

MEDIA RELEASE
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WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY **15TH JUNE 2021**

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) takes place annually on 15 June. Officially recognised by the United Nations General Assembly back in December 2011.

The day is designed to raise awareness of elder abuse, and to unite in our efforts to stamp out the physical, financial, and mental abuse that too many of our older citizens experience.

Elder Abuse Action Australia (EAAA) believe that around 10% of older Australians experience elder abuse, the majority in their own homes and from a trusted person.

With current numbers of older people in this country, that equates to nearly half a million people who are at risk and/or experiencing a form of elder abuse.

What is elder abuse?

It is important to note that when it comes to elder abuse, it is more than just physical abuse experienced.

According to the Australian Law Reform Commission report into elder abuse in 2017, **the most common forms are financial and psychological abuse**. The perpetrators of this type of abuse are most often people that the older person trusts – friends, helpers or family members such as children and grandchildren.

Often the older person doesn't realise that what they're experiencing is elder abuse - they talk about feeling taken advantage of - not realising how truly manipulative and underhanded it can be. Due to the complexity of the issue, some older people are also unwilling, or unable, to acknowledge that their loved one is being abusive.

And likewise, many perpetrators of elder abuse are unaware that some of their actions constitute abuse. There is a lack of education and awareness, underpinned with systematic ageism, that means these behaviours go unnoticed, unreported and unpunished.

Support needed for all older Australians, not just those in residential aged care

While the Royal Commission exposed the extensive and appalling treatment of older Australians in residential care, abuse of older people is not confined to residential care.

Around 93% of older Australians remain living at home, so the majority experience elder abuse outside the aged care system.

EAAA welcomes the budget allocation of almost \$18 billion over five years for the aged care sector, and the additional 80,000 home care packages. Most older Australians prefer to stay in their own homes. It's everybody's business to recognise, respond and more importantly prevent abuse from occurring.

The EAAA is urgently calling for:

- funding and for stronger and better aged care system that protects vulnerable older people who are living at home and in care
- support for community education programs
- national harmonisation of laws and the implementation of a mandatory register for enduring powers of attorney
- a new Aged Care Act based on a human rights framework

According to Diedre Timms, Co-Chair EAAA, "A multifaceted, national response is needed that encompasses both the health and social sectors of our society. With elder abuse taking various forms, it's imperative that all of society understands exactly what elder abuse is and that if they see, or know, it is taking place, they help in the identification and reporting of this problem, as opposed to leaving the onus squarely on the older person."

Fellow Co-Chair, Russell Westacott concurs, "Funding for specific elder abuse programs and services needs to be a priority to help tackle elder abuse in our community where it is happening. We need to be able to offer older Australians' support and targeted services when they need it."

EAAA Co-Chairs, Russell Westacott and Diedre Timms are available for comment.

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[About Elder Abuse Action Australia](#)

<https://eaaa.org.au/>

The Elder Abuse Action Australia (EAAA) is the national advocate for eliminating elder abuse. Funded by the Attorney General's office, EAAA aims to address elder abuse and protect the rights of older Australians at both the grassroots and macro level.

EAAA believes in the rights of older Australians and our actions seek to eliminate elder abuse.

Our campaigns, advocacy and policy development positively impact the lives of older Australians and their families, our communities and broader society.

We work with State and Territory bodies and authorities, sharing and co-ordinating information to develop a national understanding, framework and response for elder abuse.

Our mission: Be a national voice for action that eliminates elder abuse

Our vision: A society that respects and values older Australians, and is free from elder abuse

Our commitment

- Social justice and the rights of older people
- Respect for difference and inclusion
- Community collaboration to eliminate elder abuse
- Accountability and integrity
- Evidence-based practice and research
- Innovation and forward thinking