



The National Redress Scheme

Information for people with disability

Please look after yourself – this fact sheet covers child sexual abuse. This can be a difficult topic and reading this information might bring back traumatic memories and experiences. For support or to discuss how you are feeling you can call the Blue Knot helpline to speak with a counsellor on 1300 657 380 (9am-5pm AEST). More contacts for immediate 24/7 help are listed at the end of this fact sheet.

People with Disability Australia (PWDA) gives free and confidential support for people with disability to access the National Redress Scheme. For more information, call us on 1800 843 929.

What is redress?

‘Redress’ means to give a **remedy or rectify a wrong**. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse recommended the establishment of the National Redress Scheme to deliver **justice** to survivors of child sexual abuse in institutions or in connection with institutions.

What is the National Redress Scheme?

The National Redress Scheme **gives support** to survivors of institutional child sexual abuse. The Scheme **acknowledges abuse** by **holding institutions accountable** for this abuse.

The Scheme gives access to three things:

1. counselling
2. a redress payment
3. a direct personal response from the institution.

More detail about the three parts of the redress scheme is below.

The National Redress Scheme began on the 1 July 2018 and will finish on 30 June 2028. Applications are **open until 30 June 2027**.

Who can apply?

You can apply to the National Redress Scheme if:

- you experienced institutional child sexual abuse (see below for further information)
- the abuse was before 1 July 2018
- you were born before 30 June 2010
- you are an Australian citizen or permanent resident.

Are you under 18 years old? If you under 18 years (and born before 30 June 2010) you can apply to the Scheme but you will need to wait until you turn 18 to get an offer of redress. The National Redress Scheme does a preliminary assessment of your application and then contacts you before you turn 18 to ask if you would like to continue with your application, or withdraw it.

If you are serving a sentence in a prison, youth training centre, community correction centre or on remand, you can only receive redress in exceptional circumstances – a special assessment process applies before your application can proceed.

If you have already got a **court-ordered** payment from the institution relating to the sexual abuse you cannot get a redress payment in relation to that institution.

What is child sexual abuse?

Please note that the definitions used here are those used by the National Redress Scheme. However, it is important to recognise that sexual abuse of people with disability can take many forms and includes many diverse experiences and contexts.

In relation to the Scheme, child sexual abuse is when someone involves a person under the age of 18 in sexual activities that they do not understand or that are against community standards. This may include (but is not limited to):

- sexual touching or activity of any kind with a child (with or without clothes on)
- preparing, encouraging, convincing or forcing a child to take part in sexual activity
- a child witnessing someone else in sexual activity or being sexually abused.

Child sexual abuse can involve adults of any gender and children of any gender.

If a child was sexually abused by another child in an institution this is also included within the scope of the Scheme if the abuse involved physical contact or penetration.

Child sexual abuse is a serious crime, and **it is never the fault of the child** who was abused. Children who have been sexually abused can feel a range of emotions and reactions including shock, silence, guilt, blame, shame, fear, confusion, isolation and loss of trust.

Child sexual abuse and disability

Children with disability are at increased risk of abuse, including sexual abuse. This can be because some children with disability spend a significant amount of time in institutions to access health, education or care services which can isolate them from the community and trusted adults. Children with intellectual disability, communication disorders or behavioural disorders are at a particularly high risk.¹

Like all survivors, people with disability can suffer profound impacts from child sexual abuse including the impacts on their mental health and personal relationships. These impacts can also be compounded by negative community attitudes, stigma and disability discrimination.

Some common barriers to disclosing abuse are shame and embarrassment, fear of retribution, lack of a trusted person to tell or fear of not being believed. Children with disability also face additional barriers to disclosure including communication needs not being met, signs of abuse being overlooked, and a fear of losing support services.

If you experienced sexual abuse as a child, **you are not alone** and there is help and support. Please see 'Key contacts and resources' at the end of this fact sheet for more information.

¹ Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017, A brief guide to the Final Report – Disability p4.

² Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017, A brief guide to the Final Report – Disability pp5-6.

What is an institution?

An institution is any organisation or entity that provides activities or services, through which it has contact with children. This includes, but is not limited to:

- schools
- churches or religious organisations
- clubs
- orphanages or children's homes
- disability service providers
- out-of-home care providers.

When is an institution responsible?

Institutions are held responsible for child sexual abuse if they brought the abuser into contact with the child who experienced abuse. Examples include where the abuse was on the institution's premises, where the activities of the institution took place, or where the abuse was by an official of an institution regardless of location. An 'official' may include an institution's employee, volunteer, or someone else who held a position of authority and trust.

Has the institution joined the Scheme?

Applications can only be assessed for institutions that have joined the National Redress Scheme. A list of organisations who have, or intend to join is on the Scheme's website, www.nationalredress.gov.au, or can be found by calling the Scheme on 1800 737 377.

If an institution has not joined the Scheme, you can contact legal service knowmore for free advice on your options by calling 1800 605 762 or visiting their website at www.knowmore.org.au.

Child sexual abuse is a serious crime, and **it is never the fault of the child who was abused**

What can I apply for?

The National Redress Scheme provides access to three things:

- 1. counselling and psychological care** where you can talk to a professional about how you think and feel and find out ways to help you feel better.
- 2. a redress payment** of up to \$150,000
- 3. a direct personal response** from the institution/s responsible for the abuse.

A direct personal response could be a letter, meeting or symbolic gesture, where the responsible institution/s acknowledges the abuse and offers you an apology. The institution may also provide an explanation of what they have done or will do to stop abuse from happening again. You decide if you would like a direct personal response or not, and it is **only initiated by you** when you are ready.

Is the National Redress Scheme the right option for me?

The National Redress Scheme is not the only choice for people who have experienced institutional child sex abuse, and it may not be the right option for everyone. Legal service knowmore can provide you with free advice about your options – you can call them on 1800 605 762 or visit www.knowmore.org.au.



Key contacts and resources

Helplines

There are helplines available 24 hours a day, seven days a week:

Lifeline – 13 11 14

Beyond Blue – 1300 22 4636

Kids Helpline – 1800 551 800

1800RESPECT – 1800 737 732

Suicide Call Back Service – 1300 659 467

MensLine Australia – 1300 789 978

In an emergency call Triple Zero (000)

Blue Knot Foundation – call 1300 657 380 (9am to 5pm AEST), email helpline@blueknot.org.au for trained trauma-informed counsellors or visit www.blueknot.org.au.

1800RESPECT – call 1800 737 732, web chat www.1800respect.org.au (24 hours a day) for counselling, information and support for sexual assault, domestic and family violence.

Bravehearts – call 1800 272 831 (8.30am to 4.30pm AEST, Monday to Friday) for information, support and referrals for child sexual assault.

Further information

National Redress Scheme – call 1800 737 377 (8am to 5pm AEST, Monday to Friday) or visit www.nationalredress.gov.au to find free support services, a list of institutions who have joined, or for an application form.

knowmore – call 1800 605 762 or visit www.knowmore.org.au for a free, confidential and independent legal service for anyone who is considering applying to the National Redress Scheme.

People with Disability Australia (PWDA) – call 1800 843 929 or visit www.pwd.org.au for free, confidential and independent support for people with disability to access the National Redress Scheme.

ReachOut – visit www.au.reachout.com for information for young people to help them understand what sexual assault is and what sort of help is available.

Child Wise – visit www.childwise.org.au for fact sheets and videos about the National Redress Scheme for young people, families and caregivers including resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) – has produced a series of fact sheets about violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of children and young people with disability at www.cyda.org.au.