

EMBARGOED until 3 PM 17 May

17 May 2022

A focus on elder abuse prevention in Toowoomba

Elder abuse prevention in the Toowoomba and Darling Downs region will be the focus for the Public Trustee as experts are brought together to start the conversation on preventing and supporting residents that are experiencing abuse.

The Public Trustee will lead a discussion with key service providers and academics, alongside many front-line professionals to discuss the issues relating to elder abuse and what can be done further to help protect some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

The Regional Community Forum in Toowoomba is the first of a series of regional forums which will bring key stakeholders together to consider collaborative options and improvements on how best support local areas to prevent elder abuse.

The Elder Abuse Prevention Unit identified an alarming 21.3 percent spike in elder abuse reports to the Elder Abuse Hotline when compared to previous reporting periods. While the cause in the spike of calls is not captured, the reporting data will help support the Public Trustee and local experts to explore the issue for the region in more detail and how to best take action to support the people of Toowoomba.

The Public Trustee and CEO Samay Zhouand said taking a place-based approach to local issues leads to the best outcomes for the community.

“We know that taking local approaches with the support of the community provides the best opportunity for the sector to explore regionally-focused solutions to issues,” he said.

While the spike in data is alarming, it is known that many cases of elder abuse go unreported, particularly due to the complex and intimate relationships between the older person and perpetrator.

Sadly, the majority of cases of elder abuse are perpetrated by a trusted individual of the older person such as direct family members, trusted friends, caregivers or the older person’s attorney.

“The Public Trustee hopes to identify and discuss effective ways of working together at a local level to address important issues relating to elder abuse and how to strengthen prevention strategies and support services in the local area.

“Local leaders, service providers and professionals are committed to preventing and protecting older people from abuse in the Toowoomba community.

“It’s our hope that through strong collaboration we will facilitate further opportunities for improvements to policies, services and awareness regarding elder abuse in our community,” Mr Zhouand said.

Ends.

Background:

Media interviews available with Regional Community Forum presenters:

- **Mr Samay Zhouand**, CEO and Public Trustee of Queensland
- **Uncle Wayne Fossey**, Chair of the Elder and Valued Persons Advisory Committee at University of Southern Queensland and Oversees Aboriginal Community Development in Toowoomba.
- **Dr Kathy Reeves**, Lecturer, elder abuse expert, University of Southern Queensland.
- **Ms Jody Currie**, Public Trustee Regional Director of the Toowoomba area.

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