

## **COMMONWEALTH REDRESS SCHEME FOR SURVIVORS OF INSTITUTIONAL CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE**

The Australian Government is establishing a Commonwealth Redress Scheme for survivors of institutional childhood sexual abuse.

Survivors who suffered childhood sexual abuse in Commonwealth institutional settings will be able to access redress under the scheme.

In addition, consistent with the Government's commitment to redress being provided to as many survivors as possible by responsible institutions, the Government has invited state and territory governments to opt in to the scheme, so that survivors who suffered childhood sexual abuse in state and territory government institutions can also access redress. In addition, if states refer sufficient powers, churches, charities and other community based institutions could opt in to the scheme so that those survivors could also access redress.

The announcement of this scheme is an acknowledgement by the Australian Government that the childhood sexual abuse suffered by children in Commonwealth institutional settings was wrong, and should not have happened. It recognises the suffering survivors can experience. It also demonstrates the Government's leadership in encouraging states, territories and non-government institutions to take responsibility for providing redress to their survivors.

The scheme will provide survivors with access to a monetary payment of up to \$150,000 to acknowledge the terrible sexual abuse inflicted upon them as children was wrong and should not have happened, and that they have suffered hurt and harm as a result.

The scheme is not just about providing survivors with monetary recognition – of equal importance it provides survivors with the opportunity to receive emotional and mental support through trauma-informed and culturally appropriate counselling to assist survivors in the redress process, and to help address the lasting impacts of the childhood sexual abuse they experienced.

Survivors will also have access to community based supports to provide advocacy, case management and support to connect them with existing services.

Should they wish, survivors will also have the opportunity to tell their personal story about what happened to them to a very senior person, and to receive direct personal acknowledgement and response.

The scheme will be best practice, and be delivered in accordance with a trauma informed approach. It will be established in 2018.

The Government will work closely with interested state and territory governments, and non-government institutions to both finalise the detailed design of the scheme, and encourage their participation. An independent Advisory Council will bring together a broad group of specialists, including survivor groups, legal and psychological experts, to provide input on the implementation of the scheme.

## Q&A

### **What will be offered under the scheme?**

The scheme will offer the following elements, to acknowledge the terrible abuse survivors experienced, in the hope that they will assist survivors in their personal journey of healing:

- A direct personal response, for those survivors who seek it, involving the survivor having the opportunity to meet with a very senior appropriate person, in a safe and supportive environment, to tell their personal story of what they experienced and how it has impacted them, to provide them with an opportunity to be acknowledged and receive a response.
- Access to trauma informed and culturally-appropriate psychological counselling, to address the suffering of survivors and support them in accessing redress.
- Access to community based supports, including case management and advocacy.
- A monetary payment of up to \$150,000 in recognition of the abuse, and the hurt and harm suffered.

### **Who will be able to receive redress under the scheme?**

The scheme will provide best practice supportive redress services to people who were sexually abused, as children, in Commonwealth institutional settings. It will also provide redress to survivors abused in other institutional settings, should state, territory and non-government institutions opt in to the scheme.

### **What do you mean by Commonwealth institutional settings?**

Whether or not a survivor was in a Commonwealth institutional setting when they suffered childhood sexual abuse will depend on the individual circumstances of each claim. However they might include, for example, situations where the Commonwealth employed children, delivered activities for children, or delivered state functions in the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory before self-government.

### **How will harm be assessed?**

An assessment matrix and guidelines will be developed to ensure that outcomes are as consistent as possible. These will be designed in consultation with the Advisory Committee.

### **What if the non-government institution where the abuse occurred no longer exists?**

If an institution no longer exists or is unable to pay redress, and there is a direct link to the Commonwealth as the responsible government, the Commonwealth will take the responsibility for providing redress. The Commonwealth is encouraging state and territory governments to take the same responsibility for providing redress where non-government institutions no longer exist and they are the relevant responsible government.

### **What happens if an institution refuses to opt in to the Commonwealth redress scheme?**

The Government will exercise every endeavour to achieve maximum participation in the scheme, and will be working closely with institutions, including churches and charities, over the coming months. The Government remains confident that there is a strong willingness from institutions to make amends and participate in a scheme.

### **How will redress payments affect Centrelink or other Government payments?**

Redress payments will be exempted from any current or future Commonwealth debt recoveries. Payments will also be exempt from any income tests that are relevant to other Government payments.

**When will the scheme commence?**

The Australian Government acknowledges survivors have waited a long time and are anxious to receive redress as soon as possible. The Government will work as quickly as possible with state and territory governments, non-government institutions, and the independent Advisory Council to work through the complex issues to ensure that a survivor focused scheme is established in 2018.

**How long will the scheme run for?**

The scheme will run for approximately 10 years. However towards the end of the 10 years, Government will review the need for the scheme to be extended if it is obvious at that time that redress has not been provided to all eligible survivors.

**Can I register now for redress under the scheme?**

Details of the scheme are still being worked out. At this time, registrations are not able to be made. The Australian Government will provide as much notice as possible to survivors about when the scheme will open.

**What if I have already received redress under another scheme?**

The arrangements for people who have already received some form of redress through another scheme have not been finalised. Survivors who have accessed redress under another scheme will not be excluded from applying to this scheme. Prior relevant payments will be taken into account in assessing entitlements under this scheme.

**What is the Advisory Council?**

The independent Advisory Council will provide input on the design and operation of the scheme. The Advisory Council will bring together a broad and diverse group of specialists to ensure the Commonwealth redress scheme meets the needs of survivors. They will include survivor group representatives, legal and psychological experts.

**What sorts of counselling will be available under the scheme?**

The psychological counselling under the scheme will be trauma-informed and culturally appropriate, delivered through Primary Health Networks. It will be complemented by community-based suicide prevention activities and professional development for psychological professionals.

In addition, community based support services such as those currently available to support the Royal Commission including case management, advocacy and healing support will be available.

**Where can I get support now?**

The Department of Social Services funds Royal Commission support services in every state and territory, including case management, advocacy, healing support and suicide prevention services. Details of the services can be found at <http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/support-services>.

Additionally, 24 hour telephone assistance is available through:  
Lifeline 13 11 14  
1800 Respect 1800 737 732  
Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia 1800 211 028  
MensLine Australia 1300 789 978