

Senator Pratt: Can I ask if you've got awareness of the extent to which government run institutions which are now defunct would have passed on any information or records about sexual assault that had happened within those institutions so that someone could follow them up? As you say, the victims themselves might have been non-verbal and therefore not have the cognitive capacity, but there might be some other organisation that could follow that up. For example, I'm aware of a number of peer based rapes that took place within the department of disability services, at the site in Curtin, in Western Australia, which has now been closed down for a long time. Who is pursuing those historical cases on behalf of clients or submitting applications on their behalf?

At the public hearing, I replied to Senator Pratt that I did not really have knowledge of this, however in NSW we were aware of some of the big NGOs who had been handed responsibility for people when de-institutionalising of people with disability took place.

The list of NGOs, which was gleaned from a government website, includes:

- Australian Unity
- The Benevolent Society
- Live Better
- Mid North Coast Disability Services
- Aruma (previously House with No Steps)
- Northcott
- Hunter Valley Disability Services
- Achieve Australia
- Life Without Barriers
- Cerebral Palsy Alliance
- The Disability Trust
- Achieve Australia
- Disability Services Australia

The only one of these services that PWDA were able to have a meaningful conversation with about the National Redress Scheme was Northcott. We were stonewalled when we tried to connect with CEOs or senior managers from the other organisations.

We are aware that some of the Redress Support Services (RSS) are survivor organisations, for example CLAN. These organisations would have members who perhaps lived in defunct institutions, and would receive information about the National Redress Scheme from the RSS. Other Redress Support Services would also potentially have existing clients on their books who had been institutionalised.

Where there are defunct institutions, particularly those that have been named either through the National Redress Scheme or the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, it would be good to have a strategy for addressing this. First and foremost it would need to be carefully thought out to avoid as much as possible any re-traumatisation of survivors. Our approach to getting information about the Scheme to survivors is to identify their trusted supports, and provide them with the information to be shared when and if appropriate. Even if there are records from these defunct institutions, we would not suggest something like a mass mail-out to former residents, a much more nuanced approach is necessary.

In NSW, after many months of making connections and speaking with different people, we were able to find out that residents from a fairly recently closed institution had been placed into group homes, and who the service provider was. We are now in conversation with this provider about whether/how we may be able to share information about the National Redress Scheme with their employees who provide support to the group home residents.

For some institutions that have not been in operation for a very long time, it may be very difficult to trace former residents. But in some cases, particularly for people with disability, these people would have remained in some form of care. If the government has records of which organisations became responsible for their care (like the list we have for NSW) they could be asked to reveal where those people are now residing, and/or could be asked to co-operate with Redress Support Services in sharing the information.