

MEDIA RELEASE

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WOMEN LIVING WITH COGNITIVE DISABILITY FACE INCREASED RISK OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Alarming new figures by Community Living Association (CLA) indicate women who live with cognitive disability are 40 to 70 per cent more likely to experience domestic violence and violence from multiple perpetrators and over extended periods than women in the general population.

The statistics, which highlight the severity of this issue in Australia, have a number of organisations worried, with Queensland's peak advocate for the state's aged and people with disability expressing concerns for the safety of women living with a cognitive disability.

Queensland Aged and Disability Advocacy (QADA) CEO Geoff Rowe said the figures highlight a pressing need for further support for women with cognitive disabilities who are, or have been, a victim of domestic violence and sexual assault.

"The figures from Community Living Association are appalling and demonstrate the lack of recognition of women with cognitive disabilities who are highly vulnerable, but often not recognised or supported after they experience domestic violence or are sexually assaulted," Mr Rowe said.

"These women are unable to express or discuss the violence or assault to the appropriate authorities due to intellectual disabilities, autism, learning difficulties or acquired brain injury.

"We need to work together as a community to not only put an end to domestic violence and sexual assault but to ensure that those who are unable to speak up for themselves, are heard."

CLA Co-ordinator Morrie O'Connor said violence and abuse of women with cognitive disability is a very real issue and greater attention was needed in this space to protect those most vulnerable in our society.

"We need better responses from services across the board, including domestic violence support services and the police to better identify, support and achieve justice for women with cognitive disability who have been victims of abuse," Ms O'Connor said.

"CLA is only one service in Queensland to support people with cognitive disabilities who experience sexual and other violence. This service, WWILD Sexual Violence Prevention is based in Brisbane but serves the entire state. It is currently at case load capacity and may be at risk of losing funding to support vital outreach."

To launch the position paper CLA Inc. and co-sponsors, QADA, QDN, Micah Projects, ASID and WWILD are holding a Discussion Forum to hear the experience of survivors and to discuss the impacts and experiences of women living with cognitive disability who have experienced domestic violence.

To register for the forum, go to <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/women-with-cognitive-disability-domestic-violence-forum-tickets-24861534519>

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