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## The Disability Royal Commission and how to get involved

The Australian Government has established a Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. A Royal Commission is the highest form of inquiry into major issues of public importance.

This Royal Commission will run for 3 years, finishing in 2022. It will cover all forms of violence against, and abuse, neglect and exploitation of, people with disability, in all settings and contexts.

The Commission says “what we learn from the Royal Commission will help to inform Australian governments, institutions and the wider community on how to prevent, and better protect, people with disability from experiencing violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation in the future.”

The Disability Royal Commission's website provides more detailed information: <https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/>.

### What is a Royal Commission?

A Royal Commission is an independent investigation into issues of public importance. Commissioners are appointed by the government. They will commission research, hear evidence and receive submissions, and then make recommendations to government about what should change.

The work that the Royal Commission does is guided by its terms of reference. The Disability Royal Commission terms of reference are available on its website.

Royal Commissions look at systemic issues, rather than individual cases. They are not able to address individual charges or seek justice for individual victim survivors.

### Taking part in the Disability Royal Commission

#### How to take part

If you, your child, or someone you know has experienced violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation, you can share your story with the Royal Commission. There are several ways to do this, and more information is available on the Royal Commission website.

#### Making an individual submission

Anyone can make an individual submission. This is a way for you to tell your story and share your experiences with the Commission in writing or other ways. You can make as many submissions as you like.

You can make an individual submission by:

- Phone (call 1800 517 199 or +61 7 3734 1900)
- Email ([DRCenquiries@royalcommission.gov.au](mailto:DRCenquiries@royalcommission.gov.au))
- Post (GPO Box 1422, Brisbane Qld 4001)
- Filling in a submission form, available on the Commission website
- Sending in a video or audio recording.

The Royal Commission's website has a list of questions to think about that can help you with your submission: <https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/share-your-story/questions-help-you>.

#### Speaking at a hearing, private session and/or community forum

As well as inviting submissions, the Royal Commission will hear people's experiences in other ways, including holding public hearings and community engagement activities across the country. The calendar of activities is kept up to date on the Commission's website.

Anyone can speak at a community forum, while people are invited to talk at hearings. Both types are open to the public to watch.

You can also apply to have a private session with the Commission. These can be in person, by phone or by video conferencing, and allow you to share your experiences with a Commissioner directly and confidentially. You can apply for a private session by email, phone or post. Information is available on the Commission's website.

### Responding to issues papers

The Commission will also be asking for comments about some areas in more detail. To do this, the Commission releases issues papers on particular topics, which include information about the topic and ask you to respond to specific questions. Anyone can provide their comments on an issues paper by sending in a submission.

So far issues papers have been released about topics including education, group homes and health. More papers will be released as the Commission continues its work.

### Things to think about before taking part

It's a big decision to share sensitive information about you or your child's experiences of violence, abuse, neglect and/or exploitation. Here are some of the things that other people have considered before deciding to share their family's experiences.

People often want to:

- Tell their story, or their child's story, and be heard
- Show how things can be
- Have more people know about violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation
- Add to the understanding about how violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation happens
- Ensure more resources are spent on keeping children safe
- Be part of changing things for the better
- Join with others to act on this issue.

People are often concerned about:

- Keeping their family member's information private
- How they can tell someone else's story in a fair way
- Potential for negative consequences from telling their story.

Before deciding to take part, it is important to think about:

- How you and your child can stay safe, as re-telling your story can be traumatising
- What support you have to help, like family or friends
- What support the Royal Commission can provide
- If you want your information to stay confidential
- The best way for you to be involved.

You may also want to think about what changes you would like to see that will help keep children and young people safe. These might be changes needed to help individuals, and also changes to systems that work on the bigger picture.

You can find more information about taking part in the Disability Royal Commission on their website, or by calling them on 1800 517 199 or +61 7 3734 1900. Information is in Easy Read, Auslan and community languages.

### Support that is available

There are services available to help you and your family when sharing your stories with the Royal Commission. They include counselling, advocacy and legal services.

- For free counselling support and referrals, call Blue Knot Foundation on 1800 421 468 or email [ncrscounsellors@blueknot.org.au](mailto:ncrscounsellors@blueknot.org.au)
- For free legal advice to help you interact with the Commission, call 1800 771 800 or visit <https://drclegalservice.org.au>
- For free advocacy services, contact a disability advocacy organisation near you: <https://www.dana.org.au/find-an-advocate/>.

More information is available on the Royal Commission's website.

### How is CYDA taking part in the Disability Royal Commission?

CYDA is focused on what works to keep children and young people safe and have their rights upheld. We will be sharing stories, case studies, research and evidence about this. We want to make it clear that children and young people with disability are valued and need to have their rights upheld.

There may be significant media and community attention on the Commission and what it uncovers. CYDA will be using this as an opportunity to gain support to make positive changes that help keep children and young people safe and that build more inclusive communities.

We will be focused on making sure that the needs of children and young people with disability are included in any changes or recommendations from the Royal Commission.

We will also be working to make sure that the Commission is accessible, supportive and understanding about the needs and children and young people.

We regularly share information about our work through our e-newsletter and on our website ([www.cyda.org.au](http://www.cyda.org.au)). Please contact us if you would like more information.

### National Redress Scheme

CYDA is also involved in supporting the National Redress Scheme, which was established by the Australian Government in response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

The Redress Scheme is an alternative to seeking compensation or damages through the courts. It is for any person who was sexually abused as a child by a person employed by an institution, before July 2018. This might include people who would also like to share their story with the Disability Royal Commission.

The scheme commenced in July 2018 and will end on 30 June 2028.

People need to be 18 years and over in order to accept an offer of redress. Children under 18 are eligible to apply for redress if the child turns 18 before the end of the scheme in June 2028.

The National Redress Scheme can provide three things:

- Access to counselling and psychological care.
- A payment of up to \$150,000. The average is estimated to be around \$76,000.
- A direct personal response from the institution responsible for the abuse, for example, an apology.

It is each person's choice whether they want to receive all or some of these things.

Please contact us for:

- Further information about the Redress Scheme
- Information about the application process
- Connections and referrals to other services including counselling, free legal services and financial support services
- Information and advice to other services to make sure that the needs of children and young people with disability are met in the application process.

### More information

This fact sheet may have raised concerns for you or for people you know.

If you have any concerns or you would like support, please contact CYDA on:

**t:** 03 9417 1025

1800 222 660 (regional or interstate callers outside Melbourne metro)

**e:** [info@cyda.org.au](mailto:info@cyda.org.au)

For information about providing a submission to the Disability Royal Commission, please visit our website:

<https://www.cyda.org.au/disability-royal-commission>

or the Disability Royal Commission website:

<https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/>

**This fact sheet is one of four.  
Please also read:**

**Fact Sheet 1** *What is violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of children and young people with disability?*

**Fact Sheet 2** *What to do when harm occurs – or if you suspect it*

**Fact Sheet 3** *How can we help keep children and young people with disability safe?*