

## **Joint Select Committee on the Implementation of the National Redress Scheme**

Written Questions – 20 September 2023

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

**Topic:** Inquiry into the operation of the National Redress Scheme

**Question reference number:** IQ23-000138

**Question asked by:** Catryna Bilyk

**Type of Question:** Written. **Hansard Page:** N/A

**Date set by the Committee for the return of answer:** 06 November 2023

**Question:**

12. Since the Scheme commenced, in each financial year, what has been the average processing time for:
- a. All applications?
  - b. Applications accorded priority status?
  - c. Applications where the applicant identifies as a First Nations person?
  - d. Applications where the applicant identifies as a person living with disability?
  - e. Applications where government has agreed to be funder of last resort?

**Answer:**

Since the Scheme commenced, the average processing time for an application (that is from when an application is lodged, to when an applicant is notified of an outcome), is detailed below (noting that the financial year is determined based on the date the outcome is advised):

| <b>Average processing time</b>     | <b>FY18-19<br/>FY19-20*<br/>(months)</b> | <b>FY20-21<br/>(months)</b> | <b>FY21-22<br/>(months)</b> | <b>FY22-23<br/>(months)</b> | <b>FY23-24<br/>(to date)<br/>(months)</b> |
|------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| i. All applications                | 12.3                                     | 11.1                        | 12.1                        | 11.8                        | 13.5                                      |
| ii. Priority Status                | 11.5                                     | 10.4                        | 11.4                        | 10.3                        | 12.5                                      |
| iii. First Nations                 | 11.5                                     | 10.4                        | 11.1                        | 11.3                        | 12.9                                      |
| iv. Disability**                   | 11.8                                     | 11.1                        | 11.9                        | 11.9                        | 14.3                                      |
| v. Funder of Last Resort (FOLR)*** | 16.6                                     | 14.2                        | 19.5                        | 17.5                        | 17.2                                      |

\* The Scheme’s reporting functionality was not completely developed in the first year of operation. Therefore, the data for the first two financial years have been combined.

\*\* The Scheme has received applications from First Nations people who are living with a disability. Therefore, these applications will appear under both criteria (double counted).

\*\*\* There are a number of complexities with FOLR arrangements that may cause variable processing timeframes.

Data as at 15 September 2023.

## **Joint Select Committee on the Implementation of the National Redress Scheme**

Written Questions on Notice – 20 September 2023

### **ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**

Department of Social Services

**Topic:** Inquiry into the operation of the National Redress Scheme

**Question reference number:** IQ23-000155

**Question asked by:** Catryna Bilyk

**Type of Question:** Written. **Hansard Page:** N/A

**Date set by the Committee for the return of answer:** 06 November 2023

#### **Question:**

29. On 9 March 2023, during a public hearing (Committee Hansard at page 5), a question was taken on notice regarding strategic success measures. If not already provided to the Committee, could the Department please provide information as discussed during the public hearing?

#### **Answer:**

The department does not appear to have received a written Question on Notice on this topic arising from the 9 March 2023 hearing.

Two reports against the success measures were published – in October 2020 and July 2021.

Following the discussion of the strategic success measures (Measures) at the 9 March 2023 hearing, the department undertook the following actions:

- The Measures page on the National Redress Scheme (the Scheme) website was amended to include advice that the Measures were under review and therefore publication of reports on the Measures were on hold.
- The Measures webpage changes also included a reference and links to the monthly Scheme Updates which include data on Scheme operations; as well as the department's Annual Report which includes Scheme performance data.
- Approval was sought from the Ministers' Redress Scheme Governance Board for revisions to the Measures. Approval from every minister has now been received, with the final approval received on 21 September 2023.

The department is currently preparing reporting against the revised Measures, and aims to deliver the first report before the end of 2023.

## Joint Standing Committee on the Implementation of the National Redress Scheme

Public Hearing – 20 October 2023

### ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

**Topic:** Inquiry into the operations of the National Redress Scheme - Staffing

**Question reference number:** IQ23-000167

**Question asked by:** Dean Smith

**Type of Question:** Spoken.      **Hansard Page:** 36

**Date set by the Committee for the return of answer:** 17 November 2023

#### **Question:**

Senator DEAN SMITH: What can you share with the committee in terms of, for want of a better word, the churn of officials or staff through the operation of the scheme?

Ms Curnow: Can I just clarify. When you say 'the operation of the scheme', are you speaking specifically about the Service Delivery branch or the scheme as a whole?

Senator DEAN SMITH: The Service Delivery branch.

Ms Curnow: I don't have the specifics of that with me today, but we can absolutely take that on notice and get back to you.

Senator DEAN SMITH: I suppose the point that I'm trying to make is that, as the scheme has evolved and a body of experience and a body of practice have started to build, if officials, whether they be senior or junior, are coming into the scheme and then leaving the scheme, that body of consistent practice may not be as strong as it could possibly be. I'm keen to get an understanding. Is participating in this part of the department's work seen as a good opportunity, an important learning experience? Is there support there—because these are difficult issues—that makes it easy for officials, whether they be junior or more senior, to continue to hone their professional skills in the scheme? Do you understand what I'm saying?

Ms Curnow: Certainly. There are a range of issues you've highlighted there. I'm happy to speak to some now, but we can certainly provide further information on notice.

#### **Answer:**

The question in regards to length of employment in Service Delivery in the National Redress Scheme (the Scheme) is answered in IQ23-000168.

The Scheme provides intensive induction training to all new staff and ongoing support is delivered through standardised practices that include task cards and on-going training sessions. Scheme wide communication is also undertaken to ensure consistent practices across the Scheme.

This approach to training, support and communication ensures staff have access to key information in their role to maintain consistent practices across the work of the Scheme.

Staff wellbeing is also a priority for the Scheme. All staff in the Scheme have access to wellbeing support, including regular appointments with an external wellbeing support provider that has expertise in supporting people at risk of experiencing vicarious trauma. Staff also have access to a 24/7 support line.

These supports are underpinned by the Redress Wellbeing Framework which was a recommendation in the Second Year Review.

## Joint Standing Committee on the Implementation of the National Redress Scheme

Public Hearing – 20 October 2023

### ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

**Topic:** Inquiry into the operations of the National Redress Scheme - Staffing - Applicant-facing roles

**Question reference number:** IQ23-000168

**Question asked by:** Dean Smith

**Type of Question:** Spoken.      **Hansard Page:** 37

**Date set by the Committee for the return of answer:** 17 November 2023

#### **Question:**

Senator DEAN SMITH: When we think about those performing applicant-facing roles, what's the average length of time that someone would stay in that role?

Ms Curnow: That's something specific we'd need to get back to you on notice about, Senator, but we can certainly look into that.

Senator DEAN SMITH: I'd be interested to know, too, how many officials leave the applicant-facing role prematurely.

Ms Curnow: Can I ask a little bit more about that: what do you mean by 'prematurely'?

Senator DEAN SMITH: Perhaps someone finds themselves performing some tasks that they don't feel suitably trained for or suitably supported for, so they decide that this particular role is not for them. I'm keen to understand to what extent that may or may not exist.

Ms Curnow: We'll certainly look into seeing what data we can provide.

[...]

Ms Curnow: I'm not sure what specifics we have or how we would capture that data, but we will absolutely look into that and come back to you with as much detail as we can.

Senator DEAN SMITH: What's the average age of someone in an applicant-facing role?

Ms Curnow: That is a good question. We certainly don't have that to hand. I'd have to see what we can provide about that. I don't know that.

Senator DEAN SMITH: Okay. Secondly, if it's available, what is the length of time they've served in the department prior to taking on an applicant-facing role?

Ms Curnow: We can look into that as well.

#### **Answer:**

As at 27 October 2023, the average length of time an officer spends in a Service Delivery role is 530 days (1.45 years).

The average age of someone in a Service Delivery role is 40 years of age.

Data on employee length of time served with the department, prior to commencing with the Redress Group, is not and has not been captured centrally and sourcing this would be an unreasonable diversion of resourcing.

# Joint Standing Committee on the Implementation of the National Redress Scheme

Public Hearing – 20 October 2023

## ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

**Topic:** Inquiry into the operations of the National Redress Scheme - Application numbers

**Question reference number:** IQ23-000170

**Question asked by:** David Shoebridge

**Type of Question:** Spoken.      **Hansard Page:** 41

**Date set by the Committee for the return of answer:** 17 November 2023

### Question:

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Do we know how many claims were done in August or any month over the last few months? Give us a month—any month?

Ms Peascod: I might just use the data in front of me. I've done it 'life of scheme'. I just don't have it in front of me by month, but I do back at my computer. I'm sure one of my staff members—Justine; if you're contacting them?

Ms Curnow: There were 611 applications determined by independent decision-makers in September.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: That's half of the numbers received. I come back to the point: not only is it bad on the numbers that we already have but it's getting worse on that trend. It's bad now, and it's getting worse, month by month. What's the strategy? You're going to give me a detailed answer on that on notice—is that right?

Ms Hope: Yes. We're going to talk about that on notice. But, as I said earlier, and I think I said this in my opening statement, we have seen an annual increase of about seven per cent on application times relative to the 30 per cent of increased applications over the course of the year.

### Answer:

The Scheme is undertaking a number of initiatives to respond to the increase in applications, including:

- 1) The number of Independent Decision Makers has increased by six in 2023 (from 45 to 51). Recruitment of additional IDMs is also underway.
- 2) Recruitment activities are underway to bring on additional staff, including outside the highly competitive labour market in Canberra. This will add to the agility of the Scheme in being able to respond to operational demands.
- 3) The Scheme is also systematically reviewing every aspect of the application process to ensure it strikes the right balance between administrative efficiency and taking a trauma-informed approach to engaging with survivors. This includes triaging applications when they first come into the Scheme, and advising applicants within five days whether further information is required from them. This accounts for over 3000 of the applications submitted to the Scheme. Applicants are provided details of Redress Support Services to help them submit a more complete application.