

## Media Statement

28 March 2017

### **Disability services must be safe and secure for Victorians with a disability**

Recent reports in the media have drawn public attention to the ongoing issue of abuse, assault and neglect of people with a disability.

Mr Laurie Harkin AM, Disability Services Commissioner, says “The safety of people with a disability in disability services is an ongoing concern, with an increasing number of complaints received by my office relating to allegations of abuse, assault and neglect.”

“We know that disability service providers play a very personal role in people’s lives. These relationships must be made safe and secure for Victorians with a disability.”

The Disability Services Commissioner (DSC) is an independent body handling complaints about Victorian disability services.

DSC has conducted an increasing number of investigations over the past three years, as complaints relating to allegations of abuse, assault and neglect have increased from six to 21 per cent of all in-scope complaints received by the office.

Mr Harkin says, “Everybody has the right to access the justice system. My office will work with Victoria Police when we receive complaints that include a criminal element such as abuse.”

The Government’s November 2016 response to the *Parliamentary Inquiry into Abuse in Disability Services* committed to improving safeguards for Victorians with a disability, including stronger oversight powers for the Commissioner. These measures will facilitate better responses to and prevention of abuse and neglect of people with a disability.

Mr Harkin says “I encourage people to contact my office if they have a complaint about a Victorian disability service. People should feel confident to speak up and know that their complaint will be taken seriously.”

**For information on how DSC receives, assesses and handles complaints through resolution, conciliation and investigation, visit our website at [www.odsc.vic.gov.au](http://www.odsc.vic.gov.au).**

**Please contact 1300 728 187 with any enquiries.**