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**Women with Disabilities Victoria submission on the Draft Terms of Reference for a Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability**

Women with Disabilities Victoria is an organisation run by women with disabilities, for women with disabilities. We are united in working towards our vision of a world where all women are respected and can fully experience life. Our gender perspective allows us to focus on areas of particular inequity to women with disabilities including access to women’s health services, gendered National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) services and safety from gender-based violence.

The Australian Government has recently announced the beginning of a public consultation on the draft Terms of Reference for a Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. We welcome this decision. We hope to see a greater community awareness of the gendered nature of disability abuse and awareness of the experiences of women with disability as a result of the Royal Commission.

As part of the public consultation process, the Australian Government have heard from Women with Disabilities Victoria that the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability must be able to inquire into all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation against people with disability and in all settings, circumstances and contexts. This includes forms of reproductive coercion women with disabilities often experience.

We call on the Australian Government to specifically adopt an intersectional approach to its work. An intersectional approach will allow the Royal Commission to see the multiple forms of discrimination experienced by women with disability and the multiple drivers of violence, such as ableism and sexism.

Although the role of families, carers, advocates and the workforce are important, we believe this Royal Commission needs to center people with disability, including women with disability and their lived experience. By appointing women with disability as commissioners, safe spaces can be created for women with disability to tell their story. This includes ensuring that there is culturally safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women with disability. We expect respectful consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) people with disability.

To make a real difference, this Royal Commission must also enable access to justice and redress for victims-survivors of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. This includes sufficient powers for prosecution and criminal investigation. We also call on the Australian Government to ensure that the Royal Commission the can commission research to address critical knowledge gaps about the extent, prevalence, impact of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of women with disability, and the drivers and structural enablers of violence.

The Royal Commission must also be accessible: reasonable adjustments, support and information must be made available and information provided in a range of community languages and accessible formats. People with disability must be provided with support services and community groups that have an understanding of particular intersectional disadvantages.

Funding and resources must be allocated to Disabled Peoples Organisations (DPOs) and advocacy organisations so that they can engage, support and provide information to people with disability about the Royal Commission. As we know, reform to disability services, including the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) are increasing the volume and complexity of advocacy cases, putting advocacy organisations under stress. We need to see DPOs and other organisations that support people with disabilities adequately resourced to enable people with disability to equitable participate in the Royal Commission.

For further details, please contact:

Amber Karanikolas

Policy Officer

Women with Disabilities Victoria

[Amber.Karanikolas@WDV.org.au](mailto:Amber.Karanikolas@WDV.org.au)