

Combined Pensioners & Superannuants Association

OF NEW SOUTH WALES INC



Submission on the Draft Interagency Policy for Responding to Abuse of Older People



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Combined Pensioners & Superannuants Association of NSW Inc (CPSA)

Address: Level 9, 28 Foveaux Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010 **ABN:** 11 244 559 772

Phone: (02) 9281 3588 **Country Callers:** 1800 451 488 **Facsimile:** (02) 9281 9716

Email: cpsa@cpsa.org.au **Website:** www.cpsa.org.au **Donations:** 1800 451 488

CPSA was founded in 1931 in response to pension cuts. CPSA is a non-profit, non-party-political membership association which serves pensioners of all ages, superannuants and low-income retirees. The aim of CPSA is to improve the standard of living and well-being of its members and constituents. CPSA has approximately 140 Branches and affiliated organisations with a combined membership of over 29,000 people living in all parts of NSW.

CPSA welcomes the opportunity to make comment on the draft Interagency Policy for Responding to Abuse of Older People.

CPSA commends the NSW Government for being outspoken against the abuse of older people and we are pleased that a helpline and resource unit will form a key role in addressing abuse of older people.

CPSA supports the establishment of a helpline dedicated to the abuse of older people in NSW staffed by well-trained, sensitive professionals in line with those in operation in the ACT and Queensland. Older people constitute a significant proportion of the NSW population and have the right to safe environments and respectful relationships with their families and communities and an abuse helpline for NSW is a welcome step in helping this become a reality. It is important that callers are walked through referral services and given ongoing support.

CPSA is concerned that the draft Interagency Policy for Responding to Abuse of Older People does not adequately have provisions in place for how to deal with abuse cases when conflicts of interest arise.

While in favour of the helpline and resource centre, CPSA is concerned about the conflict of interest that could arise from Catholic Healthcare Ltd being awarded the tender to run this important initiative. While not questioning Catholic Healthcare's integrity to run the facility, there is a clear conflict of interest in the fact that they operate approximately 3,000 aged care places – both residential and community care packages - across NSW. As abuse can occur in these settings, CPSA calls for adequate mechanisms to be put in place to manage potential conflicts of interest, should a complaint be made about one of Catholic Healthcare's aged care operations.

CPSA has been told by the Elder Abuse Prevention Unit operating in Queensland that approximately ten per cent of abuse reported to them occurs in an aged care setting. Therefore it is of utmost importance that this conflict of interest is adequately managed.

The reluctance of older people to identify with the term 'abuse' should also be noted in the document and is something that agencies and individuals who suspect abuse should keep in mind. This has proved to be particularly the case when family members are involved in the abuse and when it is of a non-physical nature, such as financial abuse. Terms such as 'misuse', 'mismanagement' and 'fraud' are terms that older people are more likely to be comfortable with in these situations due to perceived shame around 'abuse'.