




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR EVERTON

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

 **Mr MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (2.48 pm): I rise to speak on the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse bill. Australia has a very dark stain on its past with regards to abuse of children in institutions, whether they be state run institutions, church run institutions, sporting groups or community groups. It is something that we as a country should be embarrassed about and, quite frankly, ashamed of. It is good to see that at least there has been some sort of process done at both the federal and state levels to address and recognise the pain that tens of thousands of children suffered over many, many years. In fact in this day and age it is hard to believe how this could have gone on for so long unchallenged, and the enormous amount of pain, hurt and suffering from young people is frankly beyond belief and something that is very difficult to come to terms with.

The royal commission did address these issues and gave victims an opportunity to tell their story. For many it was the first time in their lives that they had their concerns validated and confirmed that this actually did happen to them. Hopefully in some ways this is an opportunity for a therapeutic process for them to get it out of their system and to tell others about it. Of course, it will never heal the suffering and the hurt that they felt, but something has to be done and this goes some way towards that.

The report recommended that there be three elements of redress: a monetary payment—and no matter what amount of money is given, of course it will not be enough—access to counselling and psychological care, which I hope many of the victims are accessing and will continue to access; and a direct response from the responsible institutions. We have seen over a period that some institutions have, unfortunately, had to be dragged kicking and screaming to admit that there was a problem and to admit liability. However, the royal commission shone a light on what was a very dark spot in our history, as I said earlier.

Modelling indicates that approximately 10,000 redress applications may relate to abuse in Queensland institutions. I suspect that 10,000 might be an underestimate. Of these, half would have been in government-run institutions. Again, as a father of four, I just cannot imagine a young child going through that harrowing experience, and for many of them it was relentlessly over a long period. Again, it is hard to believe that in our country something like this can happen. It obviously did and it is necessary that we address it, and this goes some way towards doing that.

Not only do survivors deserve this redress but we need to make sure that our future children are protected from abuse as well. There have been some great reforms done in this area. I know from my previous history as the CEO of SU Queensland, the largest employer of school chaplains, of the processes that now go into making sure that people who work with children are checked, double-checked and triple-checked to make sure that anybody who might be susceptible in this area is blocked. That is happening with church-run institutions, organisations, sporting groups and community groups like the scouts and Girl Guides. That is necessary and some good reform has happened there. It is important that we protect children from any chance of this happening again.

The LNP is very committed to this. We accepted and implemented the recommendations of the Carmody inquiry, which led to child safety notifications and substantiated cases of harm going down under the LNP, which is something we are quite proud of. It is one of the reasons that in recent days we have spoken again about introducing tougher laws to make sure that those who are responsible for these indescribable crimes are not let back out in the community again to do whatever their sick minds want to do with children.

I only intended to make a short contribution. I just want to put on the record my support for this bill. I congratulate the government on coming on board with this as well. I would also encourage any other institution that is yet to come on board to do so. It is important to own up to the mistakes that have been made, to say sorry and to help these poor, innocent victims somehow recover as much as they can from the tragedy that has been bestowed upon them.