**Women With Disabilities Australia, Women With Disabilities ACT and Women With Disabilities Victoria: Joint statement on Government’s response to the Disability Royal Commission**

Women With Disabilities Australia, Women With Disabilities ACT and Women With Disabilities Victoria are deeply disappointed by the Government’s response to the Disability Royal Commission, released this week.

We are concerned that only 13 recommendations of 222 have been fully accepted, with many critical recommendations yet to be resolved across different levels of government.

The Disability Royal Commission ran for four years. It was the culmination of tireless and persistent advocacy for recognition of, response to, and redress for the violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation experienced by people with disabilities in all areas of life.

Our organisations were involved in all aspects of the Disability Royal Commission, to elevate the voices of women, girls, and gender diverse people with disabilities across Australia. We told the Disability Royal Commission about the violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation that women, girls and gender-diverse people with disabilities experience.

The response fails to address the scale of this violence, and the urgent need for transformative change.

We welcome some of the commitments to addressing gender-based violence against women and girls with disabilities, like the commitment to implementing a disability lens in the actions under the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children. This is a critical step to addressing the increased rates, and specific forms, of violence that women and gender-diverse people with disabilities experience. However, we’re concerned that Government’s response does not go far enough. For example, Commonwealth, State and Territory governments have failed to agree to implement a nationally consistent and disability-inclusive definition of family and domestic violence in law.

Too often, services designed to support people experiencing gender-based, family and domestic violence, are inaccessible to people with disabilities, or not responsive to our needs. We welcome the Government’s commitment to accessible guidance materials for front line services, but this is unlikely to address the shortage of accessible crisis accommodation or the chronic under-resourcing that front line services face.

We are also devastated that the Government has not committed to enacting nationally consistent legislation to prohibit forced sterilisation. Forced sterilisation is recognised by the United Nations as a form of gender-based violence and a form of torture. The Federal Government has said that this is the responsibility of the State and Territory Governments. However, the United Nations treaty monitoring bodies have said that Federal Governments that have ratified a United Nations Convention (like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) are still responsible for ensuring that the Convention is fully implemented throughout the territories under its jurisdiction. We believe that Commonwealth, State and Territory governments must all act to prohibit forced sterilisation. We need to see the human rights of people with disabilities protected in Australian law.

This includes through national human rights legislation. We are disappointed that the Government has not committed to implementing a national Human Rights Act to better protect the rights of people with disabilities in domestic law. This is one of the most critical reforms needed to protect against violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Our organisations will consider the Government response to the Disability Royal Commission, and will continue to advocate to protect and promote the rights of women, girls and gender-diverse people with disabilities in Australia.