

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

Who does the Royal Commission want to hear from?

Anyone can speak to a Royal Commission. The Disability Royal Commission wants to hear about experiences of violence, neglect, abuse or exploitation of people with disability. The Commission is particularly interested in hearing from people with a disability and also the from family members and professionals who can share their perspectives.

Why does the Royal Commission want to hear my experience?

Hearing from you helps the Royal Commission really understand what life is like for people with disability. Sharing your experiences allows the Commission to understand the extent of the problem, helps them to learn more about the contexts in which abuse is more likely to occur and allows them to understand the impacts on people with disability, their families and the community at large. People with disability are the best witness to their own life and experience.

Does my experience have to be recent?

No. There are no time limits on when your experience may have occurred.

How do I share my experience with the Royal Commission?

If you choose to share your experience with the Disability Royal Commission you can share your story in any format that works for you, including:

- In writing
- Through a picture or artwork
- Via a video recording
- Via a recorded telephone conversation with the Royal Commission
- In a private face to face meeting with a Commissioner

You can also share your experience in any language, including indigenous languages and Auslan.

Do I have to use a special form?

No, share whatever way works for you.

What is a “submission”?

Whenever you share your experience with the Commission you “make a submission”. The wording indicates how seriously the Commission takes what you share. You can share any experience you think the Royal Commission should be aware of. You can tell the Commission about something you experienced or something you observed – you can speak for yourself and others. Your submission can contain any information and insights you think are relevant.

If I do a written submission, how long does it need to be?

It can be a few sentences or many pages. There is no right length. You don’t need to prove anything to the Commission. Giving detail can help the Commission to understand what the problem is, what the impact is or what changes need to be made.

Can I have a Private Session?

If you would like to share your experience with the Royal Commission in a confidential setting, you can request a private session. Private sessions can happen via telephone, video link and in person. You register through the Disability Royal Commission’s website: <https://privatesessionrequest.disability.royalcommission.gov.au/>

If you have a preference to speak with a male or female Commissioner, you can let the Commission know.

Anything you tell the Royal Commission in connection with, or during, a Private Session will be confidential, even after the Royal Commission ends.

The average wait time for a private session is between 6 and 8 months. The wait time may be reduced if you organise your private session with a Commissioner over the phone or online, rather than in person.

I’m interested in being considered as a witness for a hearing. Where do I start?

The word ‘witness’ refers to the people who are asked to speak at a Public Hearing. The Commission recommends you make a submission and in your submission indicate you are interested in speaking at a Public Hearing. The Commission will decide whether they will ask you to speak.

Will the Disability Royal Commission publish my story?

If you share your story with the Royal Commission and you do not want them to publish your information, they won't share your experience publicly.

With your permission, the Royal Commission may use your information in public documents, such as their final report. If they do use your information, they can do so without naming or identifying you.

Can I share my experience anonymously? Will it carry less weight if I do?

Yes, you can choose to share your experience without giving your personal information. You can do this by giving no name (anonymously) or using a pseudonym (using a different name or a number). Your experience will be treated in the same way as other submissions and has equal weight.

Some things to consider before you do this:

- If you want to give extra information on your story later you will have to start again from the beginning
- If the Commission wants to ask you questions to clarify anything or to summon you to speak at a Public Hearing then they won't have your contact details.

You could also consider making a submission through an advocacy organisation.

Can I name names?

If you are thinking of using the name of a person or organisation when you tell your story, we would recommend contacting Your Story Disability Legal Support for free legal advice. They can be contacted on 1800 771 800. There is also a free factsheet on their webpage <https://yourstorydisabilitylegal.org.au/Resources/Can-I-name-names-HTML-version>

If you do not wish to use names, you can use a random letter, like "X" instead of the name of the person or organisation. For example: *I was working at X when it happened*

What privacy protocols are in place for people who make submissions?

There are many ways to protect your identity and keep the details of what you share confidential. Recent legislation strengthens the protections for people who engage with the Royal Commission and ensures

submissions and other information remain confidential even from Freedom of Information requests after the Commission ends.

It is important to note that in some limited circumstances, for example when a submission details a serious offence, the Royal Commission may have the ability to disclose your information to other people.

There are many ways that you can ensure that your submission is captured by the new confidentiality amendments. Please contact Family Advocacy or Your Story Disability Legal Support for more information.

I still have questions. Where do I go next?

Find out more by:

- Visiting the Family Advocacy Disability Royal Commission webpage
<https://www.family-advocacy.com/royal-commission/>
- Contacting Family Advocacy on 98690866 and asking for Troy or Talia
- Accessing the Disability Royal Commission's website
<https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/share-your-story>
- Calling the Royal Commission helpline on 1800 517 199