

MEDIA RELEASE

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CONFERENCE WRAPS UP WITH STRONG CALLS FOR ACTION

After their two-day conference *Turn Up The Volume!* Elder Abuse Action Australia (EAAA) and co-host Aged Rights Advocacy Service (ARAS) concluded that the event was a resounding success.

The event, held at the Adelaide Convention Centre from 22-24 July, brought together experts, advocates and community members to address the critical issue of elder abuse, promoting a future where older Australians live with dignity and respect.

Highlights and findings

The conference featured a series of sessions, panels and keynote speeches highlighting the urgent need to tackle ageism and elder abuse. Highlights and findings across the two days will be unpacked and shared over the coming weeks. Some key topics raised include:

- *Amplifying the voices of older people* – ensure we're hearing these voices to shape policies and practices; hear them and believe them, particularly concerning sexual abuse
- *Addressing ageism* – an 'acceptable' form of discrimination that must be tackled both through a change of policy and a change of mindset
- *Barriers to reporting* – the issues of language can prevent older people from seeking help. For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people don't use the word abuse so speaking about feelings is more helpful
- *Enhancing prevention* – a complex issue that requires multifaceted solutions and better frameworks for support
- *Strengthening legal frameworks* – stronger legal protections and robust laws are required for older people
- *Community and cultural engagement* – creating culturally safe spaces and engaging appropriately with diverse communities.

Quotes from keynotes

Excellent and thought-provoking presentations from our day 1 keynote speakers set the stage for a powerful opening day. Some of the key points from their presentations were:

Jane Caro

- The parallels between sexual abuse and elder abuse are impossible to ignore
- Casual discrimination is on the same continuum as the most extreme forms of discrimination
- Be alert to attitudes of casual ageism and casual sexism which can limit people's ability to speak up when they are subjected to discrimination

- The fastest growing group among the homeless are women over 55. An estimated 400,000 women in Australia over 45 face this fate
- 60% of older single women rely on the age pension and over half of them live in income poverty
- When a group of people is identified according to a characteristic of the group it can remove the ability for individuals in the group to be taken seriously.

Anne Burgess

- Adult children often being the perpetrators of elder abuse – and the shame that subsequently went with an older person having to say that a family member was their abuser
- The need for a national register of Enduring Powers of Attorney
- The need for the voices of older people to be heard at every stage of proposed reform – and in everything that is designed for the future benefit of older people
- Ageism and burden language i.e. the everyday language that we use that denigrates older people in general, as in the “burden” of the ageing population, because there is an entitlement in younger generations that flows from that
- “Retirement” is another overused and misused descriptor with the connotation that someone has retired from life.

Robert Fitzgerald:

- The neglect of older people, often seen by the gradual decline in the level of care and support for the older person in their own home
- The lack of willingness of the broader population to talk about the rights of older people – which in turn is reflected in under-investment in systems of support for older people going forwards
- How people act, feel and think about someone simply based on the fact of their age
- Workplaces being open to accepting older people in their recruitment as they have much to offer
- Ageism in the media – how older people are referred to
- Ageism in the health care system – what services and choices are offered to older people
- Dignity and risk – we should support a will and preference system (not perceived best interest)
- Supported decision making – the aim of which is to enable an older person’s right to participate in decision making for as long as possible. This is only possible with appropriate supports e.g. Easy Read
- Breaches of fiduciary duty under an enduring power of attorney should be criminalised.

Launch of advertising campaign

The Attorney-General’s Department took the opportunity to launch its advertising campaign to combat elder abuse.

The campaign features a 30-second commercial and the tagline ‘*Ending the abuse of older people begins with a conversation*’.

More information and the commercial can be viewed on the [Compass website](#).

Poll results

A poll carried out at the end of day 2 showed that a national approach to providing elder abuse services that is equitable, appropriately funded and culturally appropriate, in particular for regional, remote and diverse populations was an overwhelming priority for delegates. This was followed by a call for harmonisation of national laws and registers.

Next steps and call to action

The conference was a powerful reminder that we all have a role to play in ending the abuse of older people.

As the conference concluded, delegates were urged to continue their advocacy and efforts to combat the abuse of older people. EAAA Executive Officer **Bev Lange** and CEO of ARAS **Carolanne Barkla** called on participants to take the knowledge and inspiration gained from the conference back to their communities – “Let’s turn our discussions into actions and create real, lasting change!”.

EAAA extends its gratitude to all speakers, sponsors and delegates for their contributions to the success of the conference.

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