

Victorian Government releases CSA redress scheme consultation paper

Last week the Victorian Government released its public [consultation paper on compensation and redress](#) for survivors of institutional child abuse.

The 38-page paper is part of the Government's response to recommendations from the 2013 Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations.

The paper outlines proposals for a redress scheme which are broadly in line with the Royal Commission's preferred option laid out in its January discussion paper: a direct personal response from the offending institution, access to counselling and psychological care and a financial payment.

Significantly, however, this move appears to be a very clear indication that if a national scheme doesn't eventuate then Victoria will put in place its own.

The release of this document, the first concrete contribution to the redress debate from any Australian state or territory government since the Commission started in 2013, now puts real pressure on the Commonwealth to get involved.

If the Federal Government fails to respond positively to the Royal Commission's redress recommendations, due for release this month, then it has the potential to see the major problems survivors of CSA have faced in seeking redress continue for decades to come.

While the move by the Victorian Government must be applauded, in the absence of either a national redress scheme, or at the very least, state-based schemes that are nationally consistent, then abuse survivors will continue to receive compensation based on their postcode rather than the abuse they have suffered.

Too often we have seen the most high profile failure of Federation, the inability for state and territory governments to achieve national regulatory consistency, cripple good policy such as consistent workers compensation, licensing and other administrative processes.

If a national redress scheme becomes victim to similar parochial posturing then the hope of a nationally consistent, independent, generous redress scheme for survivors of CSA is a long way off.

The Victorian Government's paper says it is open to participating in a national redress scheme or cooperating with other Australian governments.

It makes the point very clear, however, that "it is by no means clear that a national scheme will eventuate. It appears that the broad support required for a national redress scheme is missing amongst many other Australian governments, particularly from the Commonwealth."

While some other States have run their own redress schemes, they have been targetted in their scope. For example, the former redress scheme in Western Australia was set up to provide redress to survivors of abuse and neglect in state care. The Victorian Government's paper, the strongest indication yet that a redress scheme will be established for Victoria, has set the bar for the Commonwealth and other states and territories.

In the paper the Victorian Government says it has "a unique opportunity to respond to the diverse needs and experiences of a wider group of survivors than has been done in other Australian jurisdiction".

As I've said before, the public hearings in this Royal Commission paint a picture of an inconsistent approach to compensation, inadequate payments and a lack of transparency about process and outcomes.

Now is the time for all governments, all institutions and all people of good will to get behind a nationally consistent redress scheme for survivors of child sexual abuse, as an essential first step towards ensuring justice for victims and survivors.

Francis Sullivan, CEO, TJHC

www.tjhcouncil.org.au

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