

Inquiry into Elder Abuse in Queensland

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Government Inquiry into Elder Abuse Submission [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 2 April 2025 When we were sixty years old, people probably thought we had a good family. We had three adult children and ten grandchildren. We spent a lot of time babysitting and helping the various families with housework and home maintenance. We enjoyed the contact with grandchildren, but it all changed when they didn't need babysitters anymore. Blackmail It seems as if our adult children determined that we love our grandchildren and would do anything to maintain the relationships, so the blackmail began with all manner of demands. We were told that we would never see our grandchildren again unless... • We abandon my elderly mother (now deceased) and give all that time to them. • We double the unpaid work we were doing for them. (We were doing a great deal of childminding, cleaning, home maintenance etc.) • We never go on holidays and always be on call. • We do "everything" they say. They competed for our attention, and it was impossible to meet their demands, so we were cut off. As a result, we have not seen most of our grandchildren for many years. It should be noted that our kids hardly did anything for us! Even when we had surgeries, serious illnesses, and now old age, they do nothing for us. (We suspect that our oldest daughter and son are also in controlling relationships and are bullied into bullying us.) Power games and coercive control Along with the blackmail, we have endured significant coercive control and abuse. Much could be written about this, but here are just a few examples. 1. We must never say "no". On numerous occasions, they demanded that we do something for them immediately or at short notice. If we didn't drop everything and do what they said, we would be verbally abused even if we were at work or sick. We were told that any of their friends would drop everything and come at once if asked. Really! If we didn't do everything they said, we were called "bad parents" or "bad grandparents". If we tried to explain why we could not do what they wanted, they would not listen but just talk over us. Sometimes we discovered that their situation was neither critical nor urgent and it was all about power and control. 2. Sabotage On occasions they set us up for sabotage. One family said they wanted to go on a cruise, and we offered to pay for one. They agreed, said we were very generous and went online and provided all the information to the cruise company. However, shortly before the cruise was to leave, they pulled out without giving any valid reason.

On another occasion, we purchased a new car and needed to sell the previous car. My son wanted to purchase the car from us for his boys, but we decided to give it to them. He took delivery of the car and the signed the registration transfer papers but a few months later we got a registration renewal notice. They hadn't transferred the registration. We asked for an explanation but never got a satisfactory answer. A short time later we received anonymous mail with a cheque. It turned out that they had sold the car for about a quarter of its value. Each time they led us on a course of action that they then sabotaged. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that they did these things for no other reason than to mess with us. They must feel powerful when they encourage us to make plans which they can sabotage on a whim. 3. Verbal and emotional abuse We no longer have anything much to do with our children and grandchildren. When we had a relationship with them, we were constantly abused. We were told that we were "bad parents" or "bad grandparents" or that our behaviour is "unacceptable". When we asked them to tell us what we have done wrong, they could not tell us. We challenged them to tell us what "sin" we had committed: had we lied or stolen something? They replied that we had not done anything wrong, but we are bad people all the same. Anything we did could be labelled as "unacceptable" and we had no right of reply. On occasions, we tried family counselling with registered counselling agencies and had a few different counsellors.

While counselling was helpful to us, it provoked negative responses from our kids. They obviously wanted the counsellor to force us to comply with all their demands. Ever since, we have been accused of "abuse" because the counselling sessions shone a light on their bad behaviour. We now get feedback from people that our kids say we abused them and that we behave very badly. Words like "abuse" and "unacceptable" are used very loosely to create worst impression with the least justification. Some of them engage in gaslighting. They go out of their way to tell relatives and friends that we are bad people who abuse them and behave in an unacceptable manner. They give the impression that we constantly interfere in their lives and bully them. The reality is we avoid them and have had minimal contact for years. They seem to want to cut off all our social supports. We suspect they think, that if they keep saying we are bad people, we might come to believe it is true and comply with all their demands. Seeking help We have sought help from various sources. The people at the Elder Abuse Helpline were empathetic but not particularly helpful. Unless we were the cause of the problem, I think there was little they could do. They could have suggested that we involve the police, but they didn't. The Police were very helpful. They gave us over an hour of their time and were very supported. They issued an official caution to the spouse of one of our kids. However, the police said that they could do a lot more if we made a civil complaint first. When we tried to make a civil complaint, we were told that we need to make a police complaint first. The help seems to be there, but the process seems obscure. Elder abuse is hard to prove unless they leave an evidence trail. If they write letters or send emails, evidence is provided. However, if coercive control is done over the phone or in person without warning, there is no evidence. Evidence also needs to be recent but elder abuse is also about patterns of behaviour over a long time. We have plenty of evidence, but the hard data was years ago. For example, there is written evidence that we were commanded to do everything they said, or we would not see our grandchildren. They are still acting on that: the coercive control is still current, but the evidence is no longer admissible. If the behaviour is current, why can't current behaviour in view of past evidence of blackmail, be deemed to be current evidence? Our doctor is very helpful. He knows our family and explained that psychopaths and narcissistic personality disorders are driving factors. He also set up a mental health plan with a psychologist who is also very helpful. The pastoral team at our church have also been very helpful. Ongoing unresolved problems We have concluded that we must face the future as if we have no children or grandchildren. They cannot be relied on for anything and some are more likely to hinder than help. Estate issues can easily be addressed but it seems that the responsibility for our funerals will automatically fall to our children. We have enquired and there does not seem to be any mechanism for nominating someone to be responsible for funerals. It would be helpful if such a process could be established.