

21 December 2017

Relationships Australia Victoria Response to the Conclusion of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

Relationships Australia Victoria (RAV) is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) to provide free, specialist support to people engaged with or affected by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Since late 2013, RAV has been providing these services to survivors, family members, community members and those providing evidence at public hearings through our *Reclaim Support Services*.

On Thursday 14 December 2017, the Royal Commission had its final sitting with the six Commissioners receiving a standing ovation from those present, including survivors, advocates, the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon Bill Shorten MP, and Prime Minister, the Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP.

The following day the Commission's 17-volume Final Report was delivered to the Governor-General, His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd), and tabled in Parliament. We welcome the release of the Report, and given the level of anticipation around this report, RAV supports the Federal Government's decision to release it immediately to the public.

RAV also supports the Federal Government's commitment to thoroughly review the recommendations contained within it and hope that the Government will provide a prompt and transparent response as to how the recommendations of the Report will be enacted.

We know that many of our clients are experiencing difficulties as a result of the uncertainty around the proposed National Redress Scheme which is due to commence in July 2018. RAV recommends for any redress scheme to be inclusive, and does not support the exclusion of some survivors from the scheme, as proposed in the current bill before Parliament.

We also encourage the Victorian Government to take the lead in Victoria and opt in to the National Redress Scheme, so that Victorian-based institutions can follow suit. This demonstration of leadership will provide some level of reassurance to survivors and their families that their needs will continue to be a priority now that the Commission's work has concluded. Having the opportunity for survivors to access the Redress Scheme is important not only for the financial component but also to ensure their access to therapeutic counselling and the opportunity for a direct, personal acknowledgement from the responsible government or institution.

We acknowledge that the conclusion of the Royal Commission may be a difficult time for many of our clients and the communities with whom we work, and that there may be mixed emotions associated with this event.

Survivors of child sexual abuse or those affected by the Royal Commission can access free, comprehensive support through RAV's *Reclaim Support Services*. Call our dedicated phone number - 1800 052 674 or visit www.relationshipsvictoria.com.au for more information.