

1. Inquiry: the Violence, abuse and neglect against people with disability in institutional and residential settings, including the gender and age related dimensions, and the particular situation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability, and culturally and linguistically diverse people with disability.

The violence, abuse and neglect against people with a disability in residential settings would seem to be systemic and a much more common occurrence than we would prefer to believe. Evidence of violence and abuse in other sectors of the community has been studied and we are lead to believe that the instances shared in the public domain are but the tip of the iceberg and that there are many more instances remaining hidden.

There are some underpinning issues we need to address before any process of accountability can successfully minimise abuse and neglect within this venerable group

1. The victims of crime in this instance are often unable to communicate their dissatisfaction using the current acceptable models of communication. It is discriminatory and unjust to continually not follow through allegations because of the inability of the system to adapt to alternate augmented communication.
2. The care providers if qualified at all have, in Victoria a Certificate IV in Disability Work and in other states a Certificate III in Disability Work. This qualification can be undertaken in many and various forms from almost no direct teaching and no placement over a few weeks to a 12 month course with 100+ hours of placement in a disability facility. This results in a huge discrepancy in the skills and knowledge of the work force.
3. The perception of what constitutes violence is readily understood by most workers but abuse and neglect are often not so easily comprehended. The Health Dept. Victoria's "Elder Abuse Prevention" campaign fascinators (those delivering the Elder Abuse Prevention workshops) often found that workers failed to see disempowering practice as abuse. This was based on ignorance rather than intent to harm and once acknowledged workers intended to change practice.
4. The existing role of the disability commissioner and reporting mechanisms for the identification of violence, abuse and neglect within the disability sector are very obviously not preventing same from occurring. It is a system set up for those persons with literacy skills, who can cognitively recognise abuse as illegal and then plan to do something about it otherwise it relies on a third party being present and having the will to report the matter which even when this takes place there is no guarantee action is taken or police informed.
5. I find it indicative of society's values and attitudes when 3 Greyhound trainers are banned for life and a national inquiry into the sport ensues for cruelty to animals and in the instance of cruelty to people with a disability agencies continue to operate and workers implicated in the non-reporting of abuse continue to work.