



knowmore legal service to offer in-house financial counselling to survivors

knowmore

The Financial Counselling Foundation has awarded knowmore legal service a \$1 million grant to offer free financial counselling to survivors of institutional childhood sexual abuse.

This service adds to its multidisciplinary, trauma-informed and culturally safe legal and support services for survivors of institutional childhood sexual abuse.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Childhood Sexual Abuse recommended that financial counselling be available for those victims and survivors seeking options of redress through the National Redress Scheme. However, additional services are yet to be provided.

knowmore executive director Warren Strange said that this new in-house

service will be directed at survivors who are experiencing financial hardship or stress.

“To date, there have been limited services available to survivors seeking this support, some of which would be near impossible for survivors to access,” he said.

“We want to ensure that victims and survivors have the opportunity to utilise their redress payment so that it doesn’t end up paying off Centrelink or housing debts.

“We also know that victims and survivors of crime who receive a lump sum payment are vulnerable to predation and debt recovery.

“We are looking forward to building on the work we are doing with Financial Counselling Australia by continuing and growing the education, training, and resources we are currently offering to financial counsellors with the National Debt Helpline and people working with survivors, more broadly.”

According to the chairman of the Financial Counselling Foundation, George Brouwer, the funding will provide support to build the capacity of the community legal and support services sector.

“This funding provides knowmore with the resources to become a source of information and knowledge for other financial counsellors,” Mr Brouwer said.

“These in-house financial counsellors will become experts in the National Redress Scheme and in delivering trauma informed care.

“Although it is a step in the right direction, there is still a serious

shortfall in the number of financial counsellors available to help survivors of child abuse.

“The National Redress Scheme currently refers people seeking financial counselling to the National Debt Hotline, however, the demand on this service has exceeded its capacity and they currently have long wait lists.”

The federal government estimates 60,000 individuals will be eligible to access the National Redress Scheme, making it the largest redress scheme of its kind anywhere.

Redress payments are capped at \$150,000, with the average payment expected to be \$76,000.

The scheme commenced operation on 1 July 2018 and will operate for 10 years.

knowmore legal service is a national, free, independent and confidential community legal centre providing legal information, advice, representation and referrals, education and systemic advocacy for victims and survivors of child sexual abuse.

knowmore was established in 2013 to provide free legal assistance to people engaging with the Royal Commission.

From its inception, knowmore has delivered multi-disciplinary, trauma-informed and culturally safe legal services to survivors of child sexual abuse across Australia.

For further details contact:

Fiona Guthrie, chief executive, Financial Counselling Australia: 0402 426 835

Warren Strange, executive officer, knowmore: (07) 3218 4500

