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## Member Profile: Meg Dalling, ANZ’s Customer Vulnerability and Accessibility Lead

ANZ Bank has become one of EAAA’s newest members, a significant move by one of Australia’s big four banks. ANZ’s Customer Vulnerability and Accessibility Lead, Meg Dalling, says it is an opportunity to deepen the bank’s understanding of the elder abuse policy landscape” and “engage with other experts to share insights.” Ms Dalling says it is about demonstrating our ongoing commitment to limiting customer harm from financial abuse.

EAAA spoke with the ANZ’s Meg Dalling about what the bank is doing to identify, prevent and deal with elder abuse.

***When did the issue of financial elder abuse become a priority for ANZ?***

ANZ has long recognised the important role that banks play in supporting customers impacted by financial elder abuse, a serious issue which can impact anyone in the community. Older customers are more likely to live alone, be isolated or have a physical or cognitive impairment which can mean they rely on others for support, including with their banking. In some cases, sadly, this can open the door to abuse. We train frontline bank staff to identify ‘red flags’ of possible elder financial abuse: this may present as unusual financial transactions, the customer being accompanied into a branch by a new acquaintance to make a large withdrawal, by someone who does all the talking or by someone who appears to be coercing the customer into making transactions.

Financial elder abuse is recognised as a type of family violence, and often occurs alongside other types of abuse such as physical or emotional abuse so we need to respond with sensitivity and care. Where possible, frontline staff will also refer a customer to external support services such as the
[**Elder Abuse Helpline**](https://eapu.com.au/elder-abuse-helpline/).In exceptional cases such as where we are concerned an attorney is abusing their role and not acting in the interests of the customer, ANZ can engage with adult safeguarding agencies, which in some cases have investigative powers to look into elder financial abuse.



“*ANZ’s membership of EAAA is an opportunity to deepen
the Bank’s understanding of the elder abuse policy landscape and engage with other experts to share insights.”*

**Meg Dalling**

*ANZ’s Customer Vulnerability and Accessibility Lead*

***What are the challenges your organisation faces in combatting financial elder abuse as banking becomes more digital and older people aren’t seen as often face to face?***

We are seeing a rapid transition to digital in all aspects of our lives, not just banking. While this can bring improved access and convenience, it can also present new challenges for issues like financial elder abuse where we have traditionally relied on face-to-face interactions as a way of identifying and responding to potential misuse of a customer’s funds. We are exploring more closely how we might actively use our data to identify abuse - but there will be unique challenges associated with this. We know, for example, from the recent [**Elder Abuse Survey**](https://aifs.gov.au/projects/elder-abuse-research) that up to 28 per cent of older Australians have shared their pin or password with someone else to assist with their banking.
These informal support arrangements are not visible to banks and make it difficult for us to detect suspicious transactions. So, we need to consider customer behavioural factors as well as the changing landscape in digital banking.

***With Australia’s rapidly ageing population and a looming intergenerational wealth transfer, how confident are you that older people can be protected from financial abuse?***

Strong community support and connections are known protective factors against elder abuse, including financial abuse, so we must continue to prioritise these areas to protect vulnerable older Australians. Banks will continue to focus on training and building strong referral pathways for support, and increasingly also data analysis to help identify and support customers impacted by financial abuse.