

Inquiry into Elder Abuse in Queensland

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To The Committee, Elder Abuse is an important issue for the Queensland community and it is an excellent initiative to hold a Parliamentary Inquiry. Thank you for holding this Inquiry. The only way to reduce the problem of elder abuse is research and development of evidence-based policy. At the moment, there are research gaps and policy gaps that mean that the extent of elder abuse is somewhat unknown. As a community, how can we address this problem if we are largely unaware of how much it is happening? There have been good quality Australian studies conducted about elder abuse. By far the best study is the Australian Institute of Family Studies National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study which was published in 2021. One methodological issue with this study is that it excluded residents of aged care from participating in the study. Whilst it does give us an excellent insight in to elder abuse in Australia it does not provide insight in to elder abuse in aged care or other formal care settings. The prevalence of elder abuse in aged care facilities remains largely unknown. See recommendation 1. The only data set that I am aware of in Queensland that specifically deals with elder abuse in aged care is the Elder Abuse Prevention Unit Annual Report. There are a number of the issues with this data set. One problem is that it is only collecting data from those that know about the EAPU helpline so it is questionable how far the reach and awareness is of the service. As I understand it, there is work being completed to collate national data from State and Territory based elder abuse helplines so that it is more easily comparable. See recommendations 2 and 3. To my knowledge, the Australian Capital Territory is the only Australian jurisdiction to have legislative provisions specific to vulnerable persons in the context of elder abuse. The Crimes Act 1900 (Cth) sections 36A, 36B, and 36C cover the abuse and neglect of, among others, older people. Whilst the domestic violence legislation is comprehensive there could be situations where elder abuse slips through the cracks of the provisions. See recommendation 4. Recommendation 1: the Queensland Government fund research to investigate the prevalence of elder abuse in aged care or other care settings in Queensland. Recommendation 2: the Queensland Government create a way to collect data on elder abuse gathering data from various agencies. Recommendation 3: the Queensland Government invest in promotion and awareness of the Elder Abuse Prevention Unit helpline. Recommendation 4: the Queensland Government consider law reform to protect the older people of Queensland from elder abuse. Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry. Tristan Jack Rogers Bachelor of Justice (Policing) with Distinction, Queensland University of Technology Diploma of Dementia Care, University of Tasmania Certificate in Public Health, Massey University New Zealand

