

# Communique – No. 4, 1 October 2021

## National Task Group – Disability Royal Commission

On 5 August 2021, the National Task Group (NTG) for the Disability Royal Commission met via video conference. The Communique contains:

- information about matters and decisions from the meeting that are relevant to the Synod Task Groups/Synods and their work
- a general update on the work of the NTG
- important information about the work of the Disability Royal Commission and related updates.

The Communique can be circulated to Synod Task Group members and Synod staff but should not be circulated further.

If you have any questions about the Communique or would like to discuss it further, please contact Beth Irvin, Executive Officer, National Task Group on 02 6181 1006 or [bethi@nat.unitingcare.org.au](mailto:bethi@nat.unitingcare.org.au).

### Reports from each Synod

Written reports from four Synods (VicTas, WA, SA and Queensland) were circulated with the meeting papers. These reports were taken as read.

### Presentation from Penny Eden, Partner, MinterEllison: Risks, implications and lessons arising from the Disability Royal Commission

Penny presented a high-level overview of the Royal Commission and highlighted the themes emerging to date for organisations to consider:

- people with disability are represented at board or senior management level – the lived experience
- readily accessible complaints and feedback mechanism – how flexible are the complaints processes
- recruitment processes to identify gaps in work history or areas of concern
- strong communication protocols that ensure information is easily accessible
- processes and procedures to ensure participants can exercise choice and control – person centred approach to policies and procedures

- strong and appropriate dispute resolution processes
- staff training on incident reporting.

### **National Task Group's future work program**

The Group discussed its future work program and noted that it will be discussed further at its October meeting.

Members reflected on Penny's presentation, including on redress, workforce, the interface between aged care and disability services and the streamlining of the sectors, the Royal Commission's work on schools, acting on the Commission's work to date and being aware of the Government's policy agenda as the Commission evolves. A new agenda item will be included going forward so that the Group can be updated on the Government's policy agenda as the Commission continues its important work.

The Group agreed to include engaging with Uniting Church schools and providing information to the Royal Commission about domestic violence in its future work program.

The Group noted that Wesley Mission Queensland is incorporating the work of the Child Sexual Abuse, Aged Care and Disability Royal Commissions into its Child Safe Framework.

### **Trauma-informed training for NTG members**

The Group agreed to develop and undertake four trauma-informed eLearning modules with a disability focus. The Group will also investigate the possibility of making the modules available throughout the Uniting Church.

### **Mapping of disability services and activities across the Uniting Church**

The Group discussed repeating the survey and agreed that:

- clear parameters will be needed for future surveys, as will a plan for what happens after the NTG's work is completed
- Synods be consulted and a survey proposal be developed to be considered at the October meeting.

### **Advisory Group**

The People with Disability Advisory Group Application Form is being finalised and it will facilitate the formation of the Group.

## **Disability Royal Commission public hearings 15 and 16 and the Commission's hearings schedule**

The Commission held public hearing 15 to explore issues relating to people with cognitive disability and the criminal justice system and the interface with the NDIS.

The purpose of public hearing 15 was to finalise public hearing 11 and to provide an opportunity for the Commonwealth, state and territory governments to respond to the issues that were raised with respect to the NDIS in public hearing 11.

The [opening addresses from the Senior Counsel Assisting and the Chair and the transcripts of the hearing](#) are available on the Commission's website.

Public hearing 16 focused on the experiences of First Nations children with disability in out-of-home care. It was the second public hearing specifically examining the experiences of First Nations people with disability.

The other hearing was public hearing 8: the experiences of First Nations people with disability and their families in contact with child protection systems which was held from 23 to 27 November 2020.

The Commission has also examined the experiences of First Nations people with disability in the following public hearings:

- 4: health care and services for people with cognitive disability from 18 to 28 February 2021
- 5: experiences of people with disability during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic from 18 to 21 August 2020
- 9: pathways and barriers to open employment for people with disability from 7 to 11 December 2020
- 11: the experiences of people with cognitive disability in the criminal justice system from 16 to 25 February 2021.

The [transcript of the hearings](#) are available from the Commission's website.

The Commission's hearings schedule continues to be refined and updated to take into account the COVID-19 restrictions. Beth provides details of the latest schedule in her fortnightly update of the work of the Commission. If you are not receiving the update, please contact Beth at [bethi@nat.unitingcare.org.au](mailto:bethi@nat.unitingcare.org.au) to add yourself to the distribution list.

Please note that the Commission has advised that for the rest of 2021:

- public hearings will be conducted in a COVID safe way, including using video conferencing
- a small number of witnesses may attend in person to give their evidence, subject to relevant government advice
- it will not hold community meetings or in-private sessions.

### **Issues papers**

Since the last Communique, no new issues papers have been published.

Please remember to let Beth know if a Synod or its agencies decide to provide a response to an issues paper or make a submission and to include Colleen and Beth in the feedback processes for any responses/submissions so there is the opportunity for national input.

### **Draft Commissioners report**

On 27 September the Commission released the draft Commissioners [Report of public hearing 12: The experiences of people with disability in the context of the Australian Government's approach to the COVID-19 vaccine rollout.](#)

The Commissioners made 17 findings and seven recommendations about the Australian Government's approach to the COVID-19 vaccine rollout as it affects people with disability, particularly people in residential disability settings and people with intellectual disability.

### **NDIA and the Pharmacy Guild work together to boost NDIS vaccination rates**

On 30 September the Minister for the NDIS Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds, CSC announced that the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and the Pharmacy Guild Australia had joined forces to make it easier for NDIS participants to book and access COVID-19 vaccinations through local pharmacies. Minister Reynolds' media statement is attached for further information.

### **Last meeting for 2021**

The last meeting of the NTG is scheduled to take place on Tuesday, 12 October via video conference. The Group will consider its meeting schedule for 2022 at the meeting.