

The National Redress Scheme

Information for families, caregivers and support people

About the Scheme

The National Redress Scheme provides support to people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse. 'Redress' means to give a **remedy or rectify a wrong**. The Scheme acknowledges abuse that has occurred and holds institutions accountable for this abuse. The Scheme provides access to:

1. counselling and psychological care
2. a redress payment of up to \$150,000
3. a direct personal response from the institution/s responsible for the abuse (this can include a letter or meeting with the responsible institution/s where they acknowledge the abuse and offer an apology).

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

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.

This fact sheet is one of three by People with Disability Australia (PWDA) and Children Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) about the National Redress Scheme. To find out more about the Scheme, including who can apply and how to apply, please see our other factsheets: 'The National Redress Scheme' and 'Applying to the National Redress Scheme'.

How to respond to disclosure of child sexual abuse

Children or adults may disclose child sexual abuse at any time; while the abuse is happening, immediately after it has ended, or many years after the abuse has happened. Some common barriers to disclosing abuse are shame and embarrassment, fear of retribution, lack of a trusted person to tell or fear that they will not be 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.¹

¹ Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017, A brief guide to the Final Report – Disability. pp 5-6

When a child or someone close to you discloses sexual abuse, you may feel overwhelmed and unsure about how to respond or how to best support them. You may experience a range of reactions and emotions including shock, grief, anger, and/or feeling helpless. It is important to remember that they have chosen to tell you because they trust you. Responding well when someone discloses their abuse can make a big difference to their recovery from trauma. Some helpful and supportive ways that you can respond include:

Believe – many children who have been abused are told by the perpetrator that they will not be believed if they tell someone, or they may have already disclosed to someone else and not been believed. It is critical that the person who is disclosing their abuse feels validated.

Listen – when someone discloses child sexual abuse it is usual to have lots of questions. However, asking lots of questions can make the other person feel uncomfortable or may make them feel like they are not believed. Before asking, listen. Remain calm and patient.

Reassure – let them know that they have done the right thing by telling you, and that what happened is not their fault.

Assist – find out what professional and support services are available to help your child, family member or friend. The National Redress Scheme is one option for accessing counselling and psychological care. See the ‘Key contacts’ section at the end of this fact sheet for further information.

Respect – acknowledge the bravery and strength of the child or person who is disclosing to you. Respect that they may only reveal some details of the abuse. Avoid making promises that you cannot keep. For example, if it is a child who is disclosing explain that you will need to report the abuse so that they can be kept safe.

Protecting safety and reporting

You can act to protect the safety of the child by reporting the abuse to the relevant authorities.

Every state and territory has laws regarding the mandatory reporting of abuse of children under the age of 18 years old. The Australian Institute of Family Studies has information about mandatory reporting and the relevant laws in each state or territory: www.aifs.gov.au.

If the survivor is an adult, a sexual assault service can help with information about reporting sexual abuse to the police and the relevant laws. The support service 1800RESPECT has a services directory which can assist you to find support services in your state or territory: www.1800respect.org.au.

Reporting abuse against people with disability can be done by calling the National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline on 1800 880 052 (9am to 7pm AEST, Monday to Friday).

In an emergency call Triple Zero (000).

How to support someone applying to the National Redress Scheme

Your family member, friend, or person you care for may feel nervous, confused or overwhelmed about the idea of applying to the National Redress Scheme. Getting support from someone they know and trust is very important and can help them during this journey. There are some practical ways that you can support someone who is applying to the National Redress Scheme.

Learn more about the Scheme

By learning about the Scheme you can assist your family member, friend, or the person you care for to understand and navigate it. Please see CYDA and PWDA’s other fact sheets ‘The National Redress Scheme’ and ‘Applying to the National Redress Scheme’, or visit the National Redress Scheme’s website at www.nationalredress.gov.au.

Facilitate contact with a Redress Support Service

Redress Support Services are available in each state and territory and can provide free information and advice about the National Redress Scheme and help you with your application. PWDA gives free and confidential support for people with disability to access the National Redress Scheme – you can call them on 1800 843 929. You can also visit www.nationalredress.gov.au or call the National Redress Scheme on 1800 737 377 to find a support service in your area.

Provide support during the application process

The application process for redress can be very challenging, as it requires the applicant to recall painful and distressing experiences. You can support your family member, friend, or person you care for through this process and reassure them that they can work through the application at their own pace and seek out professional support. You or the person you are supporting can speak to a professional counsellor by calling the Blue Knot helpline on 1300 657 380.

Be prepared that this may be a long process – both the application and then waiting for the outcome. It can take up to 12 months (or longer in some circumstances) for an application to be processed and offer made. Check in regularly with the person you are supporting and remind them that you are there for them throughout the process.

Responding well when someone discloses their abuse can make a big difference to their recovery from trauma

Becoming a nominee

An applicant to the National Redress Scheme can ask a family member, friend, advocate or other trusted person to act on their behalf. This is called a nominee.

There are two types of nominees:

- 1. assistance nominees** can help someone with their application for redress, receive copies of letters, ask questions and receive phone calls about the redress application, give information to the Scheme, and ask for a review of a redress offer.
- 2. legal nominees** are people who already have the power to make decisions for the person applying for redress under Australian law (for example, guardianship or power of attorney). Legal nominees can do the same things as assistance nominees; and can also apply for redress and accept or decline an offer of redress on the person's behalf.

Nominees have a duty to act in the best interests of the redress applicant at all times. To appoint a nominee, an additional 'Redress Nominee Form' must be completed. Redress Support Services can assist you with this process.

Looking after yourself

It is usual to feel upset or distressed when someone close to you experiences something traumatic. You will be in a better position to support your family member, friend or person you care for if you get support for yourself when you need it. Please see the 'Key contacts' section at the end of this fact sheet for further information about available support.

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.

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.

Child Family Community Australia – Responding to children and young people's disclosures of abuse www.aifs.gov.au.

Trauma and Grief Network – Supporting your child after abuse www.tgn.anu.edu.au.

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.