

Media guidelines

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

Overview

This guide is to provide a brief ready reference for journalists, media outlets and the general public about reporting on the upcoming Royal Commission that puts people with disability at the heart of the story.

Our Royal Commission is of vital importance to people with disability, with many people and our representative organisations campaigning for this for years. We believe that only a Royal Commission, with its specific powers and reach, can bring justice for the thousands of people with disability who have experienced violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation when it bears witnesses to these aspects of our lives.

Violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation against people with disability is endemic, occurring in a wide variety of places, including disability support settings, hospitals, prisons, custodial settings, workplaces, nursing homes, schools and the home. This violence takes many forms including physical and sexual violence and abuse, psychological or emotional harm, restrictive practices and forced treatments. This abuse can also be specifically about a person's disability, and include removing aids and equipment, denying support and care, abuse or denial of medications and isolation from the community.

People with disability will be telling their stories to the Royal Commission in a variety of ways – through submissions, in public hearings and in private sessions. In addition, our disability representative organisations will be providing support for people with disability, as well as expert contributions to the Royal Commission.

In addition, our representative organisations, such as PWDA, have considerable expertise about the Royal Commission and the wider issues that it will raise. We will be providing advocacy for individual people with disability to engage with the Royal Commission, as well as a wide range of policy, training and other support.

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People with disability and our Royal Commission

In all stories about the Royal Commission, we ask that you centre people with disability, our stories and our experiences. This means:

- Always including the voices of people with disability, and our representative organisations
- Crediting the expertise of people with disability, and our representative organisations
- Making sure your stories are accessible – this could include captions, image descriptions, alt-text, Easy English, audio descriptions
- Using [respectful language](#) about people with disability
- Putting support numbers at the end of media stories, particularly those that deal with specifics about violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation
- Take an intersectional approach to issues of age, ethnicity, race, sex, gender, sexual orientation, intersex status, race and the particular situation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people with disability.

Why media matters

We know that our Royal Commission will shine a light on the shocking violence that many people with disability experience because we hear about this every day from people with disability. The reporting that media outlets will do about our Royal Commission will help Australians to understand the extent of this violence, how pervasive it is, and its impact on people with disability.

Great journalism about violence against people with disability has helped bring about this Royal Commission, uncovering shocking stories and hearing directly from survivors with disability.

Media stories will be part of driving the systemic change that is needed to stop the violence against people with disability, and raising awareness about the issues in the wider Australian community.

Societal and attitudinal change towards people with disability and our safety requires a national conversation driven by good quality, person with disability centred, regular and ongoing media.

Key evidence and data

Here are some links that are helpful to get background information, evidence and data about our Royal Commission.

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

This list is updated regularly, and contains many links to previous campaigning, and answers to many questions about our Royal Commission.

[Data and evidence about violence](#)

Finding accurate evidence and data about violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability is difficult, with much more research needed. Our Royal Commission will be working to fill



these knowledge and data gaps and build an evidence base for change. This is a compilation of all the evidence that is currently known.

Key terminology

Here are some tips about terminology.

- This is a Royal Commission into violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation against people with disability, NOT into people with disability.
- This is a Royal Commission into violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation against people with disability in all settings, NOT just disability support services.
- This violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation is systemic, and not about how 'vulnerable' we are as individuals. We are not vulnerable because of our disability - we are made vulnerable because of the values, attitudes, contexts and environments we are subjected to.
- People with disability are survivors of abuse, not victims.
- This violence impacts some people with disability more, and differently, than other people with disability - intersectionality matters.

Talking with survivors

Often, media will ask to speak to people with disability, who are survivors of violence, about their experiences. Many people with disability will want to speak about what happened to them, however, we ask that media outlets approach survivors with a high degree of sensitivity, and longer timeframes. Also, many people with disability will not want to speak to the media, and these requests need to be respected by media outlets.

People with disability who are survivors should not be asked, or expected, to talk about the violence they have experienced with people they don't know, at short timeframes, and with no support.

We suggest that media outlets take the time to invest in their relationships with survivors, and ensure that any reporting is respectful and does not lead to people with disability being retraumatised. People with disability will often want support during any interview.

Suggested support numbers

We ask that support numbers and resources are listed at the end of all stories about the Royal Commission, particularly those with strong descriptions of violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Those numbers can include:

- Lifeline 13 11 14



- Mens Line 1300 789 978
- Kids Helpline 1800 551 800
- 1800 RESPECT 1800 737 732
- National Counselling and Referral Service: 1800 421 468
- Aboriginal Family Domestic Violence Hotline 1800 019 123

About PWDA

People with Disability Australia (PWDA) is a national disability rights, advocacy and representative organisation that is made up of, led and governed by people with disability.

We have a [vision](#) of a socially just, accessible and inclusive community, in which the human rights, belonging, contribution, potential and diversity of all people with disability are recognised, respected and celebrated with pride.

Our members, people with disability and organisations made up of people with disability, are actively involved in PWDA, electing a [Board](#) of people with disability every year. Many of [our staff](#) are also people with disability.

[Founded in 1981](#), the International Year of Disabled Persons, People with Disability Australia provides people with disability with a voice of our own. We have a cross-disability focus representing the interests of people with all kinds of disability. We are a non-profit, non-government organisation.

We are a founding member of [Disabled People's Organisations Australia](#).