

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The NSW Government has established the Ageing and Disability Commission (ADC) to prevent and better protect adults with disability and older people from abuse, neglect and exploitation, caused by someone they know in their home and community.

WHY IS THE ADC NEEDED?

The NSW Government takes its responsibility to safeguard the most vulnerable members of our community seriously. Unfortunately, older people and people with disability can be more vulnerable to abuse, neglect and exploitation. A number of reviews and inquiries have highlighted opportunities for the NSW Government to do more to address this issue. These include the Parliamentary Inquiry report into the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and provision of disability services, the Ombudsman's recent report Abuse and neglect of vulnerable adults in NSW – the need for action, the Law Reform Commission's Review of the Guardianship Act 1987 and the 2016 Parliamentary Inquiry into Elder Abuse.

The establishment of the ADC addresses the gaps and concerns raised in these reports, by strengthening our ability to respond to abuse, neglect and exploitation of **adults with disability and older people**.

WHAT DOES THE ADC DO?

- **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**
 - **Raise awareness and educate the public** about abuse, neglect and exploitation of adults with disability and older people.
 - **Provide advice and assistance to the public** about matters relating to the abuse, neglect and exploitation of adults with disability and older people.
- **MANAGE ENQUIRIES AND REPORTS**
 - **Deals with allegations** of abuse, neglect and exploitation of adults with disability and older people, by reviewing reports and enquiries, sharing information, making referrals and conducting investigations.
 - Refers to other agencies when the matter may not be within the Commission's domain or influence.
 - Conducts investigations, and takes further action if needed, in order to protect the adult at the heart of the report.

• **ADVISE AND INFORM GOVERNMENT**

- **Inquire into and report on systemic issues** relating to the abuse, neglect and exploitation of adults with disability and older people, and the protection and promotion of their rights.
- **Advise and make recommendations** to the Minister on matters relating to the abuse, neglect and exploitation of adults with disability and older people.
- Oversight the **Official Community Visitors** scheme.

WHAT POWERS DOES THE COMMISSIONER HAVE?

The Commissioner has strong powers to ensure they are able to properly investigate matters. These include:

- The power to initiate investigations on their own motion, or following a referral or complaint.
- The power to apply for and execute a search warrant, and seize evidence as part of an investigation.
- Information gathering and sharing powers.

Importantly, the Commissioner is independent and not subject to Ministerial direction and control in exercising its functions.

WHAT TYPES OF REPORTS CAN BE MADE TO THE ADC?

Suspicions or alleged abuse, neglect or exploitation can be reported, including:

- Financial abuse or exploitation.
- Neglect – such as failing to provide access to health care, and social isolation.
- Physical abuse.
- Sexual abuse or exploitation.
- Psychological and emotional abuse – including verbal abuse.

Anyone can make a report if they believe an adult with disability or an older person is subject to, or at risk of, abuse, neglect or exploitation.

- Reporters can be anonymous.
- Reporters have protections under the Act.
- Reports can be made to our Helpline - by phone, email or online.

WHAT ROLE DOES THE ELDER ABUSE HELPLINE AND RESOURCE UNIT (EAHRU) HAVE WITH THE ADC?

EAHRU is now part of the ADC, and have expanded their functions to include adults with disability. Because of this merge and expansion, the helpline is now called the **NSW Ageing and Disability Abuse Helpline**. The number remains the same (**1800 628 221**).

The ADC will continue the delivery of training and inter-agency collaboratives that were established by EAHRU, and are working to have the same programs available for colleagues and stakeholders working with adults with disability.

CONTACT INFORMATION

The Ageing and Disability Abuse Helpline number is **1800 628 225 (M-F, 9-5)**.

You can also email reports to the helpline staff on nswadc@adc.nsw.gov.au

For general enquiries or if you would like the ADC team to attend an upcoming forum, please email commissioner@adc.nsw.gov.au

To download flyers and other resources, please visit the website www.ageingdisabilitycommission.nsw.gov.au