

Aged Rights Advocacy Service

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ABUSE PREVENTION PROGRAM

Annual Summary July 2005 to June 2006 incorporating statistical data 2003-2005

The Aged Rights Advocacy Service Inc (ARAS) works across three program areas: residential aged care, community care and elder abuse prevention. ARAS also has an Aboriginal Advocacy Project. ARAS assists the older person, or their representative, whose rights and entitlements are at risk when they are using either Commonwealth subsidised Aged Care Services (including residential facilities), and Community Services funded by the Home and Community Care (HACC) Program, or where they are at risk of, or experiencing, abuse by family and/or friends. A key principle adhered to is the right of the older person to self determination.

The Abuse Prevention Program (APP) assists older people who are at risk of, or experiencing abuse from those with whom they are in a relationship of trust, such as family, or friends. APP assists people who are experiencing the following abuses: financial, psychological, physical, sexual, social or neglect. ARAS assists older people, or their representatives, through an advocacy process. This includes providing information about rights, offering options that would address the issues and providing support with strategies to reduce and/or stop the abuse.

APP Outcomes in 2005-2006

APP has continued to achieve a broad range of outcomes, in addition to casework, encompassing collaborative work with other agencies, projects and publications.

Achievements for 2005 -2006 are:

- ARAS organised the highly successful 'Elder Abuse – Its Time to Respond' conference on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, June 15th 2006. The event was sponsored by the Office for the Ageing as part of the Improving with Age – Our Ageing Plan for South Australia.
- Input to the Improving with Age plan advocating the development and implementation of an Elder Abuse Prevention action plan for SA.
- The Regaining Your Control (RYC) booklet remains extremely popular. The Department for Families and Communities funded the revision and printing of 40,000 copies to increase access to abuse prevention information.
- Participation in the Alliance for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (APEA). APEA is a group comprised of the Legal Services Commission, the Office of the Public Advocate, SA Police, the Public Trustee and ARAS collaborating to raise awareness of abuse of older people and develop strategies to prevent or minimise abuse.
- The APEA 'Safeguarding Your Finances' pamphlets were translated into 4 languages, Greek, Italian, Polish and Vietnamese, with a grant from the Women's Safety Strategy Community Education Grant Fund. They have been widely distributed and are well regarded by the CALD communities.

2002 - 2006 - Statistical Data

Data is presented for 2005 – 2006, with comparison data from the preceding years. This data represents the salient features of the abuse situations with which APP provides advocacy assistance to older people. APP provided information about rights and preventative strategies to 252 people and advocacy assistance to a further 388 individuals.

The following data analysis only features those clients who requested advocacy assistance.

Table 1 shows some consistencies over the four years, as do the other tables below.

Table 1. Who APP Worked With

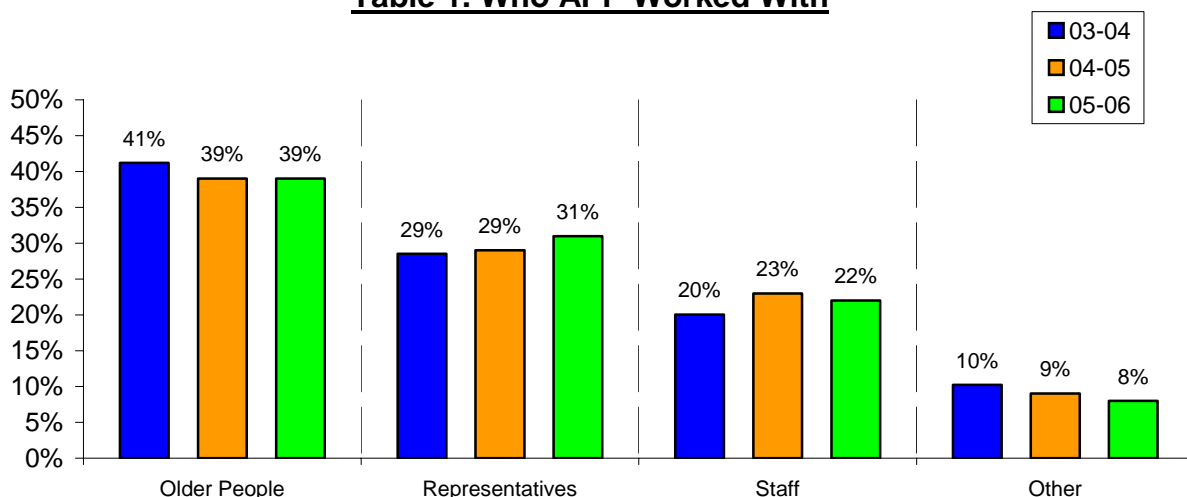


Table 1 APP is most likely to work directly with the older person although the next highest group has consistently been the representatives of the older person. Representatives contact APP when they are concerned about the well-being of an older person who may have mental incapacity, or cannot get the older person to contact ARAS directly, and have gained the permission of the older person, or intend to encourage the older person to take action. There were 66 CALD clients (17%).

Non-metropolitan clients accounted for 16% (62) of clients, including 1% (5) from remote areas.

Table 2. Relationship of Alleged Abuser

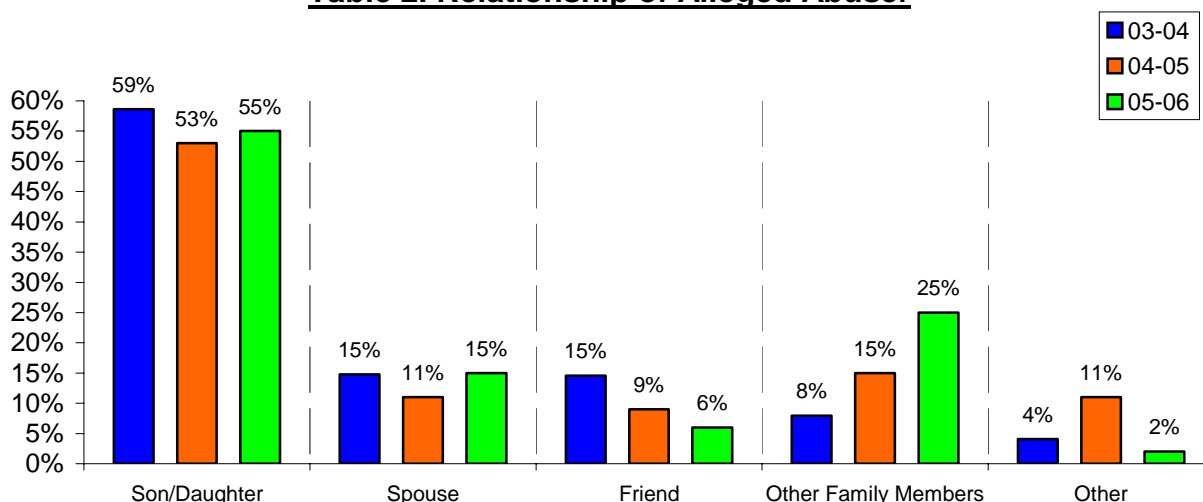


Table 2 The most common relationship of the alleged abuser were adult children (unlike domestic violence in younger adults, typically perpetrated by a spouse or partner), which is consistent with information from national and international sources.

The mean age in 2004-2005 of APP consumers is 79 (78 in 2004-2005). Of the clients who reported their age, 36% were over 80 years old. HACC service providers referred 18% of clients.

Table 3. Types of Abuse

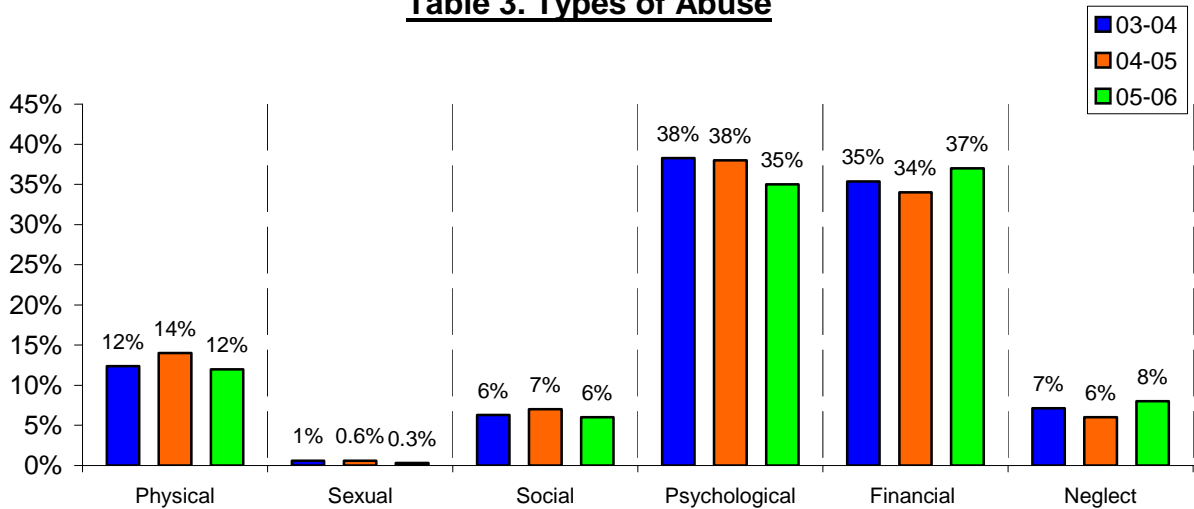


Table 3 It is interesting to note that the most common forms of abuse reported to APP remain psychological and financial. Typically, these forms are seen together. Numbers are similar to last year across the types. Abuse of the Enduring Power of Attorney was reported by 17% of all clients. This pattern is distinct from domestic violence, where the most common forms of abuse are physical and psychological.

Table 4. Gender of APP Consumers

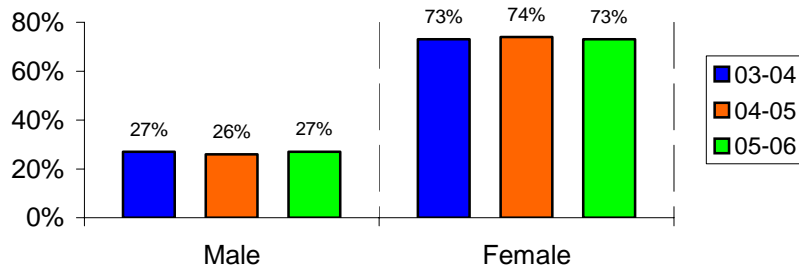


Table 4 Demographically more women are represented in the older age group and are thus more likely to be consumers of APP services. When considered with other research, the level of female consumers is not higher than in the general community. In terms of abusers 53% were female, which is the first year that males were not in the alleged abuser majority.

Table 5. Risk Factors Associated With The Abuse (Part 1)

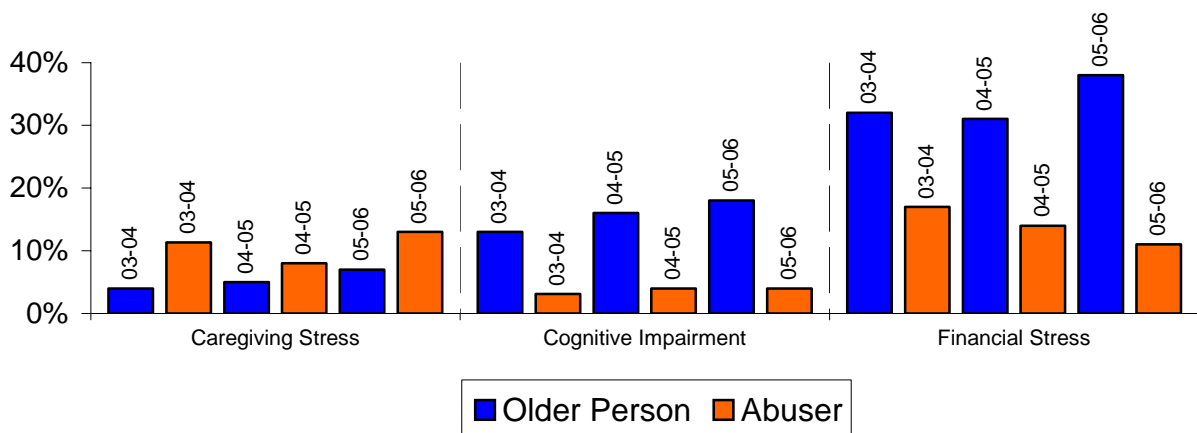


Table 5. Risk Factors Associated With The Abuse (Part 2)

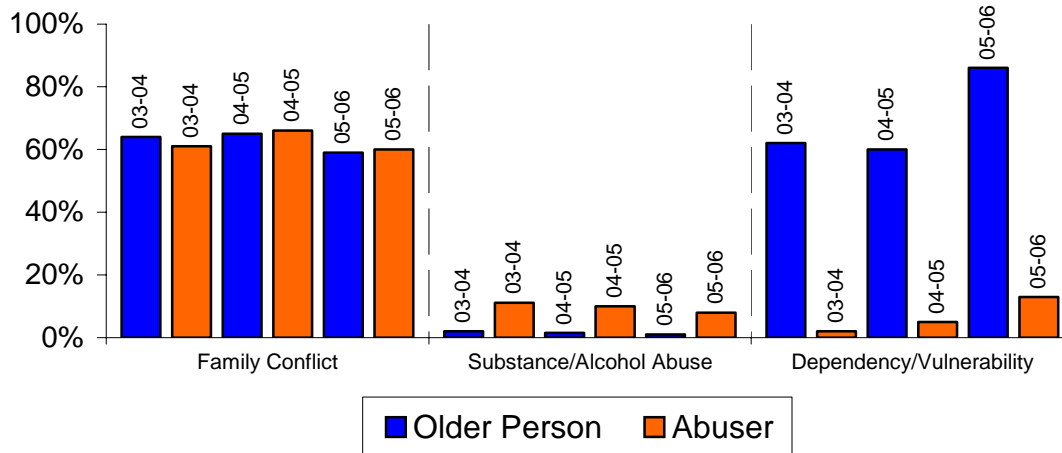


Table 5 Parts 1 and 2, show risk factors associated with the abuse. Each year the most common risk factor for older people is dependency, both physical and psychological, which can have links to cognitive impairment and isolation. Statistics for ‘isolation’ indicate it being reported for 41% of clients.

Family conflict has emerged as a key issue over the last 2 years. An increase in the ‘dependency’ risk factor for the abusers has been noted this year.

Note that substance/alcohol abuse is consistently more commonly associated with the alleged abuser than the older person, lending some credence to issues of the psychopathology of the abuser as a risk factor for abuse (as opposed to characteristics of the person experiencing abuse).

APP will continue its preventive focus in the future by:

- Promoting the inclusion of safeguards into Advance Directives including Power of Attorney (PoA) documents. The APEA is also advocating for improvements to the PoAs, including that they be registered, with information provided to the PoAs about their responsibilities.
- Presenting information sessions to service providers and community to raise awareness of the issues of abuse of older people and how to safeguard against it.
- Continuing collaborative involvement in APEA and the initiatives dedicated to awareness, address and prevention of financial abuse of older people.
- Collaborating with other agencies to ensure that older people receive the support and assistance they need to address abuse.
- Promoting the safeguards people need to consider when lending money or sharing housing costs to avoid legal difficulties in recouping funds if problems arise.
- Encouraging older people to utilise their existing local support mechanisms including counselling, legal and domestic violence support services.
- Participate in the development of the Elder Abuse Prevention Action Plan for SA as stated in the Improving With Age – Our Ageing Plan for South Australia.