

Improvement Update

**What is the Improvement Update?**

The Improvement Update (the Update) has been introduced to help keep survivors, advocates, and the wider public informed of improvements that are being made to the National Redress Scheme (the Scheme). These improvements will increase access to the Scheme and improve the way that the Scheme works. Many of these improvements are related to recommendations of the second anniversary review of the Scheme. They only cover the recommendations that have been agreed to by the Commonwealth and relevant jurisdictions. Other recommendations made by the second anniversary review are still in consideration.

The Update will detail recent changes that have been made to the Scheme, along with changes that are in progress, with expected completion dates. These changes do not include all changes that have been, or will be, made to the Scheme to enhance the survivor experience.

This version of the Update was published in September 2022. It will be updated regularly to reflect when improvements have been implemented or when new ones are planned.

**Improvements in progress**

The following table details the improvements that are currently in progress or that are being planned for the National Redress Scheme.

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| **Improvement** |
| September 2022 - The Scheme is implementing a Trauma-informed Framework. This will formally enshrine the trauma-informed principles that the Scheme operates under and ensure that the Scheme continues to operate in a trauma-informed way whenever possible. It will also assist the Scheme in continuously improving how we provide our service. |
| October 2022 - Improvements are being made to the way that the Scheme handles and manages complaints through the development of a Complaints Framework. This will make clearer what applicants can expect from the Scheme around the complaint process. We are implementing the framework to make it easier for you to provide us with feedback. |
| Late 2022 - The Intergovernmental Agreement that governs the National Redress Scheme is being updated to ensure that survivors and advocacy groups have formal input into the Scheme’s operations. |
| 2023 - The Application for Redress form is being updated after a successful co-design process that involved key stakeholders, including survivors. Changes will incorporate trauma-informed principles and ensure that it is more accessible and user friendly. The form will be updated in 2022 and 2023. All updates will be reflected in the myGov and fillable PDF versions of the form. |
| Ongoing Improvement - The outcome letter package, provided to applicants when a determination is made on their redress applications, has undergone a co-design process with survivors and Redress Support Services to be further simplified and be more accessible. The outcome letter package is also frequently updated to take into account any legislative changes to the Scheme. This is an ongoing process. |

**Improvements made**

This table details improvements that have been made to the Scheme and when they were made.

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| **Improvement** |
| October 2021 - Advance payments for redress were introduced. This allows the Scheme to make an offer of an advance payment to applicants who meet certain criteria, such as being elderly or terminally ill. This payment is made in recognition of the applicant’s vulnerability while their redress application continues to be processed. Applicants do not need to ask for an advance payment, the Scheme will write to applicants who meet the criteria with further information and the offer of an advance payment. |
| October 2021 - Changes were made to how the Scheme calculates the indexation of relevant prior payments when determining an applicant’s redress payment. Relevant prior payments are now indexed to the date that the applicant applies for redress, not when a determination is made on their application. This will ensure that applicants are not financially disadvantaged by the length of time it takes for the Scheme to process a redress application. |
| November 2021 - The Scheme introduced the option for applicants to receive their redress payments by installments rather than as a lump sum. This has provided applicants with choice around how they receive their redress payment. |
| January 2022 - A scheduled progress update service was introduced. This gives applicants the option to request regular scheduled calls with their case coordinator where they can be updated on the progress of their redress application.    The Scheme has also **improved the way that redress determinations are delivered to applicants**.The Scheme now tries to schedule follow up phone calls with applicants when they receive their outcome letter package. This gives applicants the chance to ask questions when going through their redress offer. |
| March 2022 - The requirement for an application to be supported by a witnessed statutory declaration was removed. This has helped to remove a barrier to access for redress. Applicants must still make a declaration when submitting a redress application and it remains an offence under the Act to submit false or misleading information. |
| April 2022 - The Scheme has introduced a new Direct Personal Response Information and Support Service. This provides assistance to applicants in receiving the direct personal response from institutions responsible for their abuse. In June 2022 the Scheme also automated how participating institutions report on Direct Personal Responses. This will enable the Scheme to have better data to continuously improve the Direct Personal Response process for applicants |
| April 2022 - To enhance the quality and consistency of decision making on redress applications, a panel of Chief Independent Decision Makers has been appointed. The Scheme has also introduced a de-identified application and decision database for Independent Decision Makers to assist them with their decision making. The Scheme is also continuously improving the training and resources that are available to Independent Decision Makers. |
| June 2022 - The Scheme finalised a review of Redress Support Services to identify best practices in providing culturally appropriate and trauma-informed services. This will assist the Scheme and Redress Support Services in making future improvements to how we operate. |
| August 2021 to June 2022 - The Scheme provided additional funding to Redress Support Services to address service gaps and provide additional outreach. The Scheme is also funding additional Redress Support Services to 30 June 2024. This will improve access and support for people who are considering applying, or wish to apply to the Scheme. This includes funding for knowmore Legal Service to provide dedicated free financial counselling services to all redress applicants. This is in addition to the free legal advice and support that they continue to offer survivors. |
| July 2022 - The funder of last resort (FOLR) provision have been expanded. This covers defunct institutions, where there is no parent institution or representative to take responsibility and a Commonwealth, State or Territory government institution is not responsible for the abuse. It also covers cases where institutions do not have the financial capacity to join the Scheme. Including defunct institutions to the Scheme does take some time and requires agreement from relevant jurisdictions, which is an ongoing process. The expanded FOLR arrangements will increase access to redress for survivors. |
| September 2022 - The Service Charter for your National Redress Scheme was introduced. This document explains what people can expect from the National Redress Scheme and its staff. |

**Contact us**

If you have questions or need advice or support, you can contact us.

* Calling from Australia: by phone on 1800 737 377 from Australia (call charges may apply), Monday to Friday 8am-5pm AEDT.
* Redress Support: A list of free, independent support services and their contact details are available at the website www.nationalredress.gov.au/support. Services can provide practical and emotional support, legal advice, and financial counselling. They can support you before, during and after you apply for redress.