




Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

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

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (2.22 pm): I rise to speak to the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Abuse (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2018. I start by particularly thanking the committee on this occasion. Not being a member of the committee, I particularly appreciate the thoroughness of the report and the work they have done in what is really quite a distressing area.

The purpose of this bill is to adopt in Queensland the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse and introduce a framework to enable information sharing by Queensland government agencies for handling applications for redress under the national scheme.

On 30 April this year the government publicly announced that the Queensland government would opt in to the national redress scheme. The Queensland government has committed \$500 million to be part of that. The scheme is estimated to be worth \$4 billion nationally. Modelling indicates that approximately 10,000 redress applications may relate to abuse in institutions in Queensland alone. Of those, 5,000 are estimated to be from non-government institutions. Survivors will be eligible for up to \$150,000 in redress, an apology—and I think that is extremely important because that has far more value than the dollars may have in some situations—and psychological care under the national scheme. All states and territories have signed up to this scheme. The purpose of this bill is to make good on Queensland's commitment to be part of that scheme.

In going through the report, one contribution that stood out as, I think, exemplifying the broad agreement within the community on the importance and the value of this bill. I would like to read the contribution from the Australian Lawyers Alliance. This is an excerpt from their submission—

We believe that the establishment of a National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse has the potential to have a genuine positive impact on the lives of thousands of people whose lives have been affected by sexual abuse when they were children.

Many aspects of the National Redress Scheme will provide meaningful redress for survivors. Providing three forms of redress—a monetary payment, access to counselling and psychological services, and a direct personal response—

which I referred to before—

will all contribute to healing, and ensure that survivors know that what has happened to them has been acknowledged as wrong, and that there are also practical tools provided to assist with their healing. The proposed standard of 'reasonable likelihood' is appropriate and will minimise the level of re-traumatisation that is likely to arise as a result of engaging with the Scheme.

I think that I would speak for most members of this House, if not all, when I say that when you become a member of this House you are exposed to all sorts of aspects of society and public administration that you may have had very little idea about before. I certainly count myself as one of those. Looking back, I wonder how it is that, as a nation, as a society, we went for so long without delving into these dark times. I can only imagine—and I stress that I do not know but I can only imagine—the enormous trauma that has surfaced and has had to be dealt with in the course of redressing this terrible problem of institutional child sex abuse.

If you put yourself in the shoes of a young person in an institution, with nowhere to go, no voice and no-one to stand up for them, having to suffer these terrible traumas and injustices, you can see how vitally important it is that society do all it can to rectify the problem and acknowledge the difficulties that people have been through. As someone famous once said, an evil once recognised is halfway towards its remedy.

I am in awe of the victims and survivors of child sexual abuse, many of whom have had to overcome enormous personal hurdles in order to participate in the royal commission and provide submissions and information to legislatures like ours. This bill is not perfect. I am aware of that. I do not think any form of redress could be perfect in the eyes of people who have suffered so grievously.

If the House will oblige, I will read into *Hansard* the submission of a constituent of mine, Mr Kelvin Johnston, whom I came across very early in my time as a candidate for the electorate of Southern Downs. Mr Johnston is a passionate advocate for reform and legislatively addressing the wrongs that have happened to children in institutional situations in the past. I do not necessarily agree with everything he says, but I know that he speaks with the authentic voice of someone who understands the issue and has always been at the forefront of contributing to the parliament's inquiries on this matter. I will read his submission into *Hansard*. He states—

The Queensland Child Sexual Abuse Legislative Reform Council wishes to make the following comments re the state Bill and some comments pertinent to the overall issues.

1. The state labor government has watered down the Royal Commission recommendations by 50,000 and sided with the coalition in doing so. The Labor Federal government has raised concern about this point in the Senate.
2. The issue of solicitors fees previously being indexed has not been addressed at a Federal level and the state do not appear to have addressed this.
3. The Commonwealth Bill which the state has signed up too does not say how the formular matrix for payment will occur by Federal Minister.
4. Redress should also include adequate funding of Police and DPP work relating to matters where charges need to be laid. Queensland Police Officers have been unable to do there job and the offenders remain free.

The funding of Royal Commission adverse findings need to be dealt with read and prosecuted by Police and DPP now.

I am happy to speak to the Parliamentary Committee.

I give permission to publish my text.

Yours Sincerely

Kelvin Johnston.

Spokesperson

Queensland Child Sexual Abuse Legislative Reform Council.

I say again that I think it is appropriate that I read that into the *Record of Proceedings* because of the great respect that I have for Mr Johnston and the work he has done over many years in this field.

Although this debate is one which engenders broad bipartisan agreement, I would like to state for the record some of the things which my side of the House have on their record. In government the LNP established the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry to chart a road map for the future of child protection. We supported victims of crime by enabling a survivor to read their impact statement before sentencing in court if the survivor so wishes and it is reasonable in the circumstances, and we increased funding to support groups.

We introduced a number of criminal law reforms including mandatory life imprisonment for repeat child sex offenders with a minimum non-parole period of 20 years and the two strikes policy. We increased penalties for child exploitation material offences and other child sex offences, and inserted a new offence of grooming into the Criminal Code. We introduced a mandatory sentence of one year imprisonment for sex offenders who tamper with or remove their GPS monitoring bracelet. We increased the maximum penalty for the offence of procuring a child or a person with a mental impairment for prostitution from 14 years to 20 years—and that is no small thing—and made amendments to allow the court to list a predator convicted of child grooming as a dangerous offender. I am proud of our record in that matter.

I would like to conclude by saying that I deeply regret the trauma and the enduring effect that institutional child sex abuse has had on Queenslanders and Australians. Our regret probably does not count for that much when we consider what they have been through, but I would like to thank all those involved with the royal commission and the development of this bill for their forthrightness and for the bravery they have shown in exposing their own stories. I commend the bill to the House.