




Speech By  
**Lachlan Millar**

**MEMBER FOR GREGORY**

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

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (3.37 pm): I rise to speak to this truly important bill. The National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2018 will provide Queensland victims of child sexual abuse with redress for abuse suffered while they were under the control of Queensland institutions. I believe that most Queenslanders were shocked and saddened by the evidence that emerged from the royal commission into child sexual abuse. This evil had been perpetrated across Australian society by unchallenged authority figures in some of Australia's most trusted institutions, including Queensland government-run institutions. These crimes were committed against our most vulnerable and powerless—our children. The heart recoils and it is simply unforgivable.

While the royal commission was sitting, I know that the Gregory electorate office helped several constituents who wished to make a submission to the royal commission. In every case, it was an enormously difficult decision for these victims to take part in the proceedings and put that into action. Initially, many victims were very hesitant to come forward. I congratulate the former commission for the excellent way in which they handled the difficulties facing these victims. Thanks to their good work, many victims were encouraged to speak out so that the commission could collect the evidence of victims and a picture began to emerge of the scale of the crime that had been hidden.

The effects of the abuse suffered by these children has lasted their whole life long and has, in turn, affected their adult relationships, their work life and their family life. Despite the inevitable reawakening of old traumas by evidence emerging from the royal commission, these people were desperate for the events to be publicly acknowledged as historical fact and for their pain to be acknowledged as real. Indeed, part of the damage inflicted on them was the denial—by the perpetrators, by the institution and by society—that anything had happened. This bill is vital in completing that act of public recognition of what occurred at the hands of persons and institutions that should have been trustworthy but were the opposite.

This bill is vital in affording public acknowledgement of the pain endured by the victims. We acknowledge that pain by ensuring public redress is made. I know this does not undo the evil. That is impossible and it is not the purpose of the redress referred to in the bill title. The redress is a small public recognition of the past evils suffered by these victims. Old definitions of the word 'redress' define the term as having the meaning of 'to set upright' and I sincerely hope that this act of redress helps victims to set their world upright and that it contributes to them finding some peace.

Like many people in this House I am proud to welcome this bill. It is a necessary and overdue bill that will enable Queensland to participate in the federal government's national redress scheme, but I must note how long it has taken to get to this point. It must seem like a very long road for those victims. The royal commission ran from 2013 until its final report in December 2016. Its proper title was the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The revelations of what had

occurred were horrific. The fact that our educational, religious, sporting, youth and state institutions had covered up, had aided and abetted the abusers, was a devastating betrayal of the victims and of our Australian ideals.

While not speaking to the federal bill, I am saddened that it does not fully translate the royal commission's recommendations. I would have liked to see this done. However, the federal government has made a sincere attempt and we must start somewhere. I do encourage the federal and state governments to continue to work together and work with the stakeholders to continue improvements to the scheme that will more fully capture the royal commission's recommendations.

I apologise to Queensland victims that it has taken so long for governments to bring this necessary legislation to the House. Pictures of little Mason Jet Lee were in the media again last week. His case is a reminder that we must do better—we must do so much better. While the Attorney-General is appealing the inadequate sentence in this case, SBS News reports that the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council has found that Queensland child killers are more likely to be convicted of manslaughter than murder and spend less time behind bars than people who kill adults. It also found that offenders convicted of child manslaughter receive on average shorter jail terms than those who kill adults. Like many Queenslanders, and as a father, I question what it takes to take a child's safety seriously. Certainly we are seeing notifications, separations and reported risk of harm going to pre Carmody inquiry days. That was a very valuable inquiry which was instituted by the LNP and the LNP government accepted and implemented all of the recommendations fully.

Queensland stakeholders in this legislation were let down by governments of the day when they were children. Finally Queensland has joined the national redress scheme so that redress can be made to those victims. I hope that we are not going to further injure the victims by creating false hurdles and delays in making the redress. We must act now. I welcome the efforts to properly recognise the wrongs done to children who have suffered at the hands of these sexual abusers in institutions and I commend this bill to the House.