



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

Joint Standing Committee on

Implementation of the National Redress Scheme

Discussion Paper

Inquiry into the continuing operations of the National Redress Scheme

Introduction

The Joint Standing Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme is undertaking an inquiry into the continuing operations of the National Redress Scheme.

The purpose of this discussion paper is to identify some of the issues and themes arising out of the inquiry terms of reference and assist stakeholders to focus their submissions. The paper has been informed by initial discussions with the Department of Social Services, legal support services and other stakeholders. The information outlined in this paper is not intended to replace the Terms of Reference. Nor is it intended to place more importance on some issues over others. Rather, the paper sets out questions that may assist people who wish to make a submission.

The Committee welcomes all contributions to the inquiry. The Committee is seeking evidence with a view to ensuring the Scheme can respond to emerging trends and challenges, particularly as it moves into its final phase of operation. Submitters may address as many or as few of the matters set out in this paper as they wish. Since the Committee's role is to make recommendations to Government, submitters are encouraged to highlight issues with the Scheme and put forward recommendations they would like to see the Committee make in its report. General information on how to prepare a submission is available on the Parliament of Australia [website](#).

Closing date for submissions: **Friday 06 February 2026**.

Submissions can be made via:

Inquiry website:	https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/National_Redress_Scheme_Standing
Email:	redress@aph.gov.au
Mail:	Committee Secretary Joint Standing Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme PO Box 6021 Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600

There is no set format for submissions, and they do not need be formal documents.

Terms of reference

On 30 October 2025, the Committee resolved to undertake an inquiry into the continuing operations of the National Redress Scheme, with a focus on transition arrangements and outstanding case management as the Scheme approaches its conclusion.

The Committee will consider:

- the Scheme's operational timeline, and the potential for this timeline to be extended;
- the accessibility, funding, and transition plans for support services as the Scheme concludes;
- current case management issues and information requests, and the timeframe required to resolve these matters;
- outstanding applications and determinations, and the processes and procedures that may need to be implemented to maximise just outcomes before the Scheme concludes;
- planning for a possible increase in applications as the Scheme approaches its conclusion;
- access to justice by vulnerable cohorts following changes to the Scheme access in 2024;
- any other matters associated with the conclusion of the National Redress Scheme that survivors would like to make known to the Committee; and
- 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.

In these Terms of Reference, the definition of “survivors” is intended to be open and inclusive. The term includes, but is not limited to:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- People with disability
- Care leavers
- Former child migrants
- Prisoners
- People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Survivors who may be eligible but are unable to apply for redress
- Survivors recently deemed ineligible for redress

Purpose of the current inquiry

Applications to the National Redress Scheme close on 30 June 2027, and the Scheme ends on 30 June 2028. As the Scheme approaches its conclusion, this inquiry primarily focuses on transition arrangements and outstanding case management.

The terms of reference are designed to explore key questions related to the final operational stage of the Scheme, including:

- What challenges does the Scheme face as it nears its conclusion?
- How can the Department of Social Services effectively manage the Scheme's conclusion?
- What mechanisms should be implemented to ensure an efficient and fair closure?
- How to ensure consistency and transparency in application decisions?

As part of this inquiry, the Committee is also keen to understand:

- Should certain functions continue beyond the life of the Scheme?
- What forms of support will be most effective for applicants after the Scheme ends?
- Whether models from state, territory, or international jurisdictions could inform best practice.

Insights from survivors

As has been the case throughout each of its iterations, the Committee is particularly interested in receiving insights from survivors.

The Committee acknowledges that the National Redress Scheme has been extremely complex to implement. This inquiry provides an opportunity to reflect on lessons learned, with a view to improving Australia's policy framework for responding to child sexual abuse and other social issues in the future.

Recent statutory amendments to the Scheme

On 20 March 2024, a series of amendments were made to the Scheme through the *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Amendment Act 2024* (Cth). The key changes made to the Scheme included:

- a change to review processes to allow new information to be provided as part of a request for review of a determination, and considered by independent decision-makers as part of the review process, with a view to increasing procedural fairness for applicants;
- removal of the restriction on people making an application for redress from gaol to increase equity for survivors;
- changes to the process for people with serious criminal convictions applying for redress to better target and reduce the number of people required to go through the special assessment process;
- changes to the Scheme's protected information framework by introducing additional authorisations for the disclosure of protected information, in order to:
 - allow information about a non-participating institution to be shared with survivors who have named those institutions in their applications to enhance transparency;
 - authorise the Scheme operator to share protected information with public trustees, as appropriate; and
 - authorise an institution within a participating group to share protected information with another institution within the same participating group for internal investigations and disciplinary procedures;
- the implementation of technical amendments to align funder of last resort rounding provisions with other provisions in the *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018* (Cth); and
- allow finalised applications for redress to be reassessed where an institution identified in the application has subsequently joined the Scheme or been listed under funder of last resort arrangements, to ensure that a survivor is not disadvantaged by having their application decided prior to relevant institutions joining.

As part of this inquiry, the Committee will consider the impact of these changes, with a view to assessing how these reforms have been implemented and their impact on applicants, support services, and overall Scheme administration.

The relevant term of reference for this aspect of the inquiry states that the Committee will consider "access to justice by vulnerable cohorts following changes to the Scheme access in 2024."

The Committee has used the term “vulnerable cohorts” to refer to survivors who face additional challenges in accessing the National Redress Scheme, such as individuals experiencing homelessness or living with mental illness. In the context of this term of reference, “vulnerable cohorts” primarily relates to individuals applying for redress from correctional facilities. However, it remains broad enough to include other groups or individuals whose specific issues may emerge during the course of the inquiry.

Background

The National Redress Scheme was established in 2018 in response to recommendations made by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Royal Commission). It is established under the *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018* (Cth) (NRS Act) and is scheduled to run for ten years, concluding in June 2028.

Under the NRS Act, the Secretary of the Department of Social Services is the Scheme Operator. Department officials are responsible for receiving and processing applications to the Scheme, although ultimate accountability rests with the Secretary. The Department also manages the engagement of Independent Decision Makers, who determine eligibility for redress by interpreting and applying the NRS Act, relevant policies, and other statutory provisions in accordance with public law requirements.

Scheme applicants can receive an offer of redress comprising three components:

- counselling and psychological care;
- monetary payment (up to \$150,000, with any relevant prior payment related to abuse suffered deducted from this amount); and
- direct personal responses from each participating institution responsible for the abuse.

Parliamentary oversight

Three previous iterations of the Committee have provided oversight throughout the life of the Scheme:

Timeframe	Committee name
June 2017 – April 2019 (45 th Parliament)	Joint Select Committee on Oversight of the Implementation of Redress Related Recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
September 2019 – April 2022 (46 th Parliament)	Joint Select Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme
July 2022 – March 2025 (47 th Parliament)	Joint Standing Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme

Inquiries by these Committees have resulted in four reports to Parliament to date:

Date of Publication	Report Title
2 April 2019	<u>Getting the National Redress Scheme right: An overdue step toward justice</u>
1 May 2020	<u>First Interim Report</u>
23 November 2021	<u>Second Interim Report</u>
26 November 2024	<u>Redress: Journey to Justice</u>

Complementing these Committee reports, on 26 March 2021 an independent statutory review of the Scheme after its second year of operation produced the report [Final Report of the Second Year Review of the National Redress Scheme](#).

On 24 November 2025, the Australian National Audit Office released a [report](#) reviewing the Department of Social Services' management of the National Redress Scheme. These reports, along with a forthcoming Eight Year Independent Review, have informed ongoing improvements to the Scheme. The Committee intends that this inquiry will similarly have a positive impact on Scheme operations.