ROYAL COMMISSION INTO VIOLENCE & ABUSE AGAINST PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

A Shorten Labor Government will establish a Royal Commission into Violence and Abuse against People with Disability.

There are countless harrowing cases of people with disability being abused and assaulted in the places where they should be safe.

A Royal Commission will allow people with disability, their families and carers to be able to recount these shocking instances of abuse to the highest level of inquiry.

They have a right to be heard, to be believed and to seek justice. Labor will not allow these sickening crimes to be swept under the carpet.

People with disability have been campaigning for a Royal Commission for years. Labor calls on the Turnbull Government to give them justice by joining Labor and committing to a Royal Commission immediately.

If they don’t, a Shorten Labor Government will get this done. This will be a vital part of a national healing process.

Why is a Royal Commission needed?

We know that people with disability experience much higher rates of violence than the rest of the community, and in many cases, this violence occurs in places where they are meant to be receiving support.

According to the Disabled People’s Organisations Australia:

- people with disability experience far higher rates of violence than the rest of the community;
- 90% of women with intellectual disability have been sexually assaulted in their lives, and 60% before the age of 18;
- children with disability are at least three times more likely to experience abuse than other children;
- people with disability can’t always rely on the police for protection against violence;
- people with disability are often treated as ‘unreliable witnesses’, or are not even permitted by law to provide testimony at all;
- There are many cases that have described clear cases of abuse where perpetrators have never been charged and worse, have been allowed to continue working with vulnerable people.
A Royal Commission is necessary because:

- It provides people with disability, their families and carers with an opportunity to tell their stories to the highest level and seek justice;
- A Royal Commission becomes part of a national healing process;
- A Royal Commission can compel witnesses, evidence and testimony, where other forms of inquiry cannot, and
- A Royal Commission is able to make recommendations and findings, fully independent of all areas of government and the non-government sector.

A Royal Commission will make recommendations and findings to prevent future abuse of people with disability. This is about doing what’s right for people with disability.

Labor has carefully considered the recommendations of the Senate Community Affairs Committee inquiry into Violence, Abuse and Neglect against People with Disability. The first recommendation of the Committee was for the establishment of a Royal Commission.

It took the Turnbull Government 16 months to respond to the Committee’s recommendations. They ruled out a Royal Commission.

The Government has suggested that the NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework will be sufficient to address the systemic issues of violence, abuse and neglect of people with disability identified in the Senate Inquiry Report.

However, this Framework will only apply to approximately 10 per cent of people with disability who will be NDIS participants. The majority of people with disability will not be covered.

In 2016, a Victorian Parliamentary Committee also undertook an inquiry into abuse in disability services and recommended a Royal Commission be established.

A Shorten Labor Government will ensure people with disability have access to justice and proper safeguards are put in place.

**Support for a Royal Commission**

A Royal Commission into abuse of people with disability has the support of Disabled People’s Organisations Australia (an alliance of multiple Disability Peaks) and the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations.

Labor has worked with these organisations and will do so during the course for the inquiry, with the Terms of Reference for the Royal Commission to be developed and agreed with the disabilities sector.
Financial Implications

The Royal Commission would go for one year with the option to be extended if necessary.

The proposal has been fully costed by the Parliamentary Budget Office at $26 million for the first year.