



Joint Standing Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme

**Written submission in response to:
*Inquiry into the continuing operation of the National
Redress Scheme***

27 January 2026

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Background

SAMSUN is the only specialist service in Australia dedicated to assisting male survivors of child sexual abuse (CSA), their families and supporters. SAMSUN is a NSW Redress Support Service funded by the Department of Social Services. This funding enables SAMSUN to provide access for male survivors to specialist trauma-informed and culturally appropriate support as they engage with the National Redress Scheme.

SAMSUN is survivor led and believes male survivors can heal from child sexual abuse, support others to thrive and be leaders for change. SAMSUN offers programs and services for victim-survivors and their supporters, together with training, community engagement, advocacy, and research work. The services SAMSUN provides are based on SAMSUN's model of professionally facilitated peer support.

Combining lived experience and professional expertise, SAMSUN has established itself as an essential service that is in high demand. Details of the programs offered by SAMSUN [can be found here](#).

SAMSUN also provides tailored training to health professionals, community organisations and government departments supporting people impacted by CSA.

SAMSUN is funded by NSW Health, NSW Department of Communities and Justice and receives Commonwealth Government funding as a Redress Support Service (RSS) and to capacity build Redress Support Services in New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania.



1. Scheme's operational timeline and the potential for this timeline to be extended

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse set out in its Final Report that there were approximately 60,000 people in Australia who had experienced institutional child sexual abuse.¹

The data released by the National Redress Scheme (the Scheme) shows that the figure of 60,000 was a conservative estimate. The latest Scheme data shows:

As of 31 December 2025, 72,855 applications have been received, of these;

- 25,317 applicants (34.75%) have been advised of their outcomes.
- 4,002 (5.5%) applications have been withdrawn or closed.
- 43,536 (59.75%) applicants are yet to have their outcomes advised.

Of the 43,536 or 59.75% of applicants yet to have their outcomes advised;

- 29,053 (66.75%) applications are actionable by the scheme that is the applications are being validated, they are at the information gathering stage, the applications are with the IDM or they are being prepared for the delivery of their outcomes.
- 8,627 (19.8%) applications cannot be actioned by the scheme, with 6,873 (15.8%) applicants to provide further information and 1,754 (4%) applications undergoing the special assessment process.
- 5,856 (13.45%) applications are on hold.

¹ Royal Commission into Institutional Child Sexual Abuse, Redress and Civil Litigation Report 2015 at page 8



Over the last six months the Scheme has received an average of 1,480 applications per month.

The Scheme is governed by the following instruments:

- *The National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018 (the Act);*
- *The National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Rules 2018 (the Rules);*
- *The National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Assessment Framework 2018;*
- *The National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Direct Personal Response Framework 2018; and*
- *The National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Declaration 2018.*

In the main, it is the Act and Rules that establish the Scheme, set out its guiding principles and detail how the Scheme will function.

Section 3 (1) of the Act states:

- (1) *The main objects of this Act are:*
 - (a) *to recognise and alleviate the impact of past institutional child sexual abuse and related abuse; and*
 - (b) *to provide justice for the survivors of that abuse.*

Section 10 of the Act sets out the general principles:

General principles guiding actions of officers under the scheme:

- (1) *This section sets out the principles that must be taken into account by the Operator and other officers of the scheme when taking action under, or for the purposes of, the scheme.*
- (2) *Redress under the scheme should be survivor-focused.*
- (3) *Redress should be assessed, offered and provided with appropriate regard to:*



- (a) what is known about the nature and impact of child sexual abuse, and institutional child sexual abuse in particular; and*
- (b) the cultural needs of survivors; and*
- (c) the needs of particularly vulnerable survivors.*
- (4) Redress should be assessed, offered and provided so as to avoid, as far as possible, further harming or traumatising the survivor.*
- (5) Redress should be assessed, offered and provided in a way that protects the integrity of the scheme.*

Based on the data set out above, it is our submission that the scheme will not be able to finalise and process the almost 60% of applications yet to have their outcomes advised and comply with sections 3 and 10 of the Act. Of concern, is the fact that SAMSUN is already seeing applications being processed with minimal contact being made with our clients. This is causing distress and is re-traumatising our clients. It also means SAMSUN's trained staff are needing to provide more intensive support to clients while their applications are being processed.

This being the situation, SAMSUN submits the scheme must be extended to allow:

- i. all applications received to date to be processed in accordance with the general principles set out in sections 3 and 10 of the Act, taking into account the needs of vulnerable survivors and as far as possible avoiding further harm by traumatising the survivor.
- ii. all people eligible to apply for redress have the opportunity to apply for redress, noting the scheme is currently receiving 1,480 applications per month.²

² National Redress Scheme data as at 31 December 2025



2. Accessibility, funding and transition plans for support services as the Scheme concludes

The Act sets out the dates that will apply for the end of the Scheme. The last day for the lodgment applications will be 30 June 2027 with the closure of the Scheme set for 30 June 2028.³

SAMSN's current funding concludes on 30 June 2027. SAMSN has been receiving additional funding to support clients who are in prison and to provide assistance to people who have received requests to provide further information (section 24 letters).

Without the continuation of funding beyond 30 June 2027, SAMSN and the other RSSs will not be able to provide the support applicant/survivors need, as they:

- i. await the outcomes of their applications. (In SAMSN's experience it is taking 18 to 24 months to process applications);
- ii. engage with the Scheme in the event more information is needed; and
- iii. consider their options once they have received their redress outcomes.

On the current timeframes, it is SAMSN's submission that the Scheme will need to be extended beyond 30 June 2028 if only to process the almost 60% of applications still to be determined. It follows that with any extension of the Scheme, must come an extension of funding for RSSs to support clients applying for redress.

Case studies

SAMSN is currently supporting many clients whose applications have surpassed the timeframes for the processing of claims. The delays cause ongoing distress. Many clients

³ National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse, 2018 s.193



have described the processing times as ‘daunting’ as a ‘weight hanging over them’ and as something ‘they quite often think about.’ We know the importance to survivors of being acknowledged and believed. The longer the process takes the more our clients feel they are neither acknowledged nor believed. One of SAMSNS’s clients sends a text every two weeks requesting an update of his application. His application is nearing the two year mark since being lodged. This client shares with SAMSNS staff the negative impact the application process is having on his family life and on his general well-being. Another SAMSNS client calls every two weeks requesting an update on his application. His application has passed the two year mark. During these update calls, the client often presents as being angry and distressed at the processing times. He is often concerned that he won’t be believed and wonders if the Scheme is actually looking at his application at all. A phone call was made to the Scheme in early December 2025. SAMSNS staff were told the application was progressing and nothing further was needed. A few days later a section 24 letter was received (dated the same day as the call) requesting more information. The client had to be told that while we had been led to believe from the phone call that the application was progressing, in fact it was not progressing at all. The client became extremely distressed.

3. Current case management issues and information requests, and the timeframe required to resolve these matters.

As noted above, there are currently 6,873 (or 15.8%) applications where further information is yet to be provided by applicants. SAMSNS has received additional funding to employ staff to help people who receive requests for additional information. These letters are issued under section 24 of the Act, and have been called by the Scheme, section 24 letters.

It is noted that section 24 of the Act gives the Scheme the power to request information from the applicant; this section provides



- i. if operator believes the applicant may have further information that may be relevant to the application (this can include responding to information disclosed by an institution)
- ii. request must be in writing
- iii. the notice must specify what information is required, how the information is to be given, within what time period and that the notice is given under s.24
- iv. if urgently needed, then the applicant has 4 weeks, otherwise 8 weeks to provide the information
- v. the operator can by written notice, extend the production period if they considers it appropriate
- vi. this extension can be given on the Operator's own initiative or on the request of the person applying for redress
- vii. the person applying for redress can request an extension provided the request is made before the end of the production period and complies with any requirements prescribed by the rules.

Section 26(1) of the Act provides that if the applicant fails to provide the information within the time set, then the Operator is not required to make a determination until the information is provided.

It should be noted that in relation to the institution's failure to provide requested information, section 26 (2) of the Act, states the Operator can progress the application and make a determination on the basis of the information they already have.

SAMSUN has been advised by the Scheme that in relation to people who have applied for redress and who have received a section 24 letter,

- they are required to respond in compliance with the section within 8 weeks, with an extension of time possible on request;



- that applicants are not required to respond and if they don't their applications will proceed to be determined by the information held.

The Scheme has advised that it wants to align the practices adopted for applicants and institutions where further information is requested, in that in the absence of additional information, the application will be determined on the basis of the information held. However, this practice is contrary to section 26(1) of the Act which provides in relation to applicants, the Operator is not required to make a determination until the information is received. Had Parliament intended that the Operator should proceed to make a determination based on the information held, there would have been similar wording to that used in section 26(2) of the Act. Section 26(2) only applies to information requested from institutions.

The concerns SAMSNS has about the adoption of the current practice of 'alignment' are:

- the operator is failing to comply with the provisions of the Act.
- people applying for redress are being denied procedural fairness because applications are proceeding without additional information.
- there is a failure to understand the many reasons people may have for not responding to section 24 letters, including changing their address and not receiving the letter, not being able to read and understand what is being sought from them, people in prison receiving these letters and not having access to support and, people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and CALD communities receiving section 24 letters, where English is not their first language.
- it is possible that this practice of bringing into alignment information requests for applicants and institutions is being adopted to quickly reduce the number of applications where insufficient information has been supplied by the applicant.



Given that at 31 December 2025 there were more than 6,800 applicants who need to provide more information, the legislative interpretation being adopted by the Operator of section 26(1) needs to be urgently addressed.

4. Outstanding applications and determinations and the processes and procedures that may need to be implemented to maximise just outcomes before the Scheme concludes.

SAMSUN is very concerned by the operational changes being implemented since 2025 by the Scheme. The changes are seeing the reduction in ‘person to person’ contact with Scheme staff. Also as from the end of 2025, it is no longer possible to leave a voicemail with the Scheme - the phone rings out after 10 minutes. One SAMSUN staff member, as redress nominee for an applicant, phoned the Scheme three times (30 minutes in all) to try and speak to someone at the Scheme about his client’s application. After 30 minutes, the staff member gave up. RSS’s are told, in their regular meetings with the Scheme, that communication with the Scheme needs to be by letter or email.

Trauma-informed principles appear not to be being applied when new procedures and processes are being assessed and implemented.

The Scheme appears to be making assumptions about literacy levels, proficiency in English and confidence to engage with an institution in writing.

The Scheme is required by the Act to be guided by the general principles set out in section 10 in everything that is being done by the Scheme. This must especially be the case, when the Scheme trials new and ‘more expedient ways’ to communicate with applicants.

In addition, over the past twelve months there has been a very high turnover of staff in the Scheme. This is making it increasingly difficult as a RSS to build rapport and continuity with those working within the Scheme.



The people applying for redress as the Scheme comes to an end are those in the main living with severe impacts of the abuse on their lives including isolation, loneliness, mental health and addiction issues. Many of those now applying for redress are in prison, noting that it was not until April 2024 that people in prison could apply for redress without having to establish exceptional circumstances.⁴

Given that those applying for redress towards the end of the Scheme, are often the most vulnerable, it is imperative that the general principles set out in section 10 of the Act are followed; that in applying for redress these survivors are provided with respect and dignity, and that where possible they are protected from further harm and from re-traumatisation.

It is SAMSN's observation that the procedures being put in place to expedite claims (such as communication only by letter or email), question the Scheme's commitment to following the general principles set out in section 10. It is very important that the processes and procedures being put in place by the Scheme are trauma-informed and so far as possible do no further harm.

5. Planning for a possible increase in applications as the Scheme approaches its conclusion.

Unfortunately, there appears to be little evidence of the Scheme making any plan for a possible increase in applications as the Scheme approaches its conclusion. What we have seen is the Scheme grappling with the high number of applications (almost 60%) which are still to be finalized. Many of the approaches adopted to speed up the Scheme's processes reflect an attitude of 'let's just get to the end regardless of the human cost'. These approaches do not reflect the implementation of trauma-informed principles and are far from the general principles set out in section 10 of the Act.

⁴ *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Amendment Act 2024*



Examples of approaches introduced by the Scheme which are not trauma-informed and which have the potential of doing further harm include not having any way of leaving a message on voicemail and requiring communication to be only in writing.

The high turnover of Scheme staff also means that much corporate memory of the Scheme especially in relation to the trauma-informed delivery of the Scheme, has been lost.

Interestingly the Auditor-General's Report noted what RSSs have been experiencing especially over the past twelve months.

“There were risk management arrangements from the start of the Scheme, with a high rated risk about finalizing applications by 2028 not escalated as required and treatments delayed...There has been no detailed communication planning for the end of the Scheme.”⁵

SAMSN notes with interest, that NSW and Commonwealth Stolen Generations Schemes have each extended their closing dates, allowing all people applying for redress or reparation to be treated fairly and minimising the impact of the process on the applicants.⁶ It is our submission that given the very high number of people applying for redress through the National Redress Scheme, it is of utmost importance that all people applying for redress are treated with procedural fairness and that the impact of the process on the applicants is minimised. The only way we can see this can occur is for the life of the Scheme to be extended, allowing Scheme staff the time to interact with applicants in a respectful manner.

6. Access to justice by vulnerable cohorts following changes to the Scheme access in 2024

One of the most vulnerable cohorts of applicants are those in prison. Changes were made to the Scheme in 2024 which removed restrictions allowing people in gaol to apply for redress.⁷

⁵Auditor-General Report No.9 2025-26 Performance Audit Pp 8 - 9

⁶ NSW Stolen Generations reparation scheme and the Territories Stolen Generations Redress Scheme

⁷ National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Amendment Act 2024



Prior to these changes, people in prison could only apply for redress if special circumstances existed. These special circumstances were set out in the Rules as being

- where the person in prison was so ill that it would be reasonable to expect that the person would not be able to make an application for redress when the left goal; or
- they were expected to be in prison until after the end of the Scheme.⁸

With the removal of the barrier of meeting special circumstances, many people in prison are now applying for Redress.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, visited correctional centres across Australia. Private sessions with 713 inmates took place, representing nearly 10% of all private sessions provided. Even if we say 10% of survivors of institutional CSA are in prison, that would represent over 7,000 people in prison entitled to apply for redress. What we know about the impact of childhood trauma in particular CSA, 10% is an extremely conservative estimate of the number of people in prison who are eligible to apply for redress.

Apart from the sheer number of people in prison now entitled to apply for redress, there are considerable logistical difficulties in preparing applications for redress in a speedy manner for applicants in prison.

Firstly, there are the logistical difficulties in contacting people in prison including

- arranging appointments to speak to clients, then not being able to have those appointments because the prison has gone into lockdown;
- prisoners being moved to another correctional facility and being faced with delays to find them within the system;
- prisoners exiting the prison system with no way of being able to contact them.

⁸ *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Rules 2018 section 14 (2)*



Secondly there are real concerns about managing the safety and wellbeing of prisoners as they complete the redress application. As noted by the Royal Commission in Volume 5 of the Final Report, talking about prisoners

“Many of these survivors (in prison) referred to childhoods marked by multiple traumatic experiences. Most had complex or difficult childhoods involving the child welfare system, abuse and neglect by family, running away and/or youth detention. They often told Commissioners about abuse and neglect by members of their family, and some also gave accounts of violence, substance use or crime by family members. Some told Commissioners about being placed in multiple different foster care families and some talked about how they were continually moved between different family members. Many reflected on how this lack of stability in their living arrangements impacted on their schooling, their ability to make friends and their ability to feel part of their community. For many survivors in prison, child sexual abuse within an institutional context was one of multiple childhood traumas.”⁹

For both of the reasons set out above, preparing applications for redress for this vulnerable cohort of survivors will and must take time. The Scheme ending in June 2027 for the receipt of applications will see many people in prison not being able to apply for redress.

Case study – client exiting prison

SAMSUN has been supporting an incarcerated client with his redress application. The client agreed he would on his release, discuss and review his application. The client was released from prison, but not with all his paperwork. In particular what was missing were the contact details for SAMSUN. He called the prison but they were unable to provide the

⁹ Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Final Report Volume 5 at page 268 and 269



contact details. The client had provided SAMSNS with a secondary contact. On not hearing from the client, SAMSNS staff reached out to the secondary contact, who arranged for the client to reconnect with SAMSNS. However, SAMSNS is having difficulties contacting the client who is yet to return missed calls and texts. It has been our experience that upon being released from prison, clients face many barriers reintegrating with society. It can often be difficult to continue with the redress application when other more pressing priorities are present such as finding housing, food and work. There is also the possibility that the client has been incarcerated again thereby presenting issues of locating him within the prison system.

Case study – prison clients

SAMSNS is experiencing considerable delays in connecting with clients in prison. Firstly, an appointment has to be found in the client’s schedule, using JUSTConnect (NSW) or Xpress Bookings (SA). Even after an appointment is booked, cancellations often occur because of prison lockdowns, insufficient prison staff to ensure the client is at the appointment, prison strikes or the client not wanting to take the call.

These delays add to the time it is taking to complete redress applications for people in prison.

7. Any other matters associated with the conclusion of the National Redress Scheme that survivors would like to make known to the Committee

Any extension of the Scheme will require amendments to be made to existing legislation, in particular section 193 of the Act.

Section 192(4) of the Act provides for a review of the Scheme to take place on the eighth anniversary of the Scheme, being 1 July 2026. We understand that plans are underway for this review to take place.



Reliance on a decision to extend the Scheme cannot be based on the outcome of this review. History tells us while the Second Year review of the Scheme took place between July 2020 and March 2021, with the report being delivered on 26 March 2021, the Government's Response was not made until May 2023, three years after the start of the review process.

If the same timelines were to be applied to the Eighth Year review, the response to the report would be expected to be received in 2029, one year after the scheme has closed. Sufficient information in terms of the Scheme's own data and the results of the Performance Audit carried out by the Auditor-General justify amending the legislation immediately, to extend the life of the Scheme. It is SAMSUN's submission that the life of the Scheme be extended by three years to 30 June 2031, with final applications being received two years prior, by 30 June 2029.

Case study – with complex mental health issues

[This case study highlights the time it is actually taking to support applicants with complex mental health issues and therefore the need to extend the life of the Scheme, so this client and many like him can safely complete their applications for redress.]

One of SAMSUN's clients had been diagnosed with complex PTSD, ADHD and Agoraphobia. They said that they often missed appointments because of their agoraphobia. SAMSUN staff and the client began drafting the redress application in early 2024. As at December 2025, the application still has not been finished. During this time weekly appointments have been booked to work on the redress application. However, the client often cannot attend appointments because of their agoraphobia or the inability of their NDIS support worker being able to attend the appointment. When the client has felt safe and well enough to work on the application, SAMSUN staff have only been able to draft a couple of paragraphs before it becomes too overwhelming. During this time, the client has had other competing demands including support completing a Victims Services request for counselling and



application for recognition payment following a recent sexual assault, connecting to a financial counsellor at Knowmore, arranging appointments with police to discuss reporting options and support to reconnect with people they have disengaged from. The task of SAMSUN staff is to hold the space and support the client as he completes his redress application.

8. Whether the operation and administration of the Scheme by the Department of Social Services is meeting the expectations of survivors and the Scheme’s statutory objectives.

SAMSUN wants to acknowledge what is working well and notes from the Scheme’s own Strategic Success Measures as at June 2025:

- the percentage of redress payments being made within 14 days remains high at 92% above the metric is 80%
- the quality of decision making remains high at 99% and above the metric of 95%
- institutional participation remains high at 99% above the metric of 95%

Case studies

One of SAMSUN’s clients commenced his involvement with SAMSUN by seeing a counsellor at SAMSUN two years ago. SAMSUN staff then supported him to complete his redress application. Once he received his redress payment, he took up the offer of the Direct Personal Response (DPR). He requested the institutional representative attend SAMSUN’s office. The client brought with him to the DPR, a member of his family, his disability support worker and his SAMSUN worker. He stated he wanted the DPR to take place at SAMSUN, which has been his place of healing, where he had started his redress journey, met with the counsellors and disclosed his abuse experience to other survivors in one of SAMSUN’s Eight-week Support Groups.

Another SAMSUN client had lodged his redress application with support from SAMSUN. The application had been lodged three years ago in 2022. The client had given up hope because the institution where he had been abused had not joined the Scheme. However, in



November 2025, another check was made of the institution and it was found it had joined the Scheme. The client received his redress payment less than a month later. He was overjoyed.

Yet in many respects according to the Scheme's own Strategic Success Measures as at June 2025, the Scheme is not meeting the expectations of survivors, including:

- worryingly the percentage of outcomes notified within six months of receiving all information, continues to fall well below the metric of 75%, at 27%.
- the Auditor-General's report noted 60% of the total number of applications were awaiting an outcome as at June 2025, this was very close to the percentage of 59.75% in December 2025.
- this report also noted the average time to complete processing an application stood at 16.3 months. Interestingly the Scheme noted that at the same date the average processing time was 14.1 months, a discrepancy of more than 2 months¹⁰ and at odds with SAMSN's own experience.

Case studies

In one week two SAMSN clients received their outcome letters. Included with the outcome letter was the Statement of Reasons. The Statements of Reasons for both clients were dated 6 months prior to the date of the letter. The significant discrepancy in the dates caused considerable distress to both clients.

¹⁰ The National Redress Scheme's Strategic Success Measures June 2025 at page 5



Conclusion

SAMSN has been supporting clients through the period of the Royal Commission and since 2018 as a RSS. It has accumulated many years' experience in working with and supporting survivors of institutional child sexual abuse.

SAMSN thanks the Joint Standing Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme for the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into the continuing operation of the National Redress Scheme.

The recommendations from the submissions made in this document are detailed below.

Recommendation 1: Immediately introduce legislation to extend the life of the National Redress Scheme by three years to 30 June 2031 with the closing date for redress applications being two years prior, on 30 June 2029.

Recommendation 2: Immediately introduce legislation to clarify the situation in relation to the operation of sections 24 and 26. The Scheme has erroneously stated it is bringing its practice of requesting additional information from applicants, into line with that of the information requests made of institutions. No such alignment exists in the legislation. This situation needs to be clarified, to ensure applicants are afforded procedural fairness, noting the general principles set out in section 10 of the Act.