

Joint Standing Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme

Public Hearing – 18 September 2024

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Medical ethicist report

Question reference number: IQ24-000199

Question asked by: Catryna Bilyk

Type of Question: Spoken. **Hansard Page/s:** Pages 3 and 4

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 2 October 2024

Question:

Ms Hope: No, Senator. The department is not deliberately trying to be effusive or obstructive in any way. We know that this is a complicated scheme to administer. You know we've had conversations, and the secretary has said he will quite happily sit with this committee and walk you through where there are concerns or bad actors at play in the work that we do. We understand that this scheme is extraordinarily complicated. We understand that we need to maintain the integrity of the scheme. We cannot afford for people to have bad actors. We cannot afford for our institutional partners to walk away from the scheme; otherwise, the whole thing collapses. We understand that. We also have to administer the act. We have to follow legislation, and we understand that as well. But we do work—

CHAIR: Ms Hope, the legislation does not say we cannot see the report.

Ms Hope: No. That is correct. I will take that on notice and come back to you with a substantial answer about the report. The point I am making is that the department is not trying to be effusive or secretive in any way, shape or form. We are trying to protect the integrity of the scheme and the integrity for victims-survivors. That is a very difficult balance. We've talked about it a lot, in terms of the administration of the scheme. I do appreciate your frustration. We will work as productively with this committee as we can—absolutely. We are certainly happy to provide information in private sittings. I absolutely—

...

Ms Hope: I certainly understand that every senator around this table is extraordinarily busy. I'm not suggesting you are not. The only things the department is very cautious with are things that we believe potentially unpick the integrity of the scheme. Even with that, we are happy to have private in camera sessions with this committee. We've made that offer several times. We'll continue to make that offer.

CHAIR: Ms Hope, you've said you will take the issue—

Ms Hope: I will.

CHAIR: back and think on it.

Ms Hope: No. I will get advice.

CHAIR: When will you let me know when that advice is—

Ms Hope: I will get advice as expediently as possible. I'm happy to have the secretary write to the committee separately rather than wait for a question on notice process.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Answer:

The medical ethicist's report has been provided to the Committee separately with a letter from the Secretary of the Department of Social Services on 10 October 2024.