

C.A.N.

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Submission to the NSW Government - Why the Redress Committee Must Continue Beyond 2027

The continued operation of the Redress Committee and an open-ended National Redress Scheme is essential. Ending the Scheme after a fixed date fails to recognise the enduring nature of trauma, the time it can take for survivors to come forward, and the powerful symbolic message that a cut-off date sends about the importance of accountability.

1. Trauma Does Not Expire - Survivors are Affected Long After the Abuse

Trauma experienced in childhood, particularly child sexual abuse, including a religious context and institutional abuse, often persists for decades and can result in chronic psychological harm. Longitudinal mental health research shows that a meaningful proportion of trauma survivors continue to experience elevated post-traumatic stress symptoms many years - even over a decade - after the original event, and can face ongoing anxiety, depression, and reduced quality of life.

The ongoing need for psychological support is recognised in national standards - for example, redress counselling is recommended to be available throughout a survivor's life, not merely for a fixed short term.

Also see: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/the-british-journal-of-psychiatry/article/trajectory-of-posttraumatic-stress-following-traumatic-injury-6year-followup/BF901F6CD762ED0666C6FABA6353332F>

2. Many Survivors Need Years Before They Are Ready to Claim

Trauma survivors often delay disclosure of abuse for many years. With abuse perpetrated in a religious context, survivors may wait to disclose until religious parents pass. The process of acknowledging abuse, preparing to tell one's story, and being emotionally ready to navigate complex systems can take a long time. Advocates warn that the complexity of the Scheme and the emotional work involved - including gathering evidence and confronting painful memories - means many survivors need extended time and support before they can apply. Survivors can make many attempts to start the process, being emotionally impacted and then delay the completion of the application.

This is supported by evidence from survivor engagement and service providers: engagement with the Scheme can trigger re-traumatisation if not adequately supported, and many survivors require extensive emotional support throughout the process.

Also See <https://www.relationshipsvictoria.org.au/media/52dk5w5w/rav-submission-to-the-joint-standing-committee-on-the-implementation-of-the-national-redress-scheme-april-2020.pdf>

3. A Deadline Sends a Symbolic Message About Importance and Accountability

The decision to set an end date for redress applications communicates political and social priorities. If the government signals that redress is only relevant until mid-2027, institutions and the broader community may interpret this as a signal that redress is no longer important or urgent. There is a strong concern from the survivor community that perpetrating Institutions will also withdraw community support and financial support aligning with the government's position to cease Redress. This will have devastating impacts on Survivor networks such as the Clergy Abused Network. Conversely, an ongoing commitment reflects that institutional child abuse is a long-term societal harm requiring sustained accountability and support.

Internationally and domestically, advocates and legal bodies have called for extensions to redress deadlines to ensure survivors are not denied justice by arbitrary time limits.

An extension or ongoing Scheme would also align with calls from advisory bodies and advocates to address backlogs and ensure trauma-informed, survivor-focused outcomes - which cannot be accomplished by an artificial deadline.

See <https://koffels.com.au/what-happens-when-the-national-redress-scheme-expires/>

4. Many Survivors Still Don't Know the Scheme Exists or Understand Their Eligibility

Research and committee reports have found that if the Scheme closes on schedule, some eligible survivors may never lodge an application simply because they **never learned about it in time** or were not reached by awareness campaigns. The Royal Commission and subsequent parliamentary inquiries have argued that schemes with fixed deadlines risk excluding survivors who were *hard to reach or unaware* of their rights. The Clergy Abused Network regularly has survivors coming forward for the first time.

See: <https://esdocs.com/doc/482087/ch-2---what-we-have-done---royal-commission-into-institut...>

5. The Scheme's Design Was Originally Intended to Be Open-Ended

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse specifically recommended that a redress scheme should **not have a fixed closing date** and should only conclude when it's reasonable to do so, with adequate public awareness and survivor access. The current fixed deadline contradicts that original expert recommendation.

<https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/redress-and-civil-litigation>

Specific Feedback about the current scheme that need to be addressed

6. Delays where there is a mistake by the Scheme

Concerns exist about the Scheme not taking into account or mistakenly taking into account a prior payment even though the paperwork has been submitted, the remedy is to make a Review application which takes many months. There should be a separate 'pathway' to review a decision where there has been a mistake by the Scheme.

Additionally, extensive general delays that are stressful for applicants.

7. Problems with the Scheme's definition : of abuse happening 'at the institution' and questions 39 and 40 'person who abused you at these institutions & how did they come into contact with you'. This has led to the rejection of applications.

8. Declining of Applications

E.g.

a). Application in relation to a catholic priest who attended the local hospital as part of his 'pastoral care'. Applicant's father was dying and asked the priest to 'look after' his family. Priest went on to sexually abuse the daughter and entered a long-term sexual relationship with the mother. Application was declined because the priest 'came into contact' with the daughter at the hospital and much of the abuse occurred at her home. Review application arguing that the relevant institution was the catholic diocese and the exact locations of the abuse being irrelevant was declined.

b). Application by a student who initially 'came into contact with' the abuser through a teacher at her high school (he was the teacher's boyfriend). The abuser volunteered for the school and used those occasions to abuse the applicant. Later (while the abuse was continuing), the abuser was employed at the school. Application declined because the initial introduction came through the teacher's personal relationship and the initial abuse occurred at the student's home (where the teacher had asked the family to provide him temporary lodgings) and then at various locations (but not at the school itself).

Conclusion

The evidence is clear:

- **Trauma persists long after the event**, and many survivors continue to bear its effects across the lifespan.
- **Survivors often take years to be ready to disclose and claim**, meaning deadlines can unfairly exclude those who need more time.

- **An arbitrary closure date risks signalling that survivors' experiences and healing are no longer valued**, undermining accountability and discouraging institutions from engaging meaningfully with their responsibilities and culpability.
- **Awareness gaps** mean many survivors might never know to apply before the deadline.
- **Original expert advice was against a hard deadline.**

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-12-04/national-redress-scheme-wait-times-growing/106095996>

<https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/redress-and-civil-litigation?>

For these reasons, the ongoing operation of the Redress Committee and an open-ended approach to redress applications are not only compassionate but essential for justice and healing. We appeal to the Government to continue to support and care for impacted persons to access vital redress at a time they are capable of doing so.

Clergy Abused Network

Newcastle- Hunter Manning

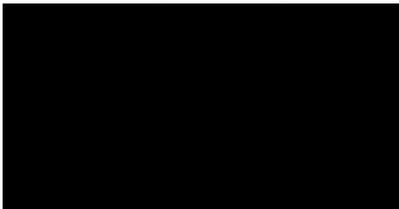
www.clergyabusednetwork.org.au

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Chair,