

Federal budget funding for national redress

Francis Sullivan 11 May 2017

This week's budget announcement by the Commonwealth that some \$33 million has been set aside to set up a national redress scheme for survivors of sexual abuse is welcome news.

It sends a strong signal that the federal government is committed to putting in the ground work needed for such an ambitious scheme.

Ambitious, because to be successful, the scheme demands buy-in from the states and territories, as well as the many institutions responsible for the sexual abuse of children.

The Royal Commission released its final report calling for a national redress scheme in 2015 and the Catholic Church was right behind the idea. A number of the states have come on board but a few are still sitting on the fence.

The bottom line is that not one dollar of taxpayer's money will go to paying compensation to victims who have been abused in Catholic institutions, the Catholic Church will pay its own way.

Funding for the scheme will come from the institutions where the abuse occurred. This is how the scheme operates.

And if that institution happens to be a state government, then they should, in all conscience be prepared to pay what reasonable. This might mean revisiting claims, where payments were very low as was the case in South Australia and Western Australia.

The scheme will once and for all provide fair compensation for victims, regardless of where or when they were abused. It will also provide valuable acknowledgement of the abuse and psychological support.

Under the scheme survivors will receive up to \$150,000. Some argue that cap is too low, but the figure takes into account the less demanding burden of proof needed (given many perpetrators are now dead), compared to the rigorous requirements should compensation claims go to court.

Survivors of abuse in Commonwealth institutions can apply for compensation from July 2018.

It's been a long journey for all survivors, regardless of where they were abused. Let's get on with it.