

Joint Standing Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme

Public Hearing – 21 August 2024

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Inquiry into the operation of the National Redress Scheme

Question reference number: IQ24-000159

Question asked by: Catryna Bilyk

Type of Question: Spoken. **Hansard Page/s:** 12

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 4 September 2024

Question:

CHAIR: On notice, can you tell me what the scheme's been doing in regard to outreach over the last 18 months to two years?

Mr Riley: Of course.

Answer:

- The National Redress Scheme (the Scheme) has worked with the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), state and territory governments, Redress Support Services (RSS), and national peak health, disability, Indigenous and other community organisations as part of its efforts to reach potential applicants and raise awareness about accessing redress.
- Engagement occurs through written correspondence, distribution of communications materials, targeted individual meetings, presentations at stakeholder meetings/workshops, and Scheme attendance at stakeholder events.
- Officials from the Scheme continue to attend community-based events to engage with frontline service services to promote the Scheme and build connections for further engagement.

RSS led community engagement

- All RSS are funded to undertake community engagement and promotional activities. This is often with local community organisations within their service delivery area, to build referral pathways.
- The department has provided additional funding to several RSS to lead community engagement activities through in-person workshops. Representatives from the Scheme have presented at these workshops, including participation in question-and-answer sessions.

New South Wales

- Survivors and Mates Support Network (SAMSN) is the lead agency of a consortium of 4 NSW RSS providers (SAMSN, Link-Up NSW, People with Disability Australia and Wattle Place) delivering community engagement and outreach across metropolitan and regional NSW.
- To date, 11 workshops have been held across NSW, targeting areas where there are low application numbers to the Scheme. The most recent event was held in Muswellbrook on 8 August 2024, with the next workshop scheduled to be held in Hurstville on 27 November 2024.

Victoria

- In Good Faith Foundation is the lead agency of a consortium of Victorian based RSS to deliver engagement and community workshops across Victoria. To date, 3 workshops have been held in Bendigo on 26 October 2023, Warrnambool on 21 February 2024 and Traralgon on 18 April 2024. The next workshop is scheduled to be held in Geelong on 19 September 2024.

Queensland

- Micah Projects is running similar engagement activities in Queensland, which commenced in early 2024. Representatives from Micah Projects have delivered information sessions about the Scheme to peak bodies in Queensland who have contact with people who have experienced child sexual abuse, such as aged care, disability services, health professionals and other social services.

Other Engagement

- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the NT Government has been agreed, to undertake a Community Engagement Program to raise awareness of the Scheme. The MOU enables the NT Government to coordinate and undertake targeted communication and engagement about the Scheme across the NT, including in major remote communities. It includes continued networking with RSS and knowmore Legal Service, as well as networking with existing network groups/bodies, and agencies.
 - This builds on a previous project led by the NT Government in 2021, where targeted community and stakeholder consultation assisted in the development of resources such as wallet cards, a video and community radio campaign.
- The Scheme, in collaboration with NIAA, the NT Government and funded support services, held community workshops with frontline service providers in Alice Springs and Darwin on 21 and 24 June 2024 respectively. The aim was to raise awareness of the National Redress Scheme and the Territories Stolen Generations Redress Scheme, to create pathways for referrals to support services. The events were followed by information sessions for members of the community to ask questions about both Schemes.
- Representatives from the Scheme also attended one off events to raise awareness of the Scheme, including the final Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Taskforce Forum in Brisbane (August 2023) and the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) Members' Conference in Perth (October 2023).

Timeline of recent or significant stakeholder engagement events attended by Scheme staff

Date	Action
8 August 2024	NSW RSS workshop – Muswellbrook
24 June 2024	Community engagement workshop – Darwin
21 June 2024	Community engagement workshop – Alice Springs
4 June 2024	Territories Stolen Generations Redress Scheme information session – Mt Isa
30 May 2024	NSW RSS workshop – Lawson
18 April 2024	VIC RSS workshop – Traralgon
21 February 2024	NSW RSS workshop – Nowra
21 February 2024	VIC RSS workshop – Warrnambool

Date	Action
26 October 2023	VIC RSS workshop – Bendigo
25 – 26 October 2023	NACCHO Members’ Conference – Perth
30 August 2023	Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Taskforce Forum – Brisbane
17 August 2023	NSW RSS workshop – Wyong
22 June 2023	NSW RSS workshop – Parramatta
4 May 2023	NSW RSS workshop – Dubbo
30 March 2023	NSW RSS workshop – Mount Druitt
15 November 2022	NSW RSS workshop – Redfern
23 June 2022	NSW RSS workshop – Campbelltown
9 June 2022	NSW RSS workshop – Penrith
24 May 2022	NSW RSS workshop – Bankstown

Distribution of communications materials

- Distribution of new targeted communications materials through stakeholders and intermediaries commenced in August 2023. These materials were distributed both digitally and as hard copy packs, which consisted of posters, brochures, wallet-cards, flip books and a discussion guide. Recipients included RSS providers, peak bodies and frontline service providers. These materials are also part of the resource kits available on the Scheme website.
 - The total number of hard copy resources ordered online as at 23 August 2024 is 85,697 by 197 stakeholders.
- Digital distribution of a second set of targeted communications materials commenced in August 2024. These new materials included animated explainer videos, survivor case study videos and social media kits.
 - As at 23 August 2024, digital distribution of the communications materials have been sent to 410 community stakeholders via electronic direct mail (EDM). Additionally, these materials have been shared with all RSS, state and territory governments and other key stakeholders for distribution through their networks.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Weight of evidence

Question reference number: IQ24-000162

Question asked by: Catryna Bilyk

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

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 4 September 2024

Question:

The following question is in relation to weighting of evidence.

8. Is any instruction given to IDMs on how evidence should be weighted in either the applicant's or institution's favour?

Answer:

Independent Decision Makers (IDM) are required to apply the reasonable likelihood test to each of the eligibility criteria set out in the Scheme's governing legislation and rules in order to determine whether a person is entitled to redress under the Scheme.

There is no definitive rule on the weight that should be applied to certain documents or evidence. Any information provided to the Scheme is considered by IDM in the whole context of the application and in line with the Guiding Principles of the Scheme.

Considerations would include:

- the age of the applicant at the time of abuse
- the length of time since the abuse occurred
- the impact trauma may have on memory
- that disclosure to the Scheme through an application may have been the first time the applicant has told anyone about the abuse
- the Royal Commission finding that records of institutions were often poor, and institutions often actively covered up abuse.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Update to response IQ23-000044

Question reference number: IQ24-000163

Question asked by: Catryna Bilyk

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

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 4 September 2024

Question:

1. Update to response IQ23-000044: Institutions in the process of joining the Scheme and/or 'working with' to join (number).

Answer:

On 9 August 2024, the Scheme was working with 184 institution that have been named in applications to the Scheme, to support them to join the Scheme. Of these:

- 75 institutions have agreed to join the Scheme and are on-boarding.
- 45 have agreed to have their name published on the Scheme's website "Institutions intending to participate in the National Redress Scheme" webpage.

Additionally, 53 institutions have provided *words* for applicants. These *words* can be utilised by service delivery staff within the Scheme if the applicant enquires about the status of the institution named in their application joining the Scheme.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Update to response IQ23-000134

Question reference number: IQ24-000172

Question asked by: Catryna Bilyk

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

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 4 September 2024

Question:

10. Update to response IQ23-000134: If known, could the Department please advise on how many applications have been determined to be ineligible because the circumstances were characteristic of (or deemed to be) a medical procedure?

Answer:

This dataset is not captured by the National Redress Scheme.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Update to response IQ23-000137

Question reference number: IQ24-000174

Question asked by: Catryna Bilyk

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

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 4 September 2024

Question:

12. Update to response IQ23-000137: Could the Department provide details on the number/percentage of applications that name:

- a. One institution?
- b. Two institutions?
- c. Three or more institutions?

Answer:

Since the Scheme commenced:

Number of institution(s) named in applications	Number of applications where institution(s) was verified	Percentage of applications where institution(s) was verified
One institution	10,054	29%
Two institutions	10,203	29%
Three or more institutions	14,865	42%

Data as at 9 August 2024.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Update to response IQ23-000147

Question reference number: IQ24-000179

Question asked by: Catryna Bilyk

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

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 4 September 2024

Question:

17. Update to response IQ23-000147:

- a. What threshold determines whether a matter amounts to a complaint?
- b. In what timeframe does the Department aim to respond to and resolve complaints?
- c. Since the Scheme commenced, how many complaints have been received?
- d. How many of these complaints have been resolved?
- e. Within these complaints, in general terms, what are the most common grounds on which a complaint has materialised?

Answer:

a. In line with the Department of Social Services' (the department) Complaints Handling Policy and with reference to the Australian and New Zealand Standard, AS/NZS 10002:2014, the Scheme defines a complaint as an:

'Expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation, related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.'

b. In line with the department's complaints handling policy, the Scheme aims to resolve and respond to complaints within 28 calendar days of receipt.

c. The Scheme does not have comprehensive complaint data dating back to its commencement in 2018. However, following the Second Anniversary Review, the Scheme has developed a centralised database to record complaints and feedback. The Scheme can provide complaint data from 1 July 2022:

- Since 1 July 2022 until 26 August 2024, the Scheme has received 932 complaints. Of these, 272 were substantiated or partially substantiated.
- During FY 2022–23, the Scheme received 431 complaints. Of these, 156 were substantiated or partially substantiated.
- During FY 2023–24, the Scheme received 448 complaints. Of these, 105 were substantiated or partially substantiated.
- For the current FY 2024–25 to 26 August, the Scheme has received 53 complaints. Of these, 11 were substantiated or partially substantiated.

d. Of the 932 complaints received since 1 July 2022, 902 have been investigated and responded to. The remaining 30 are being investigated.

e. The most common complaints relate to applications (timeframes, eligibility, processes), service (responsiveness, phone communication, Redress Support Services) and institutions (non-participating, request for information process and Direct Personal Response).

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Update to response IQ23-000153

Question reference number: IQ24-000184

Question asked by: Catryna Bilyk

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

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 4 September 2024

Question:

21. Update to response IQ23-000153: The Department's submission referred to numbers of freedom of information requests from survivors (at page 8). Could the Department please provide updated figures?

Answer:

In 2021, the Scheme received approximately 564 requests for material to be released. This total includes requests via administrative release, and valid Freedom of Information requests.

In 2022, the Scheme received approximately 986 requests for material to be released. This total includes requests via administrative release, and valid Freedom of Information requests.

In 2023, the Scheme received approximately 1595 requests for material to be released. This total includes requests via administrative release, and valid Freedom of Information requests.

In 2024 to 9 August 2024, the Scheme received approximately 1985 requests for material to be released. This total includes requests via administrative release, and valid Freedom of Information requests.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Update to response EC23-001907

Question reference number: IQ24-000192

Question asked by: Catryna Bilyk

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

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 4 September 2024

Question:

28. Update to response Ref EC23-001907: Dates and locations of survivor roundtables previously held or planned.

Answer:

To date, 6 Survivor Roundtables have been held:

- 6 March 2024, Perth
- 6 December 2022, Sydney
- 15 June 2021, Darwin
- 9 March 2021, Canberra
- 7 November 2019, Melbourne
- 30 November 2018, Sydney

Two Survivor Roundtables were planned but did not proceed due to COVID related restrictions:

- 6 June 2021, Sydney
- 17 August 2021, Perth

The next Roundtable will be held on 16 October 2024 in Adelaide.