**Australian Shadow Report Delegation Opening Statement**

**Kelly Cox**

Disabled women are frequently left out of the conversation when it comes to violence. There is little to no acknowledgment that there can be key differences in the types of violence we experience and that there are significant difficulties finding pathways to safety.

We continue to experience violations of our sexual and reproductive rights, including forced sterilisation, forced contraception and forced abortions.

Disabled women should have pathways to safety. We should be free from abusive and coercive behaviour from the people around us. We have had enough of being at the mercy of the people whose behaviour puts us at risk.

The Government must prioritize including disabled people and their representative organizations in all areas of policy development and include the types of violence we experience from the outset.

We welcome the establishment of a *Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Exploitation and Neglect of People with Disability.* However, we are concerned about barriers to our participation:

* there are Commissioners that have had responsibility for the service systems that will be investigated;
* there is not sufficient funding for trauma informed advocacy support and counselling;
* no funding to facilitate representation, access and engagement to deliver long term systemic change; and
* there is no provision for a redress scheme.

This is our Royal Commission and we need to be heard to ensure we receive a measure of justice.