



**Royal Commission**  
into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation  
of People with Disability

# First Nations people with disability

Easy Read version



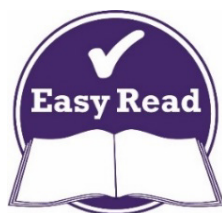
**Final Report**  
Volume 9

## How to use this report



The Disability Royal Commission  
(the Royal Commission) wrote this report.

When you see the word 'we', it means  
the Royal Commission.



We wrote this report in an easy to read way.

We use pictures to explain some ideas.



This report is a **summary** of Part 9 of our *Final report*.

A summary only includes the most important ideas.



We wrote some important words in **bold**.

This means the letters are thicker and darker.



We explain what these bold words mean.

There is a list of these words on page 35.



You can ask for help to read this report.

A friend, family member or support person may  
be able to help you.



Our *Final report* is in 12 parts.

This is Part 9 – First Nations people with disability.



You can find the rest of the *Final report* on our website.

[www.disability.royalcommission.gov.au](http://www.disability.royalcommission.gov.au)

## Acknowledgement of Country



We recognise First Nations peoples as the traditional owners of the land we live on – Australia.



They were the first people to live on and use the:

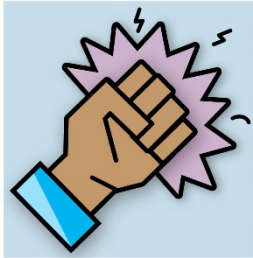
- land
- waters.

## What's in Part 9?

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## What is the Disability Royal Commission?

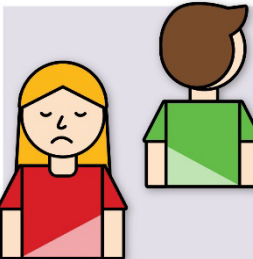
We wanted to work out the best ways to stop people with disability from experiencing:



- **violence** – when someone hurts you physically



- **abuse** – when someone treats you badly



- **neglect** – when someone is not helping you the way they are supposed to help you



- **exploitation** – when someone takes advantage of you.



People with disability should have the same **rights** as everybody else.

Rights are rules that say you can choose how you live your own life.

And they explain how other people must treat you.



On 5 April 2019, the Australian Government created the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

We call it the **Royal Commission**.



A Royal Commission is an official way of looking into a big problem.

It helps us to work out what went wrong and what we need to improve.



The Royal Commission finished on 29 September 2023.



We have shared what we learned.

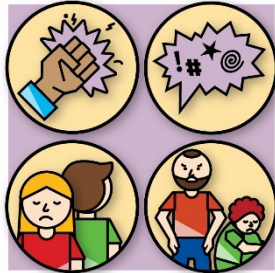


The last thing we need to do is share what we **recommend**.

When we recommend something, we share an idea about how to make things better for people with disability.

## What's Part 9 about?

Part 9 is about how First Nations people with disability experience:



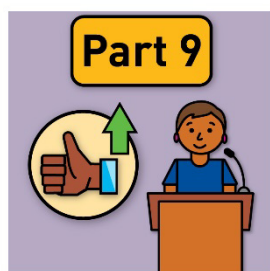
- violence
- abuse
- neglect
- exploitation.



We explain some of the issues that First Nations people with disability face.



Including issues that make it harder for First Nations people to get support.



Part 9 also explains what governments should do to make life better for First Nations people with disability.

## Disability in First Nations communities



First Nations **cultures** often understand disability in different ways.



A culture is:

- a way of life
- what people believe
- what is important to the community.

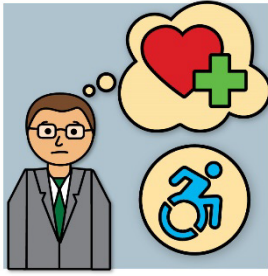


For example, First Nations peoples might not use the word 'disability'.



And they might not agree with how government services think about disability.





Government services think about disability as a medical problem.



Or they think about the way communities work and how this stops people with disability doing what they:

- want to do
- need to do.



But First Nations peoples focus on making sure everyone feels included in:

- the community
- their culture.



And supporting the wellbeing of every person through their:

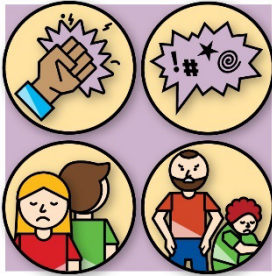
- family
- friends.



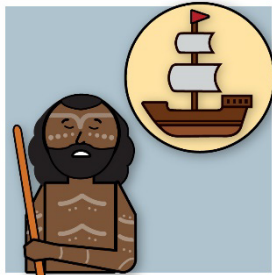
This helps make life better for First Nations people with disability.

## Events that affect how First Nations people understand disability

Events in the past still affect how First Nations people with disability experience:



- violence
- abuse
- neglect
- exploitation.



Many First Nations communities experienced **trauma** when people from other countries first arrived in Australia.

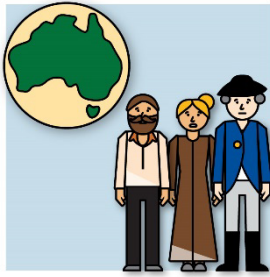


Trauma is the way you feel about something bad that happened to you.

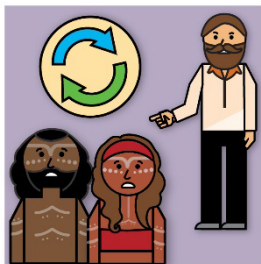
For example, you might feel scared or stressed.

Trauma can affect you for a long time.

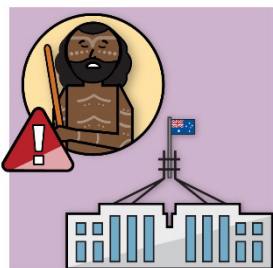
These people:



- took over the traditional lands of First Nations peoples



- tried to force them to change their cultures.



The Australian Government has done things that made this trauma worse.

For example, the Government would take First Nations children away from their:

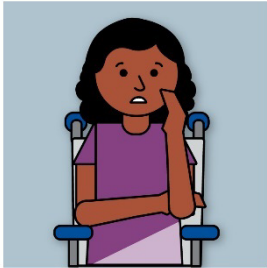


- family
- culture
- traditional lands.



This trauma has affected First Nations cultures.

And First Nations peoples still experience it.



Because of these experiences, many First Nations people feel shame about having a disability.



And they:

- don't trust government services
- won't get a disability **assessment**.

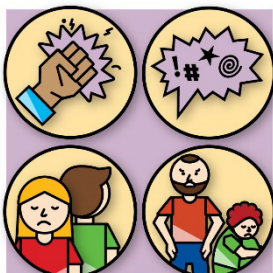


Assessments help the government work out:

- how your disability affects your life
- what supports you need.

## Culturally safe services

**Culturally safe** services can help protect First Nations people with disability from:



- violence
- abuse
- neglect
- exploitation.



When the community is culturally safe, people understand and respect the cultures of First Nations people with disability.

And also understand their needs as a person with disability.

First Nations people with disability can be safer when they connect with their:



- culture



- traditional lands



- community



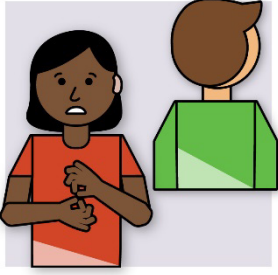
- **kin** – the people you call your family.



But there aren't enough culturally safe disability **providers** for First Nations people with disability.



Providers support people by delivering a service.



This is a type of neglect.

It also means First Nations people with disability often have to choose between:

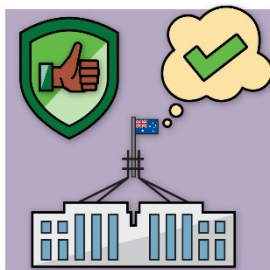


- their culture

or



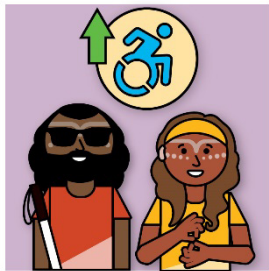
- getting support.



Governments need to think about how to make sure disability services and supports are culturally safe.

And providers do too.

## What First Nations people with disability experience



First Nations people are more likely to have a disability than other Australians.



**1 in 5** First Nations children have a disability.



But only **1 in 12** of all children in Australia have a disability.

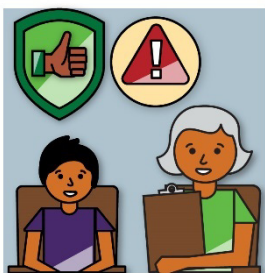


## Culturally safe schools

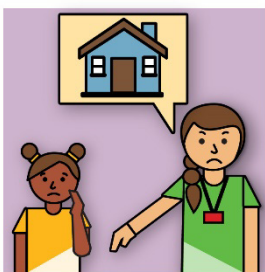


Many First Nations children with disability experience **bullying** at school.

Bullying is when someone says or does something to make you feel bad over and over again.



And it can be hard for them to get culturally safe support.

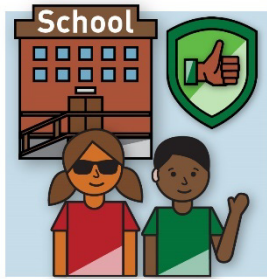


Schools also send First Nations children home because of their behaviour more often than other children.



It is important to make sure schools are culturally safe for First Nations children with disability.

And help children feel like they belong.



Culturally safe schools can help keep First Nations children with disability safe from:

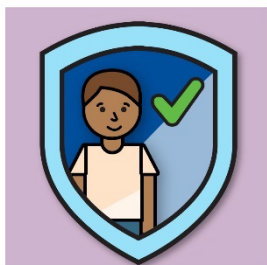
- violence
- abuse
- neglect
- exploitation.

Culturally safe schools can also help children stay out of the **justice system**.



The justice system includes:

- police
- the courts
- the law
- prisons.

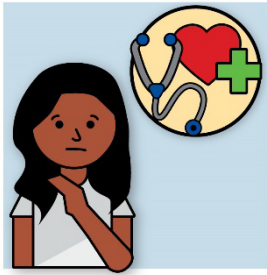


And keep them out of the **child protection** system.

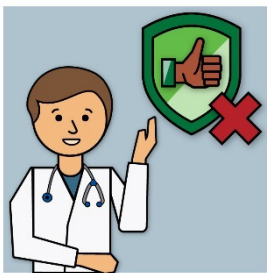
The child protection system helps children stay safe.

It is run by the government.

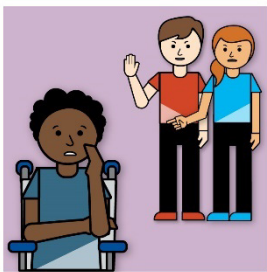
## Health care



First Nations people with disability often find it hard to get good health care.

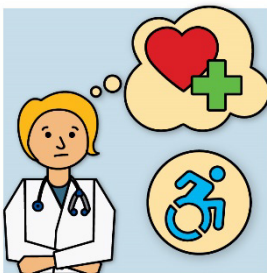


This can be because there aren't enough culturally safe health services to support them.



And because of **racism**.

Racism is when someone treats you badly because of your race.



It can also happen when a doctor thinks a health issue is linked to a person's disability.

But they don't check to see if it's something else.



There are also not enough culturally safe assessments for disability.



This means First Nations people often don't know:

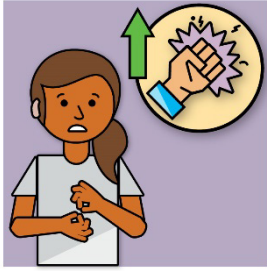
- if they have a disability
- what disability they have.



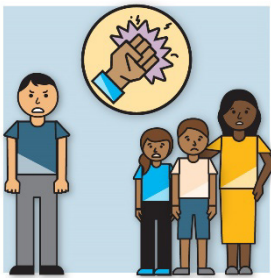
Health services need to work together.

And have culturally safe ways to support First Nations people with disability.

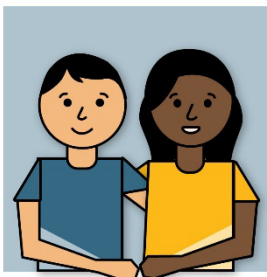
## Family and domestic violence



First Nations people with disability experience more **family and domestic violence** than other people.

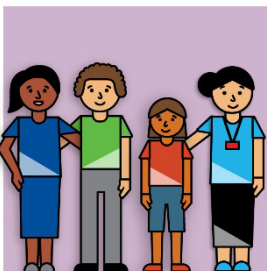


Family and domestic violence is when someone close to you acts in violent ways towards you.



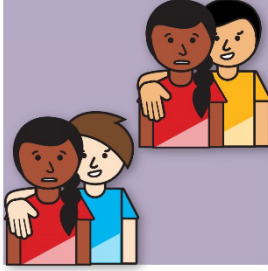
They might be:

- your boyfriend or girlfriend
- your husband or wife.



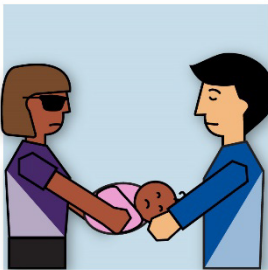
They might also be:

- a member of your family
- someone who takes care of you.



We heard that First Nations people with disability can experience this violence from different partners. And over a long time.

Many First Nations people with disability don't get help for family and domestic violence because:



- they worry child protection will take their children away



- they might lose their home and community



- there aren't enough culturally safe services.

## Child protection



Too many First Nations parents and children with disability have contact with child protection.



Early support can help keep First Nations parents and children with disability out of child protection.

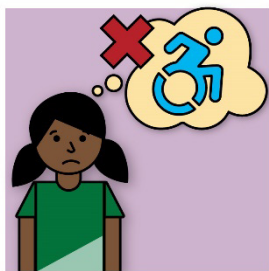
But there aren't enough culturally safe support services.



Children who have contact with child protection can spend time in **out-of-home care**.

When a child spends time in out-of-home care, it means they:

- can't live with their parents or carer
- might live in a home with a different family.

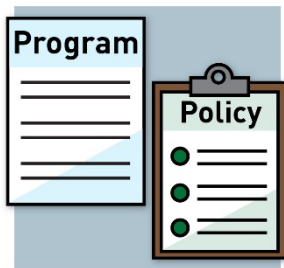


First Nations children might not know they have a disability.

And often they won't find out while they are in out-of-home care.



First Nations parents and children with disability need support in ways other people don't.



And they should have a say in things that affect them.

This includes:

- programs
- **policies.**



Policies are:

- government plans for how to do things
- where rules come from.



## The justice system



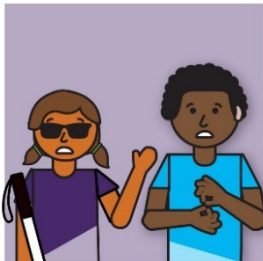
We wanted to know about how the justice system treats First Nations people with disability.

In the past, there wasn't enough information about this.



The Royal Commission gave us a chance to look into it.

We learned that the youngest children in the justice system are often:



- First Nations children

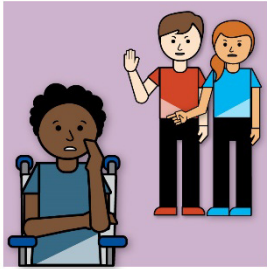


- children with disability

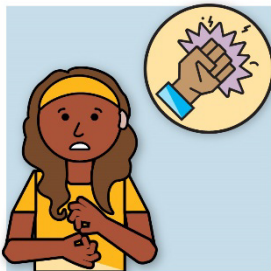


- children who have had contact with child protection.

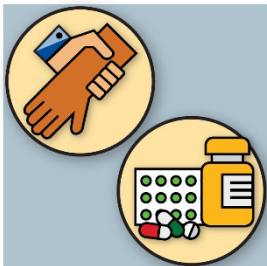
And we learned about how First Nations people with disability in the justice system experience:



- racism



- violence



- restrictive practices.

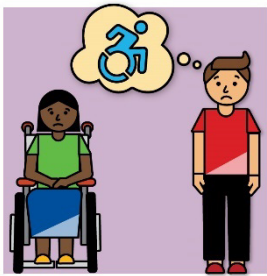


Restrictive practices are actions that stop people from:

- moving
- doing what they want.



Restrictive practices include making people take medicine so they are easier to control.



They are more likely to have these experiences than other people because of:

- their race
- what other people think about their disability.



We also learned that culturally safe supports can help First Nations people with disability:

- have better experiences with the justice system
- do well after they have been in the justice system.

## What do we recommend?



We recommend state and territory governments check their **disability strategies**.

Disability strategies tell us about what governments should do to improve life for people with disability.



They should check that their strategies include First Nations people with disability in the justice system.



And explain what the justice system must do to become culturally safe for First Nations peoples.



They should think about what the Royal Commission learned about this issue.



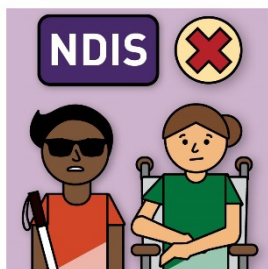
And they should share how they will change their strategies by the end of 2024.

## First Nations peoples and the NDIS



The National Disability Insurance Scheme supports people with disability around Australia.

We call it the NDIS.



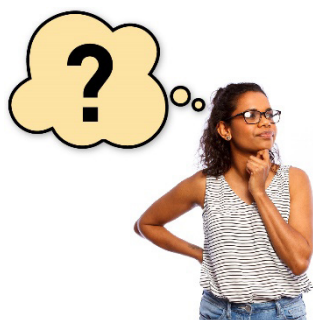
But the NDIS doesn't always work well for First Nations people with disability.



Many NDIS providers aren't culturally safe for First Nations peoples.



And they think about disability in different ways than First Nations peoples do.



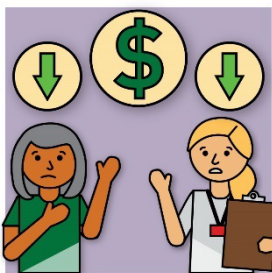
Many First Nations communities don't know about the NDIS.

Or how it works.

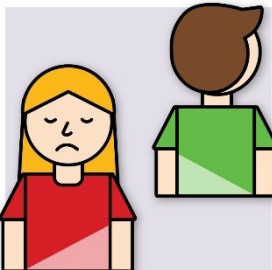


And it is hard for providers to support people who live far away from cities and towns.

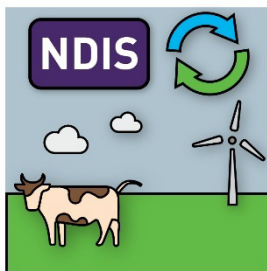
This can be because:



- not many people need support in these places
- it costs a lot of money
- there aren't enough workers to provide disability services.



These issues are types of neglect.



The NDIS needs to change the way it works in places far away from cities and towns.

The NDIS should support:



- local people to provide services



- **Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs).**



ACCOs are organisations that:

- First Nations people run
- support First Nations peoples in the community.

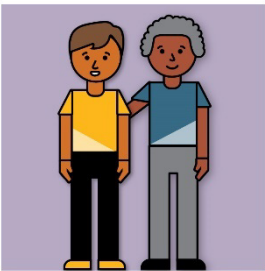


It will take time to fix these issues.



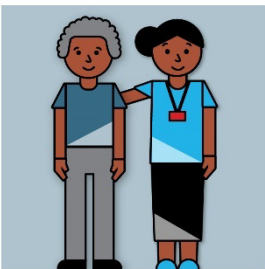
The NDIS should also understand that culture is important to First Nations people with disability.

And should make sure providers support people to work towards their cultural goals.



First Nations people with disability often get support from a family member.

This is because there aren't enough culturally safe providers.



But family members who care for people with disability also need support.



The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) runs the NDIS.

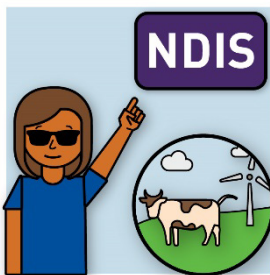
The NDIA should make sure people understand what supports family members of people with disability can get.



## What we recommend



We recommend the NDIA should improve the community connector program.



Community connectors help First Nations peoples very far away from cities and towns:

- learn about the NDIS
- connect with the NDIS.



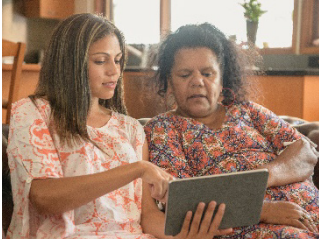
There should be more community connectors to support more communities far away from cities and towns.



The NDIA should support communities to provide community connectors.

And make sure they:

- give community connectors enough training
- support them for a long time.



Some First Nations communities speak languages other than English.

So the NDIA should make sure community connectors can also speak these languages.



And the Australian Government should plan how to train more First Nations people who live far away from cities and towns.

They should train them to support people with disability who also live far away from cities and towns.

## Word list

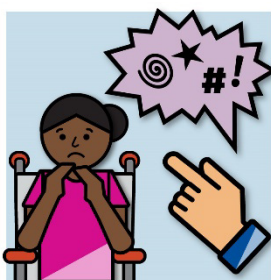
This list explains what the **bold** words in this document mean.



### **Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs)**

ACCOs are organisations that:

- First Nations people run
- support First Nations peoples in the community.



### **Abuse**

Abuse is when someone treats you badly.



### **Assessments**

Assessments help the government work out:

- how your disability affects your life
- what supports you need.



### **Bullying**

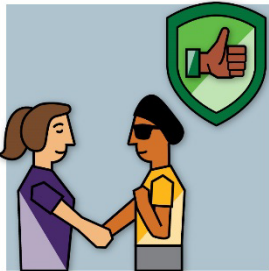
Bullying is when someone says or does something to make you feel bad over and over again.



## Child protection

The child protection system helps children stay safe.

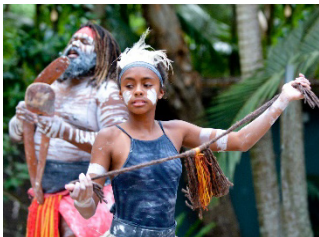
It is run by the government.



## Culturally safe

When something is culturally safe, people understand and respect the cultures of First Nations people with disability.

## Culture



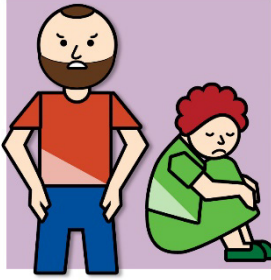
A culture is:

- a way of life
- what people believe
- what is important to the community.



## Disability strategies

Disability strategies tell us about what governments should do improve life for people with disability.

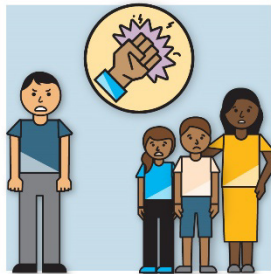


## Exploitation

Exploitation is when someone takes advantage of you.

## Family and domestic violence

Family and domestic violence is when someone close to you acts in violent ways towards you.



They might be:

- your boyfriend or girlfriend
- your husband or wife.

They might also be:

- a member of your family
- someone who takes care of you.

## Justice system

The justice system includes:

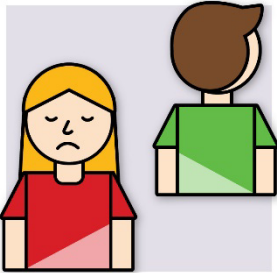
- police
- the courts
- the law
- prisons.





## **Kin**

Kin are the people you call your family.



## **Neglect**

Neglect is when someone is not helping you the way they are supposed to help you.



## **Out-of-home care**

When a child spends time in out-of-home care, it means they:

- can't live with their parents or carer
- might live in a home with a different family.



## **Policies**

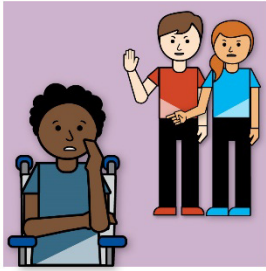
Policies are:

- government plans for how to do things
- where rules come from.



## **Providers**

Providers support people by delivering a service.



## Racism

Racism is when someone treats you badly because of your race.



## Recommend

When we recommend something, we share an idea about how to make things better for people with disability.



## Restrictive practices

Restrictive practices are actions that stop people from:

- moving
- doing what they want.



## Rights

Rights are rules that say you can choose how you live your own life.

And they explain how other people must treat you.



## Royal Commission

A Royal Commission is an official way of looking into a big problem.

It helps us to work out what went wrong and what we need to fix.



## Summary

A summary only includes the most important ideas.



## Trauma

Trauma is the way you feel about something bad that happened to you.

For example, you might feel scared or stressed.

Trauma can affect you for a long time.



## Violence

Violence is when someone hurts you physically.

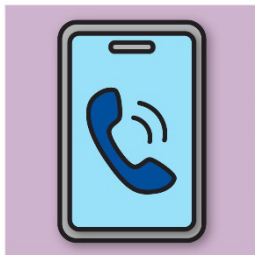


## Support for you



Lifeline is a service for people at risk of suicide.

This is when someone ends their own life.



You can call Lifeline any time.

**13 11 14**



You can use Lifeline's online chat to talk to someone.

**[www.lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat](http://www.lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat)**



Beyond Blue is a service that can support you with your mental health.



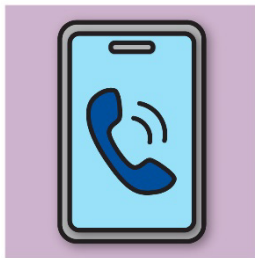
You can call them any time.

**1300 224 636**



1800Respect is a phone service for people around Australia who experience:

- domestic and family violence
- sexual violence.



You can call them any time.

**1800 737 732**



Qlife is a service that supports people in the LGBTIQ+ community with their mental health.



You can call them any day from 3pm to 12am.

**1800 184 527**

## Contact us



Australian Government  
Attorney-General's Department

The Disability Royal Commission has ended.

If you have questions, you can contact the Attorney-General's Department.



You can call them.

**(02) 6141 6666**



Or you can use the form on their website.

**[www.ag.gov.au/about-us/connect-us/contact-us](http://www.ag.gov.au/about-us/connect-us/contact-us)**



You can also contact them to make a complaint.

This is when you explain that something:

- has gone wrong
- isn't working well.

## Support to contact the Attorney-General's Department



You can call the National Relay Service.

**133 677**



You can visit the Access Hub website to find the right service for you.

**[www.accesshub.gov.au/services](http://www.accesshub.gov.au/services)**



If you speak a language other than English, you can call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS).

**1800 131 450**

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**Royal Commission**  
into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and  
Exploitation of People with Disability