

Media Statement

1 September 2016

Abuse, assault and neglect an ongoing issue in disability services

National and state inquiries into disability services have highlighted the ongoing issue of abuse, assault and neglect of people with a disability.

Mr Laurie Harkin AM, Disability Services Commissioner, says “The heightened public awareness created by the recent inquiries has resulted in an increased number of complaints being brought to my office regarding the abuse of people with a disability.”

“Abuse, assault and neglect of people with a disability is completely unacceptable. It has a devastating impact on the victims and undermines people’s confidence in disability services. People have a right to feel and to be safe and to have their human rights respected.”

The Disability Services Commissioner (DSC) is an independent body handling complaints about Victorian disability services. Complaints are handled confidentially.

Mr Harkin says “To respond effectively to the changing profile of complaints including allegations of abuse, assault and neglect, my office has established a Quality Team that undertakes reviews and investigations.”

During investigations, service providers are required to attend interviews and give DSC information and documents. DSC identifies whether in responding to the issues, the service provider has met their obligations for delivering disability services.

If investigations identify that a service provider has failed to meet their obligations in responding to the issues, DSC issues actions to remedy the complaint. These actions focus on improvements for the person making the complaint and other people using the service.

Mr Harkin ends “I encourage people to contact my office if they have a complaint about a Victorian disability service. People should feel confident to speak up and know that their complaint will be taken seriously.”

For general information on how DSC receives, assesses and handles complaints through informal resolution, conciliation and investigation, visit our website at

www.odsc.vic.gov.au.