



Queensland Catholic Education Commission

Level 1, 143 Edward Street, Brisbane Qld 4000

GPO Box 2441, Brisbane Qld 4001

Ph +61 7 3316 5800 Fax +61 7 3316 5880

email: enquiries@qcec.catholic.edu.au

www.qcec.catholic.edu.au

ABN: 57 525 935 419

Response to National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2018

Queensland Catholic Education Commission

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The Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2018.

QCEC is a peak strategic body with state-wide responsibilities for Catholic education in Queensland. This submission is provided on behalf of five Diocesan Catholic School Authorities and 17 Religious Institutes and other incorporated bodies which, between them, operate a total of 304 Catholic schools that educate more than 147,000 students in Queensland.

QCEC fully supports the establishment of the National Redress Scheme for people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse. The finding of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse make clear the need for a universal system of recompense and practical assistance for individuals who have suffered such abuse. On a national basis, the Catholic Church has confirmed that it will be a participating institution in the National Redress Scheme. Therefore, all Catholic entities in Queensland will come under the operation of the National Redress Scheme.

National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2018

A key function of the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2018 (the Bill) is to refer relevant powers to the Australian Parliament in accordance with section 51 (xxxvii) of the Commonwealth Constitution. The referral of powers to the Australian Parliament is essential for Queensland based non-government institutions, including church entities, to participate in the National Redress Scheme. Therefore, this function of the Bill is supported by QCEC.

It is noted that the Bill closely resembles the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2018 (NSW), passed by the New South Wales Parliament. Given the need for a truly national scheme that is open to all Australians that have suffered institutional child sexual abuse, consistency across jurisdictions is an important goal. Under the framework established by the Australian Government, a coherent and coordinated approach should apply for all States and Territories and non-government institutions participating in the scheme. That the Queensland Bill contributes to this end is commended.

Other provisions of the Bill deal with the Queensland Government's participation in the National Redress Scheme and how this will be facilitated between Queensland Government agencies. It is noted that the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women (Child Safety) will function as the central contact point for Queensland Government related applications and will coordinate and manage all information requests from the National Redress Scheme Operator.

In respect of information sharing, the Bill provides for the sharing of information between State agencies and the chief executive of Child Safety, but not between State agencies generally (as is the case in NSW and Victorian legislation). Information sharing provisions do not extend to non-government institutions, as it is not proposed that information will be shared between the Queensland Government and non-government institutions. Given that the National Redress Scheme Operator is authorised under Australian Government legislation to request information directly from non-government institutions, this approach appears appropriate.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2018. QCEC supports the aims of the Bill, particularly in respect of allowing for the operation of the National Redress Scheme in Queensland and therefore the participation of non-government institutions as well as Queensland Government agencies.

For further information or clarification, please contact [REDACTED], Director, Governance, Strategy and Corporate Services, by email [REDACTED] or phone [REDACTED].



Dr Lee-Anne Perry AM
Executive Director