




Speech By  
**Ros Bates**

**MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA**

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

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (3.10 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the national redress scheme bill. On 30 April 2018 the Premier, Anastacia Palaszczuk, publicly announced that the Queensland government would opt in to the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse. As usual, Queensland was slow to the table. The Premier was dragged kicking and screaming, along with other Labor state governments, to support this scheme. This aside, I am proud to stand in this parliament as an elected representative and finally bring restitution to victims of institutional child sexual abuse.

The establishment of the scheme is an acknowledgement by the Australian government and participating governments that sexual abuse suffered by children in institutional settings was wrong. It was a betrayal of trust and it should never have happened. It recognises the suffering survivors have experienced and accepts that these events occurred and that institutions must take responsibility for this abuse.

The federal government acknowledged the need to provide public recognition of the suffering experienced by survivors and investigate the inadequate responses provided by institutions through the establishment of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, the royal commission. The royal commission's *Redress and civil litigation report* recommended the establishment of a national redress scheme for survivors of institutional child sexual abuse. All governments and individual institutions were directed to make amends and take responsibility.

The royal commission estimates that almost 20,000 survivors were sexually abused in state and territory government institutions. The royal commission also identified more than 4,000 institutions where sexual abuse took place. Modelling indicates that approximately 10,000 redress applications may relate to abuse just in Queensland institutions alone. Of this, 5,000 are estimated to be from government run institutions.

The establishment of a national redress scheme acknowledges that the abuse occurred. It is the most significant step in addressing the wrongs of the past and providing a just response to survivors. It is also an important step towards healing. It ensures governments and institutions take steps to safeguard against these crimes being repeated in the future.

The national redress scheme will provide access to counselling, an apology from the institution involved and a monetary payment. This is an important part of the healing process as the institution acknowledges the harm caused to children in their care. Survivors in Queensland will be eligible for up to \$150,000 in redress, an apology and psychological care under the national scheme.

I hope for the sake of survivors that the rollout of the Queensland part of this scheme is implemented smoothly; however, sadly, Labor does not take child safety in Queensland seriously. Its track record on this seriously important issue has been appalling. When Peter Beattie called an election in February 2004 after being in government for six years, he acknowledged the need to repair the state's child protection system. Why? Because a Crime and Misconduct Commission report was released

which outlined systemic child abuse within the state's foster care regime. This was also off the back of the Forde inquiry, initiated by former premier Anna Bligh in 1998, and nothing improved during that time. Labor remained in power for a further eight years, until 2012, under Beattie and Bligh, in which time child safety went from bad to worse.

In 2014 the LNP accepted all of the recommendations of the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry and over the following 18 months began rolling out some of the largest reforms in child safety the state had seen. In three years and eight months under Palaszczuk, Fentiman and the current minister, we are now the second worst performing state in the country in child safety—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Pause the clock. Member, I would ask you to stick within the long title of the bill. I have granted some latitude, and you have strayed very, very far away from the long title of the bill. I ask you to come back to the long title of the bill.

**Ms BATES:** In South Australia there was a royal commission into child safety. This government sat on the final report of the Youth Sexual Violence and Abuse Steering Committee for 16 months and then only released it during the middle of estimates to avoid scrutiny.

The Labor government for three years has sat on its hands whilst crisis engulfs the department and put Queensland kids at risk. Despite being warned three years ago that something needed to be done, all we have seen is a government more concerned about renaming hospitals and hanging out with Dora the Explorer—

**Ms FARMER:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. You have just made a ruling asking the member to speak to the long title of the bill. The long title of the bill is quite specific. I ask that—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you. The point of order is on relevance. I call the member for Mudgeeraba but ask you to stay within the long title of the bill.

**Ms BATES:** Thank you. I will refer to the long title of the bill, which is about child sexual abuse in institutions. Last year, child safety data showed that over 60 per cent of investigations into suspected abuse did not start within the recommended time frames. Under Labor, the number of kids exiting care who had 10 or more placements has also doubled since 2014.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Member, resume your seat. If you cannot come back to the long title of the bill, I will stop you from making a further contribution. Please stay within the long title of the bill.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I have the long title of the bill in front of me. Not only does it refer to adopting the national redress act; it also refers certain matters relating to the redress scheme for child sexual abuse to the parliament of the Commonwealth, for the purposes of the Commonwealth Constitution. It also amends the Victims of Crime Assistance Act 2009 for particular purposes. It is not so limited as the minister would have us believe. It is a very broad long title.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you for that. I will take some advice. There is no point of order. The member for Mudgeeraba has the call. I ask her to stay within the long title of the bill.

**Ms BATES:** I note that stakeholders' views came from PeakCare Queensland, which is the peak care body that deals with child safety; Bravehearts, which deals with child sexual abuse; Community Legal Centres Queensland; Micah Projects, which has received quite a deal of funding from the current government; and, more importantly, the Queensland Family and Child Commissioner herself. Child safety across this state comes within the purview of the Queensland Family and Child Commissioner.

I notice that there were concerns relating to the national redress act which included the lowering of the maximum redress payments from \$200,000 to \$150,000—Queensland has followed the federal lead in doing this; limitations imposed upon the provision of the redress elements of counselling and psychological care services; restrictions upon eligibility that impact upon categories of survivors including noncitizens, survivors currently in prison and survivors who at some time of their life have been sentenced to a term of imprisonment of five years or more; families of survivors who committed suicide not being able to access redress; the approach taken to providing a funder of last resort to provide redress in situations where the responsible institution no longer exists and/or has no assets or successor; the lack of enforcement penalties for entities that do not comply with notices; shortening the period for accepting redress offers to six months, as opposed to the recommended 12 months; and requiring that redress applications be in the form of a statutory declaration.

Other concerns worth noting are that the royal commission's recommendation of making religious ministers mandatory reporters of real or suspected child sexual abuse has not been adopted by the national redress scheme or this bill. Tasmania, South Australia and the ACT are working towards mandating reporting.

On a personal note, I would like to relate something that happened to me as a young mum in a small country town. I was applying for my children to go to the local Catholic school and some of the questions that the parish priest at the time was posing to both my husband and I were quite suspect, actually. I will never forget going home as my mum and my grandma are very strong Catholics and all they wanted was for my two boys to be altar boys. I was the first one in the family to have boys, so it was going to be a big deal to have your sons as altar boys. I just had a gut feeling about this priest. I went home and had a huge fight with my mum and said that I would not be doing that with the boys and 10 years later it came out that three other boys, who were the sons of another girl that I went to school with, were the victims of sexual assault by that priest. He has since been prosecuted, so there but for the grace of God go my two sons that something did not happen to them.

The national redress scheme will provide access to counselling, an apology from the institution involved and a monetary payment. This is an important part of the healing process as the institutions acknowledge the harm caused to children in care. The LNP has a strong record, as I said, when it comes to addressing child safety issues. We accepted and implemented all of the recommendations of the Carmody inquiry and child safety notifications were going down under the LNP but have gone backwards under Labor. As usual, the Palaszczuk Labor government has taken a slowly, slowly approach to this issue. As I have said before, it has been dragged kicking and screaming to sign on to the national redress scheme.

The debate we are having today is about more than passing a bill, though, through this House or supporting a much needed scheme of redress. This bill is about righting a wrong. It is about ensuring that the countless victims of sexual abuse in their childhood are finally given the support, acknowledgement and remuneration they deserve. I am so proud that I have been part of the LNP which highlighted this issue nationally and announced this important policy which in turn saw legislation introduced into this House. Whilst the government's bill has flaws which I and many colleagues have highlighted today, I am pleased to see a bipartisan approach taken to finally support the survivors of institutional child sexual abuse.