

Thursday, 26 October 2017

## Redress scheme close to reality with introduction of landmark bill today

The Law Council today applauded the Federal Government's introduction of landmark legislation establishing a Commonwealth redress scheme for survivors of child sexual abuse.

The bill, *Commonwealth Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Bill 2017*, was introduced by Minister for Social Services, Christian Porter, this morning.

The bill will enable survivors of child sexual abuse in an institutional setting to access three elements of the redress scheme:

- 1) A redress payment of up to \$150,000;
- 2) Access to psychological counselling; and
- 3) A direct personal response from the responsible institution, if requested by the survivor.

Law Council President, Fiona McLeod SC, said that a redress scheme is crucial to ensuring that survivors can access justice for the abuse they have suffered.

"Survivors of child sexual abuse have suffered injuries that are often uniquely severe and long lasting," Ms McLeod said.

"In many cases survivors have not been able to receive appropriate redress or compensation and there has been a failure to recognise their significant trauma.

"A government run redress scheme has greater capacity to be independent and transparent than institution run schemes, which is why it was recommended by the Royal Commission."

The Law Council has been keen to ensure that the redress scheme does not diminish or impact upon existing common law or statutory rights, and there is a specific allocation for legal assistance services to assist applicants in navigating the redress scheme.

"Legal aid commissions, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services, family violence prevention legal services and appropriate community legal services are critical in assisting applicants navigate the redress scheme," Ms McLeod said.

"It is also crucial that states, territories and relevant institutions 'opt-in' to the redress scheme.

"The introduction of this legislation is certainly a landmark moment for survivors of child and sexual abuse and we applaud the government for its national leadership."

The Law Council will now consider the bill in detail and looks forward to engaging closely with Parliament as the bill progresses.

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**Patrick Pantano: Public Affairs**

P 02 6246 3715

E Patrick.Pantano@lawcouncil.asn.au

**Sonia Byrnes: Communications**

P 0437 078 850

E Sonia.Byrnes@lawcouncil.asn.au