



## **SENIORS RIGHTS VICTORIA:**

10 Years empowering older people  
experiencing elder abuse

*Helpline 1300 368 821*

# WHAT WE DO AT SENIORS RIGHTS VICTORIA

Seniors Rights Victoria is the key state-wide service dedicated to preventing and responding to elder abuse.

Elder abuse is any act that causes harm to an older person and is carried out by someone they know and trust. The abuse may be physical, social, financial, psychological or sexual and can include mistreatment and neglect.

Seniors Rights Victoria provides information, support, advice, casework and education to help prevent elder abuse and safeguard the rights, dignity and independence of older Victorians. Seniors Rights Victoria is a community legal centre and is a program of Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria.

Our services are multidisciplinary and include a Helpline, specialist legal services and short-term support and advocacy for individuals. We have a leadership role in policy development, law reform and education, and work with organisations to raise awareness of elder abuse.

In 10 years, the values of how we operate have remained the same:

- Empowerment of older people and respect for their rights;
- Collaboration with older people, services and partnerships;
- Leadership in policy and government engagement and
- Provision of a quality service through our client work and community education.

## WHERE OUR WORK MAKES AN IMPACT

We celebrated our 10th anniversary in 2018. Since 2008:



**29,182**  
people participated  
in **community education** sessions

**12,247**

elder abuse specialists  
received **professional education**



**22,063**

calls to our  
**1300 368 821**  
**Helpline**

**4,382**

older people receiving **personalised assistance** through advice and casework

Production of **nine** different information sheets and the booklet, *Care for Your Assets: Money, Ageing and Family*.





## Maria and Meg's stories

This year Seniors Rights Victoria asked two former clients Maria\* and Meg\* to record their stories about elder abuse within their families. It was hard for both Victorian women to speak about their experiences, but then neither want any other older person to endure abuse.

Maria's issues began after she took in her adult son to help him through difficult personal and financial times. Despite positive beginnings, things quickly soured. Arguments ensued around Maria's son using her credit card without paying her back, refusing to contribute to household expenses, stealing \$8000 worth of stamps from a collection and finally, making physical threats on her life.

The police were unable to help so Maria reached out to Seniors Rights Victoria. Seniors Rights Victoria's casework team accepted Maria's case and worked with her through the court system to have her son removed from the house with an intervention order. In addition to supporting her through the stressful court process, they re-connected Maria with community social activities to combat isolation.

To listen to these former clients go to [Maria's Story](#) and [Meg's Story](#).

*Please note the personal details for Maria\* and Meg\* were changed to protect their privacy.*

## WE PROVIDE LEADERSHIP AND INFLUENCE POLICY CHANGE TO SUPPORT OLDER PEOPLE:

Seniors Rights Victoria is an influential leader, working for positive change for and with older people. This has resulted in constructive opportunities to contribute to stopping elder abuse.

- The Federal Attorney-General Christian Porter MP launched Elder Abuse Action Australia (EAAA) in June 2018. SRV is an inaugural board member of the EAAA. In speaking at the Sydney launch, SRV Manager Jenny Blakey said the EAAA is a growing network of organisations and individuals engaged in elder abuse prevention and support around Australia.
- As a result of our success in raising awareness of elder abuse as a form of family violence we are active in Victorian Government committees. We participate in the Family Violence Steering Committee, the Ministerial Taskforce on the Prevention of Family Violence and the Diverse Communities and Intersectionality Working Group.
- We contribute to consultations on matters including support and safety hubs, information sharing and monitoring the implementation of relevant Royal Commission of Family Violence recommendations. We also continue to develop closer relationships with Family Violence services.
- The publication of five discussion papers was a significant contribution to understanding the relationship between family violence and elder abuse. These were *Elder Abuse as Family Violence*; *Elder Abuse, Gender and Sexuality*; *Preventing Elder Abuse*; *Mandatory Reporting*; and *Criminal Law and Elder Abuse*.

“Everything that has been done for me has worked, it might have seemed overwhelming at the time... To know that there are people there to help, you just need somebody to start the ball rolling... It was like being in a prison and all of a sudden the roof came off and I flew away.

*former Seniors Rights Victoria client, Judy\**

# OUR FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

Seniors Rights Victoria can draw on 10 years of expertise and experience to:

1. Support an articulated and co-ordinated state-wide elder abuse plan. The outcomes would be local, competent, collaborative responses, effective interface and referral pathways between service types and coherent connection to state-wide specialised services, such as Seniors Rights Victoria.
2. Build Primary Prevention capacity at both a state and federal level by contributing to a primary prevention strategy and actions that challenge the drivers of elder abuse, including:
  - A media campaign to address ageism, that positively profiles the diversity of older people;
  - Systemic reform to institutions that incorporates the experiences, needs and rights of older people (e.g. banking, residential care and in-home services); and
  - Support projects, people and organisations that create meaningful intergenerational interactions and an age-friendly environment.
3. Build community capability to address elder abuse and the additional barriers where there is diversity. In culturally and linguistically diverse communities, there are already established co-design processes used for culturally appropriate approaches. We must continue to support these and extend this to other ethnic communities. Aboriginal communities require a long term, intensive commitment based on self determination to reach culturally appropriate solutions.
4. Create greater collaboration opportunities between older people, government, business and the non-government sectors as awareness about elder abuse grows in the service professions, particularly in the finance, banking and health industries.
5. Build an evidence-based approach to develop elder abuse practice in the various forms of service delivery, for example health or justice. This includes using common foundations such as the ethos of empowerment. But also different interventions depending on the stage of the older person's journey. Research should deepen the understanding from a person-centred approach.
6. Enhance our legal/advocacy model to meet the needs of older people experiencing abuse, and their supporters, be they family or friends. Using an evidence-based approach, it is timely to evaluate our model, reassess our role in complementing other services and consider how to add greater value to continue our elder abuse work.



**Seniors Rights Victoria**



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