



UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

SUBMISSION TO

**ROYAL COMMISSION INTO VIOLENCE, ABUSE, NEGLECT
AND EXPLOITATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY**

RESPONSE TO THE PROMOTING INCLUSION ISSUES PAPER

APRIL 2020

Uniting Church in Australia Assembly

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The Uniting Church in Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide a response to the Royal Commission's Issues Paper on Promoting inclusion.

The Uniting Church thanks those across the life of the Church who provided information for this response, including Queensland Synod, the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania and services within the Uniting Church's community services network.

Recommendations

The Uniting Church makes the following recommendations – in addition to recommendations made in response to previous issues papers – to promote a more inclusive society that supports the independence of people with disability and their right to live free from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation:

1. Self-determination that gives people with disability full control over decisions impacting their lives
2. Establish an Office of Disability Inclusion and fund the new National Disability Strategy, its implementation, monitoring, and evaluation
3. Provision of accessible information, including information tailored to individuals' specific circumstances
4. Require disability service providers to develop overarching principles that set out their commitment to inclusion and clear plans for how the supports they provide to people with disability will achieve inclusion outcomes for those individuals
5. Prioritise NDIS participants' communication rights and commit funding and resources to ensure participants are supported to develop their communication capacity
6. Utilise the comprehensive human rights indicators for article 19 of the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, developed by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), to regularly measure and report on Australia's progress in implementing article 19
7. Provide local government grants for community organisations and small businesses to make their premises more accessible
8. Establish minimum accessibility standards to be included in Australia's National Building Code to ensure increased supply of accessible housing
9. Enable people with disability to remain living in their private or family home, if this is their preference, through the provision of sufficient personalised supports and accessible environments
10. Provide alternative accommodation options to residential aged care for people with disability, where Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) is not an option
11. Commit funding to making public transport safe and accessible for people with disability
12. Provide individualised employment supports to non-NDIS participants
13. Support and resource people with disability to take on senior roles within or establish disability support organisations

Inclusion

Inclusion is the antithesis of isolation or segregation and is the exercise of personal control over one's own life and direct involvement in society. Inclusion provides the basis for meaningful participation for people with disability. Stigma and prejudice towards people with disability, as well as a lack of access, contribute to reduced inclusion and participation

of people with disability in society. The elimination of such prejudice, as well as improving access, need to be a key focus of any strategies to promote inclusion.

Article 19 of the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* is particularly relevant for the purposes of this issues paper. It “recognizes the equal right of all persons with disabilities to live independently and be included in the community, with the freedom to choose and control their lives.”¹ *General Comment No. 5 (2017) on Living Independently and Being Included in the Community* states:

Article 19 is one of the widest ranging and most intersectional articles of the Convention and has to be considered as integral to the full implementation of the Convention.²

Article 19 – Living independently and being included in the community

States Parties to the present Convention recognize the equal right of all persons with disabilities to live in the community, with choices equal to others, and shall take effective and appropriate measures to facilitate full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of this right and their full inclusion and participation in the community, including by ensuring that:

- a) Persons with disabilities have the opportunity to choose their place of residence and where and with whom they live on an equal basis with others and are not obliged to live in a particular living arrangement;*
- b) Persons with disabilities have access to a range of in-home, residential and other community support services, including personal assistance necessary to support living and inclusion in the community, and to prevent isolation or segregation from the community;*
- c) Community services and facilities for the general population are available on an equal basis to persons with disabilities and are responsive to their needs.*

Recommendation 1

Self-determination that gives people with disability full control over decisions impacting their lives

Inclusive society

An inclusive society is one where every person, regardless of real or perceived differences or preferences, including but not limited to age, nationality, culture, religion, gender identity, sexuality and/or disability, can participate fully in any activity they wish on an equal basis with other members of that society and can access services and facilities on an equal basis. An inclusive society is one in which everyone is respected and valued for who they are as an individual, with each person’s assets and uniqueness recognised. An inclusive society is fair, cohesive, and richer because of its inclusiveness.

Promoting inclusion within a society requires policies and action plans aimed at promoting equality and non-discrimination, but these alone are insufficient. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has indicated that “[a]wareness-raising (art. 8) is essential to create open, enabling and inclusive communities, as article 19 is ultimately about transforming communities.”³ It has stated that “[a]wareness-raising should be provided for authorities, civil servants, professionals, the media, the general public and persons with disabilities and their families.”⁴ Inclusion also requires a concerted effort from all members of society to engage with individuals and ensure people feel welcome and are able to participate in the community.

Ratification by Australia of the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* has facilitated awareness of the human rights of people with disability and highlighted barriers that still exist in society to achieving human rights for people with disability. Despite legislative and policy changes to promote anti-discrimination and the importance of choice and control for people with disability, many people with disability still experience segregation in accommodation, education and employment; isolation; and reduced access to justice and health services.⁵

Given the entrenched nature of inequality and discrimination, tinkering around the edges of existing systems is not going to bring about the transformational change required to build inclusion for people with disability within communities to safeguard against violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. Change is needed and it is needed now.

For tangible progress to be made:

1. dedicated funding must be allocated to promoting inclusion for people with disability. This includes dedicated funding to implement the new National Disability Strategy, once finalised, as well as funding to monitor its implementation and evaluate its outcomes; and
2. an independent Office for Disability Inclusion must be established, as recommended in *Disability Rights Now 2019* “to drive the [National Disability Strategy] across government and to ensure compliance with the [*Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*].”⁶

As indicated in the Uniting Church in Australia’s response to the Issues Paper on Emergency planning and response, a lack of information disempowers people with disability and reduces their control over a situation. This in turn increases their risk of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.⁷ If people with disability do not know what inclusion is or what possibilities for inclusion exist for them, then they cannot be included. Instead, they may be left thinking or believing that their only option is to remain living in the family home or to access supports and services through a specific service provider or support worker.

People with disability need to know what their rights and options are so they can conceptualise what their life would look like if they were being included in society on an equal basis with others. People with disability also need tailored information about accessing mainstream services and individualised supports and services in accessible formats.

Recommendation 2

Establish an Office of Disability Inclusion and fund the new National Disability Strategy, its implementation, monitoring, and evaluation

Recommendation 3

Provision of accessible information, including information tailored to individuals' specific circumstances

Independence and choice and control

Social inclusion is complex and multi-faceted and is a reasonably recent concept in Australian society. In the recent past segregation and exclusion were accepted and these beliefs and institutionalised practices continue to persist today. It is only in the last 30 years in Australia that many people with intellectual disability have been supported to live in alternative housing, rather than large-scale institutions. However, even now, people with intellectual disability are often housed in poor conditions, or moved into aged care, with no choice about where or with whom they live. Sterilisation of people with disability and abortion of fetuses with disability were – and in some instances, continue to be – acceptable practices. People with disability, particularly people with psychosocial or intellectual disabilities, have been excluded from educational opportunities and communities for generations.

This is to be contrasted with the history of acceptance and inclusion of First Nations people with disability within First Nations communities, as mentioned in the Uniting Church in Australia and Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress's response to the Issues Paper on First Nations people with disability.⁸

An inclusive society by its very nature supports the independence, choice and control of people with disability. People with disability living in an inclusive society are more likely to experience social inclusion as they experience physical inclusion. Safe, accessible and appropriate housing within the community provides options for where and with whom people with disability live, as well as enhanced physical and social environments. Loneliness and isolation are reduced because people with disability have increased contact with the wider community, are valued for who they are, and can participate in education and employment or other activities, which are accessible and adaptable. Any supports people with disability need are readily available and people with disability can exercise personal control over the services provided to them and access acceptable mainstream services. An inclusive society ensures that all its members can express their preferences and those preferences are respected.

Provision of supports

The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has stated in relation to article 19 (b), which relates to individualized support services for people with disability, that:

... all support services must be designed to support living within the community, preventing isolation and segregation from others, and must in actuality be suitable for this purpose. It is important that the aim of these support services be the realization of full inclusion within the community. Therefore, any institutional form of support services which segregates and limits personal autonomy is not permitted by article 19 (b).⁹

Disability service providers need to have overarching principles that set out their commitment to inclusion, including their commitment to understanding and implementing the preferences, choices, and decisions of the people with disability they support, as well as a clear plan for how the supports they provide to people with disability will achieve inclusion outcomes for those individuals.

Communication and supported decision making

To be consistent with promoting an inclusive society, people with disability must have “the freedom to choose and control their lives.”¹⁰ This must include the freedom to choose and control their supports and how those supports are provided. It is therefore imperative that people with disability can communicate their preferences, choices and decisions in any form or format they choose, and that mechanisms for addressing concerns about violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation are accessible.

To achieve this for NDIS participants, the National Disability Insurance Agency needs to prioritise participants’ communication rights and commit funding and resources to ensuring participants are supported to develop their communication capacity.

Currently, the communication capacity of participants is not a priority and is under resourced. It is dependent on the expertise and commitment of service providers to investigate and implement alternative methods of communication, and there is no requirement for service providers to build additional expertise in this area. This is to the detriment of NDIS participants who have different ways of communicating. Whilst NDIS packages will fund communication devices, there needs to be a concerted effort to build the expertise of service providers, families, residents, and participants in this area.

Service providers should be funded to explore all communication options and ascertain an appropriate form of communication for each person with disability they support with complex communication requirements in consultation with that person. At a minimum, each person with a disability needs to be supported to provide yes and no answers, enabling choice and control over their supports. Providers should also be required to demonstrate how they are actively working with participants to ensure their preferences, choices and decisions are understood and followed.

Recommendation 4

Require disability service providers to develop overarching principles that set out their commitment to inclusion and clear plans for how the supports they provide to people with disability will achieve inclusion outcomes for those individuals

Recommendation 5

Prioritise NDIS participants’ communication rights and commit funding and resources to ensure participants are supported to develop their communication capacity

Role and responsibilities

Governments have a clear role to play in actively ensuring that people with disability can exercise their rights under article 19. They need to enact legislation and policies in support of, and fund their obligations with respect to, this article. They also need to repeal any legislation or policies that impinge on the ability of people with disability to exercise their rights under article 19 and cease funding practices that are in contradiction to the rights enshrined in the article. Governments also have a responsibility to implement measures that increase accessibility and raise awareness.

Measuring and reporting on inclusion and Australia’s progress

Inclusion Australia measures and reports on Australia’s social inclusion performance on a regular basis. It uses several indicators to provide a full picture of inclusion within Australia.

The Inclusive Australia Social Inclusion Index: 2020 Report indicates that there is still a lot of work to be done to achieve social inclusion in Australia.¹¹ Several key findings of the report relate to Australians with disability, specifically those related to wellbeing and experiences of discrimination. People with disability had the second lowest personal wellbeing rating of the nine minority groups within the report.¹² People belonging to several minority groups tended to experience greater levels of discrimination. This is demonstrated by the fact that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability were the most likely to have experienced everyday discrimination, while young people with disability were one of two groups most likely to have experienced major discrimination.¹³

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) has developed comprehensive human rights indicators for article 19 for countries who have ratified the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. Australia should use these indicators to measure its progress in relation to article 19. It may be able to use existing data collected through agencies such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics or the Productivity Commission, or through a new survey developed to assess these indicators.

Recommendation 6

Utilise the comprehensive human rights indicators for article 19 of the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, developed by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), to regularly measure and report on Australia's progress in implementing article 19

Promoting inclusion

Eliminating prejudice

Language often used in Australia to refer to people with disability contributes to a deficit discourse in relation to people with disability. This discourse devalues people with disability and contributes to negative stereotypes and attitudes being held about people with disability. The discourse and the associated stereotypes and attitudes need to change so that social norms that perpetuate social inequalities for people with disability are challenged and altered.

Increasing accessibility

The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has stated in relation to article 19 (c) that:

Accessibility of community facilities, goods and services, as well as the exercise of the right to inclusive, accessible employment, education and health care are essential conditions for the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in the communities.¹⁴

We outline changes needed to increase the accessibility of the built environment, transport, and employment to enable the rights provided for in article 19 to be realised.

Built environment

Many buildings and spaces within Australia, as well as private and social housing dwellings, remain inaccessible and unsuitable for people with disability.

We would like to see grants made available to community organisations and small businesses to make their premises more accessible. The grant funding could be used for

assessments or modifications, like the installation of a wheelchair ramp at the building entrance or the installation of a hearing loop. This would increase the number of premises that were accessible to people with disability in the community.

Many councils and shires have access and inclusion plans and are also the most familiar with their local community. They would be best placed to provide such grants to local groups and businesses to increase their accessibility for people with disability.

There is also a need for minimum accessibility standards to be included in Australia's National Building Code to ensure increased supply of accessible housing. Currently, there are many people with disability and older people unable to access suitable housing and the demand for such housing is only going to increase as the population ages.

Enabling people with disability to remain at home, including older people with disability, if this is their preference, will contribute to maintaining their social and community inclusion. Providing sufficient personalised supports that adapt as people's needs change, as well as ensuring appropriate accessibility of their private or family home and buildings within their community, will ensure people with disability, including younger people with disability, are not inappropriately and/or prematurely admitted to residential aged care.

There is also a need for additional alternative accommodation options to residential aged care for people with disability and those with chronic health conditions who require regular monitoring. These alternative options need to provide people with disability and chronic health conditions choice and control about where and with whom they live, as well as be accessible, appropriate, and affordable. Such options need to be available to NDIS participants whose care needs are no longer able to be met in a Supported Independent Living/Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) environment, as well as to NDIS participants who do not meet eligibility requirements for SDA and people with disability who are not receiving supports through the NDIS. Specific attention needs to be paid to the supply of appropriate housing options that may not be provided through the 'market' – for example, outside metropolitan areas.

Recommendation 7

Provide local government grants for community organisations and small businesses to make their premises more accessible

Recommendation 8

Establish minimum accessibility standards to be included in Australia's National Building Code to ensure increased supply of accessible housing

Recommendation 9

Enable people with disability to remain living in their private or family home, if this is their preference, through the provision of sufficient personalised supports and accessible environments

Recommendation 10

Provide alternative accommodation options to residential aged care for people with disability, where Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) is not an option

Transport

While the physical accessibility of public transport has improved over time, we are aware that it is common for people with disability to be targeted or bullied when using public transport.

At the end of 2020, a Good Sammy Enterprises employee was tragically assaulted at a train station. The employee subsequently died.¹⁵ After this incident, employees of Good Sammy Enterprises recalled their own experiences of, and shared their anxieties about, using public transport. Several individuals expressed that they were going to cease using public transport as a result.

Increasing safety on public transport for people with disability should be a priority. Unsafe public transport has a direct and strong impact on the inclusion of people with disability and their ability to live full and meaningful lives, particularly when other forms of transport are not an option.

Where public transport remains inaccessible, this needs to be rectified.

Recommendation 11

Commit funding to making public transport safe and accessible for people with disability

Employment

The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has stated that “[t]he existence of individualized support services, including personal assistance, often is a precondition for effective enjoyment of the right to work and employment (art. 27).”¹⁶ While individualised employment supports are available to people with disability receiving supports through the NDIS, the lack of appropriate employment supports available to people with disability outside the NDIS is concerning and impedes the inclusion and participation of people with disability in the community.

The Committee has also indicated that people with disability should be working in senior roles within disability support organisations.¹⁷ People with disability should be adequately supported and resourced to take on such roles or to establish their own disability support organisations.

Friendsdayout¹⁸ is a business in the disability sector run by a person with disability. The owner receives supports from a Uniting Church network service provider. The business has been running successfully for several years and is a great example of a disability-led initiative within the disability sector.

Recommendation 12

Provide individualised employment supports to non-NDIS participants

Recommendation 13

Support and resource people with disability to take on senior roles within or establish disability support organisations

Barriers to inclusion

First Nations people with disability

First Nations people with disability are some of the most disadvantaged people within Australia, facing many barriers to inclusion and participation. As outlined in the Uniting Church in Australia and the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress’s response to the Issues Paper on The experience of First Nations People with Disability in Australia, many First Nations languages do not have a specific word for disability. As a result, many First Nations people may not see themselves or their loved ones as having a disability. This means they are unlikely to apply for or receive the supports they require.¹⁹

Rates of disability are higher within First Nations communities when compared with the broader Australian population. First Nations people with disability experience compounding disadvantage in relation to health and justice outcomes. For example, First Nations people are significantly overrepresented among people with complex disabilities and high support needs in prisons and are more likely to have undiagnosed or under-diagnosed mental health conditions and cognitive impairment. These issues further compound intergenerational and institutionalised trauma for First Nations people with disability, increasing barriers to inclusion in society.

In Human Rights Watch's report, *"He's Never Coming Back": People with Disabilities Dying in Western Australia's Prisons*, it states:

... analysis of coroners' inquest reports between 2010 and 2020 found that about 60 percent of people who died in prisons in Western Australia had a disability. Of the 60 percent, 58 percent died as a result of lack of support provided by the prison, suicide, and violence – and half of these deaths were of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners with disabilities.²⁰

As Alison Overeem stated in the Uniting Church in Australia and the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress's response to the Issues Paper on The experience of First Nations People with Disability in Australia, "[n]avigating systems that are not culturally appropriate or culturally inclusive adds yet another layer of disadvantage."²¹

People with disability from culturally and linguistically diverse communities

People with disability from culturally and linguistically diverse communities can experience cultural barriers to their inclusion. This includes where a culture negatively perceives disability. This may lead to people with disability being separated from their community and community supports, inhibiting informal oversight of their health and wellbeing and restricting their inclusion within society.

Language barriers can be an issue for culturally and linguistically diverse people, including those with disability. For example, it can be difficult to obtain an interpreter for culturally and linguistically diverse people needing to interact with government departments and agencies, such as the National Disability Insurance Agency or Centrelink.

Many culturally and linguistically diverse people have escaped discrimination and violence in their home country and encountering someone that speaks their language in their local community can potentially expose them to risks if that individual informs the wider community of their whereabouts and identity. This can limit the inclusion of culturally and linguistically diverse people with disability within the community.

People with disability who identify as LGBTQI+

LGBTQI+ people experience abuse and homelessness at disproportionately higher rates than the broader community. LGBTQI+ people with disability can be further stigmatised and pushed to the outer fringes of society, where they are excluded from the community. This makes it challenging to provide support to LGBTQI+ people with disability, particularly in relation to providing safe and appropriate housing, mental health support and access to health services. Poor experiences with professionals working in these mainstream systems creates further barriers for LGBTQI+ people with disability and reduces their ability to access mainstream supports.

Women and girls with disability

Gender-based inequalities and discrimination disproportionately affect women and girls with disability. They face greater risk of violence, especially sexual violence, abuse and harassment. The Royal Commission's recent research report *Nature and extent of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation against people with disability in Australia* highlights that the lifetime exposure of women with disability to sexual violence – as measured in the 2016 Personal Safety Survey – is twice that of non-disabled women.²² In addition, 50 per cent of women with psychological and/or cognitive impairment report having experienced sexual violence in their lifetime.²³ The authors note that these estimates do not include lifetime exposure of women with disability who: live in institutional and other care settings; need assistance with communication; and are under the age of 15.²⁴ The real level of lifetime exposure to sexual violence of women with disability is likely to be much higher.

The abusers of women with disability can also be their carers, making independence, choice and control fraught and furthering social isolation.

The Uniting Church in Australia and inclusion

The Uniting Church promotes inclusion within the Church and within society, often providing support to people who are experiencing disadvantage or marginalisation.

During 2020, Wayside Chapel in Sydney – a Uniting Church congregation – continued to serve the city's homeless, including people with disability sleeping rough, reducing its office opening hours for the safety of those it serves, while shifting to mobilised outreach in the community.²⁵ The Church of All Nations (CAN) and its agency CAN Community Support – both based in Carlton, Melbourne and part of the Uniting Church in Australia – provided support and connection to local residents during 2020, distributing masks, providing emergency relief, food packages and well-being phone calls to people living in the high rise flats, and providing hot meals in partnership with Lentil As Anything.

As stated in the Uniting Church in Australia's response to the Issues Paper on Emergency planning and response, community services assisting those requiring goods or needing support during times of crisis, including people with disability, are vital to community connection and inclusiveness.²⁶

There are also examples of specific disability inclusion within the Church and its services.

The Synod of Victoria and Tasmania has a Disability Access Fund, which provides funds to Uniting Church congregations in Victoria and Tasmania for minor access upgrades.

The Hobart North Uniting Church has become more accessible and inclusive by renovating its church building and increasing the availability of Auslan interpreters, resulting in a change to the way the Church community interacts and an increase in attendance from members of the Deaf community.

Members of the Uniting Church's community services network are also implementing programs to provide work experience opportunities to people with disability and to assist their transition to open employment. Wesley Mission Queensland runs a program called The ORCA Project Transition Program, and UnitingCare Queensland is a Project SEARCH program site.

ORCA is an acronym that stands for opportunities, readiness, community, and abilities. The ORCA Project Transition Program is based out of two Uniting Church congregations: Albany Creek Uniting Church (ACUC) and Broadwater Road Uniting Church Mansfield. The program includes training and work experience to assist participants to find meaningful work in line with their interests, and the participants attend two days a week post school. The program aims to help young people enhance their lives and be valued through inclusion and participation.

Project SEARCH is a program that originated at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Centre in the United States and has expanded to a large network of sites across the globe. As stated on the Project SEARCH website, the "primary objective is to secure competitive employment for people with disabilities."²⁷ UnitingCare Queensland, in partnership with Project SEARCH, offers 12-month internships to NDIS participants with employment-related goals who have completed year 12. Internships are available at both The Wesley Hospital and Blue Care Ipswich and include classroom instruction, hands-on skills development and coaching and support. The program assists the interns to develop their confidence and independence and build relationships within the workplace.

Conclusion

There is much to be done before the rights within article 19 of the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* are realised and the Convention itself is fully implemented. A particular emphasis is needed on eliminating prejudice towards people with disability within Australia and increasing accessibility in the community, as well as providing individualised support services for non-NDIS participants and removing barriers to inclusion for people with disability who are also a part of other minority groups.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this response to the Promoting inclusion issues paper.

About the Uniting Church

The Uniting Church in Australia is the third largest Christian denomination in Australia and the first church to be created in and of Australia. The Uniting Church in Australia was formed on June 22, 1977, as a union of three churches: the Congregational Union of Australia, the Methodist Church of Australasia and the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

In Australia's 2016 Census, more than 870,000 people identified themselves as having an affiliation with the Uniting Church.²⁸ In any week more than 2,000 congregations worship in Uniting Church communities in 45 different languages, including 15 First Nations languages. Even though our congregations can be vastly different, each is a community in which people seek to follow Jesus, learn about God, share their faith, care for each other, serve the local community and seek to live faithfully and with real joy.

The Uniting Church is organised not by a hierarchy, but by a series of inter-related councils — local churches, regional presbyteries, six synods, and the national Assembly. Decisions are usually made by consensus. Each council has its distinct tasks, and each council recognises the limit of its responsibilities in relation to other councils.

The Uniting Church is also one of the largest providers of community services in Australia. With over 1,600 sites, the community services network supports 1.4 million people annually, employs 50,000 staff and is supported by the work of over 30,000 volunteers.²⁹ As the national body for the community services network and an agency of the Church,

UnitingCare Australia gives voice to the Church's commitment to social justice through advocacy and by strengthening community service provision.

The Uniting Church is committed to cooperating fully and openly with the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (Disability Royal Commission). In line with this commitment, the Uniting Church released a [values statement](#) which will guide the Uniting Church's engagement with and response to the Disability Royal Commission. The Uniting Church has established a National Task Group to help guide the Uniting Church's response, with the membership comprising representation from across the life of the Church, each state synod, and the community services network. The Chair of the National Task Group is the Assembly General Secretary, Colleen Geyer, and the Executive Officer for the National Task Group is Tenille Fricker, a Senior Analyst at UnitingCare Australia.

Endnotes

¹ Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, *General comment No. 5 (2017) on Living Independently and Being Included in the Community*, UN Doc CRPD/C/GC/5 (27 October 2017) [2] ('General Comment No. 5').

² Ibid [6].

³ Ibid [77].

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Piers Gooding, Julie Anderson and Keith McVilly, 'Disability and Social Inclusion 'Down Under': A Systematic Literature Review' (2017) 8(2) *Journal of Social Inclusion*, 5.

⁶ Australian Civil Society CRPD Shadow Report Working Group, 'Disability Rights Now 2019', Australian Civil Society Shadow Report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in response to the List of issues prior to the submission of the combined second and third periodic reports of Australia [CRPD/C/AUS/QPR/2-3], July 2019, 14.

⁷ Uniting Church in Australia, *Response to the Emergency Planning and Response Issues Paper* (July 2020) 5.

⁸ Uniting Church in Australia and Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, *Response to The Experience of First Nations People with Disability in Australia Issues Paper* (October 2020) 4.

⁹ *General Comment No. 5*, UN Doc CRPD/C/GC/5 (n 1) [30].

¹⁰ Ibid [2].

¹¹ Nicholas Faulkner et al, *Measuring Social Inclusion: The Inclusive Australia Social Inclusion Index* (Report, September 2020).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ *General Comment No. 5*, UN Doc CRPD/C/GC/5 (n 1) [33].

¹⁵ Aja Styles, 'Charity Worker's "Heartbreaking" Death at Train Station Sends Shockwaves Through Community', *WA Today* (online, 29 December 2020) <<https://www.watoday.com.au/national/western-australia/charity-worker-s-heartbreaking-death-at-train-station-sends-shockwaves-through-community-20201229-p56qnt.html>>.

¹⁶ *General Comment No. 5*, UN Doc CRPD/C/GC/5 (n 1) [91].

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Friendsdayout* (Web Page) <<http://www.friendsdayout.com/>>.

¹⁹ Uniting Church in Australia and Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (n 8) 4.

²⁰ Human Rights Watch, "*He's Never Coming Back*": *People with Disabilities Dying in Western Australia's Prisons* (Report, September 2020) 1.

²¹ Uniting Church in Australia and Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (n 8) 3.

²² Centre of Research Excellence in Disability and Health, *Nature and Extent of Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation Against People with Disability in Australia* (Research Report, March 2021) 10.

²³ *Ibid* 14.

²⁴ *Ibid* 8.

²⁵ Michael McGowan, 'Forced into Change by Coronavirus, Wayside Chapel Hits the Streets to Help the Homeless', *The Guardian* (online, 18 April 2020) <<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/apr/18/forced-by-coronavirus-to-close-its-doors-to-the-homeless-wayside-chapel-hits-the-streets>>.

²⁶ Uniting Church in Australia (n 7) 8.

²⁷ 'Who We Are', *Project SEARCH* (Web Page) <<https://projectsearch.us/who-we-are/>>.

²⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Population and Housing: Reflecting Australia – Stories from the Census, 2016* (Catalogue No 2071.0, 28 June 2017).

²⁹ Figures are approximate at 30 June 2018.