

EAAA Statement on COVID-19

At the commencement of this statement, the EAAA board members wish to express our sympathies to the families and communities whose older members have already passed away as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We recognise that the COVID-19 pandemic may have profound negative impacts on older persons' enjoyment of their social, economic and health rights. Extreme social isolation may be experienced as an unintended consequence flowing from social distancing measures. Older persons may not as easily bounce back from financial loss including recouping money they have loaned to persons close to them to help them out in this crisis. They may face a disproportionate risk of serious and life-threatening complications from the virus and their health rights may be under greater threat when living in higher-risk environments such as aged care facilities.

Not every older person will be impacted by the pandemic in this way. The virus affects everyone in both common and unique ways. For older persons who have increased vulnerabilities including financial disadvantage, living remotely, care support needs, digital exclusion; they may experience greater challenges in making it through this pandemic.

We are deeply concerned that some of the pre-existing risk factors for elder abuse may become amplified during the pandemic at the same time those noticing the signs of elder abuse are not there to see it. This calls for greater awareness by everyone of what elder abuse is, how to prevent it and how to respond to it. **Compass, Australia's online guide about elder abuse, has useful information about how to recognise, prevent and respond to elder abuse.**

Specifically, during this pandemic, elder abuse may be recognised in these situations:

- Unnecessary levels of isolation that go beyond government restrictions
- Preventing access to potential supports and modes of communication (phone, internet)
- Unreasonable cancelling of care supports
- Misinformation causing further anxiety and fear
- Requests for sums of money to pay for unspecified items
- Threatening to leave the older person without social or care supports
- Pressure around how to make a will, power of attorney document or advanced care planning document
- Health treatment that discriminates solely based on age or disability

At a time when Government is calling for everyone to be a part of saving lives by following social distancing requirements, EAAA is calling for everyone to become a part of the fight to eliminate elder abuse. This can be done by being an active voice about elder abuse, promoting the **Compass website** and encouraging those who have concerns to call the national helpline **1800 ELDERHelp (1800 353 374)**.

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