

Manifesto for a national redress scheme

1. Introduction

Redress for survivors of abuse in institutions and out-of-home-‘care’ is a moral issue. It is about righting injustices perpetrated under the watch of those who were supposed to be our guardians. It is also a legal and financial issue. We are getting older. Some have made an apparent success of our lives, and have hidden our pain and scars pretty well. Many of us lost educational opportunities. Some made up for this against the odds, and many didn’t. You don’t get time back. Some are living in poverty and despair. Our health might be failing. We don’t want to be re-institutionalised and the prospect scares us.

The Alliance for Forgotten Australians wants a truly *national* redress scheme for survivors of *all* forms of abuse in institutional and other forms of out-of-home-‘care’, to which the Commonwealth, states, territories and past providers *sign up*. *All* sign up. It’s non-negotiable.

Attached to this paper is a table reflecting AFA’s views about the essential components of a national scheme.

2. All forms of abuse are covered

In an institutional setting, all forms of abuse: sexual, physical, emotional and psychological are connected. The ability to differentiate one type of abuse from another is affected by many factors. These include intellectual capacity; sexual knowledge; understanding of consent; loss of identity and sense of family; the pre-existing experiences of the child and trauma of removal from family; and the child’s knowledge and understanding of their body. Into adulthood, other factors will include the ability or opportunity to participate in healing; the levels of fear that are generated and carried internally as an adult; the experience of powerlessness which, for many, may take a lifetime to overcome. Any redress scheme needs to redefine this powerlessness into a process where individual perceptions and description of abuse does not discriminate, disadvantage or ignore the reality of being a victim or survivor. An inclusive redress scheme will give survivors the choice about the degree of disclosure they are comfortable to provide.

3. Principles

While advocating for Forgotten Australians, in AFA’s view the following principles apply to all survivors and should underpin a national redress scheme:

1. Survivors are seen, respected and understood, their history is recognized and the circumstances of their childhoods and the impact of abuse is comprehended.
2. Swift and decisive action demonstrates recognition and support so that survivors live the best life possible in their remaining years.
3. Redress provides justice to the survivor, it is not about protecting the institution's interests.
4. Survivors of all forms of abuse are supported, not only those who experienced sexual abuse.
5. Redress for survivors actively involves the institutions in whose 'care' the abuses occurred, including governments, church and non-government organisations, and this involvement occurs to a degree that provides a financial incentive to prevent future abuse.
6. Specialist support services for survivors are resourced on a long-term basis to maintain the trust they have earned from people who have been repeatedly let down.
7. The Commonwealth, state and territory governments are held publicly accountable for failures in their role in providing 'care'.

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Chair

And all members of the Alliance for Forgotten Australians

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