

Question on Notice

No. 848

Asked on Tuesday, 5 June 2007

MS DARLING MP asked the Minister for Communities, Minister for Disability Services Queensland, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Seniors and Youth

(**MR PITT**)—

Will he explain the process for application and the benefits to successful applicants of the new Redress Scheme which provides one-off ex-gratia payments for people abused as children in Queensland institutions?

ANSWER:

On 31 May 2007, Smart Service Queensland commenced operation of the Redress Scheme Information Line. This is a dedicated phone number, 1300 769 291, operating from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM Monday to Saturday which provides information and registrations for interested members of the public seeking to apply to the scheme.

Applications for the scheme open on 1 October this year and close on 30 June 2008.

Applications will be received by Smart Service Queensland and assessed against departmental or other relevant records to confirm an applicant's eligibility for the scheme.

Under the scheme, eligible applicants will be offered a first level payment of \$7 000 at which time, those who believe that their experience of abuse or neglect is more serious can request that they be considered for a second level payment of up to \$33 000.

Second level payments will be assessed on a case by case basis by a panel of experts. To ensure that the scheme delivers the desired outcomes for those most aggrieved, the criteria and process by which second level payments are assessed is currently being developed by the Department of Communities in consultation with members of Queensland's former resident community, through the Historical Abuse Network.

The operation of the scheme is underpinned by the principle that applicants should be provided with as much information as possible to assist them make informed decisions.

Consistent with this principle, applicants will be required to access independent legal assistance funded by the scheme, prior to accepting the legal conditions associated with a payment. Payments will be dependent on applicants signing a waiver releasing and indemnifying the State from current or future legal claims.

To assist successful applicants make informed financial decisions about their payments, funded independent financial advice will also be available upon request.

The scheme completes the government's response to the Forde Inquiry recommendations. While the ex gratia payments can never fully compensate for past institutional abuse, this type of material support will assist to address the long-term effects of abuse and neglect and bring some closure to individuals and families.

The scheme complements the work of the Forde Foundation Trust Fund and the community based support services funded by the Department of Communities to assist former residents rebuild their lives. These services and supports remain an essential part of Queensland's response to people who were abuse as children in Queensland institutions.