Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Our concerns for people with disability

Easy read
How to use this document

The Disability Royal Commission (the Commission) wrote this document.

When you see the word ‘we’, it means the Commission.

We have written this document in an easy to read way. We use pictures to explain some ideas.

We have written some words in bold. We explain what these words mean. There is a list of these words on page 27.

This Easy Read document is a summary of another document.

You can find the other document on our website.

You can ask for help to read this document. A friend, family member or support person may be able to help you.
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About coronavirus (COVID-19)

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a **virus** that has affected many people around the world.

A virus is an illness or disease that can spread easily from one person to another person.

COVID-19 is spreading quickly.

COVID-19 has been called a **pandemic**. A virus is called a pandemic when it spreads quickly to lots of countries around the world.

We will continue our important work during the COVID-19 pandemic.
The COVID-19 pandemic is a public health emergency.

A public health emergency is a time when:

- there is a risk to the health of everyone in the community
- everyone needs to act quickly to protect themselves and other people
- governments need to do what they can to keep people safe.

We haven't seen a public health emergency like this before.

Governments, businesses and the community all need to do the best they can.
The COVID-19 pandemic and people with disability

People with disability are much more at risk of having health issues.

The health of people with disability is much more at risk during a public health emergency.

Governments must make sure they do everything they can to keep people with disability safe.

People with disability have told us they are very worried about:

- the COVID-19 pandemic
- not being included when governments, businesses and the community:
  - make plans
  - take action.
We know that governments around Australia are doing what they can to support people with disability who take part in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

But many people with disability don't take part in the NDIS.

These people with disability don't get the same:

- support
- information.

Some people with disability rely on support workers for some of their daily personal care needs, such as:

- eating
- drinking
- getting dressed
- using the toilet.
This means they can’t stay away from other people.

Staying away from other people is important to stop COVID-19 from spreading.
Our concerns

We are concerned that governments around Australia aren't thinking what people with disability need during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We think governments should:

- do what they can to protect people with disability and keep them safe during the COVID-19 pandemic

- give people with disability the support and funding they need during the COVID-19 pandemic.
Key areas of concern

We have some **key areas of concern**.

Our key areas of concern are things we are very worried about.

We talk about our key areas of concern in more detail on the following pages.
The health of people with disability is much more at risk during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Members of the community have told us that there are barriers that stop people with disability from getting health care they need to:

- protect them from COVID-19
- test if they have COVID-19
- treat them if they have COVID-19.
People with disability can’t get medicine or health supplies they need because:

- there isn’t enough in shops

People with disability can’t get the mental health support they need because services are so busy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

People with disability are worried they are being treated differently when they try and get the health care they need.

We ask governments around Australia to do what they can to make sure people with disability can get the health care they need.
Support services

People with disability often get the support they need from:

- family
- friends
- carers
- support workers.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, these people may not be able to provide their usual support.

Governments around Australia must come up with a way to make sure people with disability:

- get the support they need for their daily personal care
- are safe in places they need to go where there might be lots of other people
• get support from workers who know how to keep them safe from COVID-19

• don’t have to get support from anyone who is already sick or unwell.

We ask governments around Australia to do what they can to make sure people with disability can get the support they need.
Accessible information

When something is **accessible**, everyone can use it.

This might be:

- a place or a building
- transport
- a service
- information
- a website.

Information about the COVID-19 pandemic must be accessible for people with disability.

Information can be made accessible by sharing it in different formats, such as:

- Auslan
- video with captions
- accessible websites
- accessible documents that are published online
- documents that are easy to read
- First Nations languages
- languages other than English.
We want governments to use **Auslan interpreters** when they speak to the community.

An Auslan interpreter uses Australian sign language to help people with hearing impairments understand what someone is saying.

We want governments to make sure they have ways to share information with people who don’t use the internet.

We want governments to reach out to people with disability who don’t get support from:

- family
- friends
- carers
- support workers.

We ask governments around Australia to do what they can to make sure people with disability can get the information they need.
Food and nutrition

People with disability have told us they are worried about getting the food and nutrition they need.

The things they worry about include:

- how to get food if they must self-isolate

If you self-isolate, you don’t:

  - leave your house
  - see other people.

- how much food is available in shops

- changes and limits to online shopping and delivery services.
People with disability might not be able to get the food they need if the people who usually support them are sick or unwell.

We ask governments around Australia to do what they can to make sure people with disability can get the food and nutrition they need.
Many places where people with disability work are doing what they can to make sure people can still work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We want employers to make sure people with disability:

- get support if they need to work from home
- have computers or other equipment to use that is accessible.

The Australian Government has offered to make support payments higher.

But the community is worried that the Australian Government didn't include:

- the Disability Support Pension (DSP)
- Carers payments.
The community wants the Australian Government to make Disability Support Pension and Carers payments higher too.

We ask governments around Australia to make sure people with disability can still get the money they need.
Places like group homes, prisons and mental health facilities

We are very worried about the safety of people with disability who live in places like:

- group homes
- prisons
- mental health facilities.

These are places where people with disability are at a greater risk of:

- **violence** – if someone is hurting you physically
- **abuse** – if someone is treating you badly
- **neglect** – if someone is not helping you the way they are supposed to help you
- **exploitation** – if someone is taking advantage of you.

We know these places must do things to make sure that less people visit during the pandemic.
But this means the people who live there may not have the same protection they get when they are visited by:

- family
- friends
- carers
- support workers
- Community Visitors.

Community Visitors visit people with disability where they live.

They:

- provide friendship
- spend time together
- help them connect with other people.

We ask governments around Australia to do what they can to make sure people with disability are safe in:

- group homes
- prisons
- mental health facilities.
First Nations peoples with disability face very high health risks.

This is because:

- their health may be poor
- they may live in homes with lots of people
- they can’t always get the services they need
they don’t have the transport they need so they can get:

- health care
- food
- support

there isn’t enough good health care, equipment or medicine available for their community.

The Australian Government has offered to make payments to help First Nations communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We ask governments around Australia to do what they can to make sure First Nations peoples with disability can get the support they need.
What will happen next

We know that people around Australia will face big challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We ask governments around Australia to think about what people with disability need during this time.

We still want to hear from people about violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability.

We will continue our work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

If you wish to share your story, please contact us.

Our contact details are on page 29.
We also want to know if you are having problems with the way governments or the community are responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Under the Terms of Reference, we can also look into:

- what is being done about the COVID-19 pandemic
- how this affects people with disability.

The Terms of Reference is a list of the things a Royal Commission should look at.

You can find more information about the Terms of Reference on our website.
**Word list**

**Accessible**
When something is accessible, everyone can use it.

This might be:
- a place or a building
- transport
- a service
- information
- a website.

**Auslan Interpreter**
An Auslan interpreter uses Australian sign language to help people with hearing impairments understand what someone is saying.

**Key areas of concern**
Our key areas of concern are things we are very worried about.

**Pandemic**
A virus is called a pandemic when it spreads quickly to lots of countries around the world.
Public health emergency

A public health emergency is a time when:

- there is a risk to the health of everyone in the community
- everyone needs to act quickly to protect themselves
- governments need to do what they can to keep people safe.

Self-isolate

If you self-isolate, you don’t:

- leave your house
- see other people.

Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference is a list of the things a Royal Commission should look at.

Virus

A virus is an illness or disease that can spread easily from one person to another person.
How to contact us

You can email us at DRCenquiries@royalcommission.gov.au

If you have a question, you can call us on 1800 517 199.

We are available on Monday to Friday between 9 am and 5 pm.

We are not available on public holidays.

You can also call the National Relay Service on 133 677.

You can write to us at:

- GPO Box 1422
- Brisbane
- QLD 4001
You can follow us on:

Facebook
www.facebook.com/disability.royalcommission.gov.au

Twitter
@DRC_AU

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