

# Renewed call to address health gap for people with intellectual disability

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The average age of death for an adult with intellectual disability in NSW was 27 years lower than that of the general population, UNSW research has shown. Credit: Shutterstock

UNSW Professor Julian Trollor will today give evidence at the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

This follows research late last year that revealed the reasons why people with intellectual disability had lower life expectancy than that of the [general population](#).

Professor Trollor's research has focused on exposing the gaps in health care for people with intellectual disability in Australia and on translating research findings into solutions to this problem.

Together with the team at UNSW's Department of Developmental Disability Neuropsychiatry (3DN), Professor Trollor's research has indicated that access to quality healthcare for people with intellectual disability is lacking.

"Poor access to healthcare across the lifespan of people with an intellectual disability ultimately results in [premature death](#) for many people with intellectual disability," Professor Trollor says.

"Our research indicates that the average age of death for an adult cohort with intellectual disability in NSW was 27 years lower than that of the general population, and that the rate of death in people with intellectual disability was four times higher than the general population for people aged 20 to 45 years."

The group's research showed that causes of death in people with intellectual disability included respiratory, circulatory, neoplasm and nervous system problems, and has identified key risk factors contributing to the deaths.

"The sad reality is that the excess mortality among people with intellectual disability could have been potentially avoidable by better [medical care](#)," Professor Trollor says.

"They could have been prevented through individualized care and treatment through existing care through GPs or within hospitals. 3DN's research indicates that 38 percent of deaths of people with intellectual disability were from potentially avoidable causes, and that this figure was more than double that experienced by the general population at that time."

Professor Trollor and members of his team have been strong advocates for initiatives to close the large gap between the [health status](#) and the current capacity of [health care](#) professionals and systems to respond to the needs of people with [intellectual disability](#).

First and foremost, Professor Trollor advocates for the development of a national population health strategy. He has also been working on initiatives to develop reasonable adjustments, provision of health information, improved [health services](#) and

service models, training for future doctors and nurses, improving the capacity and skills of the current workforce, developing specialist workforce for people with more complex needs, with a particular focus on the mental health sector.

Provided by University of New South Wales

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