

Y AUSTRALIA

**Submission to the Inquiry
into the continuing
operation of the National
Redress Scheme**



Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge and pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout Australia, including Elders past and present. We celebrate their important contribution and connection to the lands, seas and communities in which we work. We are committed to understanding and engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, living culture and traditions, to contribute to Australia's reconciliation journey.

Acknowledgment of Victim Survivors

We pay our respects to all victims and survivors of abuse. We would like to acknowledge the past failures of the Y to protect children and young people, and the trauma that was inflicted upon the victims, survivors and their families. The Y is committed to ensuring all children and young people in our care are kept safe from harm and free from abuse.

Submission to the Inquiry into the continuing operation of the National Redress Scheme

Executive Summary

Y Australia (the Y) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Joint Committee's inquiry into the National Redress Scheme (the Scheme).

The Y acknowledges the serious harm caused by child sexual abuse and recognises the profound and lifelong impact such abuse can have on survivors, their families, and communities. The Y accepts that failures occurred in the past and is committed to learning from those failures, responding appropriately to survivors, and ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children in its care.

The Y operates across multiple jurisdictions and has historically delivered a wide range of services involving children and young people. The Y is a participating institution under the Scheme and was among the early non-government institutions to join. The Y's engagement with the Scheme reflects the historical and federated nature of its operations over many decades, which is relevant to how records are held, identified, and accessed in responding to applications.

The Y's perspective is that of a participating institution responsible for implementing the Scheme in practice. Accordingly, this submission focuses on operational realities, process integrity, and system performance, and addresses those Terms of Reference where the Y has direct evidence and experience.

The Y recognises that access to redress is both an ethical and a practical issue. For many survivors, the National Redress Scheme represents a pathway that is more accessible and less adversarial than civil litigation, and one that can avoid the additional trauma associated with prolonged legal processes. When survivors come forward, they do so with the expectation that the system will respond with care, fairness, and timeliness. Minimising unnecessary barriers within the Scheme processes is therefore critical to ensuring that survivors who choose to engage are supported in a trauma-informed way. The operational issues raised in this submission are advanced with that objective at their core.

In designing and administering a scheme of this nature, government must also strike an appropriate balance between minimising unnecessary barriers for survivors seeking redress and maintaining safeguards to ensure the integrity of the Scheme. This balance

is not straightforward. Measures intended to prevent vexatious or fraudulent claims must be carefully calibrated, so they do not undermine survivor's access to redress.

The Scheme's operational timeline, and the potential for this timeline to be extended

The Y notes that, while the Scheme has a clearly legislated sunset date, experience demonstrates that many claims will still be unresolved by then.

Based on the Y's data and operational experience over the life of the Scheme, the Y observes that:

- there are significant delays between initial application lodgement, the issuing of Requests for Information (RFIs) to institutions, determinations being made by Independent Decision Makers, and outcomes being communicated;
- a material proportion of matters first notified to the Y between 2021 and 2023 remain unresolved; and
- modelling indicates that a substantial share of liabilities will crystallise close to, or beyond, the formal end of the Scheme.

The Y does not take a position on whether the Scheme should be formally extended. The scheme currently requires final claims to be made by 30 June 2027 but will continue until 30 June 2028. Based on experience it is highly likely that many claims will still be unresolved at that point leading to increasing uncertainty.

For survivors who have already engaged with the Scheme, prolonged uncertainty and delayed resolution can be distressing, particularly where engagement with the Scheme requires revisiting traumatic experiences. It may undermine confidence in the redress process. Resolving and communicating transitional arrangements early will also assist participating institutions with greater certainty.

Recommendation 1:

That in the context of known delays in claim resolution, the Y recommends that the Committee consider the need for early resolution of transitional arrangements.

Current case management issues and information requests, and the timeframe required to resolve these matters

This is an area where the Y has substantial direct operational experience.

The Y's national and local experience of Scheme case management over the life of the Scheme includes:

- RFIs that are frequently unclear, overly broad, or lack sufficient detail to enable meaningful historical searches;
- extensive redaction of applicant information, often without clear relevance to privacy considerations, which materially limits the ability of institutions to locate records;
- an inability for participating institutions to seek clarification or additional information from applicants, even where respectful, trauma-informed clarification could materially assist both the applicant and the decision-making process; and
- significant variation in the quality, scope, and proportionality of RFIs.

Collectively, these factors contribute to extended resolution timeframes. In many cases, final determinations occur one to three years after the Y first becomes aware of an application. In some instances, matters remain open for several years without explanation provided to participating institutions.

From the Y's perspective, prolonged delays disadvantage applicants by extending uncertainty and increasing the emotional burden associated with pursuing redress, while also placing unnecessary strain on participating institutions without demonstrable improvement in the quality or robustness of decision-making. For survivors, repeated or prolonged information requests can be experienced as confusing or re-traumatising, particularly where clarity and communication are limited.

In addition, the Y operates within a long-standing federated model that has evolved over many decades. Over the period to which many claims relate, a significant number of Y Member Associations have closed, merged, or transitioned. In many cases services were delivered through volunteer-led or community-based structures. As a result, historical records are not held in a single consolidated system and may be fragmented, incomplete, or held by successor entities. This organisational context adds complexity to record identification and retrieval and can compound the challenges associated with limited application specificity, redacted information, and the time required to respond to RFIs.

Recommendation 2:

The Y recommends that improvements be made to the clarity, specificity, and proportionality of Requests for Information, including measures to ensure that participating institutions are provided with sufficient relevant information to undertake meaningful historical searches in a timely and trauma-informed way, thereby reducing unnecessary delays for survivors.

Outstanding applications and determinations, and the processes and procedures that may need to be implemented to maximise just outcomes before the Scheme concludes

The Y is concerned about the number and age of outstanding matters as the Scheme approaches its later stages.

As at early 2026, a substantial cohort of applications involving the Y remains unresolved, including matters first notified several years ago. Participating institutions have limited visibility of why matters remain open and no capacity to prompt resolution once RFIs have been submitted, regardless of how long a matter remains unresolved.

The Y notes that, under current arrangements:

- applicants are able to seek internal reviews and extensions of review timeframes; and
- participating institutions have no corresponding right to seek review, other than in limited and exceptional circumstances.

As the Scheme progresses toward its conclusion, the Y submits that there is a need for:

- greater transparency regarding the reasons for delays in determinations;
- clearer expectations around timeframes once RFIs have been returned; and
- processes that prioritise older, long-outstanding matters for resolution.

In this context, the Y considers it appropriate for the Committee to examine whether the Scheme's administrative resourcing is adequate to support the timely resolution of outstanding applications, particularly in light of increasing application volumes as the Scheme approaches its conclusion. Prolonged delays may reflect not only process design issues, but also capacity constraints within Scheme administration. Ensuring sufficient administrative resourcing is critical to minimising delays and reducing the burden on survivors awaiting determinations.

For survivors, extended delays in resolving long-outstanding matters risk compounding harm by prolonging engagement with traumatic experiences and delaying a sense of closure or resolution. Addressing these issues would support fairness, procedural integrity, and confidence in the Scheme's outcomes.

Recommendation 3:

The Y recommends that the Scheme implement processes to prioritise the resolution of older, long-outstanding applications, supported by improved transparency around determination timeframes and consideration of whether current administrative

resourcing is adequate to deliver timely outcomes for survivors as the Scheme approaches its conclusion.

Recommendation 4:

The Y recommends that transparency be improved for participating institutions once Requests for Information have been submitted, including clearer communication about expected determination timeframes and the reasons for extended delays.

Planning for a possible increase in applications as the Scheme approaches its conclusion

The Y's experience, supported by actuarial modelling, indicates that application volumes have increased as the Scheme has progressed, and that further increases are likely as the Scheme approaches its conclusion.

This trend has implications for:

- institutional capacity to respond to RFIs within existing timeframes;
- the availability and accessibility of historical records, particularly for defunct or legacy organisations; and
- Scheme-wide processing capacity and decision-making timeframes.

As application volumes increase, these pressures compound existing delays and capacity constraints. If not addressed, they may create additional barriers for survivors seeking timely access to redress in the Scheme's final phase.

Recommendation 5:

The Y recommends that planning for the Scheme's final phase explicitly account for the likelihood of increased application volumes, including realistic assumptions about processing capacity, record retrieval complexity, and decision-making timeframes, to avoid the creation of additional barriers for survivors seeking access to redress.

Whether the operation and administration of the Scheme by the Department of Social Services is meeting the expectations of survivors and the Scheme's statutory objectives

The Y acknowledges the intent of the Scheme and recognises that some improvements in administrative practice have been observed over time.

However, based on its operational experience, the Y considers that the operation and administration of the Scheme does not consistently meet its stated objectives, particularly in relation to:

- timely decision-making;
- clear, consistent, and transparent communication; and
- proportionate and effective information-gathering practices.

While some recent improvements have been noted, ongoing systemic issues in case management and process design continue to affect efficiency and can undermine confidence in the Scheme's outcomes, which is particularly significant for survivors who rely on the Scheme as a less adversarial alternative to civil litigation.

In considering whether the Scheme is meeting its statutory objectives, the Y submits that the adequacy of administrative resourcing is a relevant factor. Persistent delays in decision-making and communication may indicate capacity constraints within Scheme administration, particularly in the context of increasing application volumes. Adequate resourcing is essential to support timely, consistent, and trauma-informed administration and to meet the reasonable expectations of survivors engaging with the Scheme.

Recommendation 6:

The Y recommends that the Department of Social Services continue to pursue system-level improvements to the administration of the Scheme, including consideration of whether current administrative resourcing is sufficient to support timely, consistent, and trauma-informed decision-making that meets the Scheme's statutory objectives and the reasonable expectations of survivors.

Key Recommendations

For ease of reference, the Y's key recommendations are summarised below:

1. That in the context of known delays in claim resolution, the Y recommends that the Committee consider the need for early resolution of transitional arrangements.
2. That improvements be made to the clarity, scope, and proportionality of Requests for Information, including measures to ensure that participating institutions are provided with sufficient, relevant information to undertake meaningful and timely historical record searches.
3. That mechanisms be considered to improve transparency for participating institutions once Requests for Information have been submitted, including clearer communication about determination timeframes and the reasons for extended delays.
4. That processes be implemented to prioritise the resolution of older, long-outstanding applications as the Scheme approaches its conclusion.

5. That planning for the Scheme's final phase explicitly account for the likelihood of increased application volumes, including realistic assumptions about processing capacity, record retrieval complexity, and decision-making timeframes.
6. That the Department of Social Services continue to pursue constructive system-level improvements to Scheme administration, with a focus on timely decision-making, clear and consistent communication, and proportionate information-gathering practices aligned with the Scheme's statutory objectives.

Conclusion

The Y reiterates its commitment to child safety and to supporting fair, trauma-informed responses to historical abuse.

This submission is offered in the spirit of constructive improvement. The Y does not seek to diminish the importance of the National Redress Scheme, but rather to highlight operational realities that, if unaddressed, risk undermining its objectives and creating unnecessary barriers for survivors seeking redress.

At its core, the Y's position is that survivors who choose to engage with the Scheme deserve a process that responds with care, fairness, and timeliness. Ensuring that Scheme processes minimise unnecessary barriers and support just outcomes is essential to maintaining confidence in the Scheme and honouring the purpose for which it was established.

