

Question on Notice

Number. 612

Asked on Tuesday, 10 May, 2005

Mr Gary Fenlon MP asked the Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors (**Mr Pitt**)-

What programs or projects is his Department of Communities undertaking to assist seniors to overcome elder abuse and what assistance is available to seniors seeking information on this issue?

ANSWER:

I am pleased to be able to provide information about the Queensland Government's responses to the prevention of abuse of older people.

The Department of Communities funds a number of projects that respond to the information needs of seniors with regard to elder abuse and which offer support to seniors wishing to address issues of abuse. These include:

- The Elder Abuse Prevention Unit which provides a statewide telephone Helpline where callers receive information, advice, support and where appropriate, referral to other agencies. The Elder Abuse Prevention Unit provides training and sector support to service providers who deal with the complexity of elder abuse cases and have developed a range of resources to support their community education role and elder abuse awareness raising activities;
- The Seniors Enquiry Line which offers an up-to-date and relevant information and referral service to Queensland seniors, their families, friends, carers and service providers. This service works to ensure that seniors are empowered with information so as to be able to make informed decisions on a broad range of issues that impact on their lives, including issues of potential or actual abuse; and
- The Seniors Advocacy Information and Legal Service which is a specialist outreach counselling, advocacy and court support service available to people 60 years and older who live in the Brisbane region. Older people are afforded access to free legal information and advice, crisis and short term counselling, court support and referral to other legal and/or support organisations. Interventions are aimed at ensuring safety and minimising risk of harm or further harm or crisis.
- The *Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989* was amended in 2003 and for the first time familial (non-spousal) relationships and informal care relationships are recognised in the Act. This is significant given that statistics on perpetrators of abuse of the elderly include sons, daughters, grandchildren as well as informal carers. Victims of elder abuse can now seek protection through application for a Domestic Violence Order against the abuser. Under the 2003 Amendment, the range of persons permitted to apply for Domestic Violence Orders on behalf of the aggrieved is extended to include "authorised persons", for example, the Adult Guardian or the person appointed as an attorney under an enduring power of attorney.
- Several research projects have been developed by the department in partnership with the University of Queensland to develop a robust evidence base to inform policy and program development. One of these is an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant to fund an Asset Management, Financial Abuse and Older People Research Project.
- This government remains committed to upholding the right of older Queenslanders to feel safe and secure and to live free from abuse or threat of abuse.