

1. Executive Summary

Knowmore Legal Service is seeking \$25M per year of ongoing government funding to continue its recognised role as a specialist community legal service supporting survivors of child abuse, including child sexual abuse. With the National Redress Scheme nearing its conclusion, there is an urgent need to ensure survivors are not left without access to trauma-informed legal assistance and holistic support.

This proposal outlines a model that builds on Knowmore's established national infrastructure and expertise. It includes legal advice, cultural support and financial counselling, and new services delivered through partnerships—such as a 24/7 phone line and counselling support to help survivors prepare for and navigate justice processes. The service will work directly with institutions to support survivors in pursuing justice in ways that reflect their individual needs and circumstances.

Knowmore will serve as a single, accessible point of contact for survivors to begin their journey toward justice and healing. By leveraging existing resources and relationships, this initiative offers a cost-effective and impactful solution to meet the ongoing needs of survivors and uphold the commitments made through the National Apology and the recommendations of the Royal Commission.

2. Background and Context

The National Redress Scheme has provided vital pathways for survivors of institutional child sexual abuse to access justice and support. Since its inception, Knowmore Legal Service has supported over 25,000 survivors through trauma-informed legal advice, cultural support, and financial counselling.

However, the problem of institutional child sexual abuse has not gone away. Recent court decisions and settlements across Australia demonstrate that

survivors continue to come forward with claims against schools, churches, government departments, and other institutions. These cases reflect both the enduring harm and the evolving legal landscape in which survivors seek justice.

The 2023 Australian Child Maltreatment Study found that 28.5% of Australians experienced child sexual abuse before the age of 18, making it one of the most common forms of childhood trauma in Australia.

As the National Redress Scheme approaches its conclusion, survivors will increasingly turn to direct engagement with institutions to pursue justice. For many, this may involve negotiating redress payments or settlements outside of the Scheme. These processes often require survivors to sign legal agreements, including statutory releases that prevent future civil claims against the institution.

It is essential that survivors receive independent legal advice to understand:

- What rights they may be giving up?
- Whether the redress offer is fair and appropriate?
- What alternative options may be available, including civil litigation?

Justice-making looks different for every individual. For some, it may mean financial compensation; for others, a formal apology, institutional reform, or simply being heard. Knowmore's trauma-informed, culturally safe approach ensures that survivors are supported to make informed decisions about their own justice journey without pressure or traumatisation.

This approach is deeply aligned with the spirit of the 2009 National Apology to the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants, in which then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd acknowledged the "absolute tragedy of childhoods lost" and committed to ensuring such injustices never happen again. The Apology was a turning point in recognising the lifelong impact of institutional abuse and the need for meaningful redress and healing.

It also reflects the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, which called for survivor-focused legal support, trauma-informed services, and accessible redress pathways. The Commission emphasised that institutions must be held accountable and that survivors deserve justice tailored to their individual experiences and needs.

3. International Evidence: Lessons from Global Redress Schemes

International experience demonstrates that the closure of redress schemes without sustained support services can have significant negative impacts on survivors of institutional child abuse. Comparative studies from Ireland, Canada, Norway, and the UK reveal consistent themes: survivors often feel abandoned when schemes end, and many experience re-traumatisation, loss of recognition, and a lack of access to ongoing emotional and legal support.

In Ireland, the Residential Institutions Redress Board (2002–2014) provided financial compensation to survivors of abuse in state-funded institutions. However, research found that many survivors felt re-traumatised by the process and unsupported after the scheme ended, particularly those who were excluded or missed deadlines (Pembroke, 2019). Survivors expressed a need for continued psychosocial care and recognition beyond financial redress (O'Donnell, O'Rourke, & Smith, 2022).

Canada's Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) concluded in 2023. While it included compensation and healing initiatives, studies show that survivors required more than financial redress. The closure of the scheme highlighted gaps in long-term emotional and cultural support, especially for intergenerational trauma (Daly, 2014; McAlinden, Keenan, & Gallen, 2025).

Norway's national and municipal redress schemes for care leavers revealed disparities in payments and access, leading to concerns about fairness and discrimination. Survivors reported frustration over inconsistent treatment and the

absence of sustained psychosocial services (Daly & Meyer, 2020; Stadsbø & Enoksen, 2024).

In Scotland, the Human Rights Commission's InterAction model emphasised the importance of survivor-led justice and long-term support. Research found that redress schemes must be embedded within broader systems of care and accountability to avoid replicating harm (Kendrick, Carmichael, & McGregor, 2025).

These findings reinforce the importance of Knowmore's proposed model, which offers a single point of contact, trauma-informed legal support, and integrated counselling services. By embedding survivor-informed practices and ensuring continuing service options, the model addresses the shortcomings identified in international schemes and aligns with best-practice recommendations. It ensures that survivors are not left behind as the Redress Scheme ends, and that the commitments made in the Apology and Royal Commission are honoured through continued, specialist legal support.

4. Service Model

The proposed service builds on Knowmore's proven model, adapted for post-redress needs and to meet the evolving requirements of survivors seeking justice.

The proposed service builds on Knowmore's proven model, adapted for the post-Redress environment, in which survivors are increasingly seeking justice outside the National Redress Scheme. During Redress, survivors primarily required support to navigate a government-administered scheme focused on recognition, a direct personal response and monetary payments. Post-Redress, survivors are more likely to require support to pursue justice through direct engagement with institutions, legal claims, alternative dispute resolution processes, and, where

necessary, the courts, often facing significant power imbalances when dealing with well-resourced organisations and insurers.

It aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Stay true to Australia's National Apology to Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse by ensuring survivors continue to have meaningful access to justice, recognition and support
- Serve as a single, accessible point of contact for survivors to begin their journey towards justice and healing, regardless of where or in what context the abuse occurred
- Provide holistic legal services tailored to survivors' individual needs, goals and circumstances
- Facilitate direct engagement with institutions to support truth telling, accountability, acknowledgement of harm and other forms of justice making
- Offer culturally safe, trauma-informed and survivor-centred support that recognises the diverse experiences of survivors
- Integrate financial counselling, practical support and systemic advocacy to address the broader impacts of child sexual abuse
- Ensure continuity of support beyond the National Redress Scheme, including for survivors pursuing civil claims, alternative dispute resolution, restorative engagement processes or other pathways to justice
- Reduce the power imbalance between survivors and institutions by providing specialist advice, advocacy and representation throughout justice processes
- Support increased demand for non-Redress justice pathways, including court-based and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.

Core components:

- Support when it is needed: Delivered through partnership, a 24/7 national phone line would offer immediate, trauma-informed support
- Navigation and Case Management: Coordinated support for complex cases involving multiple perpetrators, institutions, jurisdictions, or support agencies—ensuring survivors are not left to navigate fragmented systems alone
- Holistic Legal Support: Legal advice and representation tailored to individual needs, including civil claims and institutional engagement
- Restorative Justice Support: Assistance for survivors who seek justice through restorative processes, including facilitated dialogue with institutions or individuals, ensuring these are survivor-led, safe, and trauma-informed
- Integrated Counselling: Emotional and practical support through embedded counsellors and partner organisations
- Culturally Safe Services: Led by First Nations advisors and culturally specific providers
- Financial Counselling: Support with compensation, fund management, and financial resilience
- National Reach: Delivered through offices in major cities, outreach clinics, and partnerships across Australia.

A central feature of the proposed service is a 24/7 national phone line that offers survivors immediate, trauma-informed support and guidance. Delivered through partnerships, this line will serve as a single, accessible point of contact for individuals beginning their journey toward justice and healing. It will help survivors explore what justice means to them, understand available options, and connect with the right services. Knowmore will also offer counselling and preparation services to support survivors emotionally and practically as they consider their options and navigate complex legal and institutional processes.

Building on Knowmore's established multidisciplinary model, the service will continue to provide legal advice and representation to assist survivors in engaging directly with institutions, pursuing civil claims, and navigating other justice pathways. Legal support will be delivered in a trauma-informed manner, with embedded counsellors and culturally safe practices led by First Nations advisors. Financial counselling will also be available to help survivors understand compensation options, manage funds received through redress or settlements, and build financial resilience. Together, these components ensure survivors are supported holistically - legally, emotionally, and culturally - through every stage of their justice journey.



The service will be delivered nationally through a combination of permanent offices, outreach clinics, and strategic partnerships. Knowmore operates offices in Darwin, Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane, ensuring coverage across major metropolitan and regional centres. In addition, regular outreach clinics will be held in Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory, allowing survivors in these jurisdictions to access face-to-face support.

1800 605 762 knowmore.org.au

Adelaide Brisbane Darwin Melbourne Perth Sydney

This geographic footprint enables Knowmore to provide consistent, high quality engagement with clients and stakeholders across Australia. The multidisciplinary teams in each location will include lawyers, counsellors, cultural advisors, and financial counsellors, working collaboratively to support survivors through every stage of their justice journey. The service will also be enhanced through partnerships with specialist organisations, including those providing counselling, crisis support, and culturally specific services, ensuring that survivors receive holistic care tailored to their needs.

Outreach to remote and underserved communities will remain a priority, with flexible service delivery models including phone, video conferencing, and in-person visits. The addition of a 24/7 national phone line will further strengthen accessibility, allowing survivors to connect with support at any time, from anywhere in the country.

5. Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Knowmore's service model is co-designed with survivors and informed by continuous feedback. The organisation maintains strong partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders to ensure survivors receive coordinated, holistic support.

A key component of the model is active engagement with the institutions from which survivors may seek justice, including religious organisations, government departments, schools, and care providers. Knowmore will work directly with these institutions to facilitate survivor-led justice processes, ensuring transparency, accountability, and trauma-informed responses.

The service will also collaborate closely with state and territory governments, particularly in areas of policy development, systemic reform, and service integration. These relationships are essential to ensuring survivors can access consistent support regardless of jurisdiction.

In addition, Knowmore will maintain and strengthen partnerships with other service providers, including mental health services, homelessness support organisations, and sexual assault services. Collaboration with Women's Legal Services, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, and other community legal centres will ensure survivors receive culturally safe and gender-responsive legal support. These partnerships will be formalised through referral pathways, joint service delivery, and shared training initiatives, creating a robust ecosystem of care around each survivor.

6. Outcomes and Impact

In the short term, the proposed service will ensure that survivors of child abuse continue to have access to free, trauma-informed legal support as the National Redress Scheme concludes. Survivors will be empowered to engage with institutions, understand their legal rights, and make informed decisions about justice pathways. The addition of a 24/7 phone line and counselling services will provide immediate support and help survivors prepare emotionally and practically for these processes, reducing the risk of re-traumatisation and increasing confidence in navigating complex systems.

Over the longer term, the service will contribute to systemic change by promoting institutional accountability and improving justice outcomes for survivors. Survivors will experience improved wellbeing through access to culturally safe, coordinated support that addresses both legal and non-legal needs. The service will also strengthen Australia's legal and social infrastructure by embedding survivor-informed practices, fostering collaboration across sectors, and building capacity within institutions to respond appropriately to disclosures of abuse.

Through ongoing evaluation, survivor feedback, and transparent reporting, Knowmore will demonstrate the effectiveness and social value of this model, ensuring it remains responsive and impactful.

7. Governance and Accountability

Knowmore Legal Service operates under a robust governance framework that ensures transparency, accountability, and survivor-informed leadership. The organisation is governed by a Board comprising professionals with expertise in law, social justice, trauma-informed practice, and lived experience. This diverse representation ensures that strategic decisions are grounded in both professional insight and the realities survivors face.

The end of the National Redress Scheme must not mean the end of support for survivors. Knowmore is uniquely positioned to continue this vital work, with a proven model, trusted relationships, and deep expertise.

We invite the Attorney-General’s Department—and other government partners—to invest in this future. Together, we can ensure survivors are not left behind, and that justice and healing remain within reach.

Budget

Staff	\$	17,900,000
Phones partnership	\$	2,500,000
Accommodation	\$	1,800,000
Operations	\$	825,000
Administration	\$	1,936,000
	\$	24,961,000



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