

Government response - *Preserving the financial futures of vulnerable Queenslanders: A Review of the Public Trustee fees, charges and practices* - March 2021

On 22 January 2021, the report by the Public Advocate - *Preserving the financial futures of vulnerable Queenslanders: A Review of the Public Trustee fees, charges and practices* (Public Advocate's Report) was provided to the Attorney General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, the Honourable Shannon Fentiman MP.

The report details the findings of the Public Advocate's examination of various aspects of the Public Trustee including the Public Trustee's fees and charges.

The Government thanks the Public Advocate for the report which contributes to her important statutory role to advocate for the rights of adults with impaired decision-making capacity in Queensland.

The Public Trustee provides financial management services to more than 10,000 Queenslanders each year, including more than 9,300 people under an administration appointment by the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT).

The Public Advocate's Report found that many of the Public Trustee's customers appear to receive a high level of service for very little or no cost. However, the Report has also identified some opportunities for improvement in the way the Public Trustee engages with its customers, and it is clear that the agency needs to be more transparent about its fees and charges.

The Report makes 32 recommendations which are broad ranging and relate to the Public Trustee's fees and charges, community service obligations, investment practices and legal services.

The majority of the recommendations (23) are primarily the responsibility of the Public Trustee to implement. The Public Trustee has provided a comprehensive response to the Public Advocate's Report and the recommendations that can be found in the appendices to the Report. The Government understands that a review of the Public Trustee's fees and charges is already underway and that many other reforms have already been implemented or are being implemented through the Public Trustee's Customer First Agenda.

Of the remaining 10 recommendations (including one recommendation for which Government and the Public Trustee have joint responsibility), the Government:

- has accepted one recommendation (**recommendation 30**);
- supports in principle five recommendations (recommendations **3, 6, 11, 15 and 29**); and
- will further consider four recommendations (**recommendations 24 (c) (jointly with the Public Trustee), 26, 31 and 32**).

The Public Trustee operates in a complex environment and a number of these recommendations require further consideration and consultation with stakeholders. Government will work in consultation with the Public Advocate and the Public Trustee to consider these recommendations.

As a first step the Government has committed to the establishment of a Public Trustee Board, that will have an advisory and monitoring function. This is in response to **recommendation 30** of the Public Advocate's report that Government should consider whether the Public Trustee and its clients would benefit from additional oversight mechanisms. **(End)**