

MEDIA RELEASE

26 August 2022

Housing action long overdue for people with disability

Next week, the Disability Royal Commission will focus on people with disability who have experienced homelessness, including living in boarding houses and other forms of insecure or inadequate housing.

[Public hearing](#) 26 will take place in Parramatta, NSW from 29 August to 2 September, 2022.

We welcome this public hearing as an opportunity to hear about the impact of inappropriate housing directly from people with disability, and to discuss the range of steps urgently needed.

Ahead of the hearing, national Disability Representative Organisations [People with Disability Australia](#) (PWDA), [Disability Advocacy Network Australia](#) (DANA), and [Inclusion Australia](#) have released a joint statement outlining concerns and recommendations around housing for people with disability.

We and our members regularly hear from and provide support to people with disability who find themselves in inappropriate housing. Many have also experienced more direct forms of homelessness such as couch surfing and even street sleeping.

For far too many people with disability, the limited choices around housing further encourage exclusion and reinforce group living models where people with disability have reduced choice about who they live with and where they live. The Royal Commission has already heard multiple stories of abuse, violence, neglect, and exploitation in such settings.

Our joint statement highlights some of the significant and wide-ranging consequences for people with disability of not having a safe, secure and appropriate place to live – many of which will be illustrated by the people with disability giving evidence at next week's hearing.

In considering people's evidence, we ask the Royal Commission to acknowledge that:

- Safe and secure housing is critical to exercising our human rights and accessing supports and services
- People with disability have a right to choose where, and with whom, we live
- Structural barriers to safe, secure and accessible housing must be addressed to create genuine inclusion for people with disability.

Our statement makes practical and achievable recommendations for urgent policy changes. These range from reinforcing the mechanisms of choice and control to increasing access to accessible social housing.

The Disability Royal Commission's final report is due in September 2023. In issuing this joint statement we call on the Royal Commission to make recommendations that make a meaningful difference for people with disability and break the policy inertia that has allowed these unacceptable conditions to continue for too long.

Quote attributable to Ms Samantha Connor, PWDA President

"People with disability need real choice and control and shouldn't be expected to live with other people unless they choose to, the same as anyone else. It's a human right. To make this happen we need to see urgent action to significantly increase accessible and affordable housing. We also need to separate NDIS housing and living supports so people can change service providers without losing their home."

Quote attributable to Mary Mallett, CEO DANA

"We often hear from advocates about the difficulty of getting disability supports in place for a person without a home," said DANA CEO Mary Mallett. "A Brisbane advocate told me last year that just about everything he was doing was related to housing because all of the issues that he was trying to help people with were flowing from the fact that they didn't have a place, an appropriate place to live."

Quote attributable to Catherine McAlpine, CEO Inclusion Australia

"As the national representative body for people with an intellectual disability we are concerned about the slow drift back to institutional housing models. Although many older centres have closed, in some cases they are being replaced with new buildings and apartments on the same sites, with the same staff, still segregated from the community. The DRC must examine the institutionalisation people with intellectual disability are still experiencing across all housing models, especially housing that is provided by organisations with a history of large-scale institutionalised practices."

People with Disability Australia (PWDA) is a national peak disability rights and advocacy organisation made up of and led by people with disability – <https://pwd.org.au>

DANA is the national representative body for a network of advocacy organisations throughout Australia – <https://www.dana.org.au>

Inclusion Australia is the national representative organisation for people with an intellectual disability and their families – www.inclusionaustralia.org.au

Contact details:

Catherine McAlpine, CEO, Inclusion Australia

Email: catherine.mcalpine@inclusionaustralia.org.au or phone: 0419 530 524

Maggie Korenblium, DRC Communications Coordinator at PWDA

Email: media@pwd.org.au or phone: 0408 682 867

Mary Mallett, CEO, DANA

Email: ceo@dana.org.au or phone: 0439 399 755

