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Alan Carpenter



Sue Ellery

\$114million for child abuse victims

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Western Australia has taken another major step forward in responding to child abuse with the announcement today of a \$114million program to provide payments and counselling for children who were abused while under the protection of the State.

Premier Alan Carpenter said Redress WA would provide monetary and emotional recompense for any physical, sexual or psychological harm suffered by children in care.

"The State Government deeply regrets that in the past some children under the protection of the State - either in foster homes, institutions or non-Government or church-based care - were abused," Mr Carpenter said.

"We want to help correct the wrongs of the past.

"We know that money can never make up for the suffering endured by these people.

"However, our hope is that this program will help them come to terms with their past and move into the future as happier and healthier individuals."

People who were under the protection of the State prior to March 2006 will be eligible for Redress WA and may receive an ex-gratia payment of up to \$10,000 if they experienced abuse or neglect, or up to \$80,000 in cases where there is evidence that abuse or neglect resulted in physical or psychological harm.

"This program will allow people to receive a payment for their suffering through a process that is far less adversarial and more focused on healing than the alternative, which is to pursue civil litigation against the State through the courts," the Premier said.

"Victims will also receive an official apology from the State Government and access to a range of free, ongoing counselling and support services.

"Acknowledgement and apology are often of great importance to child abuse victims because many may not have been believed by friends, family or authorities in the past."

Communities Minister Sue Ellery said personal support, financial counselling and independent legal advice would be made available to people who wanted to apply for the Redress program.

"Many people are still suffering as a result of the abuse they may have experienced as children in State care," Ms Ellery said.

"To help them deal with any further distress associated with making an application under Redress WA, we will ensure they have all the support they need.

"Importantly, those people who choose not to participate in Redress WA or would rather pursue financial compensation through the courts are free to do so."

The State Government's commitment to the emotional recovery of people abused while in State care was first acknowledged in 2005 with a formal apology by the then Premier Geoff Gallop.

WA now joins Tasmania and Queensland as the only States in Australia to initiate a redress scheme.

Mr Carpenter said Redress WA and new legislation requiring the mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse were evidence of the Government's strong record of responding to past and contemporary abuses of children in WA.

Applications for Redress WA can be submitted from May 1, 2008 for a period of up to 12 months. All claims are expected to be resolved by December 2010.

Eligibility criteria:

- adults who, as children, were abused in State care prior to March 1, 2006, including Child Migrants and Stolen Generation children;
- State care includes facilities that were subsidised, monitored, registered or approved by the State Government, such as foster homes or other residential settings or institutions such as group homes, hostels or orphanages; and
- individuals who have already received payments from non-Government organisations (for example churches) also may apply to Redress WA.

Those ineligible:

- individuals who have received damages from a court or a settlement as a result of abuse and injuries described in the application for Redress WA from the State Government;
- relatives of deceased persons, or the estate of deceased persons, who were in State care.

For more information visit <http://www.redress.wa.gov.au> or telephone the Redress WA information line on 1800 617 233 between 9am and 4.30pm weekdays or email info@redress.wa.gov.au

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