Seniors Rights Victoria

OLDER, BETTER, TOGETHER:

The primary prevention of elder abuse by prevention networks.

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Prepared by
Rebecca Cain and Ross Wyatt, Think Impact

For further details please contact:

Think Impact
Our Community House, 552 Victoria St North Melbourne, VIC 3051, Australia
rebecca@thinkimpact.com.au

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Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Introduction

Why this report and why now

There is a significant lack of understanding within the community and by service providers of the nature and dynamics of elder abuse.

Royal Commission into Family Violence 2016 (State of Victoria 2016, vol.5, p67)

Elder abuse, like any form of exploitation or violence, is a violation of a person's fundamental human right to feel safe. It can have a range of devastating consequences for older people, including fear, emotional distress, financial hardship, physical harm and in extreme cases, death.

There is significant momentum behind efforts to bring an end to elder abuse to which this report seeks to contribute. The Royal Commission into Family Violence 2016 acknowledged elder abuse as a form of family violence and is investing in family violence programs for older Victorians. One of these initiatives is funding from the Victorian Government Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) for ten Elder Abuse Prevention Networks (EAPNs) to establish or continue local collaboration and activities to prevent elder abuse. Ten EAPNs throughout Victoria received funding in 2017 and 2018. The five networks in the first group to receive funding in 2017 have participated in this research, which was funded by a grant from the State Trustees Australia Foundation.

The fundamental right of every human to live free from cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment is established in Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 (United Nations General Assembly). More recently, a central theme of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing was stated as 'the elimination of all forms of violence and discrimination against older people' (United Nations 2002, p18). Preventing violence before it happens – referred to as primary prevention – is consistent with these fundamental global commitments and is the only way to ensure that older people avoid the distress and harm that results from elder abuse.

The Royal Commission into Family Violence recognised that 'effective prevention measures are considerably less well developed for elder abuse' compared to other areas of family violence (State of Victoria 2016, vol.6, p3). In response to Recommendation 187 of the Royal Commission's report, the Victorian Government published its primary prevention strategy titled *Free From Violence, Victoria's strategy to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women*. The EAPNs were established with a specific focus on the primary prevention of elder abuse, providing a valuable opportunity for this research to expand the knowledge base on the prevention of elder abuse in Victoria, and the role and effectiveness of networks of organisations acting locally.

This report is entitled *Older, Better, Together* to acknowledge three key themes which permeate all aspects of this research. Elder abuse occurs in the context of people getting older, and deficiencies in how our society perceives, values and cares for older people. Many of these challenges stem from ageism in the community and a failure to acknowledge the strengths of older people as expressed in the truism 'better with age'. And finally, the primary prevention of elder abuse can only be achieved if ALL sectors and parts of the community work *together*.

About the research and report

Research scope

The scope of the research is outlined below:

- To conduct primary qualitative research in five Victorian communities where the EAPNs were established and with health, community and legal professionals who provided a view not specific or limited to the five communities.

- The five communities consisted of one in urban Melbourne, one that spanned urban and peri-urban Melbourne and three communities in regional Victoria. Conducting the research in five unique communities provided the opportunity to explore the primary prevention of elder abuse in different demographic and geographic contexts. While the research was limited to a selection of communities in Victoria, the researchers believe that the findings have relevance to communities across Australia.

- Secondary research was not within the scope of the project but has been included in this report where possible.

- In line with the scope of the EAPNs, the focus was on elder abuse carried out by someone the older person knows and trusts such as a partner, family member, friend, neighbour or carer. It was not within the scope to consider misconduct by health or community care professionals towards older people or harm that occurs in consumer-based relationships e.g. buying a car, consumer scams, or abuse by strangers.

The relatively short period of operation of the networks compared to the long-term nature of preventing elder abuse means that it is not possible to be conclusive about the role of the networks and the impact of their activities within the timescale of this research.

Readers of this report are advised to note that the research is of a small scale, and to exercise judgement about how the research relates to different communities and circumstances.

Research activities

The research activities were undertaken from January to October 2018 and included:

Community members

- Discussions with groups including positive ageing reference groups, Men's Shed groups and senior support groups. The research team ensured the involvement of a cross section of the Victorian community including representatives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, different faith groups, all genders, members of the LGBTI communities, different geographic locations, a range of socio-economic backgrounds and a range of ages.
- Attendance at community forums to observe presentations and group discussions.
- One-on-one interviews.
- An online survey for community members to provide anyone with the opportunity to contribute to the research anonymously and at their convenience. Approximately two thirds of respondents to the survey were located in the areas where the EAPNs were operating.

Professionals

- One-on-one interviews.

Lead agencies and members of the EAPNs

- One-on-one interviews.
- Group discussions.
- Two online surveys, one issued in early 2018 and the other issued towards the end of the funding period in October 2018.

Over 70 sessions were conducted and over 150 surveys were completed to gather input to the research, as summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 Research undertaken

Stakeholder groups	1-1 or group sessions	Survey responses
Community members	16	103
Professionals	21	N/A
Lead agencies and members of the EAPNs	35	25 to the start of research survey in March 2018
		29 to the end of research survey in November 2018

The themes explored through the research are presented in Figure 1. These themes were identified in consultation with representatives from the lead agencies for the EAPNs, Seniors Rights Victoria and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) at an initiation workshop in November 2017. Representatives identified the information that the networks needed to inform their contribution to the primary prevention of elder abuse. The research was subsequently designed to respond to these themes.

Acknowledgements

Situations or circumstances that can create the conditions for or increase the likelihood of elder abuse

How a network contributes to primary prevention of elder abuse

The characteristics of an effective and sustainable network

Drivers of elder abuse

Effective operation of a network

Effective primary prevention strategies – older people

Implications of diversity (place and individuals)

The strategies used by **older people** to challenge/circumvent the drivers of elder abuse

Supporting **older people** to develop the skills and strategies

Effective primary prevention strategies – community

Effective primary prevention strategies – service providers

How all findings are relevant in diverse contexts

How initiatives and learnings are transferrable to other communities

The strategies that effectively lead to the primary prevention of elder abuse within **family and care relationships**

The strategies that effectively involve the wider **community** in the primary prevention of elder abuse

The strategies that effectively involve **service providers** in the primary prevention of elder abuse

Figure 1 Research themes identified at the commencement of the research project by EAPN contributors

About this report

This report shares the findings of the research and the experiences of the EAPNs in relation to the primary prevention of elder abuse and how EAPNs can most effectively operate in a primary prevention role. It is intended to inform the work of:

- Organisations with an interest in working in their local area to prevent elder abuse
- Organisations working on family violence primary prevention.

Guidance on how to use this report is provided in Figure 2.

Understanding more about elder abuse	If you are new to elder abuse, visit this section for the definition and types of elder abuse
Why does elder abuse happen	Understanding the reasons why elder abuse happens is critical to efforts to prevent it before it happens
How to prevent elder abuse before it happens	Visit this section for activities adopted by the networks or suggested by research contributors to prevent elder abuse
Why and how to have a network	Learn more about the role and value of a network and how to operate and sustain your own network
Recommendations	Information about opportunities to further understand and strengthen the primary prevention of elder abuse

Figure 2 How to navigate and use this report

Key messages from the research

The most significant messages identified through this research are:

- Elder abuse is an issue of concern across our society. Whether that's because it's happening more, or because we're now talking about it more, there is momentum behind efforts to build understanding about elder abuse and to prevent it before it occurs.

- The reasons for elder abuse occurring are complex and varied, making the task of preventing it challenging. What is clear is that it cannot be explained by one factor alone. Rather it is the result of an interplay of factors relating to the individuals involved, their relationship and how our organisations, communities, institutions and society view older people. The socio-ecological model is one framework that has been used in this report to interpret the research findings.

- The seminal publication *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*, provides a useful structure for making sense of the reasons 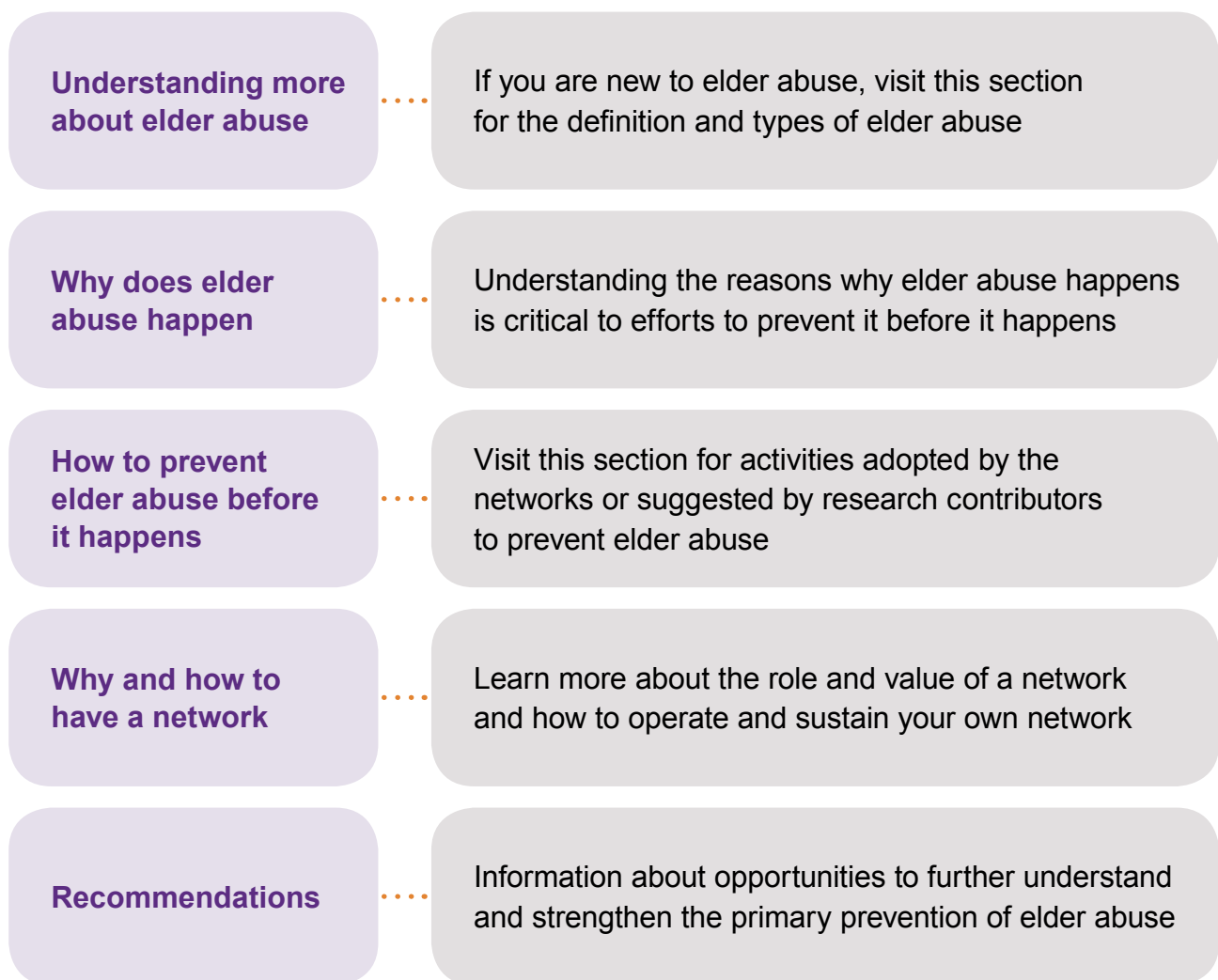why elder abuse occurs, using the categories 'drivers of abuse' and 'reinforcing factors'. There are valuable lessons for elder abuse from the primary prevention of violence against women but there are also dynamics and challenges that are specific to the context of elder abuse. For example, the potential to exploit real or perceived diminished capacity of the older person or parental love and obligation is unique to elder abuse.

- Age discrimination is the main driver in many cases of elder abuse.

- Gender inequality has also been identified as a major driver of elder abuse. Over 70 per cent of older people reporting elder abuse to Seniors Rights Victoria are women. Older women experience higher rates of sexual abuse and are also more likely than men to experience intimate partner violence, which is often a continuation of abuse that has occurred throughout the relationship. There are particular manifestations of elder abuse that are more frequently experienced by women, for example, an adult male child perpetrating elder abuse after returning to live with his mother due to his own relationship breakdown or financial hardship. There are also higher societal expectations placed on mothers to continue to support their adult children, which enhances their vulnerability to elder abuse.

- Other drivers of elder abuse are:
  - Perceived or real diminished capacity
  - Isolation or lack of connection
  - The ongoing parent-child dynamic
  - Undervaluing of and lack of support for carer relationships
  - Discrimination against members of LGBTI communities.

- Reinforcing factors interact with the drivers to increase the probability, frequency or severity of elder abuse. The main reinforcing factors are:
  - Lack of clarity about or planning for the future by older people and within their relationships
  - Issues or illness for the individual responsible for the harm and a lack of related support services

- Sharing of resources or assets within families
- Intergenerational wealth dynamics (sometimes referred to as "inheritance impatience")
- Lack of faith in the aged care system
- Lack of understanding of what constitutes elder abuse.

- Preventing elder abuse before it happens (referred to as primary prevention) involves addressing the drivers and reinforcing factors, including addressing myths and perceptions about the true reasons for elder abuse. Many of the examples of elder abuse provided during the research demonstrate that some people perceive that families 'doing the best they can' or abuse occurring due to frustration with a cognitively impaired older person are justifications for elder abuse.

- The concept of primary prevention is acknowledged as challenging. It requires a different skill set and mindset to elder abuse early intervention and response, which is the predominant background of professionals currently working in elder abuse. It requires a society-wide focus to shift attitudes, norms, practices and institutions that enable age discrimination. It requires long-term investment and coordinated effort.

- There is a perception amongst the general community that elder abuse occurs when older people don't protect themselves or it's due to family dysfunction or the negative characteristics or circumstances of those involved. While these factors can be present in cases of elder abuse, they do not alone explain it. These perceptions demonstrate the importance of an enhanced focus on primary prevention.

- Supporting older people to protect themselves from experiencing abuse is one part of the solution. Being connected to social services and the community, being aware of their rights and planning for the future are key prevention activities for older people.

- Alongside this, a whole-of-community approach is needed to address the age-based drivers of elder abuse. All segments and settings across the community need to be engaged to challenge age discrimination, promote respect for and valuing of older people, recognise the equal rights of older people and create a society where elder abuse is not tolerated.

- The elder abuse prevention networks brought together many organisations and individuals from related disciplines within their local areas. They have adopted a truly collaborative approach to develop a degree of strategic alignment and a coordinated approach at the local level. Based on the activities and experiences of the networks, the most effective role for networks was delivering activities at the local level to engage the community (and particularly older people) in awareness-raising and education. The networks played a role in mobilising the community to address age discrimination as a driver of elder abuse. They were effective in providing professional development to local organisations to better understand and play a role in primary prevention.

- The primary prevention of elder abuse is a complex and long-term proposition requiring a broad focus on all segments and settings of society. While the networks have made a strong contribution in a short time, a much broader range of activities over a sustained period of time is needed to eradicate elder abuse. Primary prevention requires a society-wide focus to shift attitudes, norms, practices and institutions that enable age discrimination. It requires long-term investment and coordinated effort.

Seniors Rights Victoria and Think Impact

Understanding more about elder abuse

In Australia, prevalence of elder abuse in the older population is estimated to be between 2% and 10%, with neglect possibly occurring at higher rates.

Joosten et.al. 2017, p10

Elder abuse defined

Elder abuse is any act occurring within a relationship where there is an implication of trust, which results in harm to an older person. Abuse may be physical, sexual, financial, psychological, social and/or neglect (AIFS 2016).

The elder abuse that this research is focused on is that carried out by someone the older person knows and trusts such as a partner, family member, friend, neighbour or carer.

About the research

Seniors Rights Victoria provided the following information relating to elder abuse based on statistics from their services for 2017/18:

- There has been a 35% increase in the number of calls over 3 years from 2014/15 to 2017/18.
- 71.3% of older people reporting abuse were women, 28.6% were men.
- 87% of alleged perpetrators were related to the older person:
    - 36% were sons and 26% were daughters
    - 1.2% were sons-in-law and 5.1% were daughters-in-law
    - 2.5% were husbands, 1.5% were wives and 5.4% were de facto partners
    - 2% were grandchildren.
- 30% of older people reporting abuse stated they lived with their son or daughter, compared to less than eight per cent of older people overall.
- The majority of elder abuse incidents were reported by people aged 70 to 84 years and the majority of alleged perpetrators were aged 35 to 54 years.
- A substantial number of perpetrators of all abuse types were described by the older person as having substance misuse, mental health or gambling issues.

The types of elder abuse

The types of elder abuse that are well established in literature are (Department of Human Services 2009, p12-16):

- **Physical abuse:** Non-accidental acts that result in physical pain or injury or physical coercion.

- **Financial abuse:** Illegal or improper use or mismanagement of a person's money, property or financial resources.

- **Psychological or emotional abuse:** Inflicting mental stress via actions and threats that cause fear of violence, isolation, deprivation and feelings of shame and powerlessness. These behaviours—both verbal and non-verbal—are designed to intimidate, are characterised by repeated patterns of behaviour over time, and are intended to maintain a hold of fear over a person.

- **Neglect:** The failure of a carer or responsible person to provide life necessities, such as adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical or dental care, as well as the refusal to permit others to provide appropriate care (also known as abandonment). This definition excludes self-neglect by an older person of their own needs.

- **Social abuse:** The forced isolation of older people including restricting or stopping social contact with others or attendance at social activities, sometimes having the additional effect of hiding abuse from outside scrutiny. Social abuse also includes ridiculing or preventing someone from practising their religious and spiritual beliefs, or using these beliefs to manipulate them.

- **Sexual abuse:** Actions including rape and sexual assault, as well as a range of unwanted sexual acts such as sexual contact, language or exploitative behaviour where the older person's consent was not obtained or where consent was obtained through coercion. This includes abuse that is a continuation of intimate partner violence that has occurred throughout life, or abuse that has manifested in older age.

Elder abuse includes **intimate partner violence**, which can consist of any and all of the types of abuse defined above. Women experience disproportionate rates of both intimate partner violence and elder abuse. Intimate partner violence experienced by older women is most often a continuation of abuse that has occurred throughout the relationship. There are instances where intimate partner violence starts in older age, particularly where either or both parties have a cognitive impairment.

Another form of abuse, referred to here as **identity abuse**, was identified through consultation with members of and professionals working with the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and/or intersex (LGBTI) community. Identity abuse occurs when an older person is prevented from expressing, or discriminated against because of, their sexual orientation or gender identity. This is typically caused by negative responses from the family to the older person's sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex characteristics. Examples of identity abuse include family members:

- Preventing friends or partners from being involved in the life of the older person.

- Not respecting the wish of older people to have their partner advocating for them or exercising next of kin decision-making for them.

- Re-entering the life of the older person to secure financial assets or inheritances yet demonstrating or expressing homophobic, transphobic or discriminatory attitudes and behaviours.

- Using control or manipulation to prevent the older person from presenting according to their identified gender identity or sexual orientation. This may involve providing support or access to grandchildren on the condition of behaving or presenting in the desired manner.

While **sexual abuse** is within the definition of elder abuse, most of the professional representatives who contributed to this research expressed a low level of understanding of this type of elder abuse. There are known instances of older women seeking help for sexual abuse being advised by elder abuse services that they cannot provide assistance. The stereotype that older women are not sexually desirable acts as a barrier to older women reporting the abuse or being believed by others. The incorrect perception that older age is a protective factor against sexual abuse also acts against awareness and prevention activities. Family violence organisations report that women experience higher rates of sexual violence than men.

It was not within the scope of the research to explore the prevalence of the different types of abuse, but the following observations are provided:

- Financial abuse was overwhelmingly the most cited type of elder abuse, particularly by members of the community. The Royal Commission into Family Violence acknowledged that older people can be at particular risk of financial abuse (State of Victoria 2016, vol.5, p69). It may be that financial abuse is a more prevalent form of elder abuse, but it is also possible that community members felt more comfortable discussing this relatively less personal type of elder abuse.

- Examples of psychological or emotional abuse and social abuse, particularly forced isolation, were the next most cited examples by the community.

- While professionals were aware of and able to cite examples of all types of elder abuse occurring, there were only a small number of professionals who had awareness of or the knowledge to provide a perspective on sexual abuse.

Based on the case studies cited by professionals, it is not uncommon for older people to experience multiple types of elder abuse and be harmed by different people at the one time or at various stages over their later life.

For more detailed descriptions of the types of abuse and signs to look, refer to (section 2.1 Types of abuse) *With Respect to Age – 2009 Victorian Government practice guidelines for health services and community agencies for the prevention of elder abuse*.

A discussion paper titled *Elder abuse, gender and sexual identity* produced by Seniors Rights Victoria in 2018 explores the ways gender and sexual identity can affect an individual's experience of elder abuse, mistreatment and disrespect.

Norma's Project was established in 2011 as a research study to increase awareness of sexual assault of older women within the community and amongst service providers, and to strengthen the community's ability to prevent, respond to and speak out about the sexual assault of older women.

The Power Project, an initiative of the OPAL Institute, was launched in February 2018 with the aim to show Australians the power everyone has to prevent the sexual abuse of older women.

Elder Abuse Ontario provides online learning for those seeking to learn more about violence against older women.

Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia provides research and thinking that can also be applied to the prevention of elder abuse.

Why does elder abuse happen?

This research identified numerous reasons and dynamics which lead to the occurrence of elder abuse.

Some of the reasons stem from specific behaviours of the individuals involved while others can better be understood through the perspective of broader societal norms and economic dynamics. Some reasons cited are best described as perceptions or excuses, rather than genuine explanations for why abuse occurs. Within this, some reasons were considered to be of greater significance due to greater prevalence or influence.

To make sense of this we have examined the reasons why elder abuse occurs using two approaches that have been adopted when seeking to understand family violence. These approaches are:

- **The shared framework for the primary prevention of violence** developed by Our Watch in their influential publication *Change the story*. This framework separated reasons into two categories – *drivers* and *reinforcing factors* and was based on significant meta-research and provides a useful way to bridge the understanding between elder abuse and family violence.

- **The socio-ecological model** which explains violence as the result of an interplay of individual, relationship, social, cultural and environmental factors that exist.

About drivers and reinforcing factors

- **The drivers of elder abuse** are those factors that are the most consistent predictors of elder abuse.

- **Reinforcing factors** are those factors which interact with the drivers to increase the probability, frequency or severity of elder abuse.

This research identified that in many (if not most) instances of elder abuse, more than one reason is present, and they can interact with and compound each other. Frequently, the experience of all parties to elder abuse is further influenced by matters of diversity and intersectionality. Figure 3 provides a simple depiction of this interaction.

This section discusses drivers, commonly cited reinforcing factors and the individual aspects of older people (including their family and carer context) that can enhance their vulnerability to elder abuse. Examples provided through the research of how these factors have led to the different types of elder abuse are provided in Appendix A.
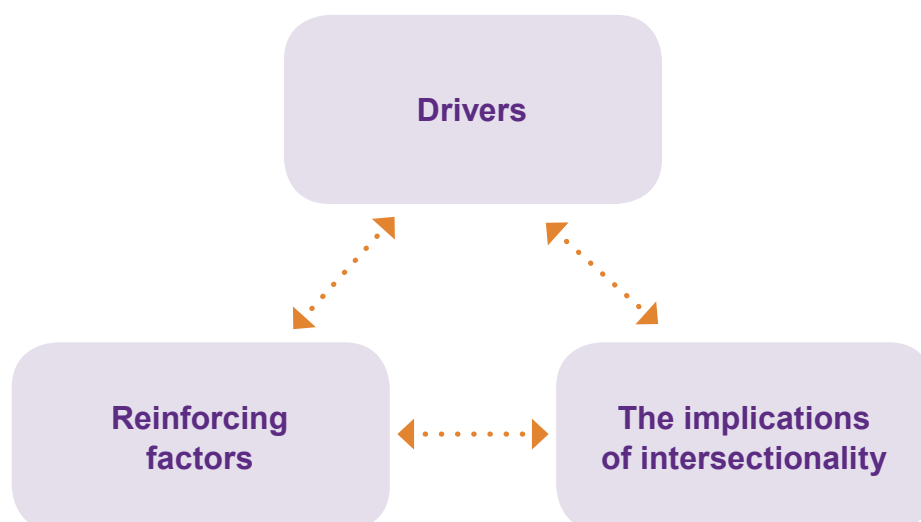
Figure 3 Inter-relationship between drivers, reinforcing factors and intersectionality

The drivers of elder abuse

Age discrimination

Similar to gender inequality being understood to be an underlying reason for violence against women, age discrimination or ageism is recognised to be an underlying reason for elder abuse.

There is little doubt that entrenched ageism plays a critical role in many cases and is often a cause of the failure to recognise elder abuse, resulting in under-reporting.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation defines ageism as discrimination on the basis of age, and the negative stereotypes perpetuated by society regarding old age. Ageism leads to the marginalisation of older people, and the issues and challenges they may face, including elder abuse. It can also mean older people are denied access to opportunities, resources and entitlements available to other members of the community (UNESCO 2002, p4).

Is it time for the older generation to pay?

WHILE Australia's young people struggle with higher house prices and university fees, one generation is laughing themselves all the way to the bank. Here's why you're getting ripped off.

Charis Chang

news .com.au DECEMBER 12, 2014 3:11PM

Figure 4 Media headline inciting intergenerational resentment around wealth dynamics

The World Health Organisation refers to ageism as the most socially 'normalised' of any prejudice, and states that it is not widely countered in the ways that racism or sexism are (WHO 2018). This was confirmed in the research by the frequency with which members of the community used phrases such as 'lack of respect for older people', 'not having time for older people' and making negative assumptions or generalisations about older people as drivers of elder abuse, even though they rarely used the terms ageism or discrimination. Professionals referred to ageism as 'pervasive', 'insidious', 'present in levels of our society and government' and 'a major factor in cases of elder abuse'.

Figure 5 How older people are portrayed in the media
(Australian Human Rights Commission 2013)

Many professionals cited the absence of an overarching policy or strategy for ageing at the Commonwealth and state/territory levels of government as a demonstration of ageism within public policy. In its strategy to prevent family violence, the Victorian Government recognised that 'elder abuse, is caused in part by society's marginalisation of older people, affording them less power and social status and seeing them as less able to make decisions for themselves. This is caused by public attitudes and practices that view ageing as a negative process associated with decline, loss and frailty, and view older people as less valuable in society' (Victorian Government 2017, p15).

Ageist attitudes, both implicit and explicit, are also frequently encountered in the corporate sector and other organisations. While not a focus for this research, the phenomenon of preferring young over old is well documented in many fields.

Transferability of the gendered drivers of violence

While a gender-based paradigm cannot explain the incidence of elder abuse (as gender is not always a factor), this research considered the extent to which the gendered drivers of violence against women, established in *Change the story*, were applicable to abuse of older people. The gendered drivers are presented in Figure 6.

Condoning of violence against women	Men's control of decisions making and limits to women's independence	Rigid gender roles and identities	Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women

Figure 6 The gendered drivers of violence against women

This research supports the continued presence of the gendered drivers in many instances of violence against older women, particularly in the of case sexual abuse and intimate partner violence. There were also many examples cited of adult sons exerting significant influence within families and the continuation of rigid gender roles. This occurs where sons, and even mothers themselves, perceive the needs and rights of the son to be foremost.

Figure 7 presents the gendered drivers translated to the context of age discrimination drawing on input provided to the research. In addition to age discrimination, the additional aspects and complexities are explored when discussing the drivers and reinforcing factors.
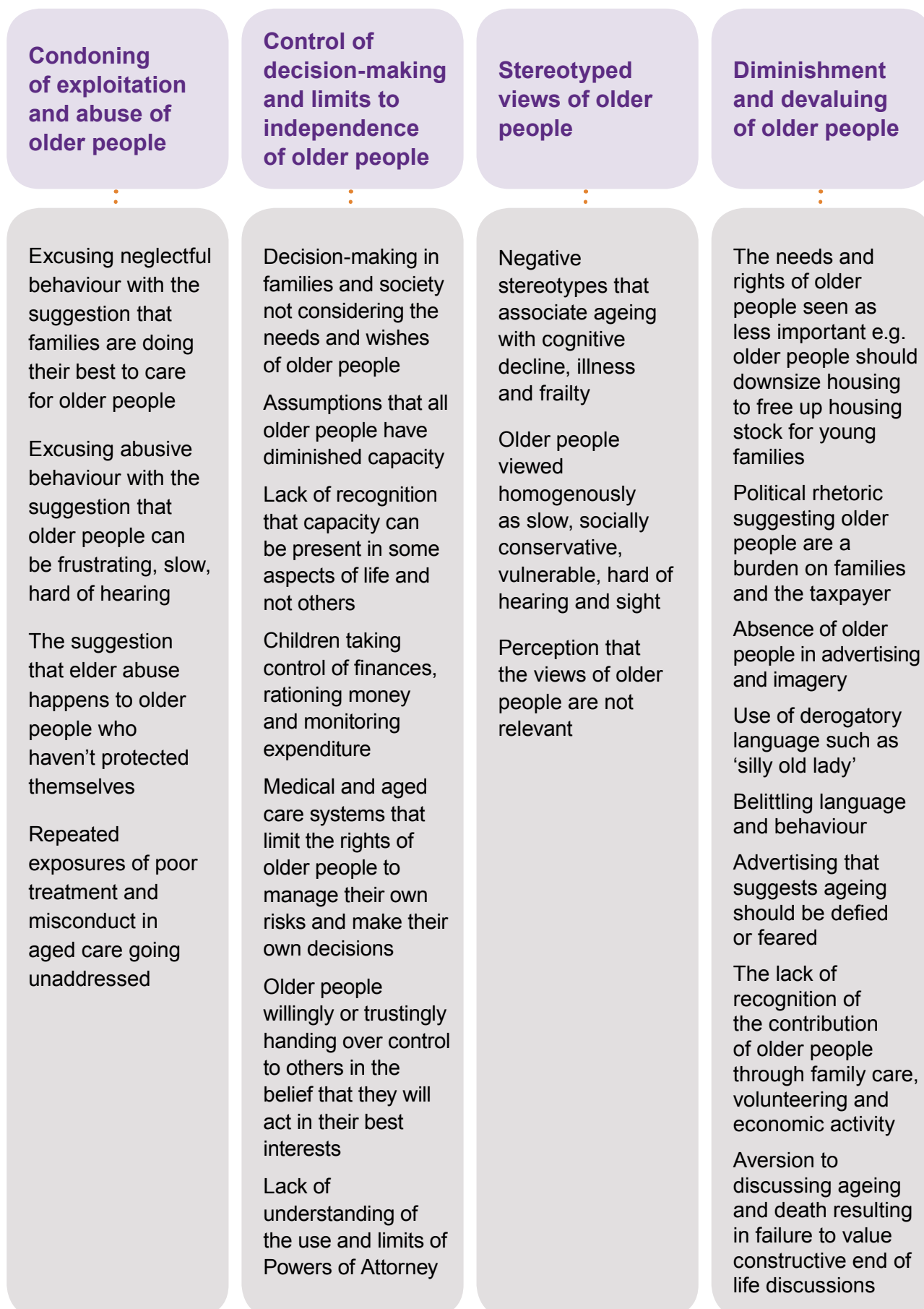
Condoning of exploitation and abuse of older people	Control of decision-making and limits to independence of older people	Stereotyped views of older people	Diminishment and devaluing of older people
Excusing neglectful behaviour with the suggestion that families are doing their best to care for older people	Decision-making in families and society not considering the needs and wishes of older people	Negative stereotypes that associate ageing with cognitive decline, illness and frailty	The needs and rights of older people seen as less important e.g. older people should downsize housing to free up housing stock for young families
Excusing abusive behaviour with the suggestion that older people can be frustrating, slow, hard of hearing	Assumptions that all older people have diminished capacity	Older people viewed homogenously as slow, socially conservative, vulnerable, hard of hearing and sight	Political rhetoric suggesting older people are a burden on families and the taxpayer
The suggestion that elder abuse happens to older people who haven't protected themselves	Lack of recognition that capacity can be present in some aspects of life and not others	Perception that the views of older people are not relevant	Absence of older people in advertising and imagery
Repeated exposures of poor treatment and misconduct in aged care going unaddressed	Children taking control of finances, rationing money and monitoring expenditure		Use of derogatory language such as 'silly old lady'
	Medical and aged care systems that limit the rights of older people to manage their own risks and make their own decisions		Belittling language and behaviour
	Older people willingly or trustingly handing over control to others in the belief that they will act in their best interests		Advertising that suggests ageing should be defied or feared
	Lack of understanding of the use and limits of Powers of Attorney		The lack of recognition of the contribution of older people through family care, volunteering and economic activity
			Aversion to discussing ageing and death resulting in failure to value constructive end of life discussions

Figure 7 The age-based drivers of violence against older people (adapted from gendered drivers of violence against women)

A perceived, assumed or imposed imbalance of power and control is frequently associated with abusive and violent behaviour. Whether it is schoolyard bullying, violence against women or elder abuse, this imbalance is frequently present. This commonality reinforces the importance of establishing genuine equity in each of these contexts, and adopting lessons from work on the prevention of violence against women.

Given the applicability to elder abuse of *Change the story*'s approach of drivers and other reinforcing factors, it is worth considering what other lessons from the prevention of violence against women are transferrable to the prevention of elder abuse:

- *Change the story* is perceived by professionals as literally changing the story when it comes to addressing men's violence against women. The existence of a document that provides an evidence-based understanding of the reasons why men's violence against women occurs and actions to prevent and address these reasons is viewed as being pivotal.

- *Change the story* also highlights the need to engage people in different settings – where they live, work, learn and socialise – to effectively address such a complex social problem. Contributors to this research have highlighted the need to work across settings, including workplaces, the media and political spheres, education environments and social and public places, particularly to address age discrimination.

- There is also a need to invest in the development of evidence-based prevention activities, resources and messages that can be deployed by organisations with confidence that they will be contributing to addressing the drivers and reinforcing factors.

- *Change the story* states '[this] framework aims to guide prevention of violence against all women, understanding that women's and men's identities, social positions and experiences are shaped not just by gender, but by a range of other social categories of difference, including Aboriginality, culture, race, ethnicity, faith or spirituality, socio-economic status, ability, sexuality, gender identity, education, age and immigration status. The framework's definition includes anyone who identifies and lives as a woman.' (Our Watch et al, 2015 P19) This framework should be considered when addressing older people's experience of violence.

- There is a strong and consistent association between the unequal distribution of power and resources and levels of violence, demonstrating the importance of addressing distribution of power within relationships and society.

Figure 8 illustrates this interrelationship but note there is no intent to illustrate proportionality in this conceptual framework.

Figure 8 A conceptual framework depicting the interrelationship between forms of abuse

This framework is an extension of that proposed in Victoria's strategy to prevent violence (Victorian Government 2017, p1). It demonstrates that elder abuse can occur:

- In the context of family violence (e.g. abuse of an older father by an adult child)
- In the context of violence against women outside a family (e.g. abuse of an older woman by a neighbour)
- In the context of violence against women inside a family (e.g. abuse of an older mother by a partner or an adult child)
- Or separate to the three conditions above (e.g. abuse of an older man by a trusted non-family member).

Internalised ageism

Ageism is so insidious that some older people have themselves internalised the messages and norms and demonstrate ageist attitudes. Examples that were provided of internalised ageism include older people:

- Referring to themselves as 'having a senior's moment'.
- A lack of self-entitlement, such as believing that respect is not something they should expect or apologising for taking the time of service providers.
- Prioritising their resources for passing on as inheritance rather than meeting their own needs or aspirations.
- Selling their home and moving in with their children to help the child afford home ownership even if it's not their preference.

- Ceasing activities based on the assumption that they are too old or don't belong, such as attending an exercise class or social activities.

- Deferring to the advice and decisions of younger people, 'I'm sure my daughter knows better than me'.

- Assuming that they are incapable of developing new skills such as digital literacy.

I'd rather die than be a burden on my daughter - like many old people
Michele Hanson

If I become demented, bedridden and incontinent, I hope a chum will smother me rather than leave me to moulder in nappies in a £1,000 a week care home

Figure 9 Media headline arguably demonstrating internalised ageism

Let's End Ageism is a 2017 TED Talk by Ashton Applewhite, ageism author and activist, urging us to mobilise against the last socially acceptable prejudice, ageism. 'Aging is not a problem to be fixed or a disease to be cured,' she says. 'It is a natural, powerful, lifelong process that unites us all.'

Aged care failures show how little we value older people – and those who care for them, published in The Conversation on September 25, 2018.

Fact or fiction? Stereotypes of older Australians Research Report 2013 published by the Australian Human Rights Commission, reveals the prevalence of age discrimination, age stereotyping and ageism in Australia.

Perceived or real diminished capacity

Diminished capacity can be a factor in all types of elder abuse. Diminished capacity can occur in older people for a number of reasons such as cognitive impairment resulting from dementia, Alzheimer's disease or an adverse event, for instance a stroke, a disability or physical or emotional frailty. Those with expertise in sexual abuse noted that older women with cognitive impairment are targeted by perpetrators of sexual abuse.

Diminished capacity increases the physical and emotional vulnerability of older people, increases the reliance of an older person on formal or informal supports and can be accompanied by another driver or reinforcing factor of elder abuse, including isolation. Diminished capacity was also cited as resulting in unreasonable frustration or stress for families or carers that may increase the likelihood of a perpetrator resorting to abusive behaviour.

The assumption that older people have diminished capacity can result from the incorrect and ageist belief that it is an inevitable consequence of ageing. It can also result from misunderstanding and the assumption that older people with a cognitive impairment lack capacity across all aspects of their lives, rather than the reality that capacity can be diminished in some areas and not others. The concept of supported decision-making recognises that people with a cognitive impairment can continue to be involved in decisions that affect them. Creating the perception of diminished capacity was cited as a strategy employed by people to carry out elder abuse, for example, using diminished capacity as the reason for taking control of an older person's finances.

Isolation or lack of connection

Isolation – both geographic and social – was a commonly cited driver of elder abuse. Isolation, or a failure of connections to people or organisations (and a failure of people and organisations to connect with older people), can create the conditions where abuse can be more easily perpetrated, sometimes undetected. Isolation from support services or social interaction can also result in older people experiencing elder abuse in the context of the care they need or the personal contact they desire.

There is widespread recognition that connection to other family members, the community and service providers is a protective factor against elder abuse. However, there is also a lack of community infrastructure to support many older people to participate in their community.

Deliberately or negligently isolating an older person is also a form of elder abuse. It was not uncommon for research contributors to describe examples of isolation as in the best interests of the older person, for example, restricting the interactions of an older person with a cognitive impairment in case they say something inappropriate or wander off. It was also referred to as an unfortunate consequence of families being too busy to visit the older person or assist them to access social connections. These justifications demonstrate societal norms and attitudes that need to be challenged, rather than simply focusing on opportunities or barriers for older people.

"It's not the people who are connected, who are in Rotary and at the U3A that you have to worry about. It's the people who aren't there."

Community member

Isolation should be considered in its broadest sense to also encompass:

- A lack of knowledge of formal services that can even be felt by people who are not isolated in other geographic or social respects. People who may have never accessed social services in the past may not have the knowledge or comfort to seek help.

- Information not always being available in other languages and forms, isolating people with low levels of proficiency in English and low levels of reading and writing skills in general.

- Heavy reliance on online information and services, isolating people with low levels of digital literacy.

Isolation experienced by the person responsible for the harm was also cited as a driver of elder abuse.

Undervaluing of and systemic lack of support for carer relationships

Professional, institutional and *formal* carer arrangements are specifically excluded from the scope of this report as abuse in this context is often covered in the scope of professional misconduct. However, *informal* care roles and caring relationships are vital and important and can lead to situations where people are vulnerable to abuse.

A substantial proportion of Australians provide care (reportedly as high as one in every eight) and the incidence of elder abuse is quite rare, yet it can and does occur. The potential for informal carers to carry out elder abuse is widely recognised by community members and professionals.

The potential for older people who are also carers for children with physical or mental impairments to experience elder abuse is perhaps identified less often. According to some professionals contributing to this research its prevalence is under-recognised.

Both these scenarios demonstrate an undervaluing of the carer relationship – what it provides to each party and the mutual and outside support needed for the relationship to thrive. Both carers and care recipients can experience harm when there is a lack of support or when they do not value the contribution and wellbeing of the other party.

Examples provided by research contributors of circumstances that can result in conditions where elder abuse of care recipients can occur (given the presence of other drivers or contributing factors) include:

- Neglect arising from poor carer capability or capacity. Instances of well-meaning actions that resulted in unintended elder abuse were mentioned, where carers were doing their best to provide for the care needs of the care recipient but did not have the skills or capacity to fulfil the carer role.

- Fulfilling a caring role can be demanding and stressful and it is a widely held view that, in addition to other drivers and reinforcing factors, may result in elder abuse. Carer stress is thought to be most associated with physical, psychological or emotional and social abuse.

- Carers may be resentful of fulfilling the carer role or may opportunistically take advantage of the imbalance of power in the relationship to carry out any type of elder abuse.

Examples provided by research contributors of circumstances that can lead to elder abuse of carers by care recipients include:

- Care recipients with cognitive impairment not being aware of or able to control their behaviour. This occurrence is stated as more commonly associated with physical abuse, psychological or emotional abuse and sexual abuse.

- Frustrated or distressed care recipients taking it out on the carer. This occurrence is stated as more commonly associated with physical abuse and psychological or emotional abuse.

It is important for support systems, and society as a whole, to properly value these informal carer relationships and provide the necessary support.

LGBTI discrimination

Older members of the LGBTI communities experience elder abuse in unique ways. In particular, they experience abuse or discrimination on the basis of their LGBTI identities, referred to as identity abuse (discussed in section 2). Older members of the LGBTI communities lived through an era where alternative gender identities and sexual orientations were pathologised and even criminalised.

The research contributors who provided input relating to members of LGBTI communities reported that LGBTI people may not have a strong sense of entitlement to rights or may not be able to advocate for themselves, making them more vulnerable to elder abuse. Due to historical experiences of discrimination and abuse, older LGBTI people may feel fear and mistrust towards institutions and workers within them and be more likely to want to continue to live independently in their own environment of relative safety and control and less likely to seek help from formal sources.

Reinforcing factors

Lack of clarity about or planning for future

One of the strongest themes to emerge in this research is the perception that good planning for current and future needs and wishes is a strong preventative factor for elder abuse. The absence of wills, powers of attorney and advanced care directives, and the aversion of older people and their families to even discussing these topics, can provide tension and uncertainty within families and a vulnerability that can be exploited. There were also examples provided where joint attorneys did not agree on decisions or actions, resulting in psychological abuse, mistreatment or neglect of the older person.

Issues or illness for the individual responsible for the harm and a lack of related support services

Mental health issues and drug, alcohol and/or gambling addiction or debt experienced by the person responsible for the harm were frequently cited as factors present in instances of elder abuse. A lack of housing and support services to address these issues was commonly cited as a barrier to older people being able to address elder abuse. The ongoing sense of obligation that some parents feel to their child can result in them tolerating elder abuse if there are no other support options available to the child.

Sharing of resources and assets

Legal representatives state that arrangements for sharing of assets or resources within families can work, but it is also a very common context within which elder abuse takes place. Elder abuse can occur in the context of older people providing loans, contributing assets to the household in exchange for the provision of care, going guarantor for a loan or having assets forcibly or deceptively taken. Where there is an absence of formal arrangements and independent legal advice, older people can be more vulnerable to being exploited, manipulated or deceived.

Family members sharing housing (whether in terms of ownership or occupancy) was also a commonly cited factor contributing to the occurrence of elder abuse. Older people who are dependent on family members for housing can be more vulnerable to elder abuse and more likely to tolerate abuse that occurs. One of the most common scenarios mentioned by both professionals and community members was elder abuse that occurs in the context of an adult male child returning to live with the parent/s due to a relationship breakdown or financial hardship. The Family Violence Protection Act 2008 suggests placing perpetrators removed from their intimate partner with other family members. This, combined with a lack of affordable or appropriate housing options can put older people at higher risk of elder abuse by being requested to house their adult male child who has had an Intervention Order issued against him following a family violence incident. This often occurs without adequate support in place. Elder abuse response services report that parents providing housing for adult children who contact their services feel unable to evict their child without being able to provide them with an alternative, and that there are limited housing services to assist.

This is compounded by other reinforcing factors including the lack of affordable and age-appropriate housing, lack of support services for perpetrators and fear of or lack of faith in the aged care system.

Intergenerational wealth dynamics

Inheritance impatience, often combined with a misplaced sense of entitlement, was frequently cited as a factor in elder abuse, particularly financial abuse. The term 'inheritance impatience' has emerged in recent years to refer to the fact that children are having to wait longer to inherit the assets of their parents due to increasing life expectancy. Alongside this, the substantial growth in the value of houses has made home ownership more difficult and fuelled resentment towards the beneficiaries of house price growth, including older people who bought property before the boom. In addition to financial abuse, inheritance impatience can also involve physical abuse and psychological or emotional abuse where intimidation or physical harm is used to manipulate or compel the older person to comply. Many instances were cited of children manipulating or pressuring their parents to provide assets, stealing from or defrauding their parents or seeking retribution because of parents not providing assets.

Inheritance impatience can be reinforced by ageist political and media rhetoric that older people have made home ownership unattainable for younger generations and that older people should downsize and relinquish their housing for allegedly more important young families.

Ongoing parent-child dynamic

The potential for parental love and obligation to be exploited was frequently cited as leading to parents being more vulnerable to elder abuse and less likely to seek help if it does occur. Elder abuse can occur when parents feel responsible for or an obligation to their adult children. This is compounded if those children feel a sense of entitlement or a willingness to manipulate their parents' sense of obligation.

Victim blaming can play a role when this factor is present. There were multiple instances of older members of the community stating that older people should feel a sense of responsibility if their children carry out elder abuse, an attitude which is likely to discourage help-seeking behaviour by people experiencing elder abuse. One professional observed that they have assisted some older people who felt they deserved the abuse that had occurred because they had not been a good parent in the past.

Elder abuse service providers stated that it was common for parents experiencing elder abuse to feel conflicted by their desire for the abusive behaviour to stop and an unwillingness to take action, using emotive language like 'I can't throw him out on the street' or 'How can I let her go bankrupt?'.

This dynamic was more frequently associated with financial abuse (but could apply to all types of elder abuse) preventing help-seeking if elder abuse does occur.

Fear of or lack of faith in the aged care system

Older people referred to negative attitudes towards both residential aged care and home care as a factor contributing to elder abuse. Older people do not have faith in the aged care system to respect their right to choice and control, and fear being subjected to the low levels of care or misconduct they have read about or seen in media exposés or heard about from others. Avoidance of aged or home care can place older people in less than desirable situations where elder abuse can occur, such as being neglected by reluctant or incapable carers or living with resentful or unsuitable family members.

The establishment of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety affirms the views of the public and older people, in particular, of the need for reform of the aged care system. It also provides an opportunity to restore confidence in society's capability to care for older people through the aged care system.

Apprehension about aged care can be further exacerbated by the increasing complexity and difficulties of accessing aged care services with the adoption of consumer-directed care. Older people can feel disempowered when they attempt to interact with the systems that support consumer-directed care, such as, My Aged Care. This results in them being less likely to make decisions for themselves.

Lack of understanding of elder abuse

"What constitutes elder abuse? People might not understand what they're doing is elder abuse. If you're working and you have a family and you can't be there to take better care, is that elder abuse if everyone is doing their best?"

Community member

Members of the community referred to a lack of understanding of what constitutes elder abuse. It was a common occurrence as part of this research for people to share scenarios experienced by older people and pose the question if this constitutes elder abuse. The line between care and abuse is not always easy to see and can change over time. Questions people caring for older people might ask are: is taking the car keys from an older person an act of care or a restriction of freedom? When does the actions of an adult child 'doing the best they can' for their mum while mum lives in increasingly squalid conditions become neglect? Does looking after a father's money give a son the right to take a few hundred dollars every now and then as compensation?

Elder abuse can occur when there is no intent to cause harm to the older person, or the harm results from actions taken with good intentions. The person causing the harm may consider they are doing their best to care for the older person in challenging circumstances.

Often, the experience may not be recognised as abuse by the older person, the person causing the harm or bystanders. This is due to a lack of understanding of what constitutes abuse or deep-seated attitudes that the rights of older people are not as important as those of others.

Despite widespread recognition of the term, there was the view that a lack of understanding of what constitutes elder abuse could be a factor in some instances where abuse is perpetrated.

Applying the socio-ecological model to elder abuse

Understanding the reasons why elder abuse occurs is key to knowing how to prevent it before it happens. It has been acknowledged by organisations such as the Australian Institute of Family Studies (Kaspiew et.al. 2016, p7) and the National Ageing Research Institute (Joosten et.al., p8) that there is a need to better understand the nature and risk factors of elder abuse in the context in which it occurs in order to improve both prevention and response.

It is widely acknowledged that preventing elder abuse is not just about the older person changing their behaviour to protect themselves from experiencing abuse. In its 2002 publication addressing all forms of violence including elder abuse, titled *World report on violence and health*, the World Health Organization applies the ecological model for understanding the nature of violence. The ecological model, depicted in Figure 10,

acknowledges that violence cannot be explained by one single factor, but is the result of a complex interplay of individual, relationship, social, cultural and environmental factors (Krug et.al. 2002, p12). This model has also been used by the National Ageing Research Institute in understanding elder abuse (Joosten et.al., p20) and informed the development of *Change the story* (Our Watch et.al. 2015, p21).
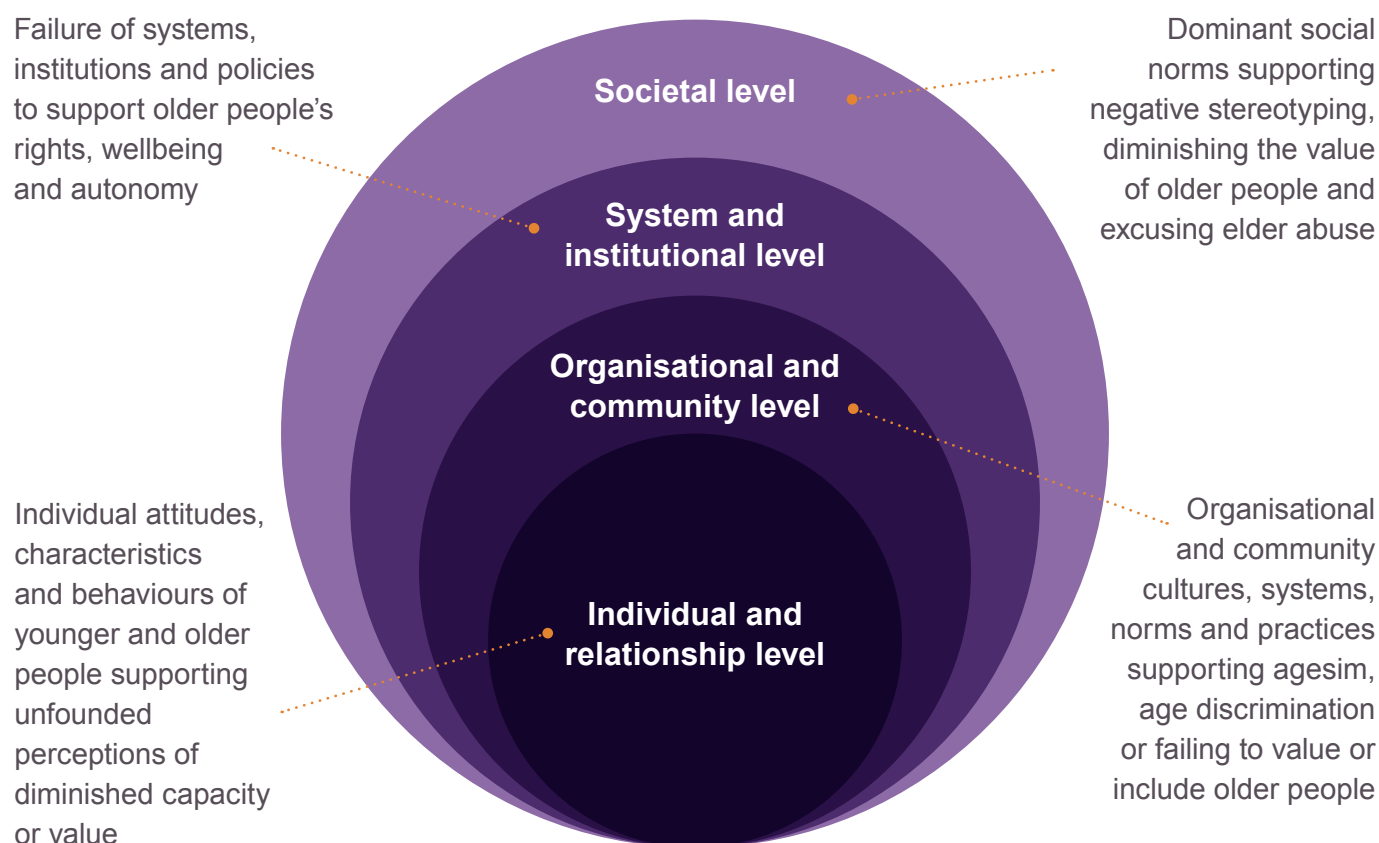
Failure of systems, institutions and policies to support older people's rights, wellbeing and autonomy

Dominant social norms supporting negative stereotyping, diminishing the value of older people and excusing elder abuse

Societal level

System and institutional level

Organisational and community level

Individual and relationship level

Individual attitudes, characteristics and behaviours of younger and older people supporting unfounded perceptions of diminished capacity or value

Organisational and community cultures, systems, norms and practices supporting agesim, age discrimination or failing to value or include older people

Figure 10 A socio-ecological understanding of the drivers of elder abuse

Adapted from *Change the Story – A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*. Our Watch 2015

Table 2 provides an exhaustive list of the reasons for elder abuse that were identified in this research, organised using the framework of the socio-ecological model. The more significant or commonly cited reasons are then discussed in further detail. It is worth noting that these reasons do not necessarily occur independently of each other and frequently exist in combination with each other.

Table 2 Summary of the reasons why elder abuse occurs

Individual – older person
Perceived or real diminished capacity due to cognitive impairment or physical or emotional frailty
Lack of clarity about or planning for future needs for housing, care and lifestyle
Isolation or lack of connection to formal or informal supports often due to reasons beyond their control
Low levels of financial resources reducing power and access to options if elder abuse occurs
Individual – person responsible for the harm
Financial hardship and sees financial abuse as a solution
Perceived or real diminished capacity due to cognitive impairment
Abuse of/addiction to drugs, alcohol or gambling
Psychiatric/psychological illness
Relationship breakdown resulting in adult children seeking financial or housing assistance from parents
Personality traits such as being greedy, domineering, exploitative, opportunistic and dishonest
Isolation or lack of connection to formal or informal supports
Relationship between older person and person responsible for harm
Sharing of resources and assets such as co-ownership of assets, exchange of assets/income for provision of care, and some financial transactions
Intergenerational wealth dynamics around housing and cash manifesting as inheritance impatience or resentment
Ongoing parent-child dynamic manifesting in a desire to help or a sense of obligation to adult children on the part of parents combined with a sense of entitlement or willingness to manipulate by an adult child
History of family violence or conflict
Undervaluing of and lack of support for carer relationships
Personality traits such as being greedy, domineering, exploitative, opportunistic and dishonest
Isolation or lack of connection to formal or informal supports
Organisational and community level
Lack of services for older people and the general community in regional and rural areas
Lack of confidence to deal with elder abuse
System and institutional level
Lack of housing that is affordable and/or age-appropriate resulting in families co-habiting
Lack of support services for perpetrators including housing, mental health services and addiction services
Fear of or lack of faith in the aged care system resulting in older people not accessing help when needed or tolerating elder abuse as the more preferred scenario
Continuation of historical **gender inequality** that was enabled by the legal system, for example, rape within an intimate partner relationship was only criminalised within the last 40 years.
Insufficient protections in the banking industry to prevent financial abuse of vulnerable customers. Examples given include banks not asking enough questions in unusual circumstances or using family members rather than independent translators to communicate with older people. The Australian Law Reform Commission's Response to the Elder Abuse Inquiry acknowledged the insufficient protections (ALRC 2017). The Banking Code of Practice, revised in 2018 for adoption from July 2019, also acknowledges current deficiencies and requires the industry to take extra care with vulnerable customers including those who are experiencing age-related impairment, cognitive impairment and elder abuse (ABA 2018, p22).

Table 2 Summary of the reasons why elder abuse occurs cont.

Societal level
Lack of understanding by older people, the community and service providers about elder abuse
Age discrimination in systems, institutions and society
Gender inequality as an underlying cause of elder abuse against older women, particularly intimate partner violence and/or sexual abuse
Lack of respect for LGBTI identities as an underlying cause of elder abuse, and identity abuse in particular, perpetrated against members of LGBTI communities
The belief that **family matters are private** preventing older people from seeking help and bystanders from intervening, and thereby emboldening perpetrators
Shame and stigma which can be felt by those experiencing any form of family violence, with the additional embarrassment and feelings of responsibility that some parents can feel for their child's behaviour

The implications of intersectionality

Individual aspects of the identity of older people and their family or carer context can enhance their vulnerability to elder abuse or make it more difficult for them to seek help when it does occur. Understanding more about how individual characteristics intersect with the social structures and systems surrounding them can ultimately inform efforts to better understand and prevent elder abuse.

The term intersectionality describes how characteristics such as ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, age or location can compound and interact on multiple levels to create overlapping forms of discrimination and power imbalances. These may increase the risk of negative occurrences such as family violence and elder abuse (Victorian State Government, p57). Those segments of the community who have experienced long-standing discrimination can be less able to assert their rights in all situations, and even more so in the face of abuse.

There is a perception within the community (rather than professionals) that some segments of the population are more respectful of their elders and consequently elder abuse would be less prevalent in these communities. There were hopes expressed that elder abuse could be reduced by translating the lessons from these exemplar communities to the broader population. While this research has not quantified prevalence in different cultures and communities, it is clear elder abuse does occur across all segments of the community, with some variance in terms of how the elder abuse manifests, vulnerability and protective factors, and barriers to seeking or obtaining help. The factors that contribute to the occurrence of elder abuse in different communities are outlined in this section, with the implications and lessons for primary prevention provided in section 9.4.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

Elders play a vital role in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities providing guidance, counselling and knowledge of culture and language. Elders are strongly represented in decision-making bodies such as Koori Courts which sentence Indigenous defendants. Countering these positive norms, *Free from Violence* acknowledges the

impacts of colonisation and dispossession, particularly the loss of land and culture, and the high levels of intergenerational trauma experienced by Indigenous people and communities which can act as drivers for family violence (Victorian State Government 2017, p2). While women in general experience disproportionate rates of elder abuse, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children experience disproportionate rates of family violence (Our Watch 2018, p5), making this a priority cohort for prevention activities. Addressing what drives violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women requires both an emphasis on the historical and ongoing impacts of colonisation and a gendered analysis (Our Watch 2018, p12).

The research findings relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities include:

- Generosity and sharing are a strong part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, which can be exploited, either deliberately or inadvertently. Older people may not identify behaviour as financial abuse due to the collectivist approach to money management common in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

- Instances of elder abuse that were cited as particular to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people include overstaying or hoarding goods in the home of an older person, inviting others into the home of the older person against their wishes, and parents receiving Centrelink payments for children who are being cared for by the grandparent.

- Drug and alcohol abuse can be a factor that is present in cases of theft and verbal and physical abuse of older people, as well as older people being relied upon to provide financial and practical support to whole families.

- Older people may feel a strong sense of obligation to do whatever they can to help family members improve the lives of their grandchildren and put an end to intergenerational disadvantage and trauma.

Culturally and linguistically diverse communities

Research undertaken by the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria found there is no evidence to suggest that there is a higher prevalence of elder abuse in ethnic communities, however, it may be more hidden due to shame, stigma and not knowing where to go for help (ECCV 2015, p2). The findings relating to culturally and linguistically diverse communities include:

- Low levels of proficiency in English leads to communication barriers, isolation from social networks and formal supports, and a greater reliance on family for interpreting and support. There were many examples provided of older people with low levels of proficiency in English being manipulated to unwittingly sign documents for loans or to transfer ownership of assets.

- There are different social norms in some cultures:
  – The expectation that grandparents will act as the primary carer for grandchildren can create tension within families and isolate older people from broader networks.
  – Older people often expect their children to conform to norms present in their culture of origin, particularly relating to providing care for parents. Yet in the absence of

the societal pressure or a different cultural context their children may not conform, resulting in conflict. Extreme cases cited by contributors to the research include older people relinquishing all their assets to their children who did not provide the anticipated housing or care in return.

– Gender-based norms are present in some cultures, such as the oldest son in families being revered and having a sense of entitlement over decision-making in the family, particularly if his father is deceased.

– Power dynamics within families can create tensions that in a different cultural context may not be considered elder abuse, such as the tension between mothers and daughters-in-law in some South Asian families.

- Holders of a contributory parent visa are frequently from a non-English speaking background and have arrived in Australia late in life with minimal connections aside from their child. They may experience enhanced vulnerability as they are reliant on their own or their sponsor's funds and can only access social security benefits after lengthy waiting periods (FECCA 2016, p4).

- The meaning and importance of family can be different across cultures, manifesting as:

– A desire to protect the family name or shame about having conflict within the family acting as a barrier to seeking help.

– Older people putting the goals and needs of the family above their own personal needs and wants.

- Intergenerational conflict can result from differences between generations in how they choose to retain or adapt cultural practices in the Australian context. There were instances cited of younger generations preventing older people from practicing cultural beliefs, such as eating kosher food or observing practices, a form of social abuse sometimes referred to as cultural abuse.

- Beliefs such as the idea that experiencing abuse is a punishment for past bad deeds can be exploited by people responsible for the harm and result in older people tolerating abuse.

Members of LGBTI communities

Lack of respect for LGBTI identities was discussed in section 4.5 as a driver that is unique to elder abuse carried out against members of LGBTI communities. The most commonly cited issues for older LGBTI people are family members perpetrating identity abuse or carrying out other forms of abusive behaviour driven by a lack of respect for their LGBTI identity.

LGBTI people are more likely than other older people to be single and to live alone, and less likely to have children and to not see biological family members on a regular basis (Guasp n.d., p3). This can result in greater levels of social isolation, another driver of elder abuse. For those older people without a care and support network, inappropriate or opportunistic people around them may step in and take advantage of the older person's need and vulnerability.

Regional and rural communities

Observations relating to the experiences within regional and rural communities include:

- A strong sense of obligation to the local community can enhance the vulnerability of older people who fear that raising experiences of abuse could disrupt the whole community.

- It is easier to become isolated as family members move away networks of friends shrink and there are limited public transport options available to people who cannot drive.

- Older people living on remote properties were highlighted as being particularly vulnerable due to the ease with which elder abuse can go undetected and the long travel distances from services. Older people who have a strong desire to remain on their property may tolerate elder abuse if it is accompanied by care or support that allows them to remain in their home.

- A variety of service providers is needed to meet the needs of all older people. Some older people living in regional areas prefer to access services being delivered from Melbourne, whereas others prefer to access services outside of their local area to maintain privacy.

- There are fewer services and service providers in regional areas, and often long waiting periods for access. There may be no options to speak with different people if privacy or a pre-existing relationship is a barrier to people accessing the service.

Socio-economic background

Amongst some members of the general public there was a perception that people from higher socio-economic backgrounds are less likely to experience elder abuse. However, professionals working in elder abuse early intervention and response stated that people from all socio-economic backgrounds experience elder abuse. Activities to prevent elder abuse clearly need to dispel the myths that only people from certain backgrounds or postcodes can experience elder abuse.

Observations about how socio-economic background may influence the experience of elder abuse are:

- Examples of elder abuse occurring to people from lower socio-economic backgrounds include people receiving a carer's payment without providing care to the older person, pressuring people on pension day to lend money and keeping older people out of aged care against their needs or wishes to secure a carer's payment or public housing.

- Examples of abuse occurring to people from higher socio-economic backgrounds include pressuring or deceiving older people to provide loans to fund business ventures and pressuring or manipulating parents to provide financial support to their child to buy a home.

- Older people from high socio-economic backgrounds were perceived as having a particular vulnerability as a result of not being familiar with services that could assist them in the event of elder abuse or feeling shame or stigma for accessing social services.

The Tango Project provides LGBTI elders in Victoria with an independent third party to document and address difficulties encountered on the basis of their LGBTI identities.

A discussion paper titled *Elder abuse as family violence* produced by Seniors Rights Victoria in 2018 explains how elder abuse is a form of family violence with unique causes and characteristics.

How to prevent elder abuse before it happens

The need for primary prevention

"We're here to respond, which is so important but it's not going to stop elder abuse. So it's good to know that there's more work happening in the prevention space."

Elder abuse response service representative

The 'primary prevention' of elder abuse – stopping it before it happens by understanding the underlying reasons for its occurrence and taking steps to eradicate or respond to them – sits alongside secondary and tertiary prevention to represent a holistic approach to addressing elder abuse. The continuum of prevention is described in Table 3. The intended outcomes of each aspect of prevention have been developed based on the perspective of Seniors Rights Victoria and the research team, rather than being informed by the research findings.

Table 3 The continuum of prevention

	Primary prevention	**Secondary prevention (early intervention)**	**Tertiary prevention (response)**
Definition (Victorian State Government 2017, p3)	Whole-of-population initiatives that address the primary, or underlying, drivers of violence	Also referred to as early intervention, the aim is to 'change the trajectory' for individuals at higher-than-average risk of perpetrating or experiencing violence	Also referred to as response, the aim is to support survivors and hold perpetrators to account, and to prevent the recurrence of violence

Free from violence: Victoria's strategy to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women and its accompanying action plans provides further context about primary prevention.

Primary prevention activities

Free from Violence provides a useful description of the nature of primary prevention:

Primary prevention requires a whole-of-community approach to drive social and cultural change across a wide range of settings. It is typically delivered through a combination of settings-based universal approaches, including in workplaces, schools and other common settings where we interact in our day-to-day lives, and more intensive interventions (that is, more targeted) with specific communities and groups. This means that everyone in the community has a role to play in prevention. Prevention is not just a task for those affected by violence, nor is it simply the role of family violence services. Rather, prevention requires all kinds of individuals and communities to act on the underlying causes in everyday places, to promote respect and equality and to reject violence in all its forms (Victorian State Government 2017, p7-8).

The research identified a tendency for prevention activities to focus on older people, whereas the extract from *Free from Violence* demonstrates that a range of primary prevention activities targeting different segments of the community and different settings are necessary to prevent elder abuse. Consideration of the drivers or reinforcing factors that need to be addressed and the component of the socio-ecological model that is being targeted should inform the selection of primary prevention activities.

The nature of preventing elder abuse is a complex and long-term proposition. At this early stage in the focus on the primary prevention of elder abuse, the evidence base on the impact of strategies is still emerging. The information presented in this section reflects the activities of the networks and the opinions of the research contributors. Further research is required to understand the impact of these activities in various contexts.

Summary of the primary prevention activities of the EAPNs

The EAPNs were each provided with $35,000 of funding to establish and operate the network and deliver a workplan of primary prevention activities over a 12-month period. All of the networks had a part-time worker to achieve this.

A summary of the primary prevention activities of the networks is provided in Table 4. More detailed information about the operation and lessons of the EAPNs are provided in section 11.

Table 4 Summary of primary prevention activities of the EAPNs

Central Highlands Elder Abuse Prevention Network
Developed helpful hints for action to prevent elder abuse. When they join the network, members make a commitment to undertake actions that improve the health and wellbeing of older people in the community
Professional development for network members
Community information sessions
Eastern Elder Abuse Network (EEAN)
Professional development for network members relating to the imperative and policy context for primary prevention and *Your Voice – Trust Your Choice* training provided by the Office of the Public Advocate
Community education sessions on legal and financial planning (some of these sessions were within the scope of the Eastern Community Legal Centre's Matter of Trust project rather than the EAPN scope)
A World Elder Abuse Awareness Day event
Macedon Ranges Elder Rights Network
Visit by Ambassador for Elder Abuse Prevention, in partnership with local U3A group
Your Voice, Trust Your Choice training
Know your Rights forum, in partnership with Cobaw Community Health
Information sessions with Rotary groups on financial issues to prevent elder abuse
Over 55s Connect Facebook page to connect people across the region and promote positive images of older people
Media stories to raise awareness of elder abuse in the local newspapers

Table 4 Summary of primary prevention activities of the EAPNs cont

Southern Melbourne Primary Care Partnership (SMPCP) Elder Abuse Prevention Network
World Elder Abuse Awareness Day lunch and presentations attended by older members of the community
Professional development forum for health and community professionals to raise awareness and understanding of elder abuse
Conversation Seeds community education sessions delivered in partnership with Seniors Rights Victoria
Elder abuse professional development provided by the Bouverie Centre to networks in the Integrated Model of Care
Positive profiles of older people in network communications to broaden the understanding of older people and challenge ageism
Building connections with leaders and organisations in a range community segments to co-design activities. It is anticipated that activities will take place in 2019

South West Carers and Respite Services Network (SWC&RSN) Elder Abuse Prevention Network
An intergenerational project called the Knitting Ninjas that brought together members of the community of all ages to yarn bomb. The project involved 10 different community groups including students from South West TAFE and a primary school to design and create installations. Media coverage has been obtained
A senior's expo in Hamilton
A community event for WEAAD with presentations by Gerard Mansour, the Victorian Commissioner for Seniors, Seniors Rights Victoria and Corangamite Shire
Community education sessions
Professional development for direct care staff in the region

Taking a rights-based approach in Macedon Ranges

The Macedon Ranges Elder Rights Network made an early decision to position itself and its messages as promoting the rights of older people, rather than being specific to elder abuse. The Shire felt that the rights of older people could be more easily aligned within the remit of other existing committees and forums such as the Community Safety Committee. A more generalised rights-based approach was also more consistent with the recent shift in the local government sector from service delivery to community capability building.

Primary prevention activities to address the drivers

The primary prevention activities cited by research contributors are presented in alignment with the drivers outlined in section 4 which they are intended to address. When suggesting these activities, the research contributors were drawing on their own work, research they had undertaken or ideas they had developed. These activities could be implemented by any organisation seeking to prevent elder abuse, including the types of networks that participated in this research.

Age discrimination

- Taking a rights-based approach through framing elder abuse as a societal rather than an individual issue for which there should be systemic solutions. The Frameworks Institute (2016) is well regarded for framing elder abuse as a preventable public health and social justice issue rather than a welfare problem.

- An important element of elder abuse prevention is to promote the autonomy and agency of older people, particularly relating to decision-making and independence. Agency can be maintained even as capacity diminishes in some aspects of life. Older people may need support to maintain or rebuild their agency if they lose confidence in their decision-making capabilities due to frailty or the experience of making a poor decision.

- A campaign to raise awareness of age discrimination, create positive social norms around the rights and respect afforded to older people and the unacceptability of elder abuse. An elder abuse media campaign identified as a key initiative in the *Free from Violence – First Action Plan* is planned for 2019 (Victorian State Government 2018, p16).

- Advocate for the development of comprehensive national and state leadership, policy frameworks and strategies on ageing and age discrimination.

- Broader adoption of approaches similar to positive ageing reference groups operated by local governments and Elder Councils in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, establishing opportunities to provide older people with input to decision-making and to share the perspective and needs of older people.

- Adopt creative approaches to challenge age discrimination to increase the likelihood of gaining attention and engagement. Examples included fashion parades featuring older people and an 'Ageing with Attitude' comedy show.

- YIRRAMBOI, The First Nations Arts Festival has an Elders Comfort Program to encourage Elders from all cultures to be part of the festival (refer to **Figure 11** for more information).

- Intergenerational activities that connect older and younger people to help build understanding and positive relationships between generations. Examples include shared activities between aged care facilities and kindergartens such as petting zoos, high school students filming life stories of older people as part of media studies subjects and the Knitting Ninjas yarn bombing.

- Equip a broad range of organisations to play a role in combatting age discrimination and elder abuse including workplaces, sporting clubs, adult education providers and faith communities.

- Provide support groups and guidance for older people to help them navigate and appreciate different age stages.

- Embed respect for older people and recognition of ageing in school-based campaigns like Respectful Relationships.

- Emulating social media movements such as #MeToo to challenge ageist attitudes and generate conversation.

Perceived or real diminished capacity

- Education for professionals and the community about the complexity of capacity and how it can be present in some aspects of life and not others, and can change over time.
- Advocate for the use of supported decision-making to enable and support an older person's involvement in decision-making that affects them.

Isolation or lack of connection

- Provide opportunities for people who may not have an interest in group activities to maintain their connections, such as through relationships with library staff, chemists, staff at cafes, shops and services e.g. hairdressers regularly visited. The availability of time during the work day to engage with older people may be a barrier that needs to be addressed.
- Provide age friendly options so that older people can continue with preferred activities as they age, for example, exercise classes for seniors, sporting clubs providing quiet spaces at functions for people with low hearing, community events designating seating for older people.

Undervaluing of and lack of support for carer relationships

- Awareness and education for the general public to influence the perceived value of the role of carers.
- Advocate for services for both carers and care recipients to support health and wellbeing such as respite services, counselling, in-home supports and social and leisure activities.
- The use of empathetic and non-judgemental language and forums to encourage help-seeking behaviour and valuing self.

LGBTI discrimination

- The Kinfolk project involves working with older Trans and Gender Diverse (TGD) elders and service providers to improve TGD elder's choice and control over gender identity and expression. In particular, it will address the restriction of gender expression by family members in ways that preserve family relationships. Kinfolk has recently been launched by Celebrate Ageing with funding from the Department of Health.

Figure 11 YIRRAMBOI Elders Comfort Program

Primary prevention activities to address the reinforcing factors

The primary prevention activities identified through the research to address the reinforcing factors outlined in section 5 are provided below.

Lack of clarity about or planning for the future

- Community forums on wills, powers of attorney and financial decision-making. Such forums held by the networks have been very well attended by older people.
- Programs or guidelines for older people to support them through the planning and decision-making they need to do at various stages. Structure these programs like checklists that people can work through similar to other milestones or stages of life such as preparing for the birth of your first child.
- An example from an American elder abuse campaign involved older people at risk of financial abuse having a buddy who visited them on pension day and accompanied them to the bank to discourage others from pressuring them to give away their pension money.
- Fun programs aimed at upskilling older people in important skills such as digital literacy and financial literacy that will support them to maintain their independence and reduce reliance on others.
- Education to discourage older people from relinquishing control for decision-making to their children unless it's vital or clearly the preference of the older person and it is safe to do so.

Issues or illness of the person responsible for the elder abuse and a lack of related support services

- Advocate for an increase in social services to address issues or illnesses experienced by the person responsible for the harm, including short term housing for men who need to find alternative accommodation because of having an intervention order issued against them for perpetrating intimate partner violence, more affordable housing, mental health services, drug and alcohol rehabilitation and counselling and gambling services.

Sharing of resources/assets

- Build acceptance of the need for all parties to have independent legal advice when entering financial arrangements with family members.

Ongoing parent-child dynamic

- Influence a change in social norms that parents are responsible for adult children and adult children are entitled to expect their parents to take responsibility for them.

Fear of or lack of faith in the aged care system

- Changes to the aged care sector which have commenced with the adoption of Consumer Directed Care (CDC) and will be further explored through the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.

Lack of understanding of elder abuse

- Education about what constitutes elder abuse and how to recognise it.

- Education about sexual abuse as a form of elder abuse to dispel myths about sexual abuse and equip service providers with more knowledge and tools.

- Provide case studies of experiences of elder abuse that reflect a broad range of individuals, families and circumstances to help older people understand that elder abuse can happen to them.

- Development of leadership statements and policies in relation to elder abuse in relevant service organisations, for example, aged and financial services.

- Professional development on how to prevent elder abuse by addressing the drivers and reinforcing factors.

A discussion paper titled *Preventing elder abuse* produced by Seniors Rights Victoria in 2018 describes activities that help prevent elder abuse from occurring.

Understanding dementia is a free Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) by the University of Tasmania and drawing on the expertise of the Wicking Dementia Research and Education Centre.

Dementia Australia provides community awareness and help sheets on commonly raised issues about dementia including caring for someone with dementia and preventing financial abuse of people with dementia.

The Cognitive Decline Partnership Centre provides research and resources to improve care for people with dementia.

The Strengthening Seniors Inclusion and Participation in Local Communities initiative supported local community-based organisations in seven Victorian local government areas to address social isolation and loneliness of older people.

Assets for care: A guide for lawyers to assist older clients at risk of financial abuse published by Seniors Rights Victoria in 2014 provides guidance on the exchange of assets for care and accommodation within families

Interviews organised by Seniors Rights Service with experts who attended the 5th National Elder Abuse Conference on topics including elder abuse in diverse communities, ageism and powers of attorney and law reform and elder abuse.

Children from The Patch Primary School and the Yarra Ranges Council Positive Ageing Reference Group co-created a video for World Elder Abuse Awareness Day 2018. The video features poems written and spoken by the reference group members about the isolation and negativity people feel while experiencing elder abuse, and drawings by the children about specific parts of the poems.

Seniors Creating Change is a group of older people based in Townsville Queensland focused on empowering themselves to call for an end to elder abuse. The group sings in public places to raise awareness of the root causes of ageism and social isolation. They use creative and attention-grabbing techniques such as flashmobs.

EveryAGE Counts is a national campaign launched in October 2018 to address ageism and achieve the vision of 'a society where every person is valued, connected and respected regardless of age and health'.

Tech, Tea and Tales was a partnership between Lively and StoryPod employing ten young jobseekers to teach older people about technology, as well as recording their life stories and experiences on film.

Ask Gran Not Google is an intergenerational project that encourages children to seek the wisdom and life experience of a senior before searching the internet for answers. By doing so, children gain insight into the valuable role seniors can play in their lives and society.

Primary prevention and intersectionality

Approaches for recognising and responding to the individual aspects of the identity of some older people and their context are provided in Table 5.

Table 5 The implications of intersectionality for primary prevention

Characteristic	Implications for primary prevention
Applicable to all	• Recognise that historical experiences of discrimination or marginalisation may have resulted in entrenched and internalised discrimination, lack of feelings of entitlement and inability of people to advocate for themselves. • Equip community-specific organisations to contribute to primary prevention to ensure appropriate language and messages. Factors of culture and context influence how all forms of abuse are viewed, and specific strategies to prevent elder abuse should address such differences. • Feature people from diverse backgrounds in images and stories to dispel the myths that elder abuse 'won't happen to me' or doesn't happen in certain communities. • Provide verbal and written materials in different languages or vernacular.
Members of LGBTI communities	• Advanced planning takes on greater significance for LGBTI people to ensure that relationships are recognised, next of kin decision-making is vested in the chosen person, the ownership or entitlement to assets is formalised and gender identity or sexual orientation are recognised at funerals. • Build understanding of identity abuse as a form of elder abuse that is unique to LGBTI communities. • Recognise 'families of choice' amongst people who are not necessarily biologically related, that are common within LGBTI communities. A person may also identify as having more than one family if they have experienced separation or rejection from their family of origin and have created a family of choice. Members of families of choice are important care and support networks for LGBTI people. As with all types of families, these family members could also abuse the trust placed in them by the older person.
Rural and regional	• Provide outreach programs that can take services and opportunities to older people, such as stalls at events such as farm shows, mobile libraries visiting people in their homes and mobile specialist services including legal advisors.

The faces of the Victorian Seniors Festival 2018 are challenging stereotypes and homogenised views of older people by representing a diverse range of individuals and experiences of older Victorians. More images and profiles of older Victorians are available at **https://www.seniorsonline.vic.gov.au/festivalsandawards/faces-of-the-festival**

Figure 12 Jeanette Lane, one of the faces of the Victorian Seniors Festival 2018

Changing the picture: preventing violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women published by Our Watch provides an understanding of the intersecting drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and primary prevention strategies.

The Eastern Community Legal Centre's Matter of Trust program delivers financial elder abuse prevention workshops in collaboration with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in eastern Melbourne.

The Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria provides bilingual community education kits in various languages for elder abuse prevention. A series of educational films in multiple languages are also available.

Safeguarding the end of the rainbow is a guide published by COTA Victoria and Transgender Victoria in 2018 to help LGBTI people to plan an end of life of their choice.

Terminology for preventing elder abuse

A broad range of terminology is recognised as being necessary to address the extensive collection of drivers and reinforcing factors as well as target audiences and settings that primary prevention addresses. The most appropriate language needs to be determined based on the context, the target audience involved and the purpose of the communications.

The experiences of the networks and other organisations who contributed to this research are shared below.

- The term 'older people' is preferred to 'elders' or 'seniors', although the use of the word 'elder' in 'elder abuse' prevails even though it is contested by some people. Alternative terms incorporate the preference for the term 'older people', such as 'abuse of older people' or 'exploitation of older people'. At this stage, the term elder abuse prevails particularly to maintain consistency with internationally recognised activities such as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

- 'Getting better with age', 'the equal rights of older people' and 'respecting older people' are phrases seen as appropriate to addressing age discrimination.

- The more general terms outlined above were highlighted as lacking clarity if it is specifically referring to elder abuse. The terms could be interpreted as valuing the opinions of older people rather than referring to situations of abuse.

- General terms may be more appropriate for starting a conversation or attracting people to come to an event where elder abuse is subsequently addressed as one related issue. Community leaders have advised elder abuse advocates that people from their community will not attend an event promoted using the term elder abuse due to the stigma attached to it or not recognising the content as being relevant to them.

- Using scenarios or examples of behaviours can be more effective than general terms. While people may not consider terms such as elder abuse or age discrimination as relevant to them, they may more readily identify with scenarios such as belittling behaviour or being pressured to provide money.

- Phrases such as 'When family relationships break down', 'Knowing who you can trust' and 'Protecting yourself' are more specific to situations of elder abuse without being confronting.

- Analogies can be more engaging than direct advice. One example is to compare the need for an older person to secure their own financial wellbeing before assisting others to the safety instructions on an aeroplane to secure your own oxygen mask in the event of a decompression before assisting others.

- Case studies gained through early intervention and response are useful in demonstrating how elder abuse can be prevented before it happens. They are valuable in dispelling myths about how and to who elder abuse occurs and can demonstrate the drivers and reinforcing factors in a way that may be more engaging and meaningful, particularly providing real world rather than conceptual language when communicating with the general community.

- Language such as 'perpetrator' and 'abuse' is seen as useful for activities such as advocacy campaigns to challenge attitudes and norms; 'person of concern', 'conflict' or 'mistreatment' may be more appropriate and productive for sensitive communications targeted at families.

- 'Abuse' does not always translate meaningfully across languages and cultures. Jewish Care in conjunction with Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV) have used the language 'harmed by someone close to you' in communications in languages other than English. In some languages, the translation of abuse refers to physical abuse only, so broader terms need to be used.

- Gunditjmara Aboriginal Co-operative co-designed brochures with the local Aboriginal community and identified the most powerful language as 'Any abuse of ANY elders is a REAL dog act'.

- Representatives of Aboriginal communities stated that there are no objections to the use of the term 'elder abuse' in the Indigenous context where 'Elders' are revered, and the term has great significance.

- Instances of elder abuse within a care relationship may be more appropriately addressed with non-judgemental language to provide a safe space for both the person responsible for and the person experiencing the abuse to seek help and to recognise the value and complexity of the relationship.

- Some people advocate the use of language like 'theft' when referring to financial abuse and 'assault' when referring to physical or sexual abuse, claiming that we need to 'call it what it is'. The counter-argument to this is that the term elder abuse is more inclusive of harm that may not be considered a criminal act.

Why and how to have a network

The experience of five EAPNs during 2018 has provided the basis for an understanding of how networks of local organisations can contribute to the primary prevention of elder abuse.

In the context of this Victorian Government initiative, an EAPN is a membership-based group of organisations including community groups, organisations or businesses that work with or provide services to older people and others in communities. The EAPNs were funded to develop and deliver activities that work towards the primary prevention of elder abuse. Each network developed a workplan of primary prevention activities for implementation in their geographic area. The activities typically built on existing strengths and momentum to respond to local characteristics and needs.

Three of the EAPNs commenced in late 2017. The South West Carers and Respite Services Network (SWC&RSN) EAPN was initiated through the expansion of the remit of the existing Everybody's Business sub-group of SWC&RSN and the Eastern Elder Abuse Network (EEAN) was established in 2010.

The relatively short period of operation of the networks compared to the long-term nature of preventing elder abuse means that it is not possible to be conclusive about the role of the networks and the impact of their activities within the timescale of this research. The information presented reflects the activities and perspectives of the networks and other research contributors. A recommendation of this report is that further research is required to understand the impact of the networks and these activities in various contexts.

The elder abuse prevention networks

The five EAPNs that participated in this research[1] are summarised in Figure 13, with more detailed profiles provided in Appendix B.
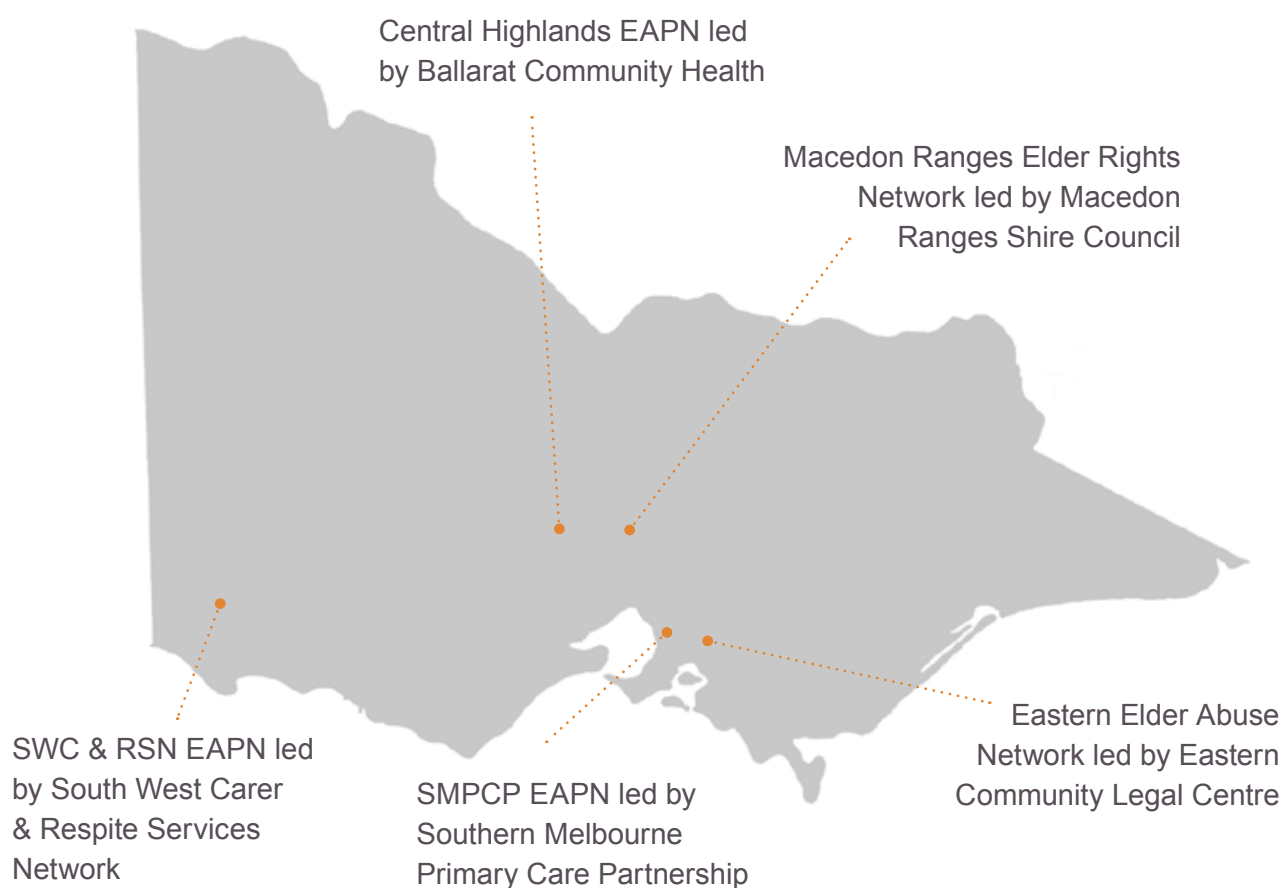

Central Highlands EAPN led by Ballarat Community Health

Macedon Ranges Elder Rights Network led by Macedon Ranges Shire Council

SWC & RSN EAPN led by South West Carer & Respite Services Network

SMPCP EAPN led by Southern Melbourne Primary Care Partnership

Eastern Elder Abuse Network led by Eastern Community Legal Centre

Figure 13 Elder Abuse Prevention Networks

The value of a primary prevention network

The question of why a network approach is important to primary prevention of elder abuse was examined throughout this research and the responses are outlined below.

Multisectoral and multidisciplinary

There is significant evidence that demonstrates the effectiveness of a multidisciplinary approach to address and prevent elder abuse (Joosten et.al., p7). The World Health Organization also states, 'Confronting and reducing elder abuse requires a multisectoral and multidisciplinary approach' (WHO 2002, p29).

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1 Elder abuse prevention networks were also established by Melbourne Health, Latrobe Community Health Service, Western Health and Peninsula Health as part of the integrated model of care approach to responding to elder abuse. These networks were initiated after this research commenced and were therefore not included.

Primary prevention of elder abuse requires a deep systemic approach that can only be achieved by bringing together many organisations, across many sectors, bringing many professional disciples to bear. The lead agencies and network members that were the subject of this research came from many sectors including:

- Health
- Legal
- Local government
- Family violence
- Aged care
- Aboriginal organisations
- Government services

- Police
- Housing and homelessness
- Sporting
- Service
- Faith
- Culture
- Other community organisations.

Organisations that cater for older people, local business or professional groups and education institutions were not strongly represented in the membership of the networks. Although these stakeholder groups and settings are acknowledged as important, the networks focused on their existing networks of professional organisations to commence promptly and gain some quick wins. All of the networks expressed a desire to diversify their membership in the future.

Each network operates in a different community, each with its own dynamics and characteristics. Each network reports that they seek to represent the unique mix of diverse characteristics pertinent to their region. This diversity is certainly not limited to cultural diversity but includes all forms of diversity. Through its diverse membership, a network provides the best chance of including a range of perspectives to generate ideas and understanding and contribute to elder abuse prevention in many settings.

Networks are well positioned to understand and reach out to their local communities, particularly older people who are often place-based, and potentially reach isolated older people.

Further, broad and diverse membership provides relevance and legitimacy within and when acting on behalf of the community that cannot be provided from a centralised service. The networks have forged relationships with different leaders and groups across their community to implement prevention activities. While building these relationships has required time and a genuine meeting of the minds, this is viewed as an investment in a more effective and sustainable engagement with different segments of the community.

Shared objectives, shared resources

With diversity comes the challenge of an integrated and connected approach to elder abuse prevention. A network approach enables shared strategic alignment and a coordinated approach which reduces fragmentation and replication often encountered with a more ad hoc approach. The majority of the network members are experienced at organisational collaboration and recognise the need for joined up effort to address social problems. Further, the personal passion and commitment of the individuals involved to play a part in a broader effort cannot be underestimated.

A network approach also enables a consistent approach to policies, processes, education, marketing collateral and events while building capability across many organisations interacting with older people and the broader community. This consistency is mostly a consequence of the fact that very few of the organisations have the resources to do these things in the absence of the networks. Being able to pool the collective resources of a network often makes network activities possible, with different organisations contributing some of their time, resources and expertise.

Lessons from the EAPNs

This section outlines valuable lessons learned during the 12 months of operations of the EAPNs.

The role of a network in primary prevention

Changing the Story identified five key techniques, presented in Table 6, that have demonstrated effectiveness or promise for the primary prevention of violence against women. This work has provided important guidance in primary prevention activities to address elder abuse.

Table 6 Five proven or promising techniques to prevent violence against women and their children

Characteristic	Implications for primary prevention
Direct participation programs	Engage all people at the individual, relationship or group level to build the knowledge and skills for equal, respectful and non-violent relationships, improve access to the resources required that support such relationships and improve connections to social networks and institutions.
Community mobilisation and strengthening	Mobilise and support communities to address violence and the social norms that make it acceptable.
Organisational development	Equip organisations to model non-violent, equitable and respectful relationships.
Communications and social marketing	Using communications to raise awareness and challenge attitudes, behaviours and social norms across entertainment and media channels including television, radio, print, community arts and social media.
Civil society advocacy	Building collective momentum across society to encourage governments, organisations and communities to act.

Figure 14 summarises some of the activities from the EAPN workplans mapped against these techniques. The size of each segment represents the relative size of the focus for EAPNs.

This graph summarises some activities from the EAPN workplans mapped against the five techniques. The size of each segment represents an estimate of the relative size of the focus of EAPNs.
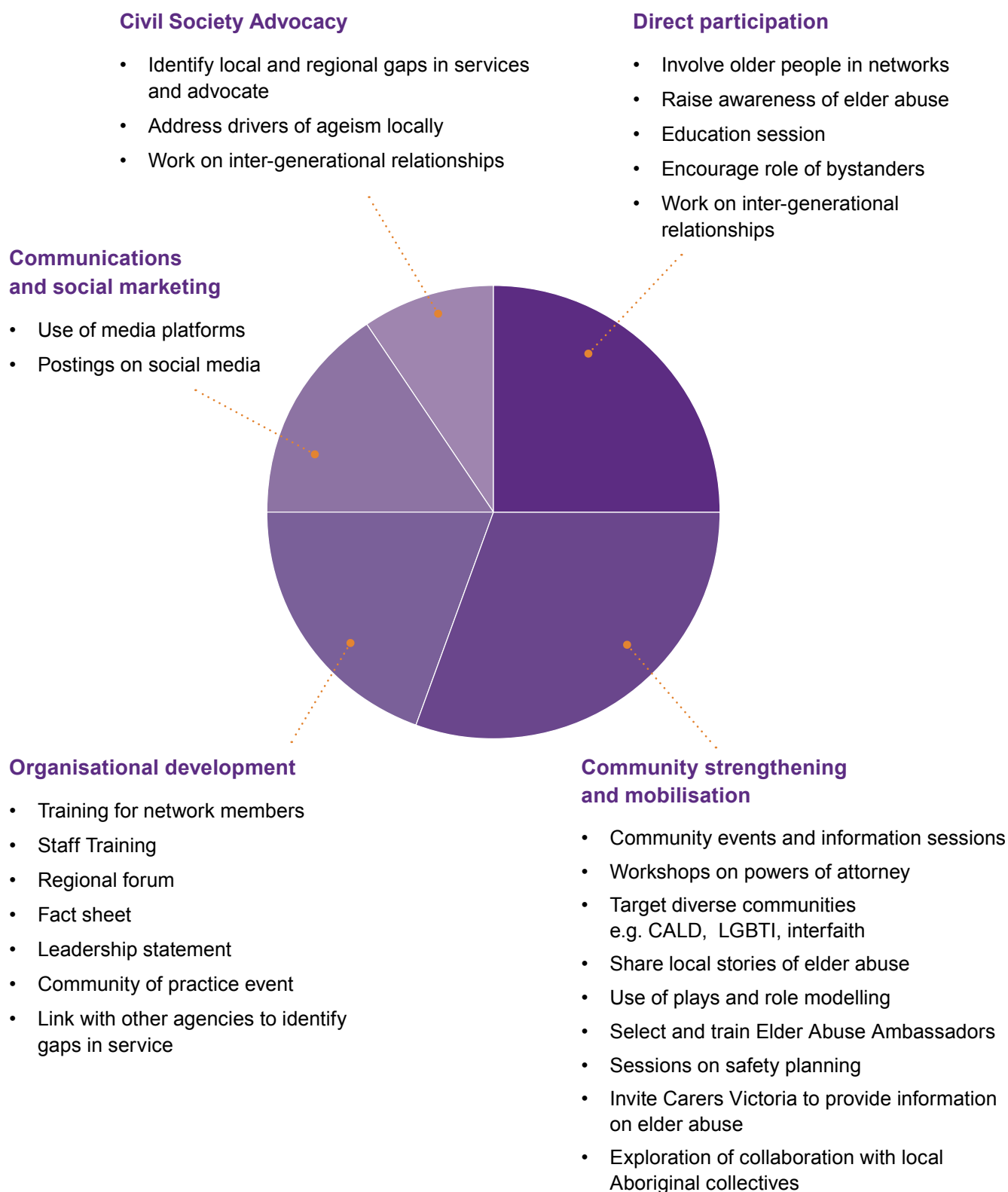
Civil Society Advocacy

- Identify local and regional gaps in services and advocate
- Address drivers of ageism locally
- Work on inter-generational relationships

Direct participation

- Involve older people in networks
- Raise awareness of elder abuse
- Education session
- Encourage role of bystanders
- Work on inter-generational relationships

Communications and social marketing

- Use of media platforms
- Postings on social media

Organisational development

- Training for network members
- Staff Training
- Regional forum
- Fact sheet
- Leadership statement
- Community of practice event
- Link with other agencies to identify gaps in service

Community strengthening and mobilisation

- Community events and information sessions
- Workshops on powers of attorney
- Target diverse communities e.g. CALD, LGBTI, interfaith
- Share local stories of elder abuse
- Use of plays and role modelling
- Select and train Elder Abuse Ambassadors
- Sessions on safety planning
- Invite Carers Victoria to provide information on elder abuse
- Exploration of collaboration with local Aboriginal collectives

Figure 14 EAPN activities mapped against the five primary prevention techniques

A review of the activity of the EAPNs during 2018 demonstrates that networks have most strongly contributed in the areas of Direct Participation; Community Mobilisation and Strengthening; and Organisational Development. At a community level this is where networks have 'their ears the ground', they are trusted in their communities and can work closely with other organisations across various settings to implement strategies relevant to the needs of their local communities. There is potential for networks to expand their contribution by focusing on other segments of the community and reaching a broader range of organisations such as businesses and professional groups.

To achieve real and significant change in fighting ageism and addressing elder abuse, all techniques would need to be deployed at multiple levels of society. While networks are unlikely to lead Civil Society Advocacy and Communications and Social Marketing campaigns, they can play a role in supporting local commitment and action.

The communications activities of local networks can have greater impact if they are part of a society-wide campaign and there can be efficiencies for networks if materials such as key messages and branding and imagery are provided. Networks can also provide value to Advocacy by providing opportunities for the public to contribute, provide case studies and spokespeople to campaigns and keep campaigns informed of issues and trends. An elder abuse media campaign, identified as a key initiative for the Victorian Government in the *Free from Violence – First Action Plan* and planned for 2019 (Victorian State Government 2018, p16), can provide this over-arching society wide momentum and messaging.

The role of the networks in Direct Participation and Community Strengthening and Mobilisation has been supported by other organisations that provide state-wide or subject-specific expertise. Seniors Rights Victoria has provided community education facilitation and materials. The Office of Public Advocate has provided professional development sessions and materials on powers of attorney as part of the *Your Voice – Trust Your Choice* campaign.

The effectiveness of these techniques was considered in 2015, drawing on research and evidence available at the time. Communications and Social Marketing, Community Mobilisation and Direct Participation are the techniques that have demonstrated significant improvements in attitudes and reductions in family violence (PWC 2015, p22). This report also introduced two additional techniques – Legislative and Policy Reform and Research, Monitoring and Evaluation. Networks can play a role in supporting these techniques, but they are unlikely to be best placed to lead them due to the need for society-wide coordination and consistency.

Lessons for starting a network

Each network included in this research took their own approach to starting and maintaining their network. The following 'lessons from the front line' are based on the experience of the first year and are provided for general guidance

Network creation

- 'Each of the EAPNs has taken a different approach to the design of the network. This is reflective of the different sorts of organisations as lead agencies and the relationships and infrastructure already in place in that geographic area. There is no single model that should be replicated by others.

- 'Where possible, build on existing momentum and activities but don't get too tied to traditional practice. New approaches may be needed.

- 'Develop terms of reference and a plan but don't get too bogged down in bureaucracy as this can consume the time that organisations have available to contribute.

- 'Use the process of developing the terms of reference to get buy-in and shared ownership that will be essential to sustain the network over the long term, and provide organisations with clarity about whether and why they should get involved in the network.

- 'Proactively seek out the organisations you think need to be involved in the network.

- 'When getting the initial commitment from participants, try to balance ease of engagement with substance.

- ''Let go' as much as possible – don't try to control the process and allow networks to gather their own momentum.

- 'Develop a solid and expansive database of people to communicate with to build interest and momentum.

- 'Be patient and persistent – it takes time to get momentum especially on this issue which is uncomfortable for some.

- 'Engage in existing committees and groups but be clear that the network is not seeking to 'hijack the agenda' or shift their focus.

- 'It's better to under-promise and over-deliver than the other way around. Being too ambitious can be overwhelming and deflating.

- 'Don't underestimate the lead time for a new network to be established and get moving. Even in instances where network or organisational relationships already existed, it has taken at least six months for members to establish or enhance their focus on primary prevention.

Primary prevention activities

- 'Engage in as much outreach as you can. Consult widely.

- 'Stimulate conversations within the community and deeply appreciate lived experience.

- 'Investigate your own community and respond appropriately.

- 'Look for short-term wins and promote them to build and maintain interest and confidence in what can be achieved.

- 'Identify response services in the local area for referrals as the public and professionals will expect this information.

Who to involve in a network

- 'The decision about who to involve in the network often comes down to whoever you can engage. You may not secure involvement quickly, or at all, even from those organisations that have a clear connection to the issue. Finding a champion within the organisation to drive their initial involvement from within can be useful, particularly where the organisation doesn't view elder abuse as 'core business'. However organisational leadership is necessary for meaningful commitment that transcends the individual. The approach of the Central Highlands EAPN to gain CEO commitment can ensure organisational involvement that extends beyond the willingness of one person.

- 'Different network models require different memberships – some models suggest smaller steering or governance groups meeting infrequently with large informal memberships, others might seek larger, more formal governance groups.

- 'It can take many months to find the right people within organisations to participate. The relevant role has many different titles and emphases. For example, it might be a person who is focused on health and wellbeing, positive ageing, community outreach, community engagement, or other specialist roles.

- 'Very importantly, a network will benefit from the inclusion of an effective voice from older people. This should go further than token representation, and may not require or be limited to attendance at network meetings. The emphasis here is on enabling effective voice. Involving older people will support a deep understanding of community needs and wants. An acknowledged consideration for allowing meaningful involvement of community members is professionals using accessible language.

- 'Diversity of skills, knowledge, backgrounds, and ways of thinking and working has proven to be an advantage in this type of work, so this should be a major consideration in establishing a network. Even people like school teachers, sporting club managers and others who don't naturally fit into this type of work have shown to be valuable in bringing a new perspective.

"We're constantly looking around to see who's missing at the table."

Lead agency

- Networks will benefit from the participation of case workers and frontline staff as they have specialised knowledge of elder abuse. However, it's often the community development or sector development workers who have flexibility and the scope within their role to get involved in activities beyond service delivery. If no frontline workers are participating there is a risk of being under-informed about the lived experience of older people. However, responders are often fully utilised by response demands and don't always have skills, capabilities or knowledge base for primary prevention work.

Operating a network

Primary prevention focus

The grants provided by the Victorian Government to the EAPNs to contribute to primary prevention in some instances complemented or augmented the existing activities of already established networks. Reflections of the networks in contributing to primary prevention are provided below.

- It can take a number of years for people to truly understand primary prevention and particularly how it differs from early intervention. This is due to the complexity of elder abuse, the underlying reasons for its occurrence and its manifestations and the need to view it as a systemic rather than individual problem. The focus can easily stray into secondary and tertiary prevention especially when there is a preponderance of service agencies involved who may have present cases for which they need assistance.

- There can be some resistance, either conscious or unconscious, to primary prevention. The need for critical reflection on the society in which we live and the established systems and structures, such as capitalism, heteronormativity and white supremacy, can be personally confronting and resisted.

- It can also take time for people to get comfortable with making space to focus on primary prevention, fearing that this focus will be instead of (rather than as well as) response. Establishing working groups for prevention and response may alleviate these concerns and demonstrate ongoing commitment to all aspects of prevention.

"People want to protect the people who are hurt, the idea that responding to people in need will be left behind is frightening."

Network member

- Early intervention and response services have experienced an increase in demand for their services over recent years, reinforcing the need for a greater focus on primary prevention. It is also well-evidenced that the delivery of primary prevention activities leads to greater recognition of experiences of violence and generates demand for early intervention and response services. All aspects of prevention are inter-dependent and critical.

- The knowledge gained through early intervention and response is needed to inform primary prevention.

- Organisations or representatives funded and equipped to provide early intervention and response activities may not have the resources to contribute to primary prevention and may need support to develop the skills and mindsets required for primary prevention, such as advocacy, campaigning, behaviour change and creative communications.

- Be vigilant for opportunities to address ageism/ageist stereotypes (appropriately) and to promote positive images of older people and their contribution to the community (not just in the context of elder abuse). These opportunities may have to be created and justified given how normalised and insidious ageism is.

Collaboration

- Investing time in collaboration and communication needs to be viewed as a valuable investment in the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of the network. The lead agencies have adopted a truly collaborative approach which means consulting with network members, taking the time to build rapport and establish ways of operating within the group. This means adopting a pace that is suited to the needs of the group and allowing time for network members to consult within their own organisations before making decisions.

- Network members often have limited resources and can end up using their available time for planning and communication, leaving little time remaining for them to contribute to the implementation of activities. Similarly, the lead agencies can spend a significant proportion of the dedicated resource on meetings and communication, eroding the amount of time they also have for implementation. This can lead to frustration about the amount of time spent on meetings and communication versus implementation. While the importance of relationship-building and collaboration is recognised, the tendency is always to assess success of the delivery of activities.

Implementation

- Focus on activities that will lead to visibility and success within a short timeframe to build confidence and momentum. Smaller is better so you can mitigate risks. Be willing to prioritise and put things on hold. Embrace learning from trying and finding transferable lessons.

- Encourage respect for different views within the network membership. The lead agency and other coordinators such as Working Group chairs may need to moderate relationships and involvement to maintain shared objectives and productive relationships.

- You will need to provide clear communications about what is happening and why to keep people engaged, but this needs to be balanced with information overload. Having different communication channels has worked effectively for the networks, for example, a targeted email list of network members for critical communications and an email list or Facebook group for more general information.

- All networks are underpinned by a dedicated worker to provide the anchor and provide the bulk of the resources for implementation. The network could not function without it, but the expectation or pattern becomes that the dedicated worker is expected to be responsible for implementation. There is a limit to what can be achieved by a part-time worker based within one organisation. Joined up effort from within multiple organisations can achieve much more. The approach of the SMPCP EAPN has had success in sharing workload across network members. Working Groups were established for targeted implementation and chairs of the Working Groups and the Steering Committee are not PCP team members.

- Organisations will always have to prioritise activities for which they are funded or contracted. 2018 has been a particularly challenging time for networks given the significant reform in the aged care and disability sectors, and the reform and activity in family violence as a result of the Royal Commission into Family Violence. The focus on these reforms and activities has affected the ability of some network members to contribute to elder abuse specific initiatives.

- The focus and activities of the network should be reviewed regularly. The experience of the EEAN over their eight years of operation is that a periodic review and refresh is valuable as needs, priorities, opportunities and the policy landscape continue to evolve.

- Finding innovative primary prevention activities that will reach across the community and get the messages heard in the age of information overload has been a challenge for all networks. Other representatives involved in the research posed the question 'What comes next after purple cupcakes on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day?'. Creative ideas, such as the yarnbombing and comedy and theatre performances were implemented or explored.

Sustaining the operation of the network

- All of the networks are exploring ways to embed the operation of the network into the roles of the contributing individuals and organisations to support ongoing sustainability. Alongside this, there is the view that it would be difficult to sustain momentum, and more importantly be strategic and effective, without a lead agency and funding to support driving and coordinating the network.

- Establishing an effective network and contributing to primary prevention are both complex and long-term processes requiring buy-in of many stakeholders and extended timeframes. Mechanisms that bring about change in beliefs and societal norms may not be clear and such change is not necessarily a linear process. It is often not obvious what follow-up actions are required to ensure sustainability and over what duration. At the same time the funding for these networks was originally only for twelve months. While they have plugged into community interest and enthusiasm on the topic, networks are also mindful of the need to not raise expectations or make plans beyond their capacity to deliver.

- It appears that the ongoing sustainability of a network is more viable when the lead agency has a commitment to the issues of elder abuse and primary prevention that extends beyond funding opportunities. Over its life, the work of the EEAN has been sustained by the ECLC and other organisations such as the Inner East Primary Care Partnership filling gaps in funding and securing a range of funding opportunities. SMPCP has also contributed funding to extend the operation of its network into 2019.

- A focus on maximising return on investment rather than self-sustaining models is likely to be more realistic. The lead agencies have leveraged their resources, expertise and relationships to deliver 12 months' of activity for a modest investment of $35,000.

- Having large (e.g. local government and health) and commercial organisations as members can assist with financial sustainability as they are more likely to have resources that can be contributed to deliver activities. These could include funding to purchase promotional materials and internal resources such as marketing, graphic design and media.

Communicating with the community

Responses to the online survey of over 100 community members show that those people who were aware of elder abuse had most commonly found out about the topic through a television, radio or newspaper story as shown in Figure 15 below. This demonstrates the strength of mainstream media campaigns in reaching audiences.
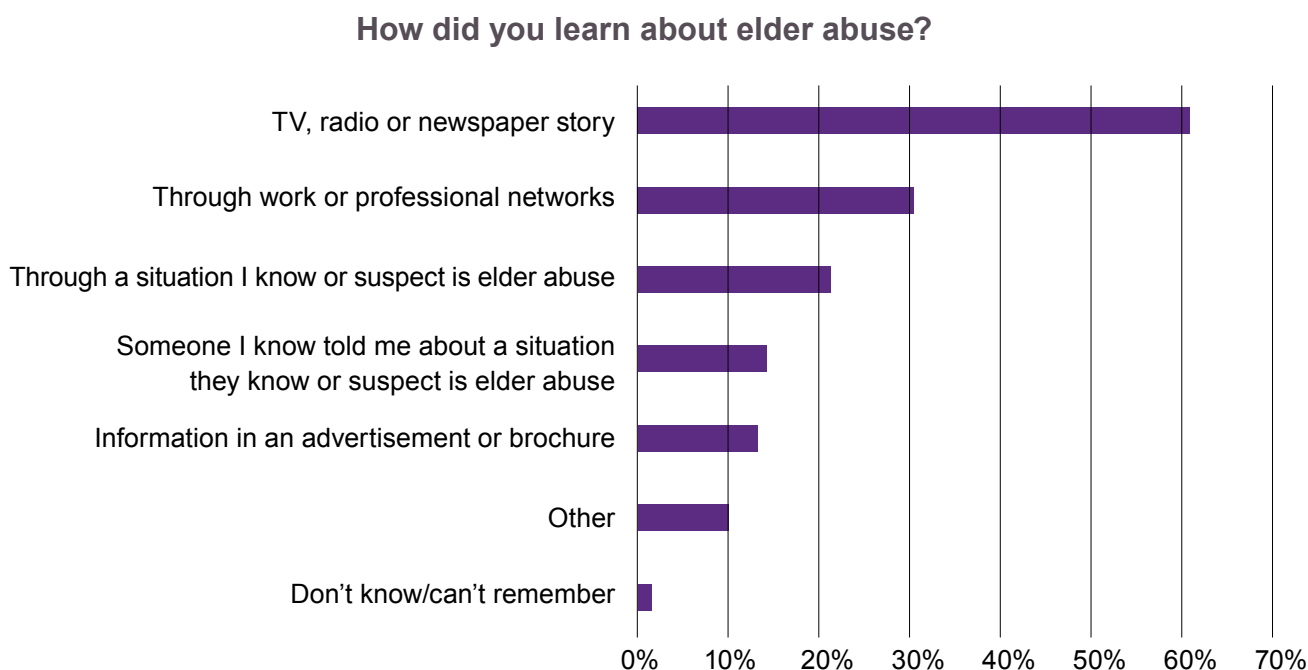
How did you learn about elder abuse?

Category	Percentage
TV, radio or newspaper story	60%
Through work or professional networks	30%
Through a situation I know or suspect is elder abuse	21%
Someone I know told me about a situation they know or suspect is elder abuse	14%
Information in an advertisement or brochure	13%
Other	10%
Don't know/can't remember	2%

Figure 15 If you have previously heard of elder abuse, how did you learn about it? (Multiple responses apply)

Over a third of respondents learned about elder abuse through their work or professional networks. This supports the importance of using workplace settings and professional associations to raise awareness of elder abuse and implement primary prevention activities to address the drivers and reinforcing factors.

Just under a quarter of respondents reported learning about elder abuse through a situation that they, or someone they know, suspects or knows is elder abuse. This demonstrates the importance of using case studies gained through early intervention and response activities.
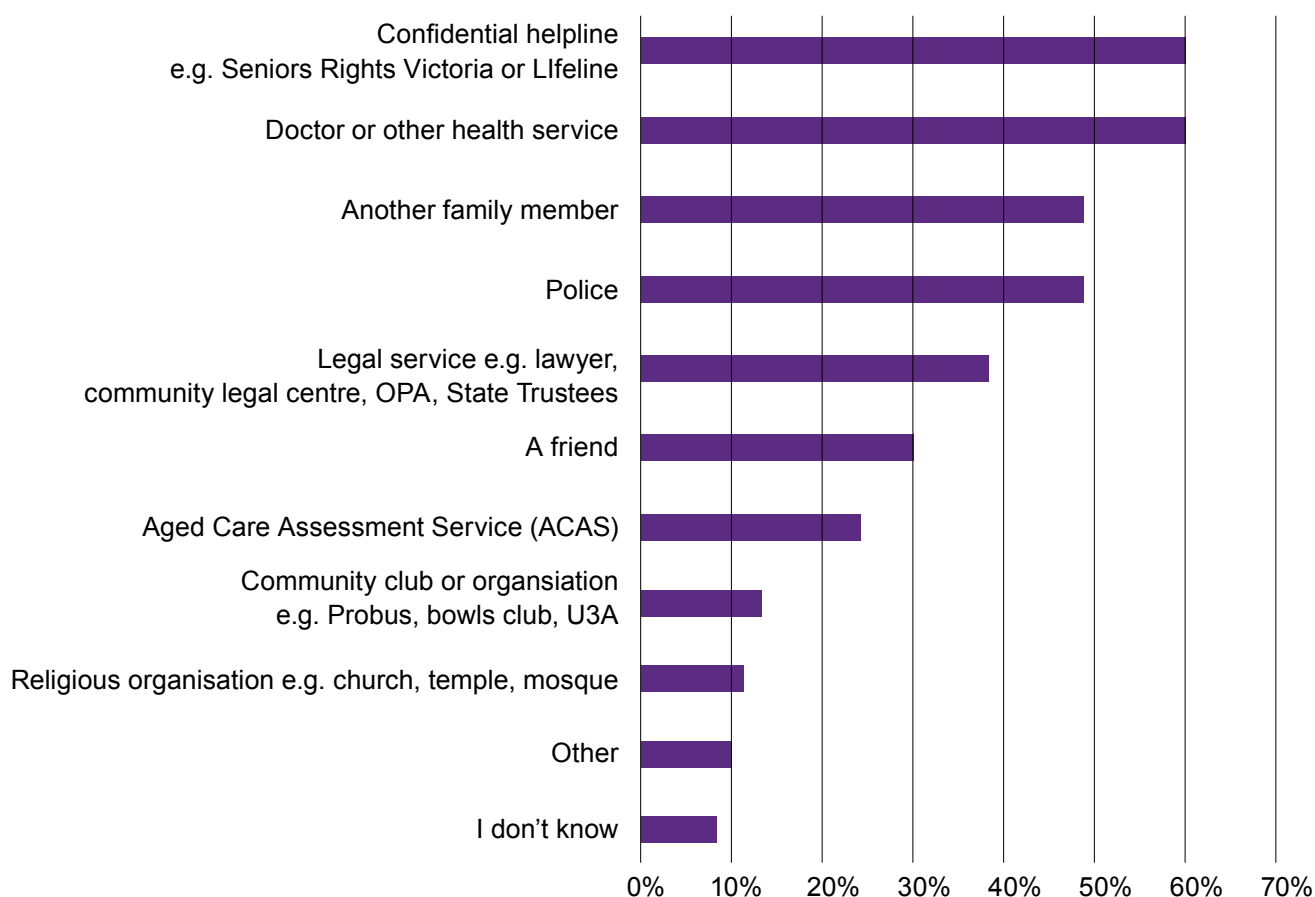
Where would you seek help?

Figure showing a horizontal bar chart with the following categories and approximate values:

- Confidential helpline e.g. Seniors Rights Victoria or LIfeline — ~60%
- Doctor or other health service — ~60%
- Another family member — ~48%
- Police — ~48%
- Legal service e.g. lawyer, community legal centre, OPA, State Trustees — ~37%
- A friend — ~29%
- Aged Care Assessment Service (ACAS) — ~23%
- Community club or organsiation e.g. Probus, bowls club, U3A — ~12%
- Religious organisation e.g. church, temple, mosque — ~10%
- Other — ~9%
- I don't know — ~8%

Figure 16 Where would you seek help if you were or someone you knew was at risk of elder abuse? (Multiple responses apply)

As demonstrated in Figure 16, the community survey responses support the idea that a broad range of community services and organisations need to be active in addressing both elder abuse and ageism. 60% of community survey respondents indicated that they would seek help from a confidential helpline, doctor or other health service such as hospital liaison officers if they or someone they knew was at risk of elder abuse. The credibility and influence of these trusted sources could be leveraged for primary prevention activities such as advocacy and marketing campaigns.

A relatively low number of community survey respondents reported that, in the event they or someone they knew was experiencing elder abuse, they would seek help from community or religious organisations, demonstrating that they are not viewed as the most appropriate organisations for elder abuse response. However, the role of these organisations in achieving the social and cultural change required for primary prevention was strongly emphasised by community members and professionals participating in interviews for the research.

Recommendations

These recommendations relate to further investment in developing an evidence base for primary prevention and implementation of primary prevention activities across Victoria. They are of most relevance to the Government representatives and organisations involved in the primary prevention of family violence and elder abuse.

Recommendations for organisations starting or considering an elder abuse primary prevention network have been provided in the section titled Why and how to have a network.

Continuing the role of networks in the primary prevention of elder abuse

- **Provide funding for the continuation of the EAPNs:** In the long-term context of preventing elder abuse the networks have had a relatively short period of operation to establish and begin to implement. The investment that has been made by the Victorian Government and the network members in the establishment phase would be most effectively realised by providing additional funding for the networks to continue. This was recognised by the Victorian Government which extended funding for the networks in late 2018.

- **Expand EAPN coverage across all of Victoria:** The existing networks cover only selected areas of Victoria. While it is too early to be conclusive about whether networks are the most effective means of prevention elder abuse, this research has identified the need for a greater focus on primary prevention and the existing networks are enabling that. It is recommended that funding is provided to support the establishment of networks to cover all areas of Victoria.

Strengthen the primary prevention evidence base

- **Investment in evidence-based primary prevention activities:** In the absence of an evidence-based suite of activities, the networks created their workplans drawing on their expertise and creativity. An investment in trialling and developing activities, messages and initiatives will provide a more efficient and effective approach for organisations to adopt, and support the consistency required to achieve societal change. This investment is similar to that required for other social change campaigns such as family violence prevention, smoking cessation, road safety and sun protection. Until this resource is available, there will be fragmentation in the approach of organisations who are all seeking similar outcomes.

- **Measuring effectiveness of primary prevention activities:** This research has compiled primary prevention activities implemented by the EAPNs and referred to by the research contributors. The nature of preventing elder abuse is a complex and long-term proposition and it was not within the scope or timeframe of this research to conclusively evaluate effectiveness. Further research and evaluation to understand the impact of primary prevention activities would be beneficial. This research could use the experience of the networks, as they continue to operate with the additional funding they have received, to evaluate the effectiveness of activities they implement.

Strengthen the focus and capability of professionals on the primary prevention of elder abuse

- **Primary prevention training for practitioners in elder abuse early intervention and response practitioners:** The majority of the roles and practitioners in elder abuse have historically focused on early intervention and response. While these practitioners have a deep understanding of older people and elder abuse, they do not necessarily have the skills or mindset for primary prevention. Training is needed to support these practitioners to understand the spectrum of prevention, even if they will continue to primarily operate in an early intervention or response capacity.

- **Training of practitioners who are engaged in the primary prevention of violence against women:** There are many organisations with a deep understanding of and commitment to the primary prevention of violence against women. Training is needed to support these practitioners to understand the unique drivers and dynamics of elder abuse and working with older people, so that their organisations can play a role in the primary prevention of elder abuse.

- **Training for all organisations interacting with older people:** All organisations have a role to play in the primary prevention of elder abuse. Training/professional development should be provided to organisations that have significant influence in elder abuse prevention or have frequent interaction with older people. Training would be most effective if targeted to sectors, such as banking and finance, community organisations, public service providers and media organisations. These are organisations that have not had strong representation in the networks to date, but are planned for engagement in the near future.

- **Enabling shared learning:** In addition to networks providing efficiency within their membership base, there is also potential for efficiency across networks, particularly as momentum builds in the primary prevention of elder abuse. A moderated community of practice including face to face interaction between practitioners and elder abuse prevention networks could enable sharing of expertise, resources and lessons.

Strengthen the focus and capability of society on primary prevention

- **Reaching all segments and settings of society:** The main focus of primary prevention activities to date has been on education of older people, yet there is a need for shared responsibility for the prevention of elder abuse across all segments and settings of society.

- **Supporting social change with an age equality campaign:** Social change requires long-term and consistent intervention at all levels of society. Further investment is needed in a social change campaign to achieve age equality.

Incorporate the understanding of elder abuse in policy frameworks

- **Explicitly addressing elder abuse in family violence frameworks and plans:** While there is much to learn from the prevention of violence against women, this research demonstrates that there are unique drivers and dynamics for elder abuse. It is recommended that the Victorian family violence policy framework and key programs such as the Orange Door service are reviewed to acknowledge and support the unique elements and requirements of the primary prevention of elder abuse.

Target the most vulnerable

- Sexual abuse is acknowledged as an issue with a lot of social stigma as well as low levels of capability and comfort in some segments of professional service providers. Initiatives are recommended to specifically address the drivers of sexual abuse of older women and to build the capacity of service organisations to prevent sexual abuse.

- Women in general experience disproportionate rates of elder abuse, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children experience disproportionate rates of family violence. This demonstrates the high vulnerability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and makes them a priority cohort for prevention activities. It is recommended that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations are resourced to further explore and address the drivers of elder abuse.

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Appendix A Examples of elder abuse

Examples of elder abuse cited by research contributors are provided as a reference for those people seeking to understand more about the manifestations of elder abuse.

Physical abuse

Driver/reinforcing factor	Examples provided by research contributors
Age discrimination	• Using physical violence or threats to secure money needed for a mortgage payment or debt.
Perceived or real diminished capacity	• Hitting an older person who drops their tablets or spills their drink in frustration. • Tying an older person with a cognitive impairment to their bed to prevent wandering.
Undervaluing of carer relationship	• Roughly directing the older person into a chair or bed. • Carer feels they have to be there no matter what ('till death do us part') but is not coping with the pressure so lashes out at the person they are caring for.
Issues or illness of the person responsible for abuse and lack of related support services	• Child assaulting their parent while under the influence of drugs or alcohol or to pressure them for money to support their addiction. • Parent tolerating abuse because they 'don't want to throw them out on the streets' and they have not been able to find any services that can provide alternative housing.
Isolation or failure of connections	• Child able to get away with assaulting their parent because the parent has few supports around them.

Financial abuse

Driver/reinforcing factor	Examples provided by research contributors
Age discrimination	• Child's sense of entitlement to financial support and/or older person feeling obliged to help their children. • Older person handing over control of their finances to their child due to internalised ageism and feeling the child knows best.
Perceived or real diminished capacity	• Family member controlling the finances of the older person due to a perception that they are unable to make sound financial decisions. • Older person with a drug and alcohol problem providing a family member with their PIN while under the influence and having money stolen.
Lack of clarity or planning	• Child asking parent to transfer their assets to finance housing for the whole family and promising care and housing, which is then not provided. • Tension in family arising from older person not formalising their will and a child then exploiting their parent to gain the assets they feel entitled to.
Fear of or lack of faith in the aged care system	• An older LGBTI person who is reliant on a neighbour for assistance to remain living at home tolerates them stealing money. This is due to fear of entering an aged care system which they perceive as lacking respect for their identity.

Financial abuse cont

Driver/reinforcing factor	Examples provided by research contributors
Issues or illness of the person responsible for abuse and lack of related support services	• An older person having their home seized as a result of being tricked into going guarantor for a loan to support their child's addiction. • An older people being manipulated into allowing someone to present as their carer so they can claim a carer's pension, which they use to support their addiction.
Isolation or failure of connections	• A vision-impaired older person who lives on a farm and relies on a neighbour to help with things like shopping began to notice he would 'lose' things. He knew the neighbour was taking them but he chose to take the help anyway and tolerate the theft so he could stay living in his home.

Psychological or emotional abuse

Driver/reinforcing factor	Examples provided by research contributors
Age discrimination	• Telling an older person that they don't know what they're talking about because they are too old. • Threatening to put older person in aged care if they don't comply with instructions. • Telling an older people they can't make their own decisions about the risks they take. • Adult children diminishing the needs and rights of older people by pressuring a parent to look after grandchildren when they're not capable or don't want to
Perceived or real diminished capacity	• Older person with diminished capacity being bullied to go into a nursing home against their wishes. • Older person yelled at for taking time to respond to a question or to answer the front door. • Forbidding an older person from spending money on 'non-essential' items because they've 'lost their mind'.
Undervaluing of carer relationship	• A carer abusing the older person for spilling a drink on their clothes.
Fear of or lack of faith in the aged care system	• An older person not accessing care and support through formal services due to fear of having control and independence taken away, and family members not coping with this burden, 'They need to go into aged care but don't want to. It puts so much pressure on the family'.
Intergenerational wealth dynamics	• Threats that an older person cannot see their grandchildren unless they behave in the required manner. • An adult child living with their parents due to financial difficulties and not respecting their parent's home and wishes.
Ongoing parent-child dynamics	• Threats to remove sponsorship of parent category visa and have the older person returned to their home country if the older person doesn't comply with requests, for example, providing childcare and housework.
Issues or illness of the person responsible for abuse and lack of related support services	• Abusive language and threats from an adult child with an addiction.

Neglect

Driver/reinforcing factor	Examples provided by research contributors
Age discrimination	• Judgement that older people are dependent or high maintenance and not providing them with adequate care or support e.g. making medical appointments. • Aversion to or repulsion by the personal needs of older people e.g. continence aids.
Perceived or real diminished capacity	• Providing reduced care such as less frequent showers or no mental stimulation because the older person is unable to advocate for their needs due to cognitive impairment.
Undervaluing of carer relationship	• Through illness or diminished capacity themselves, carer is unable to adequately care for older person.
Sharing of resources/assets	• Not providing the care the older person needs and not putting them in aged care because this would require selling the home the perpetrator is living in.
Fear of or lack of faith in the aged care system	• An older person who does not want to go into aged care tolerates a low level of care provided by family members.
Isolation or failure of connections	• An older person who is not receiving the day-to-day care they need from their carer and it goes undetected because either or both parties in the carer relationship lack social networks and access to support services.

Sexual abuse

Driver/reinforcing factor	Examples provided by research contributors
Gender discrimination	• Intimate partner violence continuing into old age, 'Men who abuse wives don't stop when they turn 65'. • Adult sons watching pornography in the lounge room of the family home.
Perceived or real diminished capacity	• A male with diminished capacity who is hyper-sexual or sexually disinhibited insisting on sexual relations with his partner and not recognising the need for consent • Claims of sexual assault made by an older person with a cognitive impairment not being believed

Social abuse

Driver/reinforcing factor	Examples provided by research contributors
Isolation or failure of connections	• Older person prevented from attending social outings as they are expected to care for their grandchildren so lose connection with their community. • The person responsible for the harm is socially disconnected and marginalised and punishes the older person by in turn isolating them, For example, someone who is no longer welcome at the local pub due to anti-social behaviour forbidding their parent from going to the pub.
Perceived or real diminished capacity	• An older person with diminished capacity kept at home because their behaviour is considered embarrassing or inappropriate. • Older person prevented from developing or continuing an intimate partnership because of perceived lack of capacity to make the decision.

Identity abuse

Driver/reinforcing factor	Examples provided by research contributors
LGBTI discrimination	• Children refusing to acknowledge or accept the partner of their LGBTI parent. • Children re-entering the life of their parent in their old age and forcing them to 'go back into the closet' in return for providing them with the care and support they need. • Posthumous abuse – family members misrepresenting the gender identity of the deceased at the funeral or failing to recognise partners and family of choice. • Adult children of the deceased ejecting partners from housing, not recognising their entitlement to assets.

Appendix B EAPN profiles

Central Highlands Elder Abuse Prevention Network

Network	Central Highlands Elder Abuse Prevention Network
Lead agency	Ballarat Community Health
History of the network	Newly created elder abuse network incorporated into the established Central Highlands Integrated Family Violence Committee (CHIFVC)
Community profile	The Network targets six local government areas in the Grampians region (Ararat, Ballarat, Golden Plains, Hepburn, Moorabool and Pyrenees) collectively known as the Central Highlands.
Membership	• Aged Care Alliances, Primary Care Partnerships in the Central Highlands and Grampians/Pyrenees PCP catchments, community groups such as the Sebastopol Men's Shed, Ballarat U3A and neighbourhood houses. • Works with the Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council to ensure CALD communities and perspectives are included in the network and plan. • Works with health and community organisations in the City of Ballarat and Hepburn Shire to ensure the perspectives of members of LGBTI communities are reflected in the work of the network.
Governance experiences and lessons	• Characterised by 'signing up' a broad range of organisations in a set of 'Helpful Hints for Action' on elder abuse. • Does not have a lot of formal meetings (although the Central Highlands Integrated Family Violence Committee (CHIFVC) provides governance), preferring instead to run events and conversations across the community.
Network coordination and implementation	Local organisations contributed to the development of the network plans and governance arrangements at a well-attended workshop in February 2018.

Eastern Elder Abuse Network

Network	Eastern Elder Abuse Network
Lead agency	Eastern Community Legal Centre (ECLC)
History of the network	Established in 2010 by the Inner East Primary Care Partnership, Seniors Rights Victoria, and the Eastern Community Legal Centre (ECLC)
Community profile	Encompassing the local government areas of Boroondara, Knox, Manningham, Maroondah, Whitehorse and the Yarra Ranges. Includes the inner suburban areas of Hawthorn, Kew and Camberwell, middle suburban suburbs including Balwyn and Box Hill, large outer metropolitan suburbs such as Ringwood and Boronia, and semi-rural and rural townships such as Healesville and Monbulk
	Approximately 20% of residents were born overseas in a non-English speaking country. Cantonese, Mandarin, Greek and Italian are the foremost languages spoken
Membership	Over 100 professional members from a range of services including hospitals and health services, local government, aged care, family violence, Government services, police and the legal profession and homelessness
Governance experiences and lessons	• Since the inception of the EEAN, the governance of the EEAN has been connected to ECLC • An EEAN Reference Group was established in 2014 to support the EEAN Coordinator based at ECLC with strategic planning and decision-making on behalf of, and accountable to, the EEAN membership. Additional members of the Reference Group were appointed in late 2018 due to resignations of existing members and to reflect the enhanced focus on primary prevention • The terms of reference were refreshed in early 2018 to raise awareness of them and maintain their relevance and ensure the network's operations were relevant to the enhanced focus on primary prevention • Considering the introduction of sub-committees focused on primary prevention and response
Network coordination and implementation	• Coordination and communication provided by the Coordinator based at ECLC • Implementation has largely been reliant on the Coordinator but refreshing the Reference Group has contributed to shifting to shared responsibility • The Network has historically met in person for bimonthly meetings. The newly established EEAN Reference Committee has decided that from 2019 the EEAN will meet quarterly focused on elder abuse issues-based forums • An e-newsletter with events and news is distributed periodically to members and other interested parties who have subscribed • Considering greater use of social media in the future

Macedon Ranges Elders Right Network

Network	Macedon Ranges Elder Rights Network
Lead agency	Macedon Ranges Shire Council
History of the network	Newly established network in a local government setting.
Community profile	The network focus is within the Macedon Ranges Shire. Some branches of local community organisations who participate in the network may extend into other nearby regions
Membership	Macedon Ranges Local Safety Committee (broad community representation: identified elder abuse a priority action for 2018), Macedon Ranges Community Care Partnership (local health agencies), individuals with an interest in, commitment to or expertise in elder abuse, community groups and organisations
Governance experiences and lessons	• Reference Group formed to provide expert advice, particularly around capability building, community links and strategy has representation from Macedon Ranges Shire Council, Victoria Police, Macedon Ranges Community Safety Committee, Rotary, community members, Kyneton District Health, Cobaw Community Health • A communications plan for the network has been developed focusing on priority and most readily achievable (within partners' current capacities) activities for the network to deliver
Network coordination and implementation	• Working within existing structures, relationships and channels, particularly with the local safety committee (which has already been active in the area of family violence) and Community Care Partnerships (who have experience supporting and delivering home care services to older people) • Given the 12 months of funding, focused on activities that can be most readily sustained beyond the life of the funding by integrating into/ leveraging off existing programs and commitments

Southern Melbourne Primary Care Partnership
Elder Abuse Prevention Network

Network	SMPCP Elder Abuse Prevention Network (EAPN)
Lead agency	Southern Melbourne Primary Care Partnership. Primary care partnerships (PCPs) are made up of a range of member agencies who work together to improve local health and wellbeing outcomes across the service sector
History of the network	Established in 2017. The SMPCP EAPN is part of the Monash Health Integrated Model of Responding to Suspected Elder Abuse, a trial which aims to strengthen elder abuse responses and support within Victorian health services, creating multiple entry points for older people and their carers/families to access specialist support services to address suspected elder abuse
Community profile	Encompassing the local government areas of Bayside, Glen Eira, Kingston, Port Phillip and Stonnington communities. Includes the inner suburban areas of South Melbourne, St Kilda and South Yarra and middle suburban suburbs including Brighton, Oakleigh and Mordialloc.
Membership	• Network members include health, local government, social support services, aged care assessment, Victoria Police, service clubs, neighbourhood houses, faith-based groups and cultural groups • The Steering Committee and all working groups include an older member of the community as a representative
Governance experiences and lessons	• A Steering Committee of 10 organisations from health, community and legal sectors meet every 2 months • The Steering Committee terms of reference defining the role, objectives and functioning of the Committee were ratified by the members • The Steering Committee reports to the SMPCP Executive Governance Group via the project lead • Community Engagement, Community Awareness and Capacity Building Working Groups, consisting of members of the extended network, carry out decisions and actions. The working groups were introduced for focused effort and efficiency
Network coordination and implementation	• Many of the organisations involved have a history of working together through the PCP which provides a shared understanding and established ways of operating to build on • A Facebook page was established to enable some organisations to have light touch involvement in activities without having to be members of the network. This page also targets community members • An e-newsletter is distributed to subscribers (network members and other interested parties who have signed up) on a regular basis with positive ageing profiles, news, events and updates on activities

South West Carer and Respite Services Network
Elder Abuse Prevention Network

Network	SWC&RSN Elder Abuse Prevention Network (EAPN)
Lead agency	South West Carer and Respite Services Network (SWC&RSN)
History of the network	The remit of Everybody's Business, a sub-group of SWC&RSN created to focus on the prevention of violence against women with disability, was expanded in 2017 to proactively address elder abuse
Community profile	Includes the regional and rural areas in south western Victoria encompassing the local government areas of Warrnambool, Glenelg, Corangamite, Moyne and Southern Grampians. Major population centres include Warrnambool, Portland and Hamilton
Membership	Members from across the broad geographic area include social service providers, aged care providers, Gunditjmara Aboriginal Cooperative, family violence services, local government and Victoria Police
Governance experiences and lessons	• The Everybody's Business Group is a sub-group of SWC&RSN created to focus on the prevention of violence against women with a disability. The group expanded its focus to include elder abuse in recognition of the need for local leadership and the alignment with existing activity • Everybody's Business has a Terms of Reference and Action Plan. A separate elder abuse plan was developed, with connection back to the main Action Plan
Network coordination and implementation	• The Group meets monthly for coordination and decision-making • A dedicated Elder Abuse Prevention Project Officer was appointed to deliver activities during 2018. A focused work plan was developed to establish realistic expectations of the 1 day/week project officer resource. The project officer had extensive community networks to utilise to gain support and make progress in the timeframes available • Network members advocate for elder abuse to be on the agenda of mainstream networks in which they participate.

Seniors Rights Victoria

Level 4, 533 Little Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, VIC 3000

📞 1300 368 821   ✉ info@seniorsrights.org.au   🌐 **www.seniorsrights.org.au**