



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

A guide to **your private session**

with the Disability
Royal Commission

The background features a large, abstract geometric composition. On the left, a dark purple triangle points towards the center. To its right, a lighter purple triangle points towards the top right. The remaining space is filled with a light lavender color, which is separated from the top by a white triangular area. The text is positioned in the lower-left quadrant of the lavender area.

**A more inclusive,
just society**

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Your experience is important

Thank you for registering for a private session with the Royal Commission.

Hearing from people with disability, their families, support people and the broader community helps us understand the nature, extent and impact of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability, and how it can be prevented in the future.

We acknowledge that coming forward to share your experience is a big step. We want to make you feel as safe as possible.

The purpose of this booklet is to help you to prepare for your private session.

If you have any questions, before or after your private session, please contact us.

What is a private session?

A private session is a confidential one hour meeting with a Commissioner where you tell them about your personal experience.

Registrations for private sessions closed on 30 June 2022. Sessions will be held until the end of 2022.

Private sessions allow you to share your experiences with a Commissioner in a confidential setting.

Please contact us to discuss any accessibility needs you have. This will help us understand how we can best support you to share your experiences with the Royal Commission.



Preparing for your private session

If you wish, you can have a support person join you for your private session. Your support person could be a friend or family member, or a professional person who you feel comfortable with, such as a counsellor or lawyer. If you choose to have your support person join you in your session, their role will be to support you while you tell the Commissioner about your experience. They can support you in person, or via a separate video link or telephone.

To make the most of your time with the Commissioner during your private session, it might help to prepare.

You can access free independent legal support to help you to prepare for your private session by calling Your Story Disability Legal Support on 1800 77 1800.

Thinking about your experience

The questions below may help you to prepare for your private session. They are only a guide. It is okay if you can't remember everything or don't answer every question.

What happened?

What would you like to tell us about your experience or knowledge of violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation?

- Are you telling us about violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation that happened to you or someone else? If it is someone else, who is that person and what is your relationship to them?
- When, or around when, did the violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation happen? If you can, please provide us with a date, or range of dates.

- Can you tell us what happened?
- Have any of your family, carers, workers or others provided you with assistance or support related to what happened?

Reporting the violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation

Have you told anyone about your experience/s?

- Who did you tell?
- What did you tell them?
- When did you tell them?
- Did you put it in writing? If yes, can you provide us with a copy?
- Was it difficult to report your experience? Can you tell us why or why not?

The response

If you reported your experience, what happened in response?

- How did the person/organisation you reported it to first respond?
- What else did they do about it?
- Was there any investigation of what happened to you? If so, by who?
- Were you offered any support? If yes, did you accept the support? Why or why not?
- Have you ever received any redress or compensation?
- Would you consider the response to reporting good or bad? Can you please tell us why?

Recommendations for change

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? You might also like to tell us about any people who have supported you.

Anything else?

Is there anything else you would like to share with the Royal Commission?

In a few sentences, what would you like to tell Australia about your hopes for the future?

Counselling, adjustments and supports

Sharing your experience can be hard.

We want to help you feel comfortable in your private session.

If you have not already provided us with information about the adjustments and supports you need or if you have anything to add, please contact us as soon as possible.

The Royal Commission has a team of experienced counsellors. Counselling support is available for participants before and after private sessions, and a counsellor will be on hand if necessary during your private session.

If someone has supported you in the past, you may want to reconnect with them so they can help you through this process.

Blue Knot Foundation offers free specialist counselling support and a referral service

for people with disability, their families and supporters, and anyone affected by the Royal Commission. You can call the national hotline on 1800 421 468 (9am to 6pm AEDT Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm AEDT Saturday, Sunday and public holidays).

If you are deaf or hard of hearing, you can contact us through the National Relay Service, by dialing 133 677 and tell them you want to call 07 3734 1900.

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 disabilityadvocacyfinder.dss.gov.au/disability/ndap/

Costs associated with taking part in a private session

If you need to travel to take part in a private session, for example if you don't have a private space at home, or need to go somewhere to access a computer, the Royal Commission may arrange and pay for the costs of travel for you and your support person.

What happens during a private session?

A Royal Commission staff member will contact you shortly before your private session begins - if your session is going to be held via video link, the staff member will help you join and make sure everything is working.

If you have a support person joining your session, the staff member will make sure they are also connected.

The private session will be joined by a commission officer, one of our Commissioners, you and, if you choose, your support person.

You will be introduced to the Commissioner. Once the process has been explained to you, you will be invited to share your experience. If you agree, the session will be recorded. You will not be asked to take an oath, but you should tell the truth.

The Commissioner and the commission officer may ask you some questions to help the Royal Commission understand the circumstances of your experiences. The Commissioner may also ask about any suggestions for change you might have.

The Royal Commission can accept documents from you as part of your private session, including a written statement if you wish. These can be provided before or after the session.

During the private session, please let us know if:

- there are some aspects of your experience you don't want to talk about
- there are questions you don't want to answer
- there are things you can't remember
- there is anything we can do to make you more comfortable.

After your private session

After your private session, one of our counsellors will contact you if you would like to talk about your session, answer any questions you might have, and ask you about any support you might need. If you have a support person who joined your private session, you can ask for them to be included, or you can talk to the counsellor alone.



Using information provided in your private session

The information you provide in your private session will help us to:

- understand the experiences of many different people with disability
- identify the extent of the problem
- understand more about the systems and contexts in which abuse is 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.

We may also use the information you provide in your private session in our reports and recommendations. If we do this, your information will be “de-identified”, which means that your identity and anything that would reveal your identity, will not be used in our reports or recommendations.

Confidentiality

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.

We can disclose information you provide for a private session that identifies you in limited circumstances including where your information relates to the contravention of an Australian law.

If you are concerned about the confidentiality of the information provided for your private session please get legal support.

Your Story Disability Legal Support

Your Story Disability Legal Support is a free, national service separate from the Royal Commission. They can give information and legal support to people about safely sharing their story with the Royal Commission.

This service is available to people with disability and their families, carers, supporters and advocates.

Contact Your Story Disability Legal Support if:

- you want support in sharing your experience through a submission or a private session
- you have concerns that could stop you from sharing your story
- you are concerned about your or someone else's rights, safety or access to services or employment if you share your experiences
- you are invited to be a witness at a public hearing
- you are required to provide a witness statement or produce other evidence.

Contact Your Story Disability Legal Support on 1800 77 1800 Monday to Friday or visit the website at www.yourstorydisabilitylegal.org.au

If you are deaf, or have a hearing or speech impairment, call the National Relay Service on 133 677 and give 1800 77 1800 as the number you want to call.

Your Story Disability Legal Support has Aboriginal legal services that can support First Nations people to share their story in a culturally safe way.



Contact us

Phone

Call 1800 517 199 or SMS message to 0459 906 629 and someone will get back to you Monday to Friday excluding public holidays.

If you are deaf or hard of hearing, you can contact us through the National Relay Service, by dialing 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

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