

27 February 2017

The Executive Director  
Australian Law Reform Commission  
GPO Box 3708  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

E-mail: [info@alrc.gov.au](mailto:info@alrc.gov.au)

Dear Executive Director,

**RE: SUBMISSION ALRC - ELDER ABUSE INQUIRY**

I refer to the discussion paper published on 12 December 2016 and the eleven proposals put forward in the document. I thank you for the opportunity to again comment on this very important issue. The Anti-Discrimination Commission's (ADC) response is limited to the issue and role of Health-Justice Partnerships as our earlier submission covered the issues raised in our limited community consultation on Elder Abuse.

Whilst Health-Justice Partnerships are discussed in chapter 12 of the discussion paper and the research quoted and evaluations conducted by groups such as Justice Connect are set out, there is no proposal or recommendation in relation to the importance of Health-Justice Partnerships and their potential as both an early detection and timely resolution role in the area of Elder Abuse.

There are two places in the Northern Territory (NT) where Health-Justice Partnerships are being trialled. However, whilst both comment on their worthwhile role there is currently no recorded evaluation of the models. In Central Australia, the model focusses on domestic and family violence and in the Top End the model is a more general legal check.

However when speaking to other health services, such as renal services etc., it is apparent that there is a need to provide legal advice to patients where they are currently receiving treatment and feel comfortable. Further the comment from both legal providers and Indigenous Controlled Health Service is that they see a benefit not just to older people that may experience elder abuse but a role in training and educating health providers about Elder Abuse.

The importance of Health-Justice Partnerships as a model is that there is the ability to reach older people in places that they already attend to receive other health services. Service's that older Australian's trust.

Health-Justice Partnerships should be promoted both as a place where legal advice can be sought by older Australians in an environment they regard as safe and without having to travel to multiple destinations or have their story repeatedly told. Also as providing education about Elder Abuse, to Health professionals working in the health clinics, hospitals, General Practitioner clinics etc., about the early warning signs, what information can be shared with others and pathways to assist patients in obtaining legal options.

Health-Justice Partnerships serve a dual role, providing legal advice to those experiencing elder abuse, and education to those providing services. This is another tool in the toolbox of legal responses to combat Elder Abuse.

It is recommended that the role of adequately funded Health-Justice Partnerships be included as a proposal or recommendation or that the National Plan include the importance of them and the role they play in both providing legal advice to older Australians and education and training to health professionals in potentially a wide array of health service.

Please do not hesitate to contact me to explore any of the matters raised above.

Yours sincerely



Sally Sievers

Anti-Discrimination Commissioner

Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Commission