

National Redress Scheme

For people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse

INDEPENDENT DECISION MAKERS

Ms Alexandra Palk

Ms Palk has practised as a Court and Tribunal lawyer in government, private and community legal settings since 2007. She has worked across State, Territory and Commonwealth jurisdictions, as well as on international projects. Ms Palk worked as a prosecutor with the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions, prosecuting offences against Federal laws, including online child sexual offences. She has worked as a homelessness outreach lawyer, representing clients in criminal and other matters and developing policy and legislative reforms. In addition to her work with the National Redress Scheme, she is a supervising Solicitor in a community legal practice providing legal services and tribunal representation to disadvantaged clients in Social Security, Housing and Tenancy and Race Discrimination law matters.

Dr Belinda Mawhinney

Dr Mawhinney is a qualified Social Worker and Health Manager, with experience working in the public health sector and statutory child protection organisations in Australia and England. Dr Mawhinney has significant expertise in child protection and wellbeing practices, including provision of clinical supervision, case consultation and coaching facilitators for group supervision. As Co-ordinator, Child Wellbeing and Clinical Projects of the Sydney Local Health District, Dr Mawhinney led the implementation of the 'Keep Them Safe Reform' aimed at reshaping the delivery of family and community services in New South Wales. In 2020, Dr Mawhinney was awarded a Doctor of Philosophy from the Faculty of Medicine and Health, University of Sydney. Her doctoral thesis examined the advanced practices of Child and Family Health Nurses in response to child maltreatment.

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.

Ms Beth Powell

Ms Powell has 30 years' experience in the Australian Public Service across strategic policy, review, development and implementation roles. Ms Powell has been responsible for the assessment and reform of key immigration policies with the Department of Home Affairs. Ms Powell has supported the development of international policy and best practice guides for the return and reintegration of migrants.

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.

Ms Carol Wall

Ms Wall has over 25 years' experience as a registered nurse and solicitor. Ms Wall has held roles in both state and Commonwealth government departments and non-government legal settings, including with the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Community Services Directorate as a Solicitor of the ACT Children's Court, where she represented the Director-General in litigation matters involving the *Children and Young People Act 2008*.

Ms Christine Nolan

Ms Nolan has had an extensive career assisting at-risk children and adults in a range of government and community sector roles over more than 40 years. Most recently, she was CEO of the Breast Cancer Network Australia, which advocates for Australians affected by breast cancer. Ms Nolan is a social worker by training and has worked in the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria and Queensland in corrections, youth and family support, family violence and social policy. She has extensive experience in child protection and human service delivery. Ms Nolan was named Telstra Queensland Public Sector Businesswoman of the Year in 1997.

Ms Dawn Juratowitch

Ms Juratowitch is a social worker with more than 30 years' experience working in the area of child protection, juvenile justice and community services in both direct practice and senior executive positions across Queensland, New South Wales and in the university sector.

Ms Juratowitch was previously on the editorial board of *Child Abuse and Neglect: the International Journal* and has qualifications in both social work and law. Ms Juratowitch was a Director on the Forde Foundation Board of Advice and has been the Director of a professional practice consultancy providing counselling, mediation, strategic engagement and assessment.

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 Diana Knight

Ms Knight is a lawyer with extensive experience in alternative dispute resolution processes which support members of the community and people experiencing vulnerabilities, to speak up and be heard. Ms Knight is a nationally accredited mediator and Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner, experienced in trauma-informed practices and culturally responsive practices. Ms Knight has enjoyed being an academic and law lecturer, and most recently enjoyed her work with the ACT Human Rights Commission, helping Canberrans resolve complaints about discrimination, health services, disability and community services.

Ms Knight is an educator, and shares her enthusiasm for conflict resolution through training and coaching other professionals in mediation. Throughout her career, Ms Knight has demonstrated her skills at managing sensitive and complex cases. Ms Knight is an experienced mediator, family dispute resolution practitioner and conciliator.

Ms Ginan Ashcroft

Ms Ashcroft is a solicitor with professional experience in Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia. She has been an Assessor at New South Wales (NSW) Victims Services in the Department of Justice where she assessed sensitive applications from victims of crime, including victims of child sexual abuse. Ms Ashcroft has worked in child protection advocacy where she participated in a Koori Family Hearing Day program, aimed to provide a culturally responsive court process to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. Most recently, Ms Ashcroft has worked at the Coroners Court of Victoria assisting in the investigation of deaths to promote public health and safety. Ms Ashcroft has a master's degree in criminology as well as qualifications in law and communications.

Ms Helen Ferguson PSM

Ms Ferguson has over 20 years' experience with the Queensland Public Service. Ms Ferguson held senior executive positions in Disability Services, Housing, Child Safety and Community Services and has expertise in social and public policy, legislative reform, governance, research and evaluation and direct service delivery. Ms Ferguson's career has been grounded through qualifications in social work and nursing and by roles at the local and regional level. Ms Ferguson has been awarded a Public Service Medal for outstanding public service to social policy development and implementation in Queensland.

Ms Helen Lac

Ms Lac has over five years' experience in considering sensitive applications from victims of crime as an assessor and senior assessor with Victims Services, New South Wales, Department of Justice. She has undertaken extensive training on therapeutic and trauma-informed practices as part of her work with victims of crime. Additionally, she 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 has worked with Indigenous community groups and organisations in the Northern Territory and regional NSW, having assisted survivors of institutional child sexual abuse through the Strong Aboriginal Women's Conferences. Before working in public and community service, she was a corporate lawyer specialising in migration, guardianship and administrative law.

Ms Helen Porter

Ms Porter's professional experience spans across a range of legal practice areas following her admission as a Barrister and Solicitor in 1983. Her most recent role as Chief Assessor in the Office of Criminal Injuries Compensation, Department of the Attorney General for Western Australia, determined compensation for persons injured in the commission of offences, including victims of sexual abuse. Ms Porter's 16 years' with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions included conduct of matters in the Children's Court, the prosecution of sexual offences involving adult and child complainants, and appearances as counsel at evidence pre-recordings from Child Witnesses and Special Witnesses. Ms Porter had involvement in the legislative design and structure of the West Australian *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse (Commonwealth Powers) Act 2018*.

Ms Hilary Russell

Ms Russell has a diverse professional history across criminal law, the health, welfare and education sectors, and the delivery of strategic planning and policy at both Commonwealth and state level. Ms Russell has a multifaceted understanding of the experience of victims of abuse through her legal experience and previous role as Independent Advisor and Chair of the Decision Review Panel (Australian Capital Territory Office for Children), where she reviewed decisions relating to children who were the subject of a protection order. As a legal advocate, Ms Russell has worked with Indigenous clients in rural and remote New South Wales and Victoria. Ms Russell has qualifications in law, business administration and social work.

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.

Ms Jo Searle

Ms Searle has significant experience in the education and human services fields, including at senior levels across both government and the community sector, and led delivery of the Queensland Government Redress Scheme which commenced in 2007. Currently a Director on the Forde Foundation Board of Advice, Ms Searle makes recommendations to the Public Trustee of Queensland on the provision of grants to support former residents who experienced abuse in Queensland children's institutions. Ms Searle contributed to the Forde Foundation Board of Advice submissions to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.

Mr John Hinchey PSM

Mr Hinchey has 30 years of experience working with offenders and victims in the Australian Capital Territory (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 Kandie Allen-Kelly

Ms Allen-Kelly is a qualified social worker and mediator and has specialist qualifications in probity and taxation. Ms Allen-Kelly has had a variety of work experience, over a 30-year career, including as Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Association of Social Workers, as a public servant working closely with victims in Victim Support Australian Capital Territory (ACT), as an academic, as a program director with the Defence Abuse Response Taskforce and as an executive coach and organisational consultant. Ms Allen-Kelly started her career as a social worker, working at the Peninsula and Torres Strait Regional Health Authority, where she worked in remote areas and developed and facilitated therapeutic groups for community members who had experienced trauma. Ms Allen-Kelly has volunteered throughout her career on a number of boards including a women's refuge and the ACT Domestic Violence Prevention Council. Ms Allen-Kelly published a number of academic papers and reports, and contributed to a range of research in the areas of family violence, sexual assault and rural and remote practise.

Ms Kathy Digwood

Ms Digwood is a former senior manager at the Western Australia (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 Australia (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, the 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 the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal 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 Michael O'Connell AM APM

Mr O'Connell has a long and distinguished career promoting the rights of victims of crime in Australia, including 12 years as South Australia's, and Australia's, first Commissioner for Victims' Rights, and globally as, among other activities, the Secretary-General, World Society of Victimology and Chair of its United Nations Liaison Committee. Mr O'Connell received the Member of the Order of Australia in 2017 for improving outcomes for victims of crime, and was a finalist for the South Australia Australian of the Year Award in 2020 and 2004. Mr O'Connell served as a summons expert, and was a session participant, in the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, has a background in law enforcement, and holds qualifications in victimology and victim assistance, business and justice administration.

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.

Ms Robyn Eltherington PSM

Ms Eltherington has a long history of supporting and advocating on behalf of Forgotten Australians and former residents of Queensland children's institutions. Ms Eltherington oversaw the implementation of key aspects of the Queensland Government Redress Scheme, and in 2012 was recognised with a Public Service Medal for her outstanding contribution. Ms Eltherington has over 35 years' experience in the public sector and non-government organisations in policy, program and service delivery roles.

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 the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). 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 is a lawyer and social worker with over 27 years of experience working with survivors of child abuse in both community and state settings in New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Australia. Her social work career included various roles in out of home care and child protection. Following admission to legal practice in 2006, she practiced in civil and criminal compensation claims for survivors of institutional abuse in Victoria. Most recently she completed a four year term with the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse as a Commission Officer in the Private Sessions Legal Team.

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.

Justice Shan Tennent

Justice Tennent is a former Justice of the Supreme Court of Tasmania, she held this position between March 2005 and October 2017, and was the first woman to be appointed to the Court. Prior to her appointment, she practiced law in Hobart with a focus on family law cases. She was partner at Hobart firm, Pager Seager, for fifteen years from 1983 until 1998. In 1998 Justice Tennent was appointed a Magistrate and Coroner and conducted a major inquest in 2000/2001 into five deaths in the Risdon Prison. This led to significant reform including the building of a new prison and separate mental health facility. In March 2019, Justice Tennent was inducted into the Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women for her service to justice and human rights.

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 Beattie

Ms Beattie has worked in a variety of senior policy, research and project management roles within the public sector and in non-government organisations focusing on driving service improvement and reform. This includes initiatives that seek to reduce alcohol and other drug related harms, prevent and reduce suicides, and improve responses to children known to child safety services. Most recently, she led the expansion of the Queensland domestic and family violence death review process, and was responsible for coordinating cross-agency improvements to the coronial system. Ms Beattie currently holds a Masters in Forensic Mental Health and a Bachelor of Behavioural Sciences, majoring in Psychology.

Ms Tarina Mather

Ms Mather has a background in child protection, with over 20 years' experience in case management, investigations (including child sexual abuse) and senior management roles. Ms Mather was a senior executive at the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (the Royal Commission) having worked there for its five year duration, leading teams to deliver key volumes of the final report. Ms Mather has extensive experience in public administration, public policy and oversight functions having worked in a range of State and Commonwealth government agencies and more recently as a senior executive in online safety.

Ms Vanessa Viaggio

Ms Viaggio has over 15 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.