

Media Release
Friday 17 June 2022

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day - let's talk about elder abuse and how to prevent it!

Aged Rights Advocacy Service (ARAS) has held an annual WEAAD conference for the past 16 years, and this year, similar to the past two years, will be hosting a WEAAD online forum, with 'Building resilience' as the theme, focusing on building resilience to support and safeguard older Australians.

The forum will be held today, from 10.00am to 1.00pm ACST, and will be opened by the Honourable Chris Picton MP, Minister for Health and Wellbeing.

Carolanne Barkla, Chief Executive of ARAS and a keynote speaker at the forum, says, " Elder abuse affects older people all around the world, even Australia, where the National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study 2021 showed that one in every six people over the age of 65 experienced abuse during a 12-month period, whether it be psychological, neglect, financial or physical, with only a third of the victims seeking help from a third party. These are extremely concerning statistics, and it is important that everyone does their utmost to build community awareness to create the momentum for change and to strengthen safeguards for vulnerable older people."

Ms Barkla went on to say "Elder abuse is more likely to be perpetrated by a person who the older person trusts. As a community we should be supporting older people to retain control of their lives, enhance their wellbeing and maintain their independence living at home and, as individuals, we should be looking out for the older people in our lives."

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 also be the result of intentional or unintentional neglect.

This forum has the following highly respected keynote speakers from Australia and the USA:

Laura Mosqueda MD from the National Centre on Elder Abuse in California, USA, who will present on Understanding Resilience from a Life Course Perspective

Professor Susan Kurrle, Geriatrician and Clinical Academic who will present on older people and resilience in turbulent times

Natasha Short, from Kimberley Birds, who will share findings and resources from the No More Humbug report

Dr Duncan McKellar, who will present on being story-informed

Dr Rachel Carson from the Australian Institute of Family Studies who will provide key insights from the National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study

Er-Kai Wang, from the Older Persons ACT Legal Service who will talk about older people and the law.

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.

There is no excuse for abuse – see it, stop it, prevent it.

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