Talking Disability Royal Commission Podcast

Episode 7 Transcript

Families Talk about their Submissions

**Troy:** Hello, and welcome to Talking Disability, Royal Commission, helping you understand the Royal Commission into violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation of people with disability. I'm Troy Hester. In this episode, You'll hear from Jo, a mother of a person with disability who shared her experiences in a private session and Susan who told her story to the commission in writing. Your submission helps the Royal commission really understand what life is like for people with disability.

It helps them work out the situations and places where abuse is more likely and understands the impacts on people with disability, their families, and the community at large. So today we are joined by Jo and Susan who have made submissions to the disability Royal commission.

Welcome everyone. I want to start with you, Jo. Hi.

**Jo:** Hi Troy

**Troy:** Why did you make a submission?

**Jo:** Well, we've had our family have had over 20 years’ experience of service systems and there's been a lot of negative situations and, and some great positive ones as well. I wanted things to be better moving forward for not only for our family, but for other families.

**Troy:** And why did you choose a private session?

**Jo:** I prefer, I prefer talking to somebody face-to-face that was probably, my initial reason. Because I can, you know, there's, there's you build that rapport when you're having a conversation with somebody, and that was something that was working for me. But I also knew that I needed to document a lot of, I had a lot of information I needed to share. So I also put my information in a written submission. And then I talked to the written submission.

**Troy:** You shared your experience and your daughter's experience in a confidential setting by a private session. Can you talk us through that process?

**Jo:** Yeah, it was really comfortable. Obviously I, I made the initial call. And then I got a phone call back for, for an intake process and that during that process they, I was given information about supports that I could access some li whether I needed some legal assistance as well. And yeah, it was, it was very comfortable. It was they were, they were wanting to work with me in timelines that suited me. so yeah, was, it was, it was, they were very concerned to make sure that we're meeting my needs. To, to, to be able to navigate the process, which was quite reassuring.

**Troy:** Okay. And with that, when you actually got to the Commissioner was that via phone or video or face-to-face?

**Jo:** We did via video link.

**Troy:** How did you find the private session?

**Jo:** Very cathartic. I felt there were quite a few very significant things that had happened in the past that I didn't have opportunity to put in formal complaints. And I always felt guilty that I had never done that. And so by, by addressing all of those issues, in, within the, the private session, I, I found that extremely cathartic.

**Troy:** And what would you say to someone else who was wanting to share with the Disability Royal Commission in a private session?

**Jo:** Personally for me, it was really reassuring. I felt like I had done something that I hadn't been able to do for a long time. And I've, I felt that it was my responsibility to change things for other people moving forward. And so. It was like this weight was off my shoulders. I'd actually addressed the things that I had not had opportunity to address previously and also put forward some recommendations on some positive things that could potentially change in the future.

**Troy:** If somebody came to you and said, you know, I'm interested, I'm thinking about putting in a submission, what would you say to them?

**Jo:** Oh, absolutely. Go, go ahead. I accessed some support with an advocate to help me document, cause there was so much information to help me document and fine tune that information, because I'm aware the commissioner has got limited amount of time and I wanted to get the most impact out of, out of the information I needed to share.

We're talking 25 years’ worth of information. So over this, all the different service systems over that time.

**Troy:** And just thinking [00:07:00] about this podcast, going out to people what would you say to somebody

about talking to the Royal Commission?

**Jo:** Absolutely do it. It's a positive, positive outcome for me. I felt very validated. That was, that was probably my concerns were were validated in the process. And that, that's probably my number one takeaway from that.

**Troy:** thanks, Jo. That's really helpful to hear.

**Troy:** Coming to you, Susan. Susan, one way that you shared your experiences.

was through writing.

What motivated you to tell your story to the Disability Royal Commission?

**Susan:** Well as the parent and primary advocate of a young person with a disability, I think from the time the Commission was announced, I had it in my mind to make a submission based on the various barriers that my child has faced in our quest for them to lead inclusive and ordinary life.

And it just, I wanted to have that opportunity to tell the story of what I consider to be very typical experience of a young person with a significant disability growing up in Australia at the moment. I did have some concerns that our experiences and the story wasn't bad enough in inverted commas or significant enough, but there were definitely barriers that we had come up against and continue to come up against that I felt were valuable information to the Commission.

**Troy:** Yeah. Great. So doing it in writing, did you have to use a special form?

**Susan:** So my submission evolved over a sort of longer period of time. It had a bit of a journey of its own, and I started off actually having a phone call with the Commission because time was sort of moving on and I was finding myself with this, putting it down on paper, perpetually on the to-do list.

And then I found out that you could make a verbal submission. So I initially started with that. And what that allowed me to do was get some words down. Onto a document that I then edited. So my submission ended up being in writing. But it started off as a conversation with one of the workers for the Commission. I think technically that person's role was a counsellor, but it was the person that takes oral submissions. And then they sent that to me as basically a word documents. So my submission, my preferred format was to then gather that into a more polished version. And I had that as a specific word document, and then there was a particular form that I filled in to add the [00:10:00] details.

And in fact, you can use just that form to make a submission. So there is a specific form if you're submitting a document or a recording that goes with it. And I think I just found that on the commission's website.

**Troy:** How did you feel getting your story down?

**Susan:** I was really glad that I had finally got to it. And the thing that motivated me in terms of timing, I'm also someone that finds it a lot easier to get it done when there's a bit of a deadline was the inclusion issues paper. So there was a point at which I was aware, really aware of the Commission’s work. And there was an issues paper that was very, very relevant. And I found that really useful to use that issues paper as the starting point the issues, papers have questions in them, and you can look at them for guidance on the information that the commission is seeking. And I then found the questions in the issues, paper really useful to structure the content that I wanted to include, I then added well beyond the specific answers to the questions, to have more information. And the timing of the issues paper gave me my deadline, which worked well for me because I wanted the submission to be considered as one of the issues papers submission specifically, then also generally as a submission to the commission overall.

So I found that really useful to get my words into a format that I could then get into a record that could be massaged into what became the final submission, which I think ended up being about 4,000 words, much of which was specific answers to the inclusion questions. And then another few pages about the other experiences that we've had with my daughter in particular in education. But it, it covered by the end, it covered very much everything that I felt that I wanted to say to the commission about the various barriers that we had encountered not only within the education system, but also in the community as general battles that we had fought with the NDIS and, and all of the things that had been quietly bubbling away in the back of my mind really came together. And in my case, I was very happy for that submission to be a public submission. And I've no, I have marked it as that, when I submitted it. I didn't name any specific names or any particular individuals or organizations with the exception of the NDIS because I felt like our experience is very typical and I felt really good that I had given that to the commission. And that was the feedback that I got both verbally from the person that helped me first type up some words. And also in my acknowledgement and response email, after I had made my submission that the message very much was these are the kinds of stories that we need to be hearing directly from people with a disability and their families and that was one of my motivators as well was making sure that there is input from the people with the lived experience, not just organizations who might be defending their own histories or actions. My very sort of, I guess, indirect impression is that there's a lot of those types of voices, the organizations and the services making themselves very loudly and clearly heard by the commission. And we need to balance that out with the real experiences of actual families who are living it and have lived it and fought the battles. So the short answer is it felt very, very good to get the story down and make that submission.

**Troy:** Hey, did you know, you can ask a question and I'll answer it on a podcast? Go to the podcast page to record your question. And remember there are no silly questions. www.family-advocacy.com/podcast. You'll also find a transcript and resources. I talked. And you can listen to other episodes there.

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