

**Question 1: What needs to be done by governments to increase the safety and wellbeing of people with disability during an emergency such as the COVID-19 pandemic or the Black Summer bushfires?**

*The government needs to dedicate a service or organisation to manage the wellbeing and safety of people with disability which will provide information and services i.e. health service, financial assistance, social work/carer assistance etc.*

*While the Government has implemented actions to support NDIS participants through the current pandemic, these measures do not assist people living with disability who are not participants of the NDIS.*

*It is imperative that people with disability are aware of the latest health advice and provided with optimal health care support as they may be disproportionately affected by the pandemic or an emergency due to underlying health conditions.*

*The Government needs to make proactive efforts to protect the most vulnerable people within our society from threats to their safety and wellbeing.*

**Question 2: What supports are required to ensure people with disability are not at risk of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation during an emergency?**

*People with disability require further support and financial assistance. These supports need to be provided in a way that is easily accessible and as quickly as possible.*

*Services will need to actively engage with people who have a disability. It should not be left up to people with disability to initiate the communication, but the relevant support agencies to inquire how individuals are coping and what assistance can be provided. This is needed to ensure that people with disabilities are not neglected during an emergency.*

**Question 3: What is the experience of people with disability in getting assistance and information in an emergency? How does a lack of assistance and information expose people with disability to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation?**

*It is difficult for people with disability to gain information regarding the corona virus and within an emergency. Many people with disabilities feel as if they have been overlooked. Lack of information available to people with disabilities has meant that they are often the last to be educated about the risks associated with the state of emergency.*

*A lack of assistance within a state of emergency greatly impacts people with disability and makes them vulnerable to neglect and exploitation. Social distancing is impossible for many who rely on the support of others for their basic needs. A lack of assistance in helping people with disabilities to respond to a state of emergency can leave them vulnerable and left behind. For example, people with disability should receive prioritisation for receiving essential services and products.*

*A lack of assistance and information is isolating for people and can have detrimental impacts upon peoples mental and physical health and wellbeing.*

**Question 4: Will an emergency hotline service help people with disability keep safe and informed during an emergency? What other communication measures might be helpful?**

*An emergency hotline service would help people with disability regarding their safety whilst providing information relevant to the emergency. The emergency hotline should be dedicated to handling particular issues faced by people with disability.*

*Other communication measures which could further assist include a text service, an email service, and a personal visitation service.*

*A secondary hotline should be established for people to call to communicate with other people. A state of emergency, such as COVID-19 is isolating and further exacerbates the neglect that people with disability are subjected to by society.*

**Question 5: How can people with disability be included in emergency planning and responses to ensure strategies that reduce risk of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation?**

*People with disability can be included in emergency planning and responses if organisations reach out directly to people with disability or to their advocates and representatives.*

*Government agencies or organisations should not wait until there is a state of emergency, but anticipate the needs of people with disability, and make plans pre-empting an emergency to ensure that people with disabilities have their needs met.*

**Question 6: How are people with disability in closed facilities and segregated settings placed at increased risk of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation during emergencies? What is needed to ensure people with disability in these settings are safe if facilities are locked down or evacuated?**

*People with disabilities in closed facilities and segregated settings are placed at an increased risk of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation during emergencies. This isolates people with disability from the public making it easier for acts of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation to occur where there are restrictions placed on public visitation in segregated facilities. Further, during times of emergency the general focus is placed on the changing conditions of the emergency and not on those who are segregated from society and are often 'out of sight, and out of mind'.*

*The lack of people who are able to visit closed facilities means that those who work within these facilities are not subject to the same level of accountability. The lack of transparency and answerability of people working within the facilities places those with disabilities at increased risk.*

*In order to ensure that people with disabilities are safe within these settings when facilities are locked down, cameras should be used (with the permission of residents) to monitor the actions of those within the facility. Further, an increased number of staff working within the facility could be used as a safeguard against exploitation of its residents. Further daily/weekly reporting from the residents to independent regulators could be adopted.*

**Question 7: How can people with disability be protected from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation when oversight and safeguarding practices are affected during emergencies? Should additional practices be in place during emergencies? If so, what should those be?**

*Please refer to the answer to question 6.*

**Question 8: What are the particular experiences of children and young people, First Nations people, culturally and linguistically diverse people, women and LGBTQI+ people with disability during emergencies?**

*The experiences of children and young people, First Nations people, culturally and linguistically diverse people, women and LGBTQI+ people with disability during emergencies is varied. People from diverse communities are more likely to experience obstacles to getting the assistance and support that they require.*

*Accessing treatments and support during times of emergency are daunting and difficult for people with disabilities. Further, they may experience unconscious bias and discrimination from services and be more likely to experience neglect and violence.*

**Question 9: How effective have initiatives by businesses been in supporting people with disability through the pandemic, such as dedicated supermarket shopping hours or home delivery services? What else can be done?**

*Dedicated Supermarket shopping hours and delivery services have provided assistance to people with disability. However, these initiatives would have been more beneficial had they been initiated from the beginning of the emergency. Further, people with disability may have difficulty setting up the orders and traveling to and from the supermarket themselves.*

*Initiatives set up by businesses should ensure that they are accessible to people with different disabilities and there are a range of ways that people with disability can acquire assistance from an employee of the business.*

**Question 10: How can people with disability, including those in closed and segregated settings, be supported to maintain social and community connections during emergencies?**

*It is important that people with disability be supported in maintaining social and community connections during emergencies. This could be done through the use of communication platforms, such as social media, phones, internet video calls, text messaging, letter writing and through exchanging art work.*

*Further, an over the phone service should be established to call people with disability periodically to check in and have a chat.*

*There should also be online and over the phone counselling services that are not capped, but allow for unlimited communication during operating hours.*

*Online official social groups should be established to maintain community connection that appeal to people with a diverse range of interests.*

*Further, short courses could be offered to people either via the internet or by hardcopy correspondence. This would provide people with the opportunity to pursue a hobby, or study a topic of their interest.*