

**Submission to the QLD Parliament HEALTH,
COMMUNITIES, DISABILITY SERVICES AND
DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION
COMMITTEE**

**Submitted by
Fighters against child abuse Australia [FACAA]**



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About the author:

Adam Washbourne is the founder and President of the charity group Fighters against child abuse Australia. He founded the charity July 2010 to fill a big gap that he saw within the community and to bring about an end to an issue that has plagued our nation for far too long now.

Adam has a Diploma of Community services (Welfare) specializing in child trauma counselling and has worked in the field for the past 15 years since completing his degree. Adam is also a martial arts instructor and has been teaching children how to defend themselves for the past 17 years.

Adam has worked for various community centres, mental health facilities and martial arts schools but currently counsels for FACAA and teaches for KMA martial arts in Liverpool Sydney, one of Australia's premier martial arts schools.

This submission was prepared by Fighters against child abuse
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About Fighters against child abuse Australia

Our mission is to end child abuse once and for all within Australia.

Our vision is to make Australia the only nation on the planet that does not suffer from the scourge of child abuse.

Our guiding principals are to remain completely non denominational and non political to achieve our mission of ending child abuse once and for all by whatever means are required (within the laws of the land). If a program does not exist to meet the needs of our clients then we will make one to meet their needs.

FACAA has been working actively for the past 8 years to end child abuse within Australia. We are currently running a survivor's healing programs, educational and legal reform programs, domestic violence programs, anti bullying programs and a social media awareness campaign which regularly receives over 4 million unique views making it the single most successful social media campaign of its kind in Australia.

FACAA is a national organisation that has full deductible gift recipient status as a public benevolent society. We have survivors of child abuse in our healing programs from every part of Australia and we have members of our social media awareness campaign from all over the world.



Introduction

We are quite lucky in FACAA to have access to over 100 thousand members and their families, to prepare this report we went to these members and asked them a very simple question. “What do you think of the redress scheme” Those who responded we sent a copy of the redress scheme via their inbox with a series of questions in plain language asking them for the issues they believed needed to be addressed. We are very happy with the outcome as it shows the views of a wide cross section of Australians from teenagers to the elderly and everyone in between.

For this particular submission we received over five hundred responses from our members. They all were very passionate about the redress scheme and shared our views on how great it is that the state governments are signing onto the scheme and upholding the recommendations of the Royal commission into institutional responses to child abuse.



Issues raised in the Redress scheme

Through the use of questions asked of our members and then a round table discussion amongst the authors of this paper, we have found two major issues with the redress scheme.

Other than those two issues we are incredibly happy with the scheme and applaud the Queensland government for signing onto the scheme as a part of their commitment to upholding the recommendations of the Royal Commission into institutional responses to child abuse.

The first major issue is to do with the suicide of victims of institutional child abuse. To put it simply will the families of victims of child abuse who have taken their life as a result of the trauma they endured at the hands of their abusers be eligible for access to the national redress scheme?

When you consider the lifelong damage that child abuse does to it's victims it should come as no surprise to hear that survivors can endure post traumatic stress disorder on similar levels endured by those who have survived front line combat in war zones.

With that in mind we at FACAA feel it would be unfair to exclude the families of victims of child abuse who have sadly succumbed to their trauma and taken their own lives.

Their family members paid the ultimate price for their ordeals and we at FACAA believe strongly that they should have the same levels of access to the national redress scheme as any other

victim.

To avoid the inevitable fight over funds amongst family members you could simply award the executor of the deceased person's estate one share of the redress scheme and let them sort out the rest of the legalities.

To exclude victims who have committed suicide due to their trauma would not only be unfair but we also believe illegal, considering their suicide was a direct symptom of the trauma they endured at the hands of the institutions who are currently making reparations through the redress scheme.

The other issue FACAA had with the redress scheme was the criminal record excluding people from accessing the scheme.

We have absolutely no problem what so ever with child abusers and child rapists being one hundred percent excluded from any form of compensation or recompense for their trauma. Simply put if they can put someone else through the hell they themselves endured, then they simply do not deserve to be compensated.

However, our concern is that those who are not guilty of hurting children might miss out on gaining access to the redress scheme. In some cases, survivors of child abuse who are self-medicating to alleviate the symptoms of their trauma they endured at the hands of their abusers. These self-medication strategies could include drug and alcohol use and abuse, self-harming behaviours such as speeding in vehicles and other risk taking activities that may find them foul of the law.

It is our view that unless the charge is for child abuse or sexual abuse, we believe that person should still get access to the redress scheme. Unless the crime is one of violence or sexual assault or any crime against a child, that survivor should still have full access to the redress scheme. We believe it is

incredibly unfair to exclude someone from the redress scheme because they simply self-medicated from their trauma and mental health issues through illicit drugs and alcohol or even risk taking behaviour which several survivors we have spoken to have said helps ease the pain and mental anguish they are living with everyday as a result of their abuse.

Once again we are not suggesting for a second that anyone convicted of child abuse offences, sexual abuse offences or any other violent offences should have access to the redress scheme. However we are asking that non child abuse criminals not be excluded from the scheme as a survivor of child abuse is eighty eight percent more likely to suffer a lethal overdose of illicit drugs than someone who had not survived child abuse.
(Australian institute of family studies)

FACAA believe having only those who have gone onto abuse children or be sexual or violent abusers should be the ones excluded from the national redress scheme and not those simply self-medicating from the trauma of their ordeal at the hands of their abusers.



Conclusion

The fact that the states have so swiftly adopted the national redress scheme is incredibly encouraging for advocacy groups like Fighters against child abuse Australia. We wish to applaud the efforts of the states like the Queensland government for acting on the recommendations of the Royal Commission into institutional responses to child abuse. It was a very real fear that the Royal Commission would do all this incredible work and have the governments simply ignore their recommendations.

The actual case has been the complete opposite and the redress scheme is just the first step towards adopting all of the recommendations of the Royal Commission. While we did identify two potential problems with the scheme, overall we were quite happy with the way it was presented and found it to be very much on the side of survivors of child abuse. A group who have been far too often ignored and left out of legislative change.



References

Direct interviews, emails and phone calls with over 500 FACAA members and clients who answered our call and wanted to add their voices to our submission. We hope we made your voices heard loud and clear.

Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Framework for the Protection of Australia's Children 2009-2020,

Bravehearts Australia in particular Hetty Johnstone

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