



Royal Commission
into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation
of People with Disability

Sharing your experience

with the Disability
Royal Commission

**A more inclusive,
just society**

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Why share your experience with us

Your experience is important. Hearing from people with disability, families, support people and the broader community helps the Royal Commission understand the nature, extent and impact of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability.

The Royal Commission's terms of reference require us to consider individual experiences.

Sharing your experiences with us will help us to:

- identify the extent of the problem
- understand more about the systems and contexts in which violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation are more likely to occur

- develop an understanding of the impacts on people with disability, their families, support people and our community
- gather information relevant to our investigations and research programs
- hear different views.

Please note that the Royal Commission cannot decide or resolve individual cases, or award compensation.

The Royal Commission acknowledges that coming forward to share your experience is a big step. We want to make it as easy as possible. Please tell us about any supports you need.

Violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation

Violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation are important terms for the Disability Royal Commission. In the context of the Royal Commission, these terms have certain meanings.

Violence and abuse

Violence and abuse cover a range of behaviours towards people with disability. These could include assault, sexual assault, constraints, restrictive practices (physical and chemical), forced treatments, forced interventions, humiliation and harassment, financial and economic abuse and significant violations of privacy and dignity on a systemic or individual basis.

Neglect

Neglect includes physical or emotional neglect, passive neglect or wilful deprivation. Neglect can be a single significant incident or a systemic issue that involves depriving a person with disability of the basic necessities of life such as food, drink, shelter, access, mobility, clothing, education, medical care and treatment.

Exploitation

Exploitation is when a person takes advantage of someone else. This could include improper use of another person or the improper use of or withholding of another person's assets, labour, employment or resources including taking physical, sexual, financial or economic advantage.

Ways to share your experience

You can share your
experience with us:

- in writing, over the phone, in a video or audio recording
- in a private session with a Commissioner

Write, phone, film or record

Anybody can make a submission to the Royal Commission. A submission can be made in any way you feel comfortable - by telephone, email, video, or through our website. Tell us about your experiences in your own words – it is okay if you don't remember everything. You can write your experience down or make a video or audio recording. You can also tell us about your experiences via the website, over the telephone, in an email or by post.

We encourage people with disability, family, friends and the people who support them to share their experiences with us in their first language including Indigenous languages and Auslan. We will provide interpreters and translators.

If you are having trouble getting started, think about the questions on page 5. These questions are only a guide, and you don't have to answer all of them. You only have to provide the information you are comfortable sharing.

If you have previously provided a written statement to another government agency, a complaints body, or to the police, you may like to provide us with a copy.

Once the Royal Commission has received your written, audio or video account, we will contact you to confirm we have received it. You will be sent a letter of acknowledgement.

You can share your experience with us by visiting the website at www.disability.royalcommission.gov.au/share-your-story/make-your-submission.

Thinking about your experience

If you would like to share your experience, you may find these questions a useful starting point:

- What would you like to share with the Royal Commission about your experiences or knowledge of violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation of people with disability?
- Have you shared these experiences with anyone else? Who did you tell and what happened?
- Are there any suggestions or recommendations you would like to share, including any examples of what worked well or ideas for how things could be done better?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell us?
- In a few sentences, what would you like to tell Australia about your hopes for the future?

Attend a private session

Another way to share your experience is in a private session with a Commissioner.

Private sessions, which can be in person, via video conferencing, or on the telephone, allow you to share your experiences in a confidential setting.

Anything you tell us for a private session that identifies you is protected from disclosure by law.

Other than in very limited circumstances, the information

you provide for a private session that identifies you remains confidential, even after the Royal Commission has ended. It cannot be subpoenaed or disclosed under freedom of information legislation. Information you provide in a private session cannot be used in evidence against you in civil or criminal proceedings.

Find out about private sessions at www.disability.royalcommission.gov.au/share-your-story

Counselling support is available for participants before, during and after private sessions.

Ask for a private session

Anyone who has information to share that is within our terms of reference can ask for a private session.

We may receive large numbers of requests for private sessions. We will do our best to offer private sessions to anyone who asks for one.

We will prioritise offering private sessions to people who cannot share the information they wish to share with us in any other way.

The Royal Commission will cover reasonable travel and accommodation costs of people attending private sessions.

You can request a private session by:

- email at DRCenquiries@royalcommission.gov.au
- telephone on 1800 517 199 or +61 7 3734 1900 (9:00am to 5:00pm Monday to Friday AEST excluding public holidays)
- post at GPO Box 1422, Brisbane Qld 4001

What happens to your information?

If you have shared your experience with the Royal Commission, you might be asked to be a witness at a public hearing, where you would present your information as evidence. You do not have to give evidence at a public hearing if you do not want to. Find out about public hearings at www.disability.royalcommission.gov.au.

Protecting your identity and information

If you do not want your identity to be shared with anyone outside of the Royal Commission, we can protect your identity and the information you share with us in a submission until the Royal Commission ends in April 2022 (when the Final Report is due).

If you are concerned about your identity or the information you have provided in a submission being disclosed after the Royal Commission has ended, you can discuss this with a lawyer. Free independent legal advice is available by calling 1800 771 800 or visit www.drclegaladvice.org.au.

Protection from retribution

We understand that people may be concerned about retribution, for example if they make a public submission that is critical of an employer or accommodation provider. We take this concern very seriously and encourage people to get legal advice about the protections the Royal Commission is able to offer.

Counselling and support

Sharing your experience can be hard. Seeing or hearing news about the Royal Commission will also be hard for some people.

The Royal Commission has a counselling team who attend all community forums, public hearings and private sessions to provide counselling and support to anyone engaging with the Royal Commission.

Blue Knot Foundation offers free specialist counselling support and a referral service, available for people with disability, their families and support people, and anyone affected by the Disability Royal Commission.

Call the national hotline on 1800 421 468 (9am-6pm AEDT Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm AEDT Saturday, Sunday and public holidays).

If you are deaf, or have a hearing or speech impairment, call the National Relay Service on 133 677 and give 02 6146 1468 as the number you want to call.

If you are non-verbal or have other communication needs, online chat facilities and email are available. If you would like to discuss your access and communication needs, please contact helpline@blueknot.org.au.

Information about the supports you can access is available on our website at www.disability.royalcommission.gov.au/counselling-and-support.

There are many organisations who can provide individual advocacy for people engaging with the Disability Royal Commission. To find an advocacy service in your area, go to www.disabilityadvocacyfinder.dss.gov.au.

Support in other languages

If you require support in another language, please call:

- the National Counselling and Referral Service on 1800 421 468 and ask for an interpreter (the counsellor will make the arrangements), or
- the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 and ask to be connected to the National Counselling and Referral Service on 1800 421 468.

If you would like to order any of our documents in braille, please phone 1800 517 199.

Legal advice

There is a free national legal service formed by National Legal Aid and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services. It provides free legal advice and information to people who want to share their experiences with the Disability Royal Commission.

The service is independent from the Disability Royal Commission and can help with:

- information and advice about the Royal Commission's powers, procedures and guidelines
- writing witness statements
- advice on related legal issues such as confidentiality agreements
- information about financial assistance that may be available to you.

Free call 1800 771 800
(9:15am-5:15pm AEDT
Monday-Friday, excluding
public holidays) or go to
www.drclegaladvice.org.au.

Legal financial assistance scheme

Legal costs will be covered
when you are engaging with
us in the following ways:

- being called, or granted
leave to appear, as a
witness at a hearing of the
Royal Commission
- being requested to attend,
or attending an interview
of the Royal Commission
- complying with a notice
to give information or a
statement in writing that
will be used as evidence
in the Royal Commission,
and/or

- complying with a notice
to produce issued by the
Royal Commission.

If you have been called
by the Royal Commission
in your personal capacity
you will be eligible for legal
financial assistance. If your
organisation has been
called, you may also be
eligible for legal financial
assistance, subject to an
assessment of whether the
organisation can meet the
cost of its legal representation
without incurring serious
financial difficulty.

The Attorney-General's
Department website includes
information on how you can
apply. Go to www.ag.gov.au.

Contact us

Phone

1800 517 199 (9am-6pm AEDT Monday to Friday excluding national public holidays.)

If you are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment, call the National Relay Service on 133 677 and tell them you want to call 07 3734 1900.

To call us in a language other than English call the free Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) on 131 450 and tell them you want to call 1800 517 199.

Postal address

GPO Box 1422, Brisbane, Qld 4001.

Email and website

DRcenquiries@royalcommission.gov.au

www.disability.royalcommission.gov.au

Stay informed

Facebook

facebook.com/disability.royalcommission.gov.au

Twitter

[@DRC_AU](https://twitter.com/DRC_AU)

Mailing list

To subscribe, fill out the subscription form on our website or send an email to DRCmailinglist@royalcommission.gov.au.



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