

JULY 2019

# Chair Chat

with Prof. David Gilchrist



## Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation in the Disability Sector

In early 2019, the Australian Coalition Government announced that a Royal Commission will be conducted into “Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability”. In the Federal budget, there was \$528 Million allocated for the Royal Commission. The funding will include the cost for the conduct of the inquiry across the nation of \$379M over five years, plus an allocation of \$149M to assist people living with disabilities and their families to engage in the process, that includes ongoing support and counselling (Source: Federal Budget Paper, Community Services, April 2019).

A Royal Commission is a legal process and the definitions and scope adopted by this Royal Commission are very broad. People living with disabilities who have advocated for a Royal Commission will commence this process with great expectations for a wide range of satisfactory responses and outcomes.

### Current Situation

At the present time, the Royal Commission has not formally commenced in WA, but is expected to do so in the near future. Given the significant place Nulsen Group holds within the disability sector as a major service provider, the Board of Nulsen has recognised that it will be involved in the Commission and has approved the allocation of resources to prepare. In consultation with our lawyers Nulsen Group are in the process of identifying:

- Current Risk Registers;
- Past complaints, claims and adverse events;
- Mandatory reporting of serious incidents and any allegations of abuse (including Police involvement);

### Key Points

- **The Royal Commission into “Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability” will commence soon within WA.**
- **This commission will have a broad scope and extend over a number of years.**
- **Support will be available to clients and families who wish to prepare a submission or a statement for consideration by the commission.**

- Employees terminated or suspended due to misconduct arising from the mistreatment of service users;
- Reports and minutes of Board and Committee Meetings that managed complaints;
- Documentation that highlights where improvements have been made following an adverse event or incident; and
- Relevant correspondence with regulators on any issues of non-compliance.

Every aspect of Nulsen will be impacted particularly governance; management practices; financial records; service provision and quality outcomes; employees and volunteers. Nulsen Group has previously established a Risk and Compliance sub-committee chaired by a Board member, as well as an internal Working Party who will perform the detailed operational work.

Nulsen Group will review the quality management systems and how these affect outcomes for people with disability and result in appropriate safeguards. Our aim is to demonstrate full compliance with the National Disability Service Standards and demonstrate that we exceed these standards.

## Future Action

The members of the Board and the executive of Nulsen Group welcome the Royal Commission and will reinforce the high standards and principles by which we will cooperate with the Commission. To achieve this, Nulsen Group will ensure compliance with our Code of Conduct and we will:

- Act appropriately, professionally and compassionately to address any concerns of any individuals receiving and delivering our service;
- Uphold our obligations under the law to provide the Royal Commission with access to all relevant information while safeguarding the rights of Nulsen's employees and clients; including provisions for privacy;
- Provide an open and transparent dialogue with all of Nulsen's employees, clients, their families and other relevant stakeholders;
- Continue to provide a safe and secure environment that maintains zero tolerance for any form of violence, abuse, harassment, discrimination, neglect and exploitation;
- Contribute positively and constructively to the discussion and actions that will flow from the Royal Commission;
- Be responsive and accountable to the Royal Commission's findings, so we can continue to provide a service environment which upholds the National Standards for Disability Services;
- Continue to provide a service environment that gives all of our clients greater control over their

lives;

- Provide information and support to past and present employees;
- Take responsibility for our actions and seek to learn from any negative outcomes;
- Work cooperatively and collaboratively with other organisations, government agencies and all stakeholders to develop the disability and community sectors that will support the needs of people with disabilities well into the future.

The ability for people to come forward and describe their situation to the Royal Commissioners will be an important element of the Royal Commission. To this end we will develop and encourage a comprehensive communication and engagement strategy, including regular updates in Chair Chat and special advice for employees, volunteers, residents, clients, families and carers.

Should a member of the Nulsen family wish to make a submission or prepare a statement for the Royal Commission, Nulsen Group will assist them to contact and link to the relevant support networks associated with the Commission. Complete independence will be encouraged to minimise any potential for a perceived conflict of interest.

In conclusion, the Royal Commissioners are required to submit an Interim Report to the Federal Government no later than 30 October 2020 and a Final Report and Recommendations no later than 29 April 2022. It is envisaged that the work of the Commission could extend for a period beyond this timeline.



**Professor David Gilchrist** BA BBus PhD FCA FAIC is a chartered accountant and a historian. He holds a PhD in economics from the University of Notre Dame Australia and is currently a Professor at the University of Western Australia as well as the Public Sector Accounting and Disclosure Research Cluster. Over his 25-year career, David has held many senior roles in the not-for-profit, commercial and public sectors. He has taught at several universities across the globe, sits as Chairman on multiple boards and has published several key national reports. Achievements include: working as the Assistant Auditor General WA, the Associate Dean of the School of Business, University of Notre Dame Australia, Chairman to Nulsen Disability Services, and the Kimberley Individual and Family Support Association. [See David's full profile here.](#)