



CoMHWA

Consumers of Mental Health WA (Inc.)

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To whom it may concern

Urgent Call for National Inquiry: End violence against people with disability in institutions

As the peak body for people with lived experience of mental health issues in WA, Consumers of Mental Health WA (CoMHWA) strongly supports the call of People with Disability Australia (PWDA) and Women with Disabilities Australia (WWDA) for a National Inquiry into violence, neglect and abuse against people with disability in residential and institutional settings.

CoMHWA supports the urgency of this appeal as vital to the immediate and future safety, inclusion, health, wellbeing, grieving and healing of victims and their families.

CoMHWA seeks the expansion of the scope of the Inquiry to include:

- People with mental illness and the health and mental health residential and institutional settings in which they receive care and treatment;
- Recognition of the individual nature of the consumer perspective of trauma.

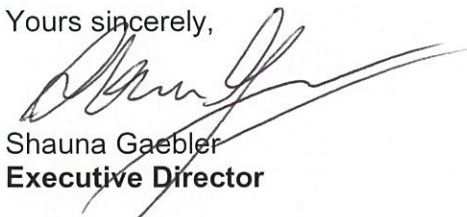
The call for the broadened scope for the Inquiry is based on the following factors:

- CoMHWA's receipt of direct requests and indications of interest from mental health consumers for a full and comprehensive inquiry into harms and abuses in psychiatric settings,
- Evidence that mental health services are likely to see people who are at risk of re-victimisation that is more vulnerable to abuse or assault.
- The potential for people with mental health issues and those with cognitive impairments have similar challenges with respect to
 - Challenges to the credibility of statements when they come forwards to people in authority and in legal testimony
 - The dependence on staff and organisational responses in institutional settings, with variable access to independent and accessible advocacy, counselling and support
 - The frequency with which additional and tailored education needs to be provided to increase self-protective and self-advocacy behaviours in relation to their sexual and physical safety, and adequate additional advocacy support as required.

CoMHWA recognizes the need for greater nationally consistent practice in relation to prevention, reporting and management of abuse, assault and neglect for people with mental illness, including those with psycho-social disability.

The need for a systemic approach to address violence, exploitation and abuse in institutions and residential settings for people with disabilities and mental health issues throughout Australia is of critical importance.

Yours sincerely,



Shauna Gaebler
Executive Director

27th November 2014