

New leadership for Advocare as demand for services increases

Advocare has appointed Ms Etta Palumbo as Chief Executive Officer.

Ms Palumbo will commence in the role in March at a time when demand for Advocare's advocacy services over issues around elder abuse and the rights of older people in aged care homes is at an all-time high after steadily increasing in recent years.

Advocare's Chairman, Brian O'Keefe, said Ms Palumbo would lead the continued development of the organisation's advocacy support services for older West Australians while also working to create greater public awareness of the rights of older people in the community.

"Recently, Advocare has taken steps to strengthen our advocacy services to ensure we are giving the best possible support to those older people who need us," Mr O'Keefe said.

"We are receiving an unprecedented number of requests for support both from residents of aged care homes and their families and from older West Australians who are experiencing elder abuse.

"This demand will continue to increase as public awareness of the rights of older people in our community also continues to increase. Advocare is in a very strong position to meet the demand for our services and we are delighted to have someone of Etta's calibre to lead our organisation at this very important and challenging time."

Ms Palumbo joins Advocare after 12 years with the Public Trustee in Western Australia and over 30 years' experience across professional services, government and not for profit sectors. She is a committee member of the WA Alliance for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and the Advanced Care Planning Agency Consortium. She therefore brings to Advocare a detailed understanding of issues affecting older West Australians and extensive knowledge of guardianship and administration laws and experience handling many issues arising from older people having to navigate the complex aged care system.

Ms Palumbo said she did not underestimate the challenges ahead.

"With the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety due to report this month, the struggling aged care sector, tragic COVID related deaths, loneliness and isolation endured by older people in aged care, financial and other types of elder abuse continuing to increase, there is much work to do," she said.

"Advocacy will continue to play an increasingly important role in our society – seldom do people deliberately set out to cause harm or distress to others, particularly older people. Issues often stem from misinformation, misunderstanding, a clash of interests or lack of time or resources, amongst other things.

"I aim to build on what Advocare has achieved and to continue to deliver advocacy services that are relevant, sustainable and of the highest standards and to use research and public awareness to make a lasting difference in empowering older West Australians."

Mr O'Keefe thanked the staff of Advocare, led by Acting CEO Justine Martyr, for continuing to provide excellent service and outcomes for older West Australians following the departure of outgoing CEO Diedre Timms last year.

“Everyone at Advocare, Board, staff and volunteers, is looking forward to an exciting new chapter in the life of our organisation,” Mr O’Keefe said.

About Advocare.

Advocare provides in person and telephone advocacy services (Telephone: 1800 655 566) including the Elder Abuse Help Line (Telephone: 1300 724 679) and the Community Volunteers Scheme which connects one-to-one volunteers with older people who are lonely or socially isolated and whose quality of life would be improved by positive engagement and companionship. Advocare is also the WA member of the national Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN), which aims to achieve national access and consistency in advocacy services and a collective voice for systemic change in Commonwealth funded aged care services.

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