



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

Lodged online

22 December 2022

Dear Commissioners,

**DCLS support for DANA submission on Independent Disability Advocacy,
and matters of particular concern**

As you stated in your 2020 Interim Report, throughout the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability you have heard that *“increased advocacy is a key measure to address violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation and would lead to a more inclusive society”* and that *“there is a lack of advocacy services... and that existing advocacy services are under-funded.”*

We would like to add our support to the submission by Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA) on independent disability advocacy, making recommendations to:

- Enhance disability advocacy service capacity;
- Improve and develop sector quality;
- Improve national co-ordination and data; and
- Enhance safeguarding mechanisms.

Additionally, DCLS is committed to co-advocacy, where an advocate and lawyer working together to provide wrap-around supports. This involves mutual knowledge and skills sharing between our Seniors Disability Rights Service which provides non-legal advocacy, and our General Legal Service and Tenancy Advice Service.

We hope that **recommendations by the Royal Commission will include a call for specific funding for co-advocacy to be delivered by community legal centres across Australia. We also urge the Royal Commission to make strong recommendations in relation to independent disability advocacy** to help realise the vision of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and of Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021-31: an Australia that includes and values people with disability and safeguards their human right to live free from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Sincerely,

Judy Harrison

Handwritten signature of Judy Harrison in black ink.

**Principal Solicitor
Darwin Community Legal Service**

Jessica Brugmans

Handwritten signature of Jessica Brugmans in black ink.

**Senior Advocate
DCLS Seniors and Disability Rights Service**