The Hon Ronald Sackville AO QC
Chair
Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability
GPO Box 1422
BRISBANE QLD 4001

By Email: DRCSecretariat@royalcommission.gov.au

Dear The Hon Sackville

We acknowledge the Statement of Concern titled "The response to the COVID-19 pandemic for people with disability" that you issued on 26 March 2020.

We provide you with the attached outline of the recent steps taken by the Australian Government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic concerning people with disability. We trust that it will be of assistance to the Royal Commission and its important work.

The Australian Government is undertaking a range of activities to ensure that vulnerable people, including people with disability, are supported in relation to COVID-19.

In addition to working in a closely coordinated manner across Commonwealth agencies, the Australian Government has been engaging intensively with peak bodies in the disability sector, organisations representing people with disability and our ministerial colleagues in the states and territories.

In recognition of the expertise available in the community and the need for urgent action on this matter, various advisory groups have been established, including:

- **Advisory Committee on the Health Response to COVID-19 for People with Disability:** On 3 April 2020, we announced the establishment of an advisory group to oversee the development and implementation of an Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Management and Operational Plan for People with Disability.
The Disability Support Services Committee (DSSC): On 25 March 2020, the Commonwealth Department of Social Services established the DSSC to provide a forum for Social Services cross-portfolio agencies and select disability support sector representatives to provide and obtain feedback on the status of support and access difficulties for people with disability as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes matters related to the direct and indirect impacts of the virus for people with disability and their access to supports.

On 21 March 2020, the Australian Government announced a range of measures to ensure disability supports meet the immediate needs of National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Australian Government acknowledges there are many Australians with disability who are not NDIS participants and still require the Australian Government’s support at this time. In addition to these NDIS measures, on 9 April 2020 the Australian Government announced up to $90.7 million in additional support for Australians living with disability to assist with employment packages and increases to a range of disability support services.

The Australian Government has consulted with disability and health stakeholders to understand the actions that are required to minimise the impact of COVID-19 on people with disability, their families, carers and support workers. One of the first steps the Australian Government implemented to assist people with disability, their families, carers and support workers was to include an Auslan interpreter in every government announcement about COVID-19 where available.

The Australian Government is also supporting people with disability and carers through the social security system. For example, recipients of the Disability Support Pension and the Carer Payment are eligible for the Economic Support Payment, which will be paid in two lump sum payments of $750. The first instalment was automatically paid on 31 March 2020 and the second instalment will be made from 13 July 2020.

The Australian Government will continue to respond to the issues faced by people with disability in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic and will continue to consider each of the matters raised in the Statement of Concern.

Should you or members of the Royal Commission require any further information about the matters addressed in the attached outline, the Australian Government welcomes an opportunity to assist you by providing any further information you require.

Yours sincerely

Anne Ruston
15/04/2020

Stuart Robert
15/05/2020

Greg Hunt
15/04/2020