




Speech By
Meaghan Scanlon

MEMBER FOR GAVEN

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

 **Ms SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (2.31 pm): I rise to speak in favour of the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse (Commonwealth Powers) Bill. My uncle was a Victorian Labor state member of parliament, and in 2006 he spoke in the Legislative Assembly about his close friend Michael Keenan who was repeatedly offended against whilst at school. Whilst we will never know the true extent to which the damage done by Gerard McNamara—who was convicted—was responsible for Michael Keenan's suicide attempt some years ago, what we do know is that these offences have had damaging and long-lasting effects.

We know from the award-winning interview by Rachael Brown of the ABC that Michael Keenan's memories of the offences stay with him every day of his life. Mr Deputy Speaker, I draw your attention to this story to highlight the fact that these matters have been raised for many years before we had a royal commission. Whilst I applaud the action taken by the Gillard Labor government, I stand here reflecting about those victims who are no longer with us—victims who were not able to see a thorough investigation into the people and institutions who betrayed them. As Minister Farmer said in her explanatory speech—

The road to where we are now, to being on the verge of implementing the national redress scheme, has been long and, for many, far too long. For some who carried on the fight for many, many years it has, indeed, come too late.

Child sexual abuse is, by its very nature, a crime that thrives on secrecy. I want to acknowledge that we would not be debating this bill today had it not been for the brave voices of those who fought through incredible pain and have overcome enormous obstacles to bring about appropriate recognition and support for victims. Many of these people were robbed of their childhood. They were betrayed and let down by people and institutions that were supposed to be keeping them safe and nurturing them to grow up to be successful adults.

For many survivors it was years and even decades before anyone would listen to their stories. Some were called liars, some were threatened and some were even told that they were worthless. Tragically, for many they believed at the time that this was true. We have all heard about the horrific stories where many of our most vulnerable children were victims. The children and families who needed help the most were taken advantage of by people in trusted positions of power. We do not pretend, and nor should we, that enough has already been done. However, here in Queensland we should acknowledge the work we have done over the last two decades to start addressing the recognition and reparation for the survivors of abuse.

The final royal commission report was handed to the Governor-General on 15 December 2017, representing the culmination of a five-year inquiry into institutional responses to child sexual abuse and related matters. The report recommended the establishment of a single national scheme to provide eligible applicants with three elements of redress: a monetary payment as a tangible means of

recognising the wrong survivors have suffered; access to therapeutic counselling and psychological care as needed throughout a survivor's life; and a direct personal response from the responsible institution if the survivor wishes.

Subsequently, the federal government announced it would create a national redress scheme. On 19 June 2018 the Commonwealth parliament passed the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018 creating the 10-year national scheme. The resulting National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse has three core elements broadly consistent with the royal commission's recommendations and it commenced operation on 1 July 2018.

On 30 April 2018 the Premier, Annastacia Palaszczuk, announced that the Queensland government would opt into the national scheme with participation likely to commence from late 2018. All Australian jurisdictions have now announced an intent to join the national scheme. This year's state budget has also committed \$500 million towards our contribution over the next 10 years.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to doing all we can to ensure people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse in Queensland have access to the redress they deserve. We know that no amount of money can compensate for the pain and suffering felt by all of those survivors. It is about healing, it is about recovery and it is about recognising past wrongs and ultimately doing what is right. This is a bill worthy of support and I commend it to the House.