

Media Release
Thursday 17 June 2021

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day - let's talk about elder abuse prevention!

Aged Rights Advocacy Service (ARAS) has held an annual WEAAD conference for the past 15 years, and this year will be hosting its second WEAAD online forum, with 'Elder abuse prevention – let's talk' as the theme.

The forum will be held on today, from 10.30am to 1.30pm ACST, and will be opened by the Honourable Stephen Wade MLC, Minister for Health and Wellbeing.

Carolanne Barkla, Chief Executive of ARAS, says, "COVID-19 continues to create significant uncertainty in Australia, especially amongst older people. Lockdowns and the subsequent inability to access support services, and the difficulty of keeping social connections has left older people with fewer avenues to talk about their circumstances and seek support. This year's theme is important as elder abuse prevention is something we all need to talk about and must be part of the national conversation about how we care for older Australians."

Ms Barkla adds, "Elder abuse affects older people all around the world. In Australia, an estimated 5% of older Australians experience some form of mistreatment, abuse or neglect by someone known and trusted to them. It's time to come together to talk about how we can build a community that supports older people to retain control of their lives, enhance their wellbeing and maintain their independence living at home."

In 2002 World Health Organisation (WHO) defined abuse of older people as 'a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm and distress to an older person'. Abuse can take various forms, such as physical, psychological, emotional, sexual or financial abuse and it can be the result of intentional or unintentional neglect.

ARAS' online forum will focus on how we can create pathways for older people to a future free of abuse. Richard Bruggemann, Senior South Australian of the year for 2021, will present on 'Five things', drawing on his experiences from the aged care and disability sector, in particular as Authorising Officer under the COVID-19 Emergency Response Act 2020 to consider applications to detain people who lack capacity and whose actions were putting themselves or others at risk of infection and his appointment to the Task Force to investigate the systemic failures that contributed to the death of Anne Marie Smith.

Janet Anderson PSM, Aged Care Quality and Safety Commissioner, will present on the Serious Incident Response Scheme, a recent initiative to help prevent and reduce incidents of abuse and neglect in residential aged care services subsidised by the Australian Government. The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission is at the forefront of the drive to ensure aged care providers deliver safe and quality care to older Australians and is the primary point of contact for consumers in relation to that quality and safety.

Carolanne Barkla will give an overview of ARAS service delivery in 2019/2020 as well as an abridged version of her annual State of the Nation presentation, with a particular focus on enduring of power of attorney and aged care reform.

Maree McCabe AM, Chief Executive, Dementia Australia will talk about how people with dementia are at increased risk of elder abuse and preventative measures.

Cassie Mason, Director, Office for Ageing Well, SA Health will present on Strengthening Safeguards while Angela McMillian, Consumer Advocate at the Commonwealth Bank will provide an overview on financial elder abuse from a banking perspective.

Abuse of older people is a global and complex health and social issue which needs to be addressed and prevented.

Every one of us deserves to lead a safe and happy life, free from abuse, as we age.

It starts with one conversation and one action - it starts with you, so let's talk!

Media contact:

Carolanne Barkla

Chief Executive

0439 206 184