




Speech By
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Record of Proceedings, 19 September 2018

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

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (3.22 pm): I stood in this House on 8 November 2016 and gave a speech on the Limitation of Actions (Institutional Child Sexual Abuse) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and want to read an excerpt of that speech to establish a context—

In the early 1990s Bruce Grundy was a journalist and editor for a small independent newspaper in Queensland. He single-handedly broke the story to the nation of the decades of abuse at St Joseph's orphanage at Neerkol in Rockhampton.

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Some 20 years later, the stories of Nazareth House, Silky Oaks and Neerkol have now come to light after decades of suppression by the keepers of those stories, those who were abused and tortured by those who were trusted to look after our children: the nuns and priests of St Joseph's Neerkol orphanage. However, speaking out about those atrocities comes at a price. The long-term pain and mental anguish that these people have harboured often comes bubbling to the surface when they relive those horrific events of their past. It does not stop there; threats upon their lives for revealing the truths about their ordeals were not uncommon.

This bill is the next step that we need to take as a society to recognise what has truly happened to those poor men and women and what they endured at various institutions. We will never be able to change what happened but we can change what happens into the future. This afternoon we have already heard different speakers talk about what the Australian Lawyers Alliance said. It said—

We believe that the establishment of a National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse has the potential to have a genuine positive impact on the lives of thousands of people whose lives have been affected by sexual abuse when they were children.

Back to the man who started this, Bruce Grundy—professor of journalism at the University of Queensland, now retired—is my uncle. I can remember the countless weeks, months and years where his research into the events at Neerkol would uncover some of the most horrific stories of child sex abuse and abuse of young children that would make every person cringe.

As a young teacher myself in the 1990s I would listen to Bruce tell story after story of barbaric treatment that the nuns and priests would inflict upon innocent children at these institutions. Bruce would also tell me that instances such as these were not confined to Neerkol but also occurred in other institutions such as Nazareth House, Silky Oaks and John Oxley. I am sure that if not for the work of Bruce Grundy during those early days of the 1990s when he was the editor of the independent newspaper and broke the story of Neerkol not only to Queenslanders but to the world perhaps this legislation would not be being debated this afternoon.

I thank Bruce Grundy, my uncle, for his work over the many decades and, in doing so, I commend the government's bill to the House.