

# Apology

Fact Sheet 1 – February 2017

## Background

In 2010 the Queensland State Government apologised to those, who as children, were in the care of the State and inappropriately placed in Queensland adult mental health facilities. As part of this apology the Government undertook to plan formal reconciliation in consultation with those who were harmed.

## Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide information on how a formal reconciliation process will be progressed.

## Reconciliation Plan Development Strategy (Strategy)

The Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services, the Honourable Cameron Dick, approved a Strategy to develop a reconciliation plan with those who were harmed. This Strategy establishes a process, that once implemented, will fulfil the commitment made by the State Government in 2010.

## Guiding Principles

A number of principles will guide how the Strategy is implemented:

- Acting consistently, fairly, respectfully and sensitively
- Minimising the risk of re-traumatisation by:
  - having a sound understanding of the prevalence and nature of trauma arising from interpersonal violence and child sexual abuse;
  - recognising and being responsive to the social and cultural contexts which shape the needs and healing pathways of those who have been harmed; and
  - recognising the importance of trust and relationships in overcoming trauma and supporting healing
- Recognising the lived experience of those who have been harmed and having regard to their individual needs
- Respecting requests for confidentiality
- Accepting the implications and undertakings in the State's apology
- Not taking advantage of those who were harmed
- Working collaboratively and negotiating in good faith

## Key Steps

A number of steps will be taken to ensure there is meaningful and respectful engagement with people who have been harmed and also to ensure Government can properly consider and progress appropriate formal reconciliation processes and outcomes.

### Step 1 – We will listen to you

The first step involves determining what formal reconciliation means for those who were harmed. 'Formal Reconciliation' may potentially mean different things to each person, depending on their lived experiences. It is important that each person has an opportunity to articulate their thoughts in a safe and respectful environment.



The Department of Health will work closely with the Mental Health Commissioner to identify an independent and respected person to meet individually with each person (accompanied by their support person if preferred). The Mental Health Commissioner will provide details of the proposed independent person to those who were harmed to ensure they are deemed suitable. The Mental Health Commissioner will also request that each person provide their personal details, including their name, address and date of birth, and their consent to provide this information to the Department of Health for the independent person. This will enable initial conversations to be held.

Once the independent person meets with each person (accompanied by a support person if preferred), the information will be brought together into one document and provided to the Department of Health.

### **Step 2 – We will develop a proposed way forward**

Once the Department of Health receives this information, the Department of Health will meet with other relevant agencies, including the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, to develop an interim proposal for Government based on each person's thoughts and ideas about a reconciliation plan. This step is intended to provide more clarity on what Government could potentially do.

### **Step 3 – We will discuss the proposed way forward with you**

Following Government consideration, the independent person will again meet with each person individually (accompanied by a support person if preferred) to establish what is achievable for each person in the reconciliation plan.

### **Step 4 – We will seek Government approval**

Government approval will then be sought for a consolidated plan based on each person's preference.

### **Step 5 – We will work with you to progress approved actions**

Following Government approval, the Department of Health will work with those who have been harmed and relevant agencies, to implement the approved plan.

## **Timeframes**

It is acknowledged there has been an unacceptable delay in progressing this formal reconciliation process in response to the 2010 Apology. There is a sincere commitment to implement a reconciliation plan as soon as possible. It is however, important that planning occurs in a careful and methodical manner that is respectful for all concerned. It is expected that the independent person will meet with each person individually (Step 1) commencing in early March 2017.

## **Further Information**

The Department of Health is progressing the Strategy in close collaboration with other Government agencies including the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. The Mental Health Commissioner, Dr Lesley van Schoubroeck has played a key role in establishing contact with people who have suffered harm when in the care of the State and inappropriately placed in an adult mental health facility. The Department of Health will continue to work closely with Dr van Schoubroeck.

Additional Fact Sheets will be provided to keep you informed of developments.

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