

New Board members announced

EAAA's fourth Annual General Meeting was held on Thursday 23 November. As well as carrying out our regular AGM business, the meeting also elected three new Board members.

We were very fortunate to receive nominations from eight highly skilled and experienced candidates which led to a very close election.

We are delighted to welcome **Dr Rebecca Edwards**, **Dr Medha Gunawardana** and **Tara Simpson** to the EAAA Board. The Board is very grateful to all the nominees for their commitment to EAAA and the broader issue of ending the abuse of older people in Australia.

Following the AGM, the Board met to elect **Sue Leitch** and **Diedre Timms** as Co-Chairs and **Graeme Tolhurst** as Treasurer for the year ahead.

Directors continuing in their roles are **Helen Wallace** and **Vicki Woods**. **Brian-John Attard** will rejoin the board in February after a short leave of absence.

EAAA would like to record our enormous gratitude to our outgoing foundation Board members **Jenny Blakey**, **Russell Westacott** and **Carolanne Barkla**. The vision and energy of these three Directors have been a driving force behind the success of EAAA.

Read all about our new Board members:

Dr Rebecca Edwards



With 25 years in the legal sector, Rebecca brings extensive skills and management expertise to the EAAA Board. Having spent the majority of her career in rural and regional Australia, she brings a particular passion for working with country Australians.

Rebecca spent the first 10 years of her career working in private practice, for Victoria Legal Aid, for the UNICTR in Tanzania and for the Kimberley Land Council. She then dedicated a decade to shaping the future of the legal profession as a lecturer at La Trobe University, nurturing the next generation of lawyers.

Returning to the practice of law in 2017, Rebecca honed her expertise in elder abuse as the Principal Lawyer, then Manager and Principal Lawyer, at Seniors Rights Victoria. During those five years, she was the co-convenor of the National Older Person's Legal Services

Network (OPLSN), a member of Elder Abuse Action Australia's Advisory Group, a member of Victoria Police's Financial Elder Abuse pilot advisory committee, and a regular conference presenter on elder abuse topics.

She is now the Director of Legal Services at ARC Justice, a human rights organisation providing legal support to people in 13 local government areas in central and northern Victoria. She is particularly experienced in law relating to family violence, including elder abuse.

Rebecca completed her social justice themed PhD in early 2022. Her research analysed the experiences of unrepresented litigants offered cooling off periods in some mediations at VCAT.

Rebecca possesses a wealth of experience in corporate governance, consistently contributing to the community sector through active leadership roles in various organisations. She is also an excellent communicator, with valuable experience in strategic planning, stakeholder management and policy development.

Dr Medha Gunawardana



Dr Medha Gunawardana, (PhD) has worked extensively in the multicultural sector in Victoria for the past 5 years and is the Manager of Community Strengthening at Australian Multicultural Community Services (AMCS).

She is a current Board member of the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV) and serves as the Chair of ECCV's Positive Ageing and Aged Care Policy Advisory Committee.

Medha is an active cultural and community development volunteer and leader in multiculturalism and is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all Australians, including newly emerging communities.

She is actively engaging in Australia's national elder abuse prevention responses through a range of Federal, State, Local and Philanthropic funding, and advisory groups. In addition, Medha is active in raising awareness of elder abuse, prevention, early intervention and response strategies among multicultural community leaders, groups and members.

She possesses an unwavering passion for community development projects aimed at creating positive impacts on the lives of multicultural communities.

Tara Simpson



Tara is a legal practitioner with 30 years of experience. She worked in private practice for 10 years and then worked for the Legal Services Commission of South Australia (“The Commission”), for 20 years.

During this period, she represented the Commission at the Alliance for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (APEA), South Australia. Also, while employed at the Commission, she established and managed the South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (SACAT) Legal Representation Scheme

which provided legal representation to clients detained under the Mental Health Act or subject to an order under the Guardianship and Administration Act.

Tara headed the team that provided specialist legal advice and representation on behalf of people living with a disability before the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) with respect to appeals under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Tara currently sits on the Human Rights Coercion Reduction Committee established by the South Australian Chief Psychiatrist in 2021 which he currently chairs. Originally appointed to the Committee due to her experience in mental health, she now sits on the committee as a representative of the Aged Rights Advocacy Services (ARAS).

She was first appointed by the Minister for Health and Wellbeing to the Prescribed Psychiatric Treatment Panel in 2017 and she was subsequently reappointed by the Minister for her second 5-year term in 2023. The Panel is tasked with overseeing the use of Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) in South Australia.

During Tara’s first term on the Panel, The Minister also appointed her to the Voluntary Assisted Dying Implementation Taskforce in 2021 to assist with the smooth introduction of South Australia’s Voluntary Assisted Dying Legislation enacted early 2023. During her spare time, Tara is also a consumer representative for the Northern Adelaide Local Health Network (NAHLN).

Tara’s main passion is in demystifying elder law and human rights to older South Australians.