




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

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**LIMITATIONS OF ACTIONS (INSTITUTIONAL CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE) AND
OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL; LIMITATION OF ACTIONS AND
OTHER LEGISLATION (CHILD ABUSE CIVIL PROCEEDINGS) AMENDMENT
BILL**

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (5.03 pm): Today is indeed an historic day for Queensland. In late 2015, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, established by the Australian government, delivered the *Redress and civil litigation report*. In the report, the royal commission identified that one of the most significant barriers for survivors of childhood sexual abuse in institutions was that they were unable to meet the requisite statutory limitation periods within which to commence an action against an institution. The royal commission considered that state and territory governments should remove any limitation periods that apply to claims for damages brought by a person where that claim is founded on the personal injury of the person resulting from sexual abuse of the person in an institutional context when the person is or was a child. It also considered that the removal apply retrospectively and occur as soon as possible. Today, we continue our process to implement those recommendations.

For far too long, survivors have been unable to access justice simply because time has passed. From the royal commission we know that it takes survivors an average of 22 years to disclose abuse, that is, 22 years. We know that the impact of institutional child sexual abuse lasts a lifetime. In these circumstances, time limits simply do not work. Survivors will now be able to make a claim to seek justice, regardless of the time that has passed.

I have met with many people who will welcome the laws being debated today. Their life experiences have been harrowing. Their stories have moved me and inspired me. I am always overwhelmed by their strength and their resilience in telling their history to me, and by their courage. Every year I join with local survivors of past child abuse during Child Protection Week. Together we reflect on our commitment to never see children treated this way again. I will leave the telling of the remarkable and often painful stories to the survivors themselves. They are not my stories to tell. Indeed, I want to reflect on this year's remembrance ceremony. This year it was a privilege to be joined by our Premier at the Gallery of Modern Art for a sombre and moving day in our state's calendar, but the mood at this year's remembrance ceremony was different because this bill had been introduced in the House. Hope had been restored to many; hope that they had a government that had not forgotten about the unfinished business and the unfinished promises of past apologies.

In August, I attended an event here at Parliament House, alongside many members of the House, the Premier and dozens of survivors of historical abuse and their supporters to mark the introduction of this historic legislation. Some were in tears and some were overjoyed, but common among them was a

determination to ensure they have access to seek justice for wrongs done to them. I have heard from survivors of their pain and suffering. I have heard of their fight for justice over many years. This is one way we can begin to right the wrongs of the past.

I commend the survivors for their bravery in sharing their stories and for advocating for justice. These significant changes are a direct result of their courage. This is a first and significant step in our reforms to civil litigation in Queensland. I am looking forward to hearing more about the views of survivors and stakeholders through the consultation process being undertaken by the Attorney-General. Of course, there is more work to do. On Friday the Australian government announced a redress scheme for Australian government institutions. Like many, I am very eager to hear more about that scheme from the Australian government. I conclude by saying that, on behalf of those brave Queenslanders who have endured so much, I commend this bill to the House.