

Blog



Redress bill makes it to parliament

Francis Sullivan 2 November 2017

Well it has finally arrived! Legislation to construct a redress scheme was introduced into the Commonwealth Parliament last week. This is a vital first step on what looks to be a long, but hopefully fruitful path.

This Commonwealth scheme at present is limited and unsatisfactory. Only 1,000 of the projected 6,5000 victims can have access to the scheme. Clearly that is not what the Royal Commission called for, neither is it what Church leaders and others committed to.

As we have known all along the success of this scheme lies plainly with the cooperation of the state governments. Without their buy-in national coverage will be impossible.

Churches and other private institutions need the state governments to facilitate their participation in the scheme. Where those states which have previously run limited schemes remain determined to stay out of this new proposal, they can still enable private organisations within their jurisdictions to participate.

Why they would render some victims within their state as worthy of access to the new scheme and others, namely those abused in state organisations, to be denied redress is their political call.

In any event our political leaders need to settle on a solution as to how a national redress scheme can be effected. The Royal Commission considered this so important it pre-empted its other recommendations by two years to enable governments to have the time to put in place a national redress scheme by mid-2018. Clearly now the ball is squarely in the hands of our elected leaders.

Institutional child sexual abuse is a national disgrace. The Commission hearings have made that plain for all to see. It is a social blight that must be addressed beyond rhetoric and hand ringing. The Catholic Church leadership has committed, more than once, to a national redress scheme. It will pay its way. It cannot join what is currently on offer and only others with the power to change things can make it possible for the all churches, non-government organisations, private institutions and state-run facilities to participate.

This is far easier to solve than the dual citizenship debacle. No need for High Court decisions or parliamentary audits.

Just governments cooperating in the interests of victims, even some from within their own organisations.