



# Queensland Advocacy Incorporated

Our mission is to promote, protect and defend, through advocacy, the fundamental needs and rights and lives of the most vulnerable people with disability in Queensland.

*Systems and Legal Advocacy for vulnerable people with Disability*

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For immediate release

## **Queensland Advocacy renews its call for a Royal Commission into violence, abuse and neglect of people with disability**

Queensland Advocacy Incorporated (QAI) welcomes the announcement that the Morrison government will establish a Royal Commission into the aged care sector, following a string of damning reports into violence, abuse and neglect in that sector. QAI considers this an opportune time for the Federal Government to finally respond to the urgent calls for a Royal Commission into violence, abuse and neglect of people with disabilities in both residential and institutional settings.

In referencing young people living in aged care facilities in the potential scope of a Royal Commission into aged care institutions, the Government is clearly aware of the importance of addressing the issues experienced by people in that situation. However, QAI is concerned that this is an indication that disability may be included as one subset of a Royal Commission into the aged care sector and this is not sufficient.

“The experience of violence, abuse and neglect by people with disability has been endemic across a range of residential and institutional settings,” QAI Director Michelle O’Flynn said today. “While we strongly support a Royal Commission into the aged care sector, there is an urgent need for a separate Royal Commission into the disability sector. Until such time as this violence, abuse and neglect is addressed, Australia remains in breach of the obligations it has assumed by signing and ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.”

“In November 2015, following an extensive Senate inquiry that documented unacceptably high rates of violence, abuse and neglect of people with disability in institutional and residential settings, the Senate’s first recommendation was the establishment of a Royal Commission into violence, abuse and neglect of people with disability in Australia,” Ms O’Flynn said. “We are still waiting for this Royal Commission to be called. Two years later, in June 2017, 163 civil society organisations and 383 individuals made an urgent call for the Federal Government to call the Royal Commission. That call still remains unanswered.”

QAI made a submission and appeared at the Public Hearing into the Senate Inquiry. At that hearing, Ms O’Flynn noted the significant problems with governance, risk management and reporting practices of institutions providing care for people with disability, stemming from the culture of those institutions, which are traditionally hierarchically structured, paternalistic and lacking in transparency and accountability. These problems are endemic both to the disability and aged care systems and affect highly vulnerable, disempowered people.

QAI considers the calling of Royal Commissions into these sectors timely, in light of the ongoing inquiry into the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT) in Australia, initiated by Australia’s ratification of OPCAT in December 2017. One of the issues that the Government is presently considering is the scope of the places of detention that OPCAT will cover. QAI has long maintained the view that, to fulfil its mandate, all places where vulnerable

**Ph: (07) 3844 4200 or 1300 130 582 Fax: (07) 3844 4220 Email: [qai@qai.org.au](mailto:qai@qai.org.au) Website: [www.qai.org.au](http://www.qai.org.au)**

**2nd Floor, South Central, 43 Peel Street, STH BRISBANE QLD 4101**

QAI endorses the objectives, and promotes the principles, of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Patron: His Excellency The Honorable Paul de Jersey AC

people are detained must be included, including aged care facilities and disability accommodation, in both residential and institutional settings.

QAI is an independent, community-based system and individual advocacy organisation for people with disability in Queensland with over 30 years' experience advocating for systems change, through campaigns directed at attitudinal, law and policy reform. Our focus throughout the OPCAT ratification and implementation campaign and consultations has been on ensuring that the rights of the most vulnerable people with disability and mental illness are advocated for and protected.

Media contact: Michelle O'Flynn 0481 381 528