

# **ROYAL COMMISSION INTO INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES TO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE**

## **STATEMENT OF INTENT BY MINISTER MCGURK ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

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#### **1. Where can I find immediate support?**

If you need support and want to speak to someone immediately, please click on this link to find crisis support services. <http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/contact>

#### **2. Where can I access ongoing support and/or counselling?**

If you would like to access counselling and/or support that is not urgent, please see the fact sheet for a range of options available in Perth and regional Western Australia. <https://www.dpc.wa.gov.au/Publications/Royal-Commission/Documents/RC-SOI-Services-v1.pdf>.

#### **3. Can I still report abuse that I have experienced in the past if I haven't already done so through the Royal Commission process?**

Yes. You are encouraged to report child abuse by contacting the WA Police on 131 444, or by calling Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000. Or go to your local Police Station.

#### **4. Will Western Australia be participating in the Commonwealth Government's Redress Scheme?**

The Commonwealth Government announced that it plans to establish a Redress Scheme for survivors of child sexual abuse in Commonwealth institutions, with State Governments and Non-Government Institutions able to participate by 'opting in'.

The Western Australian Government (along with all other jurisdictions) is currently in discussions with the Commonwealth regarding its proposed redress scheme for survivors. The Western Australian Government is considering the detail of the Commonwealth's scheme, in order to make a decision about participating in the scheme.

#### **5. Without a redress scheme how can I attempt to get compensation?**

Other avenues for compensation that may be available, depending on your individual circumstances include:

- Any informal compensation schemes that may be directly offered by the non-government institution in which the sexual abuse occurred; and
- Criminal injuries compensation.

Compensation may also be sought through the courts by bringing a civil claim for damages in respect of the sexual abuse. The Western Australian Government has introduced a Bill into Parliament to remove limitation periods (retrospectively and prospectively) within which a survivor of child sexual abuse must commence proceedings against those who have wronged them (the Bill).

When Parliament passes the Bill, victims of historical child sexual abuse will no longer be prevented by limitation periods from bringing civil claims seeking damages for the harm they have suffered.

It is hoped that the Bill will be passed by Parliament in the first half of 2018.

## **6. Has Western Australia already run a redress scheme for survivors of child sexual abuse?**

Western Australia has operated two ex-gratia payment schemes for survivors of institutional child abuse. *Redress WA* was a \$144 million scheme that ran from 2008 to 2011, providing 5,325 offers of payment, and apologies to survivors. The *Country High Schools Hostels Ex-Gratia Scheme* was established in November 2012 as a response to the abuse that occurred in St Andrew's Hostel, Katanning and other country hostels. The Government allocated \$6 million to the scheme.

## **7. What is the Western Australian Government doing about the Royal Commission's recommendations?**

Over the coming weeks and months, the Government will fully examine the Royal Commission's recommendations in detail, in preparation for a comprehensive, holistic and considered State response which takes into account the systems and protections the Government has already implemented.

The Government will work to:

- address historical abuse that occurred;
- prevent abuse from happening in the future; and
- identify and respond swiftly to abuse should it happen again.

The recommendations arising from work of the Royal Commission are extensive and will impact on many agencies, addressing issues that go beyond those of just child protection. A whole of Government response will therefore involve relevant State Government departments working cooperatively to identify the further reforms required and the benefits that can be achieved.

To oversee and direct this whole of Government response, a Cabinet endorsed process has been put in place which will monitor and report on the progression and consideration of the Royal Commission's recommendations.