



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

Research Report

How parents with disability experience child protection

Easy Read version



How to use this report

3 organisations:

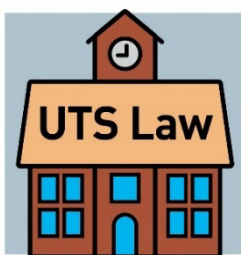


- did some research

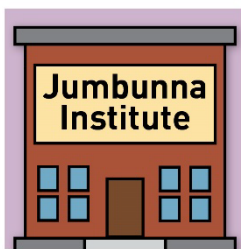


- wrote a report for the Disability Royal Commission (the Royal Commission).

The 3 organisations are:



- UTS Law



- Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research



- Western Sydney University.



The report is called *Parents with Disability and their Experiences of Child Protection Systems*.



You can find the report on the **Royal Commission website**.

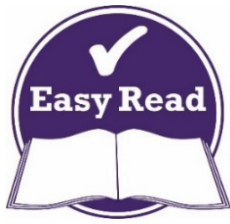


This Easy Read report is a **summary** of that report.

A summary only includes the most important ideas.



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.

Bold

Not bold

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 42.



You can ask for help to read this report.

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

What's in this report?

What's this report about?	6
Why is this research important?	8
What did the researchers do?	13
What did the researchers want to find out?	15
How do parents with disability experience discrimination?	17
How can governments make services better?	25
What legal support do parents with disability get?	31
What do the researchers recommend?	35
Future research	39
Word list	42
Contact us	48

What's this report about?



Child protection helps children stay safe.

The government runs child protection.



Child protection can decide if a child:

- is not safe in their home
- must live with someone else.

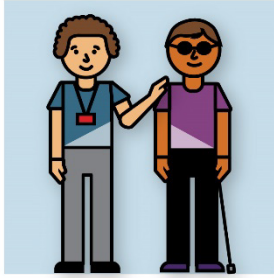


This report is about parents with disability who have contact with child protection.



This includes when child protection takes part in any decision about:

- how to keep their child safe
- where their child lives.

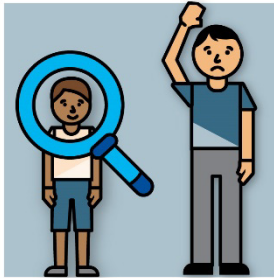


It also includes how child protection supports parents with disability to find the right services.



We asked the researchers to find out how parents with disability experience child protection.

Why is this research important?

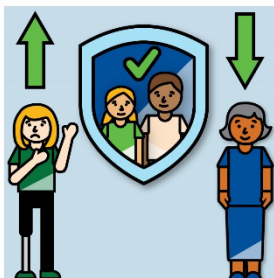


Child protection focuses on the experiences of children.

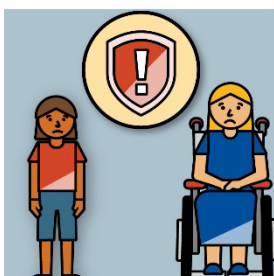
But it's also important to know what parents experience.



There is not much research about how parents with disability experience child protection.



We know parents with disability are more likely to have contact with child protection than parents without disability.

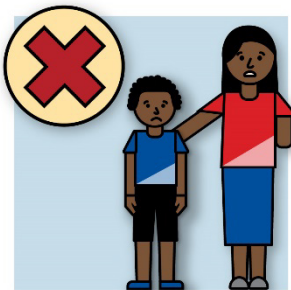


And child protection is more likely to decide a child is not safe at home if their parents have a disability.

Governments who manage child protection often don't support parents with disability to:



- find support services

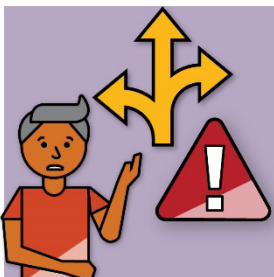


- bring their child back into their care.



This means many parents with disability struggle to keep their family together.

And many can't get their children back in their home.

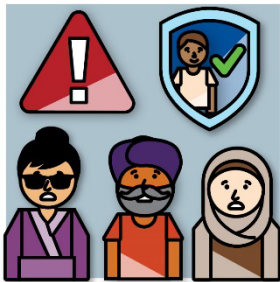


This issue affects different parents in different ways.



For example, parents with **psychosocial disability** are more likely to have contact with child protection than parents with other disabilities.

A psychosocial disability affects your mental health.



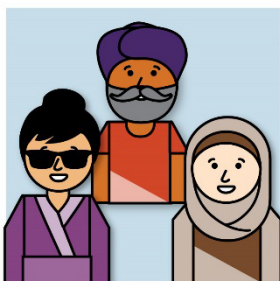
Parents with disability from different backgrounds also face other issues with child protection.

For example:



- First Nations parents with disability
- **culturally and linguistically diverse** parents with disability.

We call them CaLD parents.



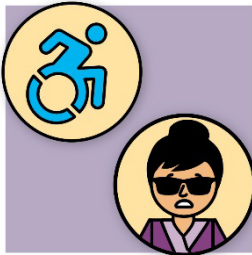
CaLD parents:

- come from different backgrounds
- speak languages other than English.



Their experiences can:

- overlap
- affect each other.



When these different experiences overlap, we call it **intersectionality**.

How this research will help

This research helps us understand:



- how child protection treats parents with disability
- what parents with disability experience when they have contact with child protection.



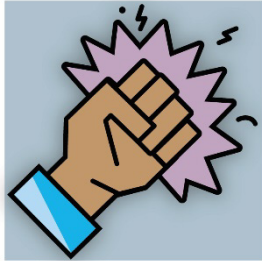
It will help us protect the **rights** of parents with disability.



Rights are rules that say you can choose how you live your own life.

And they explain how other people must treat you.

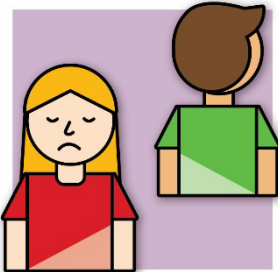
It will also help us keep parents with disability safe from:



- **violence** – when someone hurts you physically



- **abuse** – when someone treats you badly



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



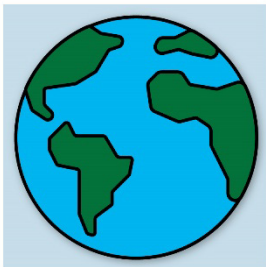
- **exploitation** – when someone takes advantage of you.

What did the researchers do?

The researchers looked at research from:



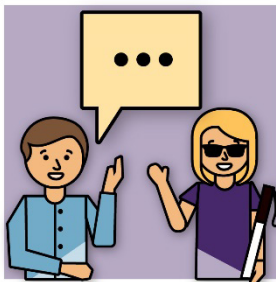
- Australia



- other countries.



They also read about how governments manage child protection in Australia.



The researchers spoke to parents with disability.

The researchers also spoke to:



- lawyers – people who know the law



- **advocates.**

An advocate is someone who can:



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

They also spoke to child protection services who support parents with disability in:

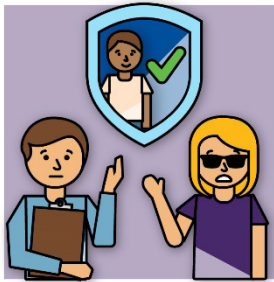


- New South Wales



- Victoria.

What did the researchers want to find out?

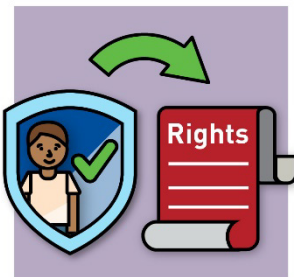


The researchers wanted to find out about the experiences parents with disability have with different parts of child protection.



The researchers looked into how child protection decides if a child:

- is not safe in their home
- must live with someone else.



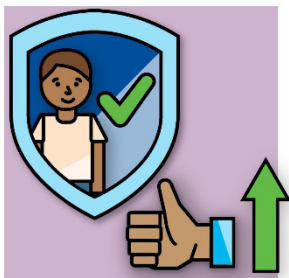
The researchers also wanted to know if child protection supports the rights of parents with disability.



And how to make sure child protection treats parents with disability fairly.

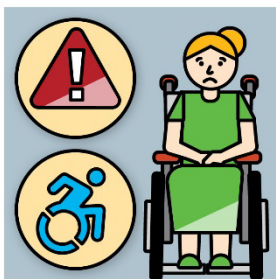


This includes supporting parents with disability early, so child protection doesn't have to contact them.



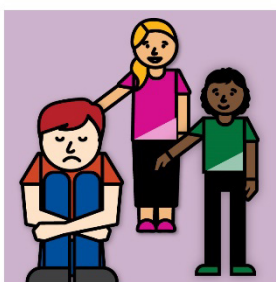
The researchers also wanted to find better ways for child protection to support parents with disability.

How do parents with disability experience discrimination?



Child protection often thinks parents are a risk to their children because of their disability.

This is **discrimination**.



Discrimination is when someone treats you unfairly because of a part of who you are.

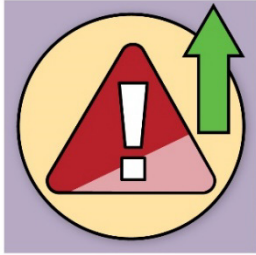


There are laws and **policies** that say child protection can't treat parents with disability this way.

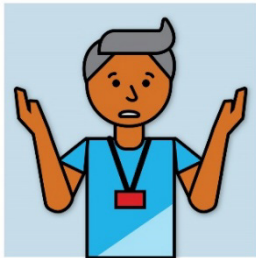


Policies are:

- government plans for how to do things
- where rules come from.

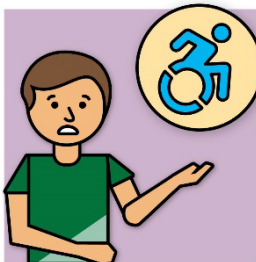


But the researchers learned that it happens a lot.

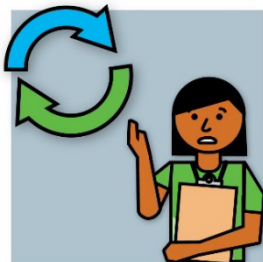


It can happen when workers don't have the right skills.

Child protection often doesn't:



- know when a parent has a disability



- change their services to work well for parents with disability.



And governments who manage child protection often don't help parents with disability early enough.

For example, before:



- they need to go to court



- child protection takes their child away.

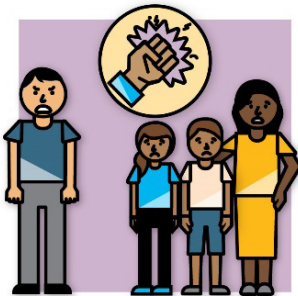
How other issues affect how child protection treat parents



Parents with disability can also face other challenges that make them more likely to have contact with child protection.

For example, a parent with disability might experience **domestic and family violence**.

Domestic and family violence is when someone close to you hurts you, such as:



- a member of your family
- someone you live with.

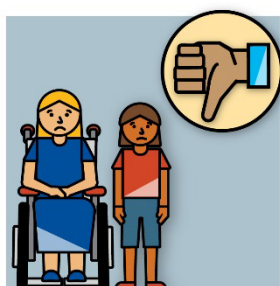


They might also have issues with:

- money
- finding good housing.



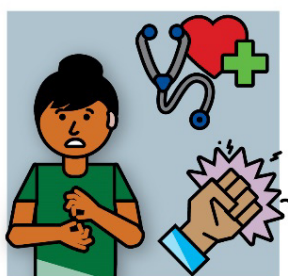
Sometimes parents with disability try to get help with these issues.



When they ask for help child protection might think this means that this parent can't care for their child.

Because of this, many parents with disability are too scared to get support for:

- health care
- domestic and family violence.



They might also be too scared to get parenting support.



First Nations parents are also more likely to experience **trauma** when they have contact with child services.



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

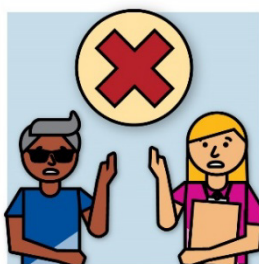
For example, you might feel scared or stressed.

Trauma can affect you for a long time.



They might experience this because of how the Australian Government has treated their community in the past.

Discrimination when finding support



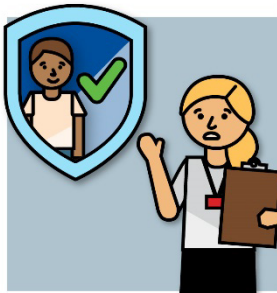
It can be hard for parents with disability to find services that have the skills to support them.



This can put them at risk.



And make it hard for them to keep their family together.

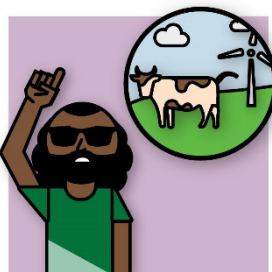


This happens with:

- child protection services
- other services.



For example, parents with disability can struggle to get support for domestic and family violence.



They can also struggle to get support if they live far from cities and towns.



The researchers found that many parents can't find services to support them to provide a safe home.



Without these services, it's harder for them to show child protection that their children will be safe at home.



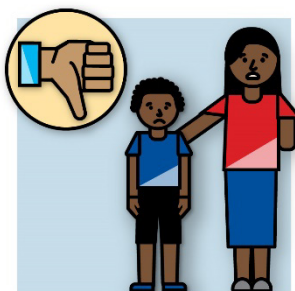
The researchers also heard that parents with disability often don't have enough time to show they've fixed these issues.



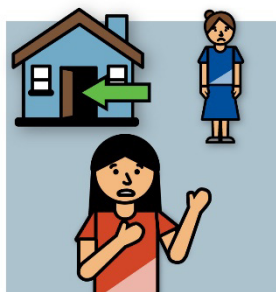
Parents usually get 2 years to fix these issues.
But sometimes it can take longer to get support.



And when child protection takes a child away,
it can become harder for parents to get support.

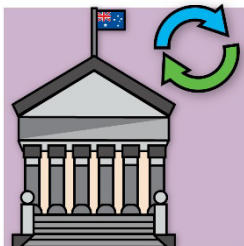


Not getting support can make child protection think parents can't care for their child.



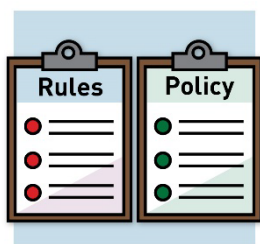
Once this process starts, it can be very hard for parents with disability to get their child back home.

How can governments make services better?



Child protection should support the rights of parents with disability.

But governments need to change how they work.

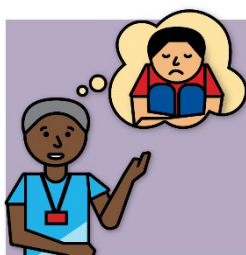


There are rules and policies that explain the supports that governments must provide for people with disability.

It's important that parents with disability can use these supports.



Governments must make sure services focus on supporting people before issues happen.



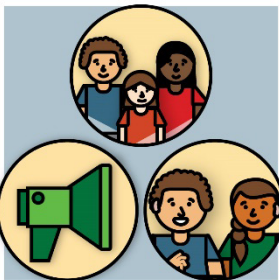
Services must also have the skills to support people who have experienced trauma.



And the services should come from the community.

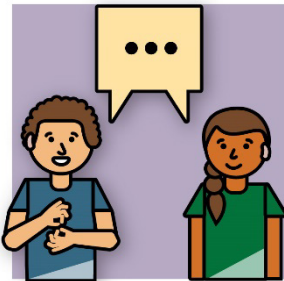


Governments should work with the community to make sure services work well.



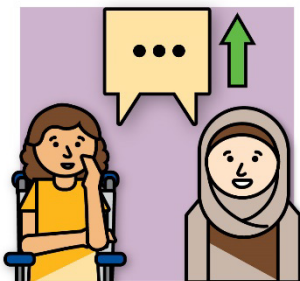
This includes working with:

- the families of people with disability
- advocates
- **peer supports.**

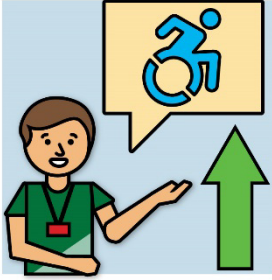


Peer support is when 2 people use experiences they share to:

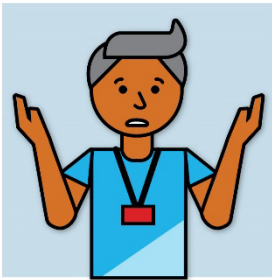
- feel connected
- help each other.



The researchers learned that there needs to be more peer supports for parents with disability.

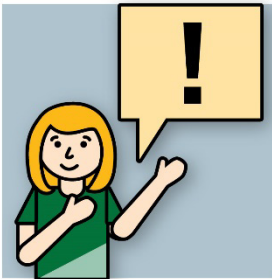


There also needs to be more disability services that support parents who have contact with child protection.

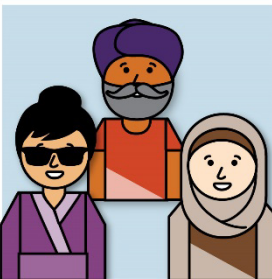


The researchers learned that parents with disability have to use services that don't have the skills to support them.

These services must change so that they can:



- support what parents with disability need



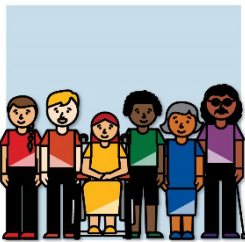
- support parents with disability from different backgrounds.

Supporting First Nations peoples

There are rules and policies about how First Nations peoples should:



- have choice and control about how they live their lives

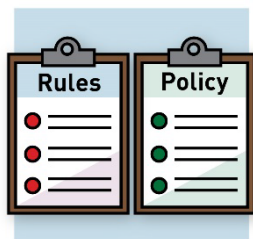


- be able to take part in the community.

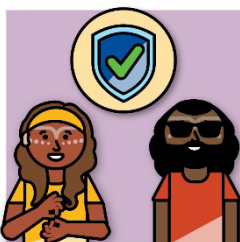


First Nations parents with disability who have contact with child protection need good support.

And government must make sure that services:



- follow these rules and policies

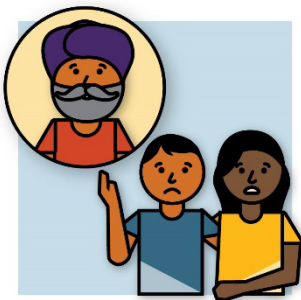


- know safe ways to support First Nations parents with disability.

Supporting parents who have moved to Australia

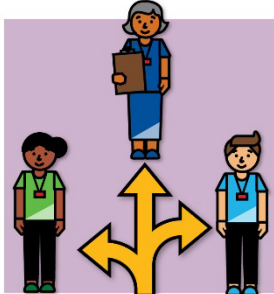


Parents who leave their country to live in Australia often don't get the support they need.



They will often get the same support as CaLD parents who have lived in Australia for a long time.

This happens because governments think about them as one group.



But parents who have moved to Australia need different support to parents who have lived in Australia for a while.

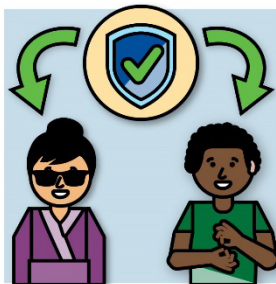


Research showed that there need to be more **interpreter** services.



An interpreter is someone who:

- uses your language
- helps you understand what someone is saying.



But these services must also know:

- what people from different backgrounds need
- how to offer supports that are safe for people from different backgrounds.

What legal support do parents with disability get?

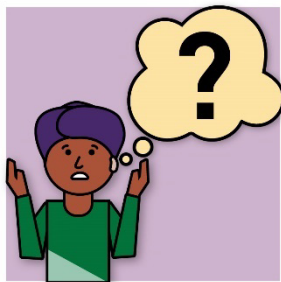


A **legal representative** is someone who can:

- give you legal support
- support you with legal decisions.



Child protection should tell parents with disability about their right to a legal representative when they first have contact.



Parents with disability might not understand what is happening until they get this support.



The researchers heard that many parents with disability don't find out about this support until it is too late.



This means they might not know what they can do to keep their family safe and together.

For example, they might not know what might happen if they:



- choose to meet with support services



- sign any documents



- have an assessment to work out what support they need.



All of these can affect a parent's legal case.



And governments who manage child protection can use these things as proof in a legal case.

People who work on legal cases



At the start of a case, lawyers often feel like they have to tell parents to agree with what child protection says they should do.

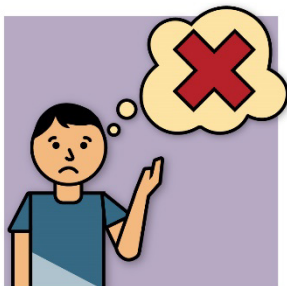
This is because there's not enough time for parents to prove that there is a better way.



The researchers learned that most parents will accept what child protection suggests in court.

This includes parents:

- with disability
- without disability.



But this doesn't mean they actually agree with what child protection says.



Judges also might not have training about how to support parents with disability.

This includes how they can support the rights of parents with disability.



Parents often feel like people don't listen to them in legal cases.

And no one tells them what the court decided at the end of the legal case.



These issues can affect all parents.

But they can be a lot harder for parents with disability.

What do the researchers recommend?



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

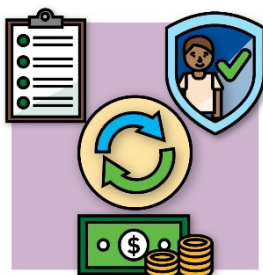


The researchers found that child protection is failing parents with disability.

And this means it's not supporting their rights.



The researchers recommend 27 ideas.



This includes ideas about how to change:

- laws and policies
- the way child protection works
- how governments pay for these services.

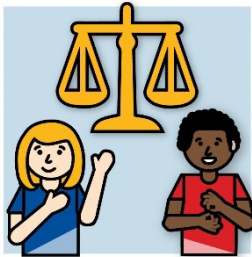


The researchers recommend finding better ways for child protection to support parents with disability who face other challenges.



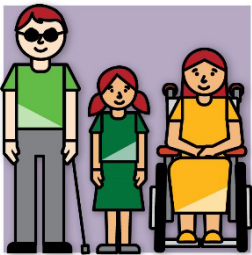
This includes challenges with:

- money
- good housing
- domestic and family violence.



This will help parents with disability get fair treatment from child protection.

They also recommend that child protection improve how they:



- find out if a family has parents with disability



- collect **data**.



When we talk about data, we mean:

- facts
- information
- records.

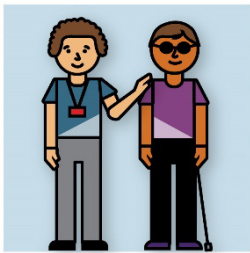


This will help services plan how to support families to safely stay together.



The researchers recommend changing child protection laws.

This includes changing laws to improve:



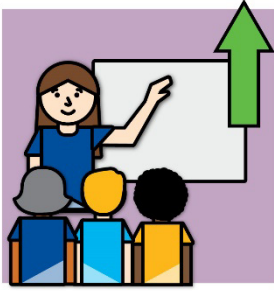
- what supports parents with disability receive



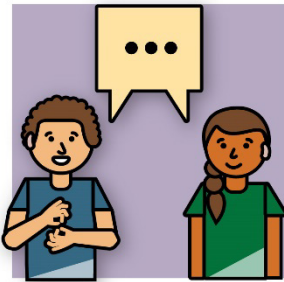
- how parents find out about their right to legal support at the start of their case



- how people listen to parents in their legal case.

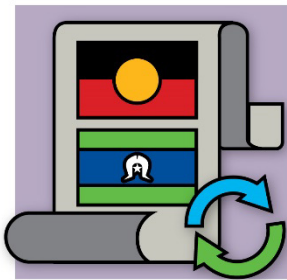


The researchers recommend more training for people who support parents with disability.



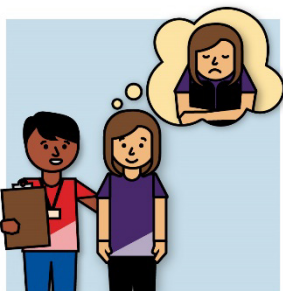
And more support for:

- parent advocates
- peer support services.



The researchers also recommend changing First Nations child protection laws.

And how governments pay for these services.



The researchers also recommend people get support when they have experienced harm from trauma.

This includes trauma that affected families in the past.

Future research

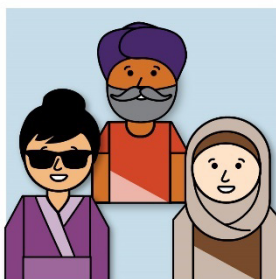


The researchers explained we need more research.

There needs to be more research on the experiences of:



- First Nations parents with disability

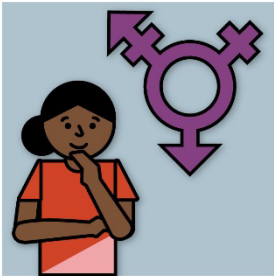


- CaLD parents with disability.

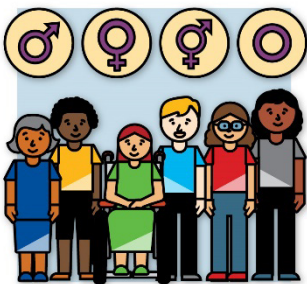
And parents with disability who have different:



- disabilities



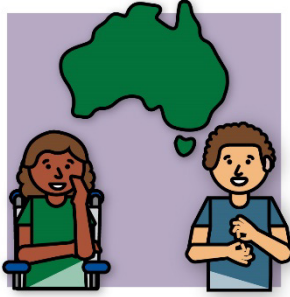
- genders.



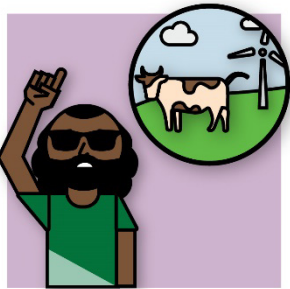
Your gender is what you feel and understand about who you are as a person.

You might think of yourself as a man or woman or something different.

You can choose the words that are right for you.



There also needs to be more research about the experience of parents with disability around Australia.



And parents with disability who live far away from:

- cities
- towns.

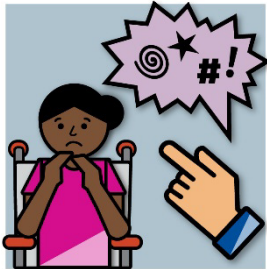


Future research should also look at the experiences of communities who have contact with child protection.

For example, First Nations communities.

Word list

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



Abuse

Abuse is when someone treats you badly.



Advocate

An advocate is someone who can:

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

Child protection

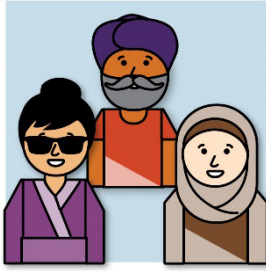
Child protection helps children stay safe.

The government runs child protection.

Child protection can decide if a child:

- is not safe in their home
- must live with someone else.





Culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD)

CaLD people:

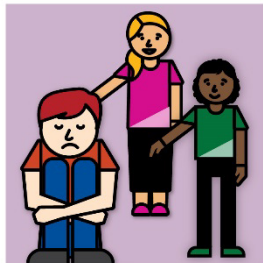
- come from different backgrounds
- speak languages other than English.

Data



When we talk about data, we mean:

- facts
- information
- records.



Discrimination

Discrimination is when someone treats you unfairly because of a part of who you are.



Domestic and family violence

Domestic and family violence is when someone close to you hurts you, such as:

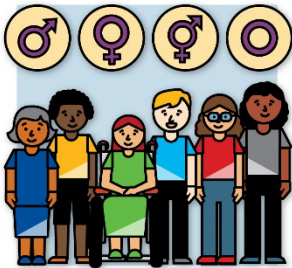
- a member of your family
- someone you live with.



Exploitation

Exploitation is when someone takes advantage of you.

Gender



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

You might think of yourself as a man or woman or something different.

You can choose the words that are right for you.

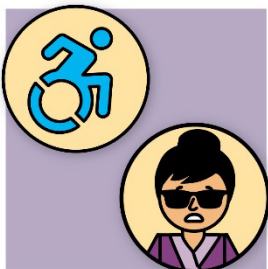
Interpreter



An interpreter is someone who:

- uses your language
- helps you understand what someone is saying.

Intersectionality



Intersectionality is when different experiences:

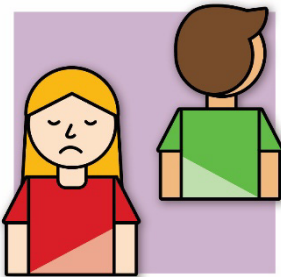
- overlap
- affect each other.



Legal representative

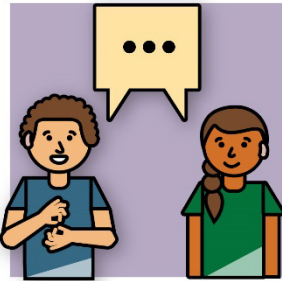
A legal representative is someone who can:

- give you legal support
- support you with legal decisions.



Neglect

Neglect is when someone is not helping you the way they are supposed to help you.



Peer support

Peer support is when 2 people use experiences they share to:

- feel connected
- help each other.



Policy

Policies are:

- government plans for how to do things
- where rules come from.



Psychosocial disability

A psychosocial disability affects your mental health.



Recommend

When researchers recommend something, they say how to make things better.



Rights

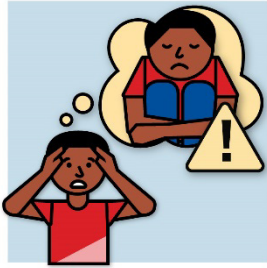
Rights are rules that say you can choose how you live your own life.

And they explain how other people must treat you.



Summary

A summary only includes the most important ideas.

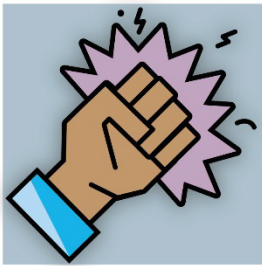


Trauma

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

For example, you might feel scared or stressed.

Trauma can affect you for a long time.



Violence

Violence is when someone hurts you physically.

Contact us



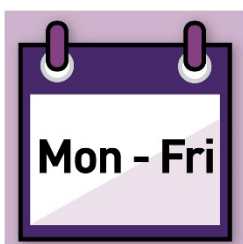
You can send us an email.

DRcenquiries@royalcommission.gov.au

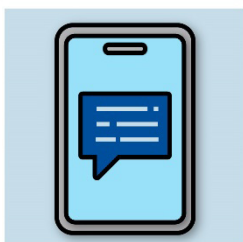


You can call us.

1800 517 199.



We are available Monday to Friday.



You can also send us a text message.

0459 906 629

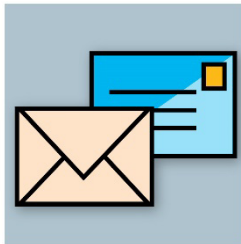


We are not available on public holidays.



You can also call the National Relay Service.

133 677



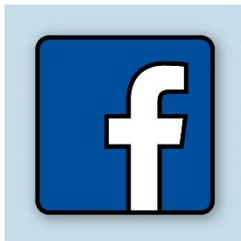
You can write to us at:

GPO Box 1422

Brisbane

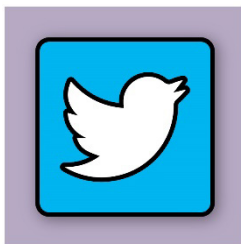
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Royal Commission
into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and
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