



Media release

Friday 14 February, 2020

Royal Commission Sydney hearing begins next week

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability will begin its next hearing at Sydney Olympic Park, Homebush on Tuesday 18 February.

The hearing will investigate the access to and treatment of people with cognitive disability, including people with intellectual disability, autism and acquired brain injury, in the health system.

The Chair Ronald Sackville AO QC said over the two week hearing, the Royal Commission will hear directly from people with cognitive disability about their experiences in the health system.

‘We will also hear from parents of people with intellectual disability, including some who have tragically lost loved ones.

‘Medical practitioners, experts and advocacy groups, as well as government departments will also give evidence,’ said the Chair.

The hearing will officially begin on Tuesday 18 February. However at the request of a number of witnesses, the Royal Commission will be holding a closed familiarisation session on Monday 17 February.

‘The aim of the familiarisation session is to help witnesses feel as comfortable and familiar with the hearing room as possible.

‘We take very seriously our responsibility to make Royal Commission hearings as accessible as possible. On advice from advocates and experts, we have taken steps to minimise the physical barriers for witnesses in the hearing room. We have also made adjustments to the layout of the room, to better meet the needs of witnesses.

‘It is critical to the success of the Royal Commission that people with disability are able to share their experiences of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation safely and that they receive a full range of supports, before, during and after giving evidence,’ said the Chair.

Over two weeks, the hearing will explore:

- The extent to which people with intellectual disability disproportionately experience significant health problems
- barriers faced by people with cognitive disability when accessing and receiving health care and services, including barriers to communication and health professionals' attitudes, values and assumptions
- training and education of health professionals with respect to patients with cognitive disability
- delayed diagnoses and misdiagnoses of people with cognitive disability
- diminished life expectancy of people with cognitive disability
- specific issues for First Nations people with cognitive disability with respect to health care and services.

Evidence to be given at the hearing suggests that more than half a million Australians live with an intellectual disability and over 60% of this group experience profound or severe impairments in the core activities of daily living

Senior Counsel Assisting the Royal Commission, Ms Kate Eastman SC, will be responsible for conducting the hearing. Four Commissioners will attend:

- The Hon. Ronald Sackville AO QC (Chair)
- The Hon. Roslyn Atkinson AO
- Barbara Bennett PSM
- Professor Rhonda Galbally AC

The hearing will be livestreamed on the [Royal Commission](#) website and include live captioning and Auslan-English interpreters.

Please note a dedicated room will be available to media. Journalists wishing to cover the hearing should notify the DRC media team to ensure access to relevant information and material, including live transcripts.