

Labor in the right as it makes the running on redress

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There have not been many instances lately of Bill Shorten's Labor Party being quicker off the mark than the Turnbull government — but there was one yesterday.

The Opposition Leader did both the smart and the right thing by committing a future Labor government to a national redress scheme for the survivors of child abuse.

It's smart because the bulk of the estimated \$4.01 billion funding over 10 years has already been committed and will not be government money.

The Catholic and Anglican churches have already committed to fund such a scheme and most smaller churches are also prepared to sign on.

The response of Malcolm Turnbull and Attorney-General George Brandis has been one of noncommittal.

Catholic spokesman Francis Sullivan wrote to the Prime Minister on September 25 asking to clarify the government's position on a redress scheme — and received a response only yesterday.

It may have been a coincidence that the Prime Minister's office replied the day Labor made its announcement to introduce a redress scheme — or it may have been that the office realised it was getting the politics of this wrong.

The latest Redress and Civil Litigation Report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse recommends the redress scheme be funded by the institutions but administered by the government.

It has recommended that the institutions where abuse occurred should pay compensation for that abuse.

The bulk of abuse brought to the commission's notice occurred in Catholic-run institutions — about 36 per cent of the allegations made.

The Catholic Church has earmarked about \$1bn in additional funding for compensation expected to be part of such a scheme.

The commission says in its report that Australian society failed to protect children “across a number of generations”.

Finally, it appears that a system may be put in place where survivors can obtain at least some redress.