

## Turnbull government to give national apology to victims of child sexual abuse

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

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Malcolm Turnbull will give a formal national apology on October 22 to victims of child sexual abuse, as part of the federal [response](#) to the royal commission.

Outlining the government's detailed response on Wednesday, the Prime Minister said that Western Australia had now agreed to sign on to the redress scheme so there will be a fully national scheme from July 1.

Victims will be entitled to up to A\$150,000, with average payments of \$76,000. The maximum is lower than the \$200,000 recommended by the commission, but the average will be higher. There will be a low evidentiary standard.

The government will set up a new National Office for Child Safety within the Social Services department, which it says will "work across government and sectors to develop and implement policies and strategies to enhance children's safety and prevent future harm".

But Turnbull was unspecific when questioned at a news conference about how to deal with one current big issue of child safety – protecting at risk children in some Indigenous communities. There has been recent controversy about whether too many or too few children are being removed from families. The issue has been highlighted by some high profile alleged rapes.

Turnbull said he had discussed the problem with the Northern Territory chief minister.

Asked about the level of removal of children he said: "the safety of children has to be paramount. It's difficult to generalise about this because every case is different." He pointed to the duty of parents and neighbours to ensure children's safety. "If you ... believe a child is being abused, don't turn a blind eye."

The government has [opened](#) consultations on the content of the national apology and the form of the ceremony.

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The commission made 409 [recommendations](#) . Of these 84 relate to redress matters. Of the remaining 325, 122 are directed wholly or partly to the federal government, which has accepted 104 of them. It has noted the other 18, which mostly overlap other jurisdictions and will need more consideration. It has not rejected any recommendation.

The government said in a [statement](#) it expected non-government institutions would indicate what action they would take on recommendations of the commission and report annually in December, along with all governments. The government will report its progress annually for five years with a comprehensive review after a decade.

“Where institutions decide not to accept the royal commission’s recommendations they should state so and why”.

Speaking at his news conference Turnbull said: “The survivors that I’ve met and the personal stories that have been told to me have given me but a small insight into the betrayal you experienced at the hands of the people and institutions who were supposed to protect and care for you.”

“Now that we’ve uncovered the shocking truth, we must do everything in our power to honour the bravery of the thousands of people who came forward.”

“The royal commission has made very clear that we all have a role to play to keep our children safe - governments, schools, sporting clubs, churches, charitable institutions and, of course, all of us.”

*Michelle Grattan does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organization that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond their academic appointment.*

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