

Media Statement

Powers to act must not be delayed

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The Victorian Disability Services Commissioner understands the Senate Committee's call for a Royal Commission, but states it is time for action now.

'We know across the country that the biggest problem by far is the reluctance and fear of people with a disability to report concerns or abuse.

'The Senate Committee inquiry report notes my office's role in reviewing reports of alleged client-to-staff assault or unexplained injury.

'One substantial constraint I face is that our jurisdiction limits me to assess or investigate only if a person makes a complaint to me. If no individual raises a complaint to me, I cannot act.

'As we move into the NDIS, now is the time to establish the most effective arrangements for managing allegations of abuse and complaints, and to give people access to equal treatment and protection across the country.

'Assault or abuse of clients by staff entrusted to care for people with a disability are one of the most disturbing issues in disability services.

'It devastates victims and undermines the confidence of other clients, families and staff in the disability system.

'We must take a zero tolerance approach to this issue and implement legislation that requires service providers to report incidents to an independent oversight body that has sufficient powers to require services to improve their practice.

'We must also not wait to invest in systems that protect, support and build the capacity of people with a disability, including better screening and training for people employed in the sector and an accessible and responsive judicial system for victims.

For further information contact 1300 728 187 or email contact@odsc.vic.gov.au