

## **Redress is an election issue**

The starter gun had barely fired and the issue of a national redress scheme for victims of institutional child abuse was on the hustings! This time it came courtesy of The Greens! Senator Rachel Siewert and her colleagues have indicated that they will push both Labor and the Coalition to deliver a national scheme along the lines first proposed by the Royal Commission.

This is consistent with what we have called for and it is certainly what victims groups prefer. A system where redress is available for victims regardless of where or when they were abused. A system that places the onus for payment on the institution responsible, including government agencies. A system that can be independently administered where victims have their redress determined by a panel that has no connection with the institution responsible.

So far the momentum for a national scheme, even a nationally consistent series of schemes, has been very ad hoc. We know that states like Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland are working towards the creation of redress schemes. They are sending signals that a national approach is also their preference.

But the kicker to this deal is the Commonwealth Government. So far only the pure optimist would be placing their hopes in the resolve and determination of the Commonwealth to get behind a serious and effective national scheme.

All the indications are that the Commonwealth wants to slip out from under any responsibility to deliver redress for victims, ven though it was the Commonwealth government that initiated, extended and funded the current Royal Commission. A commission that easily has become the most expensive in the history of their kind in Australia. A commission whose very first and arguably most important recommendation was calling for a national redress system administered by the Commonwealth government. The irony of the situation we now face is breath taking!

Does this mean that all the Commission's recommendations face the same fate? Does this reveal the scant regard the Commonwealth intends to take to the work of this Commission because its findings are too difficult or too close for comfort? Or does this show that when all is said and done, the might of governments and the clout of institutions once again will relegate the voices of those who have suffered, and still suffer, to the shadows of silence and disregard!

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11 May 2016