Talking Disability Royal Commission Podcast

Episode 6 Transcript

Will my Submission make a Difference?

**Talia:** Hello, and welcome to Talking Disability Royal Commission, a podcast that helps you understand the Royal Commission into violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation of people with disability. I'm Talia Roshan.

People share their story with the Royal Commission for many reasons. Many people I've worked with have said stuff like I'm doing this to help others, I'm doing this so it doesn't happen again. And I'm doing this to make a difference. Today, we're going to find out well, will it make a difference? After the Royal Commission has heard all these stories, what do they do with them? And how will the Commission make things better, safer, and more inclusive for people with disability? Dinesh from the Disability Royal Commission is here to help us understand why the Commission need to hear your experiences and your stories. Dinesh. Welcome.

**Dinesh:** Hey, thanks for having me.

**Talia:** Thank you so much for joining us. So I guess one of the big questions that we always get is what does the Commission do with the submissions that they receive?

**Dinesh:** The Royal Commission will use your submission to inform its work. The Royal Commission may use your information in our public documents, for example, in our interim or final reports. However, we won't publish your information unless you want us to. If we do use your information, we can do so without naming or identifying you, if you don't want your information or your identity be shared with anyone outside of the Royal commission, we can protect your identity and the information you share with us after the Royal commission ends for a period of 99 years. So that's a long time. If you have shared your experience with the Royal Commission, you might be asked to be a witness at a public hearing. Where you would present your information as evidence, and you don't have to agree to be a witness at a public hearing if you don't want to.

**Talia:** And Dinesh, why is it so important for people to engage in the Disability Royal Commission?

**Dinesh:** Change starts with hearing your story. Hearing from people with disability, family, support people, organizations, and the broader community helps the Royal Commission understand the extent of the impact of violence, neglect, abuse, and exploitation against people with disability. This will help us make recommendations to prevent it from happening again.

And stories are so, so important. I've had a spinal cord injury now for about 12 years. And so many things have happened during that time. We have things like research. We have data even, even that is lacking for people with disability, but we have all these academic bits and pieces of information, but nothing is more powerful than hearing stories because stories help us really understand what happens in people's lives. They help us understand the extent of what happens.

They help us understand the impact of what happens to a person and really that's the most important part, right? As a society, how we make lives better for the people that are experiencing these things. And that's why stories are important because by hearing stories, we can really make these experiences better, hopefully, by the recommendations that we made.

**Talia:** That's really powerful that people with disability, uh, the people that experience all of these things and without hearing those stories and without hearing those voices, it is likely that those experiences can just get lost and they won't be heard.

**Dinesh:** Yeah, exactly. And with me, for example, I've had, uh, challenges in accessing education. I’ve had challenge in accessing health care. I've had challenges accessing employment. So, ah, we can give you, we can look at statistics to say, okay, people with disability, uh, X times more likely to be unemployed, but that doesn't really tell us how frustrating it is that doesn't really tell us the processes and the barriers and the attitudes that we come across that doesn't tell us the impact that it has on someone and how it makes them feel and how it affects their lives. So for me, it affected all these things, affected me in so many different ways, but it's really by sharing that story, that we can tease all those things out. And that's why it's really important for us to hear people's stories.

**Talia:** And how will the Commission make things better, safer, and more inclusive for people with disability?

**Dinesh:** The Commission itself can’t make things better, safer, and more inclusive for people with disability. The role of the Royal Commission is to inquire into the matters set out in its terms of reference. Part of these inquiries includes providing the opportunity for the community to share their stories. The Royal Commission will deliver a final report to the Governor General containing recommendations to the government on how to improve laws, policies, structures, and practices to promote a more inclusive society.

I think that, aah, things like the Royal Commission are an important part of a democracy and of a nation like Australia, because it sits outside the structures and it is able to inquire into those structures and it's able to have a look into those things and make recommendations. So in my eyes, I think it's a critically important thing that can sit independently and can have a look at how to make people's lives better.

**Talia:** Yeah, I think that's a really important point to highlight as well that the Royal Commission is independent of government.

**Dinesh:** Yeah.

**Talia:** And you were mentioning before about the final report and we also heard from Tamara in a few of our earlier episodes about the Royal Commission's final report.

So how did the submissions received contribute towards the final report?

**Dinesh:** All the submissions received are considered closely, including to allow us to identify common themes and areas for the Royal Commission to investigate. Our policy staff can also view the submissions to help inform their work and the writing of the final report.

As I just mentioned, uh, the final report will contain recommendations to the government on how to improve laws, policies, structures, and practices to ensure a more inclusive and just society.

One of the other things that's useful to note is that this final report, when we move forward into the future, whether we are an individual or an organization or someone advocating, we can also use it to quote, we can use it as a tool to push for change. We can use it as a tool to, uh, change organizations and structures, support services, whatever it might be. So it’ll end up becoming quite a valuable document

**Talia:** Dinesh, thank you so much for joining us and for answering all those questions. We really appreciate it.

**Dinesh:** Thanks for today,

**Talia:** That was Dinesh Palipana, the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Senior Advisor to the Disability Royal Commission. Dinesh really helped highlight why it is so important for you to share your experiences with the Disability Royal Commission.

I also just wanted to take the opportunity to quote Commissioner Galbally. She said “there should be nothing about us without us”. This means that people with disability must be involved in all decisions that affect our lives as experts in your own experience. The Disability Royal commission wants to hear from you.

In our next episode, we will be sharing some tips and ideas to help you with your submission.

Hey, did you know that you can ask a question and we'll answer it on the podcast. Go to the podcast page to record your question. There are no silly questions.

www.family-advocacy.com/podcast. You'll also find a transcript, any resources that I've spoken about, and you can listen to other episodes there. This was recorded and produced on the lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. Thank you for listening to Talking Disability Royal Commission, a production of Family Advocacy.