

Victorian Government Elder Abuse Prevention Strategy



Elder abuse – together, we can prevent it

Older people have the right – just like all people – to live safely and to be treated with dignity and respect.

In most cases, this is exactly what happens. Studies have estimated that between one and five percent of older people experience some form of abuse or neglect and this is totally unacceptable.

If you are being abused, you don't have to feel powerless. Together, we can make it stop.

What is elder abuse?

Elder abuse is any act that harms older people and that is carried out by someone they know and should be able to trust, such as family or friends.

This abuse can be physical but it is also abuse if someone:

- pressures you to give them money or forces you to sign things you don't understand,
- takes control of your money, property or other possessions;
- threatens, intimidates or humiliates you;
- refuses to let you go out and do things or contact your friends, family members or support services;
- doesn't give you proper food, clothing or personal care when they are supposed to.

Who is responsible for preventing elder abuse?

Everyone should be aware of elder abuse, and that we can do something about it.

Overcoming elder abuse is a shared responsibility – government, service providers and the community working together.

The Victorian Government is addressing elder abuse in our community through the Elder Abuse Prevention Strategy.

The strategy is helping senior Victorians with educational, legal, advocacy and other support services, and providing training to service providers.

Where you can get help

It can be difficult to know what abuse is, especially when the person responsible is someone you know and should be able to trust.

You may feel shame or be afraid that talking about it will make things worse.

If something doesn't seem right but you're not sure, please talk about it.

You can contact Seniors Rights Victoria, a free and confidential statewide telephone and advisory service funded by the Victorian Government.

Seniors Rights Victoria helps to prevent elder abuse and protect the rights of older Victorians by providing:

- a helpline for information and referral,
- advocacy and support;
- legal advice;
- community and professional education.

You can contact Seniors Rights Victoria on **1300 368 821** from 10am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

Older people may refer themselves or be referred by service providers, family or friends.

Rights. Respect. Trust.

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Online: www.seniorsrights.org.au

In an emergency, call **000** for help.

Making your own decisions

You will be supported in making your own informed decisions.

Steps you can take include:

- planning for the future,
- talking about problems and concerns with family, friends, other trusted people or Seniors Rights Victoria.

Further information

For further information on action the Victorian Government is taking to prevent elder abuse, please visit www.seniors.vic.gov.au

True stories

Financial abuse

Beryl, a 91-year-old stroke victim and nursing home resident, appointed her son, Barry, as her power of attorney – authorising him to pay her bills.

Relatives became suspicious when they found that Beryl's bills were in arrears, and that withdrawals were being made from her account the day after her pension was paid.

It also emerged that Barry sold Beryl's house and used the money to extend his own home on the pretext that she could live with him.

After the renovations were completed, Barry refused to let her mother move in, forcing her to stay in the nursing home, which caused her great distress.

How Seniors Rights Victoria helped

Seniors Rights Victoria helped Beryl to appoint State Trustees as her attorney and place a caveat over Barry's property, claiming a reasonable share.

SRV is also helping Beryl to recover her money so that she can access her preferred style of accommodation and care.

Family care arrangements

Rosalind was pressured by her son and daughter-in-law to loan them \$100,000 so they could buy a new house. This was on the understanding that Rosalind, 71, could live with them into her old age.

The relationship between Rosalind and her son and daughter-in-law broke down. They asked Rosalind to move out of the house immediately but she had no money to move.

How Seniors Rights Victoria helped

Seniors Rights Victoria advised Rosalind that she had an equitable share in the house and that she should protect her share by placing a caveat on the title.

SRV then helped Rosalind negotiate an agreement for repayment of the loan. Her son and daughter-in-law agreed to pay a lump sum upfront to enable her to find rental accommodation and to make regular repayments. Rosalind was relieved to be able to make the agreement and move out.