

Office of the Disability Services Commissioner, Victoria

NEWS RELEASE

5 October 2015

Media reports in ‘The Age’ newspaper this morning referring to Autism Spectrum Australia.

NOTE: To maintain privacy and to protect people who may be fearful of speaking, the Commissioner is legally prohibited from discussing any individual complaints. The following is not a comment on the individual details of any particular case.

The Victorian Disability Services Commissioner, Laurie Harkin AM said:

“The disability sector has greatly advanced choice and control for people with a disability, but as a sector and a community we have not yet fully achieved just and equal treatment.

“While the sector can deliver outstanding services, it is unfortunate that I still see vulnerable people who are treated unequally, unconscionably and without dignity in our community.

“I believe this reflects cultural challenges for some parts of the sector, but also for our society.

“I believe the sector and our community are well-intentioned, but we must strive further to improve the lives of people with a disability.

“That means supporting their strong voice and confidence to speak up if things are not right.

“Assault or abuse of clients by staff entrusted to care for people with a disability are unacceptable, and are one of the most disturbing issues in disability services.

“It devastates victims and undermines the confidence of other clients, families and staff in the disability system.

“A focus of my office is to build confidence and reduce the fear of adverse consequences for people to speak up against inappropriate behaviour.

“With the implementation of the NDIS, access to independent accessible complaints handling will be a critical safeguard.

“People with a disability, or a person on their behalf, can complain to the Disability Services Commissioner about disability services funded by the Department of Health and Human Services, National Disability Insurance Agency, or the Transport Accident Commission.”

For further information contact 1300 728 187