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Media release

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Human rights lawyers demand royal commission into abuse and violence against people with disabilities in the disability care sector.

Australian Lawyers for Human Rights (ALHR) is calling for an immediate royal commission into the treatment of people living with disability in taxpayer-funded group homes and disability accommodation as highlighted in last night's episode of *Four Corners*.

ALHR President Benedict Coyne said the episode reinforced the findings of a Senate inquiry released in November 2015 which recommended a Royal Commission into the systemic abuse, violence and neglect of people with disabilities in Australia. The failure of the Government to respond to this recommendation and establish a Royal Commission is abhorrent. The Government must take responsibility for the abuse occurring on their watch and at their hands."

"The *Four Corners* report was harrowing and proved the urgent need for a Federal Government initiated royal commission into the abuse, violence and neglect of people with disabilities. The story reported on several shocking incidents of abuse and raised very serious questions around some deaths, particularly in the Newcastle and Hunter region of New South Wales," he said.

"The Federal Disability Watchdog brought in as part of the NDIS will fail to address *all people* with disabilities who may face abuse, exploitation and violence in care. More is needed and a Royal Commission must be initiated to truly understand the depth of the issues and for these stories to be heard."

"Disabled children are three times more likely to experience abuse than children without disability. The Senate report and last night's program have revealed ongoing systemic failures by government and service providers to notify families and report matters of violence and abuse to police. This not only consistently denies people with disability access justice, it also denies victims support and protection and instead perpetuates their vulnerability."

"People living with a disability have a right to feel safe and secure in their home environment and to be free from abuse, exploitation and violence. It's clear that in many cases, this is simply not happening and their human rights are being violated at every point in the care and justice systems."

"There is only one way to thoroughly investigate what is happening in group housing and that's with no less than an immediate royal commission as suggested by the Senate inquiry, Mr Coyne said.

To arrange an interview with Benedict Coyne, please contact Matt Mitchell on 0431 980 365 or media@alhr.org.au