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**Australian Government**  
**Department of Social Services**

Senator Catryna Bilyk  
Chair  
Joint Standing Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

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Dear Chair

Please find attached responses to questions raised by the Committee in the private briefing provided by officials of the Department of Social Services (DSS) on 26 June 2024.

Some of this information is protected information under the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018. This information is being provided to you at your request and is subject to parliamentary privilege. The Department of Social Services respectfully requests that the Joint Standing Committee keep the information provided confidential, including refraining from using it in any reports or other publications. The protection of applicant and institutional information will support continued confidence in the Scheme by applicants and participating institutions.

The Department hopes the information provided will be of assistance.

Yours sincerely

Mark Harrigan  
Group Manager, Redress  
26/07/2024

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Attachment A

**1. Could the Committee please see a copy of a medical ethicist's report?**

The department would be happy to provide the medical ethicist's report for confidential inspection on the same terms that applied to the viewing of the Assessment Framework Policy Guidelines at the meeting with the Committee on 26 June 2024.

**2. What advice about this report was given to the Minister for Social Services (or the Minister representing the Minister in the Senate) during recent debate on redress legislation amendments?**

The department prepared material to support the Minister or her representative during the debate on the *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Amendment Bill 2023* (Amendment Bill). This included content relevant to the Committee's question.

**3. Could the Department please advise on what quality control measures or testing is conducted on independent decision maker's (IDM) decisions on comparable redress outcomes?**

The National Redress Scheme does not collect data on 'comparable redress outcomes'.

Each redress application is determined by an IDM by considering the content of the application, the information provided by the institution or institutions, the Act, the *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Assessment Framework 2018* (Assessment Framework) and policy guidance.

To promote consistency in decision making, the department supports IDMs as follows:

- Officials from the Department review each application before it is assigned to an IDM to ensure it has all the necessary information.
  - IDMs can ask for further information to be obtained from either the applicant or the relevant institution(s) to support their consideration of the application.
- All IDM determinations are proofread and checked for completeness including whether any relevant prior payment has been taken into account and whether applicable procedural fairness processes have been completed.
- Any discrepancies are referred back to the relevant IDM for clarification noting that IDMs cannot be instructed to change aspects of their determination.
- The support provided to IDMs to assist with quality and consistency of decision making includes:
  - Training, including in relation to the National Redress Scheme (induction training) and administrative law principles.
  - Fortnightly team meetings with team leaders.
  - Access to the Chief IDM Panel for mentorship and guidance. The Chief IDM Panel:
    - can request policy or legal advice to assist an IDM on a particular or a broader issue.

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- conducts quality assurance activities to help identify themes, trends and opportunities to inform a knowledge base and support continual improvement.
- Access to a legal helpdesk and policy guidance to support IDMs in their decision-making process.
- Regular IDM Workshops to discuss current issues, including legislative updates.
- New Statements of Reasons (SoR) templates were drafted earlier this year, and the launch of the new SoRs was accompanied by training.