



Report Summary - Inquiry into abuse in disability services (Final Report)

June 2016

Intro - The final report of the parliamentary inquiry of abuse in disability services in Victoria found that the lived experience of people with disabilities and their families and carers has been ignored for too long, with widespread evidence of abuse evident in the disability services.

The inquiry found that abuse occurred in many ways and in many settings. Distressingly, findings included criminal physical and sexual assault, verbal and emotional abuse, financial abuse and neglect endangering life.

The inquiry heard from parents of people with disabilities who were frustrated with the systems in place for reporting abuse, and that their fears for their children were too often ignored by DHHS and service providers.

The Committee overseeing the inquiry believe that the human rights of people with disability should no longer be ignored by a sector which has previously lacked sufficient essential safeguarding and oversight.

Recommendations

The Committee made 49 recommendations for the future of the disability sector in Victoria.

Some key recommendations include:

- **A new Victorian oversight body.** The inquiry found that the current oversight body, the Disability Service Commission (DSC) has failed to provide effective oversight of the sector. The DSC will become the Disability Commissioner
[Refer to Chapter 7; Inquiry into abuse in disability services \(Final Report\)](#)
- **Powers of investigation and inspection for the new Disability Commissioner.**
- **A zero tolerance approach with penalties to employers who take adverse action against staff who report abuse.** The Disability Commissioner will develop no tolerance training and will have powers to penalise service employers.
- **A mandatory reporting scheme for suspected abuse.** This means a staff member must report abuse if they suspect it is occurring.
- **An online system for lodging and tracking reports of abuse.**

- **Reforms to the disability workforce.** The inquiry recommends a state wide prevention and risk management strategy. This strategy includes a Working with Vulnerable People Check, an extension to the Disability Worker Exclusion Scheme, making a revised Certificate IV in Disability the bare minimum qualification to work with people with a disability, and addressing workplace cultures that do not recognise the importance of reporting abuse.
- **Disability providers will be required to record a person with a disability's gender preference of support worker who will assist them with personal and intimate tasks.** The inquiry found that people with disabilities and their families felt they had little choice in choosing who would provide assistance with personal and intimate tasks.
- **Funding for dedicated advocacy services to support families of people with disability.** The inquiry found that independent advocacy services were an important safeguard in preventing and improving responses to abuse.

Refer to Chapter 6; Inquiry into abuse in disability services (Final Report)
- **Funding for independent organisations to deliver human rights education training to people with disability, their families and carers so they can identify and report abuse.**

“For too long, people with disability in Victoria have endured violence in all its forms. The voices of people with disability, their families and carers have been sidelined or ignored, and widespread abuse and neglect continues. Similar to the issue of violence against women, violence against people with disability is inextricably linked to the denigration of their human rights.”

“Throughout this Inquiry the voices of people with disability, their families, carers, advocates and disability sector workers have reinforced over and over again that the disability sector in Victoria is marked by an intrinsic lack of effective safeguarding and oversight. Fundamental change in the sector is needed to address these ingrained issues of violence, abuse and neglect.”

- Maree Edwards, Chair.

Further information

Full report available online at <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/fcdc/inquiries/inquiry/397>

For further information on support services for families in Victoria please visit: <http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/support-services/victoria>