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Call for Royal Commission into abuse of people with disability

Media Release:

“As a woman with an intellectual disability, I can say that abuse from people who were supposed to be caring for me has had a very bad long term impact on my life”, says Heather Forsyth.

Ms Forsyth is Inclusion Australia’s Our Voice Chairperson and knows first-hand the devastating impact abuse and violence against people with disability has on lives.

Inclusion Australia and its member organisations are supporting the call for a Royal Commission into the abuse of people with disability. And pressure is mounting for the Government to step up and do the same, with Opposition Leader Bill Shorten and Shadow Minister for Families and Social Services Jenny Macklin, today also calling for a Royal Commission into the abuse of people with disability.

“Every single week, Inclusion Australia hears stories of abuse, bullying and violence – this happens in disability services, schools and our community – it must stop”, says Kevin Stone, Chairperson of Inclusion Australia.

“People with intellectual disability suffer human rights abuses every day such as neglect, lack of access to appropriate care as well as physical and sexual abuse. It is just not acceptable”, he says.

A Royal Commission is essential in hearing the voices of people with disability, in particular intellectual disability, who haven’t been given adequate opportunity to voice their experiences and who are the sufferers of alarming and widespread violence and abuse.

The rate of violence for people with disability is three times the national average. It’s an epidemic. Stories from a mother whose son with an intellectual disability was “assaulted, starved and neglected” in care are shocking – but all too common.

“More than 90% of women with disability who have severe communication difficulties, have experienced sexual abuse. This is absolutely horrific”, Kevin Stone says.

A Royal Commission is critical to providing a comprehensive, independent, and just response to all forms of violence and abuse against people with disability.

“A Royal Commission will not only bring justice for the many victims but will also be a powerful mechanism in working towards a future where people with intellectual disability can be free from abuse. Inclusion Australia join an army of voices from people with disability and their

families, human rights advocates, academics and healthcare professionals in calling for this to happen now”, Kevin Stone says.

Inclusion Australia urges the Government to call a Royal Commission into this critical issue now. People with intellectual disability in Australia deserve nothing less.

For more information please contact Kevin Stone on 0418 562 922 or Aine Healy on 0418 450 717.

Inclusion Australia is the national and leading voice on issues of importance to people with intellectual disability in Australia. Inclusion Australia brings together Members from across Australia, all of who are connected locally to people with intellectual disability and who are committed to the vision of inclusion.