

COMMONWEALTH REDRESS SCHEME

117. Ms J.M. FREEMAN to the Attorney General:

I refer to the commonwealth redress scheme and the appalling claim by the federal Attorney-General, Christian Porter, that Western Australia is letting down victims.

- (1) Can the Attorney General advise the house what the government is doing to promote the interests of Western Australian survivors of child sexual abuse?
- (2) Has information about the scheme been freely available?
- (3) Can the Attorney General outline the ways in which the federal Attorney-General is letting down Western Australia?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY replied:

I thank the member for the question.

- (1)–(3) This is a dreadful, treasonous and treacherous allegation made by a Western Australian federal member of Parliament against his home state. It is absolutely treacherous. Of course, Mr Porter has form in this space of redress. He was part of the cabinet that cut the Labor government's Redress WA scheme from \$80 000 to \$45 000. Mr Porter let down those victims to such an extent, as members of the house will no doubt recall, that Michelle Stubbs who was a Liberal candidate at the 2005 election, on hearing of the Liberal government's slashing and butchering of the Redress WA scheme, returned her letter of apology to the former Premier, Mr Barnett. She said she would never have anything to do with the Liberal Party again. This is recorded in *Hansard* on 8 September 2011. The Western Australian Labor Party has a proud history of supporting survivors of child sexual abuse by introducing Redress WA, which has paid out \$117 million to the survivors of child sexual abuse. The country high schools hostels ex-gratia scheme paid out a further \$3 million. This state had already paid out \$120 million in redress payments before the commonwealth had even thought of doing anything. It has never put out one dollar in compensation, but Mr Porter came out with this dreadful allegation against his home state of Western Australia.

I can advise the member that on 15 November last year, I attended a very disappointing redress conference at InterContinental Sydney, chaired by Mr Porter, where I raised Western Australia's concerns about the commonwealth's intention to exclude from the redress scheme people who have suffered criminal convictions. I said that these people have lived dysfunctional lives by reason of what happened to them as children. When I raised this, 15 people were in the room but Mr Porter just dismissed me and said, "We're not going to talk about that." Discussion on the redress scheme, which was scheduled to last the full day, was wound up by 10.10 am. It was a dreadful performance. I came back to Western Australia and confirmed all our concerns with public servants in Western Australia. We set the concerns out in a letter dated 21 December 2017. I will read a small passage from the letter. It states —

... Western Australia remains committed to working with the Commonwealth and other jurisdictions in the development of the Scheme to ensure that it is sustainable, fair, equitable and, most importantly, treats survivors with the compassion, dignity and respect that they deserve.

That is something Mr Porter failed to do when he was the Attorney General of Western Australia. I concluded the letter by stating —

Western Australian officials will continue to work with the Redress Taskforce on a without prejudice basis to resolve these issues, in the hope that the final product is a Scheme in which the State may opt to participate in. It is therefore crucial that the issues outlined above are finalised as a matter of priority.

In order for the Western Australian Cabinet to consider opting in to the Scheme, a response to the above matters is required by 31 January 2018.

I am happy to table a copy of that letter that I sent to Mr Tehan, who was the Minister for Social Services.

[See paper 1192.]

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: It was not until I got on the megaphone in the last 48 hours and made public statements exposing Mr Porter's treachery to his own state of Western Australia that Mr Tehan has seen fit to reply. I have been handed that reply only during question time, so I have not had a chance to read it. It has taken three months to get a response out of the commonwealth to a reasonable list of questions that the media and the opposition are allowed to read. We are determined to support the victims of child sexual abuse. The evidence of that is that we were the first state in Australia to not only lift the statute of limitations, but also to offer a pathway through which

people could recover against non-government organisations, including churches and charities. The Western Australian Labor government is committed to supporting the victims of child sexual abuse.