

Northern Synod



YEARLY REFLECTION
2020





We acknowledge the Larrakia Nation whos land we live and work on. We pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging.

We pay our respects to the traditional custodians of land on which the Northern Synod covers.

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From The Moderator

Usually, if we want to travel far using a car, or in a new place, then we would use a GPS to help us not get lost. A GPS will also remind you if you have been travelling for two hours to take a rest. This serves an important warning for those of us who drive, to take some time to stretch. The vehicle's engine can also take a break, so this reminds us that everything relating to our lives has time and place.

The author of Ecclesiastes 3 reminds us that everything under heaven has a time. Time is very closely related to our lives in this world. God is the creator, giver, and organizer of this time. So, every event, whether pleasant or not is inevitable. This is not something extraordinary because God makes everything beautiful in the right time. Time itself was created time for humans. In other words, time and events are gifts from God that must be appreciated; utilized properly well and right. Salomon's point in this section is that God has a plan for all people. Thus, he provides cycles of life each with its work for us to do. Although we may face many problems that seem to contradict God's plan, these should not be barriers to believing in him, but rather opportunities to discover that, without God, life's problems have no lasting solutions.

Timing is important. All the experiences listed in these verses are appropriate at certain times. The secret to peace with God is to discover, accept, and appreciate God's perfect timing. The danger is to doubt or resent God's timing. If you do this can lead to despair, rebellion or moving ahead without his advice.

The words of King Solomon in Ecclesiastes are about "whatever is under heaven"(3:1), citing a series of contradictory events, he emphasized that "there is a season for everything/a time to be born, a time to die, a time to plant, and a time to uproot what was planted. Time to kill and a time to heal, time to tear down and a time to build. Time to weep and a time to laugh, everything happens in the world without being prevented.

Perhaps in these verses, King Solomon felt discouraged by what he saw as a life cycle in vain. However, he also acknowledged God's intervention in every age, that our work is "a gift of God" (v.13) and that, "everything that God does will remain forever."

Your ability to find satisfaction in your work depends to a large extent upon your attitude. You will become dissatisfied if you lose the sense of purpose God intended for your work. We can enjoy our work if we – remember that God has given us work to do and realize that the fruit of our labour is a gift from God, see your work as a way to serve God. To be happy and do good are worthy goals for life, but we can pursue them in the wrong way. God's wants us to enjoy life. When we have the proper view of God, we discover that real pleasure is found in enjoying whatever we have as gifts from God, not in what we accumulate.



We started this year with the belief that God cares and is during the life and ministry of creation. Even though the world was shocked by the COVID-19 which resulted in terrifying deaths, the situation got worse. When many lost their jobs, they even had to be locked up. Public and private office activities must be stopped, all forms of worship in buildings were also stopped. All activities must be stopped, and we were told to stay at home. This year we have been living in a terrible atmosphere.

Everything has its season, but we are still asking at the end of this year if the uncertainty will end. Everything goes on without being able to prevent it, there are times of happiness and there are times of sadness. There are times when the Lord Jesus works to present His Kingdom. The God who is believed by believers is a God who is active, not a God who is silent and dumb. Instead, God cares about the struggles of His creation. He becomes a place of refuge in times of trouble; He knows those who take refuge in Him.

There are times when God shows His care, He did this through the son Jesus Christ to die on the cross. But on the third day, he rose to receive His glory that has made us possible to this day.

Rev Thresi Mauboy
Moderator
Northern Synod of The Uniting Church in Australia

*"I don't know about tomorrow, I just live for day to day
I don't borrow from the sunshine, for it's skies may turn to grey*

*I don't worry o'er the future, for I know what Jesus said
And today I'll walk beside Him, for he knows what lies ahead.*

*Many things about tomorrow, I don't seem to understand
But I know who holds tomorrow, and I know who holds my
hand."*



From The General Secretary

What a year! I wish to acknowledge the Larrakia people and pay my respect to elders, past, present and emerging. Furthermore, I would like to also recognize that the church is benefiting from the Larakia land as well as lands and nations within NRCC communities of the Northern Synod.

It has been a tough year for everyone in many ways. First and foremost, COVID-19 has changed and shaped the order and the very fabric of life that we have been accustomed to. As people, communities, country and globally, we are no longer free to make decision about our own movement, travel and how to gather in groups including worship. We are now required to heed government and Health official advice to keep everyone safe. Sadly, we have lost many people to the virus this year and our prayers go out to their families and love ones. For us though at the Northern Synod, we are grateful that we are still able to meet and worship together relatively free compared to our congregations in other Synods. We give thanks to God and pray for safety of everyone.

The Synod office operations have been relatively unaffected by COVID-19. We managed to keep everyone in their jobs with good financial management. Commercial rental from our properties were certainly hit because we had to provide significant discounts including rent relief for months to our tenants to support businesses. However, the Job Keeper program was a welcoming supplement, and we are grateful for our Finance team and in carrying out that work.

COVID-19 also impacted on the way we work in the office with some staff now working from home where necessary. All meetings this year by various councils and committees were affected in some way because of the restriction in movement. Hence, we used a mix of face to face, zoom and telephones. Thanks to everyone for their understanding of this new way of gathering.

At the Special Synod meeting this year, Rev. Tony Goodluck was elected as the Moderator-Elect. He will be joining the Standing Committee meetings next year until his installation in October 2021.

Let me use this opportunity to thank the Synod, Presbyteries – PPNA, NRCC, congregations, bush chaplains, schools, and agencies such as Somerville, ARDS, Co-ordinate, Nungalinga College, St Phillips College, Frontier Services, staff and volunteers for their sheer dedication through services and prayers. We are in the service to the ministry of God and are grateful to be part of it. My sincere thanks to all related friends and service providers affiliated with the Synod.

Staff have been doing their best to provide support for the Presbyteries and congregations. As part of building a knowledge and trusting culture in the office, staff attended staff training day, staff day out and other staff building relationship and training exercises. Staff have been encouraged to enrol in short courses to develop and grow their capacity for personal development and within their roles. This has been a great initiative to some staff members.



We have great leaders throughout our Synod, known and unknown, and we have a duty to harness, build upon and utilise those gifts within our communities. "The responsibility of leadership is not to come up with all the great ideas but to create an environment in which great ideas can happen" - Simon Sinek. As a Synod, we all must ask ourselves the right, and therefore the most difficult, questions such as: "what are the challenges we face? And how can we build effective leadership for complex times?" - taken from Rethinking Leadership by Peter Kaldor, Naomi Nash and Sophie Paterson

Thank you to all members of all committees and councils for your generosity in offering your time this year. It has been an incredibly challenging year but thanks to you for your support. We are learning together, and we look forward to growing in 2021. The Northern Synod benefits from the consistent efforts and honest contributions of those who volunteer their gifts with us. We hope next year will be a year of rebuilding and cultivation of a stronger and trusting relationship between all arms of the Synod – its committees and councils. We as a Synod are learning that we must not focus on the man-made processes, rules, and regulations before we focus on carrying out our work in service of God and we certainly must not detrimentally impact on that work because of our commitment to those texts.

A year of continued growth, learning and re-engagement with our faith traditions as well as taking on new and risky path for Jesus. Growing in faith and spirit of congregation members are keys and with Words and Deeds, may we become little lights of Christ to others too. Often, we focus so much on mechanics and procedures and lose sight of our own faith journey. How do we grow as a disciple of Christ and live out our covenant with God and each other? How do we bring hope to people and grow our life journey within the rock and foundation of Christ's love? We live and work with that Love, Joy, Hope and Peace of Christ in serving God's people.

Let me finish with my key theme this year that I have shared with the Synod Standing Committee, Fresh Word Become Flesh coming from John 1: 14: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of Grace and Truth". This is a profound teaching by John and a stark reminder of the revelation of God as one of knowledge, wisdom, and Intelligence of our making, as one of the words within Jesus Christ - an unchangeable being who became a person and God. We are made in the likeness of God because God became fully God and fully human and dwells among us to reveal who God is. Jesus is the WORD who became flesh and how wonderful for us, as a disciple of Christ, to serve in such ministry within our Synod.



With The WORD, I am looking forward for another year of listening journey, leading, working, and serving with everyone and sharing God's abundant grace and gifts of dependable and boundless love. Let us continue in trust and faith and hope for another year of a growing and flourishing Synod. Wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Malo 'aupito,

Haloti Kailahi
General Secretary
Northern Synod of Uniting Church in Australia

Important Dates:

Synod Meeting: 13 - 17 April 2021

Assembly: 13 - 20 July 2021



A New Moderator

21 December 2020

Dear members of Northern Synod,

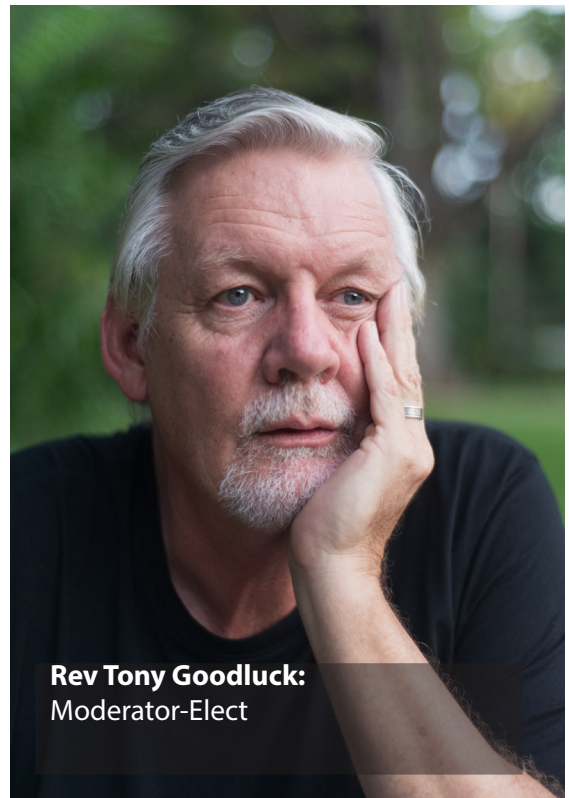
I wish to inform you that at the Special Synod meeting on 28th November 2020, Rev Tony Goodluck was elected Moderator for three years starting from October 2021 until October 2024. Tony is currently the Dean of Uniting Church NRCC Students at Nungalinga College.

A video interview with Tony was shown at the Special Synod meeting and this can be found on our website. The interview goes into his story and God's call for him to this role as Moderator for Northern Synod.

The Synod is looking forward to welcome Tony, Moderator-Elect to his first Synod Standing Committee meeting in February 2021. The first of many tasks that lie ahead for him.

Let us keep Tony in our prayers, as well as his wife Margie, as he embarks on serving Christ as Moderator of our Synod.

General Secretary
Northern Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia



Rev Tony Goodluck:
Moderator-Elect



A Strange Way To Worship

This year, the way we worshiped changed. The global pandemic meant that we had to worship in new ways. Most prominently, our normal Easter celebrations would have to be put on hold. Instead, we were encouraged to observe Easter inside our homes similar to the first Easter.

On Easter Sunday, members of the Northern Synod were encouraged to place palm leaves outside there homes. This was taken to a national level with Assembly spreading the word to other Synods to take part.





Ordinations, Commisionings, Recognitions, Conclusions

The Ordination of Dr Rosalie Clark

On the 5th of June 2020, Dr. Rosalie Clark was ordained at Living Water Uniting Church. Despite the current restrictions many were present to celebrate this joyous occasion.

(Full photos can be found on ns.uca.org.au)



Social Distance:
One of the many new ways
to have communion.



Rev Dr Rosalie Clark



The Induction of Rev Jo Mar

On the 15th of September Rev Jo Mar was inducted as Presbytery Minister for the Northern Regional Council Congress (NRCC).

The event was held at Nyugalinga College with many people being able to attend in person with COVID-19 restrictions easing in Darwin. This event also marked the first time the Northern Synod livestreamed an event on Facebook.

(Full album can be found on ns.uca.org.au)







Rev Dr Lee Levett-Olson Conclusion Service



20 October 2020 marked Rev Dr Lee's final day as Interim Presbytery Minister. The Northern Synod will miss Rev Lee and we wish him the best in all his endeavours.





Yirrkala – Celebration and Commissioning

On the 25th of September, guests from the Synod office were officially welcomed to Yirrkala with dance and prayer. The Moderator offered some words and described her joy at the diversity of the church referring to the Psalm 133, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

"If we can't sit together as a people of God, we can't celebrate together." She exclaimed. She continued to express that to be a good leader you must follow in the steps of Jesus and charge the Yirrkala congregation to continue to do so. The night concluded with refreshments.

The 26th of September saw the significant move for the Yirrkala and Wesleyan churches to come together to form one ministry team in Yirrkala and begin the steps for the ordination of pastor Marapuluwuy Marrika. At this meeting it was affirmed by the congregation that team would be headed by Rev Orient Kupu, Pastor Marapuluwuy and Graham Maymuru, Pastor Mandaka Marika and Pastor Dayulu Marika.

Headed by the General Secretary, Rev. Haloti Kailahi, and the NRCC Presbytery Minister Rev. Jo Mar, members of the Yirrkala community were invited to express the history within the church as well as their thoughts.

On the 27th of September, a Sunday service led by Pastor Marapuluwuy and Rev Jo was held to celebrate the decision. The Holy Spirit could be felt as it moved through the congregation. It was wonderful to see the congregation stand and take communion together led by the Moderator with the help of the newly formed ministry team.

In November, the Synod was present again in Yirrkala to confirm the decision made in September.





Rev Orient Kupu being prayed over.



(Left to right) Pastor Graham Maymuru, Pastor Mandaka Marika and Pastor Dayulu Marika



Ordination of Dr Steve Bevis

On the 13 Decenbver, Dr Steve Bevis was ordained ass Minister of the Word at John Flynn Uniting Church.



(Left to right) Rev Dr Michelle Cook, Rev Helen Paine, Rev Dr Steve Bevis, Rev Thresi Mauboy, Rev Haloti Kailahi, Rev Jo Mar



Testify

Continuing on from last year, Testify would still serve as a great way for the youth to create and run their own service. Held on the first Sunday of each month, each Testify would have a unique theme that would run parallel to the liturgy.

In the beginning of year, during the lockdown implemented by the government, many of the worship spaces were closed. This left an opportunity to be creative. The youth were able to use Zoom to create a “hubs” version of Testify meaning members from Jabiru, Alice Springs and Western Australia were able to join in.





A Time of Social Justice

Reassessing under covid-19 circumstances:

Under the covid-19 global pandemic, plans and expectations had to be readjusted and given that the social new normal is a reality we now have to live with for an indeterminate period, we live in prayerful hope that God's healing power of love shall bring restoration to a world that needs such restoration now more than ever before.

Ironically, under pandemic lockdown conditions, racism, the most virulently enduring and endemic social ill that continues to be a plague in our world reared its ugly head again in another killing of a black man by US police. The death of George Floyd led to a world uprising in unprecedented universal outrage and protests which gave strong momentum to the Black Lives Matter Movement (BLM) to persist in the fight for racial justice and equality. We are reminded that even under these pandemic circumstances, injustices continue to exist and thrive. Our challenge is to continue to seek creative ways to carry out our social responsibilities under very restrictive and difficult situations.

Updates:

i) Social Justice Sunday 27 September – Covid-19 contributed to delays in the preparation of the worship resources for Social Justice Sunday 2020. In addition there was confusion re the date as some of our ecumenical partners celebrated on the last Sun of August, hence the SJS worship resources were distributed later than planned. They were also made available on the synod website by communication staff. A lot of great resources had been collected in the process and will help in future preparations.

Note: Social Justice Sunday will be moved to the last Sunday of August as per request at the PPNA meeting Oct 7-9, 2020, so in the new year Social Justice Sunday will be celebrated on 29 August 2021.

ii) Black Lives Matter Webinar 27 September – In partnership with UCA Chaplaincy in NSW tertiary institutions the first of a series of BLM webinars was launched on Social Justice Sunday. The idea is to provide a forum and space for conversations about racism and the implications of BLM for the Australian context generally and for the UCA specifically. A hundred participants from around the UCA zoomed in and that event highlighted the profound need for such conversations to take place now and into the future as a means of fostering understanding and raising awareness that may lead to transformation and action. A taped copy of the webinar is available for those who are interested. The series will run monthly for at least 6-12 months. The November webinar will be on Sunday Nov 29th at 2.30pm Darwin time.

iii) Refugee Networks – Active collaboration with refugee networks in supporting refugees has been a strong feature in the work recently as well. Of note is collaboration with Amnesty Darwin Action Group in the push for the federal government to improve the Community Support Program for refugees. This is a welcomed collaborative partnership and we look forward to working together on such an important justice issue.



iv) Proposed Dan Murthy's in Darwin – Woolworth-owned Endeavour Drinks Group continues its bid to establish a Dan Murthy's store on a Darwin site in proximity to Bagot, Kulaluk, and Minmarama communities. This bid has been ongoing for five years and while previously unsuccessful, this time Michael Gunnar and the NT government appear more strongly in favour so it is more likely to succeed. Health organisations across the NT including Aboriginal primary health care groups and elders strongly object due to the increased risk to nearby Aboriginal communities and in the rate of alcohol-related harm in Darwin. Obviously, the introduction of cheap, accessible liquor would exacerbate harm within an already troubled community. The Synod, NRCC and PPNA need to decide on a unified response to this serious matter and the Social Justice Network will consider an active response when it meets at end of this month. In the meantime a petition to keep grog away from our communities is making the rounds in the synod and wider networks.

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v) Reference Group & Network – The composition of the reference group is still in the process of completion. The Network was always planned to meet in the second half of this year, and that gathering will take place at end of November possibly on Thu 26 or Mon 30. The gathering will be a combination of face-to-face (subject to covid rules) and zoom/video conference mode. We will be launching three important items at that meeting:

a. A Social Justice Calendar designed to enable and assist the presbyteries and synod in celebrating and observing social justice events and milestones throughout the year every year. Relevant and associated resources will be provided to assist with specific events.

b. Thursdays in Black Campaign will also be launched at this gathering with a Thursdays in Black T-shirt and information materials for distribution. Resources for events and activities to help local churches and groups observe Thursdays in Black and to support the ongoing campaign to abolish all forms of violence against women will be made available in the coming months so watch this space.

c. Social Justice 3-4 Year Plan will also be determined by the Network at its gathering which will guide the work for the foreseeable future.

Rev Dr Katalina Tahaafe-Williams
Nov 2020



 UNITING CHURCH CHAPLAINCY-CSU,
PORT MACQUARIE & 
SOCIAL JUSTICE-PILGRIM PRESBYTERY, NT
INVITE YOU TO JOIN THEIR WEBINAR

Make a stand and join
a series of discussions
with our panel on

Black Lives Matter

and its implications for our Australian context

As a church, how does our faith inform
responses to the Black Lives Matter movement?
How can we face the truth and history of
racial inequality in Australia
and choose to be good allies,
taking a strong stand on continuing conversations
to help bring reconciliation
and ensure equality for all?

Panellists:
Rev. Tau'alofo Anga'obelangi
Rev. Dr Carry Deverell
Emma Jackson
Rev. Liam Miller
Rev. Dr Katalina Tahaafe-Williams

Sunday
29 November, 2020
1500-1615h AEDT

Online
via Facebook Live & Zoom

Register
https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_BAZbUhoM580568XIFloK7w

FOR ENQUIRIES:
UCC_CSU@GMAIL.COM

BLM Discussion panel poster 29 November 2020



Staff News

This year, the Northern Synod staff have been wonderful -working hard as they go about serving God in what they do and offering their gifts with a generous heart. The Northern Synod demonstrated its commitment to its people by offering them time to undergo professional development and further training, to hosting a staff training session on Indigenous cultural competency, facilitating a staff excursion to Howard Springs nature park and a staff Christmas dinner.

NAIDOC Week

This year, staff celebrated NAIDOC Week by creating and hanging a banner outside. The banner was produced by Sebasti Ward and features the official NAIDOC symbol and the handprints of all staff members.



Sebasti Ward painting the banner



"Always was, always will be" - Staff holding up the banner



Professional Development

We recognise the need for staff to grow their potential as it helps them fulfil the duties of their role. This year, for the first time, Northern Synod staff were encouraged to undertake training and courses relevant to their roles – these include short courses, webinars and face-to-face trainings and the working towards attainment of graduate certificates and diplomas.

Perhaps most notably, the Northern Synod and Northern Regional Council of Congress, work for Yolgnu in East Arnhem Land will benefit from several staff undertaking a Yolngu language short-course at Charles Darwin University in the first half of the year.

Cultural Competency Staff Training.

Acknowledgement, understanding and acceptance of differences in appearance, behaviour and culture is crucially important in our work and it is important Northern Synod staff commence regular cultural competency staff moving forward.

This year, we held a session at Living Water Uniting Church and we look forward to boosting the cultural intelligence of our team in further trainings in 2021.



Cultural Training with Philip Elsegood, known as Uncle Phil (fourth from left)



Staff Excursion

The team went out to Howard Springs Nature Park to get away from the office and relax in the natural surroundings. There was plenty of food, dancing and games being played. It was thoroughly enjoyed by staff. It will be exciting to see where we will go and what we will do on our next staff excursion in 2021.

Welcome To Our New Staff

Sebasti Ward

This year we welcomed Sebasti Ward from Mowanjum, appointed by the NRCC to the role of Support Assistant, she comes to us, under one of the programs of the Saltbush Employment Services. The program aims at helping and provide training for young male and female indigenous youths. Under the Saltbush Employment Services guidelines, indigenous youths are encouraged to seek employment, to move forward towards a career path, and to discourage the youth on their dependence on social welfare.

Binu Dahal

We were honoured to have Binu Dahal as part of our team during her placement for her study of Masters in Finance at Charles Darwin University. Lal and the finance team enjoyed working with her and the Northern Synod team offer a special thanks to her for her work and wish her all the best in what lies ahead.

Farewell To Our Departing Staff

Dale Chesson

After almost 9 years of service, after long and prayerful discernment, Dale announced his resignation as the Property and IT Officer of the Northern Synod, with 16th December 2020 being his last day with us. Dale thanked the Synod for their support and friendship and the decision was not an easy one for him and Judy. Dale will be sadly missed by the wider Synod and his colleagues for his gifts which include his expert knowledge in the management of Properties and IT, as well as his professionalism, servanthood to Jesus and his warm sense of humour. We wish Dale and Judy the best and many blessings of the Lord as they both embark on this new horizon of their journey. He will continue his commitment to the Northern Synod through his leadership as the Chairperson of Living Water Uniting Church.

Lal Wijeratne

Lal announced his resignation as Chief Financial Officer of the Northern Synod, with 31st January 2021 being his last day with us. We thank Lal for his significant contribution to the Northern Synod, through his diligence, expertise, and leadership. His presence in the office was enjoyed by other staff. Lal shared that he is guided by God and his decision was an honest way of expressing God's calling on him. He will be sadly missed by the synod office as well as committees such as Finance and Property and Standing Committee. He was a valued member of the Synod Leadership team and he has been working at the synod office for 8 years. He will still be around until January to guide the synod through finance and an appropriate farewell will be organised by the staff. We thank Lal for his dedication and management of Synod, Presbyteries, and congregations' financial resources.



Howard Amery

We wish to acknowledge the contribution and leadership of Howard Amery in his role with NRCC as Interim intentional Resource until the completion of his contract in July 2020. We thank him for his work and wish him the best in his future. He joined his wife and family in South Australia

Rev Jo Mar took over the role as the NRCC Presbytery Minister.

Lee Levett-Olson

Rev Lee Levett-Olson completed his role as Interim Intentional Minister/Chair for PPNA in October 2020. We thank Lee for his contribution and wish him the best on his future while taking up the “retirement” mantra again.

PPNA is still looking for his replacement for a Presbytery Minister. We keep PPNA, Placement committee and Joint Nomination Committee in our prayers.

National Redress Scheme

The Uniting Church in Australia, including the Northern Synod, is committed to supporting the survivors of child sexual abuse suffered in its institutions and encouraging survivors to seek the supports they need and apply to the National Redress Scheme if they choose to.

An application to the National Redress Scheme can allow the applicant to: counselling; a redress payment and a direct personal response (e.g. an apology). If you may lodge an application by following the website or by calling the NRS hotline on 1800 737 377.

Disability Royal Commission

The Uniting Church welcomed the establishment of the Disability Royal Commission and expressed hope that it would shine a light on inappropriate treatment of people with disability and lay out a path to help prevent violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation against people with disability – Taken from pastoral letter of Rev Dr. Deidre Palmer, President of the Uniting Church in Australia.

Any person with disability including families, friends, and people who support them are encouraged to tell their story to the Disability Royal Commission.

Seeking Counselling Support

Blue Knot Foundation offers free, trauma informed specialist counselling support and a referral service to support people engaging with the National Redress Scheme and the Disability Royal Commission. You can call their hotline on 1800 421 468 (9am - 6pm AEST Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm AEST Saturday, Sunday and public holidays) or visit their website.