

National Redress Scheme

For people who have experienced
institutional child sexual abuse

INDEPENDENT DECISION MAKERS

Ms Amanda Gadsdon

Ms Gadsdon is a former senior executive in child protection in Western Australia, where she was responsible for managing child protection policy and legal services, Aboriginal engagement and coordination, learning and development, and family and domestic violence. She has experience working with sexual abuse and redress matters in child protection and disability services through her previous roles. Ms Gadsdon also has experience in community and professional roles, including within the Aboriginal Community Controlled sector and holding board positions on a range of committees and panels across the areas of health, family services, Aboriginal education and Aboriginal mental health.

Mr Bernard Dwyer

Mr Dwyer has over 40 years' experience working in the areas of mental health, and alcohol and other drugs in both the government and non-government sectors. He has had years of experience as a counsellor working directly with clients in the community, health and forensic settings. He has held a range of appointments to boards and reference groups in the areas of social welfare, guardianship, alcohol, drugs and gambling. Mr Dwyer has worked in the Northern Territory for over 30 years, providing services to communities in Darwin, Alice Springs and remote areas.

Mr Brian Sandland

Mr Sandland worked as a Commission Officer at the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse for over four years, where he assisted Commissioners in the conduct of private sessions, wrote reports of these sessions and provided advice and information to the Commission. His previous employment includes a variety of positions at Legal Aid New South Wales (NSW), from legal officer up to senior executive roles, where he worked for 33 years assisting disadvantaged people with civil and criminal law cases. Mr Sandland received an award for outstanding public service to the community through his work with NSW Legal Aid in 2006.

Mr Chris Redmond

Mr Redmond has over 30 years' experience working across all levels of government in direct service delivery and administrative roles in many Australian states and in the ACT community sector. Mr Redmond, an experienced Social Worker, has held senior roles in a number of community organisations focused on assisting and advocating on behalf of vulnerable people, particularly children and young people. He currently holds the roles of Official Visitor for Children and Young People and Official Visitor for Disability Services in the ACT.

Ms Deborah McLean

Ms McLean's 28 years' experience in South Australia Police extended from patrol officer through to senior management positions. As a detective, she worked in specialist investigation areas, which often saw her working to support some of the most vulnerable people in the community who were victims of serious crime. Ms McLean also has experience working with South Australia's Attorney-Generals' Department in legislative reform, and most recently assisted SafeWork South Australia to implement recommendations to enhance the agency's investigation and prosecution arrangements.

Ms Helen Lac

Ms Lac has worked as an assessor and senior assessor at New South Wales (NSW) Victim Services in the Department of Justice. She has over five years' experience in considering sensitive applications from victims of crime. Ms Lac has undertaken extensive training on therapeutic and trauma-informed practices as part of her work with victims of crime. Additionally, Ms Lac has chaired discussions on non-disclosure in child sexual abuse cases, the impact of childhood trauma, and legislative and policy responses to childhood sexual abuse at the International Victimology Symposium. Ms Lac also has experience working with Indigenous community groups and organisations in the Northern Territory and regional NSW, having assisted those who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse through the Strong Aboriginal Women's Conferences. Before working in public and community service, Ms Lac worked as a solicitor dealing with workers compensation, product liability, professional indemnity, migration and administrative law.

Ms Janie Lawson

Ms Lawson has a diverse 30 year career spanning community and government sectors. She initially provided direct support to vulnerable people in mental health, child protection, disability and youth residential settings before moving to policy and senior management roles in state and federal government agencies. She has been involved in progressing major policy reforms including the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and the Mental Health Reform Agenda and has experience designing, implementing and evaluating community based programs. Ms Lawson has tertiary qualifications in Health Education and credentials in human relations, government administration, training and leadership.

Mr John Hinchey PSM

Mr Hinchey has 30 years of experience working with offenders and victims in the ACT criminal justice system. He managed the ACT Sentence Administration Board and the ACT Victims Register. He established the ACT restorative justice scheme, which facilitates conferences between victims and offenders. Mr Hinchey was appointed as the ACT's first Victims of Crime Commissioner, an independent statutory position and the ACT's most senior victim advocate. Mr Hinchey has also been a Board member of the ACT Domestic Violence Crisis Service and the ACT Victims Advisory Board, a Council Member on the Domestic Violence Prevention Council and chair of the ACT Family Violence Intervention Program Coordinating Committee.

Mr John Schrader

Mr Schrader completed a 38 year career with the South Australia Police where he held specialist investigation and senior management positions. He was the inaugural manager of the department's e-crime section and developed its capacity to conduct investigations and safely retrieve and store digital evidence, including child exploitation material. Mr Schrader also managed police prosecution operations and headed the South Coast Criminal Investigation Branch where he managed investigations of serious crimes including child abuse and family violence. He has worked closely with victims, including those of sexual assault and abuse, and led projects aligned with victim and justice agencies to improve support and prosecution outcomes for victims. Mr Schrader recently managed a South Australian government agency's response to issues identified in the Child Protection Systems Royal Commission. He has qualifications in law and psychology and was admitted as a Barrister and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of South Australia in 2010.

Ms Julie Dixon

Ms Dixon has over 30 years' experience as a social worker in child and family welfare. Ms Dixon initially worked in child protection, followed by positions in women's health and as a manager in the West Australian Family and Domestic Violence Unit. Much of Ms Dixon's experience has focused on policy and across government responses to child and family wellbeing, working with the Commissioner for Children and Young People and in Indigenous affairs. Most recently, Ms Dixon has held senior government roles overseeing the design, development and funding of early intervention programs to create strong families and prevent children entering out of home care. She has also initiated research to identify and improve outcomes for young people who have left care.

Ms Kathy Digwood

Ms Digwood is a former senior manager at the WA Equal Opportunity Commission working to resolve complaints of unlawful discrimination. She has also worked in dispute resolution and investigative roles at WorkCover WA and the Office of the Ombudsman. Ms Digwood is experienced in strategic planning and high-level decision-making through her appointment as a Workers Compensation and Rehabilitation Commissioner. Ms Digwood was Chief of Staff to the WA Minister for Child Protection and Communities between 2007 and 2008. She was involved in the development and introduction of the WA Redress Scheme. Ms Digwood is an accredited mediator with tertiary qualifications in history and politics.

Ms Kay Benham

Ms Benham has expertise and extensive knowledge of the impacts of child sexual abuse gained throughout her career as a social worker, manager, policy maker and senior executive in a range of roles within the Western Australian (WA) Public Service. She is an experienced practitioner and worked in a range of child protection roles for over 25 years. Her experience includes working with victims of crime and child witnesses, providing counselling and specialist support to adults and children who are required to give evidence in sexual abuse and other criminal matters.

During her time with the WA Public Service Ms Benham also worked in the Family Court and gave evidence to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse on several occasions. She has postgraduate qualifications in Social Work and a Master of Business Administration.

Ms Keyana Low

Ms Low has a background and qualifications in law and social work. She has been a solicitor in insurance and administrative law and has worked as a social worker in sexual assault and mental health. She has been an Assessor with Victims Services, New South Wales (NSW) Department of Justice where she assessed claims for victims of crime, including family victims of homicide. In her time with the NSW Department of Justice, Ms Low held roles as a Senior Assessor and Co-ordinator in the Families and Friends of Missing Persons Unit.

Ms Lynn Houlahan

Ms Houlahan is a registered psychologist with over 35 years experience working with children and adults with developmental disabilities and mental health issues. She was formerly a manager of Child Protection and Disability Services with the New South Wales (NSW) government and has experience in private practice. Most recently Ms Houlahan worked with the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse where she carried out a number of roles for the duration of the Commission including as a consulting psychologist, counsellor and Commission Officer.

Ms Houlahan has served on NSW tribunals and boards including the Mental Health Review Tribunal, Guardianship and Equal Opportunity Divisions of NCAT and the Housing Appeals Committee. She has conducted independent reviews and service evaluations on a range of matters including sexual assault and child deaths in the out of home care system.

Ms Marilyn Cox

Ms Cox is a lawyer with experience working in a range of government and corporate roles. She has been an Assessor with Victims Services, New South Wales (NSW) Department of Justice where she assessed claims for victims of crime, including family victims of homicide, a specialist role requiring an understanding of therapeutic jurisprudence. More recently, Ms Cox has been acting under the delegated authority of the NSW Legal Services Commissioner, performing investigative functions pursuant to the Legal Profession Uniform Law.

Ms Melanie Bartlett

Ms Bartlett has over 40 years of experience as a lawyer in both private practice and as a magistrate, in which she dealt with a range of child protection matters, including child sexual abuse. She has sat on a number of legal tribunals and boards, including as a member of the Guardianship and Administration Board. She was a Commissioner for the Legal Aid Commission of Tasmania and a member of the Mental Health Tribunal. She was previously a Victims of Crime Commissioner and a representative on the North West Domestic Violence Advisory Committee.

Mr Peter Crouch

Mr Crouch has over 42 years of experience working within the South Australian criminal justice system as a Police Officer. He worked for 30 of those years as a Detective across a wide range of specialist investigations. He has a strong investigative and senior supervisory background in the investigation of sexual offences, homicide, anti-corruption, financial investigations and the overall case management of serious crime investigations.

Mr Crouch's experience as a practitioner and a Senior Manager at a high level has given him pronounced understanding of the sensitivity of cases and the needs of victims. As a senior manager in charge of South Australian criminal investigations training, he oversaw the implementation of a number of recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, improving the focus on the needs of victims.

Dr Peter Frost

Dr Frost has had substantial leadership experience in public administration, education, and international development. For ten years, he worked at the Victorian Auditor-General's Office, becoming successively, Chief Executive, Deputy Auditor-General and for three years, Acting Auditor-General. Dr Frost also had extensive experience in the Victorian public service, including as Deputy Secretary in the Department of Premier and Cabinet. A highlight in Dr Frost's career was his humanitarian work in Sri Lanka, where, as Director of Tsunami Reconstruction, he delivered new houses for 100 families, a school for 3,000 pupils, two operating theatres and emergency care training for nurses and doctors and a fishnet factory in Jaffna, employing up to 200 widows.

Ms Robyn Higgins

Ms Higgins has extensive experience in service delivery and management in the community sector in the Northern Territory and in the public sector in Canberra. She has worked as an advocate in ACT Victim Support Services, assisting victims of crime to participate in processes to respond to harm, including the criminal justice system. She assisted in establishing the Complainant Support Group in the former Defence Abuse Response Taskforce, managing a team who provided trauma informed support and responses to victims of abuse in the Australian Defence Force (ADF). At the conclusion of the Taskforce, when an independent abuse reporting function was established within the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman, she established and managed a dedicated team that continued to respond to victims of abuse in the ADF.

Ms Ruth Baker

Ms Baker has had over 27 years of experience in working with individuals who have experienced child abuse in New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Australia. She has worked as a social worker, a plaintiff lawyer for individuals and recently completed a four year term with the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse as a Commission Officer and Acting Team Leader.

Ms Baker worked with the Commissioners of the Royal Commission in the private sessions and was involved in drafting, analysing and assessing systemic issues to assist in the preparation for the Public Hearings and Case Study Reports.

Ms Ruth Kennedy, APM

Ms Kennedy has 25 years' experience as a police officer, including 10 years as a Police Inspector with experience in internal investigations and senior management positions. Ms Kennedy was awarded the Australian Police Medal for distinguished service. Ms Kennedy has worked in a range of government and non-government settings and was involved with developing a strategic domestic violence strategy for the Queensland government. Ms Kennedy was a member of the Panel of Experts for the Queensland government enquiry into the abuse of children (Forde Enquiry). Ms Kennedy has also had a legal career focusing mainly on construction law.

Mr Stuart Roberts

Mr Roberts was admitted as a legal practitioner in 1980 and the majority of his career as a lawyer has been in family law. He is a barrister and is accredited as a mediator and family dispute resolution practitioner. He was a Federal Magistrate and a Federal Circuit Court Judge for over 15 years, presiding in courts in Tasmania, Victoria, Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia. He is also a member of several legal bodies, including the Mental Health Tribunal and the Guardianship and Administration Board. Prior to becoming a lawyer, Mr Roberts worked for the Department of Immigration in Hobart, Canberra, London and New York.

Ms Susan Penn-Turrall

Ms Penn-Turrall is a solicitor and barrister of the ACT Supreme Court and has extensive experience working with vulnerable people through her work as an accredited mental health social worker. Ms Penn-Turrall has spent the majority of her career managing government legal and mental health responses to childhood sexual assault and adult sexual assault trauma. She played a vital role in establishing the Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Office within the Department of Defence.

Ms Vanessa Viaggio

Ms Viaggio has over fifteen years' experience working on policy and legal matters. She worked at the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse for over two years in a range of roles including as a Commission Officer and Team Leader. During her time with the Royal Commission, Ms Viaggio conducted investigations into allegations of child sexual abuse and institutional responses, led teams of lawyers to run public hearings, and provided strategic advice to Commissioners and senior managers. She has a background in law and social science (criminology), and worked in various inquiry settings including the Royal Commission, the Australian Law Reform Commission, and the New South Wales (NSW) Parliament.

Ms Viaggio has also worked in legislative and policy settings in the NSW Department of Justice, and in strategic and investigative oversight at the NSW Ombudsman's office. She currently holds a role within the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian.