

## Question on Notice

No. 1437

Asked on 18 August 2010

MS GRACE asked the Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women (MS STRUTHERS)—

### QUESTION

Will the Minister advise what benefits the Seniors Enquiry Line will provide to seniors in my electorate of Brisbane Central?

### ANSWER

The Seniors Enquiry Line was established in 1999 in response to Queensland Government research which identified the need for a senior's specific telephone information and referral service. As part of the ageing strategy 'Everyone's Future: Queensland's Forward Plan on Ageing', seniors identified the need for a personalised service, and greater access to information on senior specific community and government services.

Seniors provided positive feedback about the Seniors Enquiry Line at the regional consultation forums held across the State in late 2010 which informed the development of the Positively Ageless, Queensland Seniors Strategy 2010–20. The need for continued promotion to broaden community awareness of the line was also highlighted.

In 2009–10, the Queensland Government investment was \$0.283 million to Lifeline Brisbane to fund the Seniors Enquiry Line.

In 2010–11, the Queensland Government has made an additional \$50,000 available for the promotion of the Seniors Enquiry Line in the form of a wallet sized card displaying the Seniors Enquiry Line phone number.

The Seniors Enquiry Line, operated by Lifeline Queensland, provides information and referrals on concessions, legal issues, independent living, health, finance, computers, transport, retirement and social activities. The service utilises Information Officers who provide personalised responses to seniors' enquiries.

Seniors Enquiry Line can be contacted on 1300 135 500, weekdays from 9:00am to 5.00pm for the cost of a local call from anywhere in the State. Enquiries can also be made via email. The Seniors Enquiry Line website features an online resource directory, information and links to seniors related topics as well as an events calendar and interactive bulletin board.

This service model fits with the expressed preference of older people to have a 'real person' to talk to rather than a set of automated responses which seniors indicate can be frustrating and difficult to work through.

All Seniors Enquiry Line Information Officers undertake the Lifeline Telephone Counselling Course that provides them with the skills to communicate effectively with their callers and stabilise those in crisis. Assistance is provided in the following ways:

- direct provision of information and referrals at the time of call
- follow up provision of information and referrals based on research when the initial enquiry cannot be answered at the time of the call

- direct contact (with caller consent) on behalf of a caller with government and non-government services to ascertain information on the callers behalf
- direct contact on behalf of a caller (with caller consent) with community services/ local councils to assist with the organisation of transport, letter writing and the filling out of forms
- detailed discussion with callers who are dealing with complex issues and may need assistance with identifying and prioritising their options and course of action.

I thank the Honourable Member for her support of Queensland seniors.