

Labor backs Commission's redress while SA government continues to back away

While it was great news this week when the ALP federally came out and fully backed in the redress recommendations of the Royal Commission it is the Government that we are all waiting to hear from.

The silence from the Commonwealth is now starting to become an embarrassment.

The Royal Commission's recommendations have been with Senator Brandis since at least September 14 and all we hear when asked by the media is 'the Government is considering the Royal Commission's recommendations' and 'would consult with state and territory colleagues before committing to a response'.

Fair enough – but how long does it take. And why can't the community, which has fully backed the Commission, now at least know how this consultation will take place.

It's not too much to ask that the Commonwealth gives some indication that it is actually moving, that it is doing the work to bring together the states so that the discussions can be had and the decisions made.

And that said, it is well past time the Government started talking to the key non-government institutions which will need to part of the scheme, the churches, the private schools, sports organisations and others

And there has been no consultation from the Government – no one has come to us and said 'what do you think?' or 'how can this all work?' or 'where do you see the problems?'.

Any discussions we have had with the Government have been at our initiative, but unfortunately not with the people who actually make these important decisions.

For the scheme to work, everyone needs to be on-board – Governments from around Australia and all institutions that deal with children.

Maybe the Commonwealth is silent while it negotiates with the South Australian Government to at least be open to the idea of the redress proposal.

The South Australian Government has come out again this week pouring cold water over the Commission's redress plans saying it will not back Labor's support for a national compensation scheme unless it is "fully-funded".

I think you can read this as saying the South Australian Government is not prepared to pay a cent more than what it is obliged to pay under the ex-gratia scheme it set up in 2009 – which hasn't been much.

Up to December last year some 85 survivors of child sexual abuse in South Australian state care had received a little under \$1.2 million with an average payment of \$14,400 through its redress scheme.

This is despite the Commission making it clear in its costing document in July that the South Australian Government is potentially exposed, at the very least, to some \$67 million in payments to 1,150 adult survivors of child sexual abuse within state care.

On these figures it appears the South Australian Government has paid, at best, 1.8 percent so far of what the Commission estimates child sexual abuse survivors in state care should receive.

And even worse, only 7.4 percent of child sexual abuse survivors seemed to have received any redress through that government's redress scheme.

If South Australia continues to snub the Commission's redress proposal and insists on going its own way there will be many hundreds of child sexual abuse survivors in that state who will miss out or receive next to nothing for the abuse they endured in state homes and other South Australian government institutions.

Now that's a crime.

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