



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

Research Report

**How First Nations women and children
experience violence at home**

Easy Read version



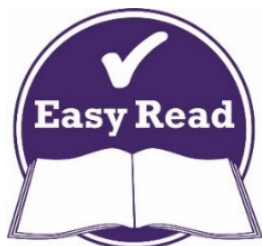
How to use this report



A team of researchers wrote this report for the Disability Royal Commission (the Royal Commission).

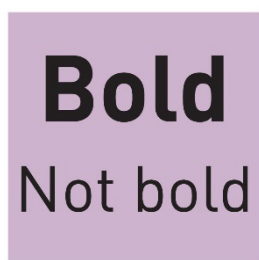


When you see the word 'we', it means the Royal Commission.



We wrote this report in an easy to read way.

We use pictures to explain some ideas.



We wrote some important words in **bold**.

This means the letters are thicker and darker.



We explain what these bold words mean.

There is a list of these words on page 39.



This Easy Read report is a **summary** of a report called *Wangkiny Yirra "Speaking Up" Project*.

A summary only includes the most important ideas.



You can find the other report on our website.

[www.disability.royalcommission.gov.au/
policy-and-research/research-program](http://www.disability.royalcommission.gov.au/policy-and-research/research-program)



You can ask for help to read this report.

A friend, family member or support person may be able to help you.



We recognise First Nations peoples as the traditional owners of our land – Australia.

They were the first people to live on and use the:



- land

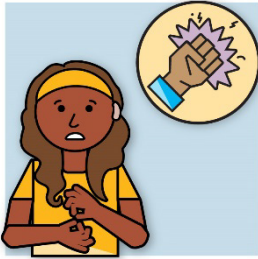


- waters.

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What is this report about?



Lots of First Nations women and children with disability experience **family and domestic violence**.



Family and domestic violence is when someone close to you acts in violent ways towards you.

They might be:



- your boyfriend or girlfriend



- your husband or wife.

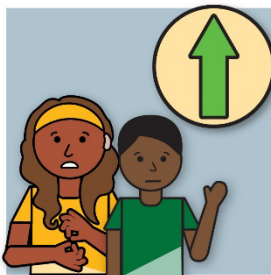
They might also be:



- a member of your family



- someone who takes care of you.

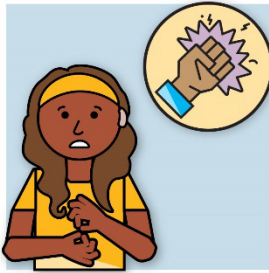


First Nations women and children with disability are more likely to experience this than other people with disability.



But research about disability in Australia often doesn't include First Nations peoples.

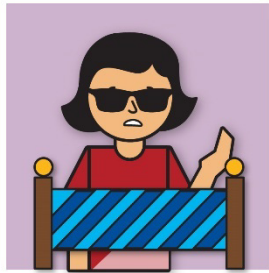
We did this research to find out about:



- how First Nations women and children experience family and domestic violence



- things First Nations people with disability think put them at risk of violence.



We wanted to know about **barriers** First Nations peoples face to getting support.



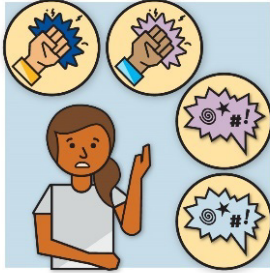
A barrier is something that stops you from doing something you:

- need to do
- want to do.

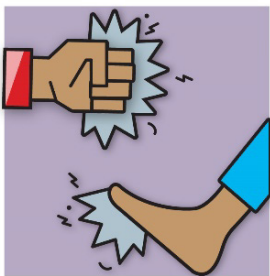


We also wanted to know what First Nations people with disability think works well to keeps them safe now.

What is family and domestic violence?

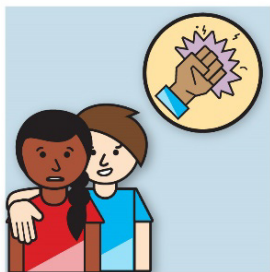


Family and domestic violence can include different types of experiences.



It can include **physical violence**.

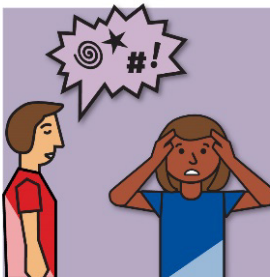
This is when someone hurts your body.



It can also include **sexual violence**.

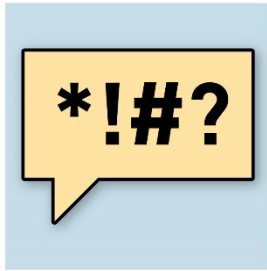
This is when someone:

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

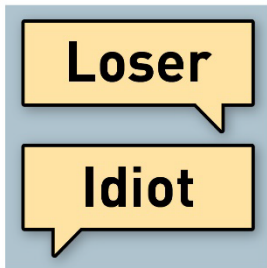


Family and domestic violence can also include **emotional abuse**.

This is when someone:



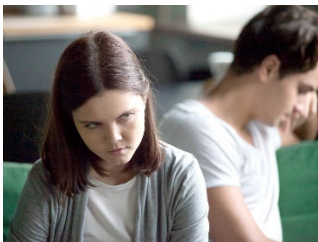
- says mean things to you



- calls you names



- puts you down



- ignores you



- stops you from seeing your friends or family.

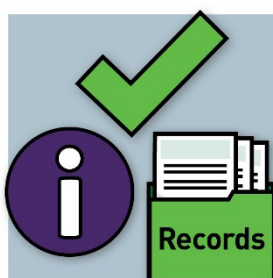
How did we do our research?



Our researchers looked at other research about issues that affect First Nations women and children with disability.

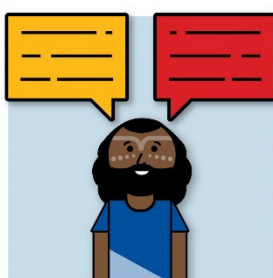


This gave us useful **data** to use in our research.



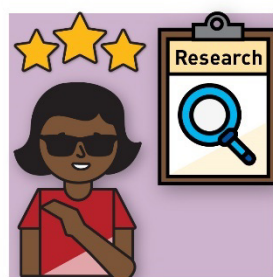
When we talk about data, we mean:

- facts
- information
- records.



We also used a type of research called **yarning**.

Yarning is a way to learn about First Nations communities by sharing stories.



When we use yarning as a way to do research, we think of the community as an expert.

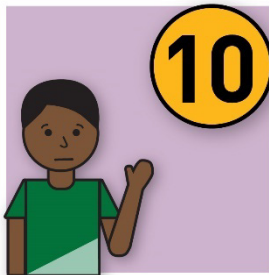


As part of this we spoke to 75 people.

This includes:



- 35 First Nations women with disability



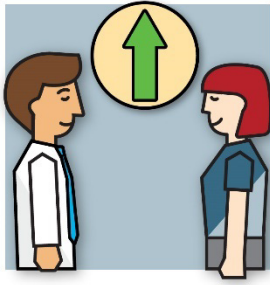
- 10 First Nations children and young people with disability



- 8 carers



- 22 people from community and government services.



We wanted to talk to more people as part of this research.



But we didn't have enough time to connect with some young people who are more at risk.



And some organisations wouldn't let us talk to the people they support.

First Nations peoples and disability



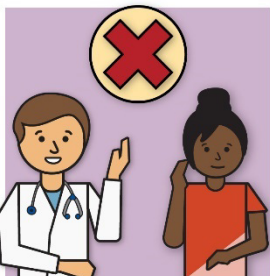
First Nations peoples often think about disability in different ways.



They might not use the word 'disability'.



We included women and children who told us they had a disability.



Even if they had not seen a doctor to find out about their disability.

What did we find out from other research?



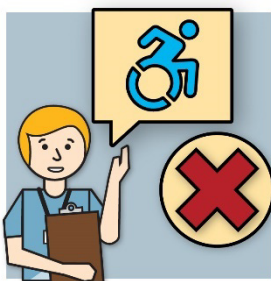
We found some **themes** when we looked at other research.



Themes are important ideas that come up in the research.



There is not much research about how First Nations women and children with disability experience family and domestic violence.



People often don't ask about disability when they collect data.



It is harder for First Nations peoples to:

- use services
- get support for a disability.

Governments need to find respectful ways to support First Nations communities to learn about:



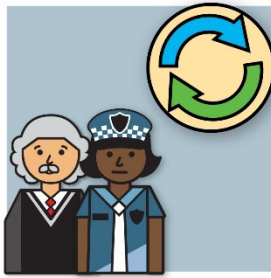
- family and domestic violence



- disability.



This includes changing how services work to stop family and domestic violence from happening.

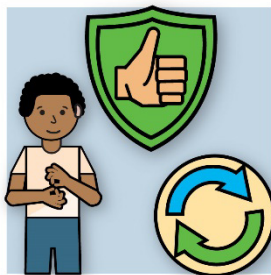


This research focused on what governments need to do to change how the **justice system** works.

The justice system includes:



- police
- the courts
- the law
- prisons.



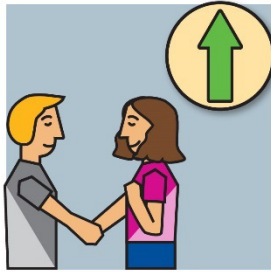
Governments also need to change how **child protection** works.



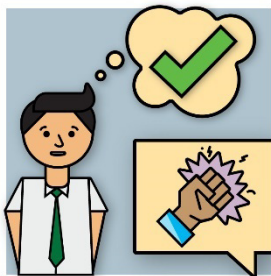
Child protection helps children stay safe.
It is run by the government.



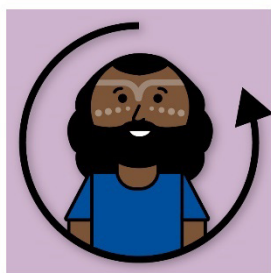
These services are not always safe for First Nations women and children.



Governments need to show more respect to what First Nations women and children have to say.

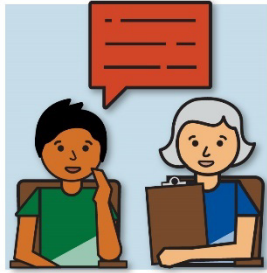


For example, governments should believe them when they tell them about family and domestic violence.



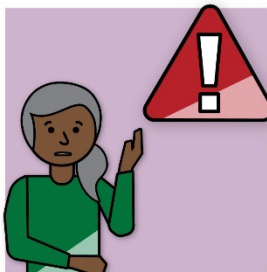
It is important to include First Nations men when we work to keep First Nations women and children safe.

What did the researchers find out from yarning?

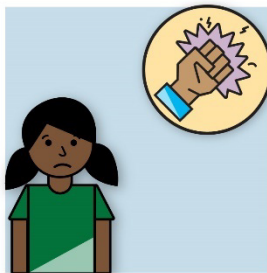


We learned a lot when we talked with the community.

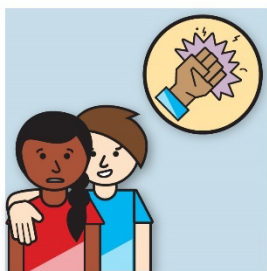
Women



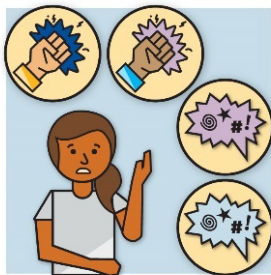
We learned about issues that matter to First Nations women and girls with disability.



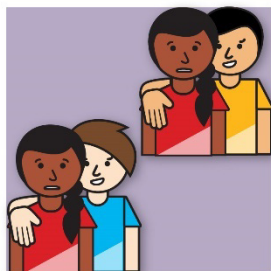
Many women told us they were around violence when they were young.



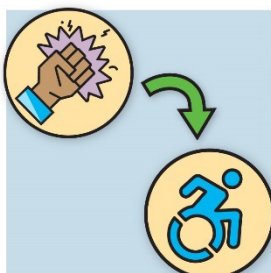
1 in 3 women we spoke to told us they experienced sexual violence when they were children.



They told us they had experienced different types of violence.

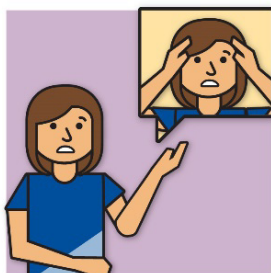


And many women told us they experienced violence from different partners.



Many women got their disability through violence.

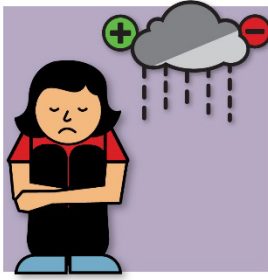
For example, through **trauma**.



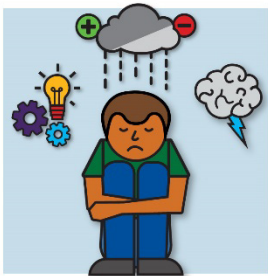
Trauma is the way you feel about something bad that happened to you.

You might feel scared or stressed.

Trauma can affect you for a long time.

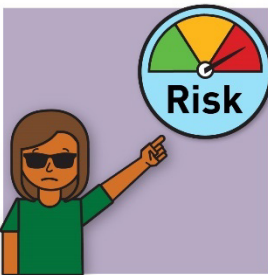


Some women with disability told us **mental health** issues are part of their disability.

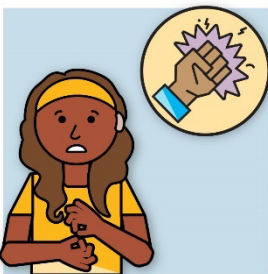


Your mental health is about how you:

- think
- feel
- manage your feelings.

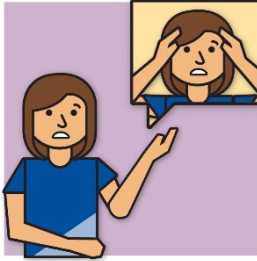


Many women told us their experiences can put them more at risk of mental health issues.



This includes experiences of violence.

This also includes experiences of:



- trauma



- services that don't meet their needs.



Many women told us about things that can cause:

- trauma
- mental health issues.

For example:

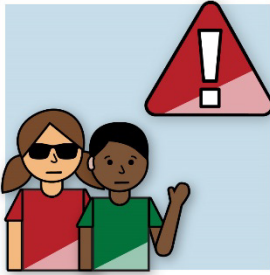


- losing someone they love

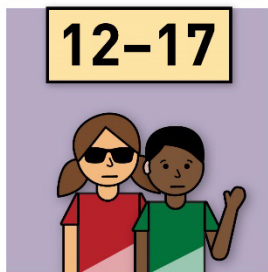


- if child protection takes their children away.

Children and young people



We learned about issues that matter to First Nations children and young people with disability.



When we talk about children, we mean young people aged 12–17.



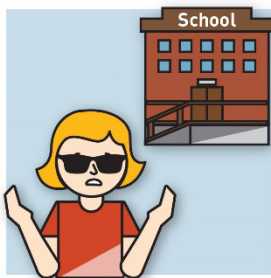
Children told us it can be hard to manage their emotions.

For example, they often feel angry.

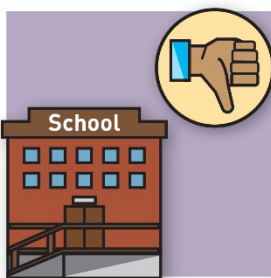


They told us they often experience **bullying** at school.

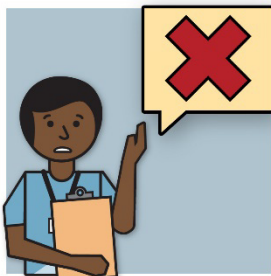
Bullying is when someone says or does something to make you feel bad over and over again.



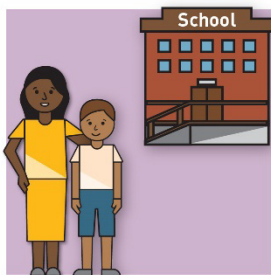
They also told us schools don't do much to help them.



This can lead to children choosing not to go to school.



Or to the school saying they can't to go to school for some time because they got into trouble.



Children with disability told us they need support to:

- stay in school
- go back to school.

Carers



We learned about issues that matter to First Nations people who provide care for children with disability.



Some of the carers also have a disability.

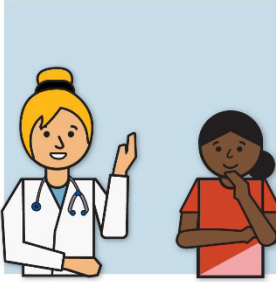


Carers told us they have to do too much.



And it affects their social and emotional wellbeing.

This includes how they connect with the people and places around them.



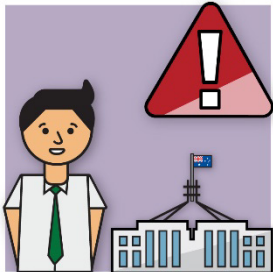
They also share that it is important children can:

- see a health professional
- find out what support they need.



This can help them get support early in their lives.

People from community and government services

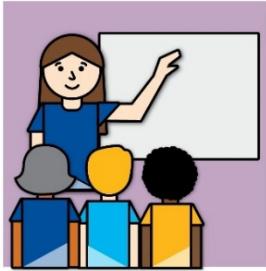


We learned about issues that matter to people from community and government services.



Most of the people we spoke to were First Nations people.

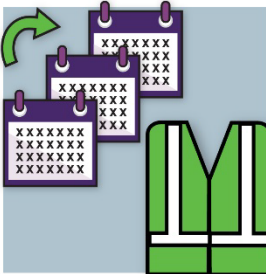
They told us that First Nations peoples can have problems:



- with training



- getting support



- staying in a job for a long time.



This can be because many services don't meet the needs of First Nations staff.



They also told us there needs to be more services that are safe for First Nations women and children.

This is most important for:



- disability services

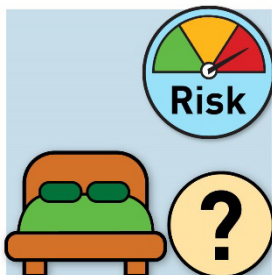


- family and domestic violence services.

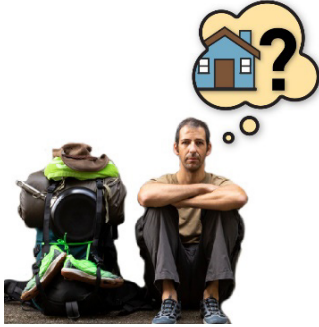
Other issues



We learned about some issues that affect First Nations women and children with disability from all of our yarning.

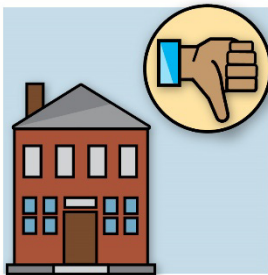


We learned that many First Nations women and children with disability are at risk of being **homeless**.



People who are homeless don't have a home.

They must find a place to sleep each night.



We also learned there is not enough housing to help people when they:

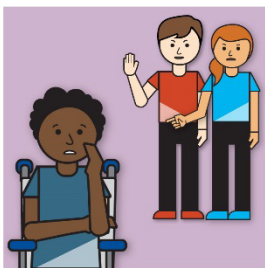
- are at risk of violence
- have nowhere else to live.

NDIS



We also learned that governments should support First Nations people to:

- know about the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)
- understand how the NDIS works.



We learned that First Nations people face barriers to getting support for family and domestic violence.

Such as **racism**.

Racism is when someone treats you badly because of your race.



We learned that many First Nations women with disability don't trust the government.

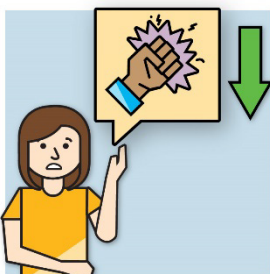


This is because child protection:

- took many First Nations children away from their families in the past
- still takes First Nations children away from their families.



It might also be because of bad experiences they've had with the police.

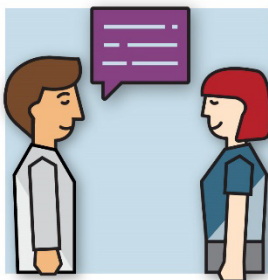


When First Nations women don't trust the government, they are less likely to report family and domestic violence.

What do we recommend?



When we **recommend** something, we say how to make things better.



We worked with an **advisory group** to help us decide what to recommend.



An advisory group is a group of people who work with us to tell them what:

- is working well
- needs to work better.

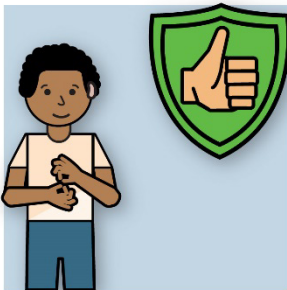


We call them the Aboriginal Leadership and Advisory Group.

We recommend fixing some government services, including:



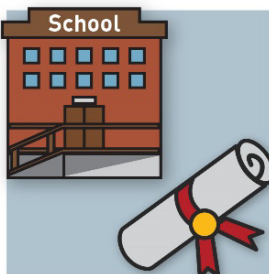
- the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)
– which runs the NDIS



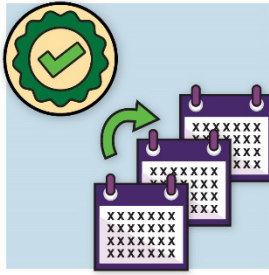
- child protection



- the justice system



- education and schools.

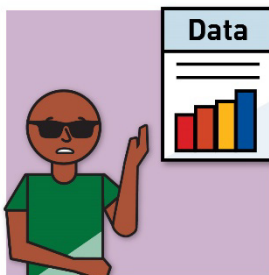


We recommend using **funding** to make sure services:

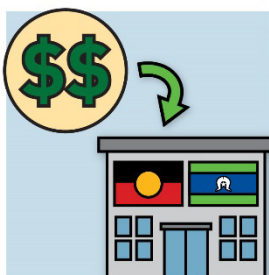
- provide quality services
- last a long time.



Funding is money that pays for the supports and services people with disability need.



We recommend finding better ways to collect data about First Nations people with disability.



We recommend giving funding to organisations that First Nations peoples run.

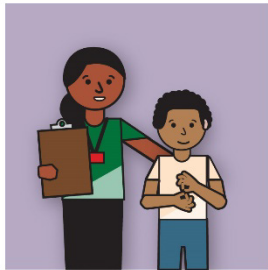


This includes organisations that support First Nations peoples in:

- the community
- prisons.



Other support services should build strong relationships with these organisations.



We recommend giving funding to these organisations to help support children early in their lives.



We recommend building family and domestic violence services that can meet the needs of First Nations peoples.

We recommend finding ways to support:



- people who provide care for children with disability
- but
- aren't their parents.



This support should also work well for carers who also have a disability.



We recommend making sure all children have a health check when they go into:

- child protection
- the justice system.

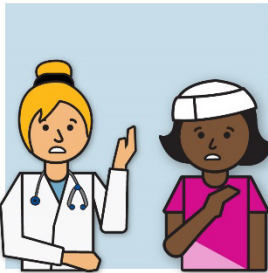


This includes making sure they:

- see a health professional
- find out what support they need.



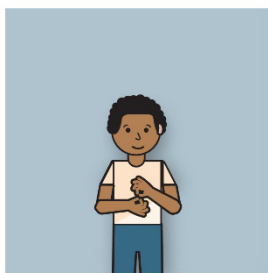
It also includes supporting them early in their lives.



We recommend health services check in with women and children who have injuries from violence.



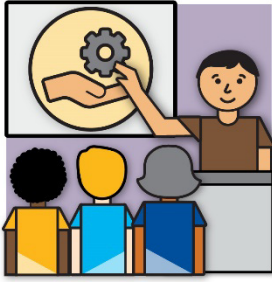
We recommend providing kindergarten programs that meet the needs of First Nations people with disability.



This can help children who need support early in their lives.



It can also help them get ready for school.

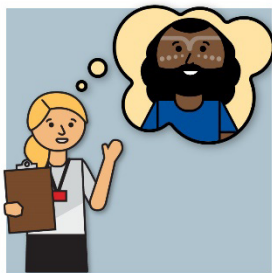


We recommend providing training to services that support First Nations women and children with disability in all parts of their lives.



This training should teach staff about:

- disability
- trauma
- family and domestic violence.

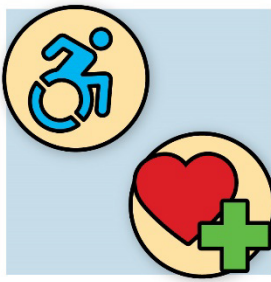


Training should also support staff to understand First Nations people and **culture**.

Your culture is:

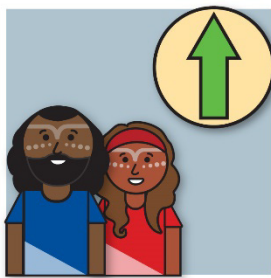


- your way of life
- how you think or act now because of how you grew up
- your beliefs
- what is important to you.



It should aim to support staff to understand how family and domestic violence can affect:

- disability
- health.



We recommend finding ways to make disability services a place where more people want to work.

Including First Nations workers.

Word list

This list explains what the **bold** words in this report mean.



Advisory group

An advisory group is a group of people who work with us to tell them what:

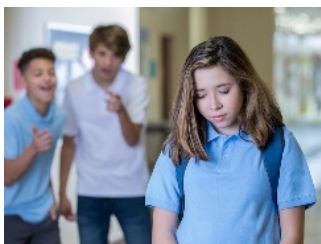
- is working well
- needs to work better.



Barrier

A barrier is something that stops you from doing something you:

- need to do
- want to do.



Bullying

Bullying is when someone says or does something to make you feel bad over and over again.



Child protection

Child protection is a government program that helps children stay safe.

Counselling support



Counselling support is when you:

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

Culture

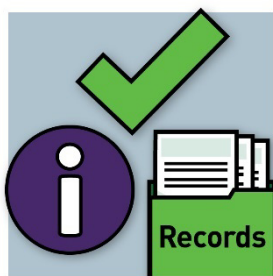
Your culture is:



- your way of life
- how you think or act now because of how you grew up
- your beliefs
- what is important to you.

Data

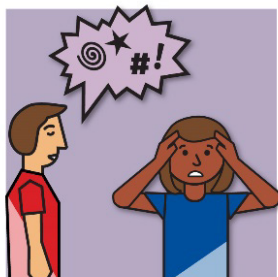
When we talk about data, we mean:



- facts
- information
- records.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is when someone:



- says mean things to you
- calls you names
- puts you down
- ignores you
- stops you from seeing your friends or family.

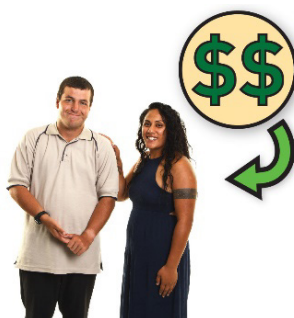
Family and domestic violence

Family and domestic violence is when someone close to you acts in violent ways towards you.



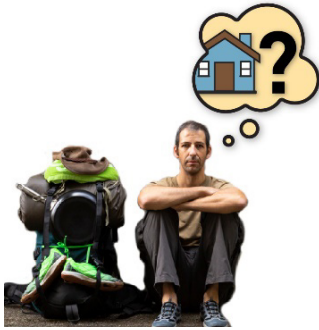
They might be:

- your boyfriend or girlfriend
- your husband or wife
- a member of your family
- someone who takes care of you.



Funding

Funding is money that pays for the supports and services people with disability need.



Homeless

People who are homeless don't have a home.
They must find a place to sleep each night.

Justice system

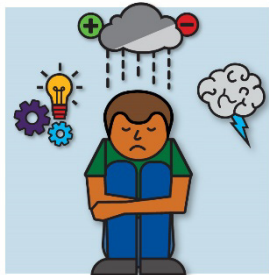
The justice system includes:



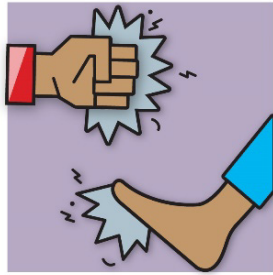
- police
- the courts
- the law
- prisons.

Mental Health

Your mental health is about how you:

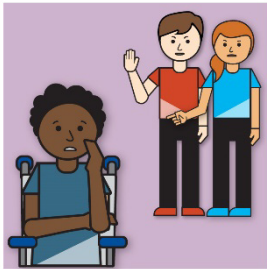


- think
- feel
- manage your feelings.



Physical violence

This is when someone hurts your body.



Racism

Racism is when someone treats you badly because of your race.

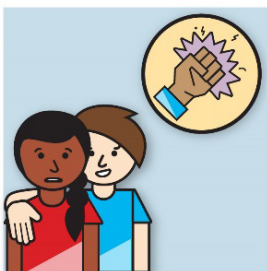


Recommend

When we recommend something, we say how to make things better.

Sexual violence

Sexual violence is when someone:



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



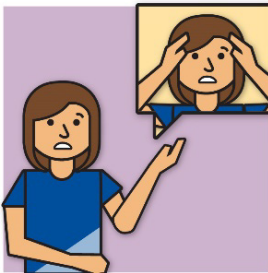
Summary

A summary only includes the most important ideas.



Themes

Themes are important ideas that come up in the research.

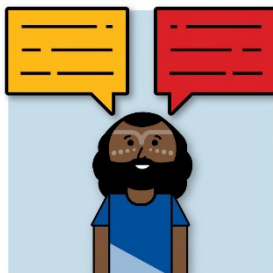


Trauma

Trauma is the way you feel about something bad that happened to you.

You might feel scared or stressed.

Trauma can affect you for a long time.



Yarning

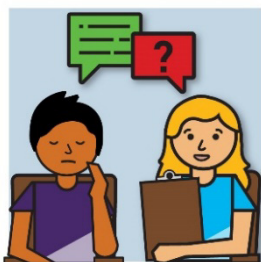
Yarning is a way to learn about First Nations communities by sharing stories.

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 call Blue Knot Foundation.

1800 421 468



They are open every day.



You can send Blue Knot Foundation an email.

helpline@blueknot.org.au

Contact us



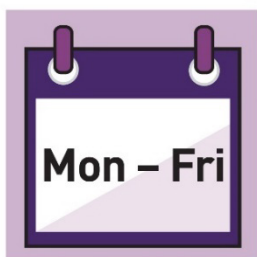
You can send us an email.

DRcenquiries@royalcommission.gov.au

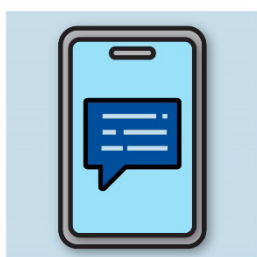


You can call us.

1800 517 199



We are available Monday to Friday.



You can also send us a text message.

0459 906 629

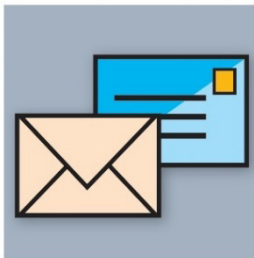


We are not available on public holidays.



You can also call the National Relay Service.

133 677



You can write to us at:

GPO Box 1422

Brisbane

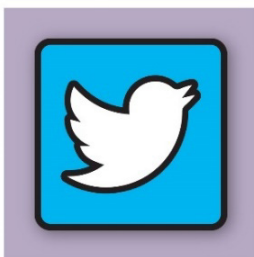
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Royal Commission
into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and
Exploitation of People with Disability