



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

# Issues Paper

A summary of what people told us  
in response to our Group homes Issues Paper

Easy Read version



September 2020

## How to use this paper



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

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



We wrote this paper in an easy to read way.

We use pictures to explain some ideas.



We have written some words in **bold**.

This means the letters are thicker and darker.



We explain what these words mean.

There is a list of these words on page 32.



This Easy Read paper is a summary of a paper called *Overview of responses to the first Group homes Issues paper*.



You can find the other paper on **our website**.



You can ask for help to read this paper.  
A friend, family member or support person may  
be able to help you.



In this paper, we talk about some things that  
might upset some people.



If you get upset and need support, we have  
support services you can contact.



Their contact details are on page 31.

## What's in this paper?

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## What is this paper about?



An **issue** is a subject or problem that people are thinking and talking about.



A **response** is what someone has told us about an issue.



The issue we looked at was **group homes** for people with disability.



Group homes are places where people with disability:

- live together
- get support.



We wrote this paper to tell you what people said about group homes for people with disability.



We asked 10 questions in our issues paper.



We share people's answers to those questions in this paper.

## Who responded to our Issues paper?



By 31 August 2020 we had received 39 responses to our group homes issues paper.



We heard from:

- family members of people with disability who live in group homes
- people who work with people with disability
- service providers
- people who work for the government
- **advocates** and **advocacy organisations.**



An advocate is someone who can:

- support you
- help you have your say
- give you information and advice.



Advocacy organisations are groups that speak up for people with disability. They can:

- help you have your say
- give you information and advice.



We didn't hear from people who:

- come from different cultures and backgrounds
- speak languages other than English
- are **First Nations people**.



First Nations people are also known as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.





We are working to make sure we hear from people with disability who:

- come from different cultures and backgrounds
- speak languages other than English
- are First Nations people.



But some responses talked about issues that affect these people.



We want to talk to people with disability who live in group homes at the moment.



We will talk to them:

- in different ways
- as part of the other work we do.

## What did people tell us?



**Group home residents** are people with disability who live in group homes.

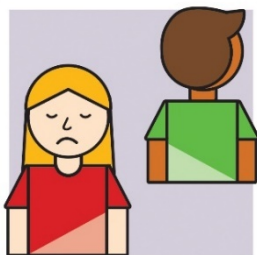
People told us that group home residents experience:



- **violence** – if someone is hurting you physically



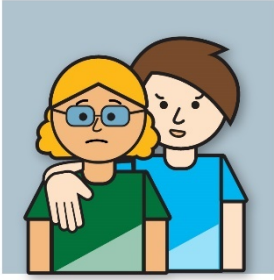
- **abuse** – if someone is treating you badly



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



- **exploitation** – if someone is taking advantage of you.



We also heard how some group home residents experience **sexual assault**.

Sexual assault is when someone:



- makes you do sexual things you don't want to do
- does something sexual to you that you don't want them to do.

People told us that group home residents are treated like this by:



- staff
- volunteers
- people in the community
- other people who live in the group home.

People told us that group home residents often don't get:



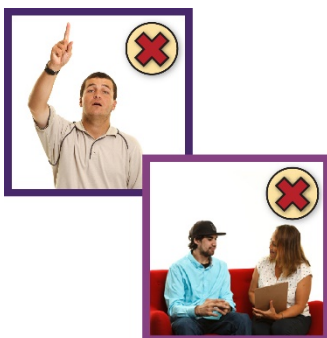
- basic health care they need



- healthy food to eat



- a chance to visit or take part in their community.



People told us that group home residents often don't get help they need to:

- talk
- tell people what they need.

If group home residents don't get the help they need to talk or tell people what they need, they might:



- get very worried and upset

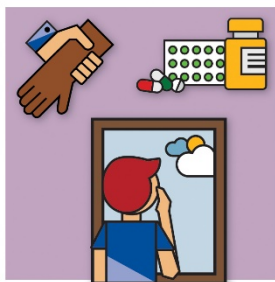


- show **behaviours of concern**.



Behaviours of concern are things someone does that might put:

- themselves in danger
- other people in danger.

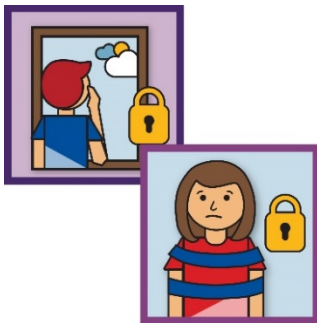


People told us that **restrictive practices** are used in group homes a lot.



Restrictive practices are actions that stop people from:

- moving
- doing what they want.



Restrictive practices include:

- **seclusion**
- using **restraints**.



Seclusion is when you put someone alone in a room or a space and stop them from leaving.



An example of seclusion is locking someone in a room for a period of time.



Restraints are ways to stop someone from doing what they are doing.

We heard about groups home where:



- a resident was tied to a chair



- the fridge was locked so residents couldn't get food



- doors were locked so residents couldn't move around their home



- people were given medicine to make them sleepy or tired



- people were given medicine to keep them quiet.



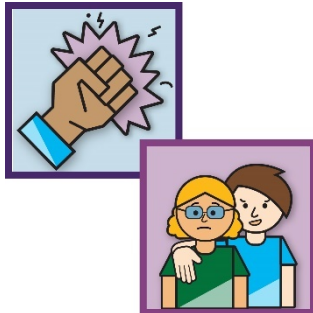
People told us how restrictive practices were used when they should not be.



## What did people say the issues are?



People told us about some of the issues that affect group home residents.



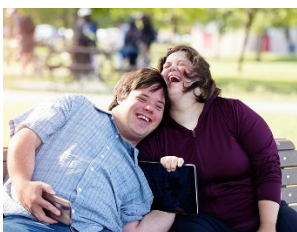
Group home residents who are women can experience:

- violence
- sexual assault.

But women with disability don't get a chance to learn about:



- what violence is



- healthy relationships



- their **rights**.





Rights are rules about how everybody should be treated fairly.



Group home residents who are First Nations people might not get a chance to connect with their:

- culture
- community.



**Discrimination** is when someone is treated badly because of something about them they can't change.

People told us that group home residents can face discrimination based on:



- their race



- their age



- their culture



- who they are attracted to



- their **gender**.



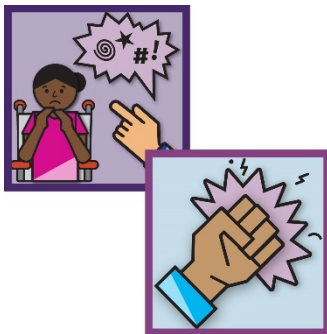
Your gender is what you understand about who you are as a person.

It isn't about whether your body is male or female.



Group home residents are more at risk if they:

- don't speak
- need a lot of support.



These group home residents are more likely to experience:

- abuse
- violence.



People told us that group home residents don't get much choice about:

- where they live
- who supports them
- who they live with.

For example:



- group home residents who are women might not have female support workers to help them have a shower, get dressed or go to the toilet



- group home staff might not have enough training or support to look after the residents well



- group home residents who aren't happy about who they live with might show behaviours of concern.



Some group home staff run group homes based on what they want, not what the residents need.

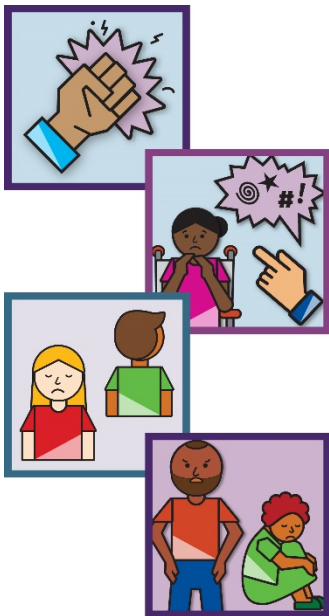
So they plan:



- meals and bedtimes when it is easy for them



- outings to places they want to go.



People told us about problems they faced when they reported the things that happened to group home residents, including:

- violence
- abuse
- neglect
- exploitation.



They told us the people who run group homes look after their staff better than their residents.



They told us that it is a problem when many staff are 'casual'.



This means that:

- there are new staff all the time
- the staff don't get to know the group home residents.



People told us that group home residents who have choice and control are happier.



Residents are also happier if they take part in how the group home is run.



Small groups homes are better for residents.

## What did people say could be better?

Many people said that:



- group homes should be closed



- people with disability should have other options about where and how they live



- people with disability should get support to live independently if they want to.



Some people told us we should still have group homes for people with disability.



But the residents must be able to choose:



- where they live
- who supports them
- who they live with.

Some people told us group homes should:



- only have 2 or 3 residents



- not have too many residents who need a lot of support living together.



We can make sure group home residents get:



- basic health care



- healthy food to eat



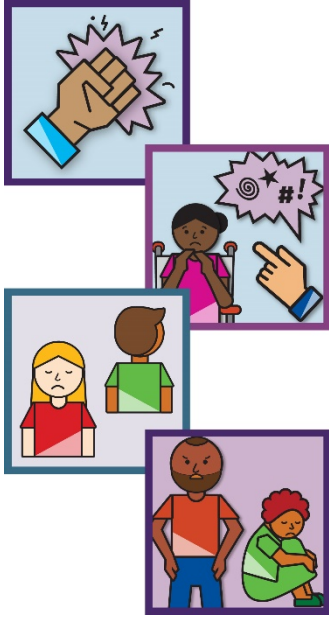
- a chance to visit or take part in their community



- help to talk or tell people what they need.



We can support group home residents to make their own decisions.

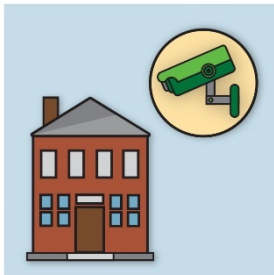


We can make sure it is easy for group home residents to report:

- violence
- abuse
- neglect
- exploitation.



We can have visitors who check on the safety of group home residents.



People told us that group homes should have cameras so other people can see what happens in the group home.



But other people said this will take away the privacy of the group home residents.



Some people believe keeping group home residents safe is more important than protecting their privacy.



We can make sure group home staff:

- have been trained well
- will treat residents well
- will keep residents safe.

## How will we use this information?



We will look closely at all the ideas we have been given.



We will think about what people have told us.

We will think about these ideas when we:



- write our reports



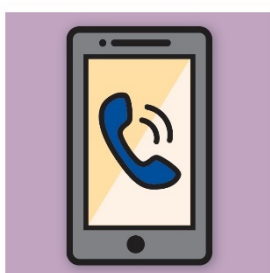
- share our ideas about what we could do to make things better.

## Contact us



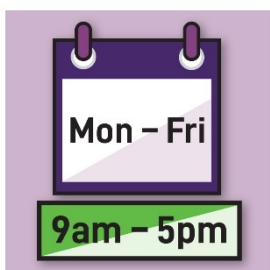
You can email us at

**[DRConquiries@royalcommission.gov.au](mailto:DRConquiries@royalcommission.gov.au)**



You can speak to us on the phone.

**1800 517 199**



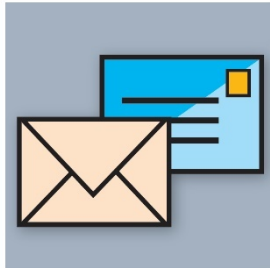
We are available on Monday to Friday  
between 9am and 5pm.



We are not available on public holidays.



You can also call the National Relay Service on **133 677**.



You can write to us at:

GPO Box 1422

Brisbane

QLD 4001

You can follow us on:



Facebook

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



Twitter

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You can also subscribe to our newsletter

*Connect* by sending an email to:

[DRCmailinglist@royalcommission.gov.au](mailto:DRCmailinglist@royalcommission.gov.au)

## Support for you

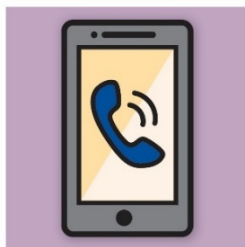


Blue Knot Foundation offers free **counselling support** to anyone who needs it.



Counselling support is when you:

- talk to someone about how you think and feel
- talk about ways to help you feel better.



You can contact Blue Knot Foundation by phone.  
**1800 421 468**



They are open every day.



You can send Blue Knot Foundation an email  
**[helpline@blueknot.org.au](mailto:helpline@blueknot.org.au)**

## Word list



### Advocacy organisations

Advocacy organisations are groups that speak up for people with disability. They can:

- help you have your say
- give you information and advice.



### Advocate

An advocate is someone who can:

- support you
- help you have your say
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### Behaviours of concern

Behaviours of concern are things someone does that might put:

- themselves in danger
- other people in danger.



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## **Discrimination**

Discrimination is when you treat someone badly because of something about them they can't change.



## **First Nations people**

First Nations people are also known as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



## **Gender**

Your gender is what you understand about who you are as a person.

It isn't about whether your body is male or female.



## **Group homes**

Group homes are places where people with disability:

- live together
- get support.



## **Group home residents**

Group home residents are people with disability who live in group homes.



## Issue

An issue is a subject or problem that people are thinking and talking about.



## Response

A response is what someone has told us about an issue.



## Restraints

Restraints are ways to stop someone from doing what they are doing.



## Restrictive practices

Restrictive practices are actions that stop people from:

- moving
- doing what they want.



## Rights

Rights are rules about how everybody should be treated fairly.



## **Seclusion**

Seclusion is when you put someone alone in a room or a space and stop them from leaving.



## **Sexual assault**

Sexual assault is when someone:

- makes you do sexual things you don't want to do
- does something sexual to you that you don't want them to do.

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Exploitation of People with Disability