

Children with Disability Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the consultation paper regarding the establishment of a Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Children with Disability Australia (CDA) is the national peak body that represents children and young people with disability and their families. The organisation is primarily funded through the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) and is a not for profit organisation. Additional funding is also received by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). CDA has a national membership of 5000 with the majority being families.

CDA's vision is that children and young people with disability living in Australia are afforded every opportunity to thrive, achieve their potential and that their rights and interests as individuals, members of a family and their community are met.

CDA undertakes the following to achieve its purpose:

1. Education of national public policy-makers and the broader community about the needs of children and young people with disability.
2. Advocacy on behalf of children and young people with disability to ensure the best possible support and services are available from government and the community.
3. Inform children and young people with disability, families and care givers about their rights and entitlements to services and support.
4. Celebrate the successes and achievements of children and young people with disability.

Comments

1. CDA strongly supports the Australian Government's decision to establish a Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Australia.
2. Children with disability must be a specific focus of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Australia. Over time Children with disability have been frequent users of institutional services, and despite the impact of deinstitutionalisation, abuse has remained a reality in modern disability services. Presently there is no national data on the prevalence of abuse of children with disability in Australia. It is clear however, from international research, that children with disability are an extremely high risk group where child abuse is

concerned. These factors combined indicate the strong vulnerability to abuse of children with disability.

3. Research suggests children with disability are more than three times more likely to be abused than other children. Children with communication difficulties and behavioural disorders are believed to have a heightened risk of abuse. It has been stated that three factors make children with disability more vulnerable, namely: society's attitudes and assumptions; inadequate services; factors associated with impairment.
4. CDA agrees that more than one Commissioner is required for this complex area, given the timescale and the volume of potential people appearing before the Commission. It is essential that there is specific expertise and knowledge amongst the Commissioners of: attachment behaviours; behavioural patterns in typically and atypically developing children; and emotional and behavioural responses to abuse and trauma.
5. Careful consideration needs to be given to how the Commission processes can be structured so that the experiences of children with disability with significant impairments in communication, that cannot give direct evidence because of their impairment, can be included equally in the inquiry.
6. It is the view of CDA that abuse of people with disability is an extremely significant issue across residential and community based services disability services and other institutions. The issues regarding abuse and people with disability are substantially broader than the scope of this Royal Commission and it is believed that a separate inquiry is warranted.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the consultation paper regarding the establishment of a Royal Commission into Institution Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Australia.

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