



Australian Government
Department of Social Services



Australian Government

Australian Government response to the
Joint Standing Committee on
Implementation of the National Redress
Scheme inquiry into the operation of the
National Redress Scheme Report -
Redress: Journey to Justice -
November 2024

INTRODUCTION

The Australian Government (the Government) welcomes the Final Report of the Joint Standing Committee (the Committee) on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse (the Scheme). The Committee tabled its final report titled *Redress: Journey to Justice* (the Report) on 26 November 2024. The Government acknowledges the significant contributions made by survivors and stakeholders over the course of the inquiry. The participation of survivors and stakeholders is critical to ensure the Scheme delivers redress to survivors of institutional child sexual abuse.

The Report delivers important recommendations and insights informed by over 50 submissions and 11 public hearings through the course of the inquiry. The Government is committed to the implementation of a number of recommendations made by the Committee and acknowledges that several of the recommendations require ongoing engagement with the Scheme's state and territory partners.

Of the 29 recommendations made in the Report, the Government:

- Agrees to 14 recommendations
- Agrees in part to one recommendation
- Agrees in principle to five recommendations
- Notes seven recommendations
- Does not agree to two recommendations.

As of February 2026, the Scheme has received over 74,500 applications, with around 46,500 applications on hand and being processed. This Scheme has now surpassed the total number of applications initially estimated by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

The Scheme is legislated to close to new applications on 30 June 2027, operating for a further year to assess applications by 1 July 2028. In 2024-25, the Scheme made 5,035 decisions. In the same year, 19,729 people applied to the Scheme.

There is dignity in a prompt response and the Department of Social Services (the Department), as the Scheme administrator, is committed to positioning itself to meet the challenge of increased applications.

This will be achieved by cultural, innovative, evidence-based and performance reforms, as well as engaging with risk. Significant efforts have already been made to enhance the quality of decision making through the introduction of new Statement of Reasons templates, administrative law training for Independent Decision Makers and procedural fairness advice. In 2026 and beyond, the Department is focused on finalising applications as efficiently and as quickly as possible. This will be achieved through tangible, innovative and evidence-based initiatives such as the Multi-Disciplinary Team, which has been established to complete multiple aspects of application processing and fast-track simpler applications - this focus will extend to applications received from funded support services, whose applications are more complete and easier to progress.

The 2023-24 Budget provided an additional \$80.1 million to extend Redress Support Services to 30 June 2027 and as part of the 2024-25 Budget, support for redress applicants was strengthened, with \$26.1 million over four years to provide targeted support to applicants who submit incomplete or otherwise unactionable applications. The 2025-26 Budget has also included \$27.2 million in additional funding to support services for applicants.

In April 2024, significant legislative amendments came into effect to improve the Scheme's accessibility and transparency for survivors. The amendments included removing the restriction on survivors applying from gaol, refining the special assessment process for survivors with serious criminal convictions, allowing applicants to provide additional information when requesting a review of their redress offer and establishing reassessments for applicants who named an institution that subsequently joins the Scheme after their application has been finalised.

The Department has also redeveloped the Scheme website and provided easy-read factsheets and explanatory animations to support survivors engaging with the Scheme. Work will continue to raise awareness about the Scheme with a particular focus on First Nations people, people with disability, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and people living in regional and remote Australia.

Redress: Journey to Justice

Recommendations made by the Committee

Recommendation 1

1.30 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government seek agreement from state and territory governments to extend the National Redress Scheme beyond 2028, including agreement on extending existing state power referrals to the Commonwealth.

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

The Government recognises and appreciates the strong interest from survivors, institutions, and other impacted stakeholders regarding the legislated closure date of the Scheme.

The Government notes the Committee's new inquiry into the continuing operation of the Scheme and is committed to supporting this inquiry and considering its findings.

As outlined in responses to recommendations 26 and 27, the eighth anniversary review of the Scheme may also provide a mechanism to explore options and advice on the management of Scheme closure, in consultation with the Scheme's state and territory government partners.

Concurrently, the Government remains focused on ensuring that survivors of institutional child sexual abuse are supported to apply for redress before the legislated application closing date of 30 June 2027. The Scheme continues to prioritise timely, trauma-informed outcomes for survivors, and is committed to progressing applications with care, clarity, and respect.

Recommendation 2

1.31 The Committee recommends that if extending the National Redress Scheme in all respects is not agreed, the Australian Government and state and territory governments should consider:

- Asking potential redress applicants to register by a set date to allow registered survivors to apply for redress after 30 June 2027.
- Extending aspects of the Scheme, such as access to psychological care (counselling) and/or direct personal responses.

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

As noted in response to recommendation 1, the Government is committed to ensuring that all eligible survivors who apply to the Scheme prior to the legislated application closing date of 30 June 2027 receive redress outcomes, including redress payments.

In addition, the Government remains committed to providing eligible survivors with access to counselling and psychological care, and the opportunity to receive a direct personal response. These components are central to the Scheme's trauma-informed approach and reflect our ongoing commitment to supporting survivors with dignity and respect.

Recommendation 3

1.32 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government should provide additional funding to the Department of Social Services, Knowmore Legal Services and Redress Support Services to ensure all redress applications can be finalised on time.

The Australian Government **agrees** to this recommendation.

The Government, through the Attorney-General's Department, funds Knowmore Legal Services (Knowmore) to deliver free, trauma-informed, culturally sensitive advice to survivors of institutional child sexual abuse on their legal options for accessing redress and assistance from the Scheme.

The Government also funds 42 Redress Support Services. These services provide coverage in each state and territory, including outreach to regional and remote areas.

The 2023-24 Budget provided an additional \$80.1 million to extend Redress Support Services to 30 June 2027. The 2024-25 Budget provided an additional \$7.2 million for Knowmore and \$26.1 million over four years to provide targeted support to applicants who submit incomplete or otherwise unactionable applications. The 2025-26 Budget also included an additional \$27.2 million in additional funding to support services for applicants with additional funding in 2025-26 of \$11.5 million for Knowmore, and \$15.7 million for Redress Support Services.

To support the Scheme's operation additional funding has also been provided over the past three Budgets:

- **2025-26** - \$119.6 million of Departmental funding to maintain the ongoing operation of the Scheme.
- **2024-25** - \$92.4 million to meet projected costs of delivering the Scheme.
- **2023-24** - \$62.1 million over five years from 2023–24 to support the administration of the Scheme.

Recommendation 4

1.33 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government should begin a public awareness campaign to ensure:

- Survivors and potential redress applicants know that they have limited time to make an application.
- Survivors with an application on hold are told that the Scheme is closing.

The Australian Government **agrees in principle** to this recommendation.

The Department employs a targeted communication strategy to raise awareness of the Scheme and its support services, including tailored advice for First Nations people, people with disability and people who speak languages other than English. This strategy will be further co-designed with Redress Support Services, noting the increasing application numbers suggest there is growing awareness of the Scheme in the general community.

Recommendation 5

1.51 The Committee recommends that the Department of Social Services should:

- Make reasonable adjustments and allow exceptions to the Scheme's application procedures.
- Do this subject to individual circumstances and the risks in each case, such as where a survivor has severe disability or a communication barrier.

1.52 This should include:

- Steps for completing the redress application, including:
 - How questions must be answered.
 - Receiving information in alternative formats, including in languages other than spoken English.
- Procedures whereby a redress applicant's documents, identity or signatures can be witnessed or recorded by electronic or virtual means.

The Australian Government **agrees** to this recommendation.

The Scheme continues to develop and implement ways to ensure submitted applications contain all required information. Recent inclusions are:

- An amended letter suite when seeking additional information under section 24 of the *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018* (the Act); supporting applicants to better understand what clarifying information is required and to afford procedural fairness.
- Choice for applicants in how they can respond to letters, including through Redress Support Services, a direct phone call to the Scheme, or in writing.

The Government funds 42 Redress Support Services nationally, to provide practical and emotional support for people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse and wish to apply for redress through the Scheme. Of these, 21 provide specialist support, including to people with disability, and 14 have been provided additional funding to support applicants receiving correspondence under section 24.

The Scheme has adapted to allow applicants to upload photo versions of documents, such as acceptance letters, through MyGov instead of submitting scanned copies. This makes it easier for applicants who may not have access to a printer or scanner, or who face other challenges like homelessness or living in remote areas, to submit the necessary documentation. Procedures are established to confirm an applicant's identity electronically through their Centrelink Customer Reference Number or Department of Veterans' Affairs number. Certified identity documents can be electronically submitted to the Department to confirm identity.

The Scheme continues to provide alternative options to support for submitting an application, including, but not limited to:

- Confirming the applicant’s identity in other ways if they do not have the required documents or cannot visit a Services Australia service centre. For example, those living in remote communities, former child migrants or those currently in gaol.
- The ability to appoint an assistance or legal nominee as someone who can act on a survivor's behalf when liaising with the Scheme.
- Enabling a person with disability to submit an unsigned application to the Scheme where all other options to support the applicant to sign (i.e. a nominee arrangement or electronic signature via myGov) are not appropriate.
- Providing translation services for applicants with supporting material in languages other than English.

The Scheme continues to improve the accessibility and usability of its processes for survivors and their nominees. Over the life of the Scheme, actions have been taken to streamline the application process as much as possible and support applicants; this includes a guidebook in plain English and audio and videos, to support applicants and their nominees to complete the application form. The Scheme’s website and instructional materials are now in accessible format, multilingual, Auslan and easy to read versions to cater to different audiences.

Recommendation 6

1.53 The Committee recommends that the Department of Social Services:

- Develop ways for applicants (or their nominee) to track the progress of redress applications.
- Continue to develop plainer language and presentation in written communication.
- Continue to adjust communication style according to the survivor’s needs, including correspondence from the Scheme to applicants.
- Take greater care to respect nominee arrangements.
- Continue to develop resources in languages other than English and in a variety of accessible formats.

The Australian Government **agrees** to this recommendation.

From 12 October 2024, applicants who have their Redress application linked to their myGov account can receive updates on the progress of their application, in addition to being able to seek this information from the Scheme by phone.

The Department is continuously improving written communication products and styles for applicants in line with trauma-informed principles, as outlined in response to recommendation 5.

The Department is trialing a process with Redress Support Services to receive applicants’ nominee forms electronically, instead of in hard copy only. This has assisted in expediting the establishment of nominee arrangements with Redress Support Services and reduced contact with applicants to confirm their nominee arrangements.

Recommendation 7

1.54 The Committee recommends that the Department of Social Services have a greater role in connecting survivors with institutions:

- Where a survivor has indicated that they would like a direct personal response.
- When the survivor indicates that they would like the Department to assist with these arrangements.

The Australian Government **agrees** to this recommendation.

The Government acknowledges some survivors may find the process of initiating a direct personal response a challenging and confronting experience.

In May 2023, the Government released the Final Response to the Report of the Second Year Review of the National Redress Scheme (the Government's response). The Government's response supported recommendation 4.7 to increase accessibility and support for survivors wishing to engage with a direct personal response and committed to the creation of a Direct Personal Response Action Plan. As a result, following a successful pilot which began in 2022, the Direct Personal Response Information and Support Service was established in April 2023. Survivors can find more information about how to access a direct personal response on the Scheme's website.

Recommendation 8

1.55 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government publish six monthly data updates regarding trends in the Scheme, including:

- The rate at which new redress applications are being received each month.
- The rate of determinations being made each month.
- Trends categorised into survivor groups, such as First Nations, disability and care leavers.
- The proportion of survivors who receive a direct and personal response.
- Review requests and how often the Scheme revises the original determination.

The Australian Government **agrees** to this recommendation.

The Government is committed to providing transparency to survivors, institutions, Government partners and the Australian public on the efficiency and effectiveness of the Scheme's implementation. Since February 2019, a monthly report has been published on the Scheme's website, providing updates on Scheme changes and relevant aggregated data to indicate how the Scheme is performing. This reporting function has evolved over time to reflect new and emerging Scheme trends.

The Department has commenced releasing additional data points recommended by the Committee in an aggregated form on the Scheme website as part of our monthly reports. The Act requires that aggregated data be provided in a form that does not disclose, either directly or indirectly, information about a particular person or institution. Consideration is also given to how best to present data for readability and accessibility purposes.

Recommendation 9

1.56 The Committee recommends that all decisions regarding redress eligibility be determined by panels of independent decision makers. Each panel should have a minimum of three members.

1.57 If this recommendation cannot be fully implemented or agreed upon, then the Committee recommends that all ineligible determinations should be automatically escalated to a panel review. Each panel should have a minimum of three members.

The Australian Government **does not agree** to this recommendation.

All applicants who receive a determination for redress can request a review of that decision under section 75 of the Act, including in circumstances where they are found ineligible or disagree with their monetary award. The Act does not allow a decision to be made by ‘panels’ of Independent Decision Makers and instead require the decision to be made by one Independent Decision Maker. This is the case for any determination – including original (section 29), review (section 75) and reassessment decisions (section 71D).

Recommendation 10

1.59 The Committee recommends that the Minister for Social Services and the Department of Social Services continue to hold regular survivor roundtables, including in regional locations.

The Australian Government **agrees** to this recommendation.

The Government is committed to holding regular Survivor Roundtables for the life of the Scheme, in addition to the six held to date, and acknowledges the important information sharing and interactions that Roundtables provide for survivors, Redress Support Services, advocacy groups and Redress Scheme staff. The location of Roundtables, including in regional locations, will be considered as appropriate.

Recommendation 11

1.64 The Committee recommends that the Department of Social Services urgently undertake a public information campaign to increase awareness of the Scheme and redress support services. This should include:

- Media advertising.
- Additional resources for redress support services to share among community organisations.
- Additional information and resources to be made available at Centrelink offices.
- Information and resources in accessible formats and languages other than English.
- Information about:
 - Who can help with redress applications.
 - Legal advice.
 - Financial advice and financial counselling.
- The closing date for redress applications.

The Australian Government **agrees in principle** to this recommendation.

The Government is committed to ensuring survivors are aware that free Redress Support Services are available to assist them to complete a redress application and support them while their redress application is progressed by the Scheme.

The Department is committed to implementing its targeted communication plan, as outlined in response to recommendation 4.

Recommendation 12

1.74 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government should publicly disclose and report on:

- How many redress applications have named:
 - An institution that has refused to join the Scheme.
 - An institution intending to join the Scheme for longer than 12 months.
 - The names of those institutions.

The Australian Government **agrees** to this recommendation.

The Government is committed to working with institutions to ensure that survivors of institutional child sexual abuse have access to redress.

As of February 2026, 20 institutions have declined to join the Scheme and are publicly disclosed on the Scheme website. These institutions may be restricted from accessing future Commonwealth Government grant funding (underpinned by the National Redress Scheme Grant Connected Policy) and risk losing their charitable status and associated tax concessions and benefits, if applicable.

The Scheme website also includes a list of the participating status of institutions, including those institutions that are intending to join the Scheme, see www.nationalredress.gov.au/institutions-landing/institutions-have-not-joined.

The Government commits to disclosing aggregated data on the number of applications that name an institution which has declined to join the Scheme, where total applications exceed 20. This protects the privacy of applicants who have named the institution and is consistent with the protected information provisions of the Act.

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| Recommendation 13 |
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| 1.76 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government consider , before the Scheme closes, what penalties will continue to be directed towards responsible institutions that did not participate in the Scheme. |
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The Australian Government **agrees** to this recommendation.

The Government is committed to working with state and territory governments, as Scheme partners, to give further consideration to this recommendation through existing Scheme governance mechanisms in accordance with the *Intergovernmental Agreement on the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse* (Intergovernmental Agreement).

As noted in response to recommendation 12, the Government is committed to working with institutions to ensure that survivors of institutional child sexual abuse have access to redress. While the vast majority of institutions have worked in good faith with the Department to determine their ability to participate in the Scheme, a small minority have declined to join the Scheme despite meeting the participation requirements. These institutions are subject to non-legislatively prescribed penalties. Where institutions indicate financial concerns, the Scheme has a range of options to support their participation, including part-participation.

Any decision to continue to impose current penalties or implement new penalties beyond the end of the Scheme will be a matter for all governments to consider and will take into account the voluntary nature under which institutions are requested to join the Scheme, and their moral obligation to survivors to support their access to redress.

Recommendation 14

1.92 The Committee recommends that the Department of Social Services update the ‘application for review of determination’ form to:

- Make the language plainer.
- Reduce the legal and technical jargon.

The Australian Government **agrees** to this recommendation.

The Government supports the Department to undertake further work to review the ‘Application for Review of Determination’ form to simplify language for applicants, including legal and technical language where possible, to ensure communication to applicants is accessible. As part of this work, the Scheme also ensures that all are trauma-informed.

Recommendation 15

1.93 The Committee recommends that legislation be amended to expressly provide that review of a redress determination cannot result in:

- A redress offer being reduced.
- Eligibility for redress being reversed.

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

In May 2023, the Government agreed to recommendation 5.1 of the Second Year Review of the Scheme and committed to enabling additional information to be provided to inform a request for review of an application, and ensuring review determinations cannot be less than the original determination when based on the same evidence.

The Government implemented these measures through the *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Amendment Act 2024* which came into effect on 4 April 2024. As of 17 February 2026, and since the commencement of these measures, no determinations have caused an applicant’s eligibility to change from eligible to ineligible and no determinations have caused a reduced payment to the survivor.¹

¹ Only one case over the life of the Scheme has had a reduced payment on review – this was before the described measures came into effect, and was due to a correction in prior payment calculations.

Recommendation 16

1.101 The Committee recommends that a consistent approach to virginity testing in Australia should be articulated. The practice should be the subject of a separate inquiry.

The Australian Government **agrees in part** to this recommendation.

In May 2025, the Department provided additional guidance to Independent Decision Makers on virginity testing, ensuring the Scheme applies a consistent approach to critically assessing redress applications describing virginity testing. This additional guidance includes contextualising virginity testing with the Scheme’s definition of ‘sexual abuse’ under the Act and the United Nations Interagency Statement on the Elimination of Virginity Testing.

Given the Scheme’s additional guidance and positive reception from impacted stakeholders, the Government does not support a separate inquiry into this matter. The Scheme is prioritising progressing applications describing virginity testing in an efficient, consistent and trauma-informed manner.

Recommendation 17

1.114 The Committee recommends that the National Redress Scheme pay a fixed sum to delegated legal practitioners where a survivor elects to receive legal advice:

- Before proceeding with a redress application.
- Before accepting a redress offer.

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

As noted in response to recommendation 3, the Government continues to ensure the operations of the Scheme are adequately resourced to support survivors in accessing free, trauma-informed advice through Knowmore. Survivors can engage with Knowmore before, during, or after their involvement with the Scheme.

The Scheme recognises that some survivors may choose to seek support from private legal practitioners. The Scheme will continue to explore appropriate avenues to engage with private practitioners to support redress applicants, while ensuring survivors are informed and supported throughout their redress journey.

Recommendation 18

1.115 The Committee recommends that before redress offers are accepted, the Department of Social Services encourages in writing for survivors to seek:

- Legal advice.
- Financial advice or financial counselling and that the Department of Social Services publish this advice on the Scheme's website.

The Australian Government **agrees** to this recommendation.

The Department encourages survivors (and their nominees) to access the Scheme's free legal advice and financial counselling support services provided by Knowmore.

Information about these free services is included in all written correspondence to survivors and has been available from the Scheme's website since it commenced on 1 July 2018.

Recommendation 19

1.116 The Committee recommends that the Department of Social Services take additional measures to protect redress payments from inadvertent loss, including by:

- Verifying who has access to (or control over) the bank account into which money is going to be paid.
- Notifying redress applicants of which bank account into which funds are due to be deposited before the transaction occurs.
- Pausing the payment process to allow time for verification.

The Australian Government **agrees** to this recommendation.

The Scheme has implemented mitigating process improvement initiatives, including:

- Confirmation of all applicants' bank account details against information held in Services Australia's Customer First or Department of Veterans' Affairs records for an applicant receiving current Government support payments if the applicant does not send in bank statements.
- Proof of Record Ownership (PoRO) confirmed with applicants on inbound and outbound phone calls regarding redress payments queries; callers are required to achieve enhanced PoRO with questions from the applicants' Customer First records. If applicants are unable to achieve enhanced PoRO, then applicants are requested to upload in myGov their identity information.
- Verifying who has access to (or control over) the bank account into which money is going to be paid for all applicants identified as at risk. The Scheme only pays into a bank account that is in the applicant's name.
- Payment Choice Forms (PCF) updated in May 2025 for ease of use for applicants and nominees. The improvement of the PCF has been significant with a success rate of 98% in safe payments made to applicants on the first attempt.

Recommendation 20

1.117 The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth encourages state and territory governments to urgently change laws to address claim farming and exploitative practices, including by:

- Making it unlawful for lawyers to charge contingency fees for services delivered with respect to National Redress Scheme applications.
- Imposing a legal obligation on lawyers to advise a potential client of the availability of free services (Knowmore Legal Service and the Redress Support Services), and to certify such advice has been provided, before executing a costs agreement for a National Redress Scheme application.
- Capping fees that lawyers can charge for services delivered with respect to National Redress Scheme applications.
- Making it an offence for any person to:
 - contact a person without their consent and solicit or induce them to make a National Redress Scheme application; or
 - give or receive any money or other benefit in exchange for a referral to make a National Redress Scheme application.
- Establishing a set of expected practice standards for lawyers and survivor advocates providing services with respect to National Redress Scheme applications.

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

The Government strongly condemns exploitative practices by legal service providers which seek to profit from survivors of institutional child sexual abuse.

The Government encourages all state and territory governments to implement legislation to curb sharp practices such as claim farming.

The Government notes legislation passed by the Queensland, New South Wales and South Australian Governments (noting these may not be specific to or encompass redress).

The Government also supports continued leadership by the Ministers' Redress Scheme Governance Board to identify opportunities to further support survivors engaging with the Scheme. The Department also regularly engages with state and territory governments to share insights and mitigation strategies available, where possible.

Recommendation 21

1.118 The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth encourages state and territory governments to codify in legislation the basis on which the courts may grant permanent stays.

1.119 This should be consistent with the High Court's ruling in the GLJ case.

The Australian Government **agrees to** this recommendation.

In response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, all states and territories removed statutes of limitation for historic child sexual abuse matters to ensure access to justice for survivors.

Any response to the High Court of Australia's decision in *GLJ v the Trustees of the Roman Catholic Church for the Diocese of Lismore (2023) 414 ALR 635 (GLJ)*, is the responsibility of state and territory governments who are responsible for respective civil liability legislation.

Recommendation 22

1.125 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government:

- Fund additional redress support services to provide dedicated support to:
 - Survivors from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including for travel and translation.
 - Survivors with disability.
 - Survivors living in regional areas.
 - First Nations survivors and culturally safe settings.

1.126 The Department of Social Services should coordinate outreach efforts among redress support services.

The Australian Government **agrees to** this recommendation.

The Government is committed to funding culturally appropriate and accessible Redress Support Services for survivors through its existing established network, as outlined in response to recommendations 3 and 4.

The Department has existing mechanisms in place to coordinate Redress Support Services' outreach efforts by encouraging referrals between services and convening regular meetings of Redress Support Services operating in each jurisdiction. These arrangements will continue and are periodically reviewed to ensure they are effective.

Recommendation 23

1.127 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government extend funding terms for redress support services until 2 years following the extended expiration date of the Scheme.

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

As outlined in response to recommendation 3, the Government recognises the importance of ensuring survivors can access free support from a Redress Support Service and Knowmore.

Recommendation 24

1.132 The Committee recommends that:

- The Department of Social Services review the basis on which survivor names and addresses are shared with law enforcement agencies.
- The Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission should cease sharing information about survivors if this is predictably done for purposes such as pursuing outstanding fines or debts.
- Protected information provisions should be amended to prevent survivor information from being used in this way.

The Australian Government **does not agree** to this recommendation.

When considering an application from a person with a serious criminal conviction, the Scheme Operator may choose to implement the special assessment process in accordance with subsection 63(3) of the Act.

Receiving a Nationally Coordinated Criminal History Check conducted by the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC) is a necessary step to inform the special assessment process, including the Scheme Operator's determination of a person's entitlement to redress.

By consenting to the sharing of their information with the Scheme for the purpose of a Criminal History Check, a person acknowledges their personal information may be used by police agencies for the purposes of law enforcement. Existing legislation permits information to be used in this way, including subsection 96(3) of the Act and the *Australian Crime Commission Act 2002*.

The Government also notes that applicant (and institutional) information may be shared with law enforcement agencies for child safe reporting purposes (set out under section 96 of the Act). This is an important mechanism to ensure the protection of children.

Recommendation 25

1.133 The Committee recommends that the Department of Social Services develop a framework for enforcement of protected information provisions.

1.134 The framework must be published on the Scheme's website together with advice on how to report suspected breaches.

The Australian Government **agrees in principle** to this recommendation.

The Department is developing an internal unauthorised disclosure policy and framework to codify the Scheme's process for managing and once finalised, consideration will be given to the publication of additional information on the Scheme's public website, including via updates to the Scheme's existing suite of protected information factsheets.

Recommendation 26

1.137 The Committee recommends that the Eight Year Review of the National Redress Scheme consider:

- Possible alternative options if redress cannot be offered to a survivor because a responsible institution does not fulfil its intention to join the Scheme by 30 June 2027.
- The effectiveness of Queensland laws intended to address claim farming, including whether there is scope to refine or improve similar laws.
- The Scheme's capacity to finalise all applications before the Scheme closes.

The Australian Government **agrees in principle** to this recommendation, noting:

- Some of these issues may be examined sooner outside of the eighth anniversary review process.
- The eighth anniversary review will be undertaken in partnership with state and territory government partners under the Scheme's Intergovernmental Agreement.

The Government is committed to encouraging institutions named in applications to join the Scheme and will continue to use Funder of Last Resort provisions to ensure eligible applicants are offered redress and, where appropriate, public naming of institutions and associated penalties for institutions that do not join the Scheme.

The Government strongly condemns exploitative practices by legal service providers which seek to profit from survivors of institutional child sexual abuse. The Government encourages all state and territory governments to implement legislation to curb sharp practices such as claim farming. The Government notes legislation passed by the Queensland, New South Wales and South Australian Governments (noting these may not be specific to or encompass redress).

The Government is also committed to improving application processing timeframes for all applications received by the legislated application closing date of 30 June 2027.

Recommendation 27

1.138 The Committee recommends, that subject to the National Redress Scheme being extended, the Eighth Year Review of the Scheme consider:

- The preferred basis on which the Scheme should eventually close; for example, based on a fixed date or when application numbers drop below a fixed threshold.
- The best option for an eventual closure if governments are likely to agree on only some aspects of the Scheme being extended.

1.139 If an extension is not possible, the Eighth Year Review should consider what is needed to close the Scheme as planned, including how to ensure all existing and future redress applications are processed on time.

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

The Government recognises the importance of planning for Scheme closure in a way that is transparent, consultative, and responsive to the needs of survivors and participating institutions. The Government remains committed to supporting survivors to apply before the legislated closing date of 30 June 2027 and ensuring all applications are processed in a timely, trauma-informed manner.

Recommendation 28

1.140 The Committee recommends that the respective Senate and House of Representatives procedural committees should inquire into the accessibility of parliamentary committee processes, including:

- Protocols for receiving, handling and publishing evidence received from witnesses who have experienced trauma.
- The suitability of House and Senate standing orders and statutory requirements when committees take evidence from witnesses who have experienced trauma or are otherwise vulnerable.
- The accessibility of committee information.

The Australian Government **agrees** to this recommendation.

The government thanks all people who provided evidence to the Committee, including and particularly those survivors of institutional child sexual abuse who participated in-person and via written submissions.

Recommendation 29

1.142 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government work with state and territory governments on a national framework for redress and/or reparation schemes. This could include developing knowledge around best practices, scheme design and administration.

The Australian Government **agrees in principle** to this recommendation.

The Government supports the exchange of knowledge and use of best practice to inform similar redress and reparation schemes. The Government will further consider this recommendation in partnership with state and territory governments.