

ELDER ABUSE

No longer hidden behind the curtain



Elder abuse is a form of family violence. It is any act or behaviour that results in harm to an older person, caused by someone they know or trust.

Elder abuse is hard to detect and seldom reported due to shame, concealment of the abuse and lack of understanding about seniors' rights.

ECLC is working with many partners to address elder abuse through early intervention, collaborative service responses, community education and prevention initiatives.

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WORLD ELDER
ABUSE AWARENESS
DAY JUNE 15



ECLC's Elder Abuse program provides legal and non-legal advice and support to older people, their families and support services when elder abuse is present or suspected.

Elder abuse often occurs in complex and highly distressing circumstances. ECLC identifies the key issues of the older person's situation and provides them with options for addressing the abuse and improving their safety and wellbeing.

ECLC assists older people with abuse concerns on matters such as:

- Intervention Orders
- Guardianship
- Powers of Attorney
- Support at VCAT hearings, and
- Being a victim of crime

ECLC also provides assistance and referrals for broader issues such as housing, health and aged care, financial counselling and financial assistance.

PERPETRATORS



adult children are the most common perpetrators

VICTIMS



● women
● men

MOST COMMON TYPES OF ELDER ABUSE SEEN BY ECLC

- 1 Psychological/Emotional Abuse
- 2 Financial Abuse

BETWEEN 2013 AND 2016, ECLC DELIVERED



OVER
200
training sessions



FOR OVER
2,000
professionals

Awareness-raising sessions to over

500



members
of the public



across the **Eastern Metropolitan Region.**

WORKING WITH PROFESSIONALS & AGENCIES

ECLC convenes the Eastern Elder Abuse Network (EEAN), which brings together over 100 professional members from a broad range of services including:

- Hospitals and health services
- Local government
- Aged care
- Family violence
- Government services
- Law
- Police
- Homelessness

ECLC and the EEAN have developed the **Elder Abuse Case Conferencing Site** to facilitate cross-agency collaboration and encourage better coordination of services. The innovative system allows agencies to share de-identified cases with other services and provides instant access to support, advice and referral for clients who are experiencing or at risk of elder abuse.

ECLC also **builds capacity across the sector** by delivering education and training for professionals at regional, state and national conferences and forums.

At a local level, ECLC **works closely with police** to improve frontline responses and documentation of elder abuse in the Eastern Metropolitan Region.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION & AWARENESS-RAISING

ECLC delivers **Matter of Trust workshops** to culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) communities across the Eastern Melbourne Region. Each workshop is designed and delivered in collaboration with cultural advisors from key partner organisations, particularly from the Indian, Greek and Chinese communities.

Participants engage in a group story-building activity, creating fictional narratives that explore situations where a person may be at risk of financial elder abuse, such as:

- Agreeing to act as a guarantor for family members' loans/debts
- Selling assets to live with adult children and their families
- Lack of financial independence for older people sponsored by their children to live in Australia

Representatives from key community services attend and provide information in response to the group story, which illustrates the collaborative approach required to address elder abuse.

FROM 'GRANDPARENTS' TO 'GRANDSERVANTS'

A fictional story created by Matter of Trust participants.

Ram and Sita moved from India to Melbourne 12 years ago to be closer to their adult children, Luv and Khushi, and their three grandchildren. They contributed financially to their children's mortgages and their grandchildren's school fees. Recently, Ram and Sita have become concerned about their finances.

RAM: We believed that investing in our children meant we were also investing in our own future. However, living costs in Australia are much higher than in India and it has affected our savings greatly.

Ram and Sita have felt exhausted by the amount of childcare they are expected to provide for the family. Despite this hard work, they've also noticed their adult children becoming distant and impatient with them around the house.

SITA: Ram and I care for the children after school. One day, I overheard Khushi saying that she wants some space from us. We've tried leaving the house on weekends but that can be tiring. Occasionally, we go to Luv's house but we're starting to feel unwelcome there, too.

Ram and Sita invested in the start-up costs of a new business run by Khushi's husband, Jeeth, believing this would improve their relationship. When Jeeth requested more money, Ram and Sita had to say 'no'.

RAM: Things at home have been getting worse. Jeeth often ignores us for days on end. We feel so guilty but we have nothing more to give. The other day, I heard Jeeth tell Khushi, 'if they won't help, they can get out!'

Days later, Ram and Sita returned from a shopping trip to find their suitcases packed and left outside Khushi's home. Their keys no longer fit the lock on the front door.

The group discusses which services may be able to help Ram and Sita, such as legal assistance, financial counselling, family mediation and other social services.

IMPROVING LAWS, IMPROVING LIVES

ECLC advocates on issues affecting older people by calling for significant and urgent law reform.

ECLC has contributed to the following government inquiries into elder abuse:

- Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence (2015)
- New South Wales Inquiry into Elder Abuse (2015)
- Australian Law Reform Commission Elder Abuse Inquiry (2016)

The corresponding reports and recommendations cited case studies, program models and other evidence produced by ECLC's Elder Abuse program.



NANCY'S STORY

Nancy, 91, is frail, in poor health and lives in her own home. Two years ago, Nancy's son moved in with her, along with his partner and two adult children.

Neighbours reported to police that Nancy was being subjected to verbal, financial, emotional and physical abuse by her son and grandchildren. Police were unable to lay charges as Nancy refused to provide statements to the police. Police issued a Family Violence Safety Notice against Nancy's son but the resulting Intervention Order did not prevent him from residing at his mother's home due to lack of detail.

When Nancy was admitted to hospital after a 'fall' nursing staff noted that her son was pressuring her for money during his visits. This was causing Nancy to feel extremely anxious and upset. She disclosed that her son had also organised for her to appear at a Magistrates' Court to revoke the Intervention Order. To protect Nancy from further abuse, the nursing staff contacted the Elder Abuse Advocate at ECLC and Nancy's case manager at another local service.

ECLC recommended that a joint letter be submitted to the Court prior to the hearing, outlining the abuse concerns. This resulted in an extension of the Intervention Order and continued police monitoring when Nancy returned home. Ongoing collaboration between police, ECLC and other services has been critical to ensuring Nancy's safety and ongoing care.



**ECLC THANKS THE FOLLOWING ORGANISATIONS
FOR PROVIDING FUNDING AND RESOURCES TO
THE ELDER ABUSE PROGRAM:**

Communities' Council on Ethnic Issues (Eastern Region)
Inner East Primary Care Partnership
Outer East Health and Community Support Alliance
Seniors Rights Victoria
Victorian Government
Victoria Law Foundation
Victorian Multicultural Commission

RESOURCES

Visit eclc.org.au/elderabuse to access tools for training and awareness-raising, including:

Elder Abuse Toolkit

A comprehensive guide for local governments working with older people

Videos

'Elder Abuse: It's a No Ball' – featuring legendary sportsperson the late Max Walker
'Behind the Curtain' – for GPs and health professionals
'Ghost Train' – award-winning short documentary challenging ageing and ageism assumptions

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ECLC'S ELDER ABUSE PROGRAM, VISIT ECLC.ORG.AU/ELDERABUSE OR CONTACT:

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ECLC offers free legal assistance from its offices in Box Hill, Boronia and Healesville and at outreach locations across Melbourne's east. ECLC also engages in law reform and undertakes community development to educate and empower the community.

ECLC acknowledges the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, the traditional custodians of the land across ECLC's region. We pay our deep respects to the Elders, both past and present.