

COMENTS FOR: THE SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY AFFAIRS LEGISLATION
SUBMITTED BY: ELLEN LOUISE BUCELLO
INDEPENDENT ADVOCATE FORGOTTEN AUSTRALIANS AND CHILD MIGRANTS
PENDING LEGISLATION COMMONWEALTH REDRESS SCHEME FOR INSTITUTIONAL CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

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Dear Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs Legislation

BACKGROUND

On 30 November 2017, the Senate referred the Commonwealth Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Bill 2017 and the Commonwealth Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2017 to the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee for inquiry and report.

ADVOCATE: ELLEN LOUISE BUCELLO

My name is Ellen Louise Bucello, an Independent Advocate for Forgotten Australian's and Child Migrants in New South Wales on the Central Coast. I am a Survivor of sexual, physical, psychological abuse which took place over 9 placements within as many years with the NSW Government. As a result, I have Complex PTSD, Border line Personality Disorder and Epilepsy. As a Survivor who was taken from both parents, then further split from my 3.5 year old brother and 5.5 year old sister, I believe I have more right to be heard than many others that represent Forgotten Australians, Child Migrants and the Stolen Generation. My work is voluntary. I am passionate about ensuring fair and equitable services, on redress without discrimination to ALL VICTIMS NOT JUST THOSE DEEMED SEXUALLY ABUSED.

Many supporting studies to the Royal Commission into Sexual Abuse into Children in Care has also highlighted the need for ongoing health and support services, psychological, counselling and various other health needs.

Children beaten, starved, worked till they had blisters on their hands and knees, welts on their backs, farmed out to help farmers and slept in sheds, given little to eat. Children as laundry slaves, house slaves, Foster parents and Institutions who pocketed 2 pounds yet victimized these young children who now live daily with the horrors of still being locked in cupboards, being whipped with cat and nine tail lashes. Passed around pedophiles rings like rag dolls, given drugs to make it more bearable when they bled. This is nightmarish truth from these children. As an Advocate I have taken phone calls at any time 24/7 to help someone just get through their trigger times. WE never lived a child's life but as adults live with daily taunts of memories, these are know the adult ***Victims of this Historical Abuse Claim in 2018***.

To pay redress to only those who were sexually abused is a blatant disregard for human life and clearly shows discrimination of children who were meant to be cared for by our respective State/Territory Governments under the guise of the Commonwealth. We were and still are *Historically Abused Children of the Government of the Day*. It is only right that your decisions must then become historical to give some solace that all Victims are treated with dignity through redress and services in their remaining years. As reported by the Royal Commission it has been established the life-span of Victims is reduced by some 10 years.

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Since, you do not have one member who has journeyed the way we have, not one who has suffered all abuses, please consider that **YOU** are now our voice – our future rests in your decisions.

I have given my background as it is important that the Committee understand this. I do not hide from these atrocities as a Survivor, I am very proud of my accomplishments as an Advocate. As such I represent my brothers and sisters who cannot put pen to paper to voice their opinion. These views are collective from many Advocates and closed Facebook Groups which have arisen to try and help Survivors to understand jargon, their rights and listen to their grievances.

Over the preceding years I have listened to arguments, read reports, been involved with the Royal Commission, Lotus Place, Wattle Place, forwarded my own Submissions, been involved in surveys with the University of NSW to gather evidence to better understand the needs of this unique group of **Historical Survivors** so that Governments/Committees can take the right steps to assist them in these there last twilight days. My last research study I was involved with was on the life outcomes for children growing up in care in the twentieth Century by the UNSW Australia “No Child Should Grow up like this:” ISBN 978—0-7334-3687-1 UNSW Australia

I submit to this Committee as concise as possible valid references to which I believe still need addressing before this legislation is passed. I am and will always be willing to appear in person to discuss these matters further.

WHAT YOU NEED TO CONSIDER FURTHER

Recommendations

It has been recommended that access to redress is denied to persons who were involved with child sexual abuse or have been incarcerated for over 5 years.

These adults as children were drugged by pedophiles to stop them talking, stop the pain and stop the memories. When they finally ran away, no life skills and still children of the Government they turned to drugs and crime or did what they were conditioned to do. They paid as children, then as young men and women did time for their crime. Now you dare to even harm them further excluding them redress. I cannot fathom the ideology of this decision, firstly they lost everything in care, and as many reports show approximately 10% were destined for this path. Certainly in my eyes and that of many Professionals with whom I have spoken Psychologist and Psychiatrists they are puzzled as to why the Government has made a judgement where you were the legislative responsibility of these adolescents demonstrates a blatant lack in humanitarian prowess.

Reasonable sexual abuse.

The legislation states that redress will be made on reasonable sexual abuse. I have looked up the synonyms for reasonable and am not able to define this terminology; sensible; rational, judicious; practical, realistic etc. perhaps clarification is required.

Sexual abuse redress payment only?

The pending legislation does set out provision for further redress of abuse providing the abuse is predominately sexual first. So it seems the Legislation is giving rise to the fact that physical and mental abuse is acceptable and as Children of the Government of the time it was an accepted action. So if one was sexually abused they then can claim physical abuse. Yet, a child who was not sexually abused cannot claim physical abuse. It seems that it is expected that the two go hand in hand. As representatives

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for Government one would be surely be pleased that any child that was not sexually abused you would sigh in relief.

Counselling and Psychological Services

Clause 49 outlines the general principles that should guide the provision of counselling and psychological services for the purpose of the Scheme;

Subclause 49(3) states that survivors should be supported to maintain existing therapeutic relationships to ensure continuity of care.

Many of us have built good and lasting relationships with Counsellor's and Psychiatrist's. Like many Forgotten Australians and Child Migrants I could not visit a Public Hospital Counsellor or Psychiatrist as this is Institutional to us and we freeze-up, become emotional and the doors of the past re-open once more. Visiting any government place such as a Public Hospital, Centrelink causes considerable anguish on us. Many publications have recorded the effects of same like institutional care and submissions have been passed to the Royal Commission. This fear is also reported as we approach Aged Care and to many it seems like we are going back to the very place that hurt us. It comes as no surprise that many Survivors advise me of their future means to overcome that situation.

These mental health issues where behaviour is not understood through flashbacks; anxiety and phobias of being hurt once again sets off mental health issues. Survivors more than often are forever going through a revolving door in and out of mental health. However, as many pay private health insurances as a security to stay out of Public Mental Health we are forced to pay \$500 plus gap fees to feel we are in a safe place. I have been in Private Mental Health thirteen times as a consequence of my childhood abuse. Can we be reassured that our Private Health admissions to see the same Practitioner's and be cared for in Private Hospitals will be covered if a Survivor can no longer fund this Private Health expense? Or will the legislation make provision to pay the excess? This group of Historically Abused Survivors are one group of people who should have automatic access to NDIS for Advocacy purposes. We well know, and it has also been reported to the Royal Commission that as Survivors age it is becoming more difficult for many to manage their own money and decision making. This Committee must approve free Advocacy Services through NDIS regardless of age to compensate these Survivors. No provisions or funding has been allocated for these services and asking family only re-ignites the intergenerational overload which many Survivors Children have already endured. In many cases a causal distance exists between parent and siblings because of this intergenerational overload.

PRIORITY ONE HEALTH CARD

Correspondence from hundreds of representative organizations and individual Advocates throughout Australia understand health dilemmas Survivors face on a daily basis in respect to our failing health and have pleaded for the consideration of a "**Priority One Health Card**" whereby we do not have to continually explain our past and conditions.

We are not asking for a Veterans Gold Card but for the Government of Australia to finally take responsibility in fixing the children who were in their care. A "**Priority One Health Card**" would finally allow survivors to feel that they have been recognized as important and that they finally are the government's priority. Many have missed out on so many health needs, dental, optical, gym, hearing, physio, meditation and other relaxation practices to help them deal with anxiety, depression, loneliness, isolation etc. It will aid in education without us having to explain our conditions or triggers which may be set off at any time.

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The ongoing health of these Survivors is not just about psychological and counselling needs. Abused Survivors should also be exempt from paying Providers through My Aged Care, Department of Human Services.

The services Survivors require to function whilst at home, whether that be home help or companionship is on the increase as they age. They fear going into Institutional Care. Provisions need to be made with Human Services to exempt fees from this group of identified individuals. *It seems criminal to ask Survivors to pay for a service fee for companionship or home help when the very reason they are isolated is because of the abuse under care of Government.* This cost must be borne by the Commonwealth or State/Territory funding as a goodwill gesture for lack of care in childhood.

EDUCATION

Apart from the Training Package that is provided at the Commonwealth National Level through Human Services Department to meet competencies for persons who are engaged in Nursing Practices in Institutional Care, I have yet to find a suitable training program that contextually can be presented to all Doctors, Nurses, Community Workers, Mental Health Services, Medical Professionals as well as Care Providers in our homes. I have written on two occasions to Mr. Phillip Reed CEO of the Royal Commission into Sexual Abuse of Children in Care. The response from the Commission was that they had sent notification off to Professional Bodies and they considered it then, their responsibility to advise their membership.

With the Commonwealth Government accepting the opting in by States/Territories it must then become a responsibility and priority **duty of care** to ensure that a training platform is established from across all tiers of Government that is consistent and approved through National Training and Competency Standards Framework and that suitable Trainers who have knowledge of Forgotten Australians, Child Migrants be offered suitable opportunities to deliver such information. May I suggest that this can be delivered through Government Funded Providers i.e. New South Wales (Relationships Australia) Queensland (Micah Projects)? This would allow Forgotten Australians who meet certain criteria to be involved in continuing this historical education along with Frameworks in Education. I recently spoke with a teacher who was not convinced I was a Forgotten Australian. Because she has been told that it is a History Lesson. She would have liked to have had a Survivor address the children, naturally it would need to be censored.

Education is a powerful tool and our Doctors and Nurses are not even informed of Forgotten Australians and Child Migrants when entering Australia to work, however they are presented with an overview to the Stolen Generation. We need to be reminded that 80K Stolen Generation and 500K Forgotten Australians and Child Migrants. This has been a long journey waiting for redress. It is important all issues are covered.

I thank you for your communicative audience and I would relish the opportunity to discuss any of these matters in person.

In the words of Martin Luther King

“If you want to change the world, pick up your pen and write”

– Martin Luther King, Jr.

Submitted by:

Ellen Louise Bucello

Independent Advocate

Forgotten Australian's and Child Migrants – 27 January 2018