

Commissioner for Senior Victorians



Respect and dignity for seniors

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Commissioner for Senior Victorians
Ambassador for Elder Abuse Prevention

Safe as Churches Conference
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Role of Commissioner for Senior Victorians

- Advise Government on policy issues
- Identify key advocacy issues
- Actively engage with older people and stakeholders
- Public and community education
- Referral of individual matters

Ambassador for Elder Abuse Prevention

- Create awareness of elder abuse in the community
- Focus on prevention

Rights of older people

Older people have the right to live **free from exploitation, violence, abuse and age discrimination.**

Elder abuse:

Acts of abuse or harm associated with relationships of trust.

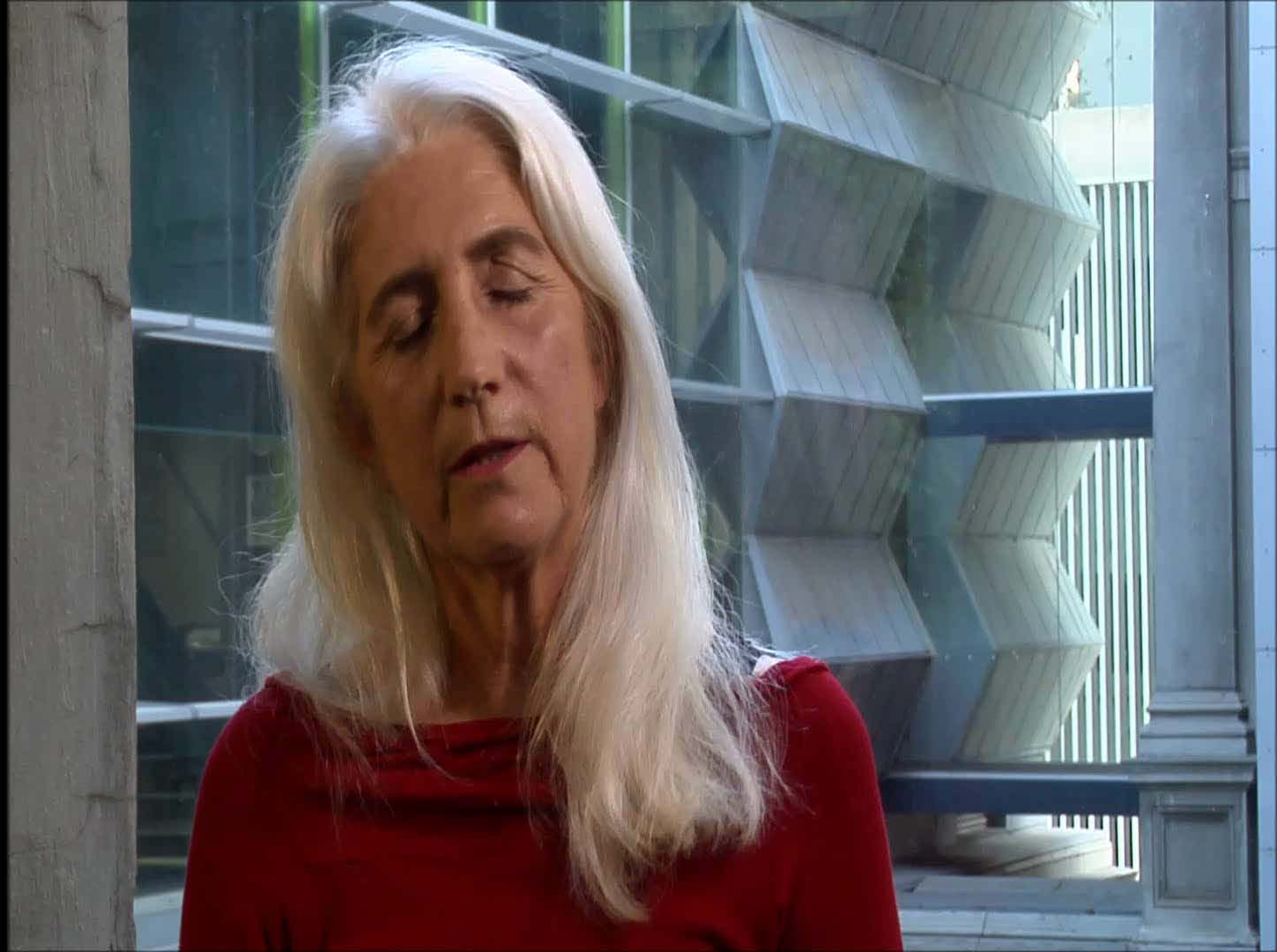
Other forms of abuse include:

Consumer law e.g. scams
Neighbourhood disputes
Other criminal acts

Elder abuse prevention: empowering older people and upholding their autonomy, dignity and right to self-determination

What is elder abuse?

- Elder abuse is '**any act occurring within a relationship where there is an implication of trust**'
- **Royal Commission into Family Violence** noted Australian research indicates that **5 to 6 %** of older people may experience abuse
- **Older people have the right** to live free from exploitation, violence and abuse



Types of elder abuse

Financial e.g.

- Forced changes to legal documents
- Misappropriation of money or other assets

Emotional or psychological e.g.

- Verbal intimidation and humiliation
- Threats of various forms

Social e.g.

- Preventing contact with family or friends
- Withholding mail

Types of elder abuse continued

Physical e.g.

- Slapping, hitting, kicking, bruising
- Use of physical restraints

Sexual e.g.

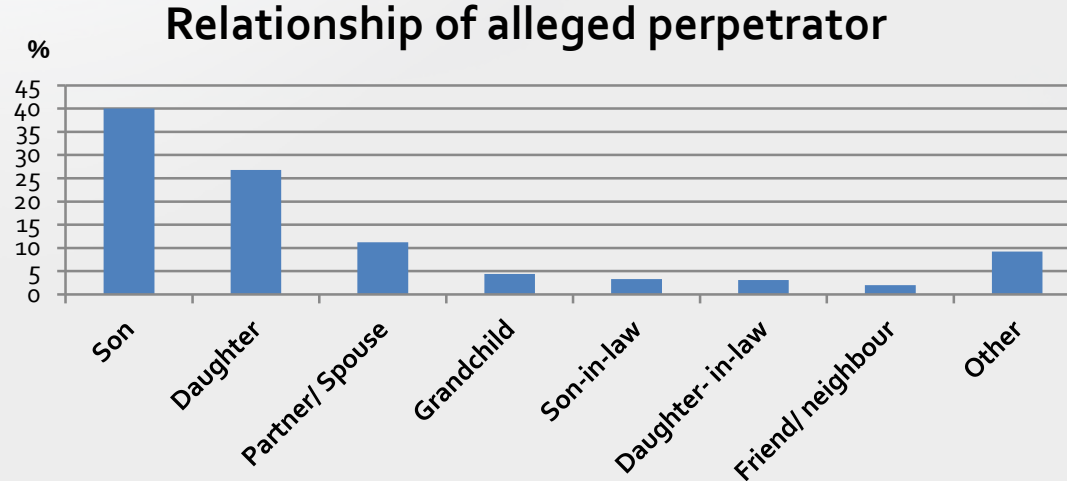
- Sexual assault or harassment
- Inappropriate touching

Neglect e.g

- Failure to provide the necessities of life
- Limiting access to aged care services

Who are the perpetrators?

- Gender of alleged perpetrator: 60% male and 40% female
- Trust Relationship



Source: Seniors Rights Victoria, 'Profile of elder abuse in Victoria', 2015

Royal Commission into Family Violence

Acknowledged that **older people**:

- **experience family violence** by family members and intimate partners
- family violence against older people tends to be **under-reported**
- older people **may not recognise** their experience as family violence



Barriers to reporting elder abuse

- Seeing abusive behaviour as normal part of relationships
- Action may result in 'detriment' to a close family member
- Not knowing where to go for help
- Thinking of family violence as a private matter
- Perpetrator may be providing care support
 - Concern that 'perpetrator' may withdraw assistance
- Community and/or service providers lack of understanding

Be aware of possible triggers

Increased dependency

- exchanging assets for care
- family member moves in to support you

Becoming a carer

- Inadvertent or deliberate abuse of a care recipient
- Abuse by the care recipient
- Unaware of available support for carers

Be aware of possible triggers (cont'd)

A family crisis

- Marriage breakdown of an adult child
- A family member or friend with a mental health, gambling or drug addiction problem

Isolation

- Living in geographically isolated area; moving to new area
- Diminishing contact with friends, family and services

Preventing elder abuse – the top 10

1. Have **'zero tolerance'** to abuse, seek advice if concerned
2. Understand **and protect your rights**
3. **Don't be pressured or intimidated** into immediate decisions
4. **Future planning is important**
 - Don't wait for a crisis – plan ahead
5. Think about **'risks'** and **'what could go wrong'**
6. **Stay connected** to friends, family and services

Preventing elder abuse – the top 10 (cont'd)

7. Make your **wishes and expectations known**
 - Have the 'challenging' conversations
8. **Confirm arrangements** in writing
9. Use **key 'legal' documents**, such as:
 - Powers of Attorney
 - Wills
 - Advance Care Plans and Advance Care Directives
10. **Take care** if considering access to, or transfer of, assets.

Resources and referrals

Seniors Online

- www.seniorsonline.vic.gov.au

Seniors Information Victoria

- 1300 13 50 90 / www.cotavic.org.au/information/seniors-information-victoria

Seniors Rights Victoria

- 1300 368 821 / www.seniorsrights.org.au

Better Health Channel

- www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Office of the Public Advocate

- 1300 309 337 / www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au

Myagedcare

- 1800 200 422 / <http://www.myagedcare.gov.au/>