



LET'S NOT MURDER THE FACTS AS ABUSE INQUIRY MOVES INTO STAGE 2

As the Family and Community Development Committee of the Victorian Parliament moves into Stage 2 of its disability abuse inquiry, submissions have now been called for.

The inquiry was established as a result of abuse against people with disabilities being on the rise across the disability sector. With the horror of the Yooralla rapes still fresh in their minds, in their submission to the Inquiry Max Jackson and Margaret Ryan put front and centre that the frequent references suggesting it is 'the system' that causes abuse are a nonsense. Max and Margaret challenge the Committee to take full account of the fact it is people, not the system, who commit acts of abuse.

In their submission to Stage 2 of the inquiry, Max and Margaret go further by also suggesting that it is not just the perpetrators of abuse who must be called to account. "Those who fail to exercise their responsibilities, whether these are in oversighting and safeguarding roles or on Boards or as Chief Executive Officers of service providers, must also be exposed to public scrutiny," they said.

In their submission, Max and Margaret emphasised that the moral choice for the Committee is to call to account the people failures of Victoria's current oversighting and safeguarding system. "If the Committee backs away from this challenge, then it must be deemed they are also prepared to go down the immoral path of blaming the system."

The facts must be faced. "It is nothing but a cop-out for people in positions of power, influence and responsibility to continue to blame the system," Max and Margaret said. They highlight that the oversight and safeguarding functions have been in existence for over a quarter of a century, and a complaints function was legislated over eight years ago. Yet despite this, the JacksonRyan submission contends that it seems by virtue of their positions of power and authority, some people are considered as being above reproach.

"If this inquiry into what are acts of law breaking is to have the impact desperately hoped for by people with disabilities and their families, then the Committee must be uncompromising."

"The Committee must go beyond simply blaming the system. It must prosecute the case not only against the perpetrators of abuse but also against those people who have failed to exercise their statutory responsibilities for protecting people with disabilities from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence," Max and Margaret stated.

Max and Margaret are concerned that the inquiry runs the risk of becoming another episode of "Yes, Minister". "The Committee's report must not be allowed to gather dust along with the myriad of reports of other inquiries and reviews previously undertaken in the disability sector. The facts must not be murdered by diverting attention to the system instead of the people failures," they said. Max and Margaret call on the Committee to urge the government to address the scourge of abuse as a matter of urgency, and give it the same attention as has been given to the abuse of children in care.

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