




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (2.44 pm): I rise today to give my full support to the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse (Commonwealth Powers) Bill. At the outset, I wish to commend Minister Di Farmer for taking the lead on this bill and also commend the Premier and Attorney-General who have worked hard to ensure Queensland can participate in the scheme. I had the privilege of representing the minister at a couple of the Commonwealth meetings with state ministers and the federal minister. I want to acknowledge Queensland departmental staff who have done sterling work on this scheme. We are indeed very fortunate to have the calibre of public servants that we have here in Queensland.

The adoption of the national redress scheme in Queensland will bring positive benefits to the lives of thousands of Queenslanders. I know there are many people in my electorate of Ipswich who have been affected by child sexual abuse, and I acknowledge them here today. There are in fact an estimated 10,000 applications expected to be received across Queensland that relate to child sexual abuse committed while the applicants were under the care of Queensland institutions. This bill acknowledges the hurt and the suffering that these survivors of institutionalised child sexual abuse endured while under their care. These institutions' primary duty of care was to protect children, not to harm or betray them.

This bill recognises that, while the abuse may have stopped long ago, survivors still face a daily battle with ongoing trauma which has effectively diminished and haunted their adult lives. While the past cannot be changed and no monetary amount can replace the personal experience of trauma related to child sexual abuse, Queensland's participation in the national redress scheme demonstrates our government's commitment to survivors of institutional child sexual abuse. We are committed to giving these people a voice and to listening to their claims with seriousness and compassion so that they may take steps towards healing and justice.

In supporting this bill, I would also like to acknowledge the incredible five years of work led by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse which led to their report recommending the establishment of a single national redress scheme for individuals who experienced institutional child sexual abuse. The royal commission gave a voice to those whose claims had been previously ignored or denied.

Over 16,000 individuals contacted the royal commission during their inquiry, over 8,000 private sessions were held and over 1,000 individuals provided written accounts to the royal commission. Many had harrowing personal stories to tell of their abuse, but they also told the inquiry stories of feeling hurt and betrayal as a result of institutions and society disbelieving their claims and denying that anything had ever happened to them. The royal commission allowed them to speak out about these terrible crimes and it led to the uncovering of the shocking toll of systemic abuse in institutions which, unfortunately, had claimed the innocence of far too many children and left them with scars well into their adult lives. In the royal commission's final report, it was rightly called a national tragedy.

To the survivors who came before the royal commission to give their personal accounts, I praise your tremendous bravery for having the courage to speak out. The national redress scheme acknowledges the harm that was done to you by trusted institutions and will hopefully help you move forward and heal. We are all responsible for keeping children safe. Ultimately, we want to establish a lasting culture whereby no child should be subjected to sexual abuse ever again.

I join with Minister Di Farmer in urging non-government institutions which have yet to join the national redress scheme to come forward and participate. I am pleased to say that many non-government institutions have already committed to the scheme, and their actions will strengthen the scheme and help Queenslanders applying for redress. Our Queensland government is committed to acknowledging and recognising past abuses in our institutions. We are proud to be participating in this landmark scheme. I wholly support this bill and commend it to the House.