



## MEDIA RELEASE

# REGIONAL COMMUNITY PROVIDER TASC WELCOMES ROYAL COMMISSION CALL FOR MORE LEGAL AND ADVOCACY SUPPORT IN AGED CARE

TASC Legal and Social Justice Services (TASC National Limited), a long-standing community legal centre and advocacy provider in the Toowoomba, Roma and Ipswich regions, has welcomed calls made by the Aged Care Royal Commission for more advocacy and complaints mechanisms in the aged care sector.

“Abuse happens in regional facilities and in the community,” said TASC CEO Frances Klaassen OAM. “That’s what our experience running community legal services for 40 years has shown us. It is what we know from our advocacy services, which help give people a voice in speaking up for their rights and making complaints about services, including aged care.”

Ms Klaassen said TASC welcomes many of the recommendations made in this week’s final report from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. The report has urged the federal government to fast-track funding to address chronic gaps in services, as well as tackle the issues of abuse and neglect and provide safer ways for residents and families to make complaints and advocate for their rights.

“TASC supports the recommendation for an overhaul of the aged care legislation by 1 July 2023,” said Ms Klaassen, “which will involve bringing in new advocacy and complaints mechanisms and a list of rights for older people.

“We endorse more pathways for advocacy and ways to make complaints,” she added. “At TASC that is what we are funded to do. We have annual funding from the Queensland Government to deliver a **Seniors Legal and Advice Service**, which helps people experiencing elder abuse.

“Through this program we have been a lifeline for people in some really serious circumstances. This includes people who have been in serious neglect in aged care facilities, for example. It includes people who have been treated as if they were incapable of making their own decisions because they signed over their Enduring Power of Attorney and were deemed ‘incapacitated’”.



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Ms Klaassen said, “We have helped people fight for their rights and for them it has been life-changing. But there is still a big unmet need and, along with other advocacy organisations, we could achieve even more with more resources, more community awareness, and more support”.

According to Ms Klaassen, the Seniors Legal and Support Service is a success story that shows how advocacy in aged care settings and in the community can operate effectively.

“In this model, lawyers and social workers collaborate so that the person’s legal needs are considered while they also have access to personal support, counselling and referrals to other services,” she said.

“It shows how providers can work with individuals and families to safely manage complaints processes and lead to a positive outcome. We are mindful that funding is not the only answer – education and awareness-raising are vital – but it goes without saying that increasing funding for approaches like this would benefit senior people and their families.

“It would mean that existing programs, like the Seniors Legal and Support Service, could be expanded, even scaled up nationally. Greater coverage would mean the unmet need could be addressed and it would help prevent elder abuse at a broader level. This would be an absolutely fantastic outcome for older people now, and into the future”.

Ms Klaassen praised the Commissioner’s focus on human rights, saying that the report highlights the need to safeguard the human rights of people seeking and receiving aged care. These include the right to “*freedom from degrading or inhumane treatment, or any form of abuse*”, the “*right to liberty, freedom of movement and freedom from restraint*”, and “*the right to voice opinions and make complaints*”.

“These are fundamental rights and TASC strongly endorses the need for legislative reform and a list of rights for older people that will help protect people in our communities flourish and live with dignity, safety and a recognition of their deepest value,” she said.

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