

MEDIA RELEASE
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WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY **15TH JUNE 2022**

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) takes place annually on 15 June, with the date being 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, often by a family member. Elder abuse can take the form of psychological abuse, neglect, financial abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse.

Elder Abuse Action Australia (EAAA) is the national voice dedicated to ending the abuse and neglect of older people across Australia. Following the release of the National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study, EAAA is appalled by the figures showing that **15% of older Australians reported being abused** in the past 12 months prior to being surveyed between February and May 2020.

With the current population of people aged 65 and over, this equates to **600,000 people** who are at risk and/or experiencing a form of elder abuse.

Bev Lange, Executive Director EAAA states *"In recognising WEAAD, Australia needs to reconsider how we treat and respond to older people. Perpetrators of elder abuse are often family members, mostly adult children. The abuse and neglect of older people is a shameful reflection on our nation and will continue to worsen unless urgent action is taken. The number of older people is set to double in the next 25 years. The fact that we need to have an awareness day, that our organisation needs to even exist, is indicative of the scale of this abhorrent social issue."*

What exactly is elder abuse?

Abuse and neglect of older people are hidden social issues. They are not talked about and not well understood within wider society. Prior to the release of the prevalence study, people who work in the elder abuse prevention and support fields often talked about prevalence of about 10%, based on the knowledge of data in countries with similar demographics. But 15% prevalence requires both immediate and long-term actions.

61% of older people don't seek help when they are abused. Elder abuse often remains hidden, with the most frequent action taken to stop the abuse involving the victim speaking directly to the perpetrator.

The necessary action

A recently convened sector-wide summit identified the actions required to make meaningful progress. These are substantial and systemic matters that demand a deep level of commitment to address which include:

1. **Strengthen frontline services** - Create equitable access to services so that all older people can obtain support across prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery
2. **Invest in research** - Determine the economic impact of elder abuse and neglect so we understand its true cost, and address the gaps in the elder abuse prevalence study
3. **Improve education and focus on prevention** - Invest in primary prevention and awareness campaigns that address ageism, empower older people, and promote respect across the generations
4. **Harmonise laws and procedures** – Address the mess of inconsistency across states and government departments that generates confusion and unfairness for older people
5. **Give older people a voice** - Prioritise the stories and experiences of seniors through every step of the process towards an abuse-free Australia

According to Jenny Blakey, Co-Chair EAAA, *“World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is to affirm the value of older people and their rights to be respected. No-one at any age should be subject to abuse. Ageism can belittle older people and result in a lack of action to tackle elder abuse.”*

Fellow Co-Chair, Russell Westacott, *“Given elder abuse in Australia impacts 600,000 older people each year, WEAAD is an important day to shine a light on that sobering reality, however the whole of Australian society needs to do more now to eliminate this appalling abuse from our communities.”*

EAAA Co-Chairs, Russell Westacott and Jenny Blakey 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