331. Queensland AIDS Council (on behalf of the National LGBTI Community Visitor Scheme Auspices' Network)

Name of organisation: Queensland AIDS Council (on behalf of the National LGBTI Community Visitor Scheme Auspices' Network)

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Proposal 2–2

Proposal 3–1

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The National LGBTI Community Visitor Scheme Auspices' Network strongly welcomes and support the proposal for the development of national guidelines. Volunteers with concerns about abuse or neglect of Community Visitor Scheme care recipients can experience distress and concern in the event of witnessing or learning of a situation of elder abuse impacting the person they visit.  They might therefore wish to report and act on their concerns. By providing national guidelines and training for volunteers this supports Community Visitor Scheme auspiced organisations to better support the volunteers within their roles. Nationally developed guidelines and training would also allow auspice staff to focus on the development of the program, while remaining confident that volunteers and recipients are well cared for.     In addition the network strongly recommends a clarification of wording in relation to point (b) above - rather than saying "provide policies and procedures for community visitors to refer care recipients to advocacy services or complaints mechanisms...etc' we recommend "provide policies and procedures for auspices to guide their community visitor volunteers in the provision of information to care recipients about advocacy services or complaints mechanisms...etc.'     It is very important that the visitor role is maintained as one of information provision around the main bodies that might take on and assist a case of elder abuse - so that the primary role of visitor of being a social companion (not a worker who provides a referral /linkage-) is maintained.  The volunteer should be directed in any national guidelines to report any concerns to their CVS coordinator who is their immediate supervisor for further actioning, such as further information provision/encouragement/assistance with referral and access into appropriate information and support services.

Community Visitors are trained volunteers who are matched with isolated elderly. Due to the profile of the clients who are eligible for the program, risk factors that may increase the potential for abuse of an older person are more relevant. It is important to make the volunteers aware about the signs and possible actions which they can take in case they have a concern. However, these volunteers are not trained advocates and should not act in that position. Advocating for people is a complex matter and it should be done by trained professionals. Volunteers are not trained to take more complex actions, and a good reporting system along with a strong working relationship between the volunteer, client and auspice should prevent any negligence. However, it should be the auspice responsibility to inform relevant authorities if the volunteer reported the issue and not the volunteer taking on solving the client’s problems as it could lead to multiply complication including disengagement from the service and possible further harm.

Proposal 11–10

The National LGBTI Community Visitor Scheme Auspices' Network agrees with the response put forward to this proposal by the Queensland Community Visitors Scheme Auspices Network.  That is, we agree and welcome this proposal for the scheme - however hold strong concerns that by introducing a second and completely distinct role with the title ‘Visitor’ that this is bound to cause confusion between aged care homes and Community Visitors Scheme participants who are already called ‘Visitors’.

As the main purpose of the Community Visitors Scheme is to decrease social isolation and become a friend to the recipient of the Community Visitors Scheme, this confusion also has the potential to cause significant problems in the successful introduction of an Official Visitor function and significant problems for the continued functioning of the Community Visitor Scheme.  There is concern that as the Official Visitor Scheme gets underway that there could be some misdirected friction experienced by CVS auspices in facilities - particularly those where a matter might have been raised.   This in turn could result in a reluctance - or outright refusal (as has been experienced in the past by some CVS auspices for other situations of misunderstanding the CVS program among residential care provider organisations)  to accept Community Visitor volunteers into their facility through lack of understanding as to the completely separate nature of Community Visitor Scheme and an Official Visitor scheme.

Proposal 11–11