




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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**NATIONAL REDRESS SCHEME FOR INSTITUTIONAL CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE
(COMMONWEALTH POWERS) BILL**

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (3.43 pm): I acknowledge the immense work of the royal commission over the five years of its inquiry. I also acknowledge the immense bravery of all who have shared their horrific stories. I want to acknowledge the Central Queenslanders who attended St Joseph's Neerkol orphanage near Rockhampton. Neerkol was a horror movie in real life for the children who lived there. The Rockhampton region must never forget the awful, horrendous and appalling treatment of children in a place where they were supposed to be cared for by people they were supposed to be able to trust. The Neerkol nuns' reign of terror ran for decades. It was only brought to an end by the orphanage's 1978 closure.

It was the royal commission that revealed the full horror of what went on in the dormitories, the yards, the dining halls and the priests' quarters not so long ago. Children were routinely slapped, flogged, starved, sodomised and ridiculed by nuns. There were public floggings, there was walking on children in high heels and forcing bedwetters to stand hungry in the dining room with their urine-soaked sheets draped over their heads while the other children ate breakfast. About 4,000 children, mostly state wards, passed through the orphanage over its 93 years of operation. I have personally met with many of these children, now adults, who experienced this horrific abuse at Neerkol and also others who experienced abuse in other institutions and they have told me how important this national redress scheme is to them to acknowledge the harm suffered by them as children which is so important to their healing.

I extend my gratitude for the immense bravery of all who have shared their stories and to those who supported them through the royal commission, including organisations like Micah Projects and Lotus Place. Whilst no amount of money can compensate for their suffering, the national redress scheme is an important step towards healing. I commend the bill to the House.