



Media Guidelines

Disability Royal Commission support services, and reporting on violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability

For some people, being exposed to news with strong descriptions of violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation may cause distress and may be a trauma trigger.

Journalists and organisations reporting publicly on such matters plays a crucial role in getting the message out to everyone in the community that support is available.

This fact sheet includes details of support services for people with disability and their families affected by violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation to include in your story. It also contains tips for using appropriate terminology and first-person language when referring to people with disability, as well as opportunities for media interviews and links to images.

Support services

The 4.4 million Australians with disability – as well as their families, friends, carers and support workers – need to know that support is available for them should they be experiencing or have witnessed violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

The Australian Government is funding free and independent support services for people with disability, their families and carers who have experienced violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, and/or are engaging with the Disability Royal Commission.

The [National Counselling and Referral Service](#) is delivered by the Blue Knot Foundation and provides emotional support for people experiencing trauma, and may also refer people to a range of other services funded by the Australian Government including advocacy support and state based counselling services.

More information about the support services available are available at www.dss.gov.au/disability-royal-commission-support

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (Disability Royal Commission) will run for three years until 2022.

For information about the work of the Disability Royal Commission please visit www.disability.royalcommission.gov.au

Contact numbers to include in your story

When reporting on matters relating to disability, particularly in relation to the Disability Royal Commission or matters relating to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability, please include the following support number:

Short version: National Counselling and Referral Service: 1800 421 468

Long version: Free, independent counselling and advocacy support is available for people with disability who have experienced violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation; and anyone affected by the Disability Royal Commission. Call the National Counselling and Referral Service on 1800 421 468, 9am–6pm weekdays and 9am–5pm weekends and national public holidays or visit www.dss.gov.au/disability-royal-commission-support

You may also wish to include one or more to the following support services as well:

- Lifeline: 13 11 14
- Mens Line: 1300 789 978
- Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800
- 1800 RESPECT: 1800 737 732
- National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline: 1800 880 052
- Aboriginal Family Domestic Violence Hotline: 1800 019 123
- Disability COVID-19 Information Helpline: 1800 643 787

Media interviews

Interviews about Disability Royal Commission support services can be arranged with:

- CEO of Blue Knot Foundation, Dr Cathy Kezelman
- CEO of Disability Advocacy Network Australia, Mary Mallett
- CEO of Australian Federation of Disability Organisations, Ross Joyce

Interviews may also be possible with local and state-based advocacy or counselling providers. Please send interview requests to madeleine@elevenstrategic.com and include your contact details including phone number, and the deadline for your story.

Images

Images are available for you to use when including information about support services in your reporting. All people with disability portrayed in the images have provided their fully informed consent for this purpose.

To download images, visit the [Department of Social Services website](#).

Language and terminology

Using person-centred language respects people with disability as individuals. Consider who the person is first, and try not to make their disability the only focus of your story. Sometimes it may be useful to talk about intersectional issues such as age, ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation or culture, when it is appropriate and relevant to the story.

Our research shows that people with disability do not necessarily wish to be portrayed as tragic or deserving of pity; or heroic, amazing or inspirational. Just because they have a disability, the reality is that for many people, their disability is just part of who they are.

Do use	Don't use
Royal Commission into violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation against people with disability, Disability Royal Commission	Royal Commission into people with disability
People with disability, person with a disability	Disabled people, disabled person (unless the person strongly identifies with this term), invalid, slow, handicapped, abnormal.
Survivor	Victim (unless the person strongly identifies with this term)
Use person first language, e.g. Rhonda is a woman with bipolar disorder	Use the disability to describe the person, e.g. Rhonda is a bipolar woman
[Person's name] has/with [name of disability]	Afflicted by, suffers from, victim of
People who are blind, the Deaf community, person with a disability since birth, person who uses a wheelchair, person with a physical disability, short-statured person, person with epilepsy	The blind, the deaf, birth defect, deformity, 'confined' to a wheelchair, wheelchair bound, cripple, dwarf, epileptic.
Person with a psychiatric disability (or specify condition), person with an intellectual disability	Insane, lunatic, maniac, mental patient, psycho, schizophrenic, mentally retarded.

Sensitivity with trauma survivors

Communication is one of the most basic needs and rights of all people. Some people with disability may choose to discuss their experiences of abuse, trauma, neglect or exploitation. Some planning, sensitivity and forethought can greatly help this process.

Do	Don't
Give people plenty of notice to consider if they want to speak to media	Ask on-the-spot questions about violence or abuse without prior warning
Set the scene early and work out appropriate areas of questioning with the person and their support networks.	Risk re-traumatising people by asking questions that delve too deep without permission or notice.
Speak to the person and their support networks to find out if they need any practical support like an Auslan interpreter, Easy English guide, or accessible location.	Overdo it (i.e. exaggerate your mouth movements or talk slowly).
Speak to a person with disability as you would speak to anyone else.	Make assumptions or have preconceptions about people's ability to understand you.
When questioning a person with disability, look at them directly, not at the person accompanying them.	Talk about a person with disability with another person as if they're not in the room.
If you are not understood the first time, rephrase the question using different words	Use acronyms, metaphors, puns and colloquialisms.
Check consent with appropriate members of a person's support network.	Assume consent to publish a person's story, particularly if they have communication barriers.

Other resources

[Media guidelines](#), Disability Royal Commission

[Media guidelines on Disability Royal Commission](#), People with Disability Australia

[Media Toolkit](#), National Disability Insurance Scheme

[Respectful communication](#), International Day of People with Disability