



**NATSILS**

**NATIONAL ABORIGINAL & TORRES  
STRAIT ISLANDER LEGAL SERVICES**

**4 November 2016**

## **Media Release**

### **NATSILS welcomes the announcement of a Commonwealth Redress Scheme for Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse**

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS) welcomes the announcement by the Attorney-General, Senator the Hon George Brandis QC and Community Services Minister, the Hon Christian Porter to establish a Commonwealth Redress Scheme for survivors of institutional child sexual abuse, led by the Australian government with an opt-in for state and territory governments and non-government institutions.

“This approach best reflects the goals of ensuring equality of access for survivors, independence and consistency. Additionally, some survivors suffered abuse in institutions in different jurisdictions, or no longer live in the jurisdiction in which they were abused. A national scheme will avoid survivors having to navigate different schemes in such circumstances”, said Ms Cheryl Axleby, Co-Chair, NATSILS.

The key components of the Commonwealth Redress Scheme should be a direct personal response; counselling and psychological care; and monetary payments. The Redress Scheme should be open ended with no fixed closing date.

“The Commonwealth Redress Scheme will need to be sufficiently flexible to cater for the particular needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly those from rural and remote communities.

“The particular conditions imposed in our communities, including the large scale child removal that took place as part of the Stolen Generations has meant that a higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had experienced sexual abuse. Across Australia, one in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were taken into some form of care”

“Of those in care, ten per cent experienced child sexual abuse – but given low reporting rates, the actual prevalence will probably never be known”

“There should be specific strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and for regional and remote communities and that this should include messaging in local languages and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement officers, use of local radio and media. This promotion needs to be ongoing.

“Furthermore, a communication strategy should also ensure that potential and actual applicants of past redress schemes are fully informed and aware of their rights under any new scheme and not discouraged from seeking redress because of past ineligibility or because of past negative experiences.”

NATSILS welcomes the commitment of the Commonwealth Government to establish an independent advisory council.

NATSILS has advocated for a National Redress Scheme and further details can be found in its [Submission to the Royal Commission Inquiry into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse Consultation Paper: Redress and Civil Litigation](#)

“A Commonwealth Redress Scheme is long overdue for many survivors who have suffered significant abuse and harm. NATSILS acknowledges that the announcement will be too late for a number of our community members who are no longer alive to seek the redress they deserve”, concluded Ms Axleby.

**Media Contact:** Karly Warner at [kwarn@vals.org.au](mailto:kwarn@vals.org.au) or by phone on 0423 610 587.