

# **ELDER ABUSE PROFILE: GOLD COAST REGION**

**JULY 2007 – JUNE 2008**



Prepared for the

## **Gold Coast Taskforce for the Prevention of Elder Abuse**

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## **EAPU HELPLINE DATA**

The Elder Abuse Prevention Unit (EAPU) and the Gold Coast Taskforce for the Prevention of Elder Abuse have worked collaboratively since the establishment of the taskforce in July 2001. Since then the Gold Coast Taskforce on Elder Abuse has been actively involved in raising awareness of elder abuse in the community and amongst services in the region and has developed very practical resources.

The EAPU collects non-identifiable data from across Queensland, through the EAPU Helpline, and is able to produce region specific reports to broaden understanding of the nature and extent of the issue in the local area. Reports produced use data only from the Helpline. Therefore, this data may not convey the full extent of the issue in the region. Due to the personal and hidden nature of the issue of elder abuse many cases could be unreported and the actual numbers will be much higher.

## **Prevalence**

There were a total of 717 new cases of elder abuse reported to the EAPU from across Queensland this financial year, 14.78% of which were from the Gold Coast region, N=106. This is a 33% increase in the number of calls to the Helpline from this region compared to last year. Refer to Table 1 for a further breakdown.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Reports for Gold Coast</b>	<b>No of Statewide Reports</b>
2003	40	402
2004	90	518
2005	73	508
2006	89	595
2007	71	596
2008	106	717

The data in Table 1 is the number of reports made to the EAPU Helpline during the 2007-2008 financial year. This figure does not include the number of follow-up calls or advocacy calls made on behalf of the notifier. The number of calls made for each reported elder abuse situation is actually higher, as shown in Table 2, below.

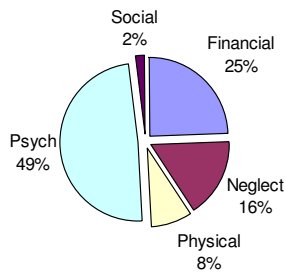
*Table 1. No. of Helpline elder abuse calls for the Gold Coast*

<b>EAPU Helpline for the Gold Coast Region (1/7/2007 – 30/6/2008)</b>	<b>Incoming calls</b>	<b>Outgoing calls</b>	<b>All calls</b>
Number of calls	119	52	171
Minutes	2669	441	3110
Hours	44.48	7.35	51.83
Average Length (mins)	22.43	8.43	18.19

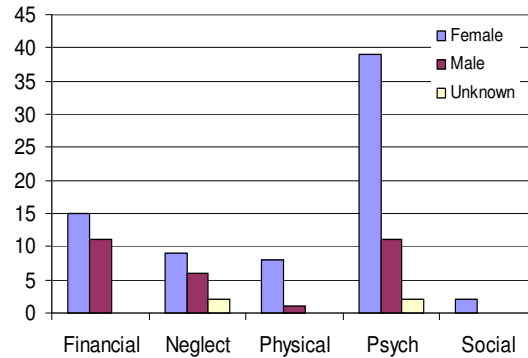
*Table 2. Call duration for reports on elder abuse received from the Gold Coast.*

## Abuse Types

Psychological abuse (N=52) of an older person had the highest call rate to the EAPU Helpline, followed by financial abuse (N=26) and neglect (N=17). There were over twice as many female (N=73) as male (N=29) victims on the Gold Coast, this financial year (refer to Figures 1 and 2).



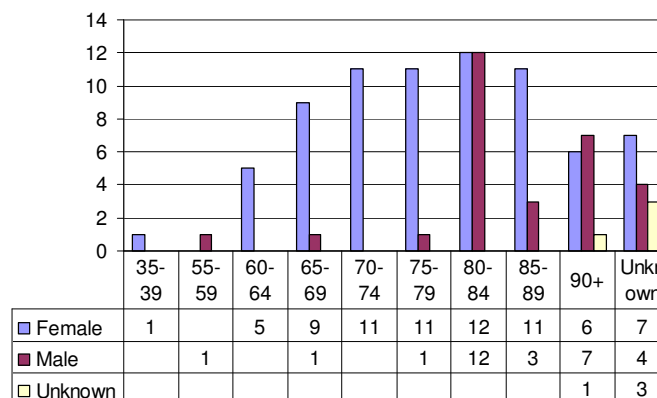
**Figure 1. Abuse type breakdown for the Gold**



**Figure 2. Abuse type for abused males and females**

## Abused

The highest age category for both male and female victims of elder abuse is the 80-84 age range with 24% (N=22) of victims falling into this category (refer to Figure 3). An interesting point is that a very high proportion (42%) of males fell into the 80-84 age category compared with only 17% for the female population.



**Figure 3. Ages of the abused persons on the Gold Coast reported to the EAPU Helpline.**

## Abusers

The EAPU undertook a review of the database at the end of 2007 and amended it to include an opportunity to capture data where the abuser was not in a relationship of trust with the older person. In these situations the gender or age of the abuser may not have been captured which would account for a higher record of unknowns. The new database took effect on 1 January 2008.

Family members made up 73% of the reported abusers on the Gold Coast. Adult children, i.e. sons and daughters are reported as the majority of alleged abusers (55%). Refer to Table 2 and Figure 4.

Relationship	Financial	Neglect	Physical	Psych	Sexual	Grand Total
No Relationship of Trust				6		6
Daughter	3	4	1	11	1	20
Friend			1	3		4
Grandchild	1		1	1		3
Neighbour				9		9
Other	4	1		2		7
Other Relative	2		1	1		4
Partner	2	1	2			5
Partner (Spouse)	1			2		3
Self		1				1
Son	12	5	3	14	1	35
Worker	1	5		3		9
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>106</b>

Table 3. Relationship of the abused to the abuser on the Gold Coast, for each form of primary abuse.

The Gold Coast had similar trends when compared to whole of Queensland figures with sons and daughters being the most highly reported categories of abusers. More males (52%, N=55) were alleged abusers in reports to the EAPU Helpline than females (37%, N=39), while 36.79% (N=39) of alleged abusers live with the victim. Figure 4 shows the relationship between the alleged abuser and the abused.

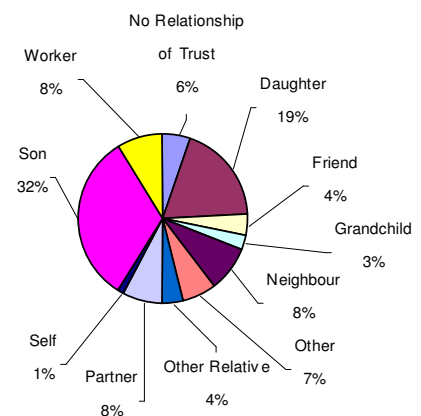


Figure 4. Relationship of the alleged abuser to the abused.

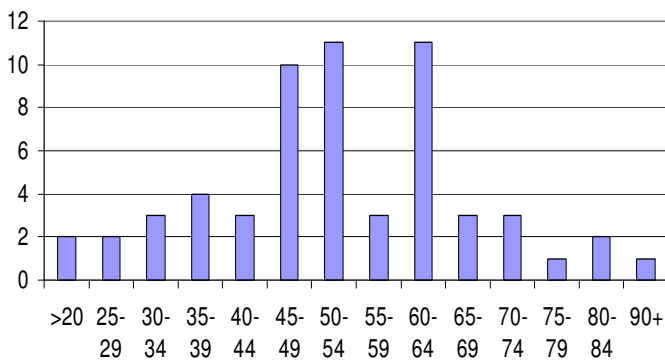
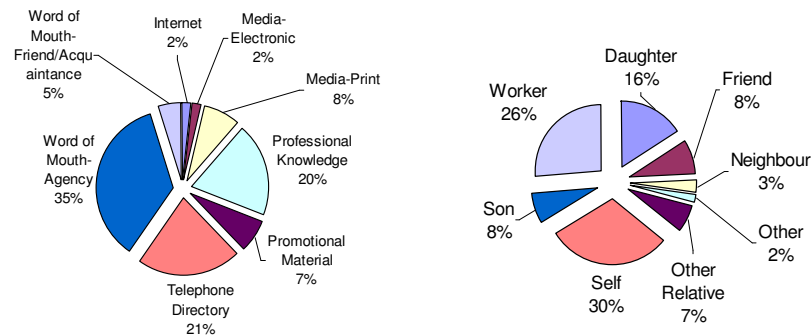


Figure 5. Age of the alleged abuser.

Figure 5 shows that the 50-54 and 60-64 age categories were the equal highest age categories for the abusers with 11 reports each (19%). These age groups are in keeping with the data displayed in Figure 4 showing that adult children were identified as the most prevalent relationship type to perpetrate abuse.

## Notifiers

Notifiers of elder abuse to the Helpline were mostly the abused person themselves (N=32) who were seeking support and information to escape an abusive situation (refer to Figure 6). This figure is consistent with reports of abuse from previous years. Workers (N= 28) and daughters (N=17) were the next highest categories of notifiers, these are similar to trends from statewide data for 2007-2008.



**Figure 6. Notifiers of abuse and referral sources to the Helpline for the Gold Coast region.**

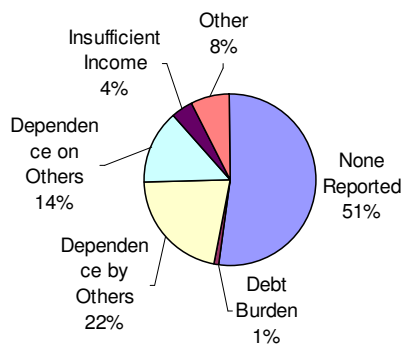
Callers often found out about the Helpline from another service (N=38), the telephone book (N=23) or through their own professional knowledge (N=21).

## Risk Factors

Research has indicated that there are proven risk factors that make an older person more vulnerable to being abused. Isolation and a history of family conflict are two such risk factors. Approximately a third of reports from the Gold Coast between January and June 2008 have reported having both risk factors (refer to Table 4).

Isolation	Family Conflict			Grand Total
	None Reported	Ongoing	Recent	
None Reported	30	24	7	61
Isolation	4	11	4	19
Lack of Services	1	3	2	6
Lack of Support Networks	11	5	3	19
Unable to Access Services	1	0	0	1
Grand Total	47	43	16	106

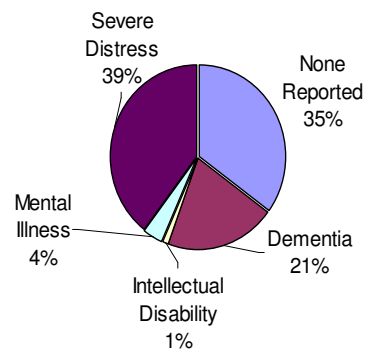
**Table 4. Family Conflict and Isolation risk factors for older people in the Gold Coast region.**



**Figure 7. Primary Financial Risk factors for older people experiencing elder abuse residing on the Gold Coast.**

Financial abuse of older people is a topic that has gained more awareness and interest in the community recently. An analysis of factors that put a person at risk of financial abuse shows 48% of Gold Coast reports had one or more financial risk factors recorded. Compared to the previous year's report there has been an increase from 44 risk factors recorded in 2006/07 to 51 for the 2007/08 reporting year, an increase of 14%. Figure 7 provides a breakdown of the various financial risk factors an older person may experience. This year has seen an increase from 1% to 4% of older people struggling to manage due to insufficient income and a decrease from 23% to 14% of reports where the older person is relying on other people for financial support. The proportion of older people who experience difficulties due to having other family members depend on them is similar to this period last year.

Psychological risk factors have proven to be major contributors for older people at risk of elder abuse. There were 69 people (65%) from the Gold Coast region who were reported as presenting with one or more forms of psychological risk factors in 2007/08. Figure 8 shows that most callers who did present with these risk factors did have the ability to make their own decisions but 39% were extremely distressed at the time of the call, requiring considerable telephone counselling skills to enable the older person to consider their options and decisions in a calm and rational manner. The second most reported psychological risk factor was Dementia as reported by the notifier, usually another family member or service provider.



**Figure 8. Psychological risk factors of older people experiencing elder abuse, residing on the Gold Coast.**

## Referrals

Due to the restructure of the EAPU Helpline database referral options provided to callers were collected differently for the second half of the 2007/08 reporting year. For the Gold Coast region for period 1<sup>st</sup> January and 30<sup>th</sup> June 2008 there were 122 referrals recorded through the EAPU Helpline as per table 5. In total there were 426 referrals made for the Gold Coast region.

SLASS Brisbane	16	Office of the Adult Guardian	6	GP	11
Community Legal Centre	10	Public Trustee	4	Community Health	1
Legal Aid Qld	0	Guardianship And Administration Tribunal	9	HACC	2
Private Solicitor	2	General Counselling	1	Hospital	1
QADA – Legal	5	Financial Counselling	1	Hospital Social Worker	4
OPAP	4	Crisis Counselling	0	Mental Health Service	0
Alzheimer's Association	0	Relationships Australia	2	Carelink or Respite Service	0
QADA	4	Centrelink	0	Emergency Accommodation	1
Carer's Qld	0	Aged Care Complaints Investigation Scheme	2	Dept of Housing	0
ARAFMI	1	Health Quality and Complaints Commission	0	Other	10
Police/DVLO	8	Dispute Resolution Scheme	1	SEL	1
Home Assist Secure	2	Office of Fair Trading	2	EAPU	4
DV Service	2	ACAT	5		

*Table 5. Referrals between 1 January and 30 June 2008 for the Gold Coast region (Total of 122 referrals).*

Between 1 July 2007 and 31 December 2007 the EAPU made 304 referrals for the Gold Coast region. Table 6 shows the break-down of these referrals by the type of service to which the referral was made. During this period there were 19 referrals made to the Seniors Legal and Support Service in Brisbane although it is not funded to provide face to face outreach for the Gold Coast region. This service has proven to be a vital support for older people since it commenced in July 2007 and although there is a high demand within the Gold Coast region for face to face legal and social work support as provided under the SLASS model, many older people have benefited from the phone support received from the Brisbane SLASS. Table 7 provides a breakdown of legal referrals made in the reporting year.

Accommodation	19
Capacity	55
Counselling	43
General	24
Legal	41
Support & Advocacy	11
Safety	48
Health	49
Complaints & Disputes	14
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>304</b>

*Table 6. Referrals between 1 July and 31 December 2007.*

Legal Option	No of Calls
Senior's Legal and Support Service (Brisbane)	19
Community Legal Centre	13
Women's Legal Service	1
Fair Trading	2
Private Solicitor	5

*Table 7. Legal referrals for the Gold Coast (1 July 2007 30 June 2008)*

## **COMMUNITY EDUCATION**

The EAPU provided 6 training and 2 awareness sessions at the Gold Coast for the 2007/08 financial year. EAPU representatives attended 2 meetings of the Gold Coast Taskforce for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and an expo hosted by the Margaret May the local member for parliament.

<b>Suburb</b>	<b>No of training sessions</b>
BEAUDESERT	1
EAGLE HEIGHTS	1
HELENSVALE	1
SOUTHPORT	2
SURFERS PARADISE	1
GRAND TOTAL	6

There were 299 people who attended the training sessions. The total length of the sessions was 4.45 hours.

Awareness sessions are more informal and provide the group an opportunity to be more directive in terms of information they are interested in addressing on the day. Although there were only two sessions delivered this financial year 75 people attended.

*Table 8. Suburbs where training was conducted on the Gold Coast*

## **CONCLUSION**

This year has seen a drastic increase in the number of calls to the EAPU Helpline across the state and also from the Gold Coast. The pilot legal services (Seniors Legal and Support Service) have been a great resource for referrals and have helped take the pressure off service providers. However there is still a great need for a similar service to be established on the Gold Coast as is evident by the number of referrals for this region alone.

The EAPU has had a longstanding effective working relationship with the Gold Coast Taskforce on the Prevention of Elder Abuse and has identified the need for advocacy services that are specially trained to deal with seniors issues and in particularly elder abuse. There is a gap in provision of direct case worker availability to provide hands-on support to older people experiencing abuse, on the Gold Coast.

For more information or a copy of the EAPU 2007/08 Annual Report (statewide) contact the EAPU on 1300 651 192 or 07 3250 1836 or visit the website: [www.eapu.com.au](http://www.eapu.com.au).