

Department of Social Services' Management of the National Redress Scheme

Department of Social Services

© Commonwealth of Australia 2025

ISSN 1036–7632 (Print)

ISSN 2203–0352 (Online)

ISBN 978-1-923405-73-8 (Print)

ISBN 978-1-923405-74-5 (Online)

Except for the content in this document supplied by third parties, the Australian National Audit Office logo, the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, and any material protected by a trade mark, this document is licensed by the Australian National Audit Office for use under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 3.0 Australia licence. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/au/>.

You are free to copy and communicate the document in its current form for non-commercial purposes, as long as you attribute the document to the Australian National Audit Office and abide by the other licence terms. You may not alter or adapt the work in any way.

Permission to use material for which the copyright is owned by a third party must be sought from the relevant copyright owner. As far as practicable, such material will be clearly labelled.

For terms of use of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, visit the *Australian honours system* website at <https://www.pmc.gov.au/honours-and-symbols/australian-honours-system>.

Requests and inquiries concerning reproduction and rights should be addressed to:

Chief Operating Officer
Corporate Management Group
Australian National Audit Office
GPO Box 707
Canberra ACT 2601

Or via email:

communication@anao.gov.au.





Canberra ACT
24 November 2025

Dear President
Dear Mr Speaker

In accordance with the authority contained in the *Auditor-General Act 1997*, I have undertaken an independent performance audit in the Department of Social Services. The report is titled *Department of Social Services' Management of the National Redress Scheme*. I present the report of this audit to the Parliament.

Following its presentation and receipt, the report will be placed on the Australian National Audit Office's website — <http://www.anao.gov.au>.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Caralee', is positioned below the 'Yours sincerely' text.

Dr Caralee McLiesh PSM
Auditor-General

The Honourable the President of the Senate
The Honourable the Speaker of the House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT

AUDITING FOR AUSTRALIA

The Auditor-General is head of the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO). The ANAO assists the Auditor-General to carry out their duties under the *Auditor-General Act 1997* to undertake performance audits, financial statement audits and assurance reviews of Commonwealth public sector bodies and to provide independent reports and advice for the Parliament, the Australian Government and the community. The aim is to improve Commonwealth public sector administration and accountability.

For further information contact:

**Australian National Audit Office
GPO Box 707**

Canberra ACT 2601

Phone: (02) 6203 7300

Email: ag1@anao.gov.au

Auditor-General reports and information about the ANAO are available on our website:

<http://www.anao.gov.au>

Audit team

Margaret Murphy

Kim Murray

Jillian Hutchinson

James Carrington

Scott Lang

Jonathan Dong

Li Lin

Dale Todd

Qing Xue

Danielle Page

Joanna Giang

Saxon Dettmann

Alexandra Collins

Corinne Horton

Contents

Summary and recommendations.....	7
Background	7
Conclusion	8
Supporting findings	9
Recommendations	12
Summary of entity response	12
Key messages from this audit for all Australian Government entities	13
Audit findings.....	15
1. Background	16
Introduction	16
Rationale for undertaking the audit	23
Audit approach	24
2. Governance and communications	25
Does the department have fit for purpose oversight arrangements for the Scheme?	26
Is there an appropriate risk management framework for the Scheme?	32
Does the department have an appropriate framework for engaging with stakeholders?	38
3. Processing of applications and funding contributions	46
Does the department have fit-for-purpose arrangements for processing Scheme applications?	47
Does the department have appropriate processes for reviews and complaints of Scheme decisions?	62
Does the department have fit for purpose processes to manage debt recovery for the Scheme?	69
4. Monitoring and reporting of performance and reviews	72
Is appropriate reporting done on the Scheme to monitor progress and outcomes?	73
Is there appropriate monitoring and reporting on the efficiency of the Scheme?	80
Has the department established appropriate arrangements to monitor implementation of review recommendations?	82
Appendices	85
Appendix 1 Entity response	86
Appendix 2 Improvements observed by the ANAO	88
Appendix 3 Overview of Scheme application process stages	89
Appendix 4 Scheme performance measures and targets.....	93



Audit snapshot

Auditor-General Report No.9 2025–26

Department of Social Services' Management of the National Redress Scheme



Why did we do this audit?

- ▶ The National Redress Scheme (the Scheme) provides support to people who experienced institutional child sexual abuse in Australian institutions, and holds institutions accountable for this abuse.
- ▶ This audit provides assurance to Parliament of the effectiveness of the Department of Social Services' (the department) administration of the Scheme.



What did we find?

- ▶ The administration of the National Redress Scheme is partly effective.
- ▶ The department's governance arrangements for the Scheme are largely effective.
- ▶ The department's processes to administer the Scheme were partly effective.
- ▶ The department's arrangements to monitor and report on the efficiency and effectiveness of the Scheme were partly appropriate.



Key facts

- ▶ The Scheme started on 1 July 2018 and ends on 30 June 2028.
- ▶ The total budget for the life of the Scheme was over \$5 billion as at July 2025.
- ▶ There were 63,995 applications to the Scheme, as at 4 July 2025.
- ▶ Non-government Participating Institutions are liable for the costs of providing redress.



What did we recommend?

- ▶ There were five recommendations to the department, concerning communication with stakeholders, quality assurance of application decisions, oversight of service delivery from Services Australia, establishing efficiency indicators and monitoring of review recommendations.
- ▶ The Department of Social Services agreed to all recommendations.

\$1.7bn

had been paid to survivors, as at 4 July 2025.

60%

of total applications were awaiting an outcome, as at 4 July 2025.

16.3 months

is the average time to complete processing an application, as at 30 June 2025.

Summary and recommendations

Background

1. The Australian Government established the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse (the Scheme) in response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (the Royal Commission).¹ The Scheme acknowledges that, ‘many children were sexually abused in Australian institutions and seeks to hold institutions to account for this abuse and help people who have experienced abuse gain access to redress.’²
2. Redress under the Scheme consists of:³
 - a monetary payment of up to \$150,000 to survivors, as a tangible means of recognising the wrong survivors have suffered; and
 - a counselling and psychological component which, depending on where the survivor lives, consists of access to counselling and psychological services or a monetary payment up to \$5,000; and
 - a direct personal response to survivors from the Participating Institutions and partly Participating Institutions⁴ responsible.
3. The Scheme started on the 1 July 2018 and operates under the *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018* (the Act) with a legislated term of ten years.
4. The main objectives of the Act are to:⁵
 - to recognise and alleviate the impact of past institutional child sexual abuse and related abuse; and
 - to provide justice for the survivors of that abuse.
5. The Department of Social Services (the department) is responsible for the delivery of the Scheme.

1 Recommendation 26 of the *Redress and Civil Litigation report*, released by the Royal Commission in September 2015, was to ‘establish a single national redress scheme’ that would enable the Australian Government to provide the ‘most effective structure for ensuring justice’ for the survivors of institutions abuse. <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/redress-and-civil-litigation> [accessed 19 May 2025.]

2 Department of Social Services, Department of Social Services Annual Report 2019–20, Canberra, 2020, available from <https://www.transparency.gov.au/publications/social-services/departments-of-social-services/departments-of-social-services-annual-report-2019-20> [accessed 19 June 2024].

3 *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018*, subsection 3(2)(b).

4 Where an institution does not meet the requirements and is unable to join the Scheme, the department investigates the possibility of ‘partly participating’ status through Funder of Last Resort arrangements. ‘Funder of last resort’ is an arrangement where a participating government institution or participating jurisdiction has agreed to pay the redress component for a specific non-government institution that is defunct or unable to join the Scheme.

5 *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018*, subsection 3(1).

Rationale for undertaking the audit

6. The National Redress Scheme is intended to ensure that, where there is a ‘reasonable likelihood’ that a person is eligible for redress⁶, they receive an offer of redress. As at 4 July 2025, there had been 63,995 applications and approximately \$1.7 billion dollars paid to applicants. The estimated funding profile for the life of the Scheme was over \$5.7 billion as at July 2025, including special appropriations. Non-government Participating Institutions are liable for the costs of providing redress.

7. There has been public and parliamentary interest in the implementation of the Scheme. The Scheme has been subject to Parliamentary inquiries and external reviews. Joint parliamentary committees on the National Redress Scheme have released four reports containing 93 recommendations. This performance audit was conducted to provide assurance to Parliament that the Scheme is being administered effectively.

Audit objective and criteria

8. The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of the department’s administration of the Scheme.

9. To form a conclusion against the audit objective, the following high-level criteria were adopted:

- Has the department established effective governance arrangements for the Scheme?
- Does the department have effective processes to administer the Scheme?
- Has the department established appropriate arrangements to monitor and report on the efficiency and effectiveness of the Scheme?

Conclusion

10. The Department of Social Services’ (the department) administration of the National Redress Scheme (the Scheme) was partly effective. The administration of the Scheme has matured since its inception with largely effective arrangements for Scheme governance. Effectiveness of the department’s administration can be improved through stronger planning, more timely processing of applications, enhanced reporting, and coordinated evaluation of engagement activities. With 60 per cent of applications awaiting an outcome as at 4 July 2025, improving service delivery, stakeholder communication and processing efficiency is needed to ensure the department can manage the legislated end of the scheme in 2028.

11. The department had largely effective governance arrangements for the National Redress Scheme including oversight committees and a service arrangement with Services Australia. Governance arrangements have matured since its establishment. There were risk management arrangements from the start of the Scheme, with a high rated risk about finalising applications by 2028 not escalated as required and treatments delayed. A Shared Risk Management Plan was established with Services Australia in 2024. Strategic planning was inconsistent, with annual business plans not considered until 2023 and end-of-Scheme planning initiated in mid-2025.

⁶ The *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018*, section 6, defines ‘reasonable likelihood’ in relation to a person being eligible for redress, to mean ‘the chance of the person being eligible is real, is not fanciful or remote and is more than merely plausible.’

There has been no detailed communication planning for the end of the Scheme. Of the 15 communications strategies, plans and frameworks, 10 had not been evaluated and there was a lack of overall coordination. By June 2025, the Scheme had engaged with 63,738 applicants and 911 institutions. The lack of comprehensive communications evaluation and shared risks reporting limited the department's ability to identify and act on opportunities to improve Scheme performance.

12. The department had partly effective processes to administer the Scheme. The department had policies and procedures that reflected the requirements as set out in the *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018* and guided staff in processing applications and invoices. Data and reporting practices lacked consistency over the life of the Scheme, including on complaints and institutional onboarding. An Independent Decision-making Quality Framework, established in 2021 to ensure consistency of decision-making, was not implemented as intended. From 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2025, 63,738 applications were received, with 33 per cent completed and an average processing time of 16.3 months. To meet the Scheme's sunset date and deliver outcomes to all applicants, the department will need to accelerate application processing and institutional onboarding, operationalise decision-making quality mechanisms, standardise reporting to improve visibility of complaints and revocations, and leverage insights to support continuous improvement.

13. The department had partly appropriate arrangements to monitor and report on the efficiency and effectiveness of the National Redress Scheme. Performance measures were publicly reported annually, and internal reports on operational statistics were established. The measures lacked comprehensive tracking of application processing, progress and efficiency. No departmental oversight existed for Services Australia's delivery against service levels, limiting insight into effectiveness. Since 2018, six reviews made 142 recommendations, with 76 per cent agreed to by the government and 88 per cent of those were implemented by June 2025. Monitoring and reporting limitations constrained the department's ability to assess the Scheme's efficiency and achievement of intended outcomes.

Supporting findings

Governance and communications

14. The department established delegations, and committees to oversee the implementation and operation of the Scheme from 2018. In 2024 the department identified deficiencies in the operations of the committees which had appeared over time and made changes to the committee structure and their roles and responsibilities. The committees operating as at May 2025 were performing their oversight functions in accordance with their terms of reference. The first National Redress Scheme Service Arrangement between the department and Services Australia was signed in June 2021, three years after the Scheme commenced. The 2024 Service Arrangement enabled the delivery of the Scheme through the specification of services and service levels. A Redress Group Business Plan was developed in each year of the Scheme. The plan was not considered by the department until 2023, five years after the start of the Scheme. The department started establishing additional functions for managing end-of-Scheme planning in mid-2025. (See paragraphs 2.4 to 2.23)

15. The department had risk management frameworks from the Scheme's outset, including a Redress Group Risk Management Plan. A high-rated risk of not finalising applications by 30 June 2028 was not reported to the Secretary, and delayed treatments had not been assessed by July 2025. A Shared Risk Management Plan with Services Australia was introduced in late 2024, with the first quarterly review taking place in January 2025. Fraud-related risks were inconsistently identified between the Redress Group Risk Management Plan and the National Redress Scheme Fraud Risk Assessment, indicating a misalignment in risk oversight across these documents. (See paragraphs 2.24 to 2.47)

16. The department established a Communications Strategy for the Scheme in 2018 and a Communications Framework in 2024. Between 2017 and 2024 there were fifteen strategies and plans for communicating with specific stakeholder groups. The relationship between the documents was not documented and there was no evaluation for 10 of the strategies, plans and frameworks. The trauma-informed approach detailed in the 2018 communications strategy was not implemented. A trauma-informed advisor for communications was available since 2021 and a trauma-informed framework was implemented in 2024. Documented guidance and processes for communication with potential institutions was established in 2023, and there has been no evaluation of the onboarding process for institutions. There was no detailed planning for communications about the end of the Scheme, or risk treatments identified. (See paragraphs 2.48 to 2.79)

Processing of applications and funding contributions

17. The department had frameworks, policies and procedures to guide staff in the processing of applications and determining eligibility and outcomes for redress. No targets were established for timely processing of applications to an outcome, or for onboarding of institutions. The average processing time to complete an application was 16.3 months, and 10.4 months to declare a non-government institution. A conflict-of-interest strategy and a fraud management framework for the National Redress Scheme was implemented. The Scheme's 2018 fraud control plan was not reviewed and updated until 2025, despite changes to roles, responsibilities and risks. An Independent Decision-making Quality Framework was established in 2021. The Framework was not reviewed annually as required, and the intended sampling to review decision making by Independent Decision Makers to ensure consistency was not done. (See paragraphs 3.3 to 3.58)

18. The *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018* and the department's Internal Assessment Guide establishes the framework for Scheme determination revocations and reviews. The department's Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures and Scheme Complaints Management Framework establishes the framework for managing complaints. Review outcomes were regularly reported to the Group Executive. Data and reporting on complaints changed over time, with no standard procedures to ensure it was capturing consistent and complete complaint themes and extension data since the start of the Scheme, limiting the information available to the department to inform continuous improvement. Since 2019–20, 436 revocations had been considered of which 57 per cent were granted. Over the life of the Scheme the department received 1,111 requests for review (two per cent of total Scheme applications) of which 77 per cent confirmed the original decision. The average processing time for a review was 3.5 months. Between July 2022 and November 2024, there were

1,062 complaints received, of which 22 per cent were outside the department's requirement for an outcome within 28 days. (See paragraphs 3.59 to 3.86)

19. The *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018* and the department's Accounts Receivable, Debt Management and Recovery Policy established a framework for Scheme debt recovery. There have been invoicing processes since 2020. Invoice reconciliation did not commence until 2024. Debt management reporting to the department did not support evaluation of cost recovery performance. As at 30 June 2025, \$1.78 billion had been invoiced for the Scheme, of which 92 per cent had been recovered from Participating Institutions. (See paragraphs 3.87 to 3.100)

Monitoring and reporting of performance and reviews

20. The department included reporting on the Scheme in its corporate plans and annual reports since 2018–19, using the same performance measures since 2022–23. The performance measures did not monitor application processing times for the Scheme from start to finish, and did not reflect the progress of applications to the Scheme. The department established internal reports for the Group Executive that provided statistics on applications to the Scheme. The internal reports did not record the methodology and how it changed over time. There was no reporting process or established governance arrangement within the department that enabled oversight of performance for the Scheme's services against the agreed service levels with Services Australia. (See paragraphs 4.5 to 4.25)

21. The department had not developed efficiency measures for the Scheme. A proxy measure for efficiency of processing applications was established in 2020 that focused on the timeliness of decision making, not the complete application processing period. There was no measure to assess efficiency or effectiveness of the cost recovery process. The department reported that it met its proxy efficiency measure for application processing every year except 2020–21 and 2023–24. (See paragraphs 4.26 to 4.35)

22. There were six reports from reviews or enquiries into the Scheme since 2018, with a total of 142 recommendations. The Australian government agreed (in full or in part) to 76 per cent of the recommendations from the first five reports. There have been periodic progress reports on agreed review recommendations. The department does not have a combined and comprehensive reporting framework for monitoring the implementation of all agreed recommendations. The department advised the Group Executive that 88 per cent of the agreed recommendations had been completed. (See paragraphs 4.36 to 4.43)

Recommendations

Recommendation no. 1 The Department of Social Services evaluate the Scheme's communication frameworks, strategies and plans, and review and update its communications framework to:

Paragraph 2.75

- (a) reflect the learnings from evaluations of all previous communication strategies and plans;
- (b) identify communication risks and relate them to the Group's risk management documents;
- (c) include a plan for timely and consistent messaging about the end of the Scheme to stakeholders; and
- (d) ensure coordination of communication activities across stakeholder groups, through to the end of the Scheme.

Department of Social Services response: *Agreed.*

Recommendation no. 2 The Department of Social Services review and implement the Scheme's Independent Decision-making Quality Framework.

Paragraph 3.47

Department of Social Services response: *Agreed.*

Recommendation no. 3 The Department of Social Services establish reporting and governance arrangements with Services Australia that provide whole-of-arrangement oversight of service delivery for the Scheme.

Paragraph 4.23

Department of Social Services response: *Agreed.*

Recommendation no. 4 The Department of Social Services establish efficiency indicators for the Scheme that enable monitoring and oversight of the efficiency of processing applications and debt recovery activities, and report results publicly.

Paragraph 4.32

Department of Social Services response: *Agreed.*

Recommendation no. 5 The Department of Social Services develop a framework for reporting on all review and inquiry reports about the Scheme. This framework should include:

Paragraph 4.41

- (a) a documented process for monitoring, reviewing and closing all report recommendations, and
- (b) a plan for evaluating how the implementation of recommendations has resulted in continuous improvement.

Department of Social Services response: *Agreed.*

Summary of entity response

23. The proposed audit report was provided to the department. The department's summary response is reproduced below, and its full response in in Appendix 1. Improvements observed by the ANAO during the course of this audit are listed in Appendix 2.

The Department of Social Services (the department) acknowledges the insights and opportunities for improvement outlined in the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) report on the Department of Social Services' management of the National Redress Scheme (the Scheme).

The department welcomes the audit findings, agrees with the five recommendations and has commenced action to address these matters.

The department acknowledges the ANAO's conclusion the administration of the Scheme was partly effective. The department is committed to the effective administration of the Scheme to ensure applicants receive their redress outcome in a timely manner. The department continues to focus on maturing Scheme governance and has already commenced a range of improvement activities aimed at:

- increasing application throughput and service improvements, recognising a large number of applications to the Scheme
- improving the quality of information received in applications to reduce the need for repeated contact and make it easier to finalise applications
- strengthening the governance and daily operations of the Scheme to enable greater accountability of enabling services and supports including reporting in complaint data
- developing internal application processing key performance indicators and setting monthly and annual targets for the 2025-26 financial year
- developing and implementing a formalised quality framework for Independent Decision Makers (IDMs).

Key messages from this audit for all Australian Government entities

24. Below is a summary of key messages, including instances of good practice, which have been identified in this audit and may be relevant for the operations of other Australian Government entities.

Program implementation

- To support program implementation and ongoing compliance with requirements, high-quality policy and guidance documentation for actions required to deliver a program should be in place at the start of the program. Periodic review of the documentation, with clear version control, helps maintain its fitness for purpose.

Performance and impact measurement

- To inform decision making on effective delivery of a program, and its continuous improvement, actions required to deliver the program should be regularly measured and evaluated from the start of the program.
- To optimise performance and improve outcomes entities should measure the efficiency of all aspects of program delivery, in terms of the resources consumed to produce outputs as well as the time taken.

Audit findings

1. Background

Introduction

1.1 The Australian Government established the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse (the Scheme) in response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (the Royal Commission).⁷ The Scheme started on 1 July 2018 and operates under the *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018* (the Act) with a legislated term of ten years.

1.2 The main objectives of the Act are to:⁸

- to recognise and alleviate the impact of past institutional child sexual abuse and related abuse; and
- to provide justice for the survivors of that abuse.

1.3 The Act states that the objectives are achieved by providing redress to survivors and ‘enabling institutions responsible for abuse of survivors to participate in the Scheme to provide redress to those survivors.’⁹

1.4 Redress under the Scheme consists of:¹⁰

- a monetary payment to survivors as a tangible means of recognising the wrong survivors have suffered; and
- a counselling and psychological component which, depending on where the survivor lives, consists of access to counselling and psychological services or a monetary payment; and
- a direct personal response to survivors from the Participating Institutions and partly Participating Institutions.¹¹

1.5 An applicant is eligible to receive redress if they:

- are an Australian citizen or permanent resident¹²;
- were born before 30 June 2010; and

7 Recommendation 26 of the Redress and Civil Litigation report, released by the Royal Commission in September 2015, was to ‘establish a single national redress scheme’ that would enable the Australian Government to provide the ‘most effective structure for ensuring justice’ for the survivors of institutions abuse. This report is available from <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/redress-and-civil-litigation> [accessed 19 May 2025].

8 *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018*, subsection 3(1)

9 *ibid.*, subsection 3(2)(c)

10 *ibid.*, subsection 3(2)(b)

11 Where an institution does not meet the requirements and is unable to join the Scheme, the department investigates the possibility of ‘partly participating’ status through Funder of Last Resort arrangements. Funder of last resort’ is an arrangement where a participating government institution or participating jurisdiction has agreed to pay the redress component for a specific non-government institution that is defunct or unable to join the Scheme.

12 From 29 November 2023, the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Rules (2018) were amended to specifically allow certain former child migrants to be eligible to apply for redress, whether or not they were citizens or permanent residents.

- experienced sexual abuse while under 18 years of age, in an Australian institution, on the premises of an institution or where activities of an institution took place, or by an official of an institution.

1.6 The Scheme ends on 30 June 2028.¹³ The Act allows for the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Rules 2018 (the Rules) to extend provisions of the Act, and transitional matters, beyond the Scheme's end.¹⁴ As at July 2025 the Rules did not include matters beyond the Scheme's end. The Department of Social Services (the department) received external advice in October 2024 that any such extensions 'would only operate for one year after the sunset day, i.e. until 30 June 2029.'

1.7 In 2015 the Royal Commission estimated that there were 60,000 eligible survivors who would make a claim for payment under a redress scheme.¹⁵ As at 4 July 2025 the department reported on its website that there had been 63,995 applications under the Scheme, with:

- 22,721 advised a result, of which 19,008 had payments made totalling approximately \$1.7 billion dollars;
- 2,979 withdrawn by the applicant; and
- 38,295 awaiting an outcome, with;
 - 25,602 actionable by the Scheme;
 - 6,144 unable to be actioned as either awaiting additional information or undergoing a special assessment; and¹⁶
 - 6,549 applications 'on hold'.¹⁷

Overview of roles and responsibilities

1.8 Under section 9 of the Act the Scheme Operator is the Secretary of the Department of Social Services. The Scheme Operator was supported by a management structure outlined in Figure 1.1.¹⁸ The Redress Group (the Group) was established in 2019 and was led by a Group Manager

13 *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018*, section 193.

14 *ibid.*

15 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Redress and civil litigation*, Sydney, 2015, p 8.

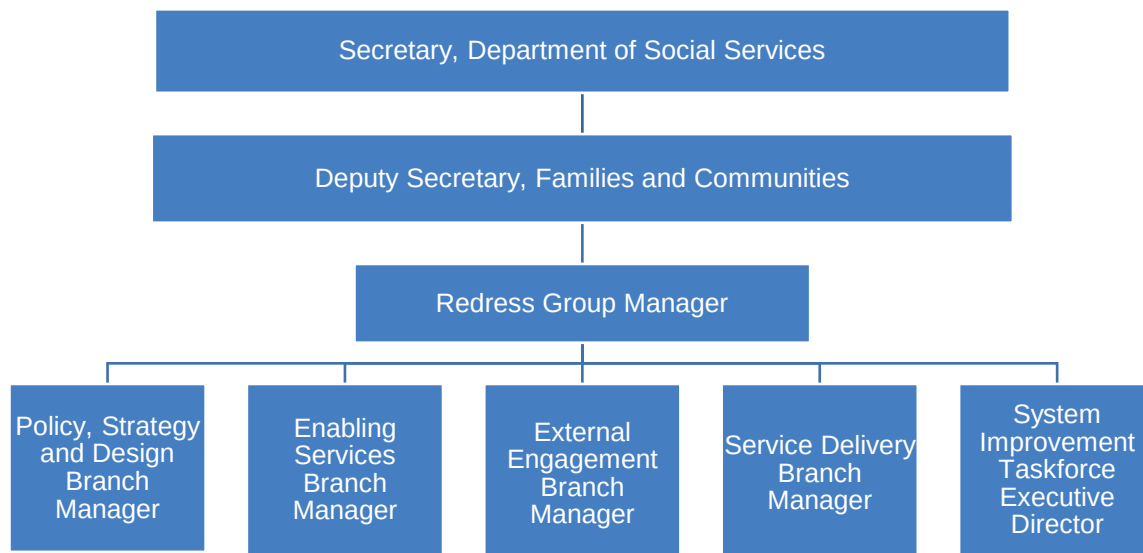
16 Special assessments are required when the applicant has been sentenced to five years or more imprisonment for certain serious offenses. The process is designed to assess whether providing redress to such individuals might negatively impact public confidence in the Scheme.

17 Applications can have an 'on hold' status where the identified Institution is not participating in the Scheme, the Scheme is unable to identify the relevant institution, the applicant has requested the application be put on hold, required documents are missing, the applicant is not contactable, or the applicant is under 18 years of age.

18 Following a functional review (see paragraph 2.23) a new Group structure came into effect on 21 July 2025. From that date the Redress Group consisted of three branches: Operations and Outcomes, Integrity and Information, and Policy, Institutions and Governance.

(Senior Executive Service Band 2) who is the Redress Scheme Responsible Officer.¹⁹ As at 30 June 2025 there were 707 staff in the Redress Group.²⁰

Figure 1.1: The management structure for the Scheme as at June 2025



Source: ANAO analysis of annual organisational structures for the department.

1.9 The Scheme Operator has delegated the power to make determinations under the Act to Independent Decision Makers (IDMs).²¹ As at 30 June 2025 there were 65 IDMs engaged by the department.

1.10 At the start of the Scheme, the Department of Human Services (now Services Australia) provided services to the Scheme, including managing enquiries from survivors, assessing applications, notifying applicants of outcomes and delivering redress payments to applicants.

1.11 On 5 December 2019 the Prime Minister announced changes to the Social Services portfolio. This Machinery of Government moved Redress Scheme services in the Department of Human Services (now Services Australia) into the Department of Social Services' Redress Group on 4 February 2020. From that date Services Australia's role was to provide enabling services to the Scheme, such as ICT, identity management and delivering redress payments to applicants.

Application process

1.12 The Act (subsection 19(1)) specifies that 'to obtain redress under the scheme, a person must make an application to the Operator.' The department established an application process for the Scheme to enable the consideration of each application and reach a determination in line with the Act (section 29). Applications to the Scheme were processed using a model where tasks and

19 Prior to the establishment of the Redress Group on the 1 July 2019, the Scheme Operator was supported by the Families and Communities Reform Group (1 January 2018 to 11 September 2018) and the Redress and Reform Group (12 September 2018 to 30 June 2019).

20 The 707 total staff is headcount of all Australian Public Service and contract staff (including Independent Decision Makers) in the Redress Group as at 30 June 2025.

21 As provided for in the *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018* (subsections 185(1) and (3)).

responsibilities were organised by specific functions or activities. The model did not take an end-to-end case management approach.

1.13 The department's application management process comprised of six processing stages, summarised in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Redress Scheme application stages

Processing stage	Overview
Pre-application support	Responding to enquiries from potential applicants
Application validation	Acknowledgement and identity check Validity check ^a Identify any need for supplementary processes Prioritisation ^b Completeness of information Identify the relevant institution(s) ^c
Requests for information	Request the Participating Institution(s) provide information relevant to the application. Processes response(s)
Review application	Review the application, supporting documentation, and institution response(s) for completeness
Decision	Application assigned to an Independent Decision Maker (IDM) ^d Assessment of application Determination(s) made and summarised in a 'statement of reasons' ^e
Outcome	Applicant and Participating Institution notified of outcome Processes applicant's response

Note a: Validity against the criteria set out in subsection 19(2) of the Act.

Note b: See paragraphs 3.8 to 3.11.

Note c: See paragraphs 3.16 to 3.23.

Note d: See paragraphs 3.38 to 3.41.

Note e: The department calls the decision summary the 'Statement of Reasons'.

Source: The Department of Social Service's Redress Hub, Maps and Resources Suite (MaRS), accessed 30 January 2025.

1.14 Appendix 3 provides further details of the activities within each stage. Supplementary processes exist for non-standard applications such as:

- a special assessment process for applicants who are imprisoned for five years or more for unlawful killing, sexual offences, terrorism offences, or were a risk to the integrity of the Scheme;
- where an applicant is eligible for an advance payment; and/or referrals are required to assess and manage any risk to the applicant.

Participating Institutions

1.15 Institutions with a history of interacting with children are encouraged to join the Scheme and become Participating Institutions. This enables Participating Institutions determined to be responsible for abuse of survivors to provide redress to those survivors, in line with the Act.

1.16 All Australian Government institutions are Participating Institutions. State, Territory and non-government institutions are Participating Institutions if they agree to participate in the Scheme and the Minister for Social Services makes a declaration that they are a Participating Institution under section 115 of the Act.²²

1.17 The National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Declaration 2018 is a list of all Participating Institutions and is updated when new institutions join, or the status of a Participating Institution changes. As at 30 June 2025 there were 911 Participating Institutions (government and non-government). This covered approximately 70,000 sites across Australia.

1.18 For a non-government institution to join the Scheme, the Minister must be satisfied that the institution is able to meet its obligations under the Scheme. Where an institution does not meet the requirements and is unable to join the Scheme, the department investigates an option of 'partly participating' status and Funder of Last Resort arrangements.²³

1.19 A participating government institution or the Australian, state or territory government can be determined as a Funder of Last Resort for another institution when:

- a government institution was equally responsible for the abuse; or
- a non or partly Participating Institution is primarily responsible for the abuse, and the abuse occurred within a jurisdiction that has agreed to be the funder of last resort.

1.20 An application for redress can proceed to an eligible determination if at least one institution identified in the application is declared to be a Participating Institution. If an application is made where an institution named is not participating in the Scheme, the applicant can either withdraw their application, wait until the institution is participating, or have their application proceed to determination.

Funding arrangements

1.21 The Australian Government covers the up-front costs of redress payments and counselling/psychological services, as well as any administrative costs born through case administration. The Australian Government funds the Scheme through the Department of Social Services' redress appropriations as summarised below.²⁴

- The departmental appropriation is used to fund the administration of the Scheme.
- The annual administered appropriation is used to fund Redress Support Services.
- The special appropriation is used to make Redress payments to eligible applicants. As a special appropriation, the total amount available is not fixed and is adjusted to reflect updated modelling of Scheme demand and payments. Payments are offset by the estimated receipts from institutions and jurisdictions for their contribution to the Scheme.

22 *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018*, section 107.

23 'Funder of last resort' is an arrangement where a participating government institution or participating jurisdiction has agreed to pay the redress component for a specific non-government institution that is defunct or unable to join the Scheme. It is specified in the *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018*, section 162.

24 The Australian Government also funds the Scheme through the Attorney-General's Department with an annual administered appropriation for the Scheme that is used to fund the Knowmore legal service.

1.22 The initial funding profile for the department over the life of the Scheme (from 2017–18²⁵ to 2027–28) was approximately \$3 billion, inclusive of special appropriations. As at July 2025, the total estimated funding profile had increased to \$5.7 billion (see Table 1.2).

Table 1.2: Department of Social Services appropriations for the National Redress Scheme

Financial year	Departmental appropriation (\$'000) ^b	Annual administered appropriation (\$'000) ^c	Special appropriation (\$'000) ^d
2017–18	5.989	12.824	–
2018–19	7.386	17.730	19.713
2019–20	19.176	21.994	255.917
2020–21	53.606	24.152	271.101
2021–22	75.896	23.624	289.616
2022–23	81.042	26.372	314.532
2023–24	93.621	28.434	346.525
2024–25	113.780	31.058	287.654
2025–26 ^a	135.103	50.694	700.274
2026–27 ^a	16.272	35.986	768.015
2027–28 ^a	15.606	5.200	737.626
2028–29 ^a	–	–	506.98
2029–30 ^a	–	–	286.049
Total of actual and forward estimates	485.334	252.285	5022.182

Note a: Forward estimate.

Note b: The Departmental Appropriation for the department is used to fund the administration of the Scheme. Government consideration of any additional departmental appropriation each year is informed by the Australian Government Actuaries' projections of applications to be received by the Scheme.

Note c: The Annual Administered Appropriation for the department is used to fund Redress Support Services.

Note d: The Special Appropriation for the department is used to make Redress payments to eligible applicants. As a Special Appropriation, the total amount available is not fixed and is adjusted to reflect updated modelling of Scheme demand and payments. Payments are offset by the estimated receipts from institutions and jurisdictions for their contribution to the Scheme.

Source: Department of Social Services data.

1.23 The Act states that:²⁶

Participating institutions that are determined by the Operator to be responsible for the abuse of a person are liable for the costs of providing redress to the person. Those institutions are liable for contributing to the costs of the administration of the scheme.

1.24 The Operator is responsible for recovering those costs from Participating Institutions on a quarterly basis (see paragraphs 3.87 to 3.98).

²⁵ The funding profile for 2017–18 was for Scheme establishment costs.

²⁶ *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018*, section 4.

Legislative framework

1.25 The *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018* (the Act) establishes the Scheme and sets out the principles under which the Scheme will operate, including:

- eligibility requirements for survivors and Participating Institutions, groups and jurisdictions;
- processes for application assessment, offer and acceptance;
- reviews of determination;
- provision of redress;
- liability for funding; and
- reviews of the Scheme.

1.26 The Act is supported by three legislative instruments and two sets of guidelines.

- National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Rules 2018 (the Rules).
- National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Assessment Framework 2018 (the Assessment Framework).
- National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Assessment Framework Policy Guidelines (the Assessment Framework Policy Guidelines).
- National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Declaration 2018.
- National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Direct Personal Response Framework 2018.²⁷

1.27 The Rules are made by the Minister for Social Services under section 179 of the Act. They provide for matters including an institution, group or jurisdiction ceasing to participate in the Scheme, and overriding any provisions of settlement agreements or deeds that relate to confidentiality or would inhibit access to, or the operation of, the Scheme.

1.28 The Assessment Framework was established by Ministerial declaration on 29 June 2018 under section 32 of the Act. The Assessment Framework sets out the method of working out the amount of a redress payment and the counselling component of redress.

1.29 The Assessment Framework Policy Guidelines were established by the Minister for Social Services on 22 October 2019 under section 33 of the Act. The Assessment Framework Policy Guidelines are to assist decision makers in applying the Framework and are not a legislative instrument.

1.30 The Act was amended in 2021 to:

- add the option of advance payments, at the discretion of the Scheme Operator;
- modify the method of indexation of relevant prior payments;
- extend review and acceptance periods;
- remove the statutory declaration requirement for applications;
- enable payment by instalments;

27 The Direct Personal Response component of redress was not within the scope of this audit.

- clarify the arrangements for funders of last resort; and
- enable the Operator to publicly disclose that an institution is not participating in the Scheme.

1.31 The Act was further amended in 2024 to:

- enable reviews of determinations to consider additional information;
- remove the restriction on people making an application for redress from gaol;
- change the process for people with serious criminal convictions applying for redress;
- provide additional authorisations for the disclosure of protected information;
- align funder of last resort rounding provisions; and
- allow finalised applications for redress to be reassessed where an institution identified in the application has subsequently joined the Scheme or been listed under funder of last resort arrangements.

1.32 The Act states that the total amount of a redress payment may not be greater than \$150,000 ‘regardless of the number of responsible institutions’ and that costs of counselling and psychological services provided must not be more than \$5,000. Section 30 of the Act provides instructions for the Independent Decision Maker (IDM) in determining how much to award an applicant deemed eligible for redress; section 31 does the same for counselling and psychological services.

Rationale for undertaking the audit

1.33 The National Redress Scheme is intended to ensure that, where there is a ‘reasonable likelihood’ that a person is eligible for redress, they receive an offer of redress.²⁸ As at the 4 July 2025, there had been 63,995 applications and approximately \$1.7 billion dollars had been paid to applicants. The estimated funding profile for the life of the Scheme was \$5.7 billion as at July 2025, including special appropriations.

1.34 There has been public and parliamentary interest in the implementation of the Scheme, and the Scheme has been subject to Parliamentary inquiries and external reviews. Joint parliamentary committees on the National Redress Scheme have released four reports containing 93 recommendations.²⁹ This performance audit was conducted to provide assurance to Parliament that the Scheme is being administered effectively.

28 The *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018*, section 6, defines ‘reasonable likelihood’ in relation to a person being eligible for redress, to mean ‘the chance of the person being eligible is real, is not fanciful or remote and is more than merely plausible.’

29 There have been three Joint committees on the National Redress Scheme. These are: the Joint Select Committee on Oversight of the Implementation of Redress related recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse; the Joint Select Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme; and the Joint Standing Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme.

Audit approach

Audit objective, criteria and scope

1.35 The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of the Department of Social Services' (the department) administration of the National Redress Scheme (the Scheme).

1.36 To form a conclusion against this objective, the following high-level criteria were adopted.

- Has the department established effective governance arrangements for the Scheme?
- Does the department have effective processes to administer the Scheme?
- Has the department established appropriate arrangements to monitor and report on the Scheme?

1.37 The ANAO focused on the department's management of the Scheme in 2023–24 and 2024–25. The audit did not:

- test the content or consistency of communications with potential applicants or potential institutions;
- test or re-perform determinations made by Independent Decisions Makers;
- test the implementation status of review or enquiry recommendations about the Scheme;
- examine the actions of any committee reporting to the Minister of Social Services;
- examine the processes associated with Redress Support Services, Direct Personal Responses or counselling support for applicants; or
- examine the ICT systems.

Audit methodology

1.38 The audit methodology included:

- review of department data, documentation, procedures and training materials;
- walkthroughs of department systems and processes;
- a site visit to the department's offices where the Scheme is managed, in Tuggeranong, ACT;
- review of 25 contributions from the public, made to the audit via email or post; and
- meetings with departmental staff.

1.39 The audit was conducted in accordance with ANAO Auditing Standards at a cost to the ANAO of approximately \$873,656.

1.40 The team members for this audit were Margaret Murphy, Kim Murray, Jillian Hutchinson, James Carrington, Scott Lang, Jonathan Dong, Li Lin, Dale Todd, Qing Xue, Danielle Page, Joanna Giang, Saxon Dettmann, Alexandra Collins and Corinne Horton.

2. Governance and communications

Areas examined

This chapter examines whether the Department of Social Services (the department) has developed and implemented effective governance arrangements for the National Redress Scheme (the Scheme).

Conclusion

The department had largely effective governance arrangements for the National Redress Scheme including oversight committees and a service arrangement with Services Australia. Governance arrangements have matured since its establishment. There were risk management arrangements from the start of the Scheme, with a high rated risk about finalising applications by 2028 not escalated as required and treatments delayed. A Shared Risk Management Plan was established with Services Australia in 2024. Strategic planning was inconsistent, with annual business plans not considered until 2023 and end-of-Scheme planning initiated in mid-2025. There has been no detailed communication planning for the end of the Scheme. Of the 15 communications strategies, plans and frameworks, 10 had not been evaluated and there was a lack of overall coordination. By June 2025, the Scheme had engaged with 63,738 applicants and 911 institutions. The lack of comprehensive communications evaluation and shared risks reporting limited the department's ability to identify and act on opportunities to improve Scheme performance.

Areas for improvement

The ANAO made one recommendation aimed at ensuring effectiveness and coordination of Scheme communication activities.

The ANAO identified one opportunity for improvement, that the department review and update its Redress Group Risk Management Plan and the National Redress Scheme Fraud Risk Assessment.

2.1 The objective of the *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018* (the Act) is to provide redress to survivors and enable institutions responsible for abuse of survivors to participate in providing redress to those survivors (see paragraph 1.2). The Act establishes a ten-year window for this to occur (1 July 2018 to 30 June 2028).

2.2 Under sections 15 and 16 of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act), the accountable authority of an entity has a duty to establish and maintain an appropriate system of internal controls for the entity, including the oversight and management of risk.

2.3 The Secretary, as the accountable authority for the department and the Scheme Operator, is required to comply with the Scheme's enabling legislation (the Act), and its legislative instruments. The implementation and operation of the Scheme requires appropriate governance arrangements, including frameworks for managing oversight, risk and engagement with potential stakeholders.

Does the department have fit for purpose oversight arrangements for the Scheme?

The department established delegations, and committees to oversee the implementation and operation of the Scheme from 2018. In 2024 the department identified deficiencies in the operations of the committees which had appeared over time and made changes to the committee structure and their roles and responsibilities. The committees operating as at May 2025 were performing their oversight functions in accordance with their terms of reference. The first National Redress Scheme Service Arrangement between the department and Services Australia was signed in June 2021, three years after the Scheme commenced. The 2024 Service Arrangement enabled the delivery of the Scheme through the specification of services and service levels. A Redress Group Business Plan was developed in each year of the Scheme. The plan was not considered by the department until 2023, five years after the start of the Scheme. The department started establishing additional functions for managing end-of-Scheme planning in mid-2025.

Delegations

2.4 The Act establishes the decision-making authority of the Minister for Social Services and Scheme Operator, which are delegated through legislative instruments. Both sets of delegations detail the Scheme power or function being delegated and to which position(s).

2.5 The Minister for Social Services delegated powers and functions under the Act to the Scheme Operator or a Senior Executive Service (SES) Band 3 position in the department. This included power to declare institutional status in relation to the Scheme, and to revoke declarations where required. The Minister's delegations under the Act commenced on 29 June 2018 and were last updated in 2023.

2.6 The Scheme Operator delegated powers and functions under the Act to a range of roles within the department, including the power to make determinations on applications for redress to Independent Decision Makers (IDMs)³⁰. The Operator's delegations under the Act commenced on 29 June 2018 and were last updated in 2025.

2.7 The delegations for the Scheme are available to department staff on the department's staff intranet. Staff are advised by email when delegations change.

Oversight committees

2.8 Since the start of the Scheme in 2018 the department had a series of committees with responsibility to oversee the implementation and operation of the Scheme.

2.9 In February 2024 the department initiated an internal governance reform project to consider the impact of the sustained increase in the number of applications received and the implementation of recommendations from the Second Year Review.³¹ The project explored matters

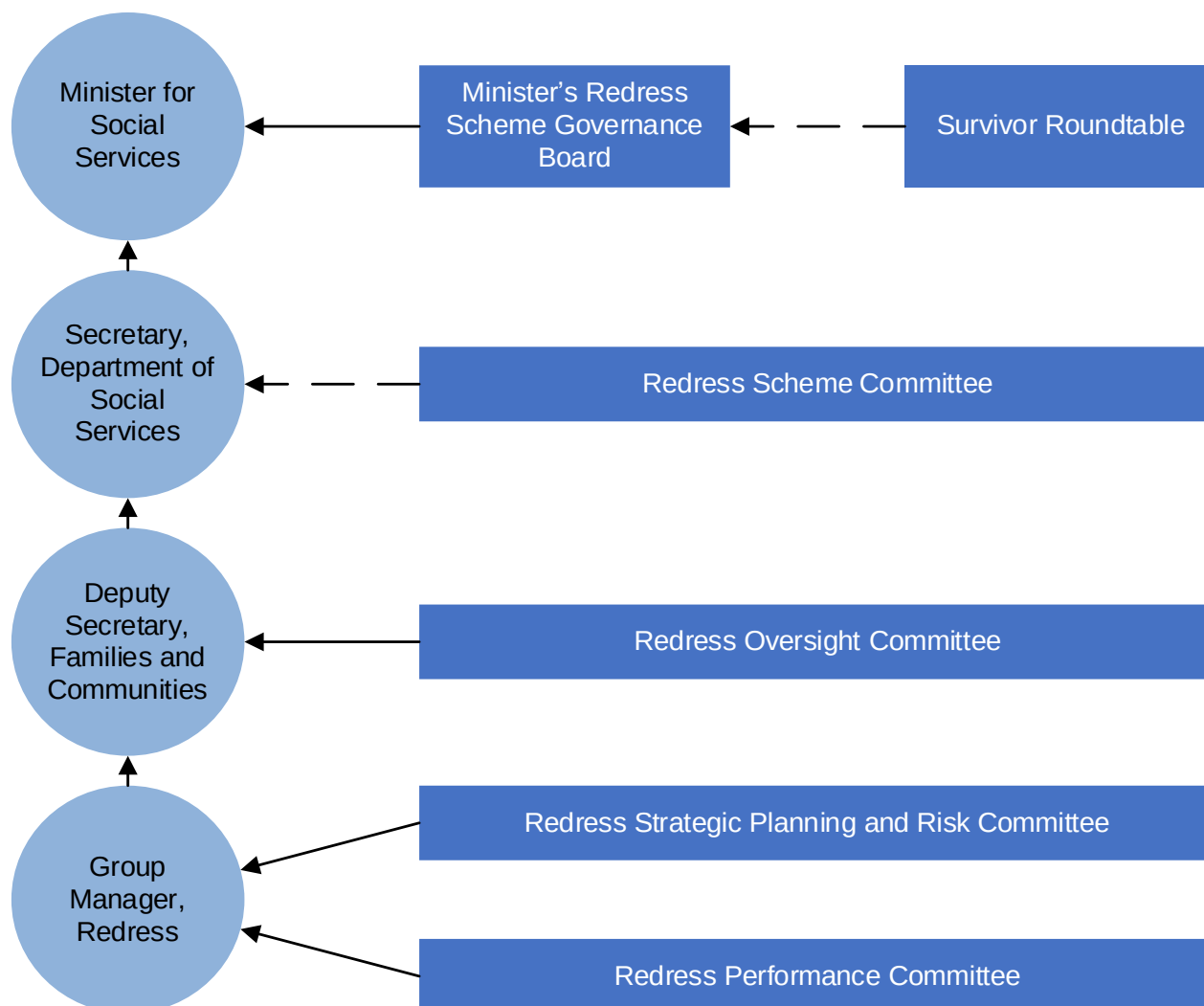
30 Independent Decision Makers (IDMs) are contractors engaged by the department, under a commercial labour hire agreement, to make determinations on applications under the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018 (subsections 185(1) and (3)).

31 Department of Social Services, Robyn Kruk, *Final Report: Second year review of the National Redress Scheme*, 26 March 2021, Contract Notice Number CN3690269.

such as meeting cycles with sufficient opportunity for consultation on impact and risk, ensuring a common understanding about the purpose and accountability of each governance body, and greater focus on data to inform strategic decisions. The project resulted in the closure of some existing oversight committees and established two new oversight committees.

2.10 Figure 2.1 summarises the Scheme's governance and management structure as at May 2025, and Table 2.1 outlines the oversight role and membership of each of these governance committees.

Figure 2.1: Scheme governance and management structure as at May 2025^a



Key: Dotted connector = advisory or consultative committee.

Solid connector = decision-making committee.

Note a: The graphic does not include sub-committees, networks or other management groups.

Source: ANAO analysis.

Table 2.1: Scheme governance committees as at May 2025

Terms of Reference	Role summary	Membership	Frequency
Ministerial Redress Scheme Governance Board — started in July 2018, ongoing as at May 2025			
Part of the Intergovernmental Agreement (2018 and 2023) ^a	Decision making — role is to assist the Minister of Social Services in the efficient and effective performance of the Scheme. The Board must agree to any legislative or key policy changes required over time, including proposed amendments to the Rules.	Chaired by the Minister for Social Services. Membership comprised of relevant ministers from participating States and Territories.	Twice a year
Survivor Roundtable — started in November 2018, ongoing as at May 2025			
Part of the Intergovernmental Agreement (2018 and 2023) ^a	Advisory — to advise the Minister and the Ministerial Redress Scheme Governance Board about the performance of the Scheme with respect to the Service Charter and key operational issues affecting the survivor's journey with the Scheme.	Chaired by the Minister for Social Services. Membership varies. Members are selected by the Minister from across Australia and from specific survivor groups.	Annually
Redress Scheme Committee — started in November 2018, ongoing as at May 2025			
Part of the Intergovernmental Agreement (2018 and 2023) ^a	Advisory — to support the Scheme Operator (Secretary of the department).	Chaired by a nominee of the Secretary of the department. Membership comprised of senior officials of all participating governments, non-government institutions with estimated exposure of over \$10 million under the Scheme, and some non-faith based institutions.	Annually
Redress Oversight Board — started in February 2025 and ongoing as at May 2025			
Endorsed by the Redress Oversight Board March 2025	Decision making — role is to provide oversight and direction for the acceleration of timely outcomes delivered by the Scheme.	Chaired by the Deputy Secretary, Families and Communities. Membership consists of the Chief Operating Officer, Chief Counsel and the Group Manager, Redress	Monthly

Terms of Reference	Role summary	Membership	Frequency
Redress Performance Committee — started in June 2024 and ongoing as at May 2025			
Endorsed by the Group Executive 28 May 2024	Decision making — role is to monitor, evaluate and report on operational performance, overseeing operational aspects of the Scheme's people, ICT and change activities.	Chaired by the Group Manager. Membership comprised of Branch Managers.	Monthly
Strategic Planning and Risk Committee — started in June 2024 and ongoing as at May 2025			
Endorsed by the Group Executive Committee 28 May 2024.	Decision making in relation to setting the strategic direction of the Group — role is to determine strategic priorities, internal performance indicators and compliance with risk management instructions.	Chaired by the Group Manager. Membership comprised of Branch Managers.	Monthly

Note a: The Intergovernmental Agreement on the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse is an agreement between the Australian Government and each of the states and territories, signed in 2018 and updated in 2023.

Source: ANAO analysis of terms of reference from the department.

2.11 All the committees as at May 2025 were working to their terms of reference. Each terms of reference detailed the committees' roles in Scheme oversight including functions such as business continuity and improvement planning, performance monitoring, compliance and risk management, and policy development. For example, the Redress Performance Committee discussed performance data, change planning, and identification of risks to program delivery, and the Strategic Planning and Risk Committee discussed the overall strategic direction, business continuity planning and compliance with risk management for the Scheme.

Service arrangements

2.12 As discussed in paragraph 1.10, the Department of Human Services (now Services Australia) provided a range of services to the Scheme from the start of the Scheme in 2018, including the processing of applications. In April 2018 the accountable authorities of the department and Services Australia signed a Statement of Intent, which replaced the 2014 Bilateral Management Arrangement (BMA) head agreement. At the time of signing, planning was underway for the involvement of Services Australia in the delivery of the Scheme. The Statement of Intent did not include the National Redress Scheme and was not updated when the Scheme commenced in July 2018.

2.13 Machinery of Government changes announced on 5 December 2019³² moved the processing of redress applications from Services Australia into the Department of Social Services

32 <https://www.pmc.gov.au/resources/administrative-arrangements-order-5-december-2019> [accessed 4 April 2025]

on 4 February 2020 (see paragraphs 1.10 and 1.11). A Letter of Exchange concerning the transitional arrangements was signed by the Deputy Secretary of the department on the 16 October 2020.

2.14 The first National Redress Scheme Service Arrangement under the BMA was signed on 24 June 2021, three years after the start of the Scheme.³³ The arrangement refers to an Operational Committee that facilitates assessment, review and problem resolution of matters relating to the agreement. The department advised ANAO in January 2025 that the committee ‘was later suggested to be unnecessary and so was never formally established. Instead managing issues relied on officer level relationships, and escalation to Branch Manager level where necessary.’

2.15 In April 2023 the accountable authorities signed a new BMA head agreement, which superseded the 2014 BMA head agreement and 2018 Statement of Intent.³⁴

2.16 On 28 June 2024 a Program Delivery Services Schedule was established for the Scheme under the 2023 BMA head agreement. The schedule specifies a range of services to enable delivery of the Scheme such as information and communication technology services and processing of payments to applicants. The schedule established processes to monitor progress annually and manage issues as they arise (see paragraphs 2.44 to 2.47).

2.17 The schedule states that governance of the services schedule will be conducted through the National Redress Scheme Services Schedule Contact Officer and the Services Schedule Relationship Manager, who ‘will facilitate assessment, review and resolution of any matters relating to this Services Schedule.’ See paragraphs 4.15 to 4.25 for more information about performance reporting between Services Australia and the department.

Business planning

2.18 The department’s business planning process requires the development of group business plans to provide a ‘clear view of our operational landscape, key risks, priorities, outcomes and relevant performance measures.’³⁵ They are to be updated and provided to the department’s Executive Management Group annually.

2.19 With the establishment of the Redress Group in 2019 a group business plan was developed and updated each year. As required by the department, it documented the operational landscape, key priorities and risks, outcomes and performance measures for the Scheme, as well as the Scheme’s governance arrangements and workforce considerations. Since 2023–24 the plan has consisted of a single page, providing a concise representation of the key components of the business plan.

33 The 2021 National Redress Scheme Service Arrangement was signed by the Group Manager, Redress Group in the department, and the Acting General Manager, Customer Design and Older Australians in Services Australia.

34 Auditor-General Report No. 4, 2023–24, *Accuracy and Timeliness of Welfare Payments* the ANAO reported on the department’s attempts to refresh the BMA from 2016 to 2023 and recommended that the departments complete the current bilateral arrangement refresh process by October 2023. Auditor-General Report No. 4, 2023–24, *Accuracy and Timeliness of Welfare Payments*, ANAO, Canberra, 2023, Recommendation no. 1, paragraph 2.10, available from: <https://www.anao.gov.au/work/performance-audit/accuracy-and-timeliness-welfare-payments> [accessed 14 February 2025].

35 DSS staff intranet, Corporate and business plans section.

2.20 The Redress Group Business Plan was not presented to the department's Executive Management Group until January 2023, when the 2022–23 plan was noted. From 2023 onwards the Redress Group Business Plan was summarised, along with others in the Families and Communities Stream, and noted by the Executive Management Group.

End of Scheme planning

2.21 The Act (subsection 192(3)) requires the Minister to conduct a review of the operation of the Scheme as soon as possible after the eighth anniversary of the Scheme start date (1 July 2026). The review must consider the same matters from the second year review, and 'the results of any other review or evaluation conducted in relation to the operation of the scheme.'³⁶ The department advised the ANAO in July 2025 that 'the review is anticipated to consider matters relating to the end of the scheme.'

2.22 The department established a steering committee to plan for the eight anniversary review, consisting of departmental, State and Territory officials. It had its first meeting on 17 March 2025.³⁷ In that meeting the members discussed the development of a topic register to set out key issues that need to be considered in the lead up to the formal review commencing. These issues were classified into three categories:

- how effective has the Scheme been for survivors and what can [the department] improve before Scheme end;
- when and how could the department end the Scheme; and
- beyond the end of the Scheme.

2.23 In February 2025, the department advised the Minister for Social Services that the department had commenced a functional review of the Scheme in January 2025, to further consider a recommendation from a 2024 Independent Review to clarify roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities between the Redress Group and the whole-of-department functions. As a result of the functional review the department implemented a new Group structure on 21 July 2025. The new structure included a new area called 'end of scheme planning'. The department advised the ANAO in July 2025 that this area was created to coordinate end of Scheme planning across the Scheme.

³⁶ *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act*, subsection 192(4).

³⁷ The terms of reference for the eighth anniversary review steering committee stated it would meet every four to six weeks. The inaugural meeting took place on the 17 March 2025 and as at July 2025 it had not met again.

Is there an appropriate risk management framework for the Scheme?

The department had risk management frameworks from the Scheme’s outset, including a Redress Group Risk Management Plan. A high-rated risk of not finalising applications by 30 June 2028 was not reported to the Secretary, and delayed treatments had not been assessed by July 2025. A Shared Risk Management Plan with Services Australia was introduced in late 2024, with the first quarterly review taking place in January 2025. Fraud-related risks were inconsistently identified between the Redress Group Risk Management Plan and the National Redress Scheme Fraud Risk Assessment, indicating a misalignment in risk oversight across these documents.

Departmental risk management

2.24 Expectations for managing risk are set out in the Secretary’s Instructions for the Department of Social Services (July 2023) (Secretary’s Instructions).³⁸ Consistent with the requirements of the Commonwealth Risk Management Policy, the Secretary’s Instructions require the department to have a risk management framework.

2.25 As at January 2025, the department’s risk management framework comprised a departmental Risk Management Policy, Risk Management Procedure and an Issues Management Procedure (all published April 2023).³⁹ The framework outlined the department’s approach to managing risk, its strategic risks, roles and responsibilities for managing risk, and its risk management process.⁴⁰

2.26 Under the department’s Risk Management Policy ‘Senior Executives’ are responsible for identifying, reviewing, monitoring and managing risks within their respective business units. The Redress Group Manager is the Senior Executive responsible for risk management for the Scheme. Table 2.2 sets out the department’s risk escalation process and accountabilities for considering and accepting risks, in line with the department’s Risk Management Procedure.

Table 2.2: Department of Social Services’ risk escalation process accountabilities

Risk rating	Minimum acceptance authority	Management requirements
Extreme	Secretary	Extreme risks must be reported immediately to Secretary by the responsible Deputy Secretary. Weekly review and reporting must be provided to the Deputy Secretary. The Deputy Secretary must provide regular reporting to the Secretary, including through the weekly dot points.

38 The compendium of the Secretary’s Instructions available on the department’s intranet as at February 2025 is dated July 2023. The document incorporates material changes to Part 1 Corporate Governance approved by the Secretary in June 2024. The document does not indicate that there have been any changes by the Secretary to these instructions since July 2023.

39 In February 2025, the department advised the ANAO that the department’s Executive Management Group approved the department’s Risk Management Framework (Risk Management Policy, Risk Management Procedure and Issues Management Procedure) on 19 April 2023. Prior to April 2023, the department’s Risk Management Framework was published as one document.

40 The department has had a documented entity-wide risk management framework since at least 2018.

Risk rating	Minimum acceptance authority	Management requirements
High	Deputy Secretary (SES Band 3)	High risks must be reported to the Deputy Secretary by the responsible Group Manager. The Deputy Secretary must inform the Secretary. Monthly review and reporting on the risk must be provided to Deputy Secretary.
Medium	Group Managers (SES Band 2)	The risk should be reviewed quarterly.
Low	Branch Managers (SES Band 1)	The risk should be reviewed every six months.

Source: ANAO analysis of the department's Risk Management Procedure.

2.27 The department updated its Risk Management Policy and Procedure, along with the Issues Management Procedure, on 23 June 2025.

Redress Group risk management

2.28 The department had Redress Group risk management plans for each year of the Scheme to May 2025. The department's 2024–25 Redress Group Risk Management Plan (the Plan)

- documented the identified risks to the Redress Group's activities,
- listed the controls in to manage each risk,
- assessed the effectiveness of those controls,
- assigned a risk rating to each risk, and
- identified proposed treatments for each risk necessary to achieve a target risk rating.

2.29 The 2024–25 Plan was last updated 13 February 2025. The department advised the ANAO in February 2025 that this plan is the primary document used to document and assess risks to the National Redress Scheme.

2.30 The Plan identifies:

- ten 'standard'⁴¹ risks to the Group's operations;
- three risks specific to the Scheme and
- seven fraud and corruption risks relevant to the Group's activities.

2.31 The three risks specific to the Scheme are summarised in Table 2.3.

41 The plan defines 'standard' risks as typical (business as usual) risks that will impact the achievement of all Groups' objectives.

Table 2.3: Scheme specific risks in the 2024–25 Redress Group Risk Management Plan dated 13 February 2025

Scheme specific risk	Risk level	Risk treatments	Executive acceptance ^a
The Group fails to finalise applications before the Scheme's legislated sunset date of 30 June 2028.	High	Yes	Accepted by the Deputy Secretary 16 July 2024.
Trauma-informed, survivor-focused objectives are not achieved by the Scheme	Medium	Yes	Accepted by the Branch Manager, Policy Strategy and Design, on behalf of the Group Manager, 5 July 2024.
Institutions do not join or remain fully participating in the Scheme	Medium	No	Accepted by the Branch Manager, Policy Strategy and Design on behalf of the Group Manager, 5 July 2024.

Note a: This risk acceptance authority is consistent with the requirement of the department's Risk Management Procedure that a risk rating of 'medium' requires acceptance by the relevant Group Manager (SES Band 2) and a risk rating of 'high' requires acceptance by the Deputy Secretary (SES Band 3).

Source: ANAO analysis.

2.32 The department's Risk Management Procedure requires the responsible Deputy Secretary to advise the Secretary of any risk with a current risk rating of 'high'. The Secretary was not informed about the high risk identified in the Plan (Table 2.3). In February 2025, the department advised the ANAO that it had 'initiated a monthly [report] to the Deputy Secretary providing updates on the High Risks' and that the Deputy Secretary's office would provide a copy of the report to the Secretary for noting.

2.33 For the risk of failing to finalise redress applications before the end of the Scheme the department identified seven 'effective controls' and seven treatments in the Plan to reduce the risk level rating from high to low. (see Table 2.4) The treatment due dates in the plan have been revised over time, as summarised in Table 2.4. As at July 2025, six of the seven treatments had been completed, and treatment implementation had not been reviewed for impact on the risk.

Table 2.4: Controls and treatments for the risk of failing to finalise redress applications before the end of the Scheme

Controls as at February 2025			
• Development and implementation of the Schemes demand driven costing model • Jurisdictional committees and boards • Annual Australian Government Actuary modelling for redress • Redress governance function • Redress risk management process • Redress ICT systems availability • Operational policy • Redress communications framework			
Treatments for controls	Due date as at July 2024	Due date as at February 2025	Status as at July 2025
The work of the Redress systems Improvement Taskforce	30 April 2025	30 April 2025 ^a	Closed, 28 May 2025
Effective workforce planning management, reporting, implement independent review recommendations	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Redress MAPS and Resource Suite development	1 October 2024	Ongoing ^b	Closed, 22 January 2025
Batching processes	1 October 2024	30 April 2025	Closed, 24 February 2025
Tandem Requests for Information	10 December 2024	30 April 2025	Closed, 30 April 2025
Multi-disciplinary Team Pilot	10 October 2024	30 April 2025	Closed, 30 April 2025
Scheme Key Performance Indicator (KPI) development	30 September 2024	30 April 2025	Closed, 30 April 2025

Note a: The due date for the Redress System Improvement Taskforce was extended to 30 May 2025 by the Strategy Planning and Risk Committee (SPaRC) on the 30 April 2025.

Note b: The treatment was closed at the SPaRC meeting on the 22 January 2025, staff training on how to use the resource continued.

Source: ANAO analysis of Redress Group Risk Management Plan 2024–25 (dated 13 February 2025) and Strategic Planning and Risk Committee minutes.

2.34 The Plan identified seven fraud and corruption risks relevant to the Redress Group's activities, each with a risk rating of 'medium':

- corruption;
- unauthorised access or disclosure of information⁴²;

42 The department noted that the sources of this fraud and corruption risk included the following.

- A staff member fails to report their access to documents they should not access.
- A staff member accesses departmental systems for reasons other than business requirements.
- A staff member changes information within a departmental system for their personal benefit (changing bank details to their own, remove information from the system that could reflect negatively on them).
- A staff member accesses and discloses sensitive departmental information.
- A staff member accesses and sell classified information or documents to a third party.

- false and misleading information or documentation;
- identity;
- misuse of assets;
- misuse of departmental funding; and
- misuse of administered funding.

2.35 Each of the seven fraud and corruption risks listed in the Plan included the same proposed treatment — the development of an updated Redress Scheme Fraud and Corruption Risk Assessment (discussed in paragraphs 2.37 to 2.43). The Plan notes that this treatment is not likely to reduce the assessed risk levels for any of the seven risks from their medium risk rating.

2.36 The Redress Strategic Planning and Risk Committee (SPaRC) is responsible for overseeing the Scheme's compliance with the department's risk management requirements.⁴³ The SPaRC meets monthly and 'risk update' is a standing item on the committee's agenda. In the minutes from the committee's meetings to January 2025, the committee had considered the 2024–25 Redress Group Risk Management Plan and received quarterly reports on the Group's risk management activities including risk controls testing.⁴⁴

Fraud risk assessment

2.37 The department's fraud and corruption control framework (discussed further in paragraphs 3.50 to 3.58) includes the requirement for 'targeted fraud and corruption risk assessments' for schemes that have a higher level of complexity, and fraud and corruption exposure. In June 2023 the department documented a National Redress Scheme Fraud Risk Assessment.⁴⁵

2.38 The 2023 National Redress Scheme Fraud Risk Assessment (fraud risk assessment) identified four categories of fraud risks to the Scheme and assessed the risk level based on controls identified as being in place at the time.

- 'False Statements — obtaining a benefit (or causing a loss) through providing false or misleading information.' The department assessed this risk as 'extreme'.
- 'Identity — obtaining a benefit (or causing a loss) through use of a false, manipulated or stolen identity.' The department assessed this risk as 'high'.
- 'Hijacking of Application or Payment — obtaining a benefit through interception of payment or take-over of application.' The department assessed this risk as 'high'.
- 'Insider Threat — staff members use their access, knowledge or authority obtain a benefit for themselves or others' (staff includes APS, contractor and IDM personnel, in both the department and Services Australia). The department assessed this risk as 'medium'.

43 The department advised the ANAO that prior to the establishment of the SPaRC in mid-2024, oversight of the Scheme's risk management had been the responsibility of several different bodies. These included the Redress Implementation Board (from January 2018), Redress Operations Board (from June 2019), Redress Operations Committee (from early 2020) and Policy Strategy Committee (from August 2020).

44 The stated purpose of the quarterly update is to provide the committee with oversight of the monitoring of the 2024–25 Redress Group Risk Management Plan including changes to emerging and existing risks, controls and treatments.

45 In February 2025 the department advised the ANAO that this version of the fraud risk assessment was current as at 21 February 2025. The department further advised the ANAO it was developing an updated National Redress Scheme Fraud and Corruption Risk Assessment.

2.39 The 2023 fraud risk assessment identified proposed treatments which, if implemented and effective, were anticipated to reduce the fraud and corruption risks to 'high' (False Statements), 'medium' (Identity and Hijacking of Application or Payment), and 'low' (Insider Threat). The fraud risk assessment did not identify planned dates for implementation of the proposed treatments. Contributions to the audit raised concerns about fraud prevention and risk management. The fraud risk assessment was updated 25 July 2025 to include treatment due dates.

2.40 The 2023 fraud risk assessment was approved by the acting Branch Manager, Redress Enabling Services on 28 June 2023. The Secretary was briefed about the current and emerging fraud risks in the Scheme on 13 October 2023 (discussed further in paragraphs 3.50 to 3.58).

2.41 There was a misalignment between the risk level ratings for fraud related risks to the Scheme identified in the 2024–25 Redress Group Risk Management Plan and the 2023 National Redress Scheme Fraud Risk Assessment. The Redress Group Risk Management Plan 2024–25 assessed 'false and misleading information or documentation risk' and 'identity risk' as medium, while the risk assessment rated them as extreme and high respectively. The updated 2025 fraud risk assessment addressed the misalignment for the 'false and misleading information or documentation risk', not for the 'identity risk'. Both the 2023 and 2025 fraud risk assessments contained additional risks not included in the risk management plan such as 'hijacking of application or payment', and 'insider threat'.

2.42 Executive oversight of the Scheme's fraud and corruption risks are conducted through the department's Fraud and Serious Non-Compliance Committee, which is chaired by the Chief Operating Officer. For matters concerning the Scheme, membership includes the Deputy Secretary, Families and Communities, the Group Manager Redress and relevant Branch Managers and Directors.

Opportunity for improvement

2.43 The department could regularly review and update its Redress Group Risk Management Plan and the National Redress Scheme Fraud Risk Assessment to ensure:

- all treatments have implementation dates, to aid monitoring of progress;
- treatment implementation is monitored and reviewed for impact on risk; and
- that there is alignment of risk identification level ratings and treatments between the Plan and the Assessment.

Shared risks with Services Australia

2.44 The Commonwealth Risk Management Policy requires entities to collaborate in managing shared risks. The department's Risk Management Policy (April 2023) requires, among other things, a joint risk management assessment that determines the governance arrangements in overseeing, managing and escalating shared program delivery risks. This has been a requirement of the department's documented risk management framework since the Scheme commenced in 2018.

2.45 The department and Services Australia agreed to the first Redress Shared Risk Management Plan on 4 November 2024, six years after the start of the Scheme. The plan identifies the following

four risks to the Scheme that are shared by the two entities, with each risk assessment based on existing controls.

- Identity fraud — rated as medium.
- Provision of quality service to applicants — rated as low.
- Protection of staff — rated as medium.
- Collection, access to, use and disclosure of Scheme information — rated as medium.

2.46 The shared risk management plan was approved by the department's Branch Manager, Enabling Services on 4 November 2024. The department advised the ANAO on 30 May 2025 that the shared risks rated as 'medium' were accepted by the Group Manager on 7 April 2025. The first quarterly review of the plan that updated the shared risks was approved by the relevant Senior Executive Service Band 1 in February 2025.

2.47 The Shared Risk Management Protocol between the department and Services Australia, established in March 2024, and revised in March 2025, specifies that shared risks will be reported through the governance arrangements specified in the BMA Head Agreement. As noted in paragraph 2.17, the Scheme's governance arrangements under the Head Agreement are through the National Redress Scheme Services Schedule Contact Officer in the department and the Services Schedule Relationship Manager in Services Australia.

Does the department have an appropriate framework for engaging with stakeholders?

The department established a Communications Strategy for the Scheme in 2018 and a Communications Framework in 2024. Between 2017 and 2024 there were fifteen strategies and plans for communicating with specific stakeholder groups. The relationship between the documents was not documented and there was no evaluation for 10 of the strategies, plans and frameworks. The trauma-informed approach detailed in the 2018 communications strategy was not implemented. A trauma-informed advisor for communications was available since 2021 and a trauma-informed framework was implemented in 2024. Documented guidance and processes for communication with potential institutions was established in 2023, and there has been no evaluation of the onboarding process for institutions. There was no detailed planning for communications about the end of the Scheme, or risk treatments identified.

2.48 To achieve the Act's objective to provide redress to survivors, and to enable institutions to participate in the Scheme, requires clarity, consistency and alignment of communications with stakeholders. This would assist in fostering trust and reducing misunderstandings, ultimately leading to better outcomes for applicants and institutions.

2.49 In 2018 the department established a Communications Strategy for the Scheme that outlined the approach to communications about the launch and initial operations of the Scheme for survivors and 'intermediaries'.⁴⁶ The Communication Strategy outlined the aim and objectives

⁴⁶ The 'intermediaries' identified in the 2018 Communications Strategy for the Scheme included family, friends and carers of adult survivors, survivor advocacy and support groups, State and Territory governments, relevant institutions, media and the Australian public.

of the communication activities, key messages to be given and the approach to different types of communication activities, including a timeline of activities to the end of 2018. The Communication Strategy was last updated on the 6 February 2018.

2.50 A communications framework was established on 14 August 2024 to outline the Scheme's communication requirements, expectations and standard procedures through to 2028, to 'ensure all communications are effective, comprehensive and timely.' The framework addresses stakeholders such as people who experienced institutional child sexual abuse and can apply for redress, members of the public, Group staff, IDMs, institutions, and jurisdictions. The department advised ANAO in May 2025 that the communications framework, together with the Redress Service Charter, the Redress Trauma-Informed Framework and the department's guidelines to manage external communications, form the current communication strategy.

2.51 Contributions to the audit noted the communication challenges experienced by survivors including the timeliness, consistency and accessibility of communications.

Engaging with potential applicants

2.52 In addition to the 2018 Communications Strategy and 2024 Communications Framework, 15 individual strategies and plans were developed. The strategies and frameworks were for specific potential applicant groups such as people with a disability, culturally and linguistically diverse stakeholders and Indigenous stakeholders, between 2018 and 2024. These are not mentioned in either the 2018 Communications Strategy or 2024 Communications Framework.

2.53 All of the 15 strategies and plans outlined the communications approach and activities to be delivered, the target audiences, key messages, and timelines. Eight of the documents were written by external agencies with communications expertise specific to the focus of the document. The documents do not refer to each other or specify if they have superseded previous documents on the same topic or stakeholder group.

Trauma-informed communications

2.54 A trauma-informed approach is one in which the core philosophy of an activity, program, or campaign is centred on empowerment and support of individuals who have experienced abuse.⁴⁷ This aligns with some of the general principles established in the Act, including that redress under the Scheme should be survivor-focused and should be assessed, offered and provided to avoid, as far as possible, further harming or traumatising the survivor.

2.55 In December 2017 WhereTo Research⁴⁸ conducted developmental research prior to the production of Scheme promotional materials. They advised the department that every aspect of the Scheme must take a trauma-informed approach to allow the Scheme to avoid activities that may risk re-traumatising survivors.

2.56 The 2018 Communications Strategy states that:

all communication materials will be reviewed by a trauma-informed psychologist to ensure they are, as much as possible, non-triggering for survivors. In accordance with research recommendations, an advisory group will be formed to provide advice on communication

47 Dr Cathy Kezelman, *Trauma informed practice*, Mental Health Australia, 4 February 2021, available from <https://mhaustralia.org/general/trauma-informed-practice> [accessed 19 November 2024.]

48 Contract Notice Number CN3457345 and CN3457345-A1.

materials, especially those produced for Indigenous and CALD [Culturally and Linguistically Diverse] audiences. CALD and Indigenous agencies will informally test material with community leaders before translation, to ensure they are appropriate and useable.

2.57 An advisory group to advise on communication materials was not established, and all communication materials were not reviewed by a trauma-informed psychologist.

2.58 The department established a Clinical Advisor role in 2021 (renamed Trauma-Informed Advisor in 2023). The 2024 Communications Framework notes the role of the Trauma-Informed Advisor in reviewing internal and external communication prior to final version approval. They do this 'through a trauma-informed lens, where advice on trauma-informed language is required, to assist in identifying and modifying language or content that might unintentionally trigger or distress survivors.' The Advisor's review of communications activities focuses on those activities expected to have the most significant impact, such as website content. The advisor can also be requested by the service delivery team to provide advice on communications directly with an applicant.

2.59 Four of the 15 communication strategies and plans referred to taking a trauma-informed approach. Communication materials were also reviewed from a trauma-informed perspective in 2018 and 2023.

- In May 2018 the department invited (through a direct approach to market) the Blue Knot Foundation to review its promotional materials from a trauma-informed perspective. Blue Knot signed a 12-month contract with the department in June 2018.⁴⁹
- In March 2023 the department commissioned concept testing from WhereTo Research⁵⁰ in which it received advice about trauma-informed content.

2.60 In May 2023 the department developed a trauma-informed framework (the Framework) to provide guidance to staff on how they could help make the Scheme trauma-informed. The department also established a Trauma-informed Embedment Strategy (the Embedment Strategy) in 2023 to support staff in applying the Framework in their work. The Embedment Strategy outlined the communications to staff, resources provided for staff and a series of mandatory monthly activities for staff to undertake. The department advised the ANAO in July 2025 that participation in the mandatory training is monitored. The Framework and Embedment Strategy are not referred to by subsequent communication plans or strategies.

Evaluation of communication plans and strategies

2.61 Five of the 15 communication strategies and plans detailed how the effectiveness of the activities would be assessed (Table 2.5), one of which (the Northern Australian Indigenous Communication and Engagement Strategy) underwent the expected evaluation.

49 Contract Notice Number CN3510864.

50 Contract Notice Number CN3936332.

Table 2.5: Communication plans and strategies with evaluation plans

Year	Document	Evaluation plan	Evaluation report
2018	Communication Strategy	Specified qualitative and quantitative research to be undertaken to evaluate the success of the campaign.	The department advised the ANAO in May 2025 that the National Redress Scheme Developmental Communication Research Report (26 September 2022) provided the evaluation of the 2018 Strategy. The report did not address the specific formal and informal evaluation plan measures. Instead it reported on research into communication needs and challenges at that time.
2021	Northern Australian Indigenous Communication and Engagement Strategy	Specified an evaluation plan including outputs and impact.	The National Redress Scheme Northern Australian Indigenous Communication and Engagement Strategy Final Report, 2 June 2021 addressed the evaluation plan.
2022	Communication Strategy Targeted Communication Activity document	Specified formal and informal evaluation measures to be used.	The department advised the ANAO in May 2025 that the NRS Communications project report, June 2024 provided the evaluation of 2022 projects.
2022	Email Marketing Strategy	Specified the measures of success.	The report did not address the specified evaluation plan measures. Instead it reported on outputs, project challenges and recommendations for the future.
2024	Communications Framework	Specified yearly communication surveys to internal and external audiences and regular reporting on website analytics.	The department advised that the survey is planned for September and October 2025, and reporting on website analytics is planned to commence in August 2025.

Source: ANAO analysis.

2.62 In addition to the above strategies there was one report that evaluated the media performance of the Scheme in 2023–24. It was an evaluation of a Google AdWords campaign by UM Australia.⁵¹ The campaign was to raise awareness of the Scheme and drive traffic to the website. The evaluation found the campaign was an example of best practice for government search campaigns, optimising the click through rate from 17.34 per cent in 2020 to 28.2 per cent in 2024, and the cost per click decreased.

51 Contract Notice Number CN4098968

Engaging with non-Participating Institutions

2.63 An application for redress can proceed to an eligible determination if at least one institution identified in the application has joined the Scheme. One of the Act's objectives is to enable institutions to participate. Institutions that have joined the Scheme are called Participating Institutions (see paragraphs 1.15 to 1.20).

2.64 At the start of the Scheme the department approached institutions who were identified by the Royal Commission, and State or Territory governments, about joining the Scheme. As applications were received the department prioritised approaching any institutions named in an application that had not joined the Scheme (non-Participating Institutions). Non-Participating Institutions could also approach the Scheme directly to join. The department advised the ANAO on the 22 July 2025 that such unsolicited approaches from non-Participating Institutions happened 'organically' and were not planned by the department.

2.65 As at March 2025 the department had guidance material for staff that outlined the process to identify and approach non-Participating Institutions. The material outlined the process for researching an institution's legal status, documentation, and history. The process is described as an important step to ensure that:

- the Scheme is engaging with the correct institution;
- the institution is capable of participating in the Scheme; and
- there is appropriate responsibility for the institution's operational history.

2.66 There has not been a review of the effectiveness of the onboarding process for institutions. Contributions to the audit indicated mixed experiences with the clarity of information received in joining the Scheme, particularly in relation to the burden of proof for institutions.

2.67 If a non-Participating Institution declines to participate in the Scheme, subsection 95A(1) of the Act⁵² provides authorisation for the Scheme Operator to publicly disclose that the institution is not a Participating Institution, if either or both of the following applies:

- a person has applied for redress under the Scheme and the application identifies the institution as being involved in the abuse of the person; and/or
- the Operator has reasonable grounds to believe that the institution may be connected with abuse of a person that is within the scope of the Scheme.

2.68 The department advised the ANAO in March 2025 that all State and Territory government institutions were onboarded to the Scheme by January 2019. Since 2018 the department has a record of engaging with 1265 non-government institutions about joining the Scheme, of which three per cent declined (see Table 2.6).

52 *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018*, subsection 95A(1)(a)(i)(ii)(b).

Table 2.6: Summary of key outcomes from department engagement with non-government institutions from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2025

Metric	Total number
Non-government institutions the department has a record of engaging with about joining the Scheme ^a	1,265
Non-government institutions that have been declared, or were ready to be declared, as participating institutions in the Scheme as at 30 June 2025	833
Non-government institutions that were being processed as at 30 June 2025	290
Non-government institutions that declined to join the Scheme ^b	41
Non-government institutions found not suitable to join the Scheme ^c	59
Non-government institutions that initiated an enquiry to join the Scheme but chose not to continue with the process.	199

Note a: Consistent data on the department's engagement with non-government institutions about joining the Scheme was available from January 2020. Data prior to January 2020 was added where it became available but is not complete.

Note b: Includes non-government Institutions that have declined, or are in the process of being publicly named as declined.

Note c: Includes unable to progress, application progressed without the institution, employment based organisation, IDM determined not responsible, institution ineligible, misidentified and out of scope.

Source: Department data.

2.69 The department further advised the ANAO in July 2025 that of the 848 non-government institutions that the department approached directly to join the Scheme, 407 had not joined for the reasons recorded as per Table 2.7. Of the 12 per cent found not suitable, this was the result of actions such as the redress application being withdrawn, or the institution being found not responsible or misidentified prior to completing the joining process.

Table 2.7: Reasons non-government institutions approached by the department didn't join the Scheme as at 30 June 2025

Reason	Number of institutions
In progress	305 (75%)
Declined	41 (10%)
Unresponsive	12 (3%)
Found not suitable by the department	49 (12%)

Source: Department analysis.

2.70 The department took an average of 12.3 months⁵³ to declare a non-government institution. The average time taken peaked in 2019 and was approaching that peak again as at 30 June 2025 (see Table 2.8).

53 The time is calculated from the date the institution indicates it is interested in joining the Scheme to the date it is declared to be a Participating Institution.

Table 2.8: Average number of days taken from a non-government institution's first contact to being declared as at 30 June 2025.

Year	Average number of days
2018	388
2019	435
2020	334
2021	343
2022	334
2023	389
2024	376
2025 (to 30 June 2025)	400

Source: Department analysis.

2.71 To ensure effective and coordinated communication with potential institutions and applicants, existing frameworks, strategies and plans should be evaluated to inform continuous improvement and planning for the conclusion of the Scheme (see recommendation 1).

Communicating the end of the Scheme

2.72 With the Scheme legislated to end on 30 June 2028, the department's website stated (as at 23 July 2025) that it will cease to accept applications on 30 June 2027. There is a risk in the Group's risk management plan with a high risk rating that the department fails to finalise redress applications before the end of the Scheme. The communications framework was one of the controls identified. The risk management plan did not include a treatment for communications, and it did not specify related communication risks such as:

- potential applicants miss the opportunity for redress due to lack of awareness of the deadline; and
- those with applications awaiting an outcome are confused and or traumatised by a lack of understanding about what the end of the Scheme means for their application.

2.73 The 2024 Communications framework states it 'is implemented until 2028'. It does not reference planning or implementing communications to stakeholders about the end of the Scheme. It states that for 'operational changes, such as ... key messages ... the [External Engagement and Communications Branch] will undertake the communication directly with their audiences.'

2.74 Two of the 15 communication strategies and plans for applicants referenced the end of the Scheme. No detailed planning is specified.

- The National Redress Scheme Disability Engagement Strategy (20 March 2025) was established to engage with people with disabilities about the Scheme and guide engagement and community activity until June 2025. The strategy notes that 'it is important that we let people know about the Scheme before applications close on 30 June 2027.'
- The National Redress Scheme First Nations Engagement Plan Yarning Circle Design and Radio Strategy (November 2024) was established to develop, execute and report on

First Nations engagements to raise awareness of the Scheme. The strategy notes a key message is the application closure date of 30 June 2027.

Recommendation no. 1

2.75 The Department of Social Services evaluate the Scheme's communication frameworks, strategies and plans, and review and update its communications framework to:

- (a) reflect the learnings from evaluations of all previous communication strategies and plans;
- (b) identify communication risks and relate them to the Group's risk management documents;
- (c) include a plan for timely and consistent messaging about the end of the Scheme to stakeholders; and
- (d) ensure coordination of communication activities across stakeholder groups, through to the end of the Scheme.

Department of Social Services response: *Agreed.*

2.76 *While Scheme extension beyond 30 June 2028 is a decision for Government, targeted communication and engagement activities through to the end of the Scheme will ensure the department appropriately addresses findings of the eight-anniversary review of the Scheme, post Scheme options and support for applicants beyond 2028.*

2.77 *The Scheme is aware survivors need timely trauma-informed information regarding Scheme end. This communication will include Direct Personal Response (DPR), Redress Support Services (RSS) and the management of personal/protected information following Scheme end.*

2.78 *The department supports the proposal for an updated communications framework that reflects learnings, relays risk and outlines the plan for coordinated, timely and consistent end of Scheme messaging.*

2.79 *The following actions have commenced by the department in response to this recommendation:*

- *Delivery of audience-specific reports for 2024-25 communication and engagement activity. The reports include learnings from project evaluations and recommendations from formal research that will be incorporated into the end of Scheme approach.*
- *Communication risks will be identified and mitigated through an updated Communication Framework and underpinned in a communication plan and messaging approach through to end of the Scheme.*
- *Agreement on communication priorities to inform development of a communication plan until June 2027, which specifically addresses end of Scheme.*
- *Changes to Scheme data on the Scheme's public website to provide more information and clarification on application processing numbers and applicant demographics.*
- *Proposed development of a revised survivor engagement approach to ensure meaningful and timely communication.*

3. Processing of applications and funding contributions

Areas examined

This chapter examines whether the Department of Social Services (the department) has effective processes to administer the National Redress Scheme (the Scheme).

Conclusion

The department had partly effective processes to administer the Scheme. The department had policies and procedures that reflected the requirements as set out in *the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018* and guided staff in processing applications and invoices. Data and reporting practices lacked consistency over the life of the Scheme, including on complaints and institutional onboarding. An Independent Decision-making Quality Framework, established in 2021 to ensure consistency of decision making, was not implemented as intended. From 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2025, 63,738 applications were received, with 33 per cent completed and an average processing time of 16.3 months. To meet the Scheme's sunset date and deliver outcomes to all applicants, the department will need to accelerate application processing and institutional onboarding, operationalise decision-making quality mechanisms, standardise reporting to improve visibility of complaints and revocations, and leverage insights to support continuous improvement.

Areas for improvement

The ANAO made one recommendation aimed at ensuring that the department has a robust and transparent quality assurance process for application decision-making.

The ANAO also identified three opportunities for improvement:

- The department document how its consideration of review outcome data informs process improvements.
- The department develop standard procedures and systems to improve data quality for Scheme complaints and ensure it is consistently reporting on complaint themes to inform continuous improvement.
- The department develop and implement a process to monitor and report to the department on Scheme funding contribution invoices and payments, to enable the assessment of the effectiveness of cost recovery performance

3.1 The objective of the *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018* (the Act) is to 'recognise and alleviate the impact of past institutional child sexual abuse for survivors and provide justice for the survivors of that abuse.' The Scheme is designed to be survivor focused and trauma-informed by 'maintaining the principles that the Scheme be a low threshold and non-legalistic process for survivors.'⁵⁴ The ANAO examined if the department had fit for purpose arrangements for processing applications from survivors, and making decisions in line with the Act.

54 Explanatory memorandum, National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Bill 2018, p. 4, available from <https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22legislation%2Fbillhome%2Fr6101%22#ems> [accessed at 19 May 2025].

3.2 Participating Institutions which are determined by the Operator to be responsible for the abuse of a person, are liable for the costs of providing redress to the person and for contributing to the costs of the administration of the scheme. The Operator is responsible for recovering those liabilities from Participating Institutions. The ANAO examined if the department had fit-for-purpose arrangements for this debt recovery.

Does the department have fit-for-purpose arrangements for processing Scheme applications?

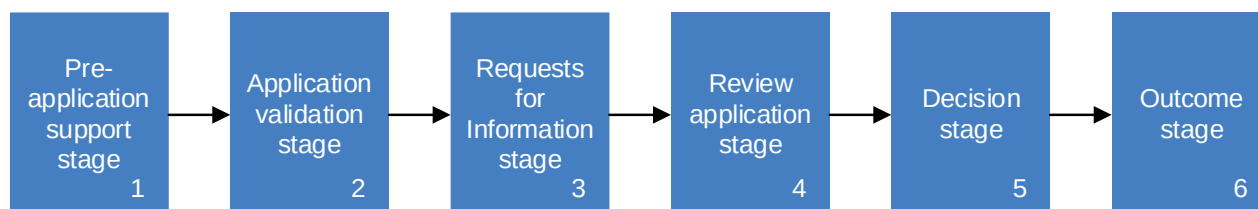
The department had frameworks, policies and procedures to guide staff in the processing of applications and determining eligibility and outcomes for redress. No targets were established for timely processing of applications to an outcome, or for onboarding of institutions. The average processing time to complete an application was 16.3 months, and 10.4 months to declare a non-government institution. A conflict-of-interest strategy and a fraud management framework for the National Redress Scheme was implemented. The Scheme's 2018 fraud control plan was not reviewed and updated until 2025, despite changes to roles, responsibilities and risks. An Independent Decision-making Quality Framework was established in 2021. The Framework was not reviewed annually as required, and the intended sampling to review decision making by Independent Decision Makers to ensure consistency was not done.

Application management

3.3 The Act (subsection 29(1)) requires the Scheme Operator (Operator) to 'make a determination to approve, or not approve, an application for redress as soon as practicable.' To do this the department engages with applicants and institutions to ensure the application contains all the information necessary to reach a decision in accordance with the Act, and to manage the outcome as required.

3.4 The redress application management process starts with the department receiving an application for redress and consists of six main stages. (Figure 3.1) A summary of the application process can be found in paragraphs 1.12 to 1.14, Table 1.1 and in Appendix 3.

Figure 3.1: Redress Scheme application process flow



Source: The department's Resources Hub, Maps and Resources Suite (MaRS), accessed 30 January 2025.

3.5 As at February 2025 the department did not have a single process for tracking and allocating applications to staff for processing at each stage. The Redress Group's intranet site states:

Sections within the Service Delivery Branch have their own specific ways of tracking and allocating applications sitting within their remit that require the actioning of a task. The medium used for application tracking varies dependent on the nature of the work involved and the complexity of information around that work needing to be captured.

3.6 Modelling commissioned by the department in 2017 anticipated that there would be 60,000 eligible applicants, with the highest number of eligible applications received in the first three years of the Scheme, declining in years four to nine, and increasing in the final year. Subsequent modelling in 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025 have provided estimates varying between 40,000 and 59,000 eligible participants. All modelling highlighted the uncertainty of the figures due to the uncertain levels of child sexual abuse in institutions. Modelling done in April 2025 estimated that the volume of eligible applications lodged will start to decline over 2025–26, with a final increase in 2027 before the Scheme closes to applications on the 30 June 2027.

3.7 Between 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2025 there were 63,738 applications submitted to the Scheme of which 33 per cent (20,896) were complete as at 30 June 2025. There was a 373 per cent increase in applications received from 2018–19 to 2024–25. The largest single year growth was 2022–23 at 79 per cent (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Application growth rate^a

Financial year	Total applications received	Rate of growth from previous year (%)
2018–19	4,168	N/A
2019–20	3,115	-25
2020–21	3,748	20
2021–22	5,975	59
2022–23	10,687	79
2023–24	16,319	53
2024–25	19,726	21

Note a: ANAO conducted analysis by examining the department's data between 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2025. The reporting of ANAO analysis is by the financial year the application was received, to reflect the perspective of applicants from when they applied to the Scheme.

Source: ANAO analysis of the department's data.

Application prioritisation

3.8 The department's prioritisation policy (June 2019) establishes three levels of priority for Scheme applications:

- Priority Tier 1 — 'critical' — highly time sensitive (for example, applicant's likely remaining lifespan or extreme vulnerability warrants expedited processing) — expected to be five per cent of applications.
- Priority Tier 2 — 'high' — moderately time sensitive (for example, considering the applicant's vulnerability or an application received over nine months ago) — expected to be 15 per cent of applications.
- Priority Tier 3 — 'normal' — standard time sensitivity — standard processing — expected to be 80 per cent of applications.

3.9 The prioritisation policy for the Scheme specified that cases initially assessed and prioritised as 'normal' are automatically reprioritised to 'high' after nine months. This has not occurred. Cases were reprioritised to 'high' automatically after twelve months.

3.10 Of the 63,738 applications received by the Scheme as at 30 June 2025⁵⁵, 517 (one per cent) were categorised in the system as ‘critical’ priority, 34,602 (54 per cent) were categorised as ‘high’ priority, and 28,619 (45 per cent) were categorised as ‘normal’ priority. This does not reflect the priority distribution stated in the prioritisation policy. See Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Application prioritisation as at 30 June 2025 and priority policy expectations

Priority ^a	Number of total applications (%) ^b	Performance against priority policy
Critical	517 (1%)	4% less than estimate
High	34,602 (54%)	39% greater than estimate
Normal	28,619 (45%)	35% less than estimate
Total	63,738 (100%)	–

Note a: Applications may be prioritised in circumstances where an applicant has a terminal illness, is elderly, or where there are any other contributing factors the department’s delegate considers appropriate to warrant expedited processing. The different priority levels are described in paragraph 3.8.

Note b: The total number of applications includes all applications with a status of open, on hold, withdrawn or completed. Open cases include those classified as ‘in progress’ and ‘on hold’.

Source: ANAO analysis of the department’s data.

3.11 As at 30 June 2025 there were 18,728 open high priority cases, with 831 (four per cent) open for less than one year. The department advised ANAO in July 2025 that the prioritisation policy was under review and expected to be updated in September 2025.

Processing time

3.12 The prioritisation policy (2019) established automatic reprioritisation for applications that were still being processed nine months from receipt. The department advised the ANAO in July 2025 that in 2020 the department established a target of processing applications within six months from receipt of application. The target was revised in 2023 when ‘the six-month period was redefined to measure from the time all necessary information was received by the Scheme to when an outcome was offered.’

3.13 As at 27 July 2025, the Scheme website advised the public that it ‘can take between 12 to 18 months [for applicants] to receive an outcome’.⁵⁶ From the start of the Scheme to 30 June 2025 the average processing time for completed applications was 16.3 months, with the longest taking 81 months. Table 3.3 shows that the average processing time did not change by more than one month from 2019–20.

55 Applications with a status of open, on-hold, withdrawn or completed.

56 Department of Social Security, National Redress Scheme, *What happens after applying, What to expect*, available from: <https://www.nationalredress.gov.au/apply/what-happens-after-applying#what-to-expect> [accessed 26 June 2025].

Table 3.3: Average processing time (months) for completed applications by financial year application received, as at 30 June 2025

Financial year application received ^a	Number of completed applications	Average processing time (months)
2018–19	3,731	20.73
2019–20	2,847	15.24
2020–21	3,260	14.42
2021–22	4,147	15.37
2022–23	5,360	15.83
2023–24	1,532	15.53

Note a: Applications received in 2024–25 were excluded from this analysis due to the low number of completed applications.

Source: ANAO analysis of the department's data.

3.14 Table 3.4 shows that of completed applications, high priority applications had the longest average processing time.

Table 3.4: Average total processing time for completed applications as at 30 June 2025

Priority ^a	Number of completed applications	Average processing time for completed applications (months)
Critical	472	9.3
High	15,117	18.6
Normal	5,307	10.4
Total	20,896	16.3

Note a: Applications may be prioritised in circumstances where an applicant has a terminal illness, is elderly, or where there are any other contributing factors the department's delegate considers appropriate to warrant expedited processing. The different priority levels are described in paragraph 3.8.

Note b: Average processing time details the average time to process each application's full duration length, including on hold times, for completed applications. This was calculated from the date a case (for a received application) was 'created' in the department's system, until the date a case was marked with a status 'completed'.

Source: ANAO analysis of the department's data.

3.15 Over the life of the Scheme, 7.8 per cent of completed application received the outcome within six months from receipt of the application, with applications taking on average 16.3 months to complete. When considered by the redefined six month period (see paragraph 3.12), 62 per cent of completed applications received the outcome within six months of the final information being provided by the institution(s), with the highest proportion occurring in 2021–22 and the lowest in 2023–24.⁵⁷ (Table 3.5)

57 The analysis of the highest and lowest years excluded 2024–25 due to low numbers of applications submitted in 2024–25 being completed.

Table 3.5: Proportion of completed applications to receive an outcome within six months of final information being provided by the institution(s)

Time from 'RFI stage' by financial year received ^a	2018–19 (%) ^b	2019–20 (%)	2020–21 (%)	2021–22 (%)	2022–23 (%)	2023–24 (%)
Over six months	34	31	28	29	50	62
Within or equal to six months	64	69	72	71	50	38

Note a: The ANAO conducted analysis of the timeliness of application processing by examining the department's data between 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2025. The ANAO included periods of 'on hold' status in its analysis as it saw evidence of applications progressing when recorded as 'on hold'. The reporting of ANAO analysis is by the financial year the application was received, in order to reflect the perspective of applicants from when they applied to the Scheme. The analysis did not include applications submitted in 2024–25 due to the low number completed as at 30 June 2025.

Note b: Percentage does not add up to 100 due to changes in the reporting of process stages over time.

Source: ANAO analysis of the department's data.

Participating Institutions

3.16 The department advised the ANAO in July 2025 that as at 30 June 2025, 5,269 applications had been associated with a non-Participating Institution, of which 3,191 applications were completed, including 763 where a non-Participating Institution was still part of the case (see Table 3.6).

Table 3.6: Status of applications associated with a non-Participating Institution as at 30 June 2025

Status of applications associated with a non-Participating Institution	Number of applications
Completed ^a	3,191
In progress ^b	1,241
On hold ^c	588
Withdrawn ^d	217
Closed	32

Note a: The department advised the ANAO in July 2025 that 763 of the completed applications still had a non-Participating Institution coded on the case.

Note b: The department advised the ANAO in July 2025 that 929 applications were progressing with a non-Participating Institution still coded on the case.

Note c: The department advised the ANAO in July 2025 that 361 applications were put on hold due to the institution not participating or not being identifiable.

Note d: The department advised the ANAO in July 2025 that 12 of the withdrawals were due to a non-Participating Institution.

Source: Department data.

3.17 As of 30 June 2025 there were 911 Participating Institutions (government and non-government). Of those, 779 were non-government institutions.

3.18 Departmental records indicate that as at 30 June 2025, 848 non-government institutions were directly approached by the department to join the Scheme⁵⁸, of which 57 per cent (483) were,

⁵⁸ The department approaches institutions to join the Scheme where the institution has been named in an application, or where the department anticipates the institution may be named.

or about to be, declared.⁵⁹ Five per cent (41) declined to join the Scheme, of which 13 were publicly disclosed (see paragraph 2.67 and Table 3.7).

Table 3.7: Non-government institutions approached by the department as at 30 June 2025

Status of non-government institution	Number of institutions ^d
Declared ^a	483 (57%)
Processing	275 (32%)
Not suitable ^b	49 (6%)
Declined ^c	41 (5%)

Note a: Declared status includes those institutions already declared, ready to be declared, or completing the onboarding process

Note b: Not suitable status includes where the institution was misidentified or deemed not responsible by an Independent Decision Maker. It also includes cases where the applicant decided to progress their application without the institution joining the Scheme.

Note c: Declined status includes those institutions publicly disclosed and potentially named.

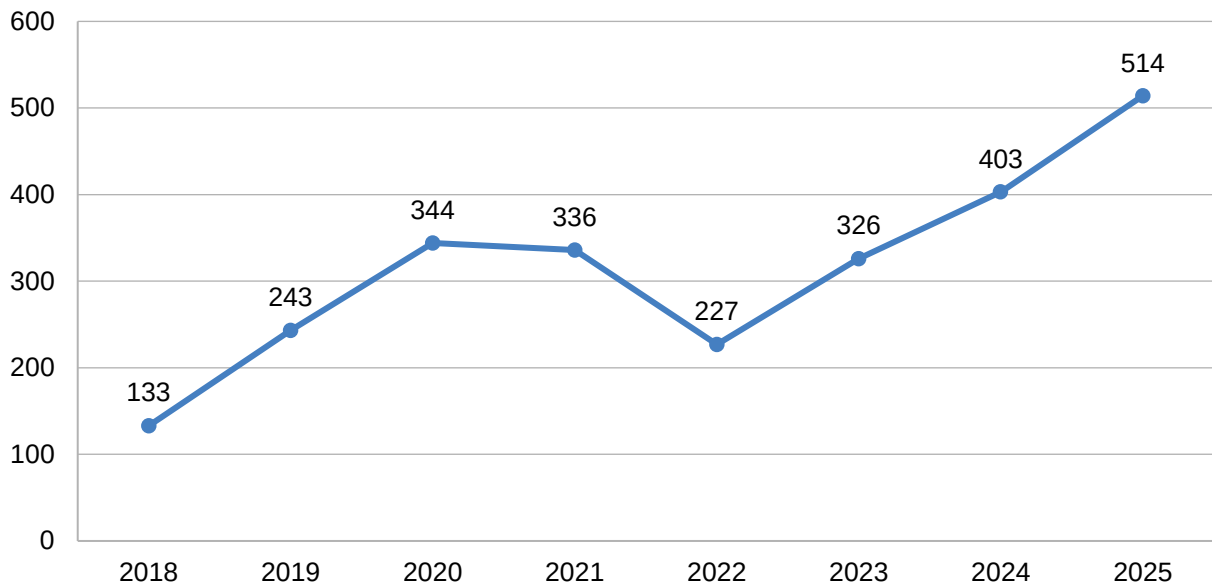
Note d: The department advised the ANAO that the data does not reflect every institutions since the commencement of the Scheme due to changes in data recording in January 2020.

Source: Department data.

3.19 Over the life of the Scheme, it took an average of 316 days from the department's initial approach to a non-government institution being declared. The average length of time to declare an institution has increased by 386 per cent since 2018 (Figure 3.2). If an institution needed to be considered under partly participating arrangement it took an average of 1,147 days. This time impacts on the processing of an application unless the applicant choses to proceed without the named institution (see paragraph 1.20).

⁵⁹ Declared in this analysis includes institutions that are ready to be declared or are completing the onboarding process to be declared.

Figure 3.2: Average days taken for a non-government institution to be declared (from first approach by the department) as at 30 June 2025



Source: ANAO analysis of department data.

3.20 In addition to institutions being approached by the department, institutions can make an unsolicited enquiry about joining the Scheme. As at 30 June 2025, 417 non-government institutions made an unsolicited enquiry to join the Scheme. Of those, 46 per cent (193) were declared and 48 per cent (199) chose not to continue through the process. The department advised the ANAO in July 2025 that:

there are various reasons why enquiring institutions opt out of completing the joining process [including]:

- the process is more involved and protracted than they expect and/or the institution lacks the resources to complete joining steps;
- some institutions incorrectly believe they must participate in the Scheme in order to receive state and territory grant funding (this applies to institutions named in applications);
- the institution is unlikely to meet the requisite financial or legal requirements to participate in the Scheme; or
- institutions simply cease communicating with the Scheme after enquiring.

3.21 In processing institutions into the Scheme, the department prioritises institutions identified in applications, so institutions approached by the department are usually processed before unsolicited enquiries. On average it took 617 days from an institution's initial unsolicited enquiry to being declared.⁶⁰

3.22 Following onboarding and declaration of an institution, the department engages with the Participating Institutions through the Request for Information process specified in the Act (section 25) outlined in Appendix 3. There is no relationship manager specifically allocated to institutions.

⁶⁰ No 'enquiring institutions' were declared as a partly Participating Institution.

The department advised the ANAO in July 2025 that it supports Participating Institutions through training and a dedicated team whose activities include:

- Referring and assessing RFIs [Requests for Information]/Requests for Further Information (RFFIs) extensions to the Scheme
- Clarifying application redactions and other Scheme processes, policies and legislation
- Identifying potential conflicts of interest in responding to RFIs/RFFIs
- Referring RFI/RFFI complaints and addressing RFI/RFFI clarification questions
- Understanding protected information requirements and privacy matters when responding to RFIs/RFFIs
- Facilitating access to institution training and related resources via the Redress Education Portal

3.23 The Act (section 25) specifies that a Participating Institution will be ‘requested to give the information [the RFI response] to the operator’ within eight weeks of the notice date, or four weeks ‘if the Operator considers the application is urgent’. The department advised the ANAO in July 2025 that, ‘the average RFI response time ranges from 37.4 (maximum days of 181) in 2018 to 47.3 (maximum days of 613) in 2024.’

Process improvements

3.24 There have been changes to Scheme application processing since it began. Reasons for this includes legislative changes or reviews into the Scheme.⁶¹

- Establishment of an advance payment process in 2021, for applicants who are terminally ill, aged 70 years and over, 55 years and over for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants, or where there are other exceptional circumstances for particularly vulnerable people, while their redress application is considered.
- Expansion of Funder of Last Resort⁶² arrangements in 2021, to provide more survivors with access to redress, in circumstances where the responsible institution is defunct or does not have the financial capacity to join the Scheme.
- Removal of the requirement for a statutory declaration in 2021 so that it was no longer a mandatory part of the application documentation.⁶³
- Establishment of a redress intranet site in 2021, and single source of information for processing staff in 2023 (Maps and Resources Suite), to provide a holistic view of all Scheme application processing tasks linked to existing operational guidance.
- Establishment of a Redress System Improvement taskforce in 2024 to oversee the implementation of the recommendations made in the 2024 Independent Review of the

61 Contributions to the audit raised issues about the timeliness of processing, the bureaucratic and re-traumatising nature of the process, and lack of transparency. Issues were also raised about the timeframes for institutional response established in the legislation, and inconsistent experiences of support available to institutions.

62 Funder of last resort’ is an arrangement where a participating government institution or participating jurisdiction has agreed to pay the redress component for a specific non-government institution that is defunct or unable to join the Scheme.

63 Department of Social Services, Robyn Kruk, *Final Report: Second year review of the National Redress Scheme*, 26 March 2021, recommendation 2c.

Scheme (see paragraph 3.25). The goal of the program of work was to ensure the Scheme can respond to increases in applicant demand and complexity as the Scheme approaches its closure in 2028.

- Expansion of the eligibility requirements in 2024 to enable people in gaol to make an application to the Scheme without the Operator being required to make a determination that exceptional circumstances apply. The legislative amendment changed the process for applicants with serious criminal convictions.⁶⁴

3.25 In October 2023 the Minister for Social Services initiated an independent review of the funding and operations of the National Redress Scheme (Independent Review).⁶⁵ The final report made 11 recommendations to improve the performance of the Scheme and ensure its suitability and sustainability through to the Scheme's end in 2028. The Minister for Social Services accepted all the recommendations in April 2024 and noted the department's plans to implement them.

3.26 As at May 2025 the department advised the ANAO that it had completed 22 out of 24 projects to improve application management in response to the independent review. This included streamlining communications, establishing a decision batching process, reducing workarounds in the system, establishing additional performance indicators and improving application processing rates. Work on establishing a triaging service and improving outcome engagement was in progress.

3.27 On 21 July 2025, the department implemented a new organisational structure for the Redress Group, an outcome of the functional review raised with the Minister for Social Services in February 2025 (see paragraph 2.23). The department advised the Minister that the goal of the changes would be to 'improve the efficiency of its operations, focussed on processing applications faster.'

Staff support

3.28 The department has training and guidance material for Scheme staff when managing Scheme applications, including process maps, process summaries and guidance materials. This guidance material is available to Scheme staff through the department's Redress Hub intranet site, launched in November 2021. Prior to the Redress Hub the department's redress guidance was contained in over 1,000 documents and 330 intranet pages across 11 intranet sites.

3.29 In May 2024, the department reviewed available process maps and identified that approximately two-thirds of all actionable tasks were not supported by formalised operational guidance for staff to use. The 2024 Independent Review recommended that the department support its staff and the IDMs with 'living' procedures that operationalise policy and legal advice and service delivery improvements that were suggested as part of the review. In late January 2025 further process maps and documentation were made available to Scheme staff on the Redress Hub intranet site. In February 2025, the department advised the ANAO that the Group's Maps and Resources Suite (MaRS) intranet site within the Redress Hub will 'continue to be enhanced to meet

64 The Act now specifies that applicants who are imprisoned for five years or more for unlawful killing, sexual offences, terrorism offences, or were a risk to the integrity of the Scheme, were required to be considered under a special assessment process. Those who do not meet this definition can now be managed through the standard application process.

65 The final report was issued on the 24 February 2024, authored by Liza Carroll. Contract Notice Number CN4018102.

operational needs'. They also said that the department was undertaking an audit to identify key gaps where further operational guidance may be needed. As at May 2025 this work was ongoing.

Managing conflicts of interest

3.30 The Australian Public Service Code of Conduct⁶⁶ and the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*⁶⁷ (PGPA Act) requires employees of a Commonwealth entity to disclose details on any material personal interest that relates to the affairs of the entity. The Redress Act states that the general duties of officials 'apply to an Independent Decision Maker the same way as they apply to an official'.⁶⁸

3.31 The department has a framework for managing conflicts of interest for redress personnel, which is supported by a Scheme specific conflict of interest strategy. The Scheme's conflict-of-interest strategy requires all staff in the Redress Group to complete and submit a conflict-of-interest disclosure form, for any real, potential or perceived conflicts:

- at the commencement of the staff member's engagement;⁶⁹
- every three months⁷⁰; and
- when a conflict of interest arises.

3.32 The department advised the ANAO on 28 March 2025 that completions of conflict-of-interest declarations are monitored by the Group and all declarations must be approved by the relevant manager.

3.33 In 2024 the department conducted a Fraud Risk Data Analytic Treatment project focused on insider threats (see paragraph 2.38 for discussion of fraud risks). The project identified six suspected policy non-compliance matters related to redress staff conflict of interest obligations. The six matters were referred to the Redress Group and each case was assessed by the Group's Director, Integrity. The Director, Integrity referred relevant cases to the People Services Branch for potential breach of the Australian Public Service Code of Conduct. In May 2025 the department advised ANAO that:

No individual case has resulted in broader changes to the policy, practice or promotion of Conflict of Interest arrangements for staff, however upon each review People Services Branch enquire regarding the frequency of such promotions of the Conflict of Interest policy and practices within Redress to ensure they are appropriate and should any concerns be identified recommendations for improvement would be provided to Redress for consideration and implementation.

66 The Australian Public Service Code of Conduct is set out in Section 13 of the *Public Service Act 1999*.

67 Section 29 of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*.

68 The *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018*, (subsection 185(4)) states that the general duties of officials as set out in Division 3, Subdivision A of the PGPA Act (which includes the duty to disclose interests in section 29 of the PGPA Act).

69 The National Redress Scheme Conflict of Interest and Staff as Applicants Management Strategy states that declared conflicts of interest will be considered prior to a staff member being given access to any information protected under the *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018* and access will be granted where there is a 'nil conflict' declaration or where any declared conflict can be managed, and a decision has been made that access can be granted.

70 The National Redress Scheme Conflict of Interest and Staff as Applicants Management Strategy states that all staff in the Redress Group will be reminded to review their conflict-of-interest declaration every three months.

3.34 The department advised the ANAO in May 2025 that it would be conducting the Fraud Risk Data Analytic Treatment exercise annually, with the next iteration due by the end of 2025.

3.35 The Scheme's Conflict of Interest Strategy applies to Independent Decision Makers (IDMs) who are engaged by the department as contractors through a commercial labour hire arrangement. IDMs are subject to an additional disclosure process during recruitment; completing a manual conflict of interest form prior to their interview for the role. Once engaged, the department requires IDMs to follow the same conflict of interest process as other redress staff. The department advised the ANAO on 28 March 2025 that no conflict-of-interest breaches (actual or potential) had been raised for IDMs over the life of the Scheme.

Decision-making framework

3.36 The Act (sections 29 to 33) sets out the decision-making framework for applications to the Scheme. Where the Operator considers that there is a 'reasonable likelihood that the person is eligible for redress', they must approve the application (section 29(2)(a)).

3.37 If the application is approved, the Act requires the Operator to make a number of determinations under subsection 29(2), including determining:

- the institution(s) responsible for the abuser(s) having contact with the person;
- the amount of redress payment for a person;
- the amount of the counselling and psychological component of redress for the person; and
- each responsible institution(s)' share of the costs of the redress payment, counselling and psychological care and administration of the Scheme.

3.38 The Scheme Operator has delegated authority for making determinations on applications for redress to IDMs engaged by the department.⁷¹ In addition to the Act, and the National Redress Scheme Assessment Framework 2018⁷² (the Assessment Framework)⁷³, the department established guidance documents to support decision making under the Scheme including:

- Assessment Framework Policy Guidelines 2019 (Oct 2019);
- Internal Assessment Guide (Version 4.0, Aug 2023)⁷⁴;
- Independent Decision-making Quality Framework (Version 1.0, Apr 2021);
- Statement of Reasons Guide (Version 1.2 Oct 2024);

71 As provided for in the *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018*, subsections 185(1) and (3)).

72 The National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Framework 2018 is a legislative instrument made by the Minister for Social Services under section 32 of the *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018*.

73 When an IDM determines that there is a reasonable likelihood of eligible abuse, the Act (sections 30 and 31), requires the IDM to apply the National Redress Scheme Assessment Framework 2018 (the Assessment Framework) to calculate the amount of redress to be offered to the applicant. The Assessment Framework sets out the method and matters to be taken into account for the purposes of determining the arrangements.

74 The department has assessed that the Internal Assessment Guide is exempt from public release under Section 47E(d) of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*. On 28 March 2025, the department advised the ANAO that the Internal Assessment Guide was under review.

- An Administrative Decision-making Guide for making a determination under the *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018* (Version 3.0, Sep 2024);
- Guides to Social Policy Law National Redress Guide (Version 1.25, 20 March 2025); and
- Trauma-informed Framework (May 2023).

3.39 Contributions to the audit raised concerns about the consistency of, and transparency in, decision-making.

3.40 As at 30 June 2025, the average time to progress an application through the department's decision-making stage (from the date an application is assigned to an IDM, to the date the applicant is advised of the outcome of their application) was 4.2 months, remaining steady or increasing year on year (see Table 3.8). Of the completed applications, 593 took less than one month to complete the decision-making stage, and one application took the longest at 64 months.

Table 3.8: Average decision-making time (months) for completed applications, by year application received as at 30 June 2025

Year application received by the department ^a	Average decision-making process time (months)
2018–19	3.5
2019–20	3.5
2020–21	3.7
2021–22	3.7
2022–23	5.2
2023–24	5.6

Note a: Data for 2024–25 is not included in this analysis due to the low number of applications received in that year being completed.

Source: ANAO analysis of the department's data.

3.41 The department has not established performance targets for IDMs or timeliness expectations for IDM decision making. The 2024 Independent Review of the National Redress Scheme⁷⁵ observed that a lack of clear expectations for IDMs was likely contributing to inefficiency in the IDM decision-making process.

Quality assurance of decision making

3.42 In April 2021, the department established an Independent Decision-making Quality Framework (Quality Framework) for the Scheme. The Quality Framework describes the:

- roles and responsibilities of IDMs;

⁷⁵ In March 2023, the Government decided to initiate an independent review of the funding and operations of the National Redress Scheme. In October 2023, the Minister for Social Services appointed a consultant to conduct the Independent Review of the National Redress Scheme. The review commenced in November 2023 and the report from the review was finalised in February 2024. The report made 11 recommendations to improve the performance of the Scheme and ensure its suitability and sustainability through to the Scheme's end in 2028. The department agreed with all recommendations and, in April 2024, the Minister accepted the recommendations and noted the department's plans to implement them.

- administrative tools and support for decision making, such as quality checks of documentation during the application management process, and a case allocation process that considers any conflicts of interest of IDMs; and
- the department's arrangements established to support continuous improvement in the quality and consistency of IDM determinations — including IDM panels, quality checks of the IDMs' Statement of Reasons⁷⁶, and six-monthly quality reviews.

3.43 The Quality Framework states that 'a currency review of the [Independent] Decision-making Quality Framework will be undertaken annually'. In May 2025 the department advised the ANAO that the annual currency review had not been conducted.

3.44 The Quality Framework states that IDM panels⁷⁷ would be established to enable IDMs to compare cases and information, to promote consistent decision making and to provide support through mentoring and coaching by other panel members, particularly on complex cases. The department advised the ANAO in May 2025 that there are two panel types; the Chief IDM Panel (established in 2022, and discussed further in paragraph 3.45) and a weekly meeting of newly appointed IDMs and their Team Leader (Executive Level 1) to 'receive appropriate support during their initial period'.⁷⁸

3.45 The department established a Chief IDMs Panel⁷⁹ in March 2022 in response to a recommendation from the Second Year Review of the National Redress Scheme⁸⁰. The recommendation was that the Australian Government create the position of a Chief IDM to strengthen consistency and integrity in the Scheme's decision making.⁸¹ The Chief IDMs Panel's terms of reference state that the panel can provide advice and feedback to IDMs through informal discussions or formal referrals. The department advised the ANAO in May 2025 that as at 15 May 2025, 29 applications had been referred to the panel, and the panel 'generally responded [to the IDM] within a one to two week period.' The department did not evaluate the consistency or integrity of the Scheme's decision making before or after the introduction of the Chief IDMs Panel.

3.46 The Quality Framework requires six monthly quality reviews of IDMs' 'Statements of Reasons' as a process intended to ensure consistency in decision-making standards across IDMs. It notes that they are to be conducted at the discretion of section Directors and occur on a 'random sample of each Independent Decision Makers' Statement of Reasons'. The six-monthly checks are

76 There are processes to quality check every Statement of Reasons prior to outcome, and the department advised ANAO in May 2025 that feedback is given to the IDM and Assistant Director, and is used to inform IDM workshops, team meeting discussions and policy development.

77 IDM panels generally consist of six to ten IDMs — with each panel led by a departmental Executive Level 1 Team Leader.

78 The department advised the ANAO in June 2025 that the 'initial period' of support for IDMs was approximately six months.

79 The Chief IDMs Panel's terms of reference state that the panel comprises five senior experienced Independent Decision Makers.

80 Kruk, Robyn, AO, Second Year Review of the National Redress Scheme, 26 March 2021 available from <https://www.nationalredress.gov.au/about/about-scheme/reports-and-statistics/second-anniversary-review> [accessed 27 March 2025].

81 Second Year Review of the National Redress Scheme, 26 March 2021, Recommendation 3.9(c), p. 20, available from <https://www.nationalredress.gov.au/about/about-scheme/reports-and-statistics/second-anniversary-review> [accessed 27 March 2025].

in addition to the quality assurance checks that occur during the decision-making phase. The department advised the ANAO in May 2025 that the six-monthly quality reviews have not occurred.

Recommendation no. 2

3.47 The Department of Social Services review and implement the Scheme's Independent Decision-making Quality Framework.

Department of Social Services response: *Agreed.*

3.48 *The Scheme acknowledges the implementation of the Independent Decision Making Quality Framework (the Framework) will support quality and consistency in IDM decision making. This will improve outcomes for applicants, including through the timeliness of application throughput. The Framework is designed to support IDMs by means of regular communication of Scheme policy advice, guidance around Scheme improvement objectives and initiatives and clarity around expectations of roles and responsibilities.*

3.49 *The department supports the proposal to further update and implement the Scheme's Independent Decision Making Quality Framework. The following actions have been undertaken by the department in response to this recommendation:*

- *On 26 September 2025 the Redress Oversight Committee endorsed the Independent Decision Making Quality Framework to define clear expectations for IDMs and assign clear roles to Redress Officers with work ongoing to implement.*
- *Dedicated resources have been assigned to the immediate implementation of the Framework.*

Fraud and corruption control management framework

3.50 The department's fraud and corruption control framework comprises:

- the Secretary's Instruction on Fraud and Corruption Control;
- a Fraud and Corruption Control Plan 2024–26;
- a Fraud and Corruption Control Policy;
- an Enterprise Fraud and Corruption Risk Assessment; and
- targeted Fraud and Corruption Risk Assessments.⁸²

3.51 Fraud risk is rated as 'extreme' in the June 2023 National Redress Scheme Fraud Risk Assessment (current as at May 2025). Contributions to the audit raised concerns about fraud and 'claim farming' in the Scheme.⁸³ Specifically, prevention, identification and management of suspected cases.

82 Fraud and Corruption Risk Assessments are targeted risk assessments for corporate functions, grant programs and schemes that have a higher level of complexity and fraud and corruption exposure that requires additional risk management.

83 'Claim farming' is defined in the Joint Standing Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme final report *'Redress: Journey to Justice'* (paragraph 10.1) as 'the practice of procuring information about victims to persuade them to make a civil claim.'

3.52 The department developed a National Redress Scheme Fraud Control Plan in 2018 to outline the department's approach for preventing, detecting and responding to fraud in the development of the National Redress Scheme. It states that fraud detection activities, including the legitimacy of application information, applicant identity checks and monetary payments are the responsibility of the Department of Human Services [now Services Australia]. The department did not revise its fraud control plan after the Machinery of Government changes in 2020.

3.53 The Scheme's fraud control plan was not revised to accompany its June 2023 National Redress Scheme Fraud Risk Assessment (discussed in paragraphs 2.37 to 2.43). This is inconsistent with the requirements of the department's Fraud and Corruption Policy (July 2024) which requires an accompanying fraud and corruption control plan for all targeted fraud and corruption risk assessments. The National Redress Scheme Fraud Control Plan and National Redress Scheme Fraud Risk Assessment were updated on 25 and 31 July 2025 respectively.

3.54 With concerns about emerging trends in potential fraud the department commissioned a review of the Scheme's fraud risk and assurance arrangements.⁸⁴ The report stated that the June 2023 National Redress Scheme Fraud Risk Assessment had not established due dates for the proposed treatments. The report recommended that, given the risk ratings in the fraud risk assessment (which include one extreme, two high and one medium rated fraud risks), as well as the trend of suspected fraud, that the department establish realistic timeframes for each proposed treatment, in conjunction with a strategy to monitor implementation of treatments. The report was not considered by the department's Audit and Risk Committee. The Scheme's risk assessment update in July 2025 included due dates for the proposed treatments.

3.55 The fraud review (October 2023) identified 'at least 60 historical events not previously referred that may be referred to [the Audit and Assurance Branch] once capacity allows the Redress Data and Assurance team to revisit these matters.' In May 2025 the department advised the ANAO that it was unable to confirm if these matters were subsequently referred to the Audit and Assurance Branch, and that a referral tracking process was established in 2024.

3.56 In April 2025, the department advised the ANAO that between July 2018 and 9 April 2025, there were 137 referrals for fraud/corruption assessments related to the Scheme, 58 per cent of which were the result of external tipoffs, 38 per cent were identified through internal processes and four per cent through a combination of both internal and external.⁸⁵

3.57 The referrals of suspected Scheme fraud or corruption concerned the provision of false and misleading information (87 per cent) or other matters such as the misuse of identity, payment interception and impersonating a public official. The department further advised that of the 137 referrals, 11 per cent had been passed on to investigation (of which 67 per cent were currently open, 20 per cent had been prosecuted, and 13 per cent were closed).

3.58 The department advised the ANAO in July 2025 that it 'analyses trends relating to both suspected and affirmed Scheme fraud, as well as instances of irregular or linked applications (which are possibly representative of fraud)' and that there 'appears to be a growing trend of potentially false applications being submitted to the Scheme.' The department provided an example of a

84 A report on the Scheme's fraud risk and assurance arrangements was prepared by Yardstick Advisory Pty Ltd in October 2023. Contract Notice Number CN3985663.

85 Internal processes include internal data matching, internal detection and internal tipoff.

2023 departmental briefing to the Secretary about growing trends in clusters of linked applications, applications with similar content and applications with limited detail. As a result, the Secretary led a fraud and assurance governance forum with departmental stakeholders that had fraud or redress responsibilities, where fraud and assurance statistics were discussed.

Does the department have appropriate processes for reviews and complaints of Scheme decisions?

The *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018* and the department's Internal Assessment Guide establishes the framework for Scheme determination revocations and reviews. The department's Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures and Scheme Complaints Management Framework establishes the framework for managing complaints. Review outcomes were regularly reported to the Group Executive. Data and reporting on complaints changed over time, with no standard procedures to ensure it was capturing consistent and complete complaint themes and extension data since the start of the Scheme, limiting the information available to the department to inform continuous improvement. Since 2019–20, 436 revocations had been considered of which 57 per cent were granted. Over the life of the Scheme the department received 1,111 requests for review (two per cent of total Scheme applications) of which 77 per cent confirmed the original decision. The average processing time for a review was 3.5 months. Between July 2022 and November 2024, there were 1,062 complaints received, of which 22 per cent were outside the department's requirement for an outcome within 28 days.

Revocations

3.59 Under section 29 of the Act, the Scheme Operator (Operator) can revoke a determination on an application for redress.⁸⁶⁸⁷ The Secretary has delegated the power to revoke a determination to IDMs. The IDM who made the original decision may choose to revoke a determination if, after the decision has been made and before the applicant accepts or rejects their redress offer:

- the Scheme receives information that the IDM did not have before making the determination; and
- the information is such that, if the IDM had the information before a determination was made, they would have made a different determination.⁸⁸

3.60 The Internal Assessment Guide (see paragraph 3.38) is the primary source of guidance for Scheme staff and IDMs on revocations. Information about the revocation process is available to the public in the department's Guide to Social Policy Law, National Redress Guide.⁸⁹

3.61 The department advised the ANAO on 16 May 2025 that 436 revocations had been considered since 2019–20, of which 248 (57 per cent) were granted, 115 (26 per cent) were not

86 *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018*, subsection 29(4).

87 The effect of a revocation is that the determination is considered never to have been made, and therefore the application is active again and a new determination must be made.

88 *ibid.*, subsection 29(5).

89 Department of Social Services, guides to Social Policy Law, version 1.25, 20 March 2025, Key terms, 1.1.R.65 Revocation and part 4.13 Reassessment of determination, available from <https://guides.dss.gov.au/national-redress-guide> [accessed 17 June 2025].

granted, and 70 (16 per cent) were still in progress. The outcome of granted revocations is detailed in Table 3.9. The number of revocations is not reported to the Group Executive.

Table 3.9: Outcomes of granted revocation requests from 2019–20 to 13 May 2025^a

Granted revocation outcome	Number of granted revocations
Increase in monetary component	182 (73%)
Decrease in monetary component	24 (10%)
No change to monetary component	42 (17%)

Note a: Data is at 13 May 2025. Data considers the eligibility and monetary components of the determination and does not include specifics of the responsible institutions or prior payment assessments which could be altered without impacting components of redress.

Source: Department data.

Reviews

Review process

3.62 The Act (Part 4–1) sets out the legislative framework for a review of a determination if a person is dissatisfied with an offer of redress.⁹⁰ A review can be requested by an applicant after a determination is made but before the offer is accepted or rejected, and the application is considered ‘completed’. The Act requires the Operator to follow specific legislative requirements to undertake a review of a determination. Appendix 3 summarises the main tasks in the review process.

3.63 The department provides internal reports to the Group Manager and Branch Managers that include reporting on the volume, status, and outcome of applications subject to a review of determination. The department does not have a process or procedure to guide when and how information from outcome review data is used to inform process improvements.

Opportunity for improvement

3.64 The department could develop and implement a process of when and how to use information from review outcome data to inform process improvements.

3.65 The Scheme is exempt from consideration by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (and its replacement the Administrative Review Tribunal⁹¹) under the *Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act 1977*. The Second Interim Report of the Joint Select Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme (November 2021) notes that ‘this means that the only avenues remaining for judicial appeal may be to the Federal Court under section 39B of the Judiciary Act 1903 or the High Court of Australia under section 75 of the Australian Constitution.’

90 *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018*, chapter 4, part 4–1

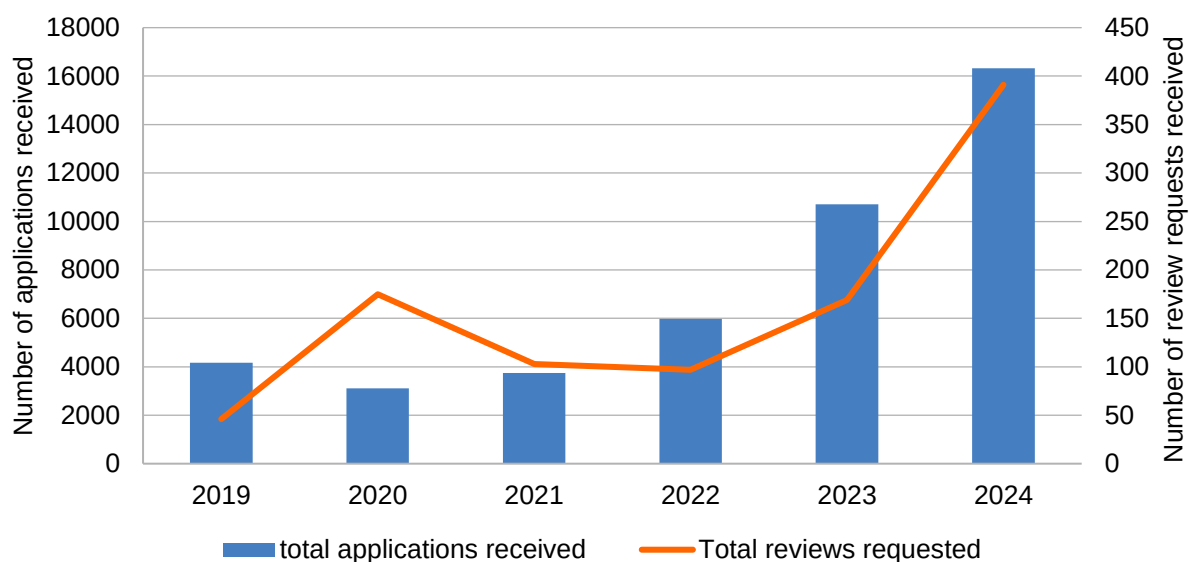
91 The Administrative Appeals Tribunal was replaced by the Administrative Review Tribunal on 14 October 2024. Available from: <https://www.art.gov.au/about-us/accountability-and-reporting> under the heading ‘Administrative Appeals Tribunal’ [accessed 13 May 2025].

3.66 Contributions to the audit raised concerns about the timeliness of review decisions and a lack of clarity about the process. Participating Institution contributions noted that there was no avenue for Participating Institutions to request a review.

Review outcomes

3.67 As at 24 April 2025, the department had received 1,111 requests for review of original determinations, (two per cent of Scheme applications).⁹² There was a 131 per cent growth rate in review requests between 2023 and 2024, which is consistent with the growth in applications over the same period (see Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3: Number of applications and review requests, by year received



Source: ANAO analysis of the department's data.

3.68 The most common reasons recorded for a review request was disagreement with the overall decision and with the monetary payment decision. The reasons recorded for review requests are summarised in Table 3.10.

Table 3.10: Reasons recorded for requests to review determination

Reason given for review request	Number of requests
Disagree with overall decision	380
Disagree with monetary payment	66
Disagree with extreme circumstances assessment	38
Disagree with prior payment assessment	31
Disagree with Participating Institution and/or institutional responsibility assessment	14
Disagree with legislation	< 10
Disagree with impact assessment	< 10

⁹² The proportion of applications that requested a review was calculated on applications received between 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2024, and requests for review received over the same period.

Reason given for review request	Number of requests
Disagree with counselling component	< 10
No reason recorded	661

Note: Multiple reasons can be recorded for a single request. Therefore, the numbers in Table 3.10 exceed the number of review requests received.

Source: ANAO analysis of the department's data.

3.69 Over the life of the Scheme 93 IDMs were appointed, of which 88 had at least one request for a review of their original decision. The maximum number of review requests received by a single IDM was 62. Fourteen per cent of the IDMs with at least one review requested on their original decision accounted for 47 per cent of the review requests.

3.70 As at 24 April 2025, 54 per cent of the applications with a review request have had their application completed. The average time taken, from the date the review was requested to the date the applicant was advised of the review outcome, was 3.5 months.

3.71 Of the completed applications with a review request, the review affirmed 77 per cent of the original decisions. Of the review determinations that did not affirm the original decision (33 per cent), 83 per cent resulted in an increase in redress. Table 3.11 provides a breakdown of review outcomes.

Table 3.11: Redress review outcomes as at 24 April 2025

Review outcomes	Number of reviews
Number of completed applications that involved a review	597
Review decision — original decision affirmed	462 (77% of review decisions)
Review decision — original decision altered	133 (22% of review decisions)
Altered outcomes	Number of reviews
Altered outcome — increase	111 (83% of altered decisions)
Altered outcome — no monetary impact	19 (14% of altered decisions)
Altered outcome — decrease	<10
Altered outcome — eligibility change	<10
Coding in progress	<10

Source: ANAO analysis of the department's data.

3.72 Of the 133 reviews where the reviewing IDM disagreed with the original IDM decision, 53 per cent were due to a disagreement with the original eligibility decision or the extreme circumstances decision⁹³ (see Table 3.12).

93 Disagreement with extreme circumstances is when the reviewing IDM disagrees with how the extreme circumstance was applied, taking into consideration guidance in the Assessment Framework Policy Guidelines and Internal Assessment Guide; this may include new information provided by the applicant/institution post legislative change in early 2024.

Table 3.12: Reasons for review IDM disagreement with original IDM decision

Reasons for review disagreement with original decision	Number of reviews
Disagree with extreme circumstances	45 (30%)
Disagree with eligibility	34 (23%)
Disagree with prior payment	16 (11%)
Disagree with level sexual abuse	14 (9%)
Disagree with responsible institution	10 (7%)
Other	10 (7%)
Disagree with reasonable likelihood	<10
Disagree with one or more institutions found responsible	<10
Disagree with institutional vulnerability	<10

Source: ANAO analysis of the department's data.

3.73 Of the 88 IDMs that had at least one review requested on an original decision they had made, the reviewing IDM disagreed at least once with the original decision of 48 IDMs (55 per cent). Of the 48 IDMs who had a review result that disagreed with their original decision, eight IDMs (17 per cent) had five or more such review results, with the maximum for a single IDM being nine.

Complaints

Complaint process

3.74 A complaint is defined by the department as:

Expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation, related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

3.75 The department has a Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure (December 2024, February 2022), and a Scheme Complaints Management Framework (the Complaints Framework, March 2023) which provides guidance for staff who receive, respond to or manage complaints for the Scheme.

3.76 The Scheme's Service Charter (August 2022) notes the Group will try to:

- make it easy for someone to submit a complaint;
- provide a response within 28 days of receiving a complaint;
- keep complainants informed about the progress of their complaint; and
- learn from complaints to improve the Scheme.⁹⁴

3.77 Contributions to the audit highlighted different levels of knowledge and understanding about the complaints process and outcomes.

94 National Redress Scheme, *Service Charter for your National Redress Scheme*, p. 15, available from <https://www.nationalredress.gov.au/apply/service-charter> [accessed 10 March 2025].

3.78 If a complaint is considered to be complex, and the 28-day response timeframe is unlikely to be met, the Redress Complaints team can request an extension from the Audit and Assurance Branch, citing the reason(s) the extension is required. In June 2022 the department started recording if an extension was given. The reason for the extension was not recorded.

3.79 If an applicant is dissatisfied with their complaint outcome they can request a review of the complaint response. Where an applicant remains dissatisfied with the Scheme's handling of their complaint, a complaint can be escalated to either the Commonwealth Ombudsman or the Australian Human Rights Commission. Additionally, complaints can be escalated to the Minister for Social Services' Office or directly to a member of the department executive.

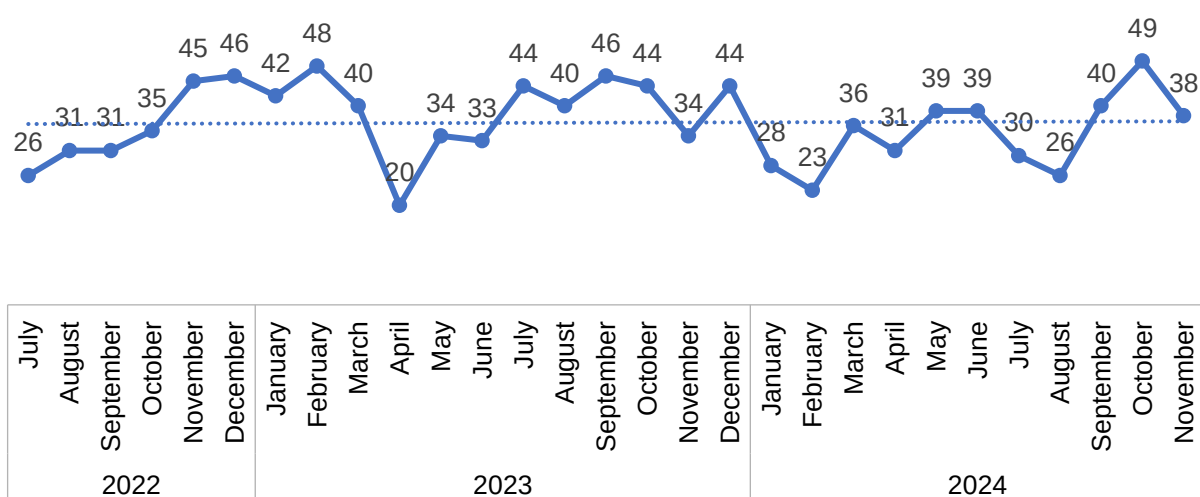
3.80 The department has recorded complaints related to the Scheme since July 2018. The recording of the complaint topic or theme was a free text data field until June 2022, limiting analysis for improving processes. Complaint Theme Guidelines were implemented in May 2023 to improve the recording of complaint themes.

3.81 No complaint reporting within the department was done prior to 2022 or from November 2024 to January 2025. Data on the number of complaints related to the Scheme were reported to the department's Scheme Operations Committee from March to December 2023. The data covered how many complaints had been made, and how they were received: it did not include data on response timeliness, extensions or common themes. Since February 2025 complaint data has been incorporated into a monthly dashboard to the Scheme's Performance Committee.

Complaint outcomes

3.82 Between July 2022 and November 2024, the Scheme received a total of 1,062 complaints (Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4: Complaints about the Redress Scheme received by the department between July 2022 and November 2024



Source: ANAO analysis of the department's data.

3.83 For the complaints recorded as completed between July 2022 and November 2024,⁹⁵ 30 per cent of the complaints were upheld. The average number of days to process a complaint was 19.9 calendar days, ranging from a minimum of less than one calendar day to a maximum of 182 calendar days. The department's overall policy has specific performance measures for responding to a complaint, stating that 90 per cent of all complaints will be responded to within 28 days. For the examined period, 78 per cent of completed complaints received a response with 28 days. The complaints tracker data does not include detail on any extensions granted to the processing deadline.

Opportunity for improvement

3.84 The department could develop standard operating procedures and systems to improve data quality for Scheme complaints and ensure it is consistently reporting on complaints themes, to inform continuous improvement, and document how the reporting informs process improvements.

3.85 The Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman's (the Ombudsman) role is to act as an independent oversight body to ensure that Australian Government agencies act fairly, lawfully and efficiently in their dealings with the public.⁹⁶

3.86 The Ombudsman advised the ANAO that as of 25 March 2025, the Office had received a total of 75 complaints about the National Redress Scheme. The Office may decline to investigate a response for several reasons,⁹⁷ as outlined under sections 5 and 6 of the *Ombudsman Act 1976*. Following an assessment of the 75 Scheme complaints, eight matters resulted in an investigation by the Office. The overall themes of the complaints investigated were described by the Ombudsman's office as:⁹⁸

- five investigations related to delays or failure to act by the department; and
- three investigations related to advice given by the department.

95 The ANAO applied a data logic for the analysis where complaints that had a status of 'Completed', and a date stamp for the fields 'Date Complaint Made' and 'Date Complaint Completed', where the date completed was after the date complaint made. (n=1,002 complaints).

96 Commonwealth Ombudsman, *Our role*, available from <https://www.ombudsman.gov.au/about/our-role> [accessed 17 March 2025].

97 The three most common reasons for declining to investigate Redress Scheme related complaints were: the complainant had not tried to resolve the matter with the department in the first instance, in accordance with subsection 6(1A) of the Act; the investigation was not warranted in all circumstances for a variety of reasons (including: complaints about the delay were still within the department standards; remedies had already been provided; complainants seeking merit review of primary decision); the complaint was either lapsed as the complainant did not engage with our Office, or the complainant elected to withdraw their complaint.

98 This figure differs from that reported by the department as each entity used different methodology for its reporting.

Does the department have fit for purpose processes to manage debt recovery for the Scheme?

The *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018* and the department's Accounts Receivable, Debt Management and Recovery Policy establishes a framework for Scheme debt recovery. There have been invoicing processes since 2020. Invoice reconciliation did not commence until 2024. Debt management reporting to the department did not support evaluation of cost recovery performance. As at 30 June 2025, \$1.78 billion had been invoiced for the Scheme, of which 92 per cent had been recovered from Participating Institutions.

3.87 The Act (Part 6–3) and the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Rules 2018 (the Rules) specify the debt recovery arrangements for the Scheme. The department has summarised the funding contribution liability responsibilities for Participating Institutions in its Guides to Social Policy Law: National Redress Guide (the Guide) available on the department's website.

3.88 The department has had an Accounts Receivable, Debt Management and Recovery Policy since 2017 which outlines the responsibilities of officials in managing debt recovery. It states that the department is committed to ensuring accurate, timely and efficient receipting of amounts owed to the department. In 2023 the department established a National Redress Scheme Debt Management and Imposition Late Payment Penalty Position Paper (endorsed by the Redress Policy and Strategy Committee 8 March 2023) which outlined the Scheme's approach to the management of debt owed by institutions.

3.89 Once a redress payment has been made and/or counselling and psychological services have been paid for by the Scheme Operator, the department issues an invoice to the liable Participating Institution(s), or funder(s) of last resort,⁹⁹ on a quarterly basis, to recoup the upfront costs to the Australian Government.

3.90 As at 30 June 2025, \$1.78 billion had been invoiced for the Scheme, of which 95 per cent (\$1.69 billion) had been recovered from Participating Institutions, with 65 per cent of the invoices issued to Participating Institutions having had at least one payment. Standard Operating Procedures for quarterly invoicing were developed in 2020, and updated in 2021, 2023 and 2024. The department advised the ANAO in October 2024, that the invoicing process was not standardised prior to 2020 and involved the manual creation of invoices.

3.91 The department advised the ANAO that as at October 2024 there were 18 active payment plan arrangements in place¹⁰⁰, with a total balance remaining of \$10,467,591. The department's National Redress Scheme Debt Management and Imposition of Late Payment Penalty Position Paper (March 2023) states that 'payment arrangements with the Scheme range in length from six to 66 months.'

99 'Funder of last resort' is an arrangement where a participating government institution or participating jurisdiction has agreed to pay the redress component for a specific non-government institution that is defunct or unable to join the Scheme.

100 The Act (section 153) allows the Operator (Secretary), or an appropriate delegate (Scheme SES officers), to enter into a deferment or payment arrangement with a Participating Institution to pay a funding contribution debt that it owes to the Australian Government.

3.92 As at 30 June 2025, 45 waivers¹⁰¹ of funding contributions had been recorded in the financial data over the life of the Scheme, with an average individual value of \$54,263 and a total amount waived of \$2,441,856. If a Participating Institution or funder of last resort is not satisfied with a waiver decision, they may request the Operator reconsider the decision within 21 days of the notice of decision. The department advised the ANAO on 26 March 2025 that since the start of the Scheme, eight requests for a review of a waiver decision were made, none of which resulted in a change to the waiver decision.

3.93 Regular invoice reconciliation is important for maintaining accurate records and detecting payment issues and potential fraud. The Scheme has no invoice reconciliation records covering Quarter 1 2018–19 to Quarter 4 2019–20, and Quarter 1 2021–22 to Quarter 4 2021–22. All the available reconciliation records are dated 2024, indicating that the records prior to 2024 were done retrospectively.

Timeliness of payments

3.94 The Act (subsection 153(1)(b)) specifies that funding contributions are payable within 30 days of the date of the invoice. As at 30 June 2025:

- 71 per cent of invoices had received a first payment or been paid in full within 30 days of the date issued (ranging from 64 per cent in 2021–22 to 79 per cent in 2024–25);¹⁰²
- the average number of days before the department received at least one invoice payment was 42 days from date of issue, with the longest being 1,249 days; and;
- the proportion of invoices that received at least a first payment, or were paid in full, over 60 days from the date the invoice was issued ranged from 25 per cent in 2020–21 to six per cent in 2023–24.

Monitoring and reporting of funding contributions

3.95 Prior to 2023 there was no monitoring and tracking of funding contribution invoices and payments for the Scheme. In 2023 the department established a National Redress Scheme Debt Management and Imposition Late Payment Penalty Position Paper (see paragraph 3.88) which established the monitoring and tracking process. The paper did not specify what debt management information would be reported to the executive, and when, to support evaluation of performance.

3.96 Deferment of payments approved under section 153 of the Act, and payment plans approved under section 170 of the Act, were manually recorded and tracked by the department. The department advised the ANAO in October 2024 that payment plans and extensions were reported via a Financial Matters report, until 14 September 2023. This file was regularly overwritten with no version control. The only copy held by the department is dated 14 September 2023. The department further advised that from September 2023 to May 2024 new or amended payment plans were reported monthly to the Branch Manager in a Payment Arrangement Tracker. No record of this was available. In August 2024 a financial monitoring dashboard was tested. The department advised the ANAO in April 2025 that it had not been consistently used and work was underway to develop a new process for reporting on deferred payments and payment plans.

101 The Act (section 156) states that the Operator may waive the payment of all or part of funding contributions or late payment penalties payable by an institution if the Operator is satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances justifying the waiver.

102 Excluding 2018–19 and 2024–25 as partial year data.

3.97 The department did not monitor Participating Institutions for potential late payment penalties prior to April 2023. The department advised the Deputy Secretary in March 2023 that this was the result of an inability to identify aged debtors due to system limitations and not having debt management arrangements in place. On 4 March 2023 the acting Deputy Secretary, Families and Communities approved a waiver of any potential late payment penalties that had been incurred from the start of the Scheme to 31 March 2023. From April 2023, the department commenced monitoring for late payment penalties. The department advised the ANAO in April 2025 that from 2022–2023 to 2023–2024, seven institutions had late payment penalties identified, totalling \$6,680.99, all of which were waived by the acting Deputy Secretary.

Opportunity for improvement

3.98 The department could develop and implement a process to monitor and report to the department on Scheme funding contribution invoices and payments, including:

- how much of the total debt had been recovered to date;
- what write-offs have been agreed;
- what was the projection for recovery based on due dates and write-offs;
- how efficiently was the recovery happening; and
- whether the recovery is on track to cover the costs as anticipated.

This would enable the executive to assess effectiveness and monitor progress in exercising its governance and performance management functions.

End of Scheme planning

3.99 The department received advice in February 2023 that it is appropriate for the department to enter into, modify or terminate arrangements to repay redress debts (in accordance with section 170 of the Act) that extend past the Scheme's end date, as:

the debt to repay a funding contribution is a Commonwealth debt and the Department is obligated to seek repayment of the debt until it is repaid (or meets other specified criteria) under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*.

3.100 The department's National Redress Scheme Debt Management and Imposition of Late Payment Penalty Position Paper (March 2023) states that 'there has been a convention that payment arrangements do not extend beyond the life of the Scheme. However, the delegate may extend the repayment period to cover a longer period if the institution is able to demonstrate a need for it.' As at 23 July 2025 one payment arrangement had a due date three years beyond the Scheme's end date.

4. Monitoring and reporting of performance and reviews

Areas examined

This chapter examines whether the Department of Social Services (the department) has established appropriate arrangements to monitor and report on the efficiency and effectiveness of the National Redress Scheme (the Scheme).

Conclusion

The department had partly appropriate arrangements to monitor and report on the efficiency and effectiveness of the National Redress Scheme. Performance measures were publicly reported annually, and internal reports on operational statistics were established. The measures lacked comprehensive tracking of application processing, progress and efficiency. No departmental oversight existed for Services Australia's delivery against service levels, limiting insight into effectiveness. Since 2018, six reviews made 142 recommendations, with 76 per cent agreed to by the government and 88 per cent of those were implemented by June 2025. Monitoring and reporting limitations constrained the department's ability to assess the Scheme's efficiency and achievement of intended outcomes.

Areas for improvement

The ANAO made three recommendations aimed at establishing governance arrangements that provide oversight of the Scheme's service delivery arrangements with Services Australia, establishing efficiency indicators for the Scheme to enable the department to exercise their performance management functions effectively, and developing a framework for reporting on review and inquiry reports about the Scheme.

The ANAO also identified one opportunity for improvement: for the department to ensure that the procedures for developing internal reports are documented and maintained to provide confidence in the data integrity for decision making.

4.1 Under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act), a Commonwealth entity must keep records that properly record and explain the entity's performance, and measure and assess its performance in achieving its purposes. Performance information is of most value when it is used to assess whether an entity's purposes are being met, and to provide a mechanism for continuous improvement. In addition to improving performance, well constructed and complete performance information can have an impact on improving productivity, policy and program implementation, integrity and innovation.

4.2 The *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018* (the Act) requires the Scheme Operator to prepare a report for the Minister for Social Services on the operation of the Scheme as soon as practicable after the end of each financial year.¹⁰³ The matters that the report must include are set out in section 75 of the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Rules 2018 (the Rules). The Minister for Social Services must present the report to the Parliament.

103 *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018*, section 187.

4.3 Section 192 of the Act requires the Minister for Social Services to conduct a review of the operation of the Scheme as soon as possible after the second and the eighth anniversaries of the start of the Scheme.¹⁰⁴ In addition, Parliament established the Joint Select Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme (September 2019 to April 2022) and the Joint Standing Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme (July 2022 to November 2024 and restarting July 2025) to inquire into, and report on, the response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, including the implementation and operation of the Scheme. As at June 2025 there have been six reports from reviews or enquiries into the Scheme.

4.4 The ANAO examined overall Scheme performance reporting, including reporting on the performance of Services Australia under the Redress Program Delivery Services Schedule; what reporting is done on the efficiency of the Scheme; and the monitoring of the implementation of recommendations from reviews and inquiries into the Scheme.

Is appropriate reporting done on the Scheme to monitor progress and outcomes?

The department included reporting on the Scheme in its corporate plans and annual reports since 2018–19, using the same performance measures since 2022–23. The performance measures did not monitor application processing times for the Scheme from start to finish, and did not reflect the progress of applications to the Scheme. The department established internal reports for the Group Executive that provided statistics on applications to the Scheme. The internal reports did not record the methodology and how it changed over time. There was no reporting process or established governance arrangement within the department that enabled oversight of performance for the Scheme’s services against the agreed service levels with Services Australia.

Corporate plans

4.5 The Department of Finance describes a corporate plan as:

designed to be a Commonwealth entity’s primary planning document. It provides Parliament, the public and stakeholders with an understanding of the purposes of an entity, its objectives, functions or role. It sets out how the entity undertakes its key activities and role and how it will measure performance in achieving its purposes.¹⁰⁵

4.6 The department’s corporate plans from 2018–19 to 2024–25 identify four outcomes: Social Security, Families and Communities, Disability and Carers, and Housing. The Scheme forms part of the Families and Communities outcome (Program 2.1).¹⁰⁶

104 *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018*, chapter 7, part 7-3, division 5, subsection 192(3)(4).

105 Department of Finance, Managing Commonwealth Resources, *What is a corporate plan?*, available from <https://www.finance.gov.au/government/managing-commonwealth-resources/corporate-plans-commonwealth-entities-rmg-132/what-corporate-plan> [accessed 15 May 2025].

106 The Administrative Arrangements Orders on 13 May 2025 and 26 June 2025 resulted in changes to the Social Services Portfolio which will be reflected in the department’s 2025–26 Corporate Plan.

4.7 The department had five performance measures and associated targets in its 2024–25 Corporate Plan to publicly report on the performance of the Scheme. Appendix 4 shows how these have changed over time.

4.8 The department's performance measures for the Scheme do not monitor application processing times for the Scheme from start to finish, and do not reflect the progress of applications. The 2024 Independent review report included a recommendation to develop and implement a concise set of whole-of-scheme performance measures and key performance indicators that enable oversight and drive efficient whole-of-scheme administration (recommendation 4). The department advised the Minister for Social Services in June 2024 that it was developing whole-of-scheme performance measures and key performance indicators that would enable oversight and drive efficient whole-of-scheme administration. In May 2025 the Redress Group approved new key performance indicators 'expanding ... the management information available to the Scheme executive ... [allowing] for clear identification of slippage against targets for monthly and annual application finalisation.'

Annual reports

4.9 The department acquits the reporting requirement of the Act by including a report on the operation of the Scheme in its annual reports, which it has done since 2018–19.¹⁰⁷ The annual reports include the department's assessment of its performance against the measures detailed in the department's corporate plan for the same financial year (see Appendix 4). The annual reports for 2019–20 and 2021–22 included reporting against performance measures that were not in the corresponding corporate plan as noted in Appendix 4.

Other reports

4.10 Since September 2019, the department has published monthly 'Updates to the Scheme' reports on its website. The reports include information on institutions that have declined to participate in the Scheme, the Minister's Governance Board meeting outcomes, changes to the Scheme during the reporting period, and updated Scheme data.¹⁰⁸

4.11 Since October 2020, the department has periodically published 'Strategic Success Measures' reports on its website with the purpose of providing 'survivors and the broader community an indication of how the Scheme is performing across three priority areas: survivor experience, health of the Scheme and equity of access'.¹⁰⁹ Since December 2022 these reports have included reporting against the Scheme's performance measures. As at 21 May 2025, the most recent Strategic Success Measures report published on the Scheme's website was June 2024.

107 *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018* chapter 7, division 5, section 187.

108 Department of Social Services, National Redress Scheme, Updates to the Scheme [internet], available from <https://www.nationalredress.gov.au/about/about-scheme/updates-scheme> [accessed 17 January 2025].

109 Department of Social Services, National Redress Scheme, Strategic Success Measures [internet], available from <https://www.nationalredress.gov.au/about/about-scheme/reports-and-statistics/strategic-success-measures> [accessed 20 January 2025].

Internal reports

4.12 The department has established internal reports that provide various statistics on applications to the Scheme. Table 4.1 describes the internal reports that were used by the executive within the department to monitor Scheme performance, as at November 2024.

Table 4.1: Departmental internal reports on Scheme performance (as at November 2024)

Report	Description	Distribution ^a (recipients)	Frequency	Introduced	Data source
Weekly Progress Report	Data on the status of applications to the Scheme and redress payment data. Does not include reporting against annual performance measures.	Deputy Secretary's office; Group Manager; Branch Managers; Business Improvement Taskforce.	Weekly	August 2021	Not specified
Weekly Snapshot Report	Scheme statistics to date including applications processed, application outcomes, payments, and institution engagement. Reports from 22 July 2022 include reporting against annual performance measures.	Deputy Secretary's office; Group Manager; Branch Managers; Business Improvement Taskforce.	Weekly	August 2021	All data sourced from Enterprise Data Warehouse (EDW)
NRS Biannual Report	Statistics for the National Redress Scheme (the Scheme) for the six monthly reporting period. It provides analysis on the progress of applicant and institution interactions with the Scheme, compared to the prior reporting period and life of Scheme figures where applicable. Does not include reporting against annual performance measures.	Group Manager; Branch Managers; State and Territory jurisdictions.	Twice a year	December 2018	Not specified
Performance Committee Dashboard	Data snapshot that provides statistics of all applications currently in the system, breaking down reasons, trends, demographics, and myGov user data from Services Australia. reports on Scheme workforce and resourcing. Includes reporting against annual performance measures.	Deputy Secretary's office; Performance Committee members (Group Manager and Branch Managers).	Monthly	May 2024	Not specified

Report	Description	Distribution ^a (recipients)	Frequency	Introduced	Data source
Service Delivery Dashboard ^b	Data, trends, and analysis on application caseload, scheme workforce, incarcerated applicants, and uptake of support services. Does not include reporting against annual performance measures.	Minister's Office, Secretary's office, Deputy Secretary's office, Group Manager, Branch Managers/	Every two months ^a	August 2024	Not specified

Note a: Based on the department's advice.

Note b: The department advised the ANAO in May 2025 that the Scheme ceased producing the dashboard due to the recent change of Minister and it 'was working with the new Minister's Office to determine the most appropriate way of providing redress data.'

Source: Department's advice to the ANAO and the department's records.

4.13 The content, frequency and data sources for internal reports have changed over time. The reports do not specify the data methodology or highlight when the methodology has changed and why.

Opportunity for improvement

4.14 The department could ensure that procedures for developing internal reports for the executive are documented and maintained (including data definitions and version control), to provide confidence in data integrity.

Performance reporting under the Bilateral Management Agreement

4.15 As set out in paragraph 2.14 the service arrangements between the department and Services Australia for the National Redress Scheme were incorporated into the Bilateral Management Arrangement on 24 June 2021.

4.16 The National Redress Scheme Service Arrangement (effective from 24 June 2021 to 27 June 2024)¹¹⁰ specified three high-level 'Key Performance Measures' that Services Australia was required to report against. Reporting against the Key Performance Measures was provided to the department through an Annual Assurance Statement from the Chief Executive Officer of Services Australia. The three Key Performance Measures were:

- timeliness — Applicants receive payments and services for which they are eligible in a timely manner thereby achieving the policy outcome;
- payment integrity — The accuracy of payments and service outlays are meeting relevant benchmarks and respective entities are able to discharge their responsibilities as agreed in the Bilateral Management Arrangement; and
- relationships management — Business Continuity and Integration of Social Services: Planning, systems, processes and infrastructure are integrated and support business continuity and delivers policy outcomes.

4.17 None of the Annual Assurance Statements for 2020–21 to 2023–24 report against the key performance measures for the National Redress Scheme.

4.18 The National Redress Scheme Service Arrangement included 12 Service Level Agreements which set out the expected performance levels for each service provided by Services Australia for the National Redress Scheme. The arrangement does not require Services Australia to report against the expected performance service levels.

4.19 In February 2025, the department advised the ANAO that:

There were limited clearly defined requirements for reporting against Service Levels specified in the various attachments to the 2021 and 2022 Service Arrangements. However, there was regular engagement and reviews of the Service Arrangements which included performance as one of the elements being reviewed. If issues occurred relating to a specific attachment, the 'Contact' against each attachment either liaised with their counterpart in Services Australia to seek resolution of

110 Two versions of the National Redress Scheme Service Arrangement have been agreed between Services Australia and the Department of Social Services — the National Redress Scheme Service Arrangement 24 June 2021, and the Program Delivery Services Schedule for the National Redress Scheme, 28 June 2024.

the issue or escalated via the specified Service Arrangement/Schedule Contact Officer role. There is no evidence of [performance] reports found on ARC, SharePoint or Share drive.

There remains regular engagement, at officer level, to monitor performance as a whole and specific issues/areas of concern and/or blockages.

4.20 On 28 June 2024 the department and Services Australia signed a new arrangement for the Scheme — a Program Delivery Services Schedule (the Schedule) for the National Redress Scheme. It includes a statement that Services Australia will ‘report on performance, conformance and assurance to the department, including system usage metrics’. The Schedule contains no key performance measures for services to the National Redress Scheme.

4.21 The Schedule includes 13 Service Level Agreements which set out the expected performance levels for each service provided by Services Australia for the National Redress Scheme. In May 2025 the department requested reporting from Services Australia against the 2024 Service Level Agreements.

4.22 There is no reporting process or established governance arrangements within the department that provides oversight of Services Australia’s performance against the agreed service levels under the Program Delivery Services Schedule. In February 2025, the department advised the ANAO that discussions were underway between the department and Services Australia to improve visibility and oversight within the department of Services Australia’s delivery of services for the National Redress Scheme.

Recommendation no. 3

4.23 The Department of Social Services establish reporting and governance arrangements with Services Australia that provide whole-of-arrangement oversight of service delivery for the Scheme.

Department of Social Services response: *Agreed.*

4.24 *The department supports the proposal to establish improved governance and reporting arrangements with Services Australia. The department recognises the need to ensure oversight and accountability for service delivery to the Scheme and to ensure that KPIs are met and timely discussions including escalation pathways for optimum system and service delivery functionality.*

4.25 *The following actions have been undertaken by the department in response to this recommendation:*

- The Scheme is currently working with Services Australia to establish a joint governance arrangement to ensure oversight and accountability for service delivery.*
- The Scheme is also working with Services Australia to capture all reporting requirements in a single document to ensure Scheme Executive of full visibility of deliverables and key performance milestones.*
- Progress has already been made with Services Australia reporting on ICT Service Levels. The department has been revising the Services Schedule, removing impractical metrics that cannot be reported on without significant burden, and adding other Service Level Agreements that can be readily reported on so to not introduce any new reporting burden.*

Is there appropriate monitoring and reporting on the efficiency of the Scheme?

The department had not developed efficiency measures for the Scheme. A proxy measure for efficiency of processing applications was established in 2020 that focused on the timeliness of decision making, not the complete application processing period. There was no measure to assess efficiency or effectiveness of the cost recovery process. The department reported that it met its proxy efficiency measure for application processing every year except 2020–21 and 2023–24.

4.26 The Department of Finance states that ‘there is a reasonable expectation that performance measurement would include measures of ... efficiency of the key activities undertaken to achieve purposes, where appropriate.’¹¹¹ The department has no efficiency measures for the Scheme (see Appendix 4).

111 The Department of Finance (RMG 131, Measures of outputs, efficiency and effectiveness) <https://www.finance.gov.au/government/managing-commonwealth-resources/developing-performance-measures-rmg-131/measures-outputs-efficiency-effectiveness> [accessed 5 May 2025]

4.27 The department established a proxy measure¹¹² for efficiency of processing applications in 2020–21:

at least 80 per cent of applications lodged [in that year] that name institutions that participate in the Scheme, have a decision communicated to the applicant within six months of being received by the Scheme.

4.28 The proxy efficiency measure target for processing applications continued until the 2021–22 annual report when the department changed the target from 80 per cent to 70 per cent, to ‘more meaningfully cover the activities of the department in managing the Scheme’. This target was changed again in the 2022–23 Corporate Plan from 70 per cent to 75 per cent. There have been no further changes to the proxy efficiency measure (see Appendix 4).

4.29 In its 2023–24 Annual Report the department states that:

Measuring the timely and quality finalisation of National Redress Scheme applications and offers made to survivors aims to demonstrate the department has efficiently processed and managed applications. This is a measure of proxy efficiency that demonstrates achievement of a key output of the National Redress Scheme key activity.

Targeting ‘at least 75 per cent of applications that name institutions that participate in the Scheme, have a decision communicated to the applicant within 6 months of all required information being received by the Scheme’ demonstrates proxy efficiency of the key activity by showing applications are processed within a timely and reasonable timeframe, and is reflective of the complexity of the assessment process, available resources to process applications, and institutions that have joined the Scheme.

4.30 In the 2023–24 Annual Report the department reported that, ‘the Scheme is implementing measures to improve the efficiency of the application assessment process and deliver outcomes to applicants sooner.’ It notes that:

The Australian Government provided funding in the 2024–25 Budget for new and expanded services to assist applicants to submit ‘more complete’ applications, and to receive independent legal advice from knowmore Legal Services. Additionally, the Scheme will recruit additional Independent Decision Makers to increase the timeliness of providing outcomes to applicants.

4.31 The 2024 Independent Review of the National Redress Scheme recommended that the department ‘develop and implement a concise set of whole of scheme measures of cost and efficiency that enable oversight and drive efficient Scheme administration’ and ‘develop and implement a concise set of whole of scheme performance measures and KPIs that enable oversight and drive efficient whole of scheme administration.’ All recommendations were accepted by the Minister on 24 April 2024 and the department advised the Minister for Social Services on 7 February 2025 that cost and efficiency measures had been implemented as part of a project to prepare the Scheme’s Estimates Variation for 2025–26. In May 2025 the department advised the ANAO that:

The 2025–26 Estimates Variation was informed by the Scheme’s workforce and cost models combined with modelling of the efficiencies already delivered and/or anticipated through the

112 The Department of Finance (RMG 131, Measures of outputs, efficiency and effectiveness) describes a proxy measure as, ‘an indirect measure of the activity which is strongly correlated with the activity to measure effectiveness and/or efficiency of the activity.’ [Measures of outputs, efficiency & effectiveness | Department of Finance](#) [accessed 14 May 2024].

implementation of improvement initiatives. Updated performance measures developed by the Scheme will inform the Scheme's monitoring of its performance and approach to whole of Scheme workforce management, informing future Estimates Variations.

Recommendation no. 4

4.32 The Department of Social Services establish efficiency indicators for the Scheme that enable monitoring and oversight of the efficiency of processing applications and debt recovery activities, and report results publicly.

Department of Social Services response: *Agreed.*

4.33 *Application timeliness is one of the Schemes corporate performance measures reported in the Department's Annual Report as well as included in the 6 monthly success measures, published on the Scheme's website.*

4.34 *The Scheme has implemented a target for 2025-26 to process 8,400 applications or 700 applications per month, including tracking and reporting of this target. The Scheme notes that this will still not yield the efficiency necessary to meet the high numbers predicted by the Australian Government Actuary (AGA) of 89,552 by Scheme end.*

4.35 *The following actions have been undertaken by the department in response to this recommendation:*

- *The Scheme has recently implemented a number of Scheme wide performance measures to increase the focus on outcomes and inform Scheme performance.*
- *The department intends to liaise with Services Australia to leverage off learnings recently implemented regarding efficiency monitoring and effectiveness.*
- *Progress has been made towards developing clearer efficiency measures to inform the future workforce model and assist strategic decision-making regarding resource allocation to increase the efficiency of application processing and deliver more timely outcomes to survivors.*

Has the department established appropriate arrangements to monitor implementation of review recommendations?

There were six reports from reviews or enquiries into the Scheme since 2018, with a total of 142 recommendations. The Australian government agreed (in full or in part) to 76 per cent of the recommendations from the first five reports. There have been periodic progress reports on agreed review recommendations. The department does not have a combined and comprehensive reporting framework for monitoring the implementation of all agreed recommendations. The department advised the Group Executive that 88 per cent of the agreed recommendations had been completed.

4.36 Since 2018 there have been six reports from reviews or enquiries into the Scheme, including four reports from Parliamentary Committees. The Act requires that a further review takes place as soon as possible after the eighth anniversary of the Scheme start date (1 July 2026).¹¹³

4.37 The six reports made a total of 142 recommendations, of which 53 per cent concerned procedures for processing applications and the wellbeing of applicants. Procedures, governance and finance were themes that occurred in recommendations from all six reports.

4.38 The Australian Government has considered the recommendations from the first five reports and supported (in full, part or principle) 86 (76 per cent) of the 113 recommendations (see Table 4.2). The Final Report by the Joint Standing Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme was published in November 2024 and as at July 2025, the Australian Government's response was pending.

Table 4.2: Government response to recommendation actions from the first five reports on the Scheme

Government response	Number of total recommendations
Supported ^a	68
Partially supported	8
Supported in principle	10
Noted	20
Not supported	7

Note a: Supported includes the following government responses — accepted, agreed, supports.

Source: Departmental analysis

4.39 The Redress Group periodically advises the Group Executive, Secretary and Minister for Social Services about progress on implementing agreed recommendations. The department has advised the Secretary that 88 per cent of the agreed actions across the first five reports have been completed.

4.40 There is no single reporting framework for monitoring the implementation of all agreed report recommendations. Updates on the implementation of the Second Year Review recommendations were given to the Group's Policy and Strategy Committee. No updates on other reports were given. The Policy and Strategy Committee was replaced by the Group's Strategic Planning and Risk Committee in 2024, and as at January 2025 it had not received updates on the implementation of agreed recommendations from any of the reports. The departmental Audit and Risk Committee has received updates on issues and risks to implementation of recommendations for three of the six reports. It is unclear how continuity over implementation reporting and monitoring occurred between the six reports.

¹¹³ *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018* chapter 7, part 7-3, division 5, subsection 192(3)(4).

Recommendation no. 5

4.41 The Department of Social Services develop a framework for reporting on all review and inquiry reports about the Scheme. This framework should include:

- (a) a documented process for monitoring, reviewing and closing all report recommendations; and
- (b) a plan for evaluating how the implementation of recommendations has resulted in continuous improvement.

Department of Social Services response: *Agreed.*

4.42 *The Scheme acknowledges the need to ensure effective monitoring and reporting on scheme recommendations and alignment with business improvement activities.*

4.43 *The following actions have been undertaken by the department in response to this recommendation:*

- *The Scheme is implementing a framework to monitor all report recommendations through to completion.*
- *Progress updates will be provided to Scheme governance quarterly and will be used to inform planning for the Scheme's legislated eight-year review.*



Dr Caralee McLiesh PSM
Auditor-General

Canberra ACT
12 November 2025

Appendices

Appendix 1 Entity response



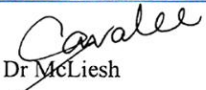
Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Michael Lye
Secretary

Ref: EC25-002370

Dr Caralee McLiesh PSM
Auditor-General
Australian National Audit Office
GPO Box 707
CANBERRA ACT 2601

OfficeoftheAuditorGeneralPerformanceAudit@anao.gov.au


Dear Dr McLiesh

**Department of Social Services' response to the Australian National Audit Office
Proposed Report on the Department of Social Services' management of the National
Redress Scheme.**

Thank you for providing the Department of Social Services (the department) the opportunity to consider the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) proposed audit report on the *Department of Social Services' management of the National Redress Scheme* (the Scheme).

The department acknowledges and accepts the ANAO's overall conclusions on enhancing the administration of the Scheme, through building on existing processes to further strengthen planning, reporting, and engagement activities with a focus on the timeliness of application processing.

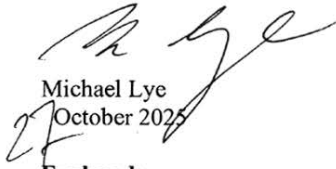
The department notes the identified areas for improvement and many of the recommendations align to work already underway. Revised Scheme project management and governance arrangements were adopted in August 2025 and the department is close to finalising an updated communication plan that will underpin a revised communication framework, informing messaging through to the end of the Scheme. The Scheme's Independent Decision Making Quality Framework has been endorsed and dedicated resourcing assigned to its implementation. The department is also currently working with Services Australia to establish a joint governance body with the Scheme to ensure oversight and reporting of service delivery standards.

A summary of the department's overall response and detailed responses to the 5 recommendations is at **Attachment A**. Editorial matters the department wishes to bring to bring to the ANAO's attention are at **Attachment B** and supporting documentation is at **Attachment C**.

GPO Box 9820 Canberra ACT 2601
Telephone 1300 653 227 • National Relay Service: TTY: 133 677, Speak and listen: 1300 555 727
Internet relay: www.relayservice.com.au
www.dss.gov.au

If you would like further information regarding this response, please contact Grant Lovelock, Group Manager, Redress on 02 5162 5941 or via grant.lovelock@dss.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Michael Lye
27 October 2025

Enclosed:

Attachment A – Summary response

Attachment B – Editorial matters

Attachment C – Supporting documentation

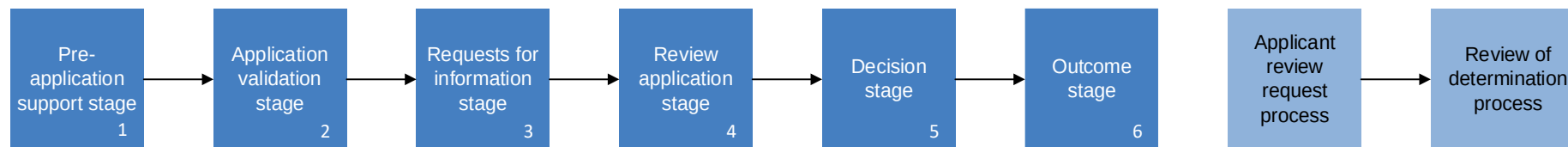
Appendix 2 Improvements observed by the ANAO

1. The existence of independent external audit, and the accompanying potential for scrutiny improves performance. Improvements in administrative and management practices usually occur: in anticipation of ANAO audit activity; during an audit engagement; as interim findings are made; and/or after the audit has been completed and formal findings are communicated.
2. The Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit (JCPAA) has encouraged the ANAO to consider ways in which the ANAO could capture and describe some of these impacts. The ANAO's corporate plan states that the ANAO's annual performance statements will provide a narrative that will consider, amongst other matters, analysis of key improvements made by entities during a performance audit process based on information included in tabled performance audit reports.
3. Performance audits involve close engagement between the ANAO and the audited entity as well as other stakeholders involved in the program or activity being audited. Throughout the audit engagement, the ANAO outlines to the entity the preliminary audit findings, conclusions and potential audit recommendations. This ensures that final recommendations are appropriately targeted and encourages entities to take early remedial action on any identified matters during the course of an audit. Remedial actions entities may take during the audit include:
 - strengthening governance arrangements;
 - introducing or revising policies, strategies, guidelines or administrative processes; and
 - initiating reviews or investigations.
4. In this context, the below actions were observed by the ANAO during the course of the audit. It is not clear whether these actions and/or the timing of these actions were planned in response to proposed or actual audit activity. The ANAO has not sought to obtain assurance over the source of these actions or whether they have been appropriately implemented.
 - The Department of Social Services and Services Australia established a Redress Shared Risk Management Plan in November 2024.
 - On 17 February 2025, the Secretary approved the department's risk appetite statement.
 - In February 2025 the department initiated a monthly email to the Deputy Secretary providing updates on 'high risks' identified in the Scheme's risk management plan, including a draft email for the Deputy Secretary to send to the Secretary informing them of this update.
 - In February 2025 the department established a Redress Oversight Committee.
 - In May 2025 the department initiated discussions with Services Australia about performance reporting.
 - In May 2025 the department agreed additional key performance indicators to enable 'clear identification of slippage against targets for monthly and annual application finalisation'.
 - The National Redress Scheme Fraud Control Plan and National Redress Scheme Fraud Risk Assessment, were updated on the 25 and 31 July 2025 respectively.

Appendix 3 Overview of Scheme application process stages

1. The Department of Social Service's application management process comprised of six processing stages, with additional processes for applicants requesting a review of their application outcome, summarised in Figure A.1.

Figure A.1: Application management and review process summary



Source: The department's Resources Hub, Maps and Resources Suite (MaRS), accessed 30 January 2025.

2. Table A.1 provides an overview of the activities within each of the six stages and two review processes for the Redress Scheme application process as documented in the department's Redress Maps and Resources Suite (MaRS) process maps.

Table A.1: Application management stage descriptions

Application process stage	Stage summary
Pre-application Support	Responding to enquiries from potential applicants to the Scheme including: • general enquiries about the Scheme and/or the application process, including processing timeframes; • questions regarding the participation status of an Institution; • questions about Scheme eligibility; • requests for a paper application form to be sent out; and • support in accessing the Redress Member Service via myGov.

Application process stage	Stage summary
Application validation	An application is received via one of three lodgement methods (post, online using the Redress Member Service hosted in myGov, or in person at a Centrelink Service Centre). Online applications are automatically loaded into the Case Manager system and paper applications are scanned into the Case Manager system using commercial scanning software. Redress staff triage applications which includes: • checking the application meets the criteria set out in section 19(2) of the Act in order for it to be considered valid. • reviewing the application to assess applicant risk and determine whether supplementary processes (for example, where the applicant is eligible for an advance payment) and/or referrals are required (for example there is an indication that there is a risk to the applicant's safety); • determining whether an application needs to be categorised as time sensitive and therefore given higher priority (expedited processing applied)^a; and • assessing the application for completeness of information needed to make a determination. All applicants receive an outbound acknowledgement call from a Redress officer to confirm the applicant's identity and discuss any gaps in the application including the information provided about the institution(s). Where an applicant has not provided enough information, the applicant will be sent a letter requesting more information (section 24 under the Act). The Act sets minimum timeframes that the department can ask the person to provide the information by and allows for extensions to these minimum timeframes.^b When the application has enough information to progress to the next stage, the department issues an acknowledgement letter to the applicant.
Requests for information (from institutions)	The Requests for Information (RFI) stage involves: • drafting a request for information from institution/s identified in the application, under the Act (section 25); • a review of the draft request for information by an RFI Quality Assurance Officer; • issuing the request for information; and • processing responses to the requests for information. The Act sets minimum timeframes that the department can ask the institution to provide the information by and allows for extensions to these minimum timeframes.^b Where required, the department may seek additional information/clarification through a Request for Further Information. (See application validation stage for requests for information from applicants)

Application process stage	Stage summary
Review application	A Redress Officer (guided by a Completeness Checklist) reviews the application, supporting documentation, institution responses and any other information available in the Case Manager system to ensure that an Independent Decision Maker (IDM) has all the information needed to make a determination. A sample of completeness checks are quality checked before the application is allocated to an IDMs.
Decision	The application is assigned to an IDM, who assesses the application and makes a determination in accordance with the Act, the National Redress Scheme Assessment Framework 2018, and the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Rules 2018. The IDMs writes a summary of their determination in a Statement of Reasons document. Redress staff complete a quality review of the Statement of Reasons before it is finalised. The Statement of Reasons is used by Redress staff to draft the outcome advice documents intended for the applicant. The outcome documents are then reviewed by the IDM to ensure their decision is accurately reflected in the documentation.
Outcome	The department: • notifies the applicants (through an outcome determination call followed by mailing out an outcome letter and pack, which includes details of the offer of redress); • notifies the relevant institutions of the outcome (by issuing an institution notice); • receives and processes the applicant's response to the offer of redress — which may be to accept or decline the offer, or to request a review of the determination — and actions the response accordingly; • the applicant may provide the Scheme with additional information after being notified of the decision but before making a response to an offer of redress. This triggers the potential for revocation. If the original IDM agrees that the new information could have made a difference to the determination then the application goes back to the Decision stage; • notifies the institution/s of the applicant's decision; and • notifies the applicant that the department has finalised the application. Designated Redress Officers or Team Leaders undertake quality checks of the department's outcome documents and records at multiple points during this stage.
Applicant review request process	Staff review the review request form and determine the level of the information provided. If required, additional information is requested from the applicant. Case manager is updated and the relevant institution is notified of the applicant's decision to request a review.

Application process stage	Stage summary
Review of Determination process	The review case is allocated to an IDM who did not make the original decision. If an applicant has submitted additional information or documents to support their review application, it is shared with the relevant institution(s). The review IDM may contact the institution and/or the applicant to request more information. The review IDM reaches a review determination and prepares a review statement of reasons. The application then re-enters the Decision stage for processing.

Note a: Applications may be prioritised in circumstances where an applicant has a terminal illness, is elderly, or where there are any other contributing factors the delegate considers appropriate to warrant a higher priority (expedited processing is applied). The department's prioritisation policy (June 2019) allows for three prioritisation levels:

Priority Tier 1 — 'critical' — highly time sensitive — for example, applicant's likely remaining lifespan or extreme vulnerability warrants expedited processing.

Priority Tier 2 — 'high' — moderately time sensitive — for example, considering the applicant's vulnerability or an application received over nine months ago warrants higher priority processing than the standard application. The department's prioritisation policy does not align with its current (since 2019–20) practice which is that applications received over 12 months ago are afforded a higher priority status. That is, cases that are initially prioritised as 'normal' are automatically reprioritised to 'high' in Case Manager after twelve months.

Priority Tier 3 — 'normal' — standard time sensitivity — standard processing

The department's prioritisation policy (June 2019) states that Priority Tier 1 and Priority Tier 2 applications are treated as urgent under the Act. See Table note b.

Cases initially prioritised as 'normal' are automatically reprioritised to 'high' in Case Manager after twelve months. In March 2025, the department advised the ANAO that it was revising its documented prioritisation policy and associated guidance material.

Note b: The *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018* (Section 75A and 75B) sets out the department's powers to request information from applicants (section 24) and institutions (section 25). These powers include legislated minimum timeframes that the department can request that applicants and institutions provide the requested information by (at least four weeks for applications the department considers 'urgent', otherwise at least eight weeks). The legislation does not define 'urgent'. As noted in Table note a, the department's prioritisation policy (June 2019) states that Priority Tier 1 and Priority Tier 2 applications are treated as urgent under the Act. The legislation allows the department to extend these minimum timeframes. There are no legislated maximum timeframes for any such extensions.

Source: ANAO representation of departmental records.

Appendix 4 Scheme performance measures and targets

Table A.2: Redress scheme performance measures as reported in the Department of Social Services' Corporate Plans and Annual Reports between 2018 and 2024.

	Scheme performance measure description and target	ANAO classification of measure type ^a	Source of Measure and result	2018–19 ^b	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25 ^c
1	Number of applications received for the National Redress Scheme	Output	Corporate Plan	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
			Annual Report ^d	4200 ^e	3217	–	–	–	–	–
2	Number of institutions that have joined the National Redress Scheme	Output	Corporate Plan	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
			Annual Report ^d	47 ^e	177	–	–	–	–	–
3	Number of individuals who have received a payment under the National Redress Scheme	Output	Corporate Plan	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
			Annual Report ^d	239	2504	–	–	–	–	–
4	Timely finalisation of National Redress Scheme applications and offers made to survivors — at least 80 per cent of applications that name institutions that participate in the Scheme have a decision communicated to the applicant within six months of being received by the Scheme. ^{f,g,h}	Proxy of efficiency	Corporate Plan	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
			Annual Report ^d	–	–	Not met 27%	–	–	–	–

	Scheme performance measure description and target	ANAO classification of measure type ^a	Source of Measure and result	2018–19 ^b	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25 ^c
5	Timely finalisation of National Redress Scheme applications and offers made to survivors — in the prior six-month period at least 80 per cent of applications lodged in that period that name institutions that participate in the Scheme have a decision communicated to the applicant within six months of being received by the Scheme ^{f, g}	Proxy of efficiency	Corporate Plan	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
			Annual Report ^d	—	—	Not met 22%	—	—	—	—
6	Timely finalisation of National Redress Scheme applications and offers made to survivors — over the most recent calendar year at least 80 per cent of applications lodged that name institutions that participate in the National Redress Scheme and are able to be progressed, have a decision communicated to the applicant within six months of being received by the National Redress Scheme. ^g	Proxy of efficiency	Corporate Plan	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗
			Annual Report ^d	—	—	—	Met ⁱ 79%	—	—	—
7	Ensure quality and timely decisions are made on applications to the Scheme — the Scheme will notify at least 75 per cent of survivors about an outcome within six months of the date that all required information [from applicants and institutions] is received. ^{f, g}	Effectiveness	Corporate Plan	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
			Annual Report ^d	—	—	—	—	Met 77%	Not Met 52%	—

	Scheme performance measure description and target	ANAO classification of measure type ^a	Source of Measure and result	2018–19 ^b	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25 ^c
8	Ensure quality and timely decisions are made on applications to the Scheme — the Scheme will maintain survivor confidence in decision making with at least 95 per cent of initial determinations reflecting the final outcome. ^f	Effectiveness	Corporate Plan	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
			Annual Report ^d	–	–	–	Met 99%	Met 99%	Met 100%	–
9	Maximising engagement of institutions with the National Redress Scheme — engagement of newly named institutions continues, and current participation is maintained, with institutions on board to cover 90 per cent of applications received. ^{a, j}	Output	Corporate Plan	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
			Annual Report ^d	–	–	Met 95%	Met 98%	–	–	–
10	Maximising institution participation with the Scheme — the Scheme will engage and maintain participation, with institutions on board to cover at least 95 per cent of applications in progress ^{a, j}	Output	Corporate Plan	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
			Annual Report ^d	–	–	–	–	Met 99%	Met 99%	
11	Providing applicants a redress payment — the Scheme will issue at least 80 per cent of survivors a redress payment within 14 days of receiving acceptance documentation. ^f	Effectiveness	Corporate Plan	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
			Annual Report ^d	–	–	–	Met 91%	Met 95%	Met 94%	–

	Scheme performance measure description and target	ANAO classification of measure type ^a	Source of Measure and result	2018–19 ^b	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25 ^c
12	Providing applicants a redress payment — the Scheme will issue at least 80 per cent of eligible survivors an advance payment within seven days of receiving acceptance documentation. ^f	Effectiveness	Corporate Plan	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
			Annual Report ^d	—	—	—	—	Met 96%	Met 95%	—

Key: ✓ = Performance measure and target reported in the corporate plan for this year.

✗ = Performance measure and target not reported in the corporate plan for this year.

‘—’ = Not applicable or available

Note a: There were no performance measures for Redress in the 2018–19 Corporate Plan.

Note b: The annual report for 2024–25 had not been published at 25 October 2025.

Note c: In its performance statements the department reported on measures 4 and 5, measures 7 and 8 and measures 11 and 12 as two separate results, against separate targets under a single performance measure. The ANAO considers that these targets are separate measures.

Note d: The department identified measures 9 and 10 as effectiveness measures. The ANAO considers that these are measures of output, not effectiveness measures, as they do not measure outcomes or impact.

Note e: Measures 4, 5, 6 and 7 are similar measures with different targets or timeframes.

Note f: Measures 9 and 10 are the same measure with different targets.

Note g: Result for 2018–19 as reported in the department's 2019–20 Annual Report.

Note h: The wording of the performance measure or target was different in the Annual Report from that in the Corporate Plan.

Note i: This target was changed between the Corporate Plan (where the target was 80 per cent) and the Annual Report (where the target was 70 per cent).

Note j: The department advised the ANAO on the 28 March 2025 that the department reports performance measure results against the year the outcome was advised to the applicant, not the year the application was received, and excludes periods of 'on hold'.

Source: As reported in the department's corporate plans 2018–19 to 2024–25, and the department's Annual Reports 2018–19 to 2023–24