

Inquiry into the funding and operation of the Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement

National data collection on disability – violence against women







Nationwide data collection is a priority. In recent decades quality data collected by organisations like the Australian Bureau of Statistics has come to underpin social policy reform. High quality data can demonstrate the need for change in policy and practice and for the development of new policy in emerging areas of need.

High quality, nationally sourced data on women with disabilities is a major shortcoming, in recently collected data in Australia, in terms of service provision and policy development in sectors dealing with the impact of violence against women, including family and domestic violence, and sexual assault.

Sadly, the ABS has not yet seen fit to include women with disabilities as a discreet category within their research on violence against women. Government services such as police and medical services say they cannot collect information from individuals about disability because this could breach privacy laws. What data is collected is fragmented and collected according to the needs of institutions providing particular services.

Women's service providers and governments need nationally collected, somewhat standardised data giving a broad view of the nature and range of disability.

Information could be sought about (for example):

-  the nature of disability and its impact in individual women's lives including their experience of violence from intimate partners, carers, other family or friends, or strangers;
-  the origin of any disability including disability that is linked to childhood experiences of violence;
-  emergent disability;
-  disability directly or indirectly caused by violence;
-  the duration of disability in individual cases;
-  services required by women with a disability/ies.

It would be helpful for planning service delivery to understand just what percentage of a service's constituent group live with a disability. Better targeted appropriate programs and services taking account of the level of disability experienced by service users is more likely to attract those for whom the services are designed and delivered.

Internationally recognised and utilised definitions of disability developed by the World Health Organisation, whilst limited, are available and could form the basis of any research as a starting point for data collection.

An 'analysis of levels of unmet needs and, in particular, the unmet need for accommodation services and support' or indeed other needs can only be partial or incomplete without robust data indicating what proportion of the population we are talking about.

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