




Speech By  
**Peter Russo**  
MEMBER FOR TOOHEY

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

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (2.17 pm): Having represented both victims and perpetrators of offences, I know how important this legislation is to redress the hurt and harm that has occurred to disadvantaged children in our community. It is well documented that their suffering is real and long lasting. The bill seeks to adopt in Queensland the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act and introduce a framework to enable information sharing by Queensland government agencies for handling applications for redress under the national scheme. The bill also seeks to amend the Victims of Crime Assistance Act 2009 to provide that redress payments cannot be deducted from victim assistance payments under the act.

The committee recommended that the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2018 be passed. The bill adopts the national redress act within the meaning of section 51 of the Commonwealth Constitution. Further, the bill refers powers to the parliament of the Commonwealth for the purposes of making express amendments to the national redress act. The adoption or referral may be terminated at any time by proclamation.

The bill is needed for Queensland abuse survivors to have access to the national redress scheme in respect of child sexual abuse committed in Queensland government and non-government institutional settings. The National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Bill, which became the national redress act, forms the schedule to the bill. The bill also provides for the request and sharing of information.

On 12 November 2012, the then prime minister, Julia Gillard, announced that she would recommend to the Governor-General that a royal commission be appointed to inquire into institutional responses to child abuse. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse's *Redress and civil litigation report* was publicly released on 14 September 2015. The report recommended the establishment of a single national redress scheme to provide eligible applicants who experienced institutional child sexual abuse with a monetary payment, access to counselling and psychological care, and a direct personal response from responsible institutions.

As the minister stated in her introductory speech on the bill on 12 June 2018, in 1999 it was the Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions, also known as the Forde inquiry, that opened the door and the eyes of many Queenslanders to the horrors that had previously been a terrible secret borne by too many people. In the foreword to the inquiry's report, Commissioner Forde stated—

I urge all Queenslanders to contemplate the experiences of children in institutions, how it came to pass that many of them were abused and mistreated, and why it has taken so long for their stories to be told. It was society that failed those children.

The report stated—

Reparation will require the government and responsible religious organisations to enter into a restorative process with survivors to redress the harm done. Accountability for the harm done cannot be characterised as a legal issue only; the government and religious organisations must also accept moral and political accountability.

The report went on to state—

The principle of compensation is accepted in our society as a means of restitution for damages resulting from the types of abuse many children suffered ...

I commend the bill to the House.