

Summary of recommendations

Recommendation 1

28

That the NSW Government embrace a comprehensive, coordinated and ambitious approach to elder abuse with the following elements:

- a rights based framework that empowers older people and upholds their autonomy, dignity and right to self-determination
- a major focus on prevention and community engagement
- legislative reform to better safeguard enduring powers of attorney and to establish a Public Advocate with powers of investigation
- an ambitious training plan to enable service providers to identify and respond appropriately to abuse
- an active commitment to building the evidence base for policy
- an enhanced role for the NSW Elder Abuse Helpline and Resource Unit.

Recommendation 2

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That the NSW Government make a significant new investment of resources in the prevention of elder abuse. This must involve the development and funding of a new prevention framework that provides for:

- substantially enhanced primary prevention, community education, awareness and engagement, carer support and later life planning initiatives
- specific resources for strategies targeting culturally and linguistically diverse and Indigenous communities and engagement with Multicultural NSW and Aboriginal Affairs NSW.

Recommendation 3

73

That the NSW Steering Committee on the Prevention of Abuse of Older People meet at least quarterly in order to enhance accountability and drive the implementation of government policy.

Recommendation 4

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That in undertaking the three year review of the *NSW Interagency policy for preventing and responding to abuse of older people*, the NSW Government:

- explicitly consider the improvements to content recommended by stakeholders documented in our report, including with regard to duty of care, reporting requirements in respect of a crime, and privacy and confidentiality
- conduct further consultation on potential improvements with relevant government and non-government stakeholders
- develop a comprehensive strategy to ensure widespread promulgation of a revised policy
- ensure that service providers exercise their responsibilities under the policy.

Recommendation 5

75

That the Department of Family and Community Services and the NSW Ministry of Health develop and fund a comprehensive plan addressing the training needs of service providers, to enable better identification of and responses to abuse. The plan should address:

- the role of the NSW Elder Abuse Helpline and Resource Unit and other potential training providers
- the needs of the full range of service providers including general practitioners and other health professionals
- the potential for mandatory training for some service providers.

Recommendation 6**75**

That the NSW Government expand the role of the NSW Elder Abuse Helpline and Resource Unit to include:

- provision of case management and coordination
- consideration of Helpline operating hours, based on an assessment of demand
- adequate provision for culturally and linguistically diverse and Aboriginal clients.

Recommendation 7**101**

That the NSW Government, as a priority, introduce legislation to amend the *Powers of Attorney Act 2003* consistent with Victoria's *Powers of Attorney Act 2014*, thereby significantly enhancing safeguards in respect of enduring powers of attorney.

Recommendation 8**118**

That the NSW Government liaise with Law Society of New South Wales to request that the Society include a unit on the assessment of mental capacity in respect of substitute decision making, wills and property transactions in its Continuing Professional Development Program for legal practitioners.

Recommendation 9**119**

That the NSW Government fund the NSW Elder Abuse Helpline and Resource Unit to conduct information sessions with financial institutions to raise awareness of financial abuse and promote online training tools for staff such as Capacity Australia's training program to identify financial abuse.

Recommendation 10**141**

That the NSW Police Force establish a Vulnerable Community Support Officer in each Regional Command in New South Wales, with the position entailing training and support to front line officers, police response, liaison with local service providers and other government agencies, community education, awareness and engagement.

Recommendation 11**143**

That the NSW Government introduce legislation to establish a Public Advocate's Office along the lines of the Victorian model, with powers to investigate complaints and allegations about abuse, neglect and exploitation of vulnerable adults, to initiate its own investigations where it considers this warranted, and to promote and protect the rights of vulnerable adults at risk of abuse. Further, that the operation of the Office be reviewed after three years.