



Media release

Wednesday 20 May 2020

Statement regarding the death of Ann Marie Smith

The Chair of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, Ronald Sackville AO QC, said Commissioners had been appalled by the circumstances surrounding the death of Ms Ann Marie Smith in Adelaide.

Mr Sackville said this deeply distressing case brings to the fore important policy questions that are already under consideration by the Royal Commission.

'The circumstances of Ms Smith's death are the subject of multiple investigations, including a major crime investigation by the South Australian Police.

'It is inappropriate for the Royal Commission to initiate an immediate inquiry into events where that might prejudice an ongoing criminal investigation or a possible future prosecution.

'For that reason, the Royal Commission will not at this time commence an inquiry into the specific circumstances surrounding Ms Smith's death.

'It is, however, open to the Royal Commission to undertake such an inquiry at a later stage and it will follow the progress of the other investigations,' said the Chair.

Mr Sackville said that many aspects concerning the treatment and death of Ms Smith fall under the Royal Commission's Terms of Reference, and will be part of the Royal Commission's ongoing inquiry.

'People with disability have the right to live independently in the community and in the safety of their home.

'The Royal Commission will hold a public hearing on the experiences of violence, neglect, abuse and exploitation of people with disability in accommodation, including private homes, once it is possible to do so.

'The Royal Commission is also investigating what must be done to improve accountability, including through safeguarding mechanisms, appropriate monitoring and oversight practices, and will be seeking community input on this topic in the coming months.

'These investigations will expose many of the underlying issues that are pertinent to the circumstances of Ms Smith's death,' said the Chair.