

27 October 2023

Committee Secretary  
Community Support and Services Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
Brisbane Qld 4000



Dear Committee

### **Victims of Crime Assistance and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Victims of Crime Assistance and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2032 (the **Bill**). Aged and Disability Advocacy Australia (**ADA**) appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the Bill and associated important issues.

#### **About ADA Australia**

ADA is a not for profit, independent, community-based advocacy and education service with more than 30 years' experience in informing, supporting, representing and advocating in the interests of older people, and persons with disability in Queensland.

ADA also provides legal advocacy through ADA Law, a community legal centre and a division of ADA. ADA Law provides specialized legal advice to older people and people with disability, including those living with cognitive impairments or questioned capacity, on issues associated with human rights, elder abuse, and health and disability legal issues related to decision-making.

ADA advocates and legal practitioners work with identified First Peoples advocates through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Disability Network Queensland (**ATSIDNQ**), a network established to support mob with disability and provide individual advocacy services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability.

#### **Review of the Bill**

ADA has reviewed the Bill and the Explanatory Notes, and provides the following for the Committee's consideration.

ADA supports the stated objective of the Bill to increase the maximum amounts of financial assistance payable to victims of acts of violence. We note that the need for increased financial assistance was recommended by two recent inquiries: the Womens Safety and Justice Taskforce, and

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the Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violences.

ADA contributed to both inquiries and is pleased that the recommendations of the inquiries continue to be introduced by the government.

ADA welcomes an increase to amounts payable to all victims of acts of violence. We note, with support, that the recategorizing of acts of domestic and family violence from a category D act of violence to a category B act of violence is a critical step in heralding in the institutional and community cultural changes which are required to recognise and address the prevalence and severity of domestic and family violence in Queensland.

This important step to better support victims must be accompanied by the implementation of other key recommendations made by the Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence.<sup>1</sup>

In this respect, ADA notes recommendation 32, which states that within 12 months (of the Report being furnished), the Queensland Police Service should improve its training in relation to domestic and family violence by ensuring its programs provide adequate knowledge and information to officers in relation to key groups.

Groups identified in recommendation 32 include older persons and people with disability. ADA provides advocacy services for persons from these cohorts and across a spectrum of circumstances whereby a client may be a victim, or the accused.

We strongly support the full implementation of recommendation 32, including:

- Improved education for police in relation to the behaviours which amount to elder abuse, and the steps that should be taken to protect older people when they report harm from a family member;
- Improved education on the recognition, inquiry, assessment and approach towards persons with a cognitive or intellectual disability, including the need to provide a support person and improved assessment capabilities and actions when a carer might also be a perpetrator;
- Improved education and understanding of other key characteristics, such as the difficult historical relationship with police for persons identifying as LGBTIQ+, or any cultural or linguistic barriers; and
- Critically, improved education to assist police in recognising the present of multiple, intersecting complex needs, including for people with mental illness.

Alongside these, ADA supports the complete implementation of recommendations 33 – 36 and 41 – 49, which will improve outcomes for victims and build on the improved understanding by police on issues of family and domestic violence as experienced by the identified cohorts.

Other key agencies and departments, such as Queensland Health, should also be provided with comprehensive training to recognise and respond to persons who may be victims of elder abuse, including death by neglect.

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<sup>1</sup> Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence, *Report: A Call for Change* (November 2022) <[A CALL FOR CHANGE \(qpsdfvinquiry.qld.gov.au\)](https://www.qpsdfvinquiry.qld.gov.au)>.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment. ADA would be pleased to further assist the Committee with its inquiry. Should you wish to discuss this submission, please do not hesitate to contact Vanessa Krulin, Solicitor and Senior Policy and Research Officer [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Geoff Rowe', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Geoff Rowe**  
Chief Executive Officer