

Media Release: Budget guarantees ongoing legal help for survivors of child sexual abuse

Tuesday 9 May 2017

The National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC) has welcomed the announcement in tonight's Federal Budget of an additional \$1.2 million funding for the knowmore legal service, in connection with the establishment of the Commonwealth Redress Scheme for Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse.

Overall the Federal Budget includes \$33.4 million to establish the Commonwealth Redress Scheme.

knowmore, established in 2013 as a program of NACLC, has been providing trauma-informed legal services to people engaging with the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. knowmore's multidisciplinary model allows the focus to be on the needs of each individual client.

"This Budget decision is great news for survivors who suffered child sexual abuse during their time in Australian institutions" said knowmore Executive Officer Warren Strange.

"The Royal Commission has provided an opportunity for thousands of survivors of child sexual abuse in Australian institutions to come forward, tell of their experiences and to seek justice."

"Many have done so for the first time and after decades of silence."

"The legal needs of these survivors will not end with the delivery of the Royal Commission's final report in December 2017."

Mr Strange said the additional funding will allow knowmore to continue to provide support to survivors, and to ensure survivors are aware of their rights to seek redress.

"knowmore has already helped over 7,000 people and has seen a high level of engagement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – 22% of our clients identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people."

"The Federal Government's funding reflects its commitment to building on the work of the Royal Commission and delivering lasting reforms that will benefit survivors, who for too long have had to live in silence and without access to justice."

"We now need to see all State Governments and other organisations responsible for the institutions in which children suffered horrendous sexual abuse match the Federal Government's commitment and leadership, by participating fully in the Commonwealth Redress Scheme" he added.

NACLC Chief Executive Officer Nassim Arrage also welcomed the Budget announcement.

"knowmore is an excellent example of what a properly funded trauma-informed service that employs lawyers, social workers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement advisors can achieve for victims" he added.

"The Government's decision to provide further funding for knowmore means the legal needs of survivors of child sexual abuse, including around options for redress, will continue to be met through a trusted and specialist community legal service" concluded Mr Arrage.

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