

Inquiry into the continuing operation of the National Redress Scheme

Public Hearing – 13 March 2026

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Independent Decision Makers (IDMs)

Question reference number: IQ26-000001

Question asked by: Renee Coffey

Type of Question: Spoken. **Hansard Page/s:** 31-32

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 7 April 2026

Question:

Ms COFFEY: Thanks for the information so far. I have a lot of questions, but this is just a quick follow-up to that. I think what's become clear in some of the communications that we've seen is that it's more than just being trauma informed, and it's more than just communication and language. What's been raised with us is around the IDMs and whether they have sufficient understanding of the behaviour of predators and, in particular, child sexual predators. Can you give us a sense of whether you feel the IDMs are well equipped to have an understanding of those behaviours, because in some of the examples—like the one that was just read out, to be frank—it's concerning that that seems to be absent.

Ms Fievez: By dint of the nature of our independent decision-makers—they do come from a diverse background, and we have counsellors, psychologists and social workers, but also people who worked in law enforcement and child protection previously, though obviously no longer—they do come to the scheme with some understanding of the impact of trauma and the behaviour of predators. We also have a training package, which is something that we'll look at potentially being able to make available to the committee, I think. When we onboard our independent decision makers, we do support them with training over several weeks when they first commence, and then there is ongoing support around training, microlearning sessions, information sessions and then workshops as well.

Ms COFFEY: Especially if that's mandatory training, learning what the contents of that are would be very helpful.

Mr Hetherington: We'll have a look at it and see if we can make it available if it's useful to the committee, and then you can draw conclusions from that. From my perspective, you've got to look at the life cycle of engagement of independent decision-maker. From a recruitment perspective, in terms of how we approach and look for independent decision-makers, we're clear about the role and the skills and attributes that we're looking for in people, and then we test that through the process of bringing them on board the training continuum—so the initial training when they come in and that ongoing piece, with continued microlearning, and then the quality framework, which sort of helps guide the way we conduct it. All of those things have to operate together to make sure that we're getting the right outcomes. So, again, this is not a space where we're just going to go: 'Yep, we've nailed that—set and forget. We can move on with life.' It is an area where you've got to keep tuning it and keep refining it.

Answer:

The National Redress Scheme (the Scheme) is currently updating the Independent Decision Maker (IDM) training package to align with the implementation of the Independent Decision Making Quality Framework and broader improvements outlined in the Department of Social Services' recent submission to the Joint Standing Committee.

The Scheme is working to July 2026 for finalisation and will provide the training package to the Committee shortly thereafter.

IDMs engaged by the Scheme receive training to ensure they can undertake their statutory responsibilities as required under section 29 of the *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018*, and to make fair, consistent and legally sound decisions.

IDM training to ensure IDMs appropriately undertake their statutory responsibilities includes:

- The legislative framework underpinning the Scheme, including the Assessment Framework
- Administrative law principles relevant to statutory decision-making
- Eligibility criteria and assessment considerations
- The Scheme's reasonable likelihood test
- The role of institutions and institutional structures
- Institutional responsibility
- Identification and management of bias
- Recording Statement of Reasons, including lawful decision making with a focus on trauma informed language

IDM Induction Training also includes introduction to the Scheme and the operational environment:

- An introduction to and overview of the National Redress Scheme
- Background and key findings of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
- The application journey and end-to-end decision-making process
- Operational components, including system use and process navigation

Under the Quality Framework, the Scheme will be delivering refresher training to IDMs that reinforces these key learning areas and supports ongoing consistency, including embedded trauma-informed principles referenced during training and supported through the trauma-informed writing guide, and supports ongoing consistency, quality, and continuous improvement in decision making.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Call centres

Question reference number: IQ26-000002

Question asked by: Dean Smith

Type of Question: Spoken. **Hansard Page/s:** 33

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 7 April 2026

Question:

Senator DEAN SMITH: Eighty people answering the phone.

Ms Fievez: Yes.

Senator DEAN SMITH: You would agree that improving efficiency around this initial contact is very important?

Ms Fievez: Yes.

Senator DEAN SMITH: Is the department considering requests from redress support services so that they might have a direct line? I would imagine that a call coming from a redress support service is more informed, is clearer, has clarity around it, so that would assist in—

Ms Fievez: Ironically, we have been discussing this internally in recent days and weeks. For our incarcerated phone line, we are going to make that number available to the redress support services because, again, there are real challenges around supporting applicants applying from jail.

Senator DEAN SMITH: Correct.

Ms Fievez: We don't have a dedicated phone line, per se, for the redress support services coming into that general line—that 1800 number—but we do have regular engagement with our redress support services. We meet with them quite often at an executive level and then at an operational level. We are currently working with a protected email trial that's been in place since last year with redress support services. They've been able to sign up to that based on their own discretion, not because we've said they should. I think the majority of our RSSs are now a part of that trial. Information is able to be shared through—again, not trying to not have a phone conversation with an RSS, but if there's information that they have from a survivor to support an application, then it can come through that email trial.

Mr Hetherington: We might have a look at it, Senator, because it's true what you say: by and large, the information that we get through support services is comprehensive and is in a better place for us to be able to progress somebody's application. We have a roundtable over a couple of days with the support services next week, so we might see whether or not there's anything further we can do in that space.

Answer:

The Department of Social Services (the Department) has recently been reviewing options to improve communication with Redress Support Services (RSS).

RSS will be provided direct access to the National Redress Scheme (NRS) prison phone line mid-April 2026, communications to support services are near completion and will be provided to advise required information. The prison phone line is for the purpose of supporting applicants who are incarcerated, or applicants with a Serious Criminal Conviction (SCC) who are undergoing the SCC assessment process.

A protected email channel has been operating since 2025 with most RSS now participating; this provides a secure and efficient way to share application information and complements phone contact.

The Department held an RSS Forum on 19 and 20 March 2026 and committed to explore further options for how RSS engage with the Scheme. Parliamentary Committee question number IQ26-000003 provides background on the agreed actions from the RSS Forum.

Inquiry into the continuing operation of the National Redress Scheme

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Survivor Roundtable and Redress Support Services Forum

Question reference number: IQ26-000003

Question asked by: Dean Smith

Type of Question: Spoken. **Hansard Page/s:** 34

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 7 April 2026

Question:

Senator DEAN SMITH: Perhaps you might be able to provide us an update after the roundtable next week in Coolangatta about what's been agreed.

Mr Hetherington: Absolutely, I'm very happy to do that.

Answer:

The Department of Social Services (the Department) convened a Survivor Roundtable (Roundtable) and a Redress Support Services (RSS) Forum during the week commencing 16 March 2026. The Roundtable, established under the Intergovernmental Agreement on the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse, forms part of the Scheme's governance framework.

The Roundtable was hosted by the Minister for Social Services, the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, on 18 March 2026. Prior to the Roundtable, on 17 March 2026, the Redress executive staff held one-on-one meetings with 17 survivors and their support persons.

The Roundtable is an opportunity for applicant survivors to share their story and experience of engagement with the Scheme. Survivors at various stages of accessing the Scheme were represented, including some still preparing an application and those who have been advised of an outcome and completed a Direct Personal Response with their named institution/s.

The RSS Forum (the Forum) was held following the Roundtable on 19 and 20 March 2026. Of the 42 RSS, plus Knowmore Legal Services, 40 were represented.

The Forum provided for discussion and workshop sessions between the Department and RSS on a partnership approach to working with survivors. The Department and RSS have committed to:

- An ongoing open and transparent relationship that places the survivor at the centre of the partnership in the Scheme.
- Exploring options for how RSS can further engage with the Scheme, including implementing more direct avenues for RSS to contact.
- Establishing a working group to review and consider Scheme written communications, Section 24 letters to applicants and Statements of Reason to ensure written material uses language that is respectful and trauma informed.
- Sharing the selection process for IDMs and expanding IDM training to include knowledge of perpetrator behaviour and patterns in behaviours.

- Development of clear guidance materials on what makes a fulsome application and when a request to states and territories for survivor records is required to support an application.
- RSS to share specific individual cases where language in statement of reasons has been considered inappropriate.
- Greater sharing of data collected by the Scheme around eligible/ineligible applications.
- Additional information on the Scheme's use of data matching for assurance purposes.
- Continued increased engagement between Scheme executive and RSS organisations.
- A collaborative approach to end of Scheme planning, with RSS to be involved in the 8 Year Review.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Number of Independent Decision Makers (IDMs)

Question reference number: IQ26-000004

Question asked by: David Shoebridge

Type of Question: Spoken. **Hansard Page/s:** 35-36

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 7 April 2026

Question:

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: what the actual number is. If we can get it now, that would be great—for IDMs. But then can we also go back over the scheme history and do that for each financial year, so what is the budget and what is the number?

Mr Lovelock: Currently, we're working to an ASL position—so not a headcount position but a funded average staffing level—of 648, which includes our independent decision-makers. We're very happy to provide on notice—

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: And what is the actual?

Mr Lovelock: I'm sorry, I don't have the actual—

CHAIR: For IDMs?

Ms Fievez: Just for IDMs, I can tell you it's 75.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: And what's the ASL?

Mr Lovelock: I don't have that with me.

CHAIR: If we can get that data—because I'm hearing you've got vacancies and you're trying to recruit. But what's the gap there?

Mr Hetherington: We'll look historically at that. Our team will have a look at it historically.

CHAIR: At the demand.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Can we get that for IDMs and for the thing just going back over the life—so what the ASL is and what the actual numbers are?

Mr Lovelock: Yes—our pleasure.

Answer:

The department's current labour-hire contract with Karlka Recruiting Group enables the engagement of Independent Decision Makers (IDMs). As at March 2026, the Scheme has 75 active IDMs.

Between September 2025 and early 2026, 11 IDMs commenced with the Scheme contributing to an average of approximately 50 FTE per month, reflecting flexible, part-time work patterns.

Over the life of the Scheme, 110 individual IDMs have been engaged, with 27 exits, including some IDMs who have since returned to the cohort.

The following table provides a breakdown of IDM recruitment by Financial Year:

IDM Recruitment by Financial Year

Year	Number of IDM Appointments
2018–19	4
2019–20	20
2020–21	32
2021–22	4
2022–23	12
2023–24	7
2024–25	23
2025–26 (to date)	11

The Scheme does not hold historical IDM-specific ASL positions by financial year. IDMs are funded within the broader Redress program ASL and historically operate under flexible part-time arrangements. As a result, monthly FTE varies, even when the number of individuals remains stable.

Recent recruitment has focused on securing IDMs able to deliver consistent, higher weekly hours (25+ hours per week) to support planning, productivity and the legislative requirement for decisions to be made in a timely and trauma-informed manner. Future recruitment will continue this approach to strengthen throughput and quality, and increase the number of Independent Decision Makers.

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Public Hearing – 13 March 2026

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Application processing - data sheet

Question reference number: IQ26-000005

Question asked by: Renee Coffey

Type of Question: Spoken. **Hansard Page/s:** 36-37

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 7 April 2026

Question:

Ms COFFEY: I've got three. The first one's probably one to take on notice, so I'll just ask it. In your submission, you talk about how a reduction in the timeframes has been achieved, and I think you spoke about that this afternoon as well. I want to know how that's been achieved and to what degree, and to understand the breakdown in the timeframes on processing of applications. From the original date of lodgement, how many individuals are currently awaiting an outcome, and how many have been doing so for more than three years, for 2½ to three years, for two to 2½ years, for 1½ to two years and for one to 1½ years? If we could get a breakdown of those, that would be very helpful.

Mr Hetherington: If we haven't already, we might provide, either now or afterwards, the latest data sheet. We've previously provided a data sheet to the committee. We can provide an updated version of that, if you'd like.

Ms COFFEY: Does it include how long—

Mr Hetherington: Yes.

Mr Lovelock: We can certainly provide this. And then we can provide the specifics of that question in terms of those that have been waiting for more than a year, more than two years—

Ms COFFEY: To actually break those down, quite frankly, would be very helpful.

Answer:

Over the life of the Scheme, the average processing time from the date the Scheme first receives an application until notification of an outcome occurs is 16 months.

A breakdown of applications on hand with the Scheme as at 6 March 2026 is as follows:

Timeframe*	Number of applications on hand
Less than 12 months	17,532
12 to 18 months	9,213
18 to 24 months	8,137
24 to 30 months	4,343
30 to 36 months	2,393
Greater than 36 months	2,828
TOTAL	44,446

*Each of these timeframes do not overlap with each other, therefore there is no double counting of applications. Note: The data is extracted from a live system, and numbers may vary slightly depending on the date of extraction.

To support timely outcomes, the Scheme has implemented initiatives to improve application processing times. These include new processing pathways for recently received applications, as well as targeted activity to progress and reduce the number of older applications.

Additionally, the Scheme is implementing the updated Independent Decision Making Quality Framework, which strengthens consistency in decision making and supports improved quality and timeliness by ensuring all applications allocated to Independent Decisions Makers are decision ready.

The data sheet is provided at **Attachment A**.

NATIONAL REDRESS SCHEME OVERVIEW

as at 06 March 2026

Applications

Key Statistics	
Applications received	76,000
(Outcomes advised)	27,280
Applications finalised	24,355
Payments made	21,621
Applications withdrawn	3,627
Applications closed	617
Applications on hand	47,401
Awaiting app decision	2,314
Awaiting inst. response	3,478
Applications on hold	6,154
S24 RFI process	4,084
Requested by app.	770
Difficulties in contacting	850
Inst. not participating	369
Further info required	46
Other	35
In progress with the Scheme	35,455
Able to be actioned	25,643
Validate application	10,117
Check inst. responses	8,525
Decision Mgmt. stage	6,277
Delivering outcomes	724
Unable to progress	9,812
Awaiting applicant info	7,957
Special Assessment SCC	1,855

Applications received			76,000
FY 2018-19	4,284	5.6%	
FY 2019-20	3,139	4.1%	
FY 2020-21	3,786	5.0%	
FY 2021-22	5,991	7.9%	
FY 2022-23	10,725	14.1%	
FY 2023-24	16,324	21.5%	
FY 2024-25	19,729	26.0%	
FY 2025-26 to date	12,022	15.8%	

Reviews requested			1,439
Original decision affirmed	756	52.5%	
Original decision changed	197	13.7%	
Reviews in progress	484	33.6%	
Reviews on hold	2	0.1%	

Application type		76,000
Paper based applications		34,135
Online applications		41,865

Weekly average of apps received	
FY 2018-19	82
FY 2019-20	60
FY 2020-21	73
FY 2021-22	115
FY 2022-23	206
FY 2023-24	314
FY 2024-25	379
FY 2025-26 to date	340

RFIs	
Total RFIs issued	105,556
Total RFIs returned	100,346
RFI ready to issue	6,700
RFI response outstanding	5,210
RFI awaiting response valid.	6,078

Finalised

Number of Finalised Applications			24,355
Eligible apps - payment	21,621	88.8%	
Eligible apps - nil payment	111	0.5%	
Applicants declined offer	426	1.7%	
Ineligible applicants	2,197	9.0%	

Determinations			28,230
FY 2018-19	351	1.2%	
FY 2019-20	3,179	11.3%	
FY 2020-21	3,202	11.3%	
FY 2021-22	3,208	11.4%	
FY 2022-23	3,664	13.0%	
FY 2023-24	5,108	18.1%	
FY 2024-25	5,030	17.8%	
FY 2025-26 to date	4,488	15.9%	

Payments made			21,621
\$1 - \$50,000	5,104	23.6%	
\$50,001 - \$100,000	13,143	60.8%	
\$100,001 - \$150,000	3,374	15.6%	
Avg payment amount		\$89,042	
Total value of payments	\$1,925,181,795		

Applications Resolved*			31,514
FY 2018-19	546	1.7%	
FY 2019-20	3,263	10.4%	
FY 2020-21	3,355	10.6%	
FY 2021-22	3,257	10.3%	
FY 2022-23	4,135	13.1%	
FY 2023-24	5,716	18.1%	
FY 2024-25	5,663	18.0%	
FY 2025-26 to date	5,579	17.7%	

Payment types	
Advance payments made	3,400
Apps eligible for advance payment	3,960
Apps requested payments by instalments	433

Applications finalised				24,355
FY 2018-19	204	0.8%		
FY 2019-20	2,565	10.5%		
FY 2020-21	3,280	13.5%		
FY 2021-22	2,768	11.4%		
FY 2022-23	3,846	15.8%		
FY 2023-24	4,010	16.5%		
FY 2024-25	4,154	17.1%		
FY 2025-26 to date	3,486	14.3%		
Offers expired*	42	0.2%		

*This figure contains the applications with initial outcome advised, withdrawn, and closed.

*Deemed finalised by the Scheme but no finalised date recorded in Case Manager.

Demographics

Gender		76,000
Male	47,003	61.8%
Female	28,338	37.3%
Other*	370	0.5%
No answer	289	0.4%

Age*					
0 - 20	1,445	1.9%	61 - 70	6,891	9.1%
21 - 30	13,045	17.2%	71 - 80	2,263	3.0%
31 - 40	21,460	28.2%	81 - 90	351	0.5%
41 - 50	17,810	23.4%	91+	27	0.0%
51 - 60	12,688	16.7%			

Residential State					
NSW	17,219	22.7%	TAS	3,434	4.5%
VIC	7,750	10.2%	NT	698	0.9%
QLD	25,569	33.6%	ACT	767	1.0%
SA	10,799	14.2%	Overseas	200	0.3%
WA	9,394	12.4%	Unspec.*	170	0.2%

*Other includes indeterminate, intersex, unspecified, transgender, and non-binary applicants.
*20 applicants have provided an invalid date of birth.

*Unspecified on application form.

DPR and CPC

DPR acceptance rate	
FY18-19 FY19-20*	52.1%
FY 2020-21	60.1%
FY 2021-22	65.2%
FY 2022-23	59.7%
FY 2023-24	57.4%
FY 2024-25	55.8%
FY 2025-26 to date	54.0%
Life of Scheme	57.8%
Apps DPR accepted	12,818

CPC accepted			16,389
CPC service referrals	11,703	71.4%	
CPC lump sum payments	4,686	28.6%	
Total value of CPC referrals	\$52,247,500		
Total value of CPC payments	\$21,392,500		
CPC acceptance rate		74.0%	

Value of CPC referrals or pay.			16,389
\$5,000	13,141	80.2%	
\$2,500	3,100	18.9%	
\$1,250	148	0.9%	

*Combined due to low population size in these Financial Years.

Institutions

Institutions	
Apps naming 1 institution	28.0%
Apps naming 2 institutions	34.2%
Apps naming 3 institutions	16.9%
Apps naming 4 or more inst.	20.8%

Funder of Last Resort	
Applications with FOLR	1,119
Of these that are finalised	806
Finalised %	72.0%

Expanded Funder of Last Resort	
Applications with EFOLR	502
Of these that are finalised	300
Finalised %	59.8%

Applying From Gaol (AFG)

Apps received AFG			10,930
FY 2018-19	22	0.2%	
FY 2019-20	31	0.3%	
FY 2020-21	39	0.4%	
FY 2021-22	96	0.9%	
FY 2022-23	311	2.8%	
FY 2023-24	1,954	17.9%	
FY 2024-25	5,103	46.7%	
FY 2025-26 to date	3,374	30.9%	

Proportion of all apps AFG	
FY 2018-19	0.5%
FY 2019-20	1.0%
FY 2020-21	1.0%
FY 2021-22	1.6%
FY 2022-23	2.9%
FY 2023-24	12.0%
FY 2024-25	25.9%
FY 2025-26 to date	28.1%

Residential State AFG						10,930
NSW	2,513	23.0%	TAS	406	3.7%	
VIC	629	5.8%	NT	130	1.2%	
QLD	4,526	41.4%	ACT	47	0.4%	
SA	1,042	9.5%	Overseas	4	0.0%	
WA	1,483	13.6%	Unspecified	150	1.4%	

This data is extracted from a live system and numbers may vary depending on the date of data extraction. Percentages may not add up 100% due to rounding of decimal values.

NATIONAL REDRESS SCHEME OVERVIEW

as at 06 March 2026

Disability

Key Statistics (Disability)

Applications received	25,576
(Outcomes advised)	10,642
Applications finalised	9,757
Payments made	8,814
Applications withdrawn	1,228
Applications closed	259
Applications on hand	14,332
Awaiting applicant decision	762
Awaiting institution response	1,022
Applications on hold	1,683
S24 RFI process	1,102
Requested by app.	288
Difficulties in contacting	169
Inst. not participating	97
Further info required	8
Other	19
In progress with the Scheme	10,865
Able to be actioned	8,076
Validate application	3,035
Check inst. responses	2,855
Decision Mgmt. stage	1,892
Delivering outcomes	294
Unable to progress	2,789
Awaiting applicant info	2,045
Special Assessment SCC	744

Applications

Paper based applications	15,199	59.4%
Online applications	10,377	40.6%
CPC acceptance rate		75.3%
DPR acceptance rate		62.0%
First Nations apps	9,758	
Special assessment*	4,273	
SCC only	980	22.9%
AFG only	2,593	60.7%
Both AFG & SCC	700	16.4%
*as indicated on application form		
Reviews requested	598	
Original decision not changed	385	64.4%
Original decision changed	110	18.4%
Reviews in progress	103	17.2%
Reviews on hold	0	0.0%

Applications received (Disability)

FY 2018-19	2,009	7.9%
FY 2019-20	1,574	6.2%
FY 2020-21	1,761	6.9%
FY 2021-22	2,264	8.9%
FY 2022-23	3,208	12.5%
FY 2023-24	4,870	19.0%
FY 2024-25	6,096	23.8%
FY 2025-26 to date	3,794	14.8%
Proportion of all applications		
FY 2018-19		46.9%
FY 2019-20		50.1%
FY 2020-21		46.5%
FY 2021-22		37.8%
FY 2022-23		29.9%
FY 2023-24		29.8%
FY 2024-25		30.9%
FY 2025-26 to date		31.6%

First Nations

Key Statistics (First Nations)

Applications received	26,487
(Outcomes advised)	9,342
Applications finalised	8,430
Payments made	7,535
Applications withdrawn	1,391
Applications withdrawn	268
Applications on hand	16,398
Awaiting applicant decision	762
Awaiting institution response	1,206
Applications on hold	2,128
S24 RFI process	1,518
Requested by app.	226
Difficulties in contacting	268
Inst. not participating	87
Further info required	15
Other	14
In progress with the Scheme	12,302
Able to be actioned	8,657
Validate application	3,475
Check inst. responses	2,902
Decision Mgmt. stage	1,999
Delivering outcomes	281
Unable to progress	3,645
Awaiting applicant info	2,680
Special Assessment SCC	965

Applications

Paper based apps	14,709	55.5%
Online apps	11,778	44.5%
CPC acceptance rate		74.5%
DPR acceptance rate		59.8%
Apps with a disability	9,758	
Special assessment*	5,955	
SCC only	985	16.5%
AFG only	4,047	68.0%
Both AFG & SCC	923	15.5%
*as indicated on application form		
Reviews requested	467	
Original decision not changed	292	62.5%
Original decision changed	59	12.6%
Reviews in progress	115	24.6%
Reviews on hold	1	0.2%

Apps received (First Nations)

FY 2018-19	975	3.7%
FY 2019-20	1,058	4.0%
FY 2020-21	1,533	5.8%
FY 2021-22	2,507	9.5%
FY 2022-23	3,999	15.1%
FY 2023-24	5,342	20.2%
FY 2024-25	6,870	25.9%
FY 2025-26 to date	4,203	15.9%
Proportion of all applications		
FY 2018-19		22.8%
FY 2019-20		33.7%
FY 2020-21		40.5%
FY 2021-22		41.8%
FY 2022-23		37.3%
FY 2023-24		32.7%
FY 2024-25		34.8%
FY 2025-26 to date		35.0%

Disability vs Non-Disability Comparison

Comparison of stats

	Disability	Non-Disability
1 named institutions	22.0%	31.4%
2 named institutions	29.8%	36.6%
3 named institutions	19.4%	15.6%
4 or more named institutions	28.7%	16.5%
Total no. of payments	8,814	12,807
Total value of payments	\$818,442,137	\$1,106,739,658
Average payment amount	\$92,857	\$86,417

Additional Payment Information (Disability)

Applicants eligible for advance payment	2,256
No. of advance payments made	1,935
No. of apps on "payment by instalments"	194

First Nations vs Non-First Nations Comparison

Comparison of stats

	First Nations	Non-First Nations
1 named institutions	21.5%	31.5%
2 named institutions	30.6%	36.1%
3 named institutions	20.2%	15.2%
4 or more named inst.	27.7%	17.2%
Total no. of payments	7,535	14,086
Total value of payments	\$700,306,669	\$1,224,875,126
Average payment amount	\$92,941	\$86,957

Additional Payment Information (First Nations)

Applicants eligible for advance payment	2,959
No. of advance payments made	2,594
No. of apps on "payment by instalments"	199

This data is extracted from a live system and numbers may vary depending on the date of data extraction. Percentages may not add up 100% due to rounding of decimal values.

Inquiry into the continuing operation of the National Redress Scheme

Public Hearing – 13 March 2026

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Application processing timeframes

Question reference number: IQ26-000006

Question asked by: Renee Coffey

Type of Question: Spoken. **Hansard Page/s:** 36-37

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 7 April 2026

Question:

Ms COFFEY: I've got three. The first one's probably one to take on notice, so I'll just ask it. In your submission, you talk about how a reduction in the timeframes has been achieved, and I think you spoke about that this afternoon as well. I want to know how that's been achieved and to what degree, and to understand the breakdown in the timeframes on processing of applications. From the original date of lodgement, how many individuals are currently awaiting an outcome, and how many have been doing so for more than three years, for 2½ to three years, for two to 2½ years, for 1½ to two years and for one to 1½ years? If we could get a breakdown of those, that would be very helpful.

...

Mr Lovelock: We can certainly provide this. And then we can provide the specifics of that question in terms of those that have been waiting for more than a year, more than two years—

Ms COFFEY: To actually break those down, quite frankly, would be very helpful.

Answer:

The Scheme's complex end-to-end processes, combined with incomplete applications, has impacted application throughput and extended assessment timeframes during the life of the Scheme. Limited early engagement with applicants has meant invalid, duplicate and out-of-scope applications remained in the system longer than necessary, diverting resources from engaged applicants.

These impacts are compounded by incomplete or low-information applications and difficulties contacting applicants, with repeated outreach often resulting in limited response. Together, these factors have delayed applications reaching decision-ready status and hindered the Scheme's ability to deliver timely outcomes.

Over the life of the Scheme, the average processing time from the date the Scheme first receives an application until notification of an outcome occurs is 16 months.

A breakdown of applications on hand with the Scheme as at 6 March 2026 is as follows:

Timeframe from application submission date	Number of applications on hand	Actionable applications on hand
Less than 12 months	17,532	14,640
12 to 18 months	9,213	6,062
18 to 24 months	8,137	4,744
24 to 30 months	4,343	1,707
30 to 36 months	2,393	726
Greater than 36 months	2,828	724
TOTAL	44,446	28,603

Note: the data above is extracted from a live system, and numbers may vary slightly depending on the date of extraction.

Please refer to Question on Notice IQ26-000012 for an overview of improvements to application processing to increase throughput.

The data sheet is provided at **Attachment A**.

The Department of Social Services (the Department), through the Scheme, has increased application throughput without additional resources by implementing applicant-focused, trauma-informed operational improvements to remove avoidable delays and resolve non-progressing cases earlier.

- A multidisciplinary team was established in November 2024, and by March 2026, using existing resources, had progressed 2,210 applications to Request for Information and 1,020 applications to decision ready status.
- An enhanced triage pilot commenced in August 2025 to ensure applications progressed with sufficient information to support Requests for Information and decision-making, supported by tailored section 24 letters that reduced repeated contact with applicants, which had previously required a minimum of 15 contacts per application.
- The Application (Completeness Check) Passport commenced in August 2025 to enable active application management and improved timeliness by tracking applications through each stage and consolidating key quality assurance checks. This consolidated view supports Independent Decision Makers to make accurate and informed determinations.
- An application fast path introduced in October 2025 to accelerate less complex applications and reduced multiple hand offs, with Scheme surge teams progressing 1,014 applications to determination and resolving 3,225 duplicate and withdrawn applications.
- From September 2024, the Scheme implemented targeted initiatives to improve Request for Information (RFI) processing, including a dedicated end to end approach for low-complexity matters, which reduced handovers, eased pressure on broader RFI workflows, and enabled faster clearance of legacy applications with improved throughput and workflow efficiency.
- The Scheme has been reviewing automation and digital efficiency options and commenced using Smart templates in September 2025 which has saved up to 15-20 minutes per letter whilst still ensuring a high level of quality.

To address delays in finalising applications, the Scheme has implemented a range of targeted, applicant-focused operational improvements.

- An Invalid/Closed Pathway was established in January 2026 to manage applications where the Scheme has been unable to contact applicants through multiple channels (telephone, text and mail) and insufficient information is available to progress the application to determination; verifying applicant identity and information at submission is critical to ensure applications can progress through Requests for Information and payment processes, and applications placed in this pathway may be re-enlivened up to 30 June 2028 if the required information is provided.
- The Scheme commenced an Outcome Determination Call (ODC) trial in August 2025, with the approach endorsed in October 2025, enabling suitable applicants to receive outcomes in writing without a preceding call, while vulnerable applicants continue to be supported through phone contact where required. This change has increased the number of outcomes advised and removed delays associated with repeated call attempts, with the Scheme progressing to expand use of this approach to support more timely outcomes.

NATIONAL REDRESS SCHEME OVERVIEW

as at 06 March 2026

Applications

Key Statistics	
Applications received	76,000
(Outcomes advised)	27,280
Applications finalised	24,355
Payments made	21,621
Applications withdrawn	3,627
Applications closed	617
Applications on hand	47,401
Awaiting app decision	2,314
Awaiting inst. response	3,478
Applications on hold	6,154
S24 RFI process	4,084
Requested by app.	770
Difficulties in contacting	850
Inst. not participating	369
Further info required	46
Other	35
In progress with the Scheme	35,455
Able to be actioned	25,643
Validate application	10,117
Check inst. responses	8,525
Decision Mgmt. stage	6,277
Delivering outcomes	724
Unable to progress	9,812
Awaiting applicant info	7,957
Special Assessment SCC	1,855

Applications received			76,000
FY 2018-19	4,284	5.6%	
FY 2019-20	3,139	4.1%	
FY 2020-21	3,786	5.0%	
FY 2021-22	5,991	7.9%	
FY 2022-23	10,725	14.1%	
FY 2023-24	16,324	21.5%	
FY 2024-25	19,729	26.0%	
FY 2025-26 to date	12,022	15.8%	

Weekly average of apps received	
FY 2018-19	82
FY 2019-20	60
FY 2020-21	73
FY 2021-22	115
FY 2022-23	206
FY 2023-24	314
FY 2024-25	379
FY 2025-26 to date	340

Reviews requested			1,439
Original decision affirmed	756	52.5%	
Original decision changed	197	13.7%	
Reviews in progress	484	33.6%	
Reviews on hold	2	0.1%	

RFIs	
Total RFIs issued	105,556
Total RFIs returned	100,346
RFI ready to issue	6,700
RFI response outstanding	5,210
RFI awaiting response valid.	6,078

Application type		76,000
Paper based applications	34,135	
Online applications	41,865	

Finalised

Number of Finalised Applications			24,355
Eligible apps - payment	21,621	88.8%	
Eligible apps - nil payment	111	0.5%	
Applicants declined offer	426	1.7%	
Ineligible applicants	2,197	9.0%	

Payments made			21,621
\$1 - \$50,000	5,104	23.6%	
\$50,001 - \$100,000	13,143	60.8%	
\$100,001 - \$150,000	3,374	15.6%	
Avg payment amount	\$89,042		
Total value of payments	\$1,925,181,795		

Payment types	
Advance payments made	3,400
Apps eligible for advance payment	3,960
Apps requested payments by instalments	433

Determinations			28,230
FY 2018-19	351	1.2%	
FY 2019-20	3,179	11.3%	
FY 2020-21	3,202	11.3%	
FY 2021-22	3,208	11.4%	
FY 2022-23	3,664	13.0%	
FY 2023-24	5,108	18.1%	
FY 2024-25	5,030	17.8%	
FY 2025-26 to date	4,488	15.9%	

Applications Resolved*			31,514
FY 2018-19	546	1.7%	
FY 2019-20	3,263	10.4%	
FY 2020-21	3,355	10.6%	
FY 2021-22	3,257	10.3%	
FY 2022-23	4,135	13.1%	
FY 2023-24	5,716	18.1%	
FY 2024-25	5,663	18.0%	
FY 2025-26 to date	5,579	17.7%	

Applications finalised				24,355
FY 2018-19	204	0.8%		
FY 2019-20	2,565	10.5%		
FY 2020-21	3,280	13.5%		
FY 2021-22	2,768	11.4%		
FY 2022-23	3,846	15.8%		
FY 2023-24	4,010	16.5%		
FY 2024-25	4,154	17.1%		
FY 2025-26 to date	3,486	14.3%		
Offers expired*	42	0.2%		

*This figure contains the applications with initial outcome advised, withdrawn, and closed.

*Deemed finalised by the Scheme but no finalised date recorded in Case Manager.

Demographics

Gender		76,000
Male	47,003	61.8%
Female	28,338	37.3%
Other*	370	0.5%
No answer	289	0.4%

Age*					
0 - 20	1,445	1.9%	61 - 70	6,891	9.1%
21 - 30	13,045	17.2%	71 - 80	2,263	3.0%
31 - 40	21,460	28.2%	81 - 90	351	0.5%
41 - 50	17,810	23.4%	91+	27	0.0%
51 - 60	12,688	16.7%			

Residential State					
NSW	17,219	22.7%	TAS	3,434	4.5%
VIC	7,750	10.2%	NT	698	0.9%
QLD	25,569	33.6%	ACT	767	1.0%
SA	10,799	14.2%	Overseas	200	0.3%
WA	9,394	12.4%	Unspec.*	170	0.2%

*Other includes indeterminate, intersex, unspecified, transgender, and non-binary applicants.
*20 applicants have provided an invalid date of birth.

*Unspecified on application form.

DPR and CPC

DPR acceptance rate	
FY18-19 FY19-20*	52.1%
FY 2020-21	60.1%
FY 2021-22	65.2%
FY 2022-23	59.7%
FY 2023-24	57.4%
FY 2024-25	55.8%
FY 2025-26 to date	54.0%
Life of Scheme	57.8%
Apps DPR accepted	12,818

CPC accepted			16,389
CPC service referrals	11,703	71.4%	
CPC lump sum payments	4,686	28.6%	
Total value of CPC referrals	\$52,247,500		
Total value of CPC payments	\$21,392,500		
CPC acceptance rate	74.0%		

Value of CPC referrals or pay.			16,389
\$5,000	13,141	80.2%	
\$2,500	3,100	18.9%	
\$1,250	148	0.9%	

*Combined due to low population size in these Financial Years.

Institutions

Institutions	
Apps naming 1 institution	28.0%
Apps naming 2 institutions	34.2%
Apps naming 3 institutions	16.9%
Apps naming 4 or more inst.	20.8%

Funder of Last Resort	
Applications with FOLR	1,119
Of these that are finalised	806
Finalised %	72.0%

Expanded Funder of Last Resort	
Applications with EFOLR	502
Of these that are finalised	300
Finalised %	59.8%

Applying From Gaol (AFG)

Apps received AFG			10,930
FY 2018-19	22	0.2%	
FY 2019-20	31	0.3%	
FY 2020-21	39	0.4%	
FY 2021-22	96	0.9%	
FY 2022-23	311	2.8%	
FY 2023-24	1,954	17.9%	
FY 2024-25	5,103	46.7%	
FY 2025-26 to date	3,374	30.9%	

Proportion of all apps AFG	
FY 2018-19	0.5%
FY 2019-20	1.0%
FY 2020-21	1.0%
FY 2021-22	1.6%
FY 2022-23	2.9%
FY 2023-24	12.0%
FY 2024-25	25.9%
FY 2025-26 to date	28.1%

Residential State AFG						10,930
NSW	2,513	23.0%	TAS	406	3.7%	
VIC	629	5.8%	NT	130	1.2%	
QLD	4,526	41.4%	ACT	47	0.4%	
SA	1,042	9.5%	Overseas	4	0.0%	
WA	1,483	13.6%	Unspecified	150	1.4%	

This data is extracted from a live system and numbers may vary depending on the date of data extraction. Percentages may not add up 100% due to rounding of decimal values.

NATIONAL REDRESS SCHEME OVERVIEW

as at 06 March 2026

Disability

Key Statistics (Disability)

Applications received	25,576
(Outcomes advised)	10,642
Applications finalised	9,757
Payments made	8,814
Applications withdrawn	1,228
Applications closed	259
Applications on hand	14,332
Awaiting applicant decision	762
Awaiting institution response	1,022
Applications on hold	1,683
S24 RFI process	1,102
Requested by app.	288
Difficulties in contacting	169
Inst. not participating	97
Further info required	8
Other	19
In progress with the Scheme	10,865
Able to be actioned	8,076
Validate application	3,035
Check inst. responses	2,855
Decision Mgmt. stage	1,892
Delivering outcomes	294
Unable to progress	2,789
Awaiting applicant info	2,045
Special Assessment SCC	744

Applications

Paper based applications	15,199	59.4%
Online applications	10,377	40.6%
CPC acceptance rate		75.3%
DPR acceptance rate		62.0%
First Nations apps	9,758	
Special assessment*	4,273	
SCC only	980	22.9%
AFG only	2,593	60.7%
Both AFG & SCC	700	16.4%
*as indicated on application form		
Reviews requested	598	
Original decision not changed	385	64.4%
Original decision changed	110	18.4%
Reviews in progress	103	17.2%
Reviews on hold	0	0.0%

Applications received (Disability)

FY 2018-19	2,009	7.9%
FY 2019-20	1,574	6.2%
FY 2020-21	1,761	6.9%
FY 2021-22	2,264	8.9%
FY 2022-23	3,208	12.5%
FY 2023-24	4,870	19.0%
FY 2024-25	6,096	23.8%
FY 2025-26 to date	3,794	14.8%

Proportion of all applications

FY 2018-19	46.9%
FY 2019-20	50.1%
FY 2020-21	46.5%
FY 2021-22	37.8%
FY 2022-23	29.9%
FY 2023-24	29.8%
FY 2024-25	30.9%
FY 2025-26 to date	31.6%

First Nations

Key Statistics (First Nations)

Applications received	26,487
(Outcomes advised)	9,342
Applications finalised	8,430
Payments made	7,535
Applications withdrawn	1,391
Applications withdrawn	268
Applications on hand	16,398
Awaiting applicant decision	762
Awaiting institution response	1,206
Applications on hold	2,128
S24 RFI process	1,518
Requested by app.	226
Difficulties in contacting	268
Inst. not participating	87
Further info required	15
Other	14
In progress with the Scheme	12,302
Able to be actioned	8,657
Validate application	3,475
Check inst. responses	2,902
Decision Mgmt. stage	1,999
Delivering outcomes	281
Unable to progress	3,645
Awaiting applicant info	2,680
Special Assessment SCC	965

Applications

Paper based apps	14,709	55.5%
Online apps	11,778	44.5%
CPC acceptance rate		74.5%
DPR acceptance rate		59.8%
Apps with a disability	9,758	
Special assessment*	5,955	
SCC only	985	16.5%
AFG only	4,047	68.0%
Both AFG & SCC	923	15.5%
*as indicated on application form		
Reviews requested	467	
Original decision not changed	292	62.5%
Original decision changed	59	12.6%
Reviews in progress	115	24.6%
Reviews on hold	1	0.2%

Apps received (First Nations)

FY 2018-19	975	3.7%
FY 2019-20	1,058	4.0%
FY 2020-21	1,533	5.8%
FY 2021-22	2,507	9.5%
FY 2022-23	3,999	15.1%
FY 2023-24	5,342	20.2%
FY 2024-25	6,870	25.9%
FY 2025-26 to date	4,203	15.9%

Proportion of all applications

FY 2018-19	22.8%
FY 2019-20	33.7%
FY 2020-21	40.5%
FY 2021-22	41.8%
FY 2022-23	37.3%
FY 2023-24	32.7%
FY 2024-25	34.8%
FY 2025-26 to date	35.0%

Disability vs Non-Disability Comparison

Comparison of stats

	Disability	Non-Disability
1 named institutions	22.0%	31.4%
2 named institutions	29.8%	36.6%
3 named institutions	19.4%	15.6%
4 or more named institutions	28.7%	16.5%
Total no. of payments	8,814	12,807
Total value of payments	\$818,442,137	\$1,106,739,658
Average payment amount	\$92,857	\$86,417

Additional Payment Information (Disability)

Applicants eligible for advance payment	2,256
No. of advance payments made	1,935
No. of apps on "payment by instalments"	194

First Nations vs Non-First Nations Comparison

Comparison of stats

	First Nations	Non-First Nations
1 named institutions	21.5%	31.5%
2 named institutions	30.6%	36.1%
3 named institutions	20.2%	15.2%
4 or more named inst.	27.7%	17.2%
Total no. of payments	7,535	14,086
Total value of payments	\$700,306,669	\$1,224,875,126
Average payment amount	\$92,941	\$86,957

Additional Payment Information (First Nations)

Applicants eligible for advance payment	2,959
No. of advance payments made	2,594
No. of apps on "payment by instalments"	199

Inquiry into the continuing operation of the National Redress Scheme

Public Hearing – 13 March 2026

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Unsuccessful claims

Question reference number: IQ26-000007

Question asked by: Renee Coffey

Type of Question: Spoken. **Hansard Page/s:** 37-38

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 7 April 2026

Question:

Ms COFFEY: It would be very helpful if you could provide some data on the rate—the percentage of claims that are now unsuccessful—but also where requests for more information are occurring. If there's some way to show that year by year to see if that's increasing, for applicants as well, I think that would be another data point, because, whilst I appreciate what you're saying, the testimony that we've received certainly doesn't reflect that. It has come through quite clearly that it seems that cases that would have been accepted much earlier in the scheme are now being rejected, so any data you've got would be greatly appreciated.

Mr Lovelock: On the question around eligibility and ineligible outcomes: there's some detail in the datasheet that has been shared, but we'll take the specifics over the life of the scheme on notice.

Mr Hethington: On the ineligible—and we might provide a little bit more colour and movement on this—that doesn't necessarily denote that we've assumed a higher bar. It might just be that the circumstances that have been described in an application don't meet eligibility for the scheme, so they're not eligible for it. We'll try to be a bit more specific about it.

CHAIR: It would be great to interrogate the ineligible and what percentage are potentially incarcerated applicants.

Mr Lovelock: We will take on notice a breakdown of that by demographic characteristics, including whether it's an application from jail or not. We are seeing an increase in the number of applications that are ineligible not because of the decision necessarily but because of the characteristics—for example, it might not be institutional abuse but it has come to the scheme. There are examples of abuse that's occurred in familial settings which doesn't meet the requirements of the scheme but is still processed through the scheme, where the survivor seeks to do so. We do a lot of work to try to work with survivors to manage those expectations, but the scheme has, over its life, facilitated consideration of that ineligible outcome.

CHAIR: That sort of information would be important for us but also for your roundtable meeting next week.

Mr Hethington: We're happy to provide that.

Answer:

Breakdown of Ineligible Applications

The number of applications determined to be ineligible by Independent Decision Makers (IDMs) for each financial year are in tables below.

Ineligible outcomes increased from FY 2023/24 onwards (see Table 1). This increase reflects a higher volume of applications being finalised where one or more eligibility requirements were not met, most commonly because no participating institution could be found responsible for the abuse for the purposes of the Scheme. This reason accounts for 2,141 of 4,123 ineligible determinations (52%), as shown in Table 6.

The increase in ineligible determinations from FY2023/24 onwards also reflects the finalisation of older applications where, on the information available, one or more legislative requirements were not met. Finalising this backlog, together with streamlined assurance processes, supported earlier identification of applications that were unlikely to meet legislative requirements based on the information available. This enabled timelier finalisation of those matters, contributing to higher volumes of ineligible determinations in later years.

A total of 1,554 determinations were coded as “Other”, refer Table 6. This category captures free-text information entered by IDMs and is often used to provide additional context alongside a primary coded reason. It may also include matters where the IDM was not satisfied that it was reasonably likely the applicant experienced sexual abuse, or where the reason for ineligibility did not align to one of the available coded options.

The Scheme acknowledges concerns regarding the reasonable likelihood threshold, and the clarity and transparency of ineligibility reasoning. Implementation of the Independent Decision Making Quality Framework will strengthen consistency, support a trauma-informed application of the reasonable likelihood standard, and ensure decisions remain legislatively grounded and aligned with section 10 principles.

Eligibility for redress is set out in section 13 of the *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018* (the Act). One of the eligibility requirements in section 13 is that the abuse must be *within the scope* of the Scheme; section 14 of the Act sets out when abuse is within scope.

Table 6 uses standardised labels to describe the reason recorded in the Scheme’s system. These labels align with the eligibility requirements in section 13 (including the requirement that abuse be within scope, assessed in accordance with section 14), as follows:

- **Section 13 eligibility requirements (Table 6 labels):**
 - The applicant was not sexually abused
 - The applicant is not an Australian citizen or permanent resident
 - No participating institution(s) is/are responsible.
- **Within-scope requirement (section 13, assessed in accordance with section 14) (Table 6 labels):**
 - Abuse did not occur when they were a child (under 18 years)
 - Abuse occurred in a non-participating state/jurisdiction
 - Abuse did not occur before 1 July 2018
 - Abuse did not occur in a participating institution.

TABLE 1 - TOTAL APPLICATIONS

Decision Year*	Total Applications	
	Ineligible Applicants	Ineligible
Scheme To Date	4,123	15%
FY18/19	<5**	n.p.
FY19/20	n.p.***	3%
FY20/21	83	3%
FY21/22	83	3%
FY22/23	148	4%
FY23/24	1,032	21%
FY24/25	1,153	26%
FY25/26	1,516	33%

TABLE 2 - GENDER DEMOGRAPHICS

Decision Year*	Male Applicants		Female and Other Applicants	
	Ineligible Applicants	Ineligible	Ineligible Applicants	Ineligible
Scheme To Date	2,090	13%	2,033	18%
FY18/19	0	0%	<5	n.p.
FY19/20	52	3%	n.p.	5%
FY20/21	39	2%	44	3%
FY21/22	30	2%	53	4%
FY22/23	61	3%	87	6%
FY23/24	464	17%	568	27%
FY24/25	564	22%	589	31%
FY25/26	880	32%	636	35%

TABLE 3 FIRST NATIONS APPLICANTS

Decision Year*	First Nations Applicants		Non First Nations Applicants	
	Ineligible Applicants	Ineligible	Ineligible Applicants	Ineligible
Scheme To Date	1,457	15%	2,666	15%
FY18/19	0	0%	<5	n.p.
FY19/20	26	4%	n.p.	3%
FY20/21	24	2%	59	3%
FY21/22	34	3%	49	3%
FY22/23	55	4%	93	4%
FY23/24	394	23%	638	20%
FY24/25	413	28%	740	25%
FY25/26	511	33%	1,005	33%

TABLE 4 AFG APPLICANTS

Decision Year*	Applying From Gaol Applicants		Non Applying From Gaol Applicants	
	Ineligible Applicants	Ineligible	Ineligible Applicants	Ineligible
Scheme To Date	137	24%	3,986	15%
FY18/19	0	0%	<5	n.p.
FY19/20	<5	n.p.	106	3%
FY20/21	0	0%	83	3%
FY21/22	0	0%	83	3%

FY22/23	<5	n.p.	n.p.	4%
FY23/24	8	14%	1,024	21%
FY24/25	24	21%	1,129	26%
FY25/26	103	30%	1,413	33%

TABLE 5 - APPLICANTS WITH DISABILITY

Decision Year*	Applicants with Disability		Applicants without Disability	
	Ineligible Applicants	Ineligible	Ineligible Applicants	Ineligible
Scheme To Date	1,273	12%	2,850	17%
FY18/19	<5	n.p.	0	0%
FY19/20	n.p.	4%	50	3%
FY20/21	39	2%	44	3%
FY21/22	43	3%	40	2%
FY22/23	59	4%	89	4%
FY23/24	328	21%	704	22%
FY24/25	331	24%	822	27%
FY25/26	415	29%	1,101	35%

Percentages are rounded.

*Decision Year is taken from the date of the original decision and does not take into account review dates.

**The data is less than five and is not provided to protect the privacy of applicants under the DSS Data Confidentiality Policy.

***The data is not provided to protect the privacy of applicants under the DSS Data Confidentiality Policy.

Reasons for Ineligibility

The Independent Decision Makers (IDM) may determine an application to be ineligible for a number of reasons as shown below.

TABLE 6 - REASONS FOR INELIGIBILITY

Reasons for ineligibility	Count of Ineligible Applications
Total	4,123
No participating institution(s) is/are responsible	2,141
Other*	1,554
The applicant was not sexually abused	696
Abuse did not occur when they were a child (under 18 years)	204
Abuse did not occur in a participating institution	99
Abuse did not occur before 1 July 2018	32
All instances of abuse were 'exposure' abuse and were perpetrated by a child	14
The applicant is not an Australian citizen or permanent resident	<5
Abuse occurred in a non-participating state/jurisdiction	<5

*Other is used when the IDM enters a free-text reason in the system. This may be due to reasons that are not one of the coded options as shown above. However, often it accompanies a coded reason and it used to add further context in the free-text field.

Request for review

The Act provides that if a person does not agree with the outcome of their application for redress, they can request a review.

An increase in requests for reviews has occurred since 2023-24, following a change to the *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Amendment Act 2024*'s review provisions to allow new information to be provided and requested in a review.

TABLE 7 - REVIEWS

Scheme year	Applications resolved	Since requested review*	Review %	Reviews outstanding	Decisions affirmed	Decisions amended	Decisions Amended - No Monetary Impact	Decisions Amended - Monetary Impact
2018-19	542	11	0	0	9	2	1	1
2019-20	3267	182	1	0	139	42	6	36
2020-21	3352	116	3	0	77	36	6	30
2021-22	3257	100	0	0	70	30	5	25
2022-23	4133	132	7	0	105	20	1	19
2023-24	5714	424	130	0	243	51	4	47
2024-25	5663	344	218	0	111	15	0	15
2025-26	5891	185	182	0	2	1	0	1
Total	31819	1494	541	0	756	197	23	174

Average Number of RFIs Sent by Eligibility and Decision Year

Table 8 below shows the average number of RFIs sent by the Scheme for each application broken down by decision year. This is further broken down by eligibility as determined by the IDM.

TABLE 8 - AVERAGE NUMBER OF RFI'S BY YEAR

Decision Year*	Total Applications	Eligible Applications	Ineligible Applications
Scheme To Date	2.17	2.26	1.65
FY18/19	1.56	1.56	1.00
FY19/20	2.62	2.63	2.28
FY20/21	2.77	2.78	2.45
FY21/22	2.45	2.45	2.27
FY22/23	2.27	2.29	1.93
FY23/24	1.98	2.02	1.80
FY24/25	1.83	1.90	1.63
FY25/26	1.76	1.93	1.41

*Decision Year is taken from the date of the original decision and does not take into account review dates.

Data as at 6 March 2026 and is extracted from a live system. Numbers may vary slightly depending on the date of extraction.

Inquiry into the continuing operation of the National Redress Scheme

Public Hearing – 13 March 2026

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Cults and victim survivors

Question reference number: IQ26-000008

Question asked by: Renee Coffey

Type of Question: Spoken. **Hansard Page/s:** 37-38

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 7 April 2026

Question:

Ms COFFEY: ...My final question, if I can push it, is around cults, and victims-survivors who have come through cult organisations or particular religious groups, where there may be issues of family members still being in those groups—coercion and some of those more complex issues. How do you feel that the scheme is set up to support those types of victims in that context, which can be quite different to a victim of another type of institution where that institution itself has gone through some changes over time? We've heard there are some institutions where those internal changes may not have shifted and that it may be quite challenging for those victims-survivors to process claims. How do you feel the scheme is set up to support them?

CHAIR: You can take this on notice.

Mr Hethington: Could we? It's a difficult question in so much as a cult is not necessarily an institution as defined. We can take that on notice and have a think about it.

CHAIR: Renee, did you want to provide the specific organisational example? I'm just going to say it: Jehovah's Witnesses presented yesterday, and I believe that they are an institution.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: We wouldn't classify that as a cult; it's a religion.

Mr Lovelock: The challenge with that question, in part, is we don't put definitions around whether an institution is or isn't a cult. I'd want to take it on notice.

Ms COFFEY: I appreciate that; that's absolutely reasonable. Can I just reframe that. If there are victims-survivors where the institution that has been named might have practices that would cause shunning, isolation from them, intimidation, threats to family—whatever that institution is, however that's defined—is there any sensitivity to that or any consideration of that in the scheme, in working with victims-survivors who might have a claim against an institution that potentially doesn't have the practices that we would hope are already established?

Mr Lovelock: I will say, having taken the question on notice, there is some more work for us to do in the way we work with victims-survivors, particularly in gathering that information and at the point at which we're advising on an outcome around their interaction with the institution—particularly around the direct personal response component of the scheme. That is a conversation we're having with survivors next week, specifically around the direct personal response component. It is incredibly challenging for every survivor in the scheme to think about the way that they go about engaging with the institution regardless of the kind of institution it is. There are absolutely supports in place for assisting survivors to navigate that, particularly through our support services. But I think there is more to do.

Ms COFFEY: Any information you can provide on notice would be very helpful.

Answer:

The Scheme does not differentiate between institutions based on belief systems or internal governance arrangements. Its focus is on whether an organisation meets the legislative definition of an institution (as outlined in section 6 of the *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018* (Act)) and whether it is responsible for abuse experienced by a survivor (as outlined in section 15 of the Act).

The Scheme recognises some survivors come from institutional contexts where there may be ongoing risks of intimidation, coercion, shunning or isolation, including where family members remain connected to the institution. These circumstances can make engagement with the Scheme more complex.

The Scheme is survivor-focused and trauma-informed, with mechanisms in place to support survivors, including:

- **Choice and control:** Survivors are not required to engage directly with an institution. Participation in the Direct Personal Response (DPR) is optional (as per subsection 42(2)(f) of the Act).
- **Support services:** Survivors can access independent, funded support services to assist them through the application process. Demand for these services remains high, and some survivors may experience waitlists.
- **Individualised consideration:** Survivors' circumstances are taken into account, including safety concerns, family impacts and the risk of re-traumatisation.
- **Confidentiality and safeguards:** Privacy and information-handling arrangements are in place to minimise risks where there are concerns about intimidation or reprisal. The legislative framework for 'Protecting information under the scheme' is set out at Part 4-3 of the Act.

The Scheme acknowledges existing processes may not address all challenges for survivors experiencing ongoing coercive or isolating practices. The Scheme is engaging with survivors and stakeholders to better understand these issues, including how the Direct Personal Response operates in practice, and to consider whether further guidance, flexibility or support is needed.

Inquiry into the continuing operation of the National Redress Scheme

Public Hearing – 13 March 2026

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Complaints and topics

Question reference number: IQ26-000009

Question asked by: Jodie Belyea

Type of Question: Spoken. **Hansard Page/s:** 38

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 7 April 2026

Question:

CHAIR: I've got a couple of other questions here. Firstly, do you have a summary of a report on the complaints and the topics that you're getting complaints on? It would be great to get a sense of those and whether they're linking in with what we're hearing and seeing. I imagine that you would need to take that on—

Mr Lovelock: We see regular reporting. I'm happy to take that on notice. The vast majority, as we've discussed before, relate to timeliness. While we're seeing an increase in the number of complaints, we're not seeing an increase in the number of complaints as a proportion of applications. It's stayed within that three to six per cent range over the life of the scheme.

Answer:

Attachment A provides a breakdown of complaints in comparison to applications in each financial year from 2022-23:

Complaints received in any given year largely relate to applications lodged in earlier financial years. Current complaint case profile is driven by older application cohorts, not by applications lodged this year. This pattern has been consistent over time and means complaint data tends to lag operational improvements rather than reflect them in real time.

When complaints are viewed alongside application numbers, complaints continue to represent a small proportion of total applications (approximately 3 - 6%).

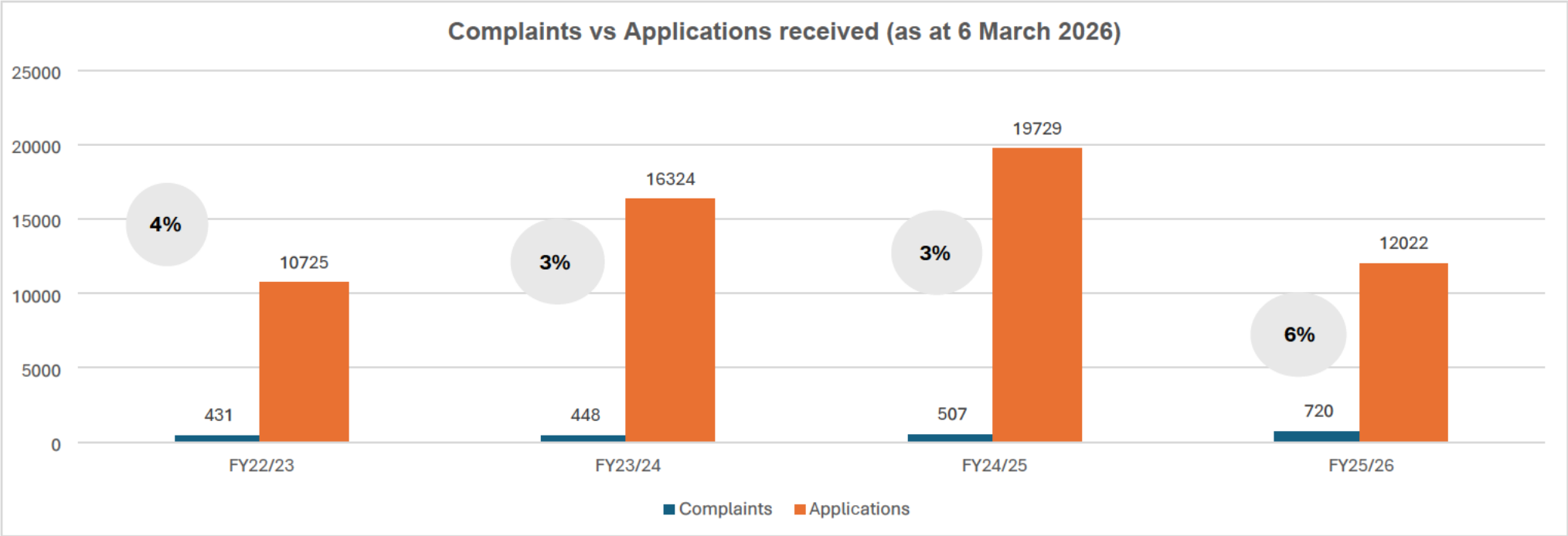
Themes breakdown

The primary theme across all financial years continues to be timeliness of application processing by the Scheme. Timeliness, Scheme's service and redress outcome are the three highest themes of the 720 complaints received in FY25/26 (to 6/3/2026).

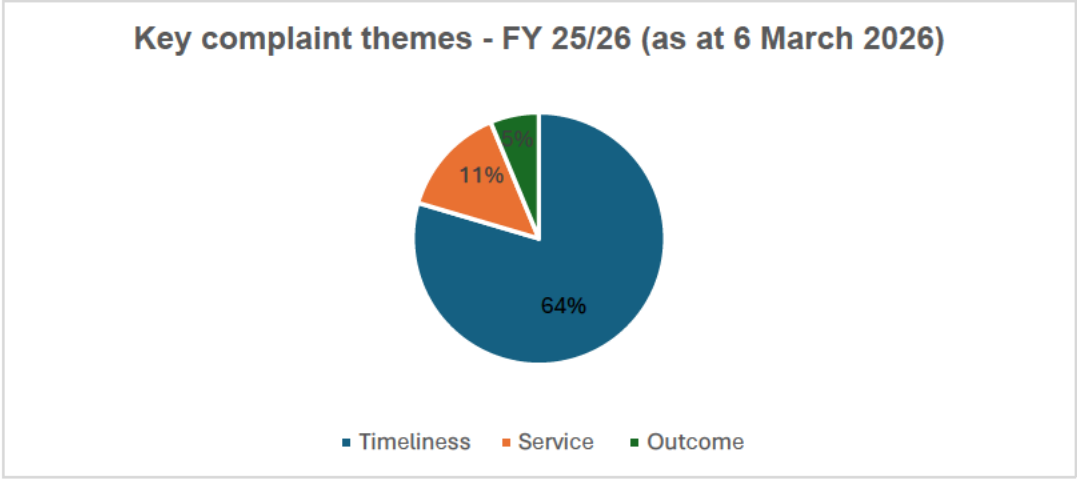
- 457 complaints related to timeliness
- 82 related to the Scheme's service
- 30 related to redress outcomes.

The service theme includes complaints about responsiveness, incorrect information provided and staff behaviour; the content or nature of forms or letters and the communication channels that are available to survivors.

The outcome theme relates to complaints about any component of a redress offer, ineligible outcomes, the acceptance period and zero-dollar outcomes.



*NB: not all complaints received in an FY mean the application was received in the same FY



Inquiry into the continuing operation of the National Redress Scheme

Public Hearing – 13 March 2026

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Application processing

Question reference number: IQ26-000010

Question asked by: Jodie Belyea

Type of Question: Spoken. **Hansard Page/s:** 38

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 7 April 2026

Question:

CHAIR: One of the pieces of feedback about timeliness has been that there's a period of time that we've been advised of, which was—what was it? Twelve to 16 months? What we've heard today and read in the submissions is that it's more likely to be 16 to 24 months. So we need to keep interrogating what the difference is between what we're getting from you and what we're getting from—

Mr Lovelock: We can give you a breakdown, based on our data, of each application by long they have been with us, to give you a sense of it as a proportion and how that results in the average figure that is reported in the public data about the scheme.

Answer:

Over the life of the Scheme, the average processing time from application receipt to outcome notification is **16 months**.

For applications processed in the **past 12 months**, the average processing time is **25 months**.

The difference reflects the time period used to calculate each average.

A breakdown of applications on hand with the Scheme as at 6 March 2026 is as follows:

Timeframe	Number of applications on hand
Less than 12 months	17,532
12 to 18 months	9,213
18 to 24 months	8,137
24 to 30 months	4,343
30 to 36 months	2,393
Greater than 36 months	2,828
TOTAL	44,446

Note: the data above is extracted from a live system, and numbers may vary slightly depending on the date of extraction.

Inquiry into the continuing operation of the National Redress Scheme

Public Hearing – 13 March 2026

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Communication strategy

Question reference number: IQ26-000011

Question asked by: Jodie Belyea

Type of Question: Spoken. **Hansard Page/s:** 39

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 7 April 2026

Question:

CHAIR: I want to ask one more question about the transitioning piece—communication and raising awareness of the scheme among different cohorts and those particularly marginalised. Is there a plan? In thinking about the transitioning, have you got timelines and those sorts of things?

Mr Hetherington: Yes.

Mr Lovelock: We have a draft communication strategy for this next period, which will be the subject of discussion and consultation with both survivors and support services next week. I'm happy to provide that draft and the updates that we make following that consultation.

Mr Hetherington: Depending on how time's going, we can go into it or provide something outside of the session. In language, for communities—we've taken all of those into consideration.

Ms Still: And through existing mechanisms where survivors have trusted organisations that they go to. We're going to use those intermediaries to actually get that message across, because our aim is to get to many survivors—particularly those that are more marginalised and vulnerable—so that they can put in an application to the scheme before 30 June 2027.

Answer:

The current draft of the *National Redress Scheme Communication Strategy 2026-2028* (Strategy) is at **Attachment A**.

The draft strategy is undergoing consultation, including from the March 2026 Survivor Roundtable and March 2026 Redress Support Services Forum and is subject to change.



Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Communication Strategy

National Redress Scheme 2026-2028

March 2026



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Aim

This strategy outlines a trauma-informed, culturally safe and accessible communication approach to support the National Redress Scheme (the Scheme) before it ends on 30 June 2028.

The 2026-2028 communication priorities raise awareness of the Scheme closure date and limited time to apply for redress. These priorities are balanced with messaging to improve application accuracy, improve navigation of application processes, increase recognition of support services and promote non-monetary components of redress.

It is essential survivors of institutional child sexual abuse have the opportunity to apply to the Scheme before applications close on 30 June 2027, if they choose to do so.

Communication objectives

- Increase awareness of the National Redress Scheme and the application closing date among target audiences by:
 - developing clear and consistent communication from the department on the Scheme's application process, eligibility and application closing date
 - delivering a suite of communication products to stakeholders and intermediaries to ensure nationally consistent messaging is rolled out locally
 - informing key stakeholders and target audiences of Scheme closure, ensuring survivors have the opportunity to apply before 30 June 2027
- Support survivors in their application journey by:
 - developing plain language guides and tools to improve application information accuracy, and improve navigation of the application process
 - promote the availability of support through Redress Support Services, and empower survivors to access all elements of redress.
- Improve transparency in Scheme information and processes for survivors, Redress Support Services and institutions.

Target audiences

Primary audience

- Survivors, families and friends with emphasis on vulnerable people considering applying to the Scheme.

Specialist and/or secondary audiences

- Survivor priority groups:
 - First Nations peoples
 - People from CALD backgrounds
 - People with disability
 - People who live in rural and remote areas
 - Incarcerated or previously incarcerated survivors (prisoners)
 - Seniors and older people
- Connected survivors: those undergoing redress application process, or have received an outcome and not yet responded
- Redress Support Services including Knowmore.

Intermediaries

Intermediaries targeted through this communication strategy

- Frontline service providers working in the health, welfare, disability, CALD and First Nations sectors who would like to support their clients/patients
- Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) and public library members
- Australian Government departments/agencies for dissemination of messages
 - Services Australia
 - National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA)
 - Department of Health, Disability and Ageing
 - Primary Health Networks
- Advocacy organisations and groups, such as
 - Australian Libraries and Information Association (ALIA)
 - Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA)
 - The Grace Tame Foundation
 - The Healing Foundation

- National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
- trauma-support providers like Lifeline, Beyond Blue,
- disability advocates
- mental health organisations
- homeless and housing support organisations.

Intermediaries to be targeted via engagements managed by the Redress Group

- Redress Support Services
- Participating government and non-government institutions
 - including those still onboarding
- State and territory governments, including
 - Inter-Jurisdictional Committee
 - correctional services, particularly prison social workers and case managers
- Relevant Australian Government departments/agencies
 - Services Australia
 - National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA)
 - Attorney General's Department
 - Department of Home Affairs
 - National Office of Child Safety
 - Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.

Stakeholders

- Ministerial offices
 - Minister for Social Services, Tanya Plibersek
 - Assistant Minister for Social Services, Ged Kearney
- Internal DSS stakeholders
 - Redress Group employees
 - Independent Decision Makers
 - call centre and processing staff, complaints, assurance functions.



Key messages

The following high-level messages will be used across all media and communication activities, including talking points, website and social media content, and media releases. Additional key messages will be tailored for each audience group in consultation with the Redress Group.

Key messages for survivors

Key messages tailored to survivor priority groups, highlighting key issues and actions will be developed as an activity of this strategy in April 2026.

- The National Redress Scheme is for people who were sexually abused when they were a child, at an institution.
- The National Redress Scheme is coming to an end. Applications will be accepted until 30 June 2027.
- Redress applications submitted by 30 June 2027 will continue to be processed until the Scheme's legislated end date on 30 June 2028.
- It is a big decision to apply for the scheme. Specialist Redress Support Services can provide practical and emotional support to applicants before, during and after they apply.
- The National Redress Scheme can offer eligible survivors a redress payment, access to counselling services and a direct personal response from the institution.
- Accessible information on how to apply to the National Redress Scheme and access to support services is available at nationalredress.gov.au or by calling 1800 737 377.

Key messages for intermediaries

Key messages tailored to intermediary roles and channels will be developed as an activity of this strategy in March 2026.

- The National Redress Scheme is coming to an end. Applications will be accepted until 30 June 2027.
- Redress applications submitted by 30 June 2027 will continue to be processed until the Scheme's legislated end date on 30 June 2028.
- It is important to share this information with your community and clients to make sure eligible people have the option to apply.
- Applicants should feel empowered to seek all parts of redress, including a direct personal response, as this can be a meaningful part of their healing journey.
- Accurate and complete applications are often processed faster. We encourage applicants to make use of the free Redress Support Services to help them through the application process.

- Applications to the National Redress Scheme can be made online through myGov or by filling in a paper application form available from nationalredress.gov.au or by calling 1800 737 377.

Key messages for institutions

Key messages tailored to institutions, outlining responsibilities and requirements, will be developed as an activity of this strategy in March 2026.

- The National Redress Scheme is coming to an end. The last applications will be accepted on 30 June 2027.
- Redress applications submitted by 30 June 2027 will continue to be processed until the Scheme's legislated end date on 30 June 2028.
- You will continue to receive notifications until the Scheme closes.
- Thank you for your signing up to support the Scheme. With your assistance, many people have been able to move forward with their healing journey.
- Your active participation will also prevent future harm and make institutions safer for the next generation.

Evaluation framework

The Communication Branch will undertake regular evaluation of activities and provide a quarterly report to Redress Group Executive.

What we measure

Outputs	How we measure
Engagement Is the target audience aware/interested?	Quantitative and qualitative measures will be used to evaluate the success of the strategy such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • website analytics measuring visits, resource downloads, click throughs, increased time spent on pages • social media engagement • media coverage • analytics on stakeholder articles and newsletters • stakeholder feedback • applicant participation and feedback in Survivor Journey Survey
Content Are the messages clear and understood?	
Participation Is the target audience informed/enabled?	
Channel effectiveness Are we reaching our target audience?	
Outcomes	How we measure
Sentiment Is feedback positive, negative or neutral?	Success will be measured through determining if there is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • media coverage around the National Redress Scheme, and specifically in relation to target audiences • applicant feedback in Survivor Journey Survey • commentary and engagement on social media channels • stakeholder feedback through direct requests or anecdotal • reported feedback from RSS.
Impact Have strategic communication objectives been met?	
Stakeholder Are internal/external stakeholders satisfied?	

Activity Schedule

The following activities are recommended to meet the objectives of this strategy.

Final scope of activities will be determined following stakeholder consultation with survivors and Redress Support services and will also be informed by the National Redress Scheme Trauma Informed Framework.

Phase one (1 March – 30 June 2026)		
Purpose is to prepare resources for engagements and plan implementation		
Communication activity	Description	Audience
Narrative and audience messaging	Initial drafts are circulated within Redress Group and approved for use. Messaging will be reviewed by Trauma Informed Advisor and be informed by the National Redress Scheme Trauma Informed Framework and subject matter experts.	All audience groups
Review and update information on Education Portal	Institutions have access to a wide range of factsheets, FAQs and information on the Redress Education Portal. An audit of materials will be conducted, ensuring content aligns with narrative.	Participating government and non-government institutions
Eighth Anniversary Review comms plan development	A communication plan will be developed to support activities for the legislated Eighth Anniversary Review.	All audience groups
Social media content	New content for social media to commence on DSS channels, emphasising application closing date.	All survivor cohorts
Communication with Jurisdictions	Messaging provided for Jurisdictions and Government agencies to use in own distribution channels. supporting resources as required.	State and territory governments, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inter-Jurisdictional Committee - correctional services, particularly prison social workers and case managers Relevant Australian Government departments/agencies
Update intermediary's social media kits	Update the existing social media kits to include newly approved content.	Intermediaries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Frontline service providers

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advocacy organisations - NIAA <p>To inform: all survivor cohorts</p>
Review and update Services Australia materials	<p>Talking points and internal messaging used by Services Australia shopfronts will be reviewed and updated to align to narrative.</p> <p>Use and distribution of existing printed resources supplies (stored internally by Services Australia) will be evaluated, with materials reallocated to DSS stores for use at engagements.</p>	<p>Services Australia</p> <p>To inform: all survivor cohorts</p>
Media opportunity	<p>Media opportunity encouraging survivors to submit an application before the 2027 deadline. Emphasise all elements of redress and support post application.</p> <p>Also coincides with Eighth Anniversary Review.</p>	<p>Media</p> <p>Public</p>

Phase two (1 July 2026 – 30 June 2027)

Purpose is to commence broad communication and engagement until applications close

Communication activity	Description	Audience
Institution engagement	Using channels already established by the Redress Group, short information pieces will be developed outlining obligations and requirements for institutions leading to Scheme closure.	Participating government and non-government institutions
Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) – newsletter input	Providing input and messaging into the Australian Library and Information Association’s fortnightly e-newsletter which is distributed to over 13,000 subscribers working in or interested in the library and information services sector.	ALIA members and subscribers To inform: all survivor cohorts
Content for inclusion into “About Time” Australia’s national prison newspaper	<p>Messaging to be sent to About Time, a national prison newspaper.</p> <p>About Time is currently distributed in print, for free, to every prison in Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Western Australia and the ACT. The digital version of About Time is uploaded, for free, to every prison tablet in New South Wales, and each incarcerated person receives an alert that the paper is available for download.</p>	Incarcerated or previously incarcerated survivors

<p>Continued engagement through existing channels</p>	<p>Issue quarterly messaging</p> <p>Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one year until applications close • application closing reminder and obligations • application accuracy and incarcerated survivors • application accuracy and importance of support 	<p>RSS</p> <p>Intermediaries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Frontline service providers - Advocacy organisations - NIAA <p>To inform: all survivor cohorts</p>
<p>Additional CALD language translations</p>	<p>RSS have requested additional languages to be added to the CALD language offering.</p> <p>Resources are already approved and finalised.</p>	<p>CALD survivors</p> <p>On Redress website</p>
<p>Update existing resources</p>	<p>Resources and support for eligible survivors guide</p> <p>The existing CALD Survivor Guide will be updated for English audiences, to include additional resources and information links. This guide clearly outlines the application process and touchpoints with Scheme.</p> <p>Once designed, guide will be shared with intermediaries and uploaded to the Redress website.</p>	<p>All survivor cohorts</p> <p>On Redress website</p>
<p>Develop new resources</p>	<p>Application accuracy fact sheet</p> <p>Fact sheet for use by RSS and stakeholders in their activities. A simple guide on how to complete application form and application process to improve the journey for survivors. It also shows how to identify false or misleading information.</p> <p>Support services fact sheet</p> <p>For inclusion in Scheme letters and for distribution by RSS. Promotes the support and services of RSS and how to access their services.</p> <p>Direct Personal Response (DPR) and Counselling and Psychological Care (CPC) fact sheets</p> <p>Development of RSS fact sheets encouraging participation in DPR and CPC, includes testimonials and quotes from case</p>	<p>RSS</p> <p>On Redress website</p> <p>Intermediaries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Frontline service providers - Advocacy organisations - NIAA - Services Australia <p>To inform: all survivor cohorts</p>

	<p>studies.</p> <p>Once designed, all resources will be shared with RSS and intermediaries and uploaded to website.</p>	
Develop First Nations resources	<p>Scheme explainer fact sheet</p> <p>Comparison fact sheet to outline differences between National Redress Scheme, and state / territory specific schemes such as Stolen Generation and Stolen Wages schemes.</p>	<p>RSS</p> <p>On Redress website</p> <p>Frontline service providers</p> <p>First Nations intermediaries</p> <p>To inform: First Nations peoples</p>
Develop case studies	<p>Leveraging on engaged survivors, seek testimonials or case studies for use in media and by Minister.</p> <p>CALD survivors are to be prioritised as this is an identified gap.</p>	All audience groups
Media pitch to specialist media publications	<p><i>Continuation of activity from 2025.</i></p> <p>Using the media pitch developed for the 2025 CALD engagements, update to include time-relevant messaging and distribute to media publications for the following groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seniors • First Nations peoples • CALD media channels • Disability advocate and carers publications • Rural and local newspapers 	<p>Media</p> <p>To inform: all survivor cohorts</p>
Anniversary of apology with media opportunity	<p>2026 focus on deadline for application submission</p> <p>Media opportunity to encourage survivors to submit their application.</p>	<p>All audience groups</p> <p>Media</p>
Update: Narrative and audience messages – for Scheme closure	<p>Update key messages and narrative to include specific information on obligations and requirements for Scheme closure.</p>	All audience groups
Media opportunity	<p>Media opportunity to thank survivors for submitting their application. Emphasise support post application messaging.</p>	<p>Media</p> <p>All audience groups</p>
Revise Google Adwords media buy	<p>Revise Google Adwords media buy from 1 July 2027 to 30 June 2028.</p>	All audience groups

	Focus will now need to be on promoting support services rather than applications.	
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Phase three (1 July 2027 – 30 June 2028)

Purpose is to keep survivors informed of application processing

Communication activity	Description	Audience
Scheme website content review and update	<p>All webpages to be reviewed and either updated or archived as the Scheme ends.</p> <p>Review information flow for applicants so they are informed of progress of application. Continue to promote support services, meaningful DPRs and access to CPC services.</p> <p>New messaging to provide clarity for institutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - operational guidance on their responsibilities during wind-down - clarity on invoicing timeframes messaging that shows planning is underway and their input is valued. 	All audience groups
Social media content	New content for social media to be aligned to Scheme closure and ongoing support services messaging.	All survivor cohorts
Continued engagement with RSS and stakeholders	Theme: Messaging and content will be changed to inform of next steps in management of Scheme.	RSS Intermediaries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Frontline service providers - Advocacy organisations - NIAA To inform: all survivor cohorts
Anniversary of apology with media opportunity	Media opportunity to provide update on application processing	Media All audience groups
Media opportunity	Media opportunity to acknowledge the 10 years of the National Redress Scheme and emphasise the positive of redress and the healing journey.	Media All audience groups

Inquiry into the continuing operation of the National Redress Scheme

Public Hearing – 13 March 2026

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Application backlogs

Question reference number: IQ26-000012

Question asked by: David Shoebridge

Type of Question: Spoken. **Hansard Page/s:** 40

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 7 April 2026

Question:

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Can you, on notice, provide us with genuine detail about what was done to have a 4½-fold increase in decision-making—I assume there hasn't been a 4½-fold increase in staffing—with stable or falling staffing? Some of what we've heard about the quality of the decision-making presents a slightly different perspective when we hear that the same resources are deciding 4½ times as many decisions.

Mr Hetherington: We'd be happy to come back to you with more detail on that.

CHAIR: So your question is on ensuring the quality?

Mr Hetherington: Well, no; it's: 'What are the things that got us there?'

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: What got you there, and then reflect—

Mr Hetherington: We'd be happy to come back—

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Anyhow, maybe that's something to come back to, sooner rather than later, to look at.

Answer:

The Scheme has undertaken a series of initiatives to increase application throughput and improve survivor-led experience, with a focus on transparency and trauma informed principles.

Scheme Improvements

Improving Engagement with Survivors

The Scheme Prioritisation Policy was updated in September 2025 and provides three tiers of support for highly time sensitive applications:

- Tier 1: Highly time sensitive (applicant is terminally ill).
- Tier 2: Moderately time sensitive (advanced age, illness or extenuating circumstances)
- Tier 3: Standard time sensitivity (majority of applications).

Dedicated teams in Redress Group support the prioritisation policy, with processes in place to assist applicants who may be presenting in immediate crisis or where imminent risk is identified.

Culturally safe options are available for First Nations applicants, including access to First Nations staff (where possible), and prioritisation applied in line with policy.

Enhancing Application Throughput

A dedicated team was established in November 2024 to address delayed applications. By March 2026, the team progressed 2,210 applications to Request for Information and 1,020 applications to decision-ready from an initial backlog of 2,800 applications. Similar approaches to this are being adopted on an application cohort basis.

Improved triage processes introduced in August 2025 now ensures applications contain sufficient information before progressing. This included the introduction of tailored Section 24 letters, reducing repeated Scheme contacts with applicants, and consolidation of key quality assurance checks through the introduction of the Application (Completeness Check) Passport.

As at 20 March 2026, 3,254 tailored letters have been issued, with an average response time of 30 days. These measures support Independent Decision Makers make accurate and informed determinations.

From October 2025, targeted surge activity has addressed aged and non-progressing applications. Surge teams progressed 1,014 applications to determinations and resolved 3,225 duplicate and withdrawn applications. Aged applications reduced from 6,183 from October 2025 to 5,396 in March 2026.

To further reduce delays, suitable applicants now receive outcomes in writing only, while vulnerable applicants continue to receive a phone call first, prior to providing the outcome in writing. This has resulted in a 13% increase in outcomes advised (4,192 compared to 3,712 in the same period last year) and removed delays caused by repeated call attempts.

Streamlining Complex Assessment Processes

Improvements to the Serious Criminal Convictions (SCC) workflow between September 2025 and January 2026 has resulted in 760 outcomes, representing a 460% uplift in application progression compared to the same period in 2024.

This included simplified workflows, consolidation of team functions through improved Scheme structures and daily reporting integration.

Independent Decision Maker (IDM) Capacity and Quality

IDMs increased to 75 alongside of finalising implementation of the Independent Decision-Making Quality Framework emphasising trauma-informed, consistent decision-making.

Enhancements include stronger quality assurance, transparency, and contract performance management. Quality assurance processes prioritise trauma-informed practice, procedural fairness, and alignment with the reasonable likelihood standard.

Implementation is being finalised. The Scheme is focussing on shared accountability for consistent, trauma-informed decision making, with quality assurance strengthened across the application process. Particular focus is placed on decision management stages to increase transparency, reduce re-traumatisation and build trust in the Scheme. Contract management of IDMs is also being strengthened, with clear expectations for conformance with the Quality Framework. Where issues are identified, performance management actions will be taken, including addressing delays in finalising

Automation and Digital Efficiency

The Scheme commenced introduction of Smart templates in September 2025 saving up to 15-20 minutes per S24 letter while maintaining quality assurance standards. As at 20 March 2026, the Scheme has issued 3,254 tailored letters since commencement in August 2025.

Reporting and Transparency Enhancements

As at February 2026, updates have been made to reporting, including tracking of invalid applications to strengthen Scheme performance, transparency, and visibility.

These initiatives delivered a major uplift in Scheme performance by streamlining processes, empowering experienced staff, and targeting quality assurance effort where it adds the most value.

Inquiry into the continuing operation of the National Redress Scheme

Public Hearing – 13 March 2026

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Cult/institutions

Question reference number: IQ26-000013

Question asked by: David Shoebridge

Type of Question: Spoken. **Hansard Page/s:** 40-41

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 7 April 2026

Question:

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Anyhow, maybe that's something to come back to, sooner rather than later, to look at. This is a question on the issue of cults/institutions. Let's ignore cults. There are institutions that have cultures in place where, if you leave, or leave and speak out against the institution, you are not just marginalised; you are shunned and excluded. There are a series of institutions that have that as part of their organisational structure. Jehovah's is one that was mentioned, but there's the Plymouth Brethren, the Exclusive Brethren—there's a series of them. There are two things about that. One is: what steps are put in place so that, when you have somebody coming from an institution like that, you put in extra protection measures, because you realise what an extraordinarily appalling journey that will be for them? The second is: 'How do you get in to those institutions?' because they also tend to have very closed communities where they don't encourage their community members to go out and look at phone numbers or websites. They're two different parts of the same problem.

Mr Hetherington: How are we making sure we're getting the reach so that people know of it? Yes.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Are you thinking about a strategy, and are you putting in place distinct protections for people who've come out of those institutions?

Ms COFFEY: I looked up the wording. It's 'high-control groups'.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Yes, that is a great description, Renee.

CHAIR: To David's point, and to Renee's: if there is limited advice on what we need to have in our recommendations around how we deal with high-control organisations and applications—

Mr Hetherington: Would it be helpful if we came back to you, on notice, with some details about the sorts of support services—

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Yes.

Mr Hetherington: and you can see where we provide that support and the extent to which it can be tailored around people.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: And if you've thought about those particularly vulnerable survivor groups who may not be coming, and, if they are coming, have extra special—

Mr Hetherington: And how we are supporting them when they do come—yes.

Answer

The Department of Social Services (the Department) recognises some survivors of child sexual abuse from high-control or closed institutional environments, including certain religious organisations, may experience heightened vulnerability after leaving those settings.

The National Redress Scheme is available to all eligible survivors on a non-discriminatory basis. While the Scheme does not operate cohort-specific programs, the Department acknowledges survivors exiting high-control environments may face additional barriers when engaging with government processes.

Within the scope of the Scheme, this awareness is reflected through:

- Trauma-informed service delivery, with staff trained to recognise fear of authority, coercive control dynamics, and the impacts of prolonged social isolation that may arise after leaving a high-control environment.
- The Scheme can suppress an application to maximise an applicant's anonymity.
- Flexible and careful engagement, including allowing additional time for individuals to consider their options, providing clear and plain-language information about Redress processes, and reinforcing confidentiality and the voluntary nature of participation.
- Supported referrals, where appropriate, to a Redress Support Service*, external counselling, legal advice (including advice on redress civil and criminal litigation options), financial counselling or community-based services with experience supporting people who have left closed or high-control institutions, including referral to the Services Australia Social Work service where heightened vulnerability or risk is identified.
- Support to access a Direct Personal Response (DPR) via careful liaison with responsible institutions.

The Department does not undertake proactive outreach into closed or high-control communities, recognising unsolicited contact could create safety risks or unintended consequences, particularly for individuals who have not yet left or remain under community scrutiny. Instead, the Department focuses on making Redress information publicly available, accessible, and confidential, and on supporting awareness through trusted intermediaries and mainstream service systems that individuals may approach after leaving.

The Department agrees this remains an area requiring ongoing attention. Current work focuses on strengthening staff capability, improving understanding of barriers faced by particularly vulnerable survivors, and ensuring accessibility of Redress processes without creating additional risk for individuals seeking support.

*A Redress Support Service can support a survivor to develop and lodge their application, provide in-house counselling, access a meaningful DPR, and action referrals as appropriate.

Inquiry into the continuing operation of the National Redress Scheme

Public Hearing – 13 March 2026

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Support service funding

Question reference number: IQ26-000014

Question asked by: Dean Smith

Type of Question: Spoken. **Hansard Page/s:** 41-42

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 7 April 2026

Question:

Senator DEAN SMITH: I support Senator Shoebridge's point. The department has a letter signed by Mr Riley, which has been provided, which makes a very, very clear statement that those previous concerns around conflicts of interest no longer exist and may never have existed. I don't have the letter in front of me, unfortunately. I think that correspondence is very, very important and should be well known across the department because that issue has always been contested. It has stood in the way of Tuart Place being able to participate as fully in the scheme and supporting—

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: It was the Find & Connect scheme, but it was also that, when the decision was made to roll over the funding for the existing support services, there was no opportunity for Tuart Place to put their hand up to be part of the support service. They have a large cohort of survivors.

Mr Hetherington: Can we look at this and come back, rather than try to take it on the fly? I haven't seen the evidence, and we probably need to get some of the pieces together. Can we commit to coming back?

Mr Lovelock: I did hear the evidence. I certainly had understood the Find & Connect piece. I hadn't appreciated the same concern around the rollover of funding for support services.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: They were both live, and the rationale given for rolling over the funding of support services, according to Tuart Place, was that that meant survivors didn't have to double-handle or revisit their trauma. But Tuart Place, I thought, made a compelling argument that they have 900 survivors on their books, and the fact that they're not a support service means they have to revisit their trauma, and that's a bad outcome. If there were a way of fixing that, I think that would be a terrific thing to do.

Mr Hetherington: We'll take a look at that issue and we'll come back.

Answer:

Tuart Place is funded as a Redress Support Service (RSS) through a sub-contracting arrangement with Knowmore Legal Service (Knowmore). In 2025-26, Tuart Place was provided funding of \$750,950 (GST exclusive), via this subcontracting arrangement.

Tuart Place applied for funding in both the Department of Social Services' (the Department) open competitive grant rounds for Find and Connect in 2012 and RSS in 2018 and 2021. The Selection Advisory Panel was not satisfied that Tuart Place demonstrated sufficient mitigation strategies to manage disclosed conflicts of interest. Tuart Place was one of six organisations which were unsuccessful in the open process due to potential conflict of interest issues.

In 2020, the Department established a sub-contracting arrangement through Knowmore for Tuart Place to deliver RSS activities. This mitigated conflict of interest concerns by ensuring all applications prepared by Tuart Place were independently reviewed by Knowmore prior to submission to the Scheme.

In 2025, the Department worked closely with Tuart Place to understand their conflict of interest and is now satisfied they are no longer relevant and any potential or future conflicts of interest that arise will be managed appropriately. Knowmore is also no longer required to review applications developed by Tuart Place.

A new funding round has not been undertaken at this time due to the time-limited nature of existing agreements and the need to balance service continuity, survivor support and funding certainty. In practice, agreements are typically extended on a year-by-year basis, contingent on funding allocations confirmed through the Budget process. This approach supports the ongoing delivery of critical services for survivors while allowing government to manage fiscal constraints and respond to emerging priorities.

Inquiry into the continuing operation of the National Redress Scheme

Public Hearing – 13 March 2026

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Medical procedure abuse

Question reference number: IQ26-000015

Question asked by: David Shoebridge

Type of Question: Spoken. **Hansard Page/s:** 42

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 7 April 2026

Question:

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: The final thing is that, as you may recall, in the last parliament there was a large amount of work around women who had been abused in medical procedures. Can you give an update on where that's up to in terms of numbers.

Ms Fievez: You'd be aware that we updated the guidance, and that's been implemented.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Thank you for doing that. That was a long path. I've heard from some women already that it's meaningful.

Ms Fievez: That was implemented late in 2024. Applications have continued to progress through to the scheme to eligible determinations. There were a number of applications that had previously been found ineligible. We conducted a review of all of those and are finalising those and contacting those applicants that, on consideration, based on the updated guidance, would likely progress to an eligible outcome. We're working to contact those applicants and progress back through.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Can you provide numbers?

Ms Fievez: There were 16. I don't have the numbers right in front of me, but I'll take it on notice and come back with the data.

Mr Hetherington: I think we did provide some numbers at an earlier—

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: You did.

Mr Hetherington: We'll come back with some updated numbers.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: That was historical. I know the guidelines have been published, but have they been shared with support services and care leavers groups? Has there been some communication about the amended guidelines?

Ms Fievez: There has been communication about the amended guidelines, and that guidance has been provided to care leavers—so CLAN. That's been provided there.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: It wouldn't just be CLAN that would have had—

Ms Fievez: No.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Can you provide on notice what's been done to get that communication out?

Ms Fievez: Yes.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: These survivors' groups, CLAN and others, have dealt with that trauma internally for so long. I want to give my acknowledgement of their work.

Answer:

The Scheme committed to reviewing 18 intrusive internal medical setting applications under the updated guidance. Of these:

- Three applications have now been finalised with eligible outcomes advised to the applicants.
- Four applications that were previously determined as ineligible, and which, based on updated policy advice, would now likely progress to an eligible outcome, are being progressed accordingly.
- One applicant's ineligible outcome acknowledged the abuse but remains ineligible due to institutional responsibility.
- Seven ineligible outcomes were confirmed as correctly determined.

Updated Policy Advice

The Department of Social Services made a range of improvements to the Abuse in Medical Settings Policy advice in late 2024 and again in May 2025, to bolster the Scheme's guidance to Independent Decision Makers (IDMs).

On 9 December 2024, the former Committee was provided a copy of this policy advice. The current Committee was provided a copy of the revised May 2025 advice on 19 September 2025.

A joint media release between Minister Plibersek and Attorney-General Rowland on the seventh anniversary of the National Apology to Victims and Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse (22 October 2025) noted the Scheme's updated policy advice.

The Scheme has taken the following action to increase the quality and consistency of decisions made for cases describing intrusive internal examinations (IIE) or 'virginity testing', as per the former Scheme Operator's commitments to the former Committee in October 2024:

- Updated policy advice for IDMs in determining applications describing sexual abuse characterised as including IIE and 'virginity testing'.
- Enhanced training for IDMs, including specific guidance on the wider practice of IIE and guidance around such examinations being performed to disguise sexual abuse.
- Created specialised knowledge for assessing these applications.

Inquiry into the continuing operation of the National Redress Scheme

Public Hearing – 13 March 2026

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: State ward application process

Question reference number: IQ26-000016

Question asked by: David Shoebridge

Type of Question: Spoken. **Hansard Page/s:** 42-43

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 7 April 2026

Question:

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: It's true. Being exposed to these histories daily and maintaining a public interest and a humane engagement with it—I join with the deputy chair in that. This may be a parochial state issue, but I've had concerns raised with me about the slow processing of state ward matters—that there are significant backlogs for New South Wales state ward matters. It's a real issue. Is that because the department's not getting back? Is there a reason for this?

Ms Fievez: I'll take that on notice and come back with more detail. If it's the conversation that I think has been had, it's not the National Redress Scheme; it's actually the New South Wales scheme.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: That's what I'm asking.

Ms Fievez: We're not aware of any issues per se, outside of a stakeholder who raised that with me as recently as yesterday, but that's a piece of work that we'll have to—

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: I think we may have been talking to the same person. Can you get some clarity on that? My understanding is that people have been waiting three years for New South Wales state ward applications to be resolved.

Mr Lovelock: I think it also highlights that scheme staff are under pressure and that, for states and territories in particular, as participating institutions there is additional pressure there as well in terms of throughput.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Where the problem is—if we have to go and look at New South Wales and get them to properly fund it, let us know.

Ms Fievez: I think that issue is actually around the provision of reports that have come through from the New South Wales government for state boards to support applications, but I'll take that on notice.

Answer:

The National Redress Scheme (the Scheme) is not currently aware of any backlog relating to New South Wales state ward matters. The Scheme maintains ongoing engagement with all states and territories and will continue to seek information regarding any potential backlogs in relation to state ward matters. Should issues be identified, the Scheme will work with the relevant jurisdiction to explore options to support timely management.