

NATIONAL REDRESS SCHEME

**473. Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI to the Premier:**

I refer to today's announcement that the state government will sign up to the National Redress Scheme. Can the Premier outline to the house what the process is now for ensuring that survivors can access the scheme; and, will survivors still have the opportunity to pursue civil litigation, which was made possible by the removal of the limitation periods for all child sexual abuse actions?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

I thank the member for the question and, once again, acknowledge the survivors of child sexual abuse who are in the public gallery today. I look forward to seeing you after question time.

I would like to acknowledge in particular the Attorney General and the Minister for Child Protection for their roles in achieving this outcome today. The Attorney General has been working extremely hard to reach an agreement with the commonwealth government on Western Australia agreeing to a redress scheme that is fair to all Western Australian survivors of child sexual abuse. I am very pleased that we have managed to secure an outcome for Western Australia that is fairer than that originally proposed, particularly with regard to child migrants and people living in regional communities across the state.

We are formally signing on to the scheme, but we are required to pass legislation, which we will bring in during the second half of this year. We expect that we will be ready to introduce that legislation fairly early in the second half of this year. That will be required not only for the state to officially sign on to the scheme, but also so that other Western Australian-based institutions—including churches, non-government institutions and the like—can sign on to the scheme as well.

We hope that this legislation will pass quickly through both houses of this Parliament. It will allow for a monetary payment of up to a maximum of \$150 000 and also funds to access counselling services for survivors. Most importantly, the legislation will allow survivors to receive a direct, personal response from the responsible institution if they wish to receive one. Also importantly, applications can be received for the scheme from 1 July this year, which is essentially next week. That is also something the Attorney General negotiated with the federal government. When our legislation is passed, we will inform the commonwealth and the assessment process of applications can therefore begin, but applications can be received from next week. This does not stop survivors of child sexual abuse who wish to pursue civil litigation. Members might recall that late last year or earlier this year we passed the legislation to lift the statute of limitations period for civil action for survivors of child sexual abuse. That legislation will be proclaimed on 1 July this year as well, so it will start on Sunday or Monday next week. I note, however, that court processes, lawyers and the adversarial nature of the courts can be difficult, expensive and time-consuming and, for some survivors, it might be a particularly traumatic experience. Redress therefore can provide for many people a more streamlined and supportive alternative, and access to financial counselling and specialised legal support services.

In closing, this is the most comprehensive approach ever in the history of Western Australia to assist victims of child sexual abuse. It is comprehensive for anyone who is impacted across the community, in particular, people in state government institutions. We are very proud and pleased on this historic day to have been able to achieve this outcome.