

Inquiry into Elder Abuse in Queensland

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Inquiry into Elder Abuse



Education, Arts and Communities Committee, Queensland Government.

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About Queenslanders with Disability Network (QDN)

Queenslanders with Disability Network (QDN) is a state-wide, not-for-profit organisation led by and for people with diverse disability. We are dedicated to advancing disability rights and inclusion in Queensland. QDN is the Executive Peak Body for people with disability in Queensland, providing overarching leadership and coordination across disability peak and representative organisations around the state. QDN operates a state-wide network of over 3,000 members and supporters all over Queensland. Guided by our motto “nothing about us without us,”

QDN ensures that people with lived experience of disability are central to shaping policies, services and supports. Our vibrant and dynamic membership is made up of people with diverse disability who are at the centre of everything we do. QDN as an organisation is in a unique position of representing people with a diverse range of disabilities.

QDN’s work is underpinned by a commitment to inclusion, co-design, collaboration, and innovation and is guided by the pillars of inform, connect, lead and influence. By partnering with communities, service providers, businesses, and government, QDN fosters systemic solutions that empower individuals, amplify the voices of people with disability, and create sustainable, inclusive systems of support, working toward a more equitable and inclusive Queensland.

Through a powerful and engaged network of individuals and 32 Peer Support Groups, QDN informs, leads and influences change on issues impacting the disability community. QDN’s extensive body of work includes connecting people through peer support groups, supporting future leaders through the Emerging Leaders Program, and influencing government policies and programs through targeted advocacy. QDN’s initiatives are co-designed and co-delivered with people with disability. QDN successfully engages with diverse communities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse groups, and rural and remote populations across Queensland. We believe that Queenslanders with disability need to be empowered active and valued citizens, and fully included in the economic, social, civic and cultural life of Queensland.

Introduction and acknowledgements

QDN welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback and recommendations regarding the Inquiry into Elder Abuse in Queensland. QDN acknowledges national and international conventions, legislation and policy that underpins this response including Australia’s commitment to upholding the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with

Disability (CRPD), Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1992, and Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031.

Elder Abuse is a significant issue, and an intersectional approach is required due to older people with a disability often having to deal with bias and discrimination throughout their lives. 1 in 6 older people in Australia have experienced a form of abuse.¹ There is a risk that elder abuse will become more prevalent due to the aging population. It has been stated that by 2050, the amount of people over 60 years old will be two billion worldwide and elder abuse victims could increase to 320 million people.² Australia has an aging population, and they can be vulnerable to abuse. 52.3% of people aged 65 years and over have a disability in Australia.³ The Disability Royal Commission highlighted that people with a disability are at increased risk in various settings, and have high rates of abuse, violence, neglect and exploitation and they require greater safeguards to ensure their safety. It is critical that Federal and State governments have adequate prevention, early intervention and responsive actions and plans to protect older people with a disability in Queensland and Australia wide.

What QDN members have told us:

QDN members have provided valuable insights into the challenges, concerns, and priorities regarding elder abuse from the perspective of older persons with a disability. QDN has drawn upon member perspectives including the MAC (65+ My Aged Care) Peer Support Group that meet monthly to share their experiences on diverse topics that impact older people with a disability. Some of key issues highlighted about elder abuse by this group and during a broader engagement of older persons with a disability include:

- Raise awareness about what constitutes elder abuse, including financial, emotional, and psychological abuse.
- It is important to have accessible information and resources in accessible formats for people with a disability. Explain concepts in plain English.
- Lack of clear pathways to community and legal organisations that could assist with elder abuse issues. One QDN member living in DOH public housing said they had mentioned possible elder abuse in their unit block with DOH staff because she was not sure who she could tell about her concerns. Another QDN member said she thought her neighbour might have been a victim of elder abuse.
- Addressing the shame and protective instincts that may prevent victims from coming forward, especially when the abuser is a family member.

¹ <https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/population-groups/older-people>

² <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/abuse-of-older-people>

³ <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings/latest-release>

- Understanding that people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds may face additional barriers to recognising and reporting elder abuse.
- Recognizing that men and women can be victims of elder abuse.
- There is a need for research into perpetrator behaviour change programs and prevention campaigns focused on perpetrator behaviour.
- There is an issue of people who are aging and being supported in the disability system and challenges with experiencing discrimination about accessing palliative care supports in their home because it is often deemed too risky by providers.
- Support organisations visiting an older person's home with disability need to ensure they are training new staff to identify and report elder abuse.

Terms of Reference

The abuse of older people in Queensland (elder abuse), defined as a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, in the context of a relationship of trust, causing harm or distress, including the: nature and extent, including for vulnerable cohorts, of:

- **forms of neglect and abuse, such as physical, sexual, psychological, emotional and financial.**
- **relationships where elder abuse occurs, including family and kinship relationships.**
- **risk and protective factors, and barriers and enablers for people to access support.**
- **forms of neglect and abuse, such as physical, sexual, psychological, emotional and financial.**

Forms of neglect and abuse, such as physical, sexual, psychological, emotional and financial.

The World Health Organisation defines elder abuse as, 'a single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person.'⁴ Forms of elder abuse include financial abuse, physical abuse, psychological or emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and social abuse. There have also been many older people who have experienced technology facilitated abuse.⁵ In Queensland, the Elder Abuse Statistics year in review report 2023-24 report from the Elder Abuse Prevention Unit Helpline stated that the most common forms of elder abuse was psychological (75.9%) and financial abuse (65%), followed by other forms of abuse. 69.5% reported multiple forms of abuse.⁶ People who have an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background are considered older from aged 50 years old due to lower life expectancy, poorer health outcomes and complex disadvantage.⁷ Approximately 36 % of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live with a disability in Queensland and that can

⁴ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/abuse-of-older-people>

⁵ <https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/population-groups/older-people>

⁶ Elder Abuse Statistics in Queensland: Year in Review 2023-24.

⁷ <https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/population-groups/older-people>

increase with age.⁸ Older people over 65 years old with a disability had a higher rate of experiencing elder abuse, particularly regarding neglect and psychological abuse.⁹

Relationships where elder abuse occurs, including family and kinship relationships.

Elder abuse in most instances is caused by a family member such as adult children, partner/spouse, paid carer, or a service provider. Elder abuse shares similar characteristics to other aspects of family violence because it is predominately a family member that is the perpetrator and there is a power imbalance.¹⁰ In Queensland, family members were the main perpetrators of elder abuse, and the Uniting Care Elder Abuse Prevention Unit 2023-24 report stated that 36% were daughters and 34.2% were sons.¹¹ There is a higher percentage of females who are victims of elder abuse.¹² Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a kinship system that places emphasis on a person's responsibilities to other people and the land and it might make it difficult to identify and deal with elder abuse in their communities. Many people with a disability rely on another person for their functional support needs such as personal care and daily activities and that heightens the risk and exposure to abuse.

Risk and protective factors, and barriers and enablers for people to access support.

Risk factors identified why elder abuse is occurring is disability and functional dependence, declining physical, cognitive and mental health of the older person and the perpetrator's dependency on the older person often for financial reasons, shared living conditions, social isolation and low standards of care if they are in aged care facilities.¹³ The younger generation in Australia are finding it difficult to buy properties due to housing affordability, rental crisis, and cost of living. Some adults are moving back in with parents to save money. There is also the issue of increasing mental health and substance abuse problems. There can be long term health complications for people experiencing elder abuse such as physical and psychological issues and increased hospitalisations.¹⁴

Some of the reasons why elder abuse occurs is due to ageism in our society and a view that older people are frail and will not stand up for themselves. Ageism contributes to discrimination and negative attitudes towards older people in our society. We need to change societal perceptions of what it means to get older, confront any bias that exists and value older people. Older people with a disability face intersectional discrimination and barriers due to having to also deal with sometimes negative attitudes towards disability. There is also an increased risk of older people with an intellectual or developmental disability because they might have communication challenges, might not understand elder

⁸ <https://www.qld.gov.au/disability/community/disability-statistics>

⁹ <http://elderabusestatisticsinqueensland.com.au/> Year in Review 2023-24

¹⁰ Joosten, M., Vrantidis, F. and Dow, B. (2017) Understanding Elder Abuse: A Scoping Study, Melbourne: University of Melbourne and the National Ageing Research Institute

¹¹ <https://www.eapu.com.au/s/aifs.gov.au/research/research-snapshots/national-elder-abuse-prevalence-study-summary-report>

¹² <https://www.eapu.com.au/s/aifs.gov.au/research/research-snapshots/national-elder-abuse-prevalence-study-summary-report>

¹³ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/abuse-of-older-people>

¹⁴ <https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/population-groups/older-people>

abuse, and might feel they will not be believed if they report the abuse. Many people are still confused as to the definition of elder abuse and might question if they are experiencing it. There are also many elder abuse victims that might feel too ashamed to report it and that could result in less data about the number of actual victims of elder abuse. There is complexity if they are family members and parents can be protective even if experiencing abuse. They might worry that if they speak up, they could be put into a nursing home or aged care facility.¹⁵ People of CALD and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds might have language barriers and lack services that are culturally responsive and understand intergenerational trauma and institutional racism. People from a CALD background might not want to tell anyone about elder abuse due to cultural and generational beliefs that violence is a private matter, certain cultures normalise violence and to protect the perpetrator who is often their child.¹⁶ It is an extremely complex situation if it is their adult child, and they might not want to lose their relationship with them.

Recommendation 1:

Co-design public awareness campaigns about elder abuse that include older people with a disability. Ensure the campaign provides clear examples of what constitutes elder abuse.

Recommendation 2:

Apply an intersectional approach to address systemic issues regarding ageism and disability to ensure more inclusive and responsive policies, strategies, and programs.

Effectiveness and cohesiveness of responses to elder abuse, including Queensland laws, policies, programs and services, in preventing, safeguarding, identifying and responding to elder abuse, including:

- **adult guardianship and violence protection services, other funded services, and community-based interventions.**
- **civil and criminal legal frameworks.**
- **community awareness, education and engagement initiatives.**
- **monitoring, evaluation and reporting processes.**
- **human rights protections.**

Adult guardianship and violence protection services, other funded services, and community-based interventions.

Guardianship can be a complex system to understand. In Queensland, the Office of Public Guardian can function as substitute decision makers for people who do not have capacity. Many people with a disability are put under the guardianship system and have a lifetime of

¹⁵ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/abuse-of-older-people>

¹⁶ Joosten, M., Vrantidis, F. and Dow, B. (2017) Understanding Elder Abuse: A Scoping Study, Melbourne: University of Melbourne and the National Ageing Research Institute

experiences that are compounded when they age and become older in the My Aged Care system. Older people when they have capacity can also consider appointing an Enduring Guardian who can act on the behalf if they lose capacity. An Enduring Guardian can make decisions about where you can live, make health care decisions, dental and support services you might want to receive.¹⁷ In Queensland you can also have a statutory health attorney that can act on a person's behalf regarding medical and health matters. Enduring Power of Attorney can be appointed if you lose capacity to make decisions about financial and legal matters.

The Queensland Public Advocate published two volumes of an Adult Safeguarding in Queensland Report that highlighted gaps and recommendations about the adult safeguarding system and included elder abuse concerns.¹⁸ The Queensland Public Advocate has also recommended to have a shift from substituted decision making to more supported decision making. They highlighted Queensland's aging population and how people with Dementia, or cognitive decline have increasing interaction with a health system that might question their decision-making ability.¹⁹ Both the Queensland Public Advocate and the Disability Royal Commission referred to adult safeguarding recommendations from The Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC). The ALRC was asked to consider how Commonwealth laws and legal frameworks could improve protection and safeguards for older people experiencing elder abuse while balancing their autonomy. The ALRC recommended nationally consistent adult safeguarding legislation to be put in place to protect older people from abuse.²⁰ New South Wales and South Australia have legislation about adult safeguarding for those at risk. The ALRC is committed to emphasizing the CRPD where possible such as with decision making principles. The ALRC outlined the need for national decision-making principles in their response about elder abuse. Again, an intersectionality perspective needs to be included around supported decision making. The Disability Royal Commission also highlighted the need for a supported decision-making framework and the CRPD emphasises that the will and preferences of people with a disability should be at the core of decisions made about their lives. Disability Royal Commission also recommended that all states and territories should have adult safeguarding laws in place and recommendations 11.1 and 11.2 highlights the need to establish nationally consistent adult safeguarding functions and an integrated national adult safeguarding framework.²¹

It has been recommended that the best approach to dealing with elder abuse is having a multi-disciplinary approach that includes legal professionals, social workers, health, and

¹⁷ <https://www.compass.info/featured-topics/public-trustees-public-guardians/>

¹⁸ <https://www.justice.qld.gov.au/public-advocate/our-advocacy/justice-and-human-rights/adult-safeguarding-in-queensland2>

¹⁹ <https://www.justice.qld.gov.au/public-advocate/our-advocacy/justice-and-human-rights/decision-making-support>

²⁰ Australian Law Reform Commission. (2017). *ALRC Report 131*.

²¹ <https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/final-report-volume-11-independent-oversight-and-complaint-mechanisms>

community workers.²² In Queensland we have the Seniors and Support Legal Service under Caxton Legal that deliver this effective model. It would be beneficial to have more multi-disciplinary services in Queensland dealing with elder abuse, particularly in remote and regional areas.

More interventions and data collection are required for older people with a disability who are at risk of abuse in Queensland. Community led organisations can play a significant role in building knowledge and capacity of older persons with disability. There are also older people living in public, community and social housing that also might be experiencing elder abuse, and they require clear pathways of how they can get support.

The draft Australian National Plan to End the Abuse and Mistreatment of Older People 2024-2034 has plans to end elder abuse and that shares similar aims with the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032.²³ Elder abuse shares many similar characteristics with family and domestic violence, however, often the perpetrators are their adult children, and it can also occur in service providers. Family and domestic violence strategies focus on intimate partner violence on women and children. Through research and evidence-based practice around violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation experienced by people with disability, we can draw information, strategies and actions based upon abuse dynamics where the perpetrator is in a care giving role. This highlights many underpinning thematic similarities to the context and dynamics of elder abuse and how this work and experiences of people with disability can support informing strategies.

It is also important that the Queensland Disability Reform Framework and Queensland Disability Stakeholder Engagement and Co-design Strategy continues its work on the engagement and implementation of the disability reform in Queensland. It is also paramount that Disability Royal Commission recommendations are implemented.

Civil and criminal legal frameworks.

The legal profession has a significant role in identifying if elder abuse is occurring due to their role in assisting people do wills and enduring power of attorneys. An emerging issue are parents who might transfer the assets such as the family home to their children for exchange of care, still living in the premises or in a granny flat. It is also known as Assets for Care. It can be a satisfactory solution for some people, but it can cause serious issues if the relationship breaks down.²⁴

It has been stated that some people appointed as Enduring Power of Attorneys could abuse their role. Often the child of the older person are the main perpetrators of financial abuse

²² Joosten, M., Vrantidis, F. and Dow, B. (2017) Understanding Elder Abuse: A Scoping Study, Melbourne: University of Melbourne and the National Ageing Research Institute

²³ <https://consultations.ag.gov.au/families-and-marriage/eamop/>

²⁴ <https://lsj.com.au/articles/out-of-the-shadows-lawyers-on-the-front-line-against-elder-abuse/>

and often the children are appointed power of attorneys.²⁵ Financial abuse can involve forcing people to change their wills, preventing access to their money or their assets, forcing them to hand over their possessions, not having control over their money, not repaying loans and even access to superannuation.²⁶ The aging population in Australia and the wealth of many older Australians demonstrates the increasing need to have an enduring power of attorney. The ALRC recommended nationally consistent safeguarding in place from financial abuse and some recommendations included establishing a national online register for enduring documents such as enduring power of attorney documents.²⁷

Community awareness, education and engagement initiatives.

The World Health Organisation has highlighted that there needs to be public awareness of the issue of elder abuse. QDN MAC (65+ My Aged Care) Peer Support Group also said there should be more advertising and public awareness of elder abuse and engagement in places where older people might frequent. It could be beneficial to have information hubs and advisors doing outreach in libraries, shopping centres, local community centres, medical centres, and multicultural organisations. They could provide information on what elder abuse is, how to report it, provide social and emotional support and referrals for assistance to legal, health and community organisations. By providing a more personal approach and reaching more people in the community it could empower older people to have more knowledge about elder abuse and the services that could assist them, or other people they suspect are victims of elder abuse. It could also help in alleviating shame associated with elder abuse.

There needs to be more accessible financial literacy initiatives for people with diverse disabilities. In Queensland, Caxton Legal offer financial protection services. The Australian Human Rights Commission is leading a Financial Elder Abuse Action Collaborative that includes representatives from banks and financial services and peak community organisations.²⁸ It would be beneficial for financial elder abuse programs to get perspectives from people with a disability and ensure they have inclusive and accessible resources.

The World Health Organisation stated that an important intervention could be developing self-help support groups.²⁹ The peer support groups at QDN such as the MAC (65+ My Aged Care) Peer Support Group are a safe place for sharing lived experiences, exchanging information, supporting and connecting with people who have a disability in the local community or around a shared topic. QDN staff support the volunteer group convenor to

²⁵ Adams, V, M., Bagshaw, D., Wendt, S., & Zannettino, L. (2014). Financial abuse of older people by a family member: A difficult terrain for service providers in Australia. *Journal of Elder Abuse and Neglect*

²⁶ Corrigan, M. (2017). Elder Abuse: Have your say on preventing elder abuse. *Bulletin (Law Society of South Australia)*

²⁷ Australian Law Reform Commission. (2017). *ALRC Report 131*.

²⁸ <https://humanrights.gov.au/about/news/new-project-tackle-financial-elder-abuse#:~:text=The%20Australian%20Human%20Rights%20Commission,response%20to%20financial%20elder%20abuse.>

²⁹ https://www.who.int/health-topics/abuse-of-older-people#tab=tab_2

run the group. Having an older person's peer group could provide a safe place for people to access information, get social support to support recovery and increase self-confidence. These groups could invite guest speakers from community, legal and health organisations that could explore relevant topics such as financial literacy, enduring power of attorneys, supported decision making and wellbeing. Peer groups could be done in person and online to ensure they are accessible to individuals across various locations and circumstances, enabling everyone to benefit from developing social connections.

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is usually held on 15 June each year. This is a day that can be used to promote awareness of elder abuse. It is important that the Queensland State Government and other stakeholders involved in the promotion of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day offer accessible resources and formats to reach as many people as possible.

Monitoring, evaluation, and reporting processes.

One of the five priorities highlighted by the World Health Organisation was to generate more data about elder abuse.³⁰ World Health Organisation said that elder abuse is also a public health issue and there needs to be more data collected regarding elder abuse in hospitals, nursing homes and residential aged care facilities. It is suggested that abuse in such settings might be prevalent and more monitoring needs to take place.³¹ In Queensland, the Elder Abuse Statistics year in review report 2023-24 analyses statistics from the Elder Abuse Prevention Unit Helpline.³² It provides valuable insights, and it mentions data about people with cognitive impairment, particularly Dementia, but it does not include a lot of data about disability. It also only focuses on data only from the elder abuse helpline. The AIHW has elder abuse data. They also include family and domestic violence data for people over 65 years of age from police, hospitalisations, and specialist homelessness service collection data.³³ However, these statistics do not necessarily refer to elder abuse. There is also the issue that some people might not be reporting elder abuse. The Voices of Queenslanders research survey conducted by Griffith University and QDN could also be used to collect more data and perspectives from older people who have a disability who might be at risk of abuse. Data collection about elder abuse requires more attention and an intersectional approach because that would result in improved responses and interventions.

There needs to be more effective screening tools developed that could assist health, medical and allied health professionals to identify elder abuse. Some people might be reluctant to reveal elder abuse, but trained health staff could prompt discussions that could result in early intervention. The National Aging Research Institute (NARI) and State Trustees of Australia developed an Australian Elder Abuse Screening instrument. The pilot testing

³⁰ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/abuse-of-older-people>

³¹ Elder Abuse Statistics in Queensland: Year in Review 2023-24.

³² Elder Abuse Statistics in Queensland: Year in Review 2023-24.

³³ <https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/population-groups/older-people>

demonstrated mixed results and needed further development.³⁴ There is potential that a screening tool could assist health professionals and other relevant frontline professionals to identify signs of elder abuse, however, it would be beneficial to also co-design the tool with people who have a disability and disability organisations so they can provide insights and strategies particularly around people who might have intellectual and learning disabilities. Older people from CALD and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds should also be involved in assessing any screening tool.

Human rights protections.

The new Aged Care Act that is due to begin on 1 July 2025 has a human rights framework to empower older people and to uphold their rights. People should be made aware of the new Aged Care Act and be provided with accessible information about the Act. The draft Australian National Plan to End the Abuse and Mistreatment of Older People 2024-2034 also has a rights-based and trauma informed approach that highlights the need to address ageism. It is important that any supported decision framework is based on human rights principles and recognises conventions such as the CRPD. There needs to be increased funding for independent advocacy organisations so they can help older people to uphold their rights and ensure their will and preferences are heard on various matters.

It is also important that the Queensland Government progress with the implementation of the anti-discrimination reforms originally scheduled for 1 July 2025 because the need for these reforms is urgent, as the ongoing impact of discrimination continues to harm people with disability across Queensland. We know that people with disability continue to experience higher rates of discrimination. The reforms were expected to deliver important legal protections for Queenslanders with disability including making hate speech based on disability unlawful, greater protection from discrimination for victim survivors of crime and domestic violence, and people experiencing homelessness, a legal obligation on organisations to prevent discrimination, not just respond to it and protection against discrimination for people experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of disadvantage.

Recommendation 3:

Ensure that people with diverse disability can access information, resources, and support in formats suited to their needs. It is essential that information should be provided in Plain English and Easy Read that avoids jargon and complex terminology. Information should also be provided in Auslan, Braille and multi-language translations, audio description and formatted for screen readers. There should also be printed information available for people who do not have internet access so they can stay informed.

³⁴ <https://www.nari.net.au/ausi>

Recommendation 4:

State and federal governments to work together to develop a national supported decision framework that has a strong focus on the supported decision-making principles highlighted in the Disability Royal Commission Final Report.

Recommendation 5:

Strengthen investment and funding opportunities for peer support groups for older people that could provide information about elder abuse, practical and emotional support and build social connection.

Recommendation 6:

Improve data collection about elder abuse and work in conjunction with the National Disability Data Asset (NDDA) to ensure an intersectional approach is incorporated. Improve the response rate of people with a disability over 65 years old in the Voice of Queensland Survey.

Recommendation 7:

Strengthen the ways elder abuse is reported by creating more screening tools and provide training for people working in services that have access to older people such as health professionals. Any development of a screening tool for elder abuse should also be co-designed with people who have a disability to ensure the tool is inclusive and accessible.

Recommendation 8:

Create information hubs in the community where older people might regularly frequent to increase public awareness and to provide accessible and inclusive information about elder abuse.

Opportunities to improve responses to elder abuse in Queensland, within the government, broader community, non-government, and private sectors, including ensuring responses are trauma informed and culturally appropriate.

Through the submission we have highlighted ways that elder abuse responses could be improved in Queensland and in Australia. It would be recommended to align with the draft Australian National Plan to End the Abuse and Mistreatment of Older People 2024-2034 and consider a specific Queensland strategy to address elder abuse and ageism in society.

It is preferred to have a human rights-based and trauma informed approach to elder abuse. The Queensland Trauma Strategy 2024-2029 should be implemented across community and government programs to ensure a trauma informed approach is being adhered to. The Disability Royal Commission also encouraged a trauma informed approach. An intersectional approach is also essential so organisations consider how diverse experiences can shape a

person's life and how people with a disability often face multiple barriers and discrimination. The National Plan to End the Abuse and Mistreatment of Older People 2024-2034 has included a new form of elder abuse that includes cultural and spiritual abuse that takes into consideration CALD and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups. It is important to have cultural safety that recognises diverse cultural beliefs, values, and practices.³⁵ CALD communities might have language barriers, diverse cultural practices and views on violence and family responsibilities. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have historical intergenerational trauma and have strong connections to family, kinship system, community and to the land. Cultural expectations relating to family privacy and protection might prevent older people from recognising and reporting elder abuse if their family member or kinships system are the perpetrators. There is also a need to have more culturally appropriate services in rural and remote areas.

Recommendation 9:

Work with the federal government to implement The National Plan to End the Abuse and Mistreatment of Older People 2024-2034 but also consider a specific Queensland strategy for elder abuse that incorporates an intersectional, human rights and trauma informed approach that also focuses on prevention and early intervention strategies.

Recommendation 10:

Increase funding for culturally responsive organisations to work on elder abuse awareness and prevention, with a particular focus on remote and regional areas.

Summary of Recommendations

- 1.** Co-design public awareness campaigns about elder abuse that include older people with a disability. Ensure the campaign provides clear examples of what constitutes elder abuse.
- 2.** Apply an intersectional approach to address systemic issues regarding ageism and disability to ensure more inclusive and responsive policies, strategies, and programs.
- 3.** Ensure that people with diverse disability can access elder abuse information, resources, and support in formats suited to their needs. It is essential that information should be provided in Plain English and Easy Read that avoids jargon and complex terminology. Information should also be provided in Auslan, Braille and multi-language translations, audio description and formatted for screen readers. There should also be printed information available for people who do not have internet access so they can stay informed.

³⁵ <https://consultations.ag.gov.au/families-and-marriage/eamop/>

4. State and federal governments to work together to develop a national supported decision framework that has a strong focus on the supported decision-making principles highlighted in the Disability Royal Commission Final Report.
5. Strengthen investment and funding opportunities for peer support groups for older people that could provide information about elder abuse, practical and emotional support and build social connection.
6. Improve data collection about elder abuse and work in conjunction with the National Disability Data Asset (NDDA) to ensure an intersectional approach is incorporated. Improve the response rate of people with a disability over 65 years old in the Voice of Queensland Survey.
7. Strengthen the ways elder abuse is reported by creating more screening tools and provide training for people working in services that have access to older people such as health professionals. Any development of a screening tool for elder abuse should also be co-designed with people who have a disability to ensure the tool is inclusive and accessible.
8. Create information hubs in the community where older people might frequent to create greater public awareness and to provide information about elder abuse.
9. Work with the federal government to implement The National Plan to End the Abuse and Mistreatment of Older People 2024-2034 but also consider a specific Queensland strategy for elder abuse that incorporates an intersectional, human rights and trauma informed approach that also focuses on prevention and early intervention strategies.
10. Increase funding for culturally responsive organisations to work on elder abuse awareness and prevention, with a particular focus on remote and regional areas.

Conclusion

QDN is thankful to the Queensland Government for the opportunity to provide feedback regarding the Inquiry into Elder Abuse in Queensland. As highlighted in the Disability Royal Commission people with a disability are even more vulnerable to abuse, violence, exploitation, and neglect. Elder abuse is a complex issue and an increasing problem that needs state and federal government focus to create effective policies, strategies that increase greater awareness, and provide information and interventions. Elder abuse matters because it is a human rights issue, and we need to empower, inform and protect older people in our society and ensure their dignity is upheld.

If you have any queries regarding this submission, please contact CEO Michelle Moss

