

**Letter published in *The West Australian* newspaper, 4<sup>th</sup> August 2009, p18.**

Imagine that your needs had been ignored throughout your childhood, and that the people you lived with harmed you. You couldn't wait to grow up and get out, but when you did you had nowhere to go and no one to help you. As an adult, you struggled to make ends meet, and always felt like an outsider.

Years later, out of the blue, the Government said they knew lots of people like you had been harmed in their care, and if you told them how badly you'd been hurt they would pay you up to \$80,000.

You were sceptical at first, but you were pretty sure your childhood would have to be up there among the worst of them, and \$80,000 seemed like a lot of money. So you did two things that went against your instincts – you talked about your child abuse and you trusted the Government.

After the trauma of reliving your painful experiences, the nightmares gradually subsided and you started to think that things might turn out ok after all. Although you tried not to think about the money, it was impossible not to, because after what you'd been through, you knew it would have to be close to the maximum payment. You couldn't help but share your excitement with the family – you promised them a holiday and took out a loan you couldn't afford.

Imagine if what happened next was that the Government took your dream away – or almost halved it. All you were left with was the prospect of paying off the loan and disappointing the family. At first you couldn't believe it was really happening, and then you remembered what you'd learned a long time ago. It's not safe to trust.

The trust of thousands of Western Australian people has been crushed in this way by the Government's decision last week to reduce the maximum payment of Redress WA from \$80,000 to \$45,000. The explanation is that a greater number of cases of serious abuse have been uncovered by the scheme than was anticipated, however the only moral course of action is to honour the original offer made to those who had the courage talk about their childhood abuse and who trusted that the Government would treat them fairly this time around.

We urge all West Australians to join in a silent protest at Parliament House in West Perth at 1.00pm on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> August.

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