



Fulfilling the vision for an Australia inclusive of people with disability

November 2023

I want everyday Australians to know about people with disabilities that are not visible and that you can be disabled and not use a wheelchair. I want the public to know about the stigma and struggles people with disabilities that are not visible face. I believe that when implemented, Australia offers some of the best support for health and disability in the world. However, we need to do better. As Australians, we have the power to be world-class leaders in how we treat our most vulnerable people. Let us rise up to the challenge.
Testimony from Priya to the Royal Commission. Priya lives with an invisible disability, including Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS).

At the end of September, the Commonwealth Government released the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

The Uniting Church in Australia, National Assembly, welcomed the Royal Commission's final report, affirming its vision for a more inclusive Australian society. The National Assembly committed the Uniting Church "to taking seriously its calls for change to transform our society into one that is more inclusive and which respects and protects the rights of people living with a disability."



The National Assembly also said, "Our values are grounded in Jesus' witness to the love of God for all people. We seek to be a Church in which the gifts, hopes and dreams of all people are valued and honoured."

The final report included 222 recommendations. The Commissioners concluded that:

Throughout our work, people with disability clearly, persuasively and passionately described their vision for a more inclusive Australia. While they had varied impairments, backgrounds and perspectives described their vision for a more inclusive Australia. While they had varied impairments, backgrounds and perspectives, they share a vision where people with disability live free from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation; where human rights are protected; and individuals live with dignity, equality and, respect and can fulfil their potential. This is a vision of a future where people with and without disability:

- *Live, learn, work, play, create and engage together in safe and diverse communities;*
- *Have the power of choice, independence and the dignity to take risks;*
- *Make significant contributions to communities that value their presence and treat them with respect; and*
- *Are culturally safe and belong in families, communities and peer networks.*

Among the recommendations that the Royal Commission made were:

- The introduction of a *Disability Rights Act* that gives effect to Australia's obligations under the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. They recommended that the Act recognise that people with disability have a right to live free from all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse, including the right to freedom from gender-based violence and abuse.
- The *Disability Rights Act* should require Commonwealth Government bodies to consult with people with disability in developing policies, laws and programs related to services provided to the public. The consultation should actively involve First Nations people with disability in issues that affect them.
- The *Disability Rights Act* should require Commonwealth Government bodies to address barriers that disadvantage people with disability and address stigma, stereotyping and



prejudice against people with disability. Government bodies should also be required to foster good relations between people with disability and other community members.

- The Commonwealth Government should establish a National Disability Commission under the *Disability Rights Act*. The National Disability Commission would:
 - Support the realisation of the human rights of people with disability through monitoring and oversight of the requirements of the *Disability Rights Act*;
 - Monitor and report on the situation of people with disability across Australia; and
 - Promote best practices and innovative approaches to improving outcomes for people with disability.
- Create a Minister for Disability Inclusion under the Minister for Social Services. The new Minister would be responsible for developing and overseeing a disability inclusion strategy and implementing policies and programs to further disability inclusion.
- The Australian Government and state and territory governments should establish targets and performance indicators to drive the reduction and elimination of restrictive practices over time. Restrictive practices include physically restraining a person with disability or using drugs to sedate them as a means of managing their behaviour.

What You Can Do

Write polite and respectful letters to:

The Hon Bill Shorten MP

Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

The Hon Anthony Albanese MP

Prime Minister
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT, 2600

Salutation: Dear Minister

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Points to make in your letters:

- Welcome the completion of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.
- Ask that the Government prioritise introducing a *Disability Rights Act* with the elements recommended by the Commission. The Act should include the establishment of a National Disability Commission.
- Request they also implement the recommendations to:
 - Establish a Minister for Disability Inclusion;
 - Set targets and performance indicators to drive the reduction and elimination of restrictive practices over time;
 - Increase the focus on homelessness in Australia's Disability Strategy;
 - Commit that when people with disability leave a residential service or institution, they are not placed into homelessness, a "no leaving to homelessness" policy;
 - Establish a national disability support worker registration scheme to ensure that only suitable people can provide services and support to people with disability;
 - Amend the *Disability Discrimination Act* to introduce a requirement to eliminate disability discrimination, harassment, vilification and victimisation;
 - Establish a First Nations Disability Forum to advise governments on the implementation of measures to support First Nations people with disability; and,
 - In partnership with the First Nations Disability Forum, develop disability-inclusive cultural safety standards for providing services for First Nations people with disability.