How to use this report

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (the Royal Commission) wrote this report. When you see the words ‘we’, ‘us’ or ‘our’, it means the Royal Commission.

We wrote this report in an easy to read way. We use pictures to explain some ideas.

We have written some words in **bold**. This means the letters are thicker and darker.

We explain what these bold words mean. There is a list of these words on page 37.

We have written 2 Easy Read documents about our Interim Report.

This Easy Read report is a **summary** of our Interim Report.
A summary only includes the most important ideas.

You can find the Interim Report on our website.

disability.royalcommission.gov.au/about-royal-commission/our-reports

You can ask for help to read this report.

A friend, family member or support person may be able to help you.

This is a long report. It talks about a lot of our important work.

You don't have to read it all at once.

We have also written an Easy Read Guide to this report.

You can find it on our website.

What is in this report?

What is this report about? 5

What problems have we heard about? 7

How and where do problems happen? 22

Word list 37

Contact us 45
What is this report about?

This is the Royal Commission’s Interim Report.

**Interim** means we are part of the way through the Royal Commission.

The report is about:

- the Royal Commission
- our work.

This report is about the problems we have heard about so far.
We have talked to people about how people with disability experience:

- **violence** – when someone hurts you physically

- **abuse** – when someone treats you badly

- **neglect** – when someone is not helping you the way they are supposed to help you

- **exploitation** – when someone takes advantage of you.
What problems have we heard about?

From our work so far, we have heard about some important problems.

We have also heard about the experiences of people with disability during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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.

A virus is called a pandemic when it spreads quickly to lots of countries around the world.

We have heard that many people with disability feel like they have been neglected during the COVID-19 pandemic.
People with disability want choice and control

People with disability have the **right** to:

- control their own lives
- make their own choices and decisions.

Rights are rules about how everybody should be treated fairly.

We have heard that many people with disability do not get to decide:

- where they live
- who they live with
- who they have close relationships with
• if they work or have a job

• how to look after their money

• what health care they have

• if they go to school, study or learn.

Like everyone else, people with disability want to be **independent**.

When you are independent, you are in control of your own:

• life
• choices.
Everyone needs some support to be independent.

But many people with disability need more support.

Good support can help people to be:

- included
- independent
- confident.

When you are confident, you:

- believe in yourself
- know what you can do
- can try new things.

Attitudes towards people with disability

We have heard that people often have negative attitudes towards people with disability.
Attitudes are what you:

- think
- feel
- believe.

These attitudes can make people in the community think people with disability have less rights than others.

This means some people with disability have more problems getting what they need.

Some people with disability already face negative attitudes because of:

- their age
- their gender identity
- who they are attracted to
- their race or skin colour
- their culture or background
- the language they speak.
Your gender identity is not about your body being male or female. It is about who you feel you are as a person.

Your gender identity can be:

- male
- female
- a combination of these
- none of these.

Your culture is:

- your way of life
- how you think or act now because of how you grew up
- your beliefs
- what is important to you.

Negative attitudes can be a big problem for people with disability who are **First Nations people**.

First Nations people are also known as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
Including people with disability

We have heard about how people with disability are not included in the community.

In the past, many people with disability were kept apart from the rest of the community.

They:

- lived in separate homes
- worked in separate places
- learned at separate schools.

Some people with disability are still kept apart from the rest of the community.

We have heard that people with disability who are not included experience more:

- violence
- abuse
- neglect
- exploitation.
Restrictive practices

We have heard about *restrictive practices*.

Restrictive practices are ways to stop people from:

- moving
- doing what they want.

Restrictive practices are sometimes used when people with disability show *behaviours of concern*.

Behaviours of concern are things someone does that might cause danger to:

- themselves
- other people.
Restrictive practices are sometimes used in places where people with disability:

- live or visit
- get medical care
- get mental health treatment
- learn or study.

We have heard that some people don’t like how restrictive practices are used in these places.

The rules about using restrictive practices are not the same around Australia.

We will look at how we can make these rules better for people with disability.
Supports and services for people with disability

We have heard about the supports and services people with disability use.

People with disability have told us it is important that they can:

- find, choose and use the right supports and services
- stay safe when they use supports and services
- speak up about problems with supports and services
- get enough funding for supports and services.
Funding is money from the government to pay for supports and services.

People with disability use many of the supports and services everyone uses.

People with disability often get extra support they need from:

- family members
- friends
- carers who are not paid
- paid support workers
- service providers.

These people should keep people with disability safe.
Sometimes the people who should keep people with disability safe:

- cause the problems
- ignore the problems
- do not help fix the problems.

We have heard that people with disability face barriers that stop them getting the supports and services they need.

A barrier is something that stops you from doing something you:

- need to do
- want to do.

Barriers are a big problem for people with disability who:

- come from different cultures and backgrounds
- speak languages other than English
- are First Nations people
- live in parts of Australia where they can’t find the supports and services they need.
Making complaints if something goes wrong

When you make a complaint, you tell someone that something:

- has gone wrong
- isn’t working well.

But it can be hard for people with disability to:

- make a complaint
- have their complaint heard.

You can make a complaint if you:

- have a problem with your supports and services
- experience:
  - violence
  - abuse
  - neglect
  - exploitation.
Advocacy

People also told us about **advocacy**.

Advocacy is when someone speaks up for you.

An **advocate** is someone who can:

- support you
- help you have your say
- give you information and advice.

People with disability can speak up for themselves.

This is called **self-advocacy**.

**Advocacy organisations** are groups that speak up for people with disability. They can:

- help you have your say
- give you information and advice.
Advocacy is important so people with disability can:

- speak up about their rights
- have a say about things that affect them
- be safe.

We have heard that:
- there are not enough advocacy services in Australia
- advocacy services don’t get enough funding.

This is a big problem for people with disability who:
- are First Nations people
- need a lot of support.
How and where do problems happen?

We have heard about some problems that happen where people with disability:

- spend most of their time
- are put together with other people with disability.

Many of these problems relate to the other problems we already talked about in this report.

We talk about these problems in more detail on the following pages.
Schools and places people go to learn

Sometimes, students with disability:

- can’t get the same education as other students
- are not expected to do very well with their learning
- do not get the support they need to do well with their learning
- experience:
  - violence
  - abuse
  - neglect
  - exploitation.
This makes it hard for people to:

- reach their goals
- feel good about school and learning
- feel good about themselves.

Many teachers who work with students with disability don’t get enough:

- training
- support.
There are different ideas about whether students with disability should learn at schools or in classrooms that are:

- inclusive
- just for students with disability.

When something is inclusive, everyone can take part.

Many students with disability face extra barriers in schools and other places people go to learn.
Homes and living

Some people with disability do not feel safe at home.

Most people with disability live with their family.

Some people with disability live in homes just for people with disability.

We have heard how many people with disability are hurt, abused or neglected in their homes.

It can be hard for people with disability to find homes that:

- are safe
- meet their needs
- they can afford.
This can be a big problem for people with disability who:

- are First Nations people
- live far away from cities or towns.

Health care

We have heard that many people with disability:

- have worse health than other people
- can face barriers when they try to get the health care they need
- are made to take medicine they don’t want to take
- get medical treatment they do not want.
Some health care services don’t treat people with disability the same way as they treat everyone else.

Health care workers might not understand what people with disability need.

Relationships

Everyone has the right to be part of a family.

Some people with disability experience **domestic and family violence**.

Domestic and family violence is when you are hurt by someone close to you, such as:

- your boyfriend or girlfriend
- your husband or wife
- a member of your family
- someone who takes care of you.
Some people with disability experience sexual violence.

Sexual violence is when someone:

- makes you do sexual things you don’t want to do
- does something sexual to you that you don’t want them to do.

Women with disability experience these types of violence more than other people in our community.

Sometimes children are taken away from parents with disability.

Sometimes this happens because the parents have a disability.

We have heard this happens more to people with disability who are First Nations people.
Making the community accessible

People with disability face barriers when they try to:

- take part in the community
- find clear information.

It can be hard to take part in your community if it is not accessible.

When something is accessible, everyone can use it.

Things that should be accessible include:

- places and buildings
- transport
- services
- information
- websites.
Working and having enough money

Many people with disability do not have enough money to:

- live well
- be safe.

Many people with disability have less money than other people.

Less people with disability work and have jobs than people without disability.

In Australia, we have services that help people with disability find work.
Many people with disability find:

- it is hard to keep a job
- they are paid less than others
- they can only find work with other people with disability
- they feel unsafe at their work.

**The National Disability Insurance Scheme**

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is a way to support people with disability.

The NDIS aims to give people with disability more choice and control.

We have heard that many people with disability face barriers when they try to:

- join the NDIS
- use the NDIS.
The justice system

The **justice system** includes:

- police
- courts
- the law
- prisons.

Some people with disability are more likely to have problems with the justice system, such as people with:

- **cognitive disability**
- **psychosocial disability**.

A cognitive disability affects how well you can:

- learn new things
- solve problems
- communicate
- do things on your own.

A psychosocial disability affects how you think and feel.
Some people with disability come in contact with the justice system many times during their lives.

People with disability can be:

- **victims** of crimes
- **witnesses** to crime
- accused of crimes.

A victim is a person who has experienced a crime.

A witness is a person who saw or knew that something happened.

Sometimes people who work in the justice system do not believe people with disability.
Sometimes police treat people with disability as if they did something wrong when they did not.

People with disability need support to:

- protect their rights
- get what they need
- get fair treatment
- use the court system
- try to solve legal problems
- give evidence and be believed.
People with disability who go to prison are at risk of:

- violence
- abuse
- neglect
- exploitation.

Sometimes people with disability are only sent to prison for a short time.

But this can happen many times during their lives.

Sometimes people with disability are sent to prison:

- because they do not have the supports they need in the community
- for longer than is fair.
Word list

This list explains what the **bold** words in this report mean.

**Abuse**
Abuse is when someone treats you badly.

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

Things that should be accessible include:

- places and buildings
- transport
- services
- information
- websites.

**Advocacy**
Advocacy is when someone speaks up for you.
Advocacy organisations

Advocacy organisations are groups that speak up for people with disability. They can:

- help you have your say
- give you information and advice.

Advocate

An advocate is someone who can:

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- help you have your say
- give you information and advice.

Attitudes

Attitudes are what you:

- think
- feel
- believe.

Barrier

A barrier is something that stops you from doing something you:

- need to do
- want to do.
Behaviours of concern

Behaviours of concern are things someone does that might put:

- themselves in danger
- other people in danger.

Cognitive disability

A cognitive disability affects how well you can:

- learn new things
- solve problems
- communicate
- do things on your own.

Complaint

When you make a complaint, you tell someone that something:

- has gone wrong
- isn’t working well.

Confident

When you are confident, you:

- believe in yourself
- know what you can do
- can try new things.
COVID-19

COVID-19 is a virus that has affected many people around the world.

Culture

Your culture is:

• your way of life
• how you think or act now because of how you grew up
• your beliefs
• what is important to you.

Domestic and family violence

Domestic and family violence is when you are hurt by someone close to you, such as:

• your boyfriend or girlfriend
• your husband or wife
• a member of your family
• someone who takes care of you.

Exploitation

Exploitation is when someone takes advantage of you.
First Nations people

First Nations people are also known as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Funding

Funding is money from the government to pay for supports and services.

Gender identity

Your gender identity is not about your body being male or female. It is about who you feel you are as a person.

Your gender identity can be:

- male
- female
- a combination of these
- none of these.

Inclusive

When something is inclusive, everyone can take part.
Independent
When you are independent, you are in control of your own:
- life
- choices.

Interim
Interim means we are part of the way through the Royal Commission.

Justice system
The justice system includes:
- police
- the courts
- the law
- prisons.

Neglect
Neglect is when someone is not helping you the way they are supposed to help you.

Pandemic
A virus is called a pandemic when it spreads quickly to lots of countries around the world.
Psychosocial disability
A psychosocial disability affects how you think and feel.

Restrictive practices
Restrictive practices are ways to stop people from:
- moving
- doing what they want.

Rights
Rights are rules about how everybody should be treated fairly.

Self-advocacy
People with disability can speak up for themselves.
This is called self-advocacy.

Sexual violence
Sexual violence is when someone:
- makes you do sexual things you don’t want to do
- does something sexual to you that you don’t want them to do.
Summary
A summary only includes the most important ideas.

Victim
A victim is a person who has experienced a crime.

Violence
Violence is when someone hurts you physically.

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

Witness
A witness is a person who saw or knew that something happened.
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 9am and 5pm.

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
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