

The Australian

Victims split over sex abuse compo scheme

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Plans to provide compensation and medical support to tens of thousands of child sex-abuse victims have run into disagreement between the federal and state governments, with victims themselves saying they are likely to reject the Prime Minister's preferred response.

Thirteen months after the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse recommended that a \$4.3 billion national redress scheme be set up, those who work with victims say they fear the opportunity to achieve this may be lost.

The royal commission recommended establishing a single, independent body able to order institutions to apologise, pay compensation to and help with the medical expenses of an estimated 65,000 victims.

Queensland Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk wrote to a psychiatrist who works with child-abuse victims earlier this month, saying "redress should be operated as a single national scheme by the federal government to provide equity and consistency for survivors".

"We are committed to working with the federal government and other states and territories on the development of a single NRS (national redress scheme)," her letter said.

A spokesman for NSW Premier Mike Baird said his government also preferred "a unified and potentially national scheme". The Catholic, Anglican and Uniting churches, as well as many Jewish community leaders, have also publicly supported the proposal.

Malcolm Turnbull has declined to commit to such a scheme, telling parliament last month that his government would instead "be seeking to deliver a nationally consistent approach".

Staff in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet are understood to be looking at whether the different states and territories could run independent schemes, using guidelines drawn up by the federal government.

But thousands of victims were abused while in state care, and several victims said they would never approach a state-based redress scheme as a result.

"The state was my perpetrator," said Geoff, who was taken into the care of the NSW government at the age of 14 months and suffered repeated physical and sexual assaults throughout his childhood.

"That's why we don't want the states doing redress. There's no justice in the states offering redress, no justice at all," said Geoff, who asked to be identified only by his first name.

Relying on state-based schemes could mean different victims received unequal levels of redress, said Robert Llewellyn-Jones, one of a number of psychiatrists and other experts who petitioned Mr Turnbull and other politicians on the issue last month.

“If they just put out a set of -national principles ... it’s a real -betrayal because it’s just kicking it into the long grass. I think we can do better than that,” he said.

The Victorian and NSW governments said they would co-operate with the federal government on either a national or state-based approach to redress. South Australia has its own redress scheme but welcomed a national scheme