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'Mortifying': Cricket ACT rejects criticism of redress response

Melanie Dinjaski, Cameron Mee

CRICKET ACT has rejected criticism it has not "genuinely" addressed victims of abuse in its participation in the National Redress Scheme.

This week the association finally became a formal participant, after completing an on-boarding process with the Department of Social Services.

It's been a long time coming, two years after Cricket ACT first began the process, and now victims of abuse in the region - at least 15 known to *The Canberra Times* so far - are able to come forward and claim up to \$150,000 in compensation.

The National Redress Scheme followed recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

However, the financial approach of the scheme - where different victim experiences are capped at claiming a certain amount - and the lack of transparency from organisations hesitant to name and shame convicted abusers such as former cricket coach Ian Harold King, have been criticised by support services.

Some historical abuse victims have instead chosen legal avenues rather than undertake the NRS process with organisations under which their abuse took place.

Cricket ACT chairman Greg Boorer insisted they have handled matters sensitively.

"We, the current board and management, are incredibly sensitive to what has transpired and how those horrible events have eventuated," Boorer told *The Canberra Times*.

"We have met with survivors, we have spoken through what's happened historically, and it's been mortifying to hear their stories. So we are absolutely cognisant of the fact that it's not just a financial decision. I think there's so many organisations that should be part of the NRS that aren't, that are absolutely thinking that way, but that's not Cricket ACT."

In a statement, Cricket ACT acknowledged incidents had occurred and expressed "its deepest sympathy to survivors of abuse", and assured victims it was "committed to supporting survivors through the NRS."

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Cricket ACT chairman Greg Boorer

The organisation also insisted it aimed to ensure the safety of young people playing cricket, with multiple screening procedures in place.

Dr Cathy Kezelman, chief executive of the Blue Knot Foundation, urged Cricket ACT and other participating members of the NRS, to do more.

"They should have genuine acknowledgement from the institution in which they were harmed, as well as a sign the institution has changed and other children are not going to experience the abuse they did," Kezelman said.

"It's a work in progress."

Blue Knot Foundation provides information and support for those affected by complex trauma, and among its services, it offers a phone and webchat redress support service for adult survivors, and their personal and professional supporters.

Kezelman said all organisations involved where children were harmed "need to play a role to show things are really different" to prove history would not be repeated.

"Anyone coming forward or any child at risk of harm needs to be believed and responded to with empathy and understanding to find a path to healing," she said.

■ Support is available for those who may be distressed. Phone Lifeline 13 11 14; Mensline 1300 789 978; Kids Helpline 1800 551 800; beyondblue 1300 224 636; 1800-RESPECT 1800 737 732.