

Regional Queensland to get more elder abuse support services

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MORE FUNDING: The Queensland Government is putting more dollars into the regions to support further elder abuse services.

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MACKAY, Rockhampton, Gladstone, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast are to get a new seniors legal and support service by early 2018.

Queensland's Minister for Seniors Coralee O'Rourke has announced \$2.1 million will be spent over the next three years to establish the services through Relationships Australia Queensland.

These services will be in addition to the existing legal and social worker support services provided by Community Legal Centres Queensland which are located in most of these regional centres.

"The Palaszczuk Government is committed to ensuring seniors have access to the support services they need, and these new regional support services will provide the information, support and referrals local seniors need," Mrs O'Rourke said.

"This will add to the already well-established services that are currently operating in Brisbane, Toowoomba, Hervey Bay, Townsville and Cairns.

"Relationships Australia Queensland has a long history of supporting family relationships, and increasing experience in supporting seniors in particular, making them an ideal organisation to deliver our new support services for seniors."

How will it work?

Relationships Australia chief executive officer Dr Ian Law said the services will be delivered through a multi-disciplinary approach.

"We want to make sure we have a case management approach," Dr Law said.

"We've got to mine for risk assessments and single case plans, and then to make sure we can provide a range of services or link people in with a range of services, depending on their needs.

"That might mean anything from mediation and counselling, to legal advice. It's a multi-dimensional approach rather than just one single way of treating or dealing with people's issues because people are complex and the problems are complex."

A waiting game

CLLQ acting director Rosslyn Monro said she was unsure just how these new services will work with the services already provided by her organisation.

"We are yet to really understand the full details and the implications of this announcement, particularly on how they might impact the services that our member centres's offer," Ms Monro said.

"We know that from other work in community legal centres, having a wrap-around, holistic response in the community on those really difficult issues is very helpful, so we would be hoping that whatever services are on the ground to deal with this, there is a collaborative approach," she added.

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Caxton Legal Centre director Scott McDougall said his organisation hadn't spoken to the government or RAQ about how it intends delivering the services.

"From the press release it appears there will be less emphasis on legal services and more on supporting relationships. That's how I have interpreted it," Mr McDougall said.

Dr Wall said RAQ will be referring people to local legal services, in the first instance, for advice and support.

"In terms of our brokerage, we would then have a legal service that we would be able to fund under the program, for legal matters that got more complex," Dr Wall said.

"We will be able to provide some specialist legal advice and support, and it may mean that a needs assessment would need to be done.

"For example, that wouldn't involve us being able to represent them in court, but it might be that we can help them to access the pre-existing legal resources that would help them to do that. It wouldn't be a replacement for that system, it would be an addition that they can get some specialist legal advice in relation to a specific issue," Dr Wall added.



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