

Answers to Questions on notice and supplementary questions – Assistant Commissioner Denis Clifford, NSW Police Force – received 5 April 2016.

- A search of COPS conducted on 23 March 2016 found that there had been 2063 reported incidents of elder abuse in the 2014-15 financial year. These involved 'assault' (1,456 incidents) or 'offences against the person – other' (607 incidents). This category comprised almost completely of intimidation and harassment offences, with two recorded incidents of kidnapping.
- Assistant Commissioner Clifford is the Corporate Sponsor for Vulnerable Communities. Each of the six geographic NSWPF regions has a senior officer who is appointed the Region Sponsor for the Vulnerable Communities portfolio. These senior officers are part of a network designed to provide support to operational police on any issues relating to this portfolio.
- The Commander of The Hills Local Area Command (LAC) Superintendent Critchlow, has chosen to create a dedicated Vulnerable Communities Support Officer using an existing general duties position from within his command.
- Multi-disciplinary approach to addressing elder abuse: This has been the direction taken for domestic and family violence, mental health and child protection. Police's view is that a coordinated, multi-agency approach to social justice issues is significantly more effective than agencies working in isolation.
- Management of elder abuse cases where the victim doesn't wish to press charges: Police adhere to the DPP Prosecution Guidelines for determining whether it is in the public interest to commence or continue criminal proceedings. The victim's wishes are a factor in making that decision. Police bear the onus of proving that an offence has been committed beyond a reasonable doubt. If police are unsuccessful at identifying enough evidence for a prosecution and the victim does not wish to press charges the attending police are able to provide details of referral services where available.
- Police agree that the rate of reporting would not accurately reflect the rate of offending against older people. The under-reporting of these matters has many causes, including that the offender is a family member or primary carer. This may be compounded for victims from a culturally or linguistically diverse background. The best way to increase the number of prosecutions is to increase the rate of reporting.
- Police are adequately equipped to investigate reports of violence against older people and people with a disability.
- Police sees merit in implementing a similar program to the Victorian 'Disability and Family Violence Crisis Response' program, particularly if this was part of a coordinated, multi-agency approach.
- Student police officers receive instruction in providing information and support to witnesses and victims when they are required to attend court to give evidence and this is applicable to vulnerable persons going through the judicial process. Police prosecutors also conference with witnesses prior to a hearing and there is a Witness Preparation Guide.