

WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY – BE AWARE OF THE SIGNS & ACT

13 June 2023

National Seniors Australia (NSA) is reminding community members to be aware of the signs of financial elder abuse and to act on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day 15 June 2024.

NSA Chief Executive Officer Mr Chris Grice said people can be at increased risk of financial abuse as they get older. Sadly, it is those closest to them including family members, friends or carers who are the most likely perpetrators of abuse.

“Elder abuse can take many forms including physical, psychological, and sexual as well as neglect, but it is financial abuse – the misuse or theft of a person’s assets or money which is the most common,” Mr Grice said.

“While we often talk about older Australians being increasingly targeted by online scammers, we also need to talk about the financial loss suffered, not at the hands of strangers, but by loved ones in positions of trust.

“Financial abuse often involves a trusted person using a person’s money or credit card without their permission, coercing, or forcing an older person to sign over assets, to change a Will or Power of Attorney or withholding care for financial gain.

“For some older people to remain independent, they rely on help from family members and carers. This may involve a Power of Attorney to act and make decisions on their behalf. Sadly, there are cases where the appointed person abuses this power.

“Older people fall victim to such abuse because they understandably never expect a loved one to take advantage of them, they’re unable to stop it, or they feel too embarrassed to go to the police – which they shouldn’t.”

In 2016 NSA made a submission to the Australian Law Reform Commission recommending consistent and strengthened Enduring Power of Attorney laws to help protect against abuse. While steps have been taken to achieve greater consistency – a commitment made in the National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians – progress has been slow. Greater work needs to be done to prevent abuse and to strengthen the services that respond to it.

“Financial loss in later life is particularly devastating because older people often don’t have the means to make-up that loss. Unfortunately, people don’t always seek help and identifying abuse can

be hard. It can go unreported as it happens in the privacy of homes, by people in positions of trust,” Mr Grice said.

“World Elder Abuse Awareness Day 2024 is an opportunity to raise awareness about this important issue, to be aware of the possible signs of financial elder abuse and to know where to go to for support.”

Possible signs of financial elder abuse include:

- large bank withdrawals or transfers between accounts
- missing belongings or property
- new changes to a will or power of attorney
- an older person signing strange documents they didn’t understand
- bank statements that go to the perpetrator.

Where to go to for support:

If you are experiencing elder abuse, witness or suspect it call the **Elder abuse phone line (1800 ELDERHELP) on 1800 353 374** – a free and confidential service.

- For Crisis Support call [Lifeline](#) on 13 11 14
- If you’re struggling with debt call the [National Debt Helpline](#) on 1800 007 007
- If you’re experiencing domestic, family, or sexual violence, call [1800 Respect](#) (1800 737 732)
- If you feel your life is in danger or someone you know, call 000.

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