



**THE HON RICHARD MARLES MP
SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE
MEMBER FOR CORIO**

**EVENT TO THANK COMMISSIONERS FROM THE ROYAL COMMISSION INTO
INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES TO CHILD SEX ABUSE**

CARE LEAVERS AUSTRALASIA NETWORK, BANKSTOWN

FRIDAY, 9 FEBRUARY 2018

*****CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*****

Firstly, can I acknowledge the traditional owners. Can I acknowledge my Parliamentary colleagues who are here. David, thank you for representing the Government. Tanya, Claire, who I think probably might have been I think amongst the politicians on to this issue before anyone I think, it is wonderful to see you. Jenny of course for all that you've done, and Jason.

If I might start in a sense a little indulgently. This has been most remarkable journey for me in my time in Parliament. The indulgent bit is I want to particularly mention Jason because I think it is a journey that both he and I have walked together. We came into Parliament at the same time and very quickly we found ourselves talking to each other about the same issue. Forgotten Australians, the need to do something about this, and from there a great friendship has developed and I don't have a better friend in Canberra today than Jason. But very early on we kind of wondered what was the guiding hand which brought us together and why we were friends and it turned out the common denominator here was we were really Leonie's MPs.

Leonie is connected to Geelong and she is connected to Bankstown. So the relevant members had to be put together and we have been ever since. But it has genuinely been the most remarkable journey and through talking with Leonie, talking with Joanna, Vlad, Frank, and so many of you about your experiences, about what this means, I think we have learnt about the meaning of identity, the meaning of a childhood lost, what family is about. Ultimately, actually, the meaning of love. And the devastation that stays a lifetime by virtue of the experiences that fortune dealt you and that something had to be done about that. It was an journey which took us to the apology in 2009 for the Forgotten Australians, and I remember saying to Jason at the time that I'm not sure that I'll ever be involved in something as important as that again, and I probably stand by that all be it that so many other things have

occurred since then and we're gathered today principally to thank the Royal Commissioners Peter, Jenny, Rob and Bob.

I remember talking to the late Steve Hutchins about this issue and he said if you're going to get involved make sure you're ready for it because this is hard stuff and we've done but a fraction of what you did in the Royal Commission. I think to peel layer by layer and reveal an ugly shocking, a deeply unsettling truth about our nation and about our society. Unsettling in terms of what actually happened. Unsettling that it happened all around us. Unsettling that the responses by those in authority allowed it happen. It has changed our country forever that you've done that and that the work involved that cannot have easy and I've got no doubt that it's changed you, but we as a nation owe you an enormous debt of gratitude for what you have done, as more than anybody else you have uncovered what needed to be uncovered.

It is important that this that has from the outset has been something that has been bipartisan. Steve Irons came into the Parliament the same time as Jason and I and we hung out a fair bit in terms of working on this issue. So forgive me for a moment, David, in making an observation. Julia Gillard I don't think will have a greater legacy than this Royal Commission and through Julia and through Jenny who was the responsible Minister at the time, our nation owes you an enormous debt of gratitude.

But the most remarkable part of the journey has in fact been meeting all of you. Now I think I've learnt more about the human spirit along this path than I ever knew before. The determination, the strength, the courage to stand up to your own memories in a sense and to keep walking forward and to know that you had to do it on behalf of others, has been breathtaking, I mean completely breathtaking for those of us who watched. So for all the bad things we learn about and seen, the wonder of your strength and your determination is one of the most wonderful encounters I've had in my life - my political life – but my life. There is a program that is now been set out by the Royal Commission and we need to see redress and we need to see those recommendations enacted and I am not exactly sure when it's going to happen – it needs to happen yesterday. But what I do know is this: the constant theme in the journey that we've all walked – and just looking at Jason, I think he and I have been able to share with you over the last ten years – the constant theme has been coming to gatherings where you see a sea of blue. That is why all of this has happened. It's the blue shirts that you are wearing, it's CLAN and the organisation that you've been a part. It's your determination to come, turn up, day in day out. And I don't know when it's going to happen but what I do know is that so long as we keep coming to meetings where we see a sea of blue, I've got no doubt that it will happen.

Thank you for having me today.

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