

General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2

Inquiry into Elder Abuse in New South Wales

Questions on Notice

Answers are to be returned to the Committee secretariat by 18 December 2015.

Seniors Rights Service (SRS) responses.

- 1. Does your organisation support the establishment of a Working with Vulnerable People Check? Or some other increased assessment of workers / carers? Or are there other options or examples from other jurisdictions?**

Seniors Rights Service supports improved training for people working with vulnerable older people. Part of that training could include a background check for individuals working with vulnerable older people. SRS would support this approach. SRS notes that police checks are already required for staff working at or professionals (such as educators) visiting aged care facilities or providing services to older people in their own homes.

Currently there are no checks on family or non-professional carers of older people looking after older people in their homes. We do not endorse a blanket check of this sort for several reasons including the additional resources that would be required that would be diverted from other worthy uses and the relatively small (though not necessarily insignificant) statistics of perpetrators of elder abuse coming from carers. However SRS does support a rapid response where complaints are made about the treatment of older people to any authority. Once a complaint has been received the person accused of mistreating an older person would have a check conducted on them. If the check reveals an unsavory past then their role as carer should be examined closely with a view to termination of that role and other appropriate support provided to the older person. So, rather than a large bureaucracy devoted to checks of older peoples' carers, SRS would support an expansion of the Police Vulnerable Persons Officers, with supporting civil staff to respond quickly and professionally to reports of mistreatment of older people by those designated to look after them.