

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
**12 June 2019**

## World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

*Seniors Rights Victoria highlights links between mental health and elder abuse.*

June 15 is designated World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD). It highlights one of the worst manifestations of ageism and inequality in our society, elder abuse.

This year, WEAAD coincides with the Victorian Government's Royal Commission into Mental Health.

"Elder abuse and mental health are interlinked, with elder abuse having devastating psychological effects on an older person, including depression and anxiety. This, in turn, can lead to social isolation, a significant risk factor for further abuse," said Jenny Blakey, Seniors Rights Victoria (SRV) Manager.

Elder abuse is any act which causes harm to an older person and is carried out by someone they know and trust, such as a family member or friend. The abuse may be physical, social, financial, psychological or sexual and can include mistreatment and neglect. Rates of elder abuse are under reported, but the Australian Institute of Family Studies estimates up to 14 per cent of older people in Australia are affected.

One of SRV's clients described how experiencing elder abuse affected her mental health, causing stress, anxiety and depression. "I got to the point where I was so stressed that I could not function anymore. I had to go to work; I could not eat, I could not function," the older woman recounted.

Another client said "I think it was just getting on top of me, you know? I couldn't cope, I didn't know what to do, didn't know where to turn, what to do, you know?"

"Depression and anxiety are not normal parts of ageing and anyone experiencing them is encouraged to seek help and support," Ms Blakey continued.

Rates of mental health issues are also notable in those perpetrating elder abuse. A report by National Ageing Research Institute in partnership with SRV identified 26.7% of alleged physical abuse cases and 18.5% of alleged psychological abuse cases as involving a perpetrator with mental health challenges.

Around Victoria, communities will be celebrating our older people, and uphold their right to live in safety, with dignity and respect. Melbourne Town Hall will be displaying WEAAD banners and be lit up in purple – the symbolic colour of WEAAD – on June 15. Forums, information sessions and awareness activities will be held around the state. More information about WEAAD and details of events can be found on <https://elderabuseawarenessday.org.au>.

"Older people are essential in the fabric of our society. It's time for us to acknowledge their importance and recognise they are entitled to the respect of their communities and especially their families. There is no excuse for elder abuse."

Seniors Rights Victoria is the key state-wide service dedicated to stopping elder abuse. It is a program of Council on The Ageing (COTA), supported by the Victorian Government. SRV provides information, support, advice, casework and education to help prevent and respond to elder abuse through its Helpline.

Older Victorians experiencing elder abuse, or family members concerned about an older person, can get help by calling Seniors Rights Victoria on 1300 368 821 Monday to Friday, from 10 am to 5 pm. The website for more information is <https://www.seniorsrights.org.au>.

**ENDS**

**Contact:**

Gemma Papprell, WEAAD Project Officer at Seniors Rights Victoria, [gpapprell@seniorsrights.org.au](mailto:gpapprell@seniorsrights.org.au) or 9655 2129  
Jenny Blakey, Manager at Seniors Rights Victoria, [jblakey@seniorsrights.org.au](mailto:jblakey@seniorsrights.org.au), 9655 2104 or 0407 329 279.