

## **Fair and Just redress - time for governments to act**

While sharing lunch with around 40 survivors of child abuse at Lotus Place in Brisbane last week I was reminded, and deeply saddened, by the devastating, long-term impact of child abuse.

Lotus Place is a dedicated support service and resource centre for Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants. Many of its clients were placed in Australian Catholic institutions in the 40s, 50s and 60s where they were abused and suffered terrible hardship.

The survivors, spoke about childhoods destroyed, relationships ruined and a life littered with pain, frustration and disappointment.

As I listened to their stories and accounts of their daily struggles it became brutally clear that a fair, compassionate and consistent compensation scheme for survivors of child sex abuse is urgently needed.

Many survivors I met are now in their sixties and seventies and they deserve to receive acknowledgement, support and compensation for their pain and suffering. In a quiet moment a survivor told me that even a small amount of financial support for her funeral would be a welcome start.

The Royal Commission last month released its consultation paper on redress schemes for survivors of child sex abuse. It will release its final recommendations mid-year.

The Commission's preferred option is built on a national scheme run by the Commonwealth in which the investigation of abuse claims and determination of compensation is accessed independently of the accused institution.

When an award is made the institution responsible for the abuse will then be responsible for paying. This scheme would also provide for counselling, psychological care and other services, again, paid for by the responsible institution.

Understandably, the community and survivors do not trust institutions to fairly examine and investigate themselves. The Catholic Church fully acknowledges that the days of the Church investigating itself are over.

This preferred Royal Commission redress scheme is largely consistent with the Church's proposal outlined in its submission to the Royal Commission in June last year.

All survivors of child sex abuse deserve an equal opportunity to access redress irrespective of where or when they were abused, or in what institution.

# Blog

**TRUTH  
JUSTICE  
HEALING  
COUNCIL**

Tragically, a scheme like this will not eventuate without the support of our law makers, both state and federal.

It is now the responsibility of governments to take a stand on behalf of the community and implement an independent redress scheme for all survivors.

Anything less will not achieve the independence and transparency that survivors deserve and the Commission has called for.

I challenge any government minister or bureaucrat, before making a decision on how they will respond to the Royal Commission's consultation paper on redress, to spend time with survivors and hear first hand their devastating stories.

There are support services like Lotus Place across the country.

If just a few of the government decision makers took time out to visit one, then I'm sure many of their concerns about establishing a national compensation scheme would take second place to the need to address the tragedy, pain and suffering of those people living with the impact of child sexual abuse.

Their stories are difficult to hear, but absolutely vital to understand.

Francis Sullivan  
18 February 2015  
[www.tjhcouncil.org.au](http://www.tjhcouncil.org.au)