

SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

**GOVERNOR-GENERAL AMENDMENT (CESSATION OF ALLOWANCES IN THE PUBLIC
INTEREST) BILL 2023**

Prepared by

Craig Hughes-Cashmore – Chief Executive Officer

Prue Gregory OAM – Policy, Advocacy and Stakeholder Relations Manager

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About Survivors & Mates Support Network (SAMSN)

Survivors & Mates Support Network (SAMSN) is grateful for the opportunity to make a submission on the *Governor-General Amendment (Cessation of Allowances in the Public Interest) Bill 2023* (the Bill) to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee.

SAMSN is Australia's leading organization for male survivors of child sexual abuse. It is in this capacity that SAMSN makes its submission.

SAMSN was founded 10 years ago by a small group of survivors who set out to build a service dedicated to supporting men and their families.

SAMSN's purpose is to build a support network that gives voice and agency to male survivors, their families and supporters. SAMSN believes male survivors of childhood sexual abuse can recover, support others to thrive and be leaders for change.

SAMSN offers a range of professional and peer support services and resources to assist men to recover from the impacts of child sexual abuse.

Combining a lived experience and professional service model, SAMSN has established itself as an essential service that is in high demand.

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse ('Royal Commission')

In November 2012, the then Prime Minister Julia Gillard established a Royal Commission to inquire into institutional responses to child sexual abuse. Over five years, the Royal Commission heard from more than 8000 victims and survivors of institutional child sexual abuse in private sessions and held more 57 public hearings. The final report comprising 17 volumes was handed to the Governor General in December 2017.



In relation to the impact on victims and survivors of child sexual abuse, of providing financial benefits to an official engaged in serious misconduct, it is worthwhile quoting from the Royal Commission

“ Many survivors are concerned about honours or memorials for alleged perpetrators of child sexual abuse, including facilities dedicated to or named after perpetrators. To meet these concerns governments and institutions should review existing institutional honours, dedications and memorials to make sure they do not honour perpetrators of child sexual abuse.” ¹

Provisions of the Bill

Many victims and survivors have voiced their anger and frustration that people in high office, such as that of Governor-General, continue to receive after their term in office ends, very high payments, when they themselves have been engaged in serious misconduct.

Many victims and survivors of child sexual abuse are struggling financially; many cannot for various reasons, bring civil litigation claims against the institutions or perpetrators responsible for their abuse; many who make successful claims to the National Redress Scheme receive payments capped at \$150,000 and that amount is only received in circumstances where there has been the most egregious abuse.

SAMSN supports the proposed amendments to the *Governor-General Act 1974* (the Act). SAMSN notes the Act does not allow for payments to be stopped where it is no longer in the public interest to do so.

The proposed amendments to the Act will allow for the cessation of standard allowances if it is in the public interest to do so.

¹ Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Final Report, Preface and executive summary, P.100



The powers being given to the Minister and House of Parliament under the new sections 2A(2), 4(2A), 4AGA, 4AGB, and 4AGC accord with the views of victims and survivors of child sexual abuse. These new sections specifically refer to serious misconduct including sexual misconduct (section 4AGB(1)) and omission (section 4AGB(5)).

SAMSN sees the proposed amendments as being necessary, recognising as they do, the harm done to victims and survivors; and recognising the need for accountability for those in this high office, who have engaged in serious misconduct.

