

WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY

15 June 2024

Each year on 15 June, communities across the globe mark World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) to acknowledge the abuse, neglect and exploitation of older people.

Elder Abuse Action Australia (EAAA) joins with these communities to advocate for the rights and dignity of older people, emphasising the importance of respect, care and protection.

This year the United Nations theme for WEAAD is '*Spotlight on Older Persons in Emergencies*'. The theme calls on governments, international donors, organisations, and communities to prioritise the safety and well-being of older persons in their emergency preparedness and response strategies.

It encourages the development of inclusive policies that ensure older persons are not overlooked during crises. This includes creating accessible evacuation plans, ensuring continuity of healthcare services, and providing targeted support to prevent isolation and abuse.

WEAAD 2024 also emphasises the importance of education and training for emergency responders, caregivers, and the public. By increasing awareness about the specific challenges faced by older persons in emergencies, we can foster a more inclusive and protective environment.

Abuse of older people in Australia

Abuse can take different forms including psychological, financial, physical and sexual abuse and neglect. Raising awareness and educating the public on this issue is paramount to safeguarding our ageing population.

EAAA is the national voice dedicated to ending the abuse and neglect of older people across Australia.

The National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study showed that **15% of older Australians reported being abused** in the 12 months before being surveyed between February and May 2020.

Considering the number of Australians aged 65 and over, **this equates to 600,000 people** or 1 in 6 older people who are at risk or may be experiencing a form of elder abuse. And unfortunately, these are only the ones who have reported abuse – EAAA believes the real number could be much higher. Older people may also be experiencing more than one form of abuse.

EAAA Co-Chair Sue Leitch explains that support of older people must be done with the needs and rights of the person in mind:

We all need support at times, sometimes a little and sometimes a lot. What we must remember as a community is that support needs to be respectful and allow older people to maintain control and autonomy as much as possible.

Abuse occurs when an older person is taken advantage of, belittled, subject to coercion, or fraud. They may lose control of their finances or their wellbeing due to the actions of others. This could be through a family member or someone very close, and it may be through paternalistic sentiments gone too far.

Good support is acknowledging autonomy and control, meaningful, respectful and with the wishes and intentions of the older person front and centre. I would urge everyone to access tools to ensure your wishes are clear stated such as those on [Compass](#).

Diedre Timms, EAAA Co-Chair shared this thought:

Elder abuse is everybody's business. So, let's make today the day. If you see it, call it out. If you know people perpetrating it, ask them to stop. We all need to stand up for older people, and respect them for their contributions past, present and future.

Turn Up The Volume!

As part of our commitment to raising awareness of elder abuse, EAAA and co-host Aged Rights Advocacy Service (ARAS) are looking forward to ***Turn Up the Volume!*** which is scheduled for 22-24 July in Adelaide.

This event will provide a crucial platform for speakers to share their insights and encourage delegates to continue their work, drive change, and be voices for action.

We urge anyone who wants to uphold the rights of older people to be part of this rally cry - join us at the conference by registering [HERE](#).

EAAA challenges ageism and discrimination and respects the agency of every person. This World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, we are calling on everyone to turn up the volume for the principles of equality and fairness for all.

Co-Chairs Sue Leitch and Diedre Timms are available for comment. Please email diane@eaaa.org.au for further information.

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About Elder Abuse Action Australia

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

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 levels.

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 coordinating 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.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters, and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging. EAAA is committed to ensuring equitable and inclusive responses to end elder abuse for people with diverse characteristics and life experiences.