

Question on Notice

No. 1488

Asked on 7 September 2011

MR WENDT asked the Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women (MS STRUTHERS)—

QUESTION

Will the Minister advise what the government is doing to raise awareness of elder abuse and what help and support is available to the most vulnerable in our community?

ANSWER

In 2010, the *Positively Ageless—Queensland Seniors Strategy 2010–20* was launched which outlines key government initiatives that will benefit older Queenslanders. Seniors, especially those who are frail and vulnerable, have the right to be free from abuse or exploitation. Unfortunately, the abuse of older people often goes unreported due to feelings of shame, fear of retaliation, the involvement of family members and fear of institutionalisation.

For the past two years, the Queensland Government has conducted an elder abuse awareness campaign to coincide with World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

In 2011, approximately \$96,000 was expended on the 'Act as one against elder abuse' Statewide advertising campaign. The campaign aimed to raise awareness of the most common forms of elder abuse and to encourage people experiencing abuse, their friends, family or neighbours to seek support.

The campaign included four posters, a wallet card, advertising, direct mail, a website feature, and postings on the 'Act as 1' campaign Facebook and Twitter pages to generate community discussion on this serious social issue.

Posters and wallet cards were placed in pharmacies, bus shelters and at major metropolitan shopping centres. The wallet card included information about behaviours that constitute elder abuse and appropriate responses, as well as contact details for available support services.

A total of 24,000 posters and 60,000 wallet cards were produced and distributed widely through direct mail to seniors' organisations, libraries, health and counselling services, police stations, medical centres, church groups, nursing homes and aged care services, regional councils and hospitals.

This year, the Department of Communities will provide funding of over \$460,000 to Lifeline to manage the Elder Abuse Prevention Unit (EAPU), which operates a Statewide elder abuse helpline.

As a result of the 2011 campaign, EAPU reported an overall 30.4 per cent increase in calls to the helpline during June and July, as compared with the preceding six months and an increase of 34 per cent for actual elder abuse notifications. The EAPU website also experienced a 20 per cent increase in traffic.

The department also provides approximately \$2.2 million in funding to five Seniors Legal and Support Services in Brisbane, Toowoomba, Hervey Bay, Townsville and Cairns to provide legal and counselling services to older people.

I thank the honourable Member for his strong commitment to the Queensland Government's initiatives to address elder abuse.