

My name is [REDACTED] I completed my national redress claim and submitted it last Friday, the 13th March, 2020.

It took me 17 months in total. Altogether it is an 85-page document complete with freedom of information documents from both institutions and supporting attachment statements from my doctors and health professionals. I included everything I could to assist and requested all the documents I could find on the places I was abused. I have since been told the National Redress will ask again for these documents. Unsurprisingly to me they showed a clear record to me of an abused child and matched up with all my memories with are crystal clear. I wish they were not.

There are only 2 services that can assist with redress in [REDACTED] for a survivor doing the National Redress. These are CASA – Centre Against Sexual Assault and Relationships Australia.

I was told initially conflicting information. One service, could not assist anymore with counselling as I had been with them for some time as a client and did receive substantial counselling but they would help with redress, as some new funding had been allocated by the Government, however, I was told I would be “a guinea pig” as this was all new for them. I valued and appreciated their transparency and advice though, and that I could remain with my counsellor but I did not feel very confident as we speed through the paperwork. I was able to access a lot of appointments but found in retelling my story of abuse in intricate detail that I was becoming re-traumatised. I would leave feeling very upset and unsettled having just gone over yet another part of my abuse story, it would take me 5 days to settle, and I would be there again 7 days later for the next appointment. I felt very rushed at this service and that my mental health was becoming worse throughout the year.

I found every time there was any sort of media focus on sexual abuse I would be re-triggered, in [REDACTED] this would be every few days and around March 2019, I became too overwhelmed and stopped with this service altogether.

I picked up with Relationships Australia a few months later and was allocated an excellent counsellor who has assisted me until completion, who is very well trained in childhood trauma. I would highly recommend this service to any survivors. Initially, I was told by this service I would only receive 6 sessions, but this did change along the way and I believe in no way would this ever have been enough for any survivor to be able to complete a redress claim.

A brief outline of my story is as follows;

I was pack raped in school by 3 boys who were peers in school at 12 years – year 8, had a teacher not bothered walking in looked right at me and walked out, this then led to my substance-abusing (chroming) at school from age 12 until 14.

I would not have bothered putting a claim in, but a duty of care was failed and thus began a nightmare of substance abuse to block the trauma out then admissions to Psychiatric hospitals. Unfortunately, my parents choose a hospital ran by a cult, the Family, Anne Hamilton Byrne – Newhaven in Kew.

Subsequently, I was transferred as I substance abused at this hospital and ended up at an adult acute ward, Larundel and was sectioned for “wanting to die” after some dreadful treatment in Newhaven, and then there I was injected with a medication that is meant to be used for schizophrenic treatment, locked in seclusion and raped by two adult male nurses.

I did not have Schizophrenia, not any other psychiatric diagnoses, at this stage. I was receiving treatment in Newhaven for substance abuse and I did this to manage the trauma of childhood sexual abuse, I told no one at the time of the abuse.

The sexual abuses left me with a lifetime of trauma and recurring anorexia and bulimia I still struggle with. I have depression, severe anxiety and now complex PTSD and many other physical issues and an autonomic nervous system that simply does not function as it should.

What did work with redress;

- I was able to access 6 sessions of EMDR sessions which helped enormously and were paid for through Relationships Australia.
- This lessened my suicidal ideation hugely.
- The Counsellor I used was well trained in trauma and very good at keeping me present as I can have a tendency to dissociate often.
- When we needed to find information out from Knowmore, she was able to call and have the information for me at the next session, or we would call Redress together.
- Every single time I called the redress 1800 number, I found the staff to be very sensitive and caring in their manner when dealing with my questions.
- When I was finally ready to submit my claim, the 1800 helpers at redress told me I could take to Centrelink and get the entire Claim scanned and this was done within 15 minutes.
- The Counsellors ability to receive fairly quick information from the Lawyers at Knowmore.

What was difficult.

- Applying for FOI's at Larundal I found the Dept of Health and Human Services to be sensitive and very accommodating, in their language and in even waiving fees.
- Booking in to receive advice from Knowmore as you would be called back 6 weeks later and there was a time difference so meetings were challenging I was waiting for our allocated time and be called 2 hours later. This may be faster now I only called the once as I was very put off.
- Having to recall all of your abuse details again in minute details, although I was told I do not need to be hyperfocused on this,

however, I believe survivors have a deep need for belief. Most have told someone at some stage and had disbelief so will go to lengths to prove and include every detail of their abuse. They want to feel heard and believed.

- To describe the impact the sexual abuse had on me in every way and my family. I was in quite a bad place afterwards.
- The Dept of Education was the exact opposite although eventually did waive the fees, the forms they sent out afterwards were quite appalling and simply aimed at gathering information to be used in case you should decide to litigate down the track against one of their staff concerning your FOI. I have attached the said documents.
- The huge ripple effect this had caused to my 3 sons in watching me complete this redress. I am under the care of a Psychiatrist, and clinician but when I am suicidal it is very difficult to admit me as my abuse was caused as an inpatient and I become terrified of hospitals.
- Knowing that Lawyers would be targeting particular area's of abuse to assist, such as religions and in particular if there were multiple victims. I know myself and others with singular institutional abuse would call on the Lawyers who assisted the Catholic survivors and other survivors who were part of multiple victim cases and were shunned as they simply were not interested in helping us. Those victims were always talked then into civil claims.
- I was eventually told to avoid all Lawyers as they would take a very large percentage of your redress once you received your claim.
- I do believe there should be more support services for victims and advice on the process. I was not aware that you could simply go into Centrecare and they would scan your redress until 15 minutes before I was ready to post it. So essentially access to information is scattered and varied at every level. It should be available right at the beginning.

Additional notes;

During the time I was completing redress, I was put onto a man in Geelong who had tried to target many into letting him assist with doing their redress claims. Or rather settlements, he seemed to be targeting those applying for redress as that is how I was referred to him. He then charges a success fee. I suspect many victims have been conned by this person. It was immediately apparent to me he was not legitimate and so I did not meet with him, he wanted too. I was also told by a worker I cannot recollect the name at the Victims Commissioner's office that his name was familiar and that he also targets VOCAT survivors too. I am concerned at fraudulent people targeting vulnerable survivors.

Finally, I am stunned that redress has an extreme circumstances amount for victims of \$150,000 yet they will tell no one what "extreme circumstances entails...I would have liked to apply given being separated from all contact with my family at 14, locked up, drugged heavily, raped and subjected to strip-searched, degrading showers being constantly watched by male staff and forced to remove my underwear when admitted which led to a lifetime of distrust of the medical system and many physical and mental health issues on top of a teacher walking out of a pack rape would surely entail an extreme circumstances claim. I was forced to leave schooling at 14 and my ability to work more than a few hours per week is limited and rarely can I go for more than a few weeks without suicidal ideation.

Extra additional notes from a survivor unable to complete this submission:

I would like to add for another survivor who is unable to complete her submission due to her struggles with PTSD from childhood abuse, in past, I have queried how she is going with redress, she was confused at what services there were and why she would even have to explain her story

again, as at the time when the Royal Commission into institutional childhood sexual abuse hearings were on, all the details were taken of our abuse stories during the private hearings and many survivors were told after by many agencies that they would not be required to retell and retraumatise themselves with having to retell during redress, yet this is not the case.

She had found the online process completely daunting as she not only fights with mental health PTSD battles by severe and complex pain issues too and long stints at a computer are simply not feasible for her. She is an intelligent woman but in recalling trauma you are left blindsided and thus the process became too much for her, I have her urged to connect with a redress service provider.

I have explained a bit of information as I go along with my redress but how handy it would be to have a simple and easy to negotiate system and not a complex webpage to be given straightforward information?

Even the support service Relationships Australia I used were not aware that Centrelink could take your Redress claim and National Redress would call ahead for you and you would not wait in a line and they would scan rather than waiting at a post office and wondering would this be lost in the mail...

I appreciate the opportunity to be able to be given the opportunity to speak about this and submit my thoughts of the National Redress.

Thank you for your time and I hope this assists in your efforts to help redress for other survivors.

Regards,





Before completing this form please ensure that you have read and understood the 'Counselling Assistance Payments – Collection of Information Statement' (Collection Statement).

COUNSELLING ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS CLAIM FORM

1. YOUR DETAILS

Surname:	
Given Name:	
Address:	
	Postcode:
Email:	
Date of Birth:	Sex:
How would you preferred to be contacted by the Department? (Please tick one option)	
Mail <input type="checkbox"/>	Email <input type="checkbox"/>

2. CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE SEXUAL ABUSE

School name:	
Year(s) you attended the school:	
Date of abuse:	Or between and
Who committed the abuse (full name(s) if known):	
Sex of abuser:	Approximate age of abuser(s):
Role of abuser at the school:	

Briefly describe the nature of the abuse: *If you require more space, please attach additional pages*

3. DETAILS OF PREVIOUS REPORTS TO POLICE

Has the abuse been reported to Victoria Police or any other police authority in Australia?	
If yes, please provide the details where possible:	
Name:	Registered No:
Rank:	Police Station:
Date of report:	

Were criminal proceedings commenced?	
Where possible, provide details known to you (ie outcome of hearing):	
4. SUPPORTING MEDICAL DOCUMENTATION	
Please ensure you have attached a letter from your general practitioner (GP) or other medical practitioner outlining:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A diagnosis of any psychological injury you have suffered as a result of the abuse • The number of therapeutic sessions recommended • Current referral to a suitable practitioner in your area 	
Your current doctor's name:	
Type of medical practitioner (eg. GP, counsellor, etc):	
Phone:	
Address:	
5. OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION	
Please provide any other relevant information	
6. REPORTING TO VICTORIA POLICE	
Please see the Collection Statement for further information about reporting to Victoria Police. Do not complete this section if you answered 'yes' at section 3 above, 'Details of Previous Reports to Victoria Police'.	
Please select one of the following options:	
Full report to Victoria Police I consent to the Department providing my name, date of birth and contact details to Victoria Police as part of the Department's notification to Victoria Police about the sexual abuse that I have reported to the Department. I understand that Victoria Police may contact me to obtain further information.	<input type="checkbox"/>
'De-identified' report to Victoria Police I do not consent to the Department providing my name, date of birth and contact details to Victoria Police. I understand that the Department will provide de-identified information about the sexual abuse that I have reported to the Department, including the name of my school, the name of the perpetrator, my age at the time of the abuse and the nature of the abuse. Please note that if Victoria Police conducts an investigation into the reported sexual abuse, the Department may be compelled by subpoena or other court order to provide your personal information to Victoria Police.	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. CONSENT/PERMISSION

I have read and understood the Collection Statement.

I consent to the collection and use of my personal, sensitive and health information in accordance with the principles contained in the Collection Statement.

I consent for the Department to provide my personal, sensitive and health information to my treating health practitioners.

I consent for the Department to provide my personal, sensitive and health information to Victoria Police in accordance with the option I have selected above at section 6 'Reporting to Victoria Police'.

Signature	Date
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Checklist

When you return your claim form, please ensure that you include the following documents:

1. Proof of identity <i>for example, a photocopy of your driver's licence, passport, birth certificate or a statutory declaration</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Supporting medical documentation	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Claim form	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Any supporting information (optional)	<input type="checkbox"/>



Counselling Assistance Payments – Information Sheet

How can I make a claim?

This information sheet outlines the claims process for applying for counselling assistance payments (**CAP**), which are made by the Department directly to a counsellor or psychologist of your choice so that you can receive therapeutic support.

Please ensure that you have read the enclosed collection of information statement (**collection statement**). The collection of information statement sets out what personal information the Department is collecting, why it is collecting this information and how it will use the information to consider your claim.

You should note that accepting an offer for CAP will not prevent you from obtaining compensation or bringing a legal claim against the Department.

Application process

To make a claim for CAP you must provide:

1. Proof of identity

Please provide a copy of your proof of identity, for example, a photocopy of your driver's licence, passport, birth certificate or a statutory declaration.

2. Supporting medical documentation

Please provide a current written referral from a registered medical practitioner (this can be your usual doctor or general practitioner) setting out:

- A diagnosis of any psychological injury that you have suffered as a result of the abuse;
- The number of counselling sessions recommended; and
- The details of a suitable practitioner, for example a counsellor, psychologist or psychiatrist in your local area who is registered with the relevant professional registration body.

You may also wish to provide any supporting medical reports related to the abuse. If possible, please provide reports that have been prepared in the past 12 months, although less recent reports may also be submitted.

3. Completed claim form

To support your claim for counselling assistance payments, please fill out the **claim form**, including as much as possible of the following information:

- Your name
- Name of the school(s) at which the abuse occurred
- Year(s) you attended the school(s)
- Name of the abuser(s) and their role at the school(s)
- Brief statement describing the abuse
- Date of the abuse (or approximate period)
- Any other information you wish to provide

This information will assist the Department to verify the facts of your claim.

If you do not want to use the claim form, you can provide a written statement including as much as possible of the above information.

You may wish to prepare your claim form or statement by yourself, or with the assistance of a family member or friend. It is not necessary for you to prepare your claim with the assistance of a lawyer. However, if you require independent assistance you may wish to contact a community legal service or a support group, who may be able to help you to prepare your statement or advise you more generally about your claim.

To support your claim for counselling, you **may** also wish to include copies of:

- School records or reports (as evidence of your attendance at the school(s))
- Statutory declarations of witnesses (for example spouse, other family members or friends who you have spoken to about the abuse)
- Statements to police
- Court transcripts or other documents from criminal proceedings related to the abuse

Submitting your claim for counselling payments

Please send your claim for counselling by email to:

Incident Management and Support Unit
incident.support@edumail.vic.gov.au
03 9651 3901

Claims assessment process

Claims for CAP will be assessed individually. To ensure that claims are handled fairly and appropriately, the Department may seek advice and assistance from its external claims managers or legal advisers, especially where the facts and circumstances are complex or uncertain.

The Department will make all reasonable enquiries to confirm the circumstances of your claim. This means that we may need to contact a number of different areas of the Department for additional information, such as the school(s) named in your claim, regional offices, human resources, records management as well as the Public Records Office Victoria.

The Department will consider all information that is relevant to your claim. The Department endeavours to assess claims within **28 days**. However, please note that in certain circumstances assessing a claim may take longer, depending on the amount and type of information that needs to

be identified and considered. We will write to let you know if the assessment process is likely to take longer than 28 days.

What happens if my CAP claim is approved?

If your claim for CAP is approved, the Department will inform you and your approved practitioner of the number of sessions that will be funded by the Department. The Department will arrange for invoices to be paid directly to the approved practitioner.

The Department can approve payment for a maximum of **ten** sessions of counselling at a time. At the conclusion of the approved sessions, your practitioner can provide a brief report to the Department stating whether you would benefit from further treatment and if so, an estimate of the number of sessions recommended. The Department will assess any recommendations for further treatment case by case.

The Department is able to pay the 'reasonable cost' of the approved counselling sessions. The 'reasonable cost' will be determined with reference to relevant fee schedules, for instance the Australian Medical Association's 'List of Medical Services and Fees' or the Australian Psychological Society 'Schedule of Recommended Fees'. If the Department determines that the proposed cost of the sessions is not reasonable, we will contact you to discuss other available options.

If you accept the offer of payment for counselling, you will need to sign a document acknowledging that the payments are made with no admission of liability on the part of the Department or the State. You will not be required to sign a release or confidentiality agreement. Please note that accepting the offer of counselling payments and acknowledging that the payments are made with no admission of liability will not prevent you from seeking compensation by making a negligence claim against the State.

What can I do if my claim is not approved?

If your claim for CAP is not approved, the Department will provide reasons for its decision. You will have an opportunity to provide any further information you believe supports your claim.