



# National Redress Scheme

For people who have experienced  
institutional child sexual abuse

## **Service Charter for your National Redress Scheme**

**Our commitments to survivors of institutional  
child sexual abuse**



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## **Acknowledgement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and country**

The National Redress Scheme and the Department of Social Services acknowledges all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traditional Custodians of Country and recognises their continuing connection to land, sea, culture and community. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

# Acknowledgement to survivors and applicants

The National Redress Scheme (the Scheme) acknowledges the courage, strength and resilience required to seek redress.

We acknowledge that, for many survivors, applying for redress is one part of a long and difficult recovery.

We also acknowledge that, for some survivors, this journey may have included experiences that have affected their ability to trust and get involved with organisations and services that are part of the redress process. We acknowledge the potential for re-traumatisation in applying for redress.

We specifically acknowledge the policies of removal and trauma experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers, and the impact this can have on trust in governments and accessing services. We also acknowledge that the Scheme and its processes can add additional significant stress for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples because of historical practices by government institutions.

The impact of institutional child sexual abuse reaches far and wide, often affecting survivors' families and communities. Sharing these experiences as part of the redress process may be part of a collective journey towards healing, as well as an individual one. We have heard from survivors that restoring trust and building relationships is an important part of the process, as is having people be willing to listen, respect and believe their story.

We also acknowledge that there are multiple ways people who have experienced child sexual abuse identify themselves in this context, including "survivor", "victim", "victim survivor" and "person".

## Contributors

This Charter was co-developed with survivors, Redress Support Services, legal advocates, and peak and representative organisations. The Scheme acknowledges and thanks every individual, family and organisation who has played a role in the development of this Charter.

## Please be aware

When reading this document, you should know support is available to help you if you need it. This document contains material that could be confronting or distressing. Sometimes words or images can cause sadness or distress or trigger traumatic memories, particularly for people who have experienced past abuse or childhood trauma.

To find out more, go to [www.nationalredress.gov.au/support](http://www.nationalredress.gov.au/support).

If you need immediate support, 24-hour telephone assistance is available through:

- [Beyond Blue](#): 1300 224 636
- [MensLine Australia](#): 1300 789 978
- [Lifeline](#): 13 11 14

# About the National Redress Scheme

**Redress means acknowledging harm done. The National Redress Scheme provides counselling, a direct personal response and a Redress payment.**

The National Redress Scheme (the Scheme) provides redress to people who experienced institutional child sexual abuse. It was created in response to recommendations by the [Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse](#). The Scheme operates under the [National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018](#).

The Department of Social Services operates the National Redress Scheme. When we say 'we' throughout this document we are referring to the Scheme administrators within the Department of Social Services.

The Scheme started on 1 July 2018 and will run for 10 years.

## Find more information about how the Scheme works

This Charter does not cover everything you need to know when considering if the Scheme is right for you or how to make an application. You can find more information on our website: [nationalredress.gov.au](http://nationalredress.gov.au) or by calling us on **1800 737 377**.

On the website, you will also find contact information for **Redress Support Services** who can help you understand and access the Scheme.

They can support you before, during and after you apply for redress. Services can provide practical and emotional support, legal advice, and financial counselling.



# Definitions

These definitions will help you to better understand this Charter document.

## The term we use in this document

## What it means

### **Institutional Child Sexual Abuse**

When the child sexual abuse occurred an institution was responsible for bringing the abuser into contact with the child.

### **Redress**

Redress means acknowledging harm done. The National Redress Scheme provides access to counselling, a direct personal response and a redress payment.

### **Nominee**

A person nominated to act on behalf of a person applying for redress. They need to fill in the Redress Nominee Form.

### **Participating Institution**

An institution means any organisation or group of persons, such as a school, a church, parish, mission, a club, an orphanage or Children's Home; or government department.

A Participating Institution is an institution who has joined the National Redress Scheme

### **Redress Support Service**

Free and confidential Redress Support Services are there to help you. They can support you before, during and after you apply for redress. These services can provide practical and emotional support, legal advice, and financial counselling.

### **Independent Decision Maker**

Independent Decision Makers will consider applications for redress. They are highly experienced people from a range of backgrounds.

### **Counselling**

You can choose to accept counselling and psychological services as a part of the offer of redress. Depending on where people live they will either receive a lump sum to pay for these services in their local area or a referral to services.

### **Direct Personal Response**

People who receive an offer of redress can request a direct personal response from the responsible institution. People may request a face-to-face meeting, either individually or in a group, a written letter, a public apology, or other arrangements depending on their circumstances.

# Purpose of this Charter

We are committed to improving how we engage with you as survivors of institutional child sexual abuse, and those that support you.

This Charter sets out our commitments to survivors to support each stage of your redress journey. It has:

- principles that everyone who provides services as part of the Scheme should follow
- commitments about what we will do to support each stage of the redress journey
- service standards to create consistency and accountability for the way we support you through the redress process
- information about how we will show that we are meeting our commitments
- ways you can contact us.

We are actively making improvements to the Scheme to make sure we can meet the commitments and standards set out. We acknowledge that we have more work to do.

We encourage your feedback at all times on how we can improve the ways we provide information and services that help you to go through the redress process.

## Who the Charter is for

This Charter is for people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse who can access the National Redress Scheme and those that support them. It explains what you can expect when you engage with us and the Scheme process.

The Charter covers how the Scheme operates. The people and organisations that run or provide services in the Scheme need to follow the principles and help to meet the commitments and service standards set out in this Charter.

## How it was developed

We developed this Charter following a recommendation of the [second anniversary review](#) into the Scheme.

We created it with input from survivors and through a joint development process with redress support services and other stakeholders.

We looked at what survivors expect when they interact with the Scheme. It puts the experience of survivors at the centre and acknowledges that there are different things people want and need when they go through the redress process.

**We published the Charter in September 2022. We will regularly review the Charter to make sure it remains up to date and reflects any changes in the Scheme.**

# Principles

## The Scheme's ways of working

The principles guide the way we engage with you and respond to your needs as you go through each stage of the redress process. These principles will guide us to make the improvements needed in the Scheme so the process is:

### Survivor-centred

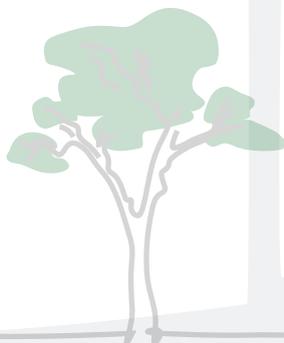
**We respect your rights and self-agency to make your own decisions.**

- We provide reliable information, and access to free and independent advice, so you can make informed decisions.
- We listen and respond to your needs and circumstances.
- We ask how you want to be kept updated about your application.
- We respect that you own your story and experiences.
- We ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples receive a service that is culturally safe and considers their diversity of culture, Country, colonisation and contact experiences.

### Inclusive & accessible

**We explain what things mean in simple and clear language. We make sure you can engage with us and in the process.**

- We help you understand the process by providing clear information.
- We offer support that considers your culture, language, ethnicity, disability, gender identity, sexual preferences, where you live and your family environment.
- We provide information in different forms to help make sure you can access and understand it.
- We give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples the opportunity and choice to access culturally appropriate and tailored services, information and support.



### Supportive & safe

**We support your individual needs and treat your story with care and confidentiality.**

- We prioritise safety and work in a sensitive, trauma-informed and culturally safe way.
- We know that the redress experience is different for everyone, and you may need different types and levels of support.
- We make sure you know how to access support and independent advice, when you want it.
- We understand the experience of telling your story is difficult. We will only ask for more information when we think it will help us understand your application.
- We are clear about how and when we use information you have given us, including who can see it.

### Transparent & accountable

**We are open and honest about what you can expect from us and whether we are meeting our commitments.**

- We make sure you can give us feedback at any time during the redress process, and you know this will not affect your application.
- We continue to measure and evaluate our services.
- We report publicly about whether we are meeting our commitments and what we will do to make improvements.
- We respond to complaints clearly and in a specified timeframe.

# Commitments

## Supporting you through the redress journey

The following 18 commitments help you to understand what you should expect from us at each stage of the redress process. The stages cover:

- [Finding out about the Scheme and considering your options](#)
- [Applying for redress, including making an application and what happens as your application is progressed](#)
- [Receiving your redress outcome and making a decision](#)
- [Asking for a review](#)

We are continuing to put in place improvements to the Scheme that will help us ensure we meet our commitments to you.



### Finding out about the Scheme and considering your options

#### What it might look like

##### **You find out about the Scheme.**

When people first find out about the Scheme, they might have lots of questions.

They might not be sure if they are eligible for redress or if it's the best option for them.

They often want to know who they should talk to for advice, if it's safe to talk to someone and how they can get support.

#### Our commitments

What we do to support this stage

##### **1. Make information available about the Scheme when you need it or are ready to engage.**

We will do this by:

- communicating widely about the Scheme.
- providing clear information about what redress is, and how it works, to help you consider your options.
- making sure information is culturally appropriate, safe and, where requested, available in language as a translation or via an interpreter.
- having resources and training available so support services and other organisations can communicate and raise awareness about the Scheme.

##### **2. Ensure you can access a support service, legal advice and financial counselling to consider your options, if you want to.**

- We make sure appropriate and independent Redress Support Service are available. They will provide services that meet the needs of survivors in a trauma-informed and culturally safe way.
- We make sure Redress Support Services can connect with you no matter where you live, including if you are in a regional, rural or remote area.
- We can connect you with legal and financial

counselling services, through a specialist provider, to support you.

**3. Be clear about how we protect information and keep it private and confidential.**

- All staff delivering redress services must follow strict privacy and confidentiality rules in the National Redress Scheme Act, the Scheme's Privacy Policy and the Privacy Act 1988.
- We are clear about how your information will be used and who it will be shared with.



## Applying for redress

### What it might look like

**You decide to make an application through the Scheme.**

This is when you share your story with us.

This is done by filling out an application form.

Sometimes, people are unsure about how much information they need to provide and how their application will be assessed.

They might be concerned about what will happen to the information they provide.

During the application process, you will be asked to answer some difficult and personal questions about your experience.

### Our commitments

What we do to support this stage

**4. Make the application forms and process accessible.**

- We give you different ways to apply—including online (through myGov) or through a paper form.

**5. Provide guidance about what information is important for you to include in your application for it to be assessed.**

- We will explain what information is important for you to put in your application. This may include specific details about what happened to you as well as information that confirms your identity.

**6. Make sure you can get support to make an application, if you want to.**

- We give you the choice to use a Redress Support Service to help with your application. These are free services that can support you during the process and are available to everyone who applies or is thinking of applying.
- Through funded support services, we offer tailored help if you are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, have a disability, are ageing, live in a regional or remote area with limited access to services, or require specific types of support.

Some people want help to make an application. A Redress Support Service or someone else can help you to fill out your application.

You can also choose to make a Redress Support Service or anyone else your nominee. This means that service or individual can complete the application with you, and they can have contact with the Scheme on your behalf.

## **7. Provide sufficient time for you to make an application.**

- You can take as long as you need to complete an application once it is started, as long as it is completed and received by 30 June 2027 (when applications for the Scheme close).
- You can place your application on hold at any time once you have submitted it, up until an Independent Decision Maker makes a decision.

## **8. Connect with you in a safe way once we receive your application.**

- When you apply, you can tell us how you want to be contacted. For example, you can ask to receive messages before we call, or that all contact from us be through your redress nominee, if you have one.
- We will assign a redress staff member (sometimes called a case coordinator) so you (or your nominee) are in contact with the same person wherever possible.
- You can ask to speak with someone of a particular gender or who is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
- When we are in contact with you, we will always be mindful of the effect of your abuse and take care not to cause further distress.
- You can choose to have someone on the phone with you during any call. This can be a support person, friend or your nominee.

## **9. Make sure the application process is secure and it is clear how your information will be used.**

- We will be clear about how we process applications, and how we protect the information you give us.
- After you submit your application, one of our redress team will contact you, or your nominee, to explain what happens next and how your information will be shared (including who will see it and who will not).
- You do not need to speak to the institution you've identified in your application during the application process.





## Your application is progressed

### What it might look like

#### **An Independent Decision Maker assesses your application.**

This assessment is done once we gather any other information we might need to assess your application.

This includes requiring information from institutions named in your application, or who have further information about the abuse.

While we progress your application, you can provide more information if you find out something relevant or realise a part of your story is missing.

This assessment process can take up to a year, but we are trying to make it a faster process for applicants.

It can take more time if we need more information, or if the institution/s in the application are not yet part of the Scheme or no longer exist.

We understand people want to know what is happening with their application during this time.

It is okay to change your mind. If you want to, you can put your application on hold or withdraw it before a decision is made.

It is important you let us know when you change your address or telephone number. This will mean we can always contact you if we need to.

### Our commitments

What we do to support this stage

#### **10. Make sure you know what is happening as we progress your application.**

- We will give you updates by contacting you in the way you said you prefer.
- We will be clear about what extra information we need from you and why.
- If you name an institution that is not currently participating in the Scheme, we will work with the institution to encourage them to join the Scheme within 6 months. Where an institution does not join, we will publicly include this information on the Scheme's website.

#### **11. Make sure you can access free and independent support while you wait for a redress outcome.**

- We will give you the choice to access a Redress Support Service while you're waiting for your application to be progressed, including help to give us more information if we need it.



## Receiving your redress outcome

### What it might look like

#### **You decide if you want to accept the redress offered to you.**

If you're eligible for redress, we will make a redress offer to you.

The decision about the redress you are offered is made by an Independent Decision Maker.

You can ask for more detail about the reasons for the decision.

You will be given time (at least 6 months) to consider the redress offer.

During this time you might want legal and financial advice, or other support, to consider your options. We encourage you to get advice from the available services.

Not everyone who applies will receive an offer of redress.

### Our commitments

What we do to support this stage

#### **12. Provide the redress outcome to you in a safe way.**

- We will contact you to let you know an outcome has been reached, and ask how and when you would like to receive it.
- We will share the outcome with you through direct contact with you and/or your nominee.
- We will give you 6 months to consider the outcome and respond. You can ask for an extension if you need more time.
- All our contact with you will be trauma-informed. This means we are mindful of the impact of your experience and take care to avoid causing further distress.

#### **13. Make sure you have support to consider the outcome.**

- Free and independent support services, legal advice and financial counselling are available to support you to consider the outcome.
- We will follow up with you while you consider the offer and contact you when your outcome period is about to expire to see if you require more time or have any further questions
- We will respect any decision you make about your redress offer.

#### **14. Explain the outcome clearly.**

- We will give you an explanation if your application is determined not eligible or if an institution is found not responsible.
- We will explain how any prior payments may have affected the redress offer, if that is the case.

### **If you accept the offer, you will receive redress.**

This might include:

- A redress payment
- the offer of a direct personal response (an apology) from the institution/s involved
- the offer of counselling and psychological care

A redress payment can be made as a lump sum or by instalments.

There are different ways you can get a direct personal response. You will have a choice in how you get your direct personal response from an institution.

### **15. Make it clear how your redress is provided and the help available to you.**

- We will tell you how a payment will be made and when it has been made to your bank account.
- We will explain what a direct personal response (DPR) is, how you can start the DPR process and the support available to help you do this.
- We will explain the offer of counselling and psychological care that you can access. In some jurisdictions this may include the opportunity to use your current provider.
- We will give you time to decide if and when you would like to start your direct personal response. This time will run for the lifetime of the Scheme.

### **16. Make sure you have support to accept the outcome.**

- We will offer to follow up with you after you accept the outcome and support you to access a direct personal response.
- You can choose to continue with a Redress Support Service to help you arrange a direct personal response as well.

### **You can ask for a review of the outcome.**

You have the right to challenge the redress outcome if you do not agree with it.

You can only ask for one review. A review cannot be requested after an offer is accepted.

You have 6 months from the original decision date to request a review, this may be extended if you contact the Scheme to ask for more time.

A review may lead to the same outcome, or a different one that could be better or worse.

### **17. Make sure you know how to request a review and have support to do so**

- When you are provided with an outcome, we will give you clear information about how to ask for a review.
- We will make sure the review process is accessible and safe.
- We will make sure you can access free and independent support, and legal advice, to help you complete a review.

### **18. Provide a clear and timely response to your review.**

- A different Independent Decision Maker will look at your review request and application.
- We will tell you the outcome of your review within 3 months.
- We will provide a clear explanation about why the review decision was made.

# Service standards

## Our guarantees to you

These service standards apply to the National Redress Scheme operated by the Department of Social Services.

### Service type

### Service standard and timeframes



#### Contacting the Scheme

- We will answer 80% of calls within 2 minutes, within the National Redress Scheme service hours of 8am to 5pm (Canberra time), Monday to Friday.
- You can contact us by phone or in writing (e.g. mail/post). We are working at giving you more ways to contact us.



#### Your interactions with the Scheme

- We will offer you a case coordinator to make sure you can contact this person about your application wherever possible.
- You can ask to speak with someone of a particular gender or someone who is of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent.
- We will make sure the person/s you are talking to about your application is/are trained and skilled in trauma-informed practices and cultural and disability awareness.



#### Progressing applications

- We will give you information about the progress of your application when you contact us. We will aim to provide the update to you within 5 business days.
- If you choose to, you can schedule periodic contact with your case coordinator for updates on your applications progress.
- We aim to make a decision about your application in 12 months or less. However, in some cases this can take longer.



### **Protecting your information**

- We will keep your information safe by storing records securely and in line with Australian Government security guidelines.
- We will make sure your personal information is only accessed by personnel on a need-to-know basis.
- We will make sure our digital systems are only accessed by Scheme staff who are allowed to do so.
- We will regularly update and check our data storage and security requirements.
- We will destroy or securely store personal information that we hold when it's no longer needed.



### **Making a complaint or providing feedback**

- We will make it easy for you to make a complaint, give a compliment and provide feedback.
- We will make sure you can give feedback about the Scheme's services at every stage of the process.
- We will try to respond to your complaint within 28 days of receiving it but sometimes it can take longer.
- We will always try to keep you informed about the progress of your complaint.
- If you're unhappy about the way we handle the complaint, you can ask for it to be escalated.
- We will make sure you can access support services during the complaints and feedback process if you want to.
- We will learn from complaints and use them to improve the Scheme.

## **Child Safe Reporting**

Under the law, and with the intent of stopping all institutional child sexual abuse, the Scheme considers if there are risks to the safety and wellbeing of children and may be required to report risks to police and child protection authorities. If we review your application and think there is a risk to the safety and wellbeing of a child, we will contact you and discuss what we need to report. You can choose whether you provide your name and further details as part of the report. If you choose not to, we will not give any identifying information to the police or child protection authorities.

States, Territories and their participating institutions may have different reporting obligations based on their own legislation.

Participating Institutions have the same obligation to report risks to the safety and wellbeing of children to police and child protection authorities, however they are not required to contact you before they make a report. You can choose not to participate in any internal or independent external reviews initiated by the institution.

# Measurement & reporting

## How you will know if we are delivering our commitments

### Improvement Update

A National Redress Scheme Improvement Update has been created as of September 2022. It details improvements that have been made, and ones that are in currently in progress, to improve the Scheme for survivors. It is available on the Scheme website.

### Survivor experience survey

A survivor experience survey will help measure if we are delivering on the Principles, Commitments and Service Standards set out in this Charter. Survivors have the option of requesting the survey when they receive an offer of redress and send in their completed acceptance document. This survey is conducted by an independent organisation that collects the surveys and reports results to the Scheme, making sure feedback is anonymous.

We are working on ways to improve this survey so that more survivors can give us feedback on different stages of their service journey with the Scheme.

The survey makes up part of the reporting that is done for the strategic success measures.

### Strategic success measures

We will continually evaluate our services through the National Redress Scheme strategic success measures. The measures provide you with information on how the Scheme is performing for survivors.

We will report publicly on these measures every 6 months and make the results available to you through our website.

The success measures are agreed by the Ministers' Redress Scheme Governance Board. They focus on three priority areas within the Scheme:

- **Survivor Experience:** The application process and how long it took, as well as the survivor experience of the Scheme.
- **Health of the Scheme:** Measures that tell us how many people accept the offer of redress, as well as how many take up counselling and psychological care and direct personal responses. We will report on the amount of institutional participation in the scheme, including institutions that have joined or left the scheme and whether institutional not taking part is holding up the progress of some applications.
- **Equity of Access:** Understanding the number of applicants and survivors accessing support services who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, people with disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people aged 70 and over and/or people who live in rural and remote locations.

### Partnerships and coordination

We know that effective delivery of the Scheme relies on strong partnerships and coordination. We will work in partnership to action the commitments in this document. This means working with:

- Survivors
- Families, carers and advocates of survivors
- Redress Support Services
- Participating Institutions
- Free and independent legal services
- Independent Decision Makers
- Commonwealth Government staff
- State and territory government staff

# Contacting us

## If you have questions or need advice or support, you can contact us by

- **Calling from Australia:** by phone on 1800 737 377 from Australia (call charges may apply), Monday to Friday 8am-5pm AEDT.
- **Calling from overseas:** by phone on +61 3 6222 3455. Please press 8 to speak to an operator. From there, you can request to be transferred to the National Redress Scheme. If we are unavailable, you will be able to leave a voice mail message and we will return your call as soon as possible.
- **Mailing your completed application to:**  
NRS  
Reply Paid 7750  
Canberra BC ACT 2610  
Australia
- **Redress Support:** A list of free, independent supports and their contact details are available at the [website](#).

## Services available to assist you to contact the National Redress Scheme

- **TTY users:** phone 1800 555 677 then ask to contact the National Redress Scheme on 1800 737 377.
- **Speak and Listen (speech-to-speech relay) users:** phone 1800 555 727 then ask to contact the National Redress Scheme on 1800 737 377.
- **Internet relay users:** visit the [National Relay Service website](#) and ask to contact the National Redress Scheme on 1800 737 377.

- **Languages other than English:** if you need an interpreter, phone Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) on 131 450. TIS National will put you through to any phone number.

## Feedback, compliments and complaints

We want to know what we do well and what we could do better. Please tell us by:

- Submitting an [online form](#)
- Emailing: [complaints@dss.gov.au](mailto:complaints@dss.gov.au)
- Calling: 1800 737 377 (call charges may apply)
- Mailing: National Redress Scheme Feedback, GPO Box 9820, Canberra ACT, 2601

If you're unhappy about the way we have handled the complaint, you can ask for a review of the complaint process.

You can also contact the Commonwealth Ombudsman by:

- Emailing: [ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au](mailto:ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au)
- Calling: 1300 362 072
- Mailing: GPO Box 442, Canberra ACT 2601

We will make sure you can access the support services we fund during this complaints and feedback process.