



Dr Sean Turner
Acting Committee Secretary
Inquiry into the oversight of the implementation of
redress related recommendations of the
Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Canberra ACT 2600

16 August 2018

Dear Dr Turner

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to this Inquiry. The Alliance for Forgotten Australians will be specifically responding to the 'establishment and operation of the Commonwealth Redress Scheme and ongoing support of survivors' in the terms of reference.

The redress legislation requires that the scheme be reviewed as soon as possible after the second anniversary of the scheme, and at the eighth anniversary of the start of the scheme (192). Section 192(2)(m) requires the review to consider the views of key stakeholders on the scheme.

The Alliance for Forgotten Australians is keen to work with your committee and the Department of Social Services at a formative stage of the review. On that basis, we would like to put forward our views on key issues for the review.

I would again like to congratulate the Australian Government, and all states and territories, for establishing the scheme. The issues we raise in this submission are intended to improve redress policy and its implementation. We believe the scheme is a good start, and acknowledge that it has been established with significant pressures of timing.

We have tried to use the words of Forgotten Australians in this submission. The quotes are used with permission and this submission may be made public.

1. A fundamental policy issue - eligibility for redress

The Alliance for Forgotten Australians has consistently advocated for an inclusive scheme, one which is not limited to sexual abuse. We recently received a letter from a Forgotten Australian about his experience in applying for redress:

How do we present a lifetime ruined on a few pages? When the main question you ask is about sexual assault. Redress should not be about sex. It should be about the effects state 'care' had on our lives.

A key issue for the review is around survivors who have experienced various forms of abuse - but not sexual abuse. What is the impact on the policy and implementation of creating two classes of victims or survivors? How will the national scheme interact with other schemes or initiatives established by state and territory governments for survivors?

2. Policy and implementation

The Alliance for Forgotten Australians is concerned that the review takes account of the redress *policy*, the *implementation* of the policy, and the *impact* of the policy. Poor implementation will exacerbate existing trauma. There are indications that this is already the case.

The same Forgotten Australian wrote:

We just want to convey to those in power how difficult the filling out of the redress form has become for the average former wards of the state. To constantly relive or review the traumatic situations we were subjected to have no value for the victim.

We are not programmed to trust that anybody is there to help or understand. Some of these people cannot or will not engage with those that they deem are authority. Redress needs to be simplified for those that find it difficult to even read or write. We need the resolution quickly so it can be left in the background of our lives.

Make it happen but make it fair.

3. Early implementation issues

We have previously made submission about design elements of the scheme that concern us. Two issues which have arisen at an early stage are:

- Our concern about the engagement of Forgotten Australians and other survivors in engaging with Centrelink, particularly in obtaining a CRN, given their previous experience with the agency and other authority figures.
- Managing expectations about receiving the maximum payment, especially given the unexplained reduction of the ceiling to \$150,000.

Questions and concerns about who are the independent decision makers and how they are appointed and accountable have been raised by many of our members and constituents. As a Forgotten Australian wrote about the administrators of the scheme:

You are it seems the closest we are going to get to the persons placing a monetary value on our lives! We want you to see who we are. We are here seeking maximum redress for lives ruined. Somebody is going to look at our lives for a moment then put a monetary value on it. That is not good enough!

4. Review or evaluation framework

The Alliance for Forgotten Australians would like to have input into the review or evaluation framework as well as the process for review or evaluation. Some specific issues for consideration:

- Review or evaluation to be established at the start of implementation so that the correct data, including baseline data, may be collected.
- We would like to participate in a partnership to learn in advance, not learn after the fact.
- Review and evaluation will be particularly complex because of the risk of re-traumatising survivors. The Alliance for Forgotten Australians has survivor members as well as service provider members in all states and territories. While we can provide anecdotal feedback, our preference is for a more structured approach.
- If an external organisation undertakes the review or evaluation, it should be independent of past providers, governments, and providers of Find and Connect Services.

If the committee has concerns about the implementation of redress, you may wish to ask the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) to schedule a performance audit in its work program for 2019-20.

5. Unfinished business

The Alliance for Forgotten Australians acknowledges that redress is a major commitment for all governments. However, redress is not a substitute for other forms of support and funding by governments. A redress scheme is only one component of what Forgotten Australians and other survivors need. We need to be recognised as a priority special needs group for health care and access to the disability support pension. Your unfinished business is our unfinished business.

6. Conclusion

Finally, a Forgotten Australian's words in closing for the committee's reflection:

Redress keeps touching on our ego and the image we have of ourselves... it's like touching on our soul, it can destroy rather than repair. The rest of our life started in

childhood! Sometimes it feels like it would just be safer to withdraw from the whole process of redress.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide input. I am happy to provide any additional information that would assist the committee.

Yours sincerely

Caroline Carroll OAM
Chair