

10 March 2017

Waiting for justice: Wolston Park Survivors

Statement from Queensland Mental Health Commissioner, Dr Lesley van Schoubroeck:

In 2010, the Queensland Government issued an apology to “those who as children in the care of the State of Queensland suffered in any way while resident in an adult mental health facility...”.

The apology document undertook to consult about and plan appropriate reconciliation strategies with those who were harmed.

I am pleased that the Minister for Health, Hon. Cameron Dick MP, responded to my request in mid-2016 and has asked Queensland Health to get a formal reconciliation process underway. I am hopeful that the people affected will see action in the near future.

The delay from when this issue was raised in the media in 1994 and a group of women came together, to a formal apology in 2010, to formal reconciliation in 2017 is clearly unacceptable.

I have met several women who were in Wolston Park as children. Their stories are tragic. They are brave and determined. They fight for justice not just for themselves but for others who have passed away since 1994 and before.

These women were excluded from a redress scheme that came out of the Queensland's Forde Inquiry because they were harmed in an adult institution not a children's institution, even though they were children in the care of the state at the time.

While we cannot undo the past, we must do everything we can to improve their futures. The whole community and the professional groups who allowed their treatment to occur must learn from their stories and prevent similar abuses happening again.

Never again must we detain young people because they stood up to so called carers who treated them and their friends cruelly and inhumanely. The evidence heard by the Royal Commission into Child Sexual Abuse has been described as “wading through evil”. The stories these women tell are no less evil. Queensland cannot pretend it knew nothing of this. The public service cannot pretend it knew nothing.

I am hopeful that by the 7th Anniversary of the 2010 apology that a formal reconciliation process will be underway.

ENDS

