



Speech by


## Christine Smith

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

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### WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY

 **Mrs SMITH** (Burleigh—ALP) (12.02 pm): Today is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. It began five years ago in Canada and is now observed each year across the world. The abuse of older people is an issue of growing concern for our community, as our population ages and the number of people vulnerable to abuse is increasing. Older persons whose decision making is impaired are particularly vulnerable to abuse. We would all like to think that such abuse is non-existent, but elder abuse has been a silent problem for far too long. Our seniors should be cared for and valued, but we are not a perfect society and some people look to exploit the vulnerable. Last week I joined the Minister for Community Services, Karen Struthers, at the launch of the government's Act as 1 Against Elder Abuse campaign. The Gold Coast has an elder abuse task force which includes a number of local organisations doing great work, but more work is needed to bring the issue out from behind closed doors.

The incidence of elder abuse on the coast is aligned with the rest of the state in terms of psychological and financial abuse being the most common reported, but it can also be in the form of physical and sexual abuse. Statistics show that it is more likely to be a family member, usually a son or a daughter, who is responsible for the abuse. It can be that an enduring power of attorney is being misused. Transfer of property and assets is a common theme—the parent finds themselves destitute and a falling out with a family member leaves them with no financial or social support. Shame and embarrassment often make it difficult for people to reveal abuse—they do not want others to know it occurs in their families. Nobody wants to admit that someone they love is abusing them. Sadly, this means the abuse of older people is largely unspoken and unrecognised by many. This is something the Bligh government is determined to change. In the last 12 months Lifeline's elder abuse helpline took 1,575 crisis calls from across the state. No-one, regardless of age, should be subjected to abusive or neglectful behaviour.

*(Time expired)*