STAND UP SPEAK OUT
27-29 JULY 2026

2026 AUSTRALIAN ELDER ABUSE CONFERENCE

Shattering the Silence on Elder Sexual Abuse

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EAAA Elder Abuse Action Australia

caxton COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE

ADAAustralia Your Aged and Disability Advocates

Why this conversation matters

Increased life expectancy (17% of people in QLD are over 65)

Elder Sexual Abuse is real NOT rare

Older victim/survivors are often disbelieved, discounted, dismissed

Older victim/survivors may have experienced recent SV and/or past SV

Sexual abuse is the least frequently reported & least substantiated form of elder abuse

We need to open up a discussion on this taboo subject

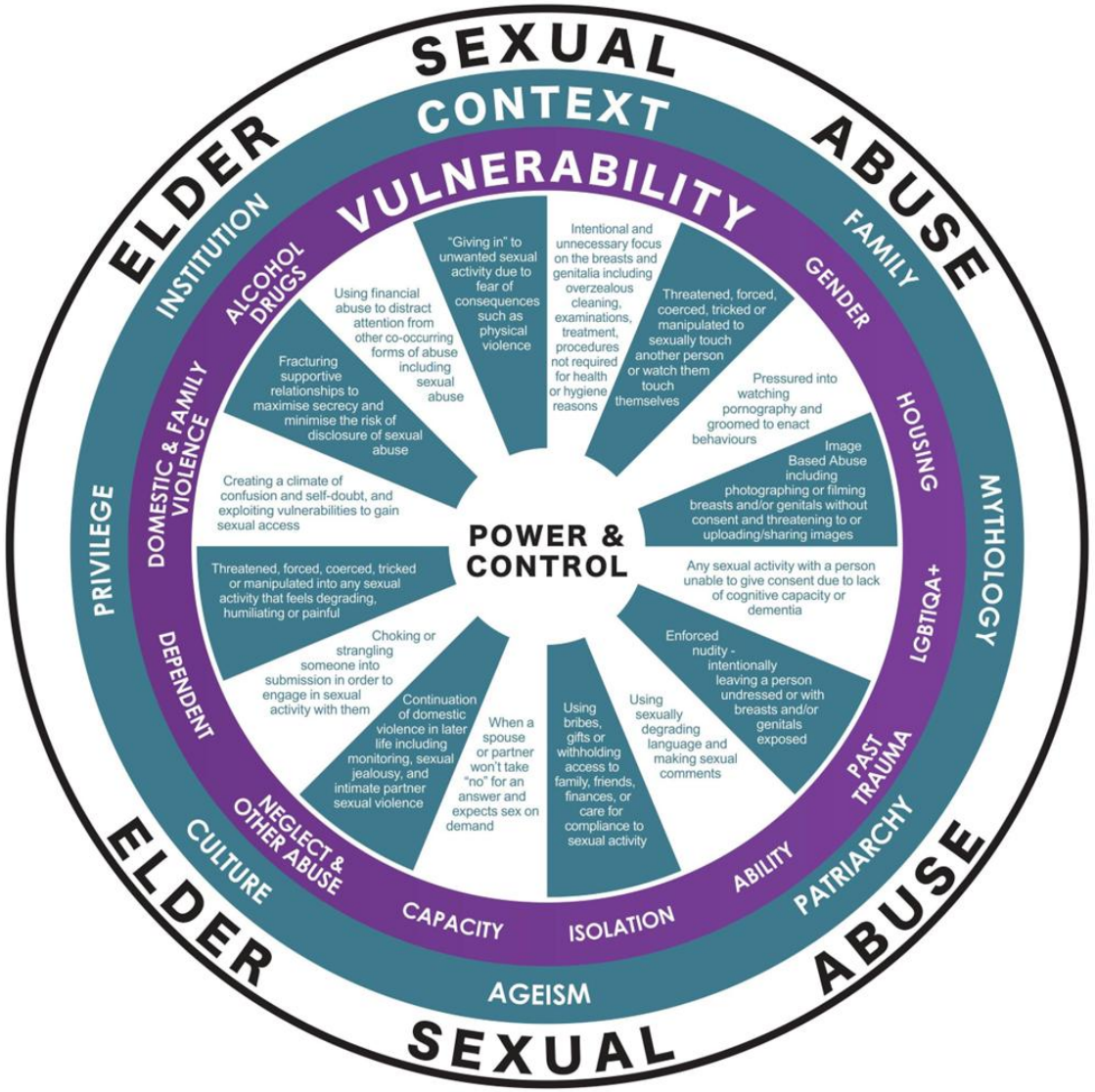
Elder Sexual Abuse Definition

Elder Sexual Abuse is any unwanted sexual behaviour, language, or activity that makes an older person feel uncomfortable, frightened, or threatened.

It is about power not sex. It can be anything sexual that a person does not consent to.

This includes when a person is afraid, sedated, asleep or has a disability that makes it difficult to understand what is happening.

Elder Sexual Abuse Power & Control Wheel



Di Macleod & Kerrin Bradfield (2018)

Inspired and adapted from the Power and Control Wheel, developed by Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, 202 East Superior Street, Duluth, Minnesota

Where does it happen?

- Public and semi public settings
- Institutional based settings
- Community based care
- Private homes

Elder Sexual Abuse
Who are the victims?

Overall, **women** are more likely to be victims of elder abuse
Most ‘main perpetrators’ of elder sexual abuse are **male**
Source: National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study (NEAPS 2020)

National analysis of offences (2009–2013) revealed that 92 % of elder sexual violence victims were female, while 85 % of offenders were male, with most victims aged 60–69
Source: Bows et al. (2020)

Sexual Violence
intersectionality and vulnerability

Oppression such as

- Sexism
- Racism
- Heterosexism
- Ableism
- Classism
- Ageism
- Exclusionism

Increases vulnerability for

- Indigenous women
- CALD women
- LGBTIQ folk
- Younger women
- Older women
- Financially marginalised women
- Women with a disability, mental health or AOD issues

Elder Sexual Abuse
who are the perpetrators?

Among familial perpetrators of elder sexual abuse, spouses and adult sons are the most common.

Other close relatives including grandsons, nephews and son-in-laws are also perpetrators

Source: National Center on Elder Abuse, Bureau of Justice Statistics (2021)

Co-occurring Behaviours in a Pattern of Coercive Control

Terminology

In the same long-term relationship, the same behaviour can attract different terms over time but there is NO difference in abuse perpetrated

- Teen dating violence
- Domestic violence
- Elder abuse

However, there is a difference between domestic violence grown old and domestic violence in later life.

How IPSV may differ for older women

- Socially
- Physically
- Mentally/emotionally/psychologically
- Partner’s control and enmeshment
- Systems response

Fear of not being believed

Fear of retaliation

By abuser

By family members

Lateral violence by cultural or religious group

Fear of moving

Not being able to live in own home anymore

Having to move to a different location

Abuser is the care giver, what now?

Fear of authority

Don't want to get self or anyone else into trouble

Abuser said no one will believe you

Previous negative interaction with systems

Barriers to disclosure and reporting

- Feeling ashamed
- Worried about causing trouble
- Credibility
- Lack of information
- Isolation
- Communication
- Systemic barriers

What can I do?

- Begin a conversation, shatter the silence, break down the barriers
- Create awareness, name and define the issue with co-workers and clients, unpack actual behaviours, ask questions sensitively
- Always include ESA in any awareness and education on Elder Abuse
- Distribute information, display posters in your workplace
- Ensure info in places older women go - shops, doctors, chemists, community halls, golf & bowls clubs, craft groups, senior expos
- Online, dating apps, radio, community newsletters
- Promote & collaborate with SV/DFV services in your community

Start by Believing

Thank you

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https://www.stopsexualviolence.com

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