

# National Redress Scheme

For people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse

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## You might know or work with someone who is eligible for the National Redress Scheme

**Content warning:** This publication contains information about child sexual abuse that may be emotionally distressing for some people. Please call the services listed on page 4 for help if you need to. Support is available for you.





**Artwork Title:** Awelye

**Artist:** Charmaine Pwerle

'Awelye' refers to the traditional ochre body paint adorned by women during women's ceremonies. The term has meaning on two levels. On one level, it describes the body paint designs that relate to each particular woman's dreaming. But on a broader level, it refers to the body of cultural knowledge that connects these designs to stories, people, history and Country. This knowledge is imbued during ceremony with song, dance and individual totemic knowledge of Country, allowing us all to connect, come together, strengthen and heal.

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## Introduction

The Australian Government set up the National Redress Scheme in 2018 in response to recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

The National Redress Scheme supports people who experienced institutional child sexual abuse to access redress and can connect them with free, confidential emotional and practical support, and independent legal and financial counselling.

*“We now know that countless thousands of children have been sexually abused in many institutions in Australia. We must accept that institutional child sexual abuse has been occurring for generations.”*

–Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Final Report, 2017

Sometimes talking about the National Redress Scheme can be difficult. This discussion guide may help you talk to your friend, client, patient, colleague or elder with some key information.

## Support and assistance

If you need immediate support, call one of the support providers below:

knowmore	<b>1800 605 762</b>
Blue Knot Foundation	<b>1300 657 380</b>
BeyondBlue	<b>1300 224 636</b>
Lifeline	<b>13 11 14</b> (24 hour service)
1800RESPECT	<b>1800 737 732</b> (24 hour service)
13YARN	<b>13 92 76</b> (24 hour service)
Full Stop Australia	<b>1800 385 578</b> or <b>1800 211 028</b> (24 hour service)
MensLine Australia	<b>1300 789 978</b> (24 hour service)
Suicide Call Back Service	<b>1800 659 467</b> (24 hour service)



## Who this Discussion Guide is for

We know that workers, healers and professionals from across the community, health, legal and social services are often the first people that a survivor may talk to about their experience, and you are in a position to refer eligible people to the National Redress Scheme (“the Scheme”).

This Discussion Guide is a resource to support you, community members and frontline services and health professionals, to talk about the National Redress Scheme with people who have experienced child sexual abuse while in an institution. We understand that this may be difficult for you and your client or patient. You can contact the Redress Support Services on the previous page for assistance if you need help before and following these conversations.

### Information in this Discussion Guide may support you to:

- understand how the National Redress Scheme can help people who have experienced child sexual abuse
- guide your client or patient on eligibility for the National Redress Scheme
- understand how to refer to, and work with, Redress Support Services as part of offering trauma-informed, culturally sensitive care
- understand common social, cultural and emotional barriers clients may face when seeking redress
- manage and respond appropriately to a client or patient’s disclosure of institutional child sexual abuse.

### This publication and other resources have been developed for you

The Australian Government Department of Social Services developed this Discussion Guide in consultation with the national network of Redress Support Service providers. It incorporates current best practices for responding to disclosures of child sexual abuse.

This Discussion Guide should be used with its partner publication, *‘Understanding the National Redress Scheme’* to help explain the National Redress Scheme to survivors. There are other downloadable resources that may also help you with this conversation.

For more information and resources developed for First Nations people, visit:

[www.nationalredress.gov.au/resources/information-aboriginal-torres](http://www.nationalredress.gov.au/resources/information-aboriginal-torres)



## About the National Redress Scheme

The Australian Government set up the National Redress Scheme in 2018 in response to recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Redress means acknowledging the harm done to people who experienced child sexual abuse in institutions and holding the institutions responsible to account.

The National Redress Scheme supports people who experienced institutional child sexual abuse to access redress and can connect them with free, confidential emotional and practical support, and independent legal and financial counselling.

People can apply for redress through the National Redress Scheme by filling in an application form, on paper or online through the myGov website.

An offer of redress can include:

- counselling that is confidential and culturally safe
- a payment
- a direct personal response, such as an apology, from an institution.

It is important to know that the person applying for redress can choose which parts of the redress offer they want to receive.

The National Redress Scheme is an alternative to pursuing institutions through the courts, which can be stressful, expensive and require a higher level of proof. It is important that your client is fully informed about their legal choices allowing them to choose what best works for them and suits their healing journey. For more information you can call knowmore on **1800 605 762** (call charges may apply) or go to [knowmore.org.au](https://www.knowmore.org.au).

### What does the name 'institutional' mean?

- institutional child sexual abuse is abuse that happened when a child was on the premises of an institution, or where activities of an institution took place (such as a camp), or by an official of an institution
- institutions include church, mission, school, orphanage or children's home, foster home, detention centre, hospital, or sports club
- many institutions are signed up to the National Redress Scheme.



## Eligibility for the National Redress Scheme

Who can apply to the National Redress Scheme?

People are eligible to apply for redress if:

- they experienced sexual abuse when they were under 18 years of age, and
- they were born before 30 June 2010, and
- the abuse happened before 1 July 2018 while they were in an institution, and
- they are an Australian citizen or permanent resident when they apply.



### Support is available

Redress Support Services have specialist services for all eligible people including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- young people
- people with disabilities
- care leavers
- former child migrants.

Redress Support Services are free, confidential and independent. They can provide emotional support and information about eligibility and assist applicants to fill out a National Redress Scheme application form. They are here to help you.

To find a Redress Support Service near you, visit [nationalredress.gov.au/support/explore](https://nationalredress.gov.au/support/explore)



## Applying to the National Redress Scheme

The chart below shows the different stages of how survivors may interact with the National Redress Scheme. Making the decision to apply for redress can be difficult, and a survivor may go back and forth or pause the process at any time.



## Identifying types of sexual assault eligible to apply for the National Redress Scheme

Under the National Redress Scheme, child sexual abuse is when someone involves a person under the age of 18 in sexual activities they do not understand, are against community standards, or are against the law.

Child sexual abuse may include (but is not limited to):

- sexual touching of any part of the body, either clothed or unclothed, including with an object
- grooming—preparing or encouraging a child to engage in sexual activity, including showing a child sexual acts or any inappropriate material
- sex of any kind with a child
- persuading or forcing a child to engage in sexual activity
- sexual acts done by an adult of any gender, to a child of any gender.

It is important to know that not all workers understand the types of sexual assault that may be eligible. This guide and telephoning the National Redress Scheme Support Services can help clarify any questions. It may be helpful to phone 1800 737 377 (from Monday to Friday, 8am–5pm) for assistance as a first step.

## Childhood trauma can change the course of a child's life and profoundly impact their long-term health

Survivors of child sexual abuse are at higher risk of experiencing a range of chronic mental and physical health problems later in life.

This means that survivors are over-represented in the health and welfare system and in the criminal justice system—in areas such as mental health and substance abuse, and for issues including homelessness, family violence and unemployment.

Certain populations are more vulnerable if they have experienced child sexual abuse while in an institution including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- people with disability
- people in families where a parent/parents have alcohol or drug dependency, or that have a background of intergenerational abuse.



## Assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

National data shows that First Nations adults, who were historically and are currently over-represented in child safety systems as children, are more likely to have experienced child abuse, neglect, and sexual assault compared to non-First Nations individuals.

Over 30 per cent of applicants to the National Redress Scheme identify as coming from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background.

## Many people find it helpful to talk to someone about applying to the National Redress Scheme

Access to practical and emotional support can make a big difference, including getting help to fill in an application, or when considering an offer of redress. Referring survivors to Redress Support Services for a free, confidential conversation is a good first step.

Many people who experienced institutional child sexual abuse have never told anyone what happened to them, or if they have, may not have been believed. They may have been made to feel ashamed, or that they should stay quiet about it, or they may have felt let down by not receiving effective support.

If someone does choose to disclose their experience, this may not happen for years or decades after. It often emerges in conversations with a professional they trust.

It takes great courage for survivors to talk about what they experienced, to overcome what may have been decades of disbelief, shame or fear.

Applying to the National Redress Scheme may be extremely daunting at first. It may be the first time a person is disclosing their childhood sexual abuse, they may feel a dislike or a lack of trust in the government. They may feel anxiety about not being believed or something else.

Having the information to explore if the National Redress Scheme is the right choice and knowing that confidential support is available throughout the application process can be reassuring for survivors considering their options.

*“I wish people could have told me that they believe me rather than trying to find out more information.”*

-Survivor

*“I wish people picked up on the hints I was dropping, about no good things happening—I didn’t have the right language to say what happened.”*

-Survivor



## A trauma-informed approach to supporting patients and clients can help minimise the risk of re-traumatisation

Applying for redress through the National Redress Scheme may bring up distressing memories and can be traumatising for some people. Redress Support Services are integral to supporting people who want to apply for redress – and those that may not. They use a collaborative, survivor-centred approach that aims to reduce the experience of relived trauma for the survivor.

Redress Support Services:

- are available to help before, during and after a person applies for redress
- can complement the work done by other community service providers, offering help tailored to the National Redress Scheme
- are free, confidential, trauma-informed and culturally safe
- include specialist services available for people with disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, care leavers and former child migrants
- can be nominated to speak and act on behalf of a person who wants to apply for redress but does not want to directly interact with National Redress Scheme staff.

*“There may be other supports you can connect your client with while they are waiting to see a Redress Support Service – it could be a trusted person they can speak to, or other supports from your professional network, like a counsellor.”*

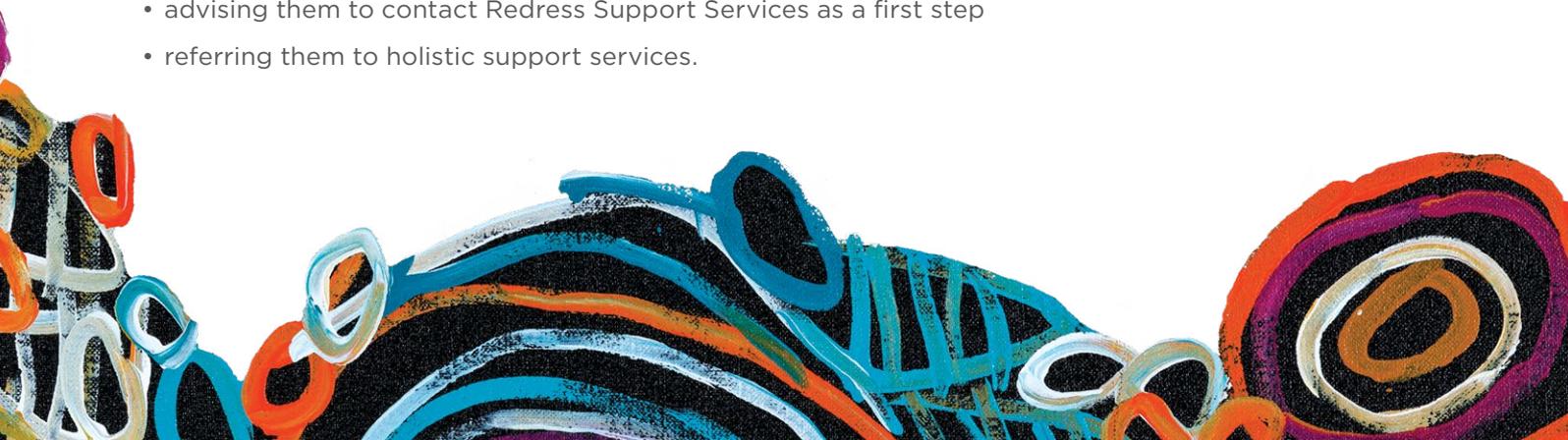
- Redress Support Service



## Appropriate referrals to practitioners with specialist skills in supporting adult survivors can enable pathways to recovery

There are different ways you can support a patient or a client who could benefit from applying to the National Redress Scheme:

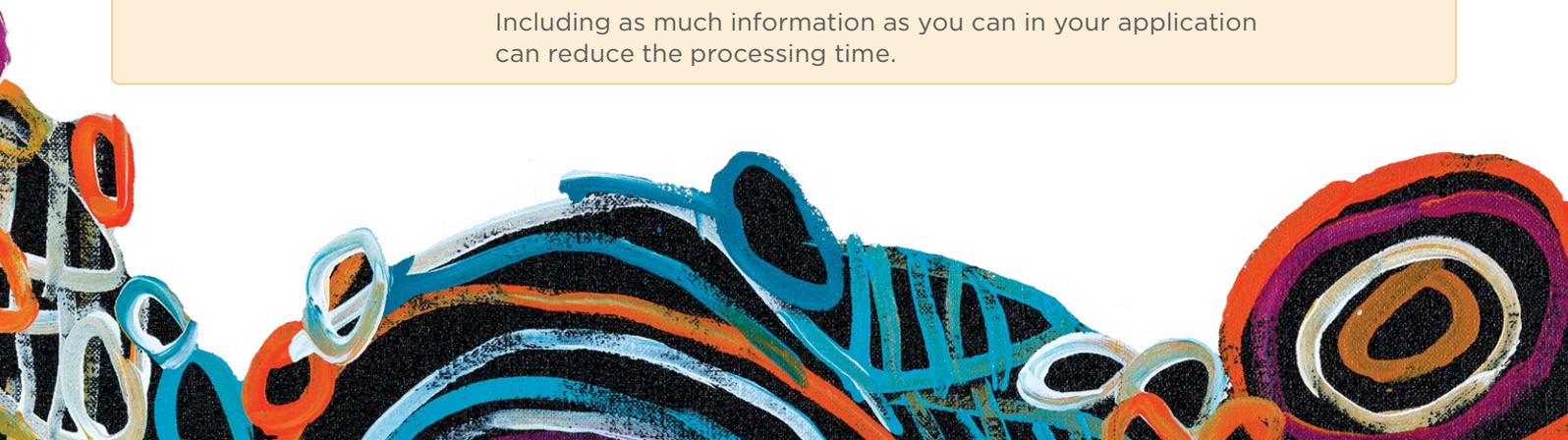
- telling them about the Scheme and what it can offer
- answering basic questions about how the Scheme works
- advising them to contact Redress Support Services as a first step
- referring them to holistic support services.



## Common questions about the National Redress Scheme

Below are some of the most common questions people ask when thinking about applying for redress through the National Redress Scheme:

QUESTION	SUGGESTED RESPONSE
<b>How do you apply to the National Redress Scheme?</b>	<p>You can apply to the National Redress Scheme by filling in an application form on paper or online through myGov.</p> <p>You can ask someone you trust to help you with your application. Please call the National Redress Scheme for further information on <b>1800 737 377</b>.</p>
<b>How much money do you get?</b>	<p>Redress payments range from less than \$10,000 to a maximum of \$150,000. The amount of money in a redress offer is different for everyone.</p> <p>It can depend on the circumstances of your experience, as well as any payments you have already received related to your abuse.</p>
<b>If I apply for redress and get money, will it affect my other government payments?</b>	<p>Redress payments are not taxed. Redress payments are not assessed as income by Centrelink but are considered a financial asset.</p> <p>Any interest earned on a redress payment may be assessed. But it depends on each person's circumstances.</p> <p>You can talk to Centrelink about how a redress payment could affect your government entitlements.</p> <p>You can also contact knowmore or Redress Support Services to talk about this before you apply: knowmore offer free, independent legal advice and financial counselling.</p> <p>Website: <a href="http://knowmore.org.au">knowmore.org.au</a></p> <p>Call <b>1800 605 762</b> within Australia</p> <p>Call <b>+61 2 8267 7400</b> from overseas</p>
<b>Do you have to be an Australian resident to apply for redress through the National Redress Scheme?</b>	<p>Yes, you must be an Australian citizen or permanent resident at the time you apply, but it doesn't matter if you were not an Australian citizen or permanent resident when the abuse happened.</p> <p><a href="http://nationalredress.gov.au/applying/who-can-apply">nationalredress.gov.au/applying/who-can-apply</a></p>
<b>How long will it take to get an offer of redress?</b>	<p>The average time is 12–18 months after an application is submitted, but it can take longer.</p> <p>Take time to tell your whole story, this will enable the Redress Support Service helping with your application to provide a comprehensive account of the impacts you have experienced.</p> <p>Including as much information as you can in your application can reduce the processing time.</p>



## Making institutions accountable

Institutions found responsible for the sexual abuse of children are held accountable by the National Redress Scheme.

The Australian Government strongly encourages all Australian institutions who have a history of interacting with children to join the National Redress Scheme as soon as possible.

If a person applying for redress names an institution that has not already joined the National Redress Scheme, the institution is given six months to sign up.

If the institution does not join within six months, they may be publicly named, could face financial penalties, and may lose their charitable status until they join.

## Protecting information and the applicant's right to privacy

The National Redress Scheme legislation sets out how information provided by applicants is protected, with strict rules about how the information can be used.

- information provided by applicants will be seen by some staff in the National Redress Scheme and the Independent Decision Maker
- information provided by applicants is not subject to freedom of information claims made to the Australian Government
- limited information is shared with the relevant institution(s), including applicant name and date of birth, description of the abuse, the Independent Decision Maker's decision, and the applicant's wishes regarding the offer of redress
- if the applicant provides permission, the National Redress Scheme may also share information about the impact the sexual abuse has had, with the institution responsible for the abuse
- there may be a requirement to report risks of ongoing abuse to the police and child protection authorities based on the information provided to you by survivors. You can encourage survivors to contact the National Redress Scheme to discuss what these reporting obligations mean for them.

**The National Redress Scheme is a way for survivors of institutional child sexual abuse to have their story heard, believed, and acknowledged. It can be a key part of a person's life journey.**



## Supporting a disclosure of childhood sexual abuse

When a survivor makes a disclosure to a professional, it is usually because they feel safe to talk about what happened to them.

If a survivor makes a disclosure, it's common to feel like you are not qualified to respond or may yourself, be a survivor. It can be difficult to listen and respond to a disclosure.

The suggested actions and responses below will help you manage disclosures appropriately.

Remember, if they have a third party who can support them in talking with you, this is fine.

**Action:** Listen first

**Description:** Before asking questions, listen, remain calm and be patient.

**What to do:** Listen first without comment.

**Action:** Take time

**Description:** A person's story happens at their own pace. It's important to listen and try not to hurry them up or paraphrase for them. If you feel you cannot listen to a client's disclosure, reassure them that what they are telling you is very important and should be heard by the right person. Offer to help them find the right person.

**What to do:** Take cues from the survivor's communication style—if they want to maintain eye contact, do the same. If they prefer not to make eye contact, avoid continually looking at them.

**Action:** Show you believe them

**Description:** Being believed is especially important to survivors. If you ask a lot of questions, they may feel that you don't believe what they are saying. Never play down or brush over what someone has said, even if they are playing it down themselves.

**What to do:** Let the survivor tell you as much or as little as they are comfortable with. Suggested response: *"I believe you."*, *"You did the right thing telling me what you experienced."*, *"Thank you for trusting me and sharing what happened to you."*

**Action:** Reassure and validate

**Description:** If appropriate, tell them what was done to them was not their fault and was a crime.

**What to do:** You might like to ask whether they have shared this with others and what has been their response. This will help you know how to respond. Suggested response: *"What happened was a serious crime."*, *"It was not your fault."*



**Action:** Ask how you can support them

**Description:** Rather than advising someone what they should do, ask how you can support them. Advise them of mandatory reporting requirements.

**Suggested response:**

*"Based on what you've just told me, I am obliged to report this abuse to make sure other children aren't being harmed. We could talk about the best way to support us to do this."*

**Action:** Refer

**Description:** Support for the person after sharing their story is important.

**What to do:** Check with them if they already have personal or professional support and whether they'd like your help in finding professional support. You can also contact Redress Support Services or the National Redress Scheme for guidance.

**Action:** Debrief

**Description:** Responding to a disclosure of abuse can be overwhelming. If it has occurred as part of your work role, consider speaking to your supervisor, as they may be able to help you access support services like EAP counselling, paid for by your organisation.

**What to do:** Seek assistance, you will be in a better position to support this person if you get care for yourself.





Call **1800 737 377**  
Monday to Friday, 8am–5pm

Or visit  
**[nationalredress.gov.au](http://nationalredress.gov.au)**

