

Improving responses
to older women affected
by domestic and family
violence in Adelaide,
South Australia:

AN ACTION PLAN



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Launch

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Setting the Scene

- Domestic and family violence (DFV) affects women of all ages, including older women.
- As the state's population ages, more older women are expected to be affected by DFV. Correspondingly, the number of older women who are homeless is also expected to increase.
- Australia wide, 80% of women experiencing violence from a current partner never contact police¹.
- Older women are a unique subgroup with distinct vulnerabilities that require specific interventions.
 - Often invisible.
 - Seek and receive help differently to younger women.
 - Issues are magnified compared to younger women.

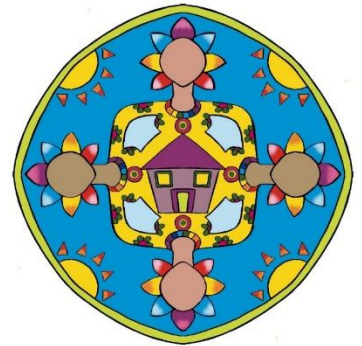


¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2013). 4906.0 - Personal Safety, Australia, 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4906.0Main+Features12012?OpenDocument>

Gathering the Evidence for Action

Data was collected using a Participatory Action Research approach, following a Plan, Do, Study, Act model via:

- A **review** of service policies and literature.
- **Interviews** with service providers and women.
- An organisational **Social Network Analysis**.
- Facilitated reflection during governance group **meetings and workshops** with service providers.



What we Found

A. Understanding the impact of DFV on older women and their help seeking behaviours:

- Older women can be exposed to a range of abuse forms (i.e. physical, verbal, sexual, social, spiritual, economic, and emotional and psychological).
- While older women may initially experience abuse from their partner, as women age, their children and grandchildren can also become abusers.
- Older Aboriginal and CALD women face additional barriers including the risk of disconnection from culture.
- Older women experiencing DFV tend to be reliant on the community and other non-specialist services to support them.

B. Current service responses to older women experiencing DFV:

- Wide variability across sectors in responding to older women seeking assistance.
- Often responses are uncoordinated and depend on the services, programs, policies and practices of the organisation.
- No single formal purposive network in Adelaide that comprehensively covers older women affected by DFV.

C. Older women's preferred service responses include:

- A 'one stop shop'.
- Clear messages pitched directly at older women.
- Ending the need to keep 're-telling' their story.



Moving Forward: Actions to Improve Responses

Improving responses to older women affected by DFV requires a multi-pronged response from government, service providers, and community. The Plan recommends 20 key Actions for future policy and practice in this area. These Actions are grouped into 4 broad themes and ranked in order of priority:

- A. Increasing housing options (3 Actions)
- B. Recognising the issues (4 Actions)
- C. Improving services, programs, resourcing, and systems (11 Actions)
- D. Raising community awareness (2 Actions)

These Actions need to be implemented in the context of an overarching Action, which is the development and strengthening of service networks between DFV, older person support, and homelessness services.



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Next Steps

- Start within your organisation
 - Conduct an internal review – What can you do to improve responses to older women?
- Collaborate with others
 - Work innovatively with other organisations to improve responses to older women affected by DFV.
 - Email Carolyn.Gregoric@flinders.edu.au if you are interested in joining a Committee focusing on the implementation of the Action Plan.