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65,000 people with disabilities restrained in six months



The disability royal commission has heard about cases of medication and other forms of restrictive practices being used on people with disability.

by Megan Neil

27th Feb 2020 7:28 PM



There have been more than 65,000 incidents involving the unauthorised use of psychotropic medications and other forms of restraints on people with disability in a six-month period.

More than 430 people died while in the care of a registered National Disability Insurance Scheme provider between July and December 2019, the latest data shows.

The NDIS Quality and Safety Commission received 65,400 notifications about the unauthorised use of restrictive practices on people with disability, which a lawyer for the disability royal commission described as "a rather grim figure".

Most involved the use of chemical restraints or psychotic medication for dealing with certain behaviours, the independent agency's commissioner Graeme Head said.

Mr Head said the agency must be notified every time a restrictive practice has been used when it has not been authorised by state and territory authorities, and if there is no behaviour support plan in place.

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"If someone is on medication twice a day, then at the end of the week that is 14 reportable incidents for that person," he told the royal commission's Sydney hearing on Thursday.

Mr Head said the reports were giving the NDIS commission insight into a very critical issue.

"The behaviour support framework is designed to, over time, reduce the use of restrictive practices and ultimately eliminate the use of restrictive practices," he said.

There were 69,400 reportable incidents in total for the six months, which included 1700 abuse and neglect allegations and 780 of unlawful physical and sexual contact.

Mr Head said the abuse complaints can range from a person feeling they have been treated unfairly to allegations of a more serious nature.

Federal Health Minister Greg Hunt on Thursday announced the first funding commitment under a national plan to improve health care for people with intellectual disability, the same day officials from his department fronted the royal commission.

The \$6.5 million over four years will be used to develop a program to increase the skills and abilities of doctors to provide effective health care for people with intellectual disability.

There has been criticism that the reforms under the 10-year national roadmap do not respond urgently enough to the poor health and health care of people with intellectual disability.

Health department assistant secretary Simon Cotterell said the roadmap was still a draft, compiled after an initial roundtable last August.

"There would have been some decisions about what was allocated as short-, medium- and long-term that were based on instinct or the best guess at the time," he said.

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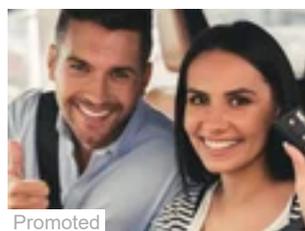
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