

## Joint Media Statement



## AUSTRALIA IS FAILING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY, EVIDENCE TO THE ROYAL COMMISSION WILL SHOW

**Evidence to be presented at the Disability Royal Commission hearing on Monday 12 October will highlight the systemic failures and human rights breaches experienced by students with disability across the country.**

The hearing will focus on the systemic neglect, abuse, and discrimination faced by students with disability across Australia – including the use of restraints and seclusion, suspension and expulsion, and the life-long impacts of this mistreatment. This is the second Commission hearing into education systems.

On Monday afternoon, our organisations, Children and Young People with Disability Australia, Family Advocacy NSW and Queensland Advocacy Incorporated, will provide evidence of the ongoing failure of education systems to comply with human rights obligations and national disability standards, and the failure of complaints processes to acknowledge or resolve issues.

These failures are well-documented in school data, research, and direct feedback from students and families. CYDA's annual education surveys consistently show high levels of exclusion, bullying, and lack of supports for students with disability. Two in five respondents to CYDA's 2019 survey reported being excluded from school activities, and 48 per cent reported being bullied in the past year.

These findings were confirmed by over 200 young people who joined CYDA's National Youth Disability Summit in early October and overwhelmingly reported facing significant issues in their education. A key message was the need to listen to students themselves and be proactive in providing appropriate supports.

We call for the Royal Commission to listen to the voices and experiences of students with disability and to shine a light on the neglect and abuse faced by so many students every day. Commitment and investment from governments is urgently needed to uphold the human rights of students with disability.

### **Quotes attributable to Mary Sayers, CEO, Children and Young People with Disability Australia**

*“Decades of research demonstrate that all children, with and without disability, experience better educational achievement when they can learn together in a safe and inclusive environment. A successful education creates the building blocks for success later in life. That’s why it’s so important that all children learn and grow in the same environment.*

*We are pleased the Disability Royal Commission is investigating the barriers to inclusive education and the discrimination faced by students with disability and how this can be overcome.”*

### **Quotes attributable to Cecille Sullivan-Elder, CEO, Family Advocacy**

*“Family Advocacy has seen a doubling of educational related advocacy calls over the past few years highlighting the many significant issues experienced by students with disability across NSW school.*

*This focus at the Disability Royal Commission this week is welcomed, and our hope is that the injustice experienced by many will be heard strongly throughout the course of the week and lead to the appropriate reform.”*

## **Quotes attributable to Michelle O’Flynn, Director, Queensland Advocacy Incorporated (QAI)**

*“For healthy functional communities, schools and families, every person needs to feel welcomed and that they belong.”*

*“Life for children beyond family begins at school – it is an enduring impression and there is great responsibility on all schools and governments to make that a happy and creatively formative time for students. Failure to succeed at this is therefore not the failure of the student but on all of us.”*

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**Families and young people from Queensland, NSW, and Victoria are available to be interviewed, with appropriate protections in place.**

### **Media contact**

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