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Sex abuse royal commission: Federal, state governments should compensate survivors when churches, schools fail to, report recommends

Jane Lee

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Churches, schools and other institutions where child abuse occurs should pay adult survivors up to \$200,000 in compensation under a national redress scheme, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sex Abuse says.

And when institutions fail to cover the full cost of compensation, federal and state governments should cover the difference, the royal commission concluded in its long-awaited report on redress on Monday.

The commission has stood by its position that there should be a national redress scheme for victims of child sexual abuse, despite the federal government's staunch opposition to the proposal in March.

Survivors of the most severe abuse cases should be paid a maximum of \$200,000, with a minimum payment of \$10,000. Average payments to survivors should be \$65,000, the report said.

The federal government, the commission's preferred administrator for a redress scheme, should announce whether it will establish a scheme by the end of the year, the report said.

If it would not do this "the next best option" for ensuring justice for survivors is for each state and territory government to establish "a redress scheme covering government and non-government institutions in the relevant state or territory".

The commission has said that it could cost \$4.3 billion over 10 years to provide redress to the 65,000 victims of child sex abuse in Australia.

The commission left it open to both levels of government to negotiate the share they would each pay as a "funder of last resort" when institutions fell short.

The government which ultimately took responsibility for the scheme should decide how to raise funding for it, including requiring payment from certain institutions.

Medicare funding for counselling and psychological care services should also be expanded for survivors who are eligible for redress under the scheme, it said, including "longer-term interventions that are suitable for treating complex trauma, including through non-cognitive approaches".

The commission did not recommend a time period for the redress scheme, but said that at least a year's notice should be given if it does end, with the closing date widely advertised.

The federal government has questioned whether it had the legal and constitutional power to co-ordinate the scheme in a submission to the commission, prepared by the Australian Government Solicitor: "Responsibility for providing redress should lie with the institution that failed to provide the individual survivors."

"Institutions must accept the legal, financial and moral responsibility for failing to protect children. Such recommendations would send a clear message to those institutions that they have no choice, for the future, but to prioritise the safety and wellbeing of those children entrusted to their care."

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