by the University of Queensland. In 2017, Karyn was awarded a Member in the General Division of the Order of Australia.

David Baker

Since October 2014, David has held the position of Moderator of the Queensland Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia. David has served in regional oversight roles in the Uniting Church, and as a congregational minister. Before being in ordained ministry in 1991, David was a property valuer for the Queensland Government.

David is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and holds a Bachelor of Theology from Brisbane College of Theology and a Diploma in Business Management from Queensland Agricultural College.



Under David's leadership, the Queensland Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia set up an Interim Redress Scheme for survivors of institutional sexual misconduct, consistent with the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. David has also overseen improved training of Uniting Church in Australia congregations to ensure that ministry within the life of the church is safe for children.