

Inquiry into Elder Abuse in Queensland

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Committee Secretary
Education, Arts and Communities Committee
Parliament House
George Street
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By email: eacc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Committee Members

Inquiry Into Elder Abuse in Queensland

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback in relation to the above.

About QCOSS

Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS) is Queensland's peak body for the social service sector and the interim peak body for the Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) sector. Our vision is to achieve equality, opportunity, and wellbeing for all Queenslanders.

QCOSS' position

QCOSS welcomes the Inquiry into Elder Abuse in Queensland ('the Inquiry').

Our submission is informed by engagement with QCOSS members across Queensland. This includes community organisations delivering legal, social, financial, psychological, health and residential supports to older people. As well as our engagement with QCOSS members, we have also consulted with the Council on the Ageing (COTA) Queensland. We endorse the position and recommendations outlined in the COTA Queensland submission.

Through our engagement with QCOSS members, we have focused our discussions on the Inquiry terms of reference part 1c, which seeks to understand opportunities to improve responses to elder abuse in Queensland. These are outlined below.

Providing holistic and coordinated services

Elder abuse impacts the physical, emotional, financial, and psychological well-being of vulnerable older people. Responses to elder abuse must therefore be robust, coordinated, and sensitive to the diverse needs of Queensland's aging population. The Queensland Government must improve coordination between government agencies such as police and health and legal services to ensure there is a holistic approach to elder abuse that includes legal, medical, and social support services.

The role of community organisations is also essential in providing frontline services for elder abuse victims. Strengthening partnerships between government agencies and community organisations will enhance service delivery by providing older people with access to vital resources such as shelter, counselling, legal advocacy, and financial support. The Queensland Government must increase the number of services, as well as the capacity of existing services being offered by



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community organisations responding to elder abuse. Improving access to these services will ensure older people are provided personalised and responsive support that reflects the complex realities of elder abuse and aims to regain a sense of safety and autonomy for the older person.

Awareness and education campaigns

The Queensland Government has made significant strides in raising awareness of elder abuse through campaigns such as 'Stop Elder Abuse' and the Elder Abuse Prevention Unit's public education efforts. These initiatives play a crucial role in helping the public recognise the signs of elder abuse and understand how to intervene. However, further efforts are needed to reach diverse communities, especially in rural and remote areas, where access to services may be limited.

Awareness and education campaigns should target both the general public and specific groups, including healthcare professionals, social workers, and first responders who may have contact with older people in vulnerable situations. Training should also be offered to community organisations and community leaders that aims to support people to recognise signs of abuse and provide support. In rural and remote areas of Queensland, where access to services may be limited, community-based responses are particularly valuable. Educating local leaders and fostering a culture of care and respect for older people can contribute to early detection and prevention.

Improving monitoring, evaluation and reporting

Effective monitoring and evaluation are vital to understanding the prevalence of elder abuse and improving responses. Currently, there is a lack of comprehensive data on elder abuse in Queensland, which hampers the ability to track trends and monitor intervention outcomes. Establishing clear reporting mechanisms for elder abuse, alongside more robust data collection, would enhance accountability and inform better policy decisions.

Regular evaluations of existing programs and services should be conducted to assess their effectiveness in addressing the diverse needs of older people. This will ensure that resources are being utilised efficiently and that interventions are continuously improved.

Conclusion

To effectively respond to elder abuse in Queensland, all sectors – government, community, and private – must work together. Providing holistic and coordinated services, raising awareness and the ongoing monitoring of system effectiveness are key steps to building a more cohesive, integrated approach that will improve safeguards and support for older people.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide our submission.

Yours sincerely



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