

QLD Focus

Elder Abuse Prevention Unit Newsletter

Edition 26

June 2011

An End To Seniors Suffering In Silence

Today the Minister for Communities, Karen Struthers said "Elder Abuse is a little known and discussed issue. People understandably find it difficult to imagine how some of our most vulnerable could be abused through violence, neglect, isolation or intimidation, by someone who is meant to care for them".

"The Bligh Government is determined to bring this problem out of the shadows with our Elder Abuse Campaign and funded support through the Elder Abuse Prevention Unit managed by Lifeline and the Seniors Legal and Support Services", said Ms Struthers.

Les Jackson, Coordinator of the Queensland Elder Abuse Prevention Unit (EAPU) said, "Current legislation provides no specific laws anywhere in Australia to guard against 'elder abuse' and while many instances of abuse do fall under current criminal codes, they don't address the specific vulnerabilities of older people".

"The United Nations principals for older people are universal and people are expected to respect these principals even though Government hasn't legislated on them" said Mr Jackson.

He also said that other parts of the world like California have specific criminal codes of conduct protecting seniors. More needs to be done to amend our current legislation to protect the vulnerable people in our community, like the elderly.

"The EAPU endorsed the recommendations to develop similar legislation in Australia as was put forward in *Elder Abuse: How Well Does The Law Cope 2010*, a joint report by the Office of the Public Advocate and the Queensland Law Society (QLS)", Mr Jackson said.

The chair of the QLS Elder Law Committee, Brian Herd said "In the context of the increasing concerns about, and incidents of, elder abuse and as a co-author of the report, I think it represents a timely stimulant for lawmakers to focus on the need to address the adequacy of our laws.

The report illuminates the cracks in the foundation of society that seniors fall through each year, tables the social cost and explains why elders are particularly vulnerable to financial, emotional and physical abuse.

While the Queensland Government has taken an interest in the Report Mr Herd said he would like to see the Government produce a considered written response and indicate in what way if any, it is prepared to change the law.

As Author of this article, I am delighted to report that my research indicates a thorough response to the report, *Elder Abuse: How Well Does The Law Cope 2010* is underway. And we can expect the Bligh Government will make a formal announcement on or around the one-year anniversary of the *Act as 1* campaign, on the 15th June 2011.

Meanwhile, said Mr Jackson "The best way to prepare older people to be on guard is to advise them to get all agreements in writing – especially family agreements".

The Bligh Government knows about 55 per cent of cases of elder abuse, or more than 25 a month, reported to the Elder Abuse Prevention Unit, are by friends and family.

That is why when you join the Queensland Government's campaign to *Act as 1* against Elder Abuse, You could be the one to make a difference."

For more information or to help someone who may be experiencing Elder Abuse you can contact the Elder Abuse Helpline on 1300 651 192 or 3250 1836.

By Selena Wallace (Freelance Journalist)

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**ELDER ABUSE
HELPLINE**

1300 651 192

Funded by



Editorial

By Rose Marwick

Greetings to you all.

Domnica has asked me to be a guest editor for this edition of Focus. No worries, I said, the writer in me rising to the challenge, but I confess that I have spent an awfully long time gazing at a blank screen!

Maybe that is what editors do!

We have had a busy few months with plenty of calls coming in on the Helpline which unfortunately serve to remind us that elder abuse is very much an issue. Some of our calls come from service providers with concerns about older people in their care and we welcome these calls. Please don't feel that the helpline is only for emergencies; we are all more than happy to talk to anyone with concerns about elder abuse and we try to clarify the issues and assist you in finding a way to deal with the situation.

Of course our response to an abusive situation normally depends on our clients' capacity to make decisions. If clients have capacity we have to respect their choices, however much we disagree with them. However if the situation has developed into an emergency then, I think you would all agree, it must be dealt with urgently. There is a duty of care to consider, after all. Imagine calling in to visit an 89 year old female client and finding her on the floor, blood pouring from a stab wound, and her psychotic live-in relative nowhere to be seen. I am quite sure you would deal with the situation whether she gave permission or not! But elder abuse is generally insidious and less dramatic and we do have to take our clients' wishes into consideration. Sometimes, seemingly small gestures, like hearing their stories and validating them, even if no action can be taken at that time, gives more solace than we can begin to imagine. It is OK to suggest options and potential solutions because one day the moment might come when the older person in your care will be ready to change. Forewarned is fore armed, as they say. It can take a long time for any of us to acknowledge that there is a problem in our lives and speaking about it is often the first step towards dealing with it.

It is important though to report any concerns about a client's situation to your supervisor or manager. It is easy to be confused around issues of privacy but the privacy is between the client and the organisation which delivers their care. If you suspect that something is going on report it and document it. It may not seem a lot but it is essential and it is our duty of care. If we choose not to report we are, in an indirect way, going along with the abuse.

That's more than enough from me—please keep elder abuse on your radar and don't hesitate to give us a ring on the Helpline if you have any concerns or questions.

I hope to catch up with some of you when I'm out and about "Out West" this year.

DATE CLAIMERS: Regional Training for 2011

- Charleville and Cunnamulla — 20th June—24th June
- Bundaberg and surrounding area—9th August—12 August

If you would like to book a training or information session please contact Andrea de Vries (Mackay and Bundaberg) or Rose Marwick (Charleville and Cunnamulla) on 1300 651 192 or eapu@lccq.org.au.

Dementia Advisory and Support Service

By Julie Morrow—DASS

Ozcare's Dementia Advisory and Support Service (DASS) provide support and information to people with dementia and their carers as well as HACC Service providers across the state.

DASS provides a short-term care co-ordination model to support carers in their understanding of dementia as well as access additional services as needed. We have a particular focus on improving understanding around behaviours of concern and using a Person Centred Approach can assist family members and professional carers to develop practical strategies to enhance an individual's quality of life.

Dementia support and information can be provided over the telephone or through face-to-face contact and can assist HACC services and eligible clients in metropolitan, rural and remote areas across the state. DASS is a free service.

More information about Dementia and contact details for the Dementia Co-ordinator in your region can be accessed on www.dementiasupport.com.au

Brisbane North (07) 3624 0500
Bundaberg (07) 4131 4250
Fraser Coast (07) 4191 3000
Ipswich (07) 3432 6035
Sunshine Coast (07) 5437 1222
Townsville (07) 4762 7800

Brisbane South (07) 3451 2000
Cairns (07) 4048 8288
Gold Coast (07) 5569 6200
Mackay (07) 4961 8600
Toowoomba (07) 4639 7888

PEER SUPPORT NETWORK TELECONFERENCE

DATE CLAIMER

Date— 13 July 2011 at 1pm

RSVP to Rose Marwick on 3250 1955 or eapu.psn@lccq.org.au by 7 July 2011

A panel of trainers from the EAPU will be presenting the issues and principles in working with older people who disclose elder abuse. The panel will also cover a case study to help provide a practical framework for service providers. They will be available to answer questions so please send in any questions you have been storing up.

Also keep an eye on the website for more details and an information sheet with from the Teleconferences, <http://www.eapu.com.au/PeerSupportNetwork.aspx>.

AGED RIGHTS ADVOCACY SERVICE

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Conference ~ June 15, 2011 ~

My World... Your World... Our World - Free of Elder Abuse

'There's no excuse for abuse – the Legal Link'

Wednesday 15th June 2011 - 9:00am - 4:30pm

Adelaide Convention Centre

Preliminary notice

The Aged Rights Advocacy Service (ARAS) has secured an excellent program with international, interstate and local speakers focusing on using the law to uphold the rights of older people regardless of where they live.

Keynote speakers:

Paul Greenwood Deputy District Attorney, San Diego. Paul is Head of the Elder Abuse Prosecution Unit since January 1996. Paul has been involved in the prosecution of over 400 felony cases of elder and dependent adult abuse, both physical and financial, and his most recent award was the National Adult Protective Services Special award for "leadership in the prosecutorial field for elder victims" in November 2010.

For the plenary sessions we are pleased to welcome back:

Assoc. Prof. Susan Kurrle, Curran Chair in Health Care of Older People Faculty of Medicine University of Sydney, Clinical Director and Senior Staff Specialist Division of Rehabilitation and Aged Care Hornsby Kuring-gai Health Service.

John Brayley, the Public Advocate.

Concurrent presentations include: Coroner's Office, SAPOL, Legal Services Commission, Complaints Investigation Scheme, and, the Financial Ombudsman Service.



The program will interest a broad audience including those who work with older people, staff of hospitals, legal services, banks, researchers, students and anyone with an interest in how legislation can uphold the rights of the older person at risk of abuse.

Don't miss out on this exciting Conference.

Register your interest by calling ARAS on 8232 5377 or

email: diane@agedrights.asn.au.



.....because there's no excuse for abuse



Paul Greenwood

Position Deputy District Attorney V
Office of the District Attorney, San Diego

Education

- Leeds University, Leeds, Yorkshire, England
Bachelor of Laws, LL.B [Hons], 1973
- Council of Legal Education, Gray's Inn,
London Barrister's Finals, 1978
- College of Law, Guildford, Surrey,
England Law Society Finals, 1979
- Admitted to California Bar, 1991

Years in Practice 31

Practice Area Criminal Prosecution; Head of Elder Abuse
Prosecution Unit since January 1996



Qualifications and Experience

- Prosecutor since March, 1993
- Testified before the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging in June 2001 & July 2007
- Involved in the prosecution of over 400 felony cases of elder and dependent adult abuse, both physical and financial
- Prosecuted nine murder cases and in seven of them obtained a first degree murder conviction in the past 8 years
- Co -Chair of California's DA Elder Abuse Committee
- Assisted with drafting Elder Abuse legislation for California Evidence Code sections 1380 and 1109
- Featured on both CBS's "Eye on America" and NBC's "Nightly News"
- A presenter at the first International Conference of Elder Abuse held in Toronto, Canada in March, 1998
- Former member of Board of Directors for the International Network for Prevention of Elder Abuse
- San Diego DA's Elder Abuse Prosecution Unit was awarded the California State Association of Counties' Challenge Award for innovation and creativity in 1998
- Named as one of the "Lawyers of the Year" by the California Lawyer magazine in December 1999
- An instructor with the California District Attorneys Association (CDAA); the National District Attorneys Association, and the American Prosecutors Institute
- Served as a legal consultant to the BBC Television in London
- Worked as a barrister and then a solicitor of the Supreme Court of England and Wales from 1981 to 1991
- A high school teacher with Voluntary Service Overseas in Kenya for two years
- Married to his wife Sue for 32 years; has two children, Rebecca, 30, and Stephen, 24
- Awarded the 2005 "Visionary for Change" Award in October 2005 at the Dementia Care Conference, San Diego.
- Awarded the 2006 San Diego County Bar Association Public Service Attorney award
- Awarded the 2007 Professional Leadership Award by Elder Financial Protection Network
- Awarded special recognition in 2008 by San Diego County Bar Association for "commitment to civility and integrity".
- Awarded the Edwin H. Sutherland award in 2009 for outstanding service to the public and the anti-fraud profession
- Awarded the National Adult Protective Services Special award for "leadership in the prosecutorial field for elder victims" in Nov. 2010

**District Attorney's Office
Elder Abuse Unit, Family Protection Division
330 W. Broadway, 12th Floor, San Diego, CA 92101 619-531-3464**



World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Forum 2011

15 June 2011

Guest Speaker: Andrea de Vries

Andrea is an experienced trainer with the Elder Abuse Prevention Unit. During this time she has provided information to many people about the signs of elder abuse and how to reduce the risk of it happening to you or someone you know. Service providers can expect training on holistic responses to elder abuse.

Forum Program:

Morning (9am -12noon) —Community Information Session

Afternoon (1 – 4pm) —Training session for Service Providers

Morning tea and afternoon tea provided.

Venue:

Andergrove Community Hall
Celeber Dr Andergrove

RSVP: Eunice Donovan at the Mackay Regional Council on 49619469 or
email: Eunice.donovan@mackay.qld.gov.au

Exploitation of Socially Isolated Older People

By Tess Patterson - Hervey Bay SLASS

Imagine the scenario – a tidy home owned by a woman whose husband has recently died, set in a rural area, equipped with all necessary services and fitted with full security screening. To most people, the woman appears to be living out her life in safety and contentment. But if the occupant is a frail, socially-isolated older person, the possibilities for exploitation are endless.

Abuse by someone who is considered a friend by an older person often begins subtly. In fact, older people are often lured into a false sense of security as an acquaintance gradually morphs into what appears to be an attentive, caring, close companion upon whom they become increasingly reliant.

Particularly for an older person who is isolated from his or her family, the attention can be most welcome. Photos of the friend may appear on the sideboard, along with other small gifts for their new-found best mate. The running of errands or the completion of some simple home maintenance tasks is understandably viewed as evidence of kindness. Offers to help with banking, allowing the friend access to personal information, may or may not follow.

Often, potential abusers can spot vulnerability from a distance. Their interest can be sparked if they come into contact with a widow whose husband has always managed the couple's business affairs as there is the possibility that the woman might be naive in regard to coping with financial matters. If it becomes evident that the widow is socially isolated and without family support, and the upkeep of her home is getting beyond her, the opportunities for dishonesty become apparent.

Over time casual chats with the new friend may stray towards topics that are important to older people; options for the future, funding the move into aged care, possible ways of minimising assets. Conversations may linger over the difficulties experienced in looking after the home. Then, the trusted friend begins to mention another friend who just happens to be looking for real estate in the area.

Given that some socially isolated older people may be prone to losing sight of trends in the real estate market, it can be relatively easy for someone to suggest what seems like a good business deal to them when in fact it benefits the buyer. For example, the older person can be seduced by the argument that selling privately will save on commission fees. If the older person is unaware of market trends, they may agree to a sale figure which is far below the actual value of their home. Potential abusers often impose subtle pressure by suggesting to the older person that the potential purchaser of the home is in a hurry for some reason, so a quick response is needed.

Anyone, in Hervey Bay, who suspects that an older person is being abused or exploited by a 'trusted' friend can contact the Seniors Legal and Support Service, a free service for seniors 60 years and over, who are experiencing or are at risk of experiencing abuse, mistreatment or financial exploitation. The service delivers a multidisciplinary approach to the issue of elder abuse by teaming a social worker and a solicitor together to obtain the best possible outcome for the client. Focus is on individual casework, community education and preventative strategies.

In Hervey Bay, you can contact the Seniors Legal and Support Service on 4124 6863 to discuss any concerns regarding personal matters, or issues affecting a friend or relative. Funded by the Department of Communities and managed by the Hervey Bay Neighbourhood Centre, the service aims to keep people in control of their own lives as they age.



Media Overview



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Calendar of Events

7th Annual Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Forum

30—31 May 2011

Mackay, Queensland

Email: enquiries@noviolence.com.au

Website:

<http://www.noviolence.com.au/eoi2011/callforexpression.html>

There's no excuse for Abuse Conference

15 June 2011

Adelaide, South Australia

PH: 08 8232 5377

Email: dianeb@agedrights.asn.au

WEAAD Forum—Mackay

15 June 2011

Mackay, Queensland

PH: 49619469

WEAAD Seniors Rights Victoria Workshops

15 June 2011

Melbourne, Victoria

PH: 03 9655 2129

Website:

http://www.seniorsrights.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=74:practical-focus-in-2011&catid=14:e-newsletter-rebuilding-confidence&Itemid=48

WEAAD Seniors Rights Victoria Bendigo Focus

15 June 2011

Bendigo, Victoria

PH: 03 5444 4364

Website:

http://www.seniorsrights.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=75:bendigo-focus-for-weaad-2011&catid=14:e-newsletter-rebuilding-confidence&Itemid=48

6th International Conference of the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse

17 June 2011

Liverpool, London, UK

Website:

<http://elderabuse.org.uk/Conferences/WEAAD%20Conf%202011%20flyer%201.pdf>

International Forum on the Sexual Safety of Older Women—A Human Rights Approach

15 June 2011

Toronto, Canada

Website: <http://www.cnpea.ca/>

Positive Mental Health for Older People Seminar

29 August 2011

Luna Park, Sydney, NSW

Website: <http://www.agedservices.asn.au/>

Alberta Elder Abuse Awareness Network Conference

3—4 October 2011

Edmonton, Canada

Website: <http://www.cnpea.ca/>

9th Asia/Oceania Regional Congress of Gerontology and Geriatrics—Aging Well Together

23-27 October 2011

Melbourne, Victoria

PH: 03 9682 0500

Email: info@ageingin2011.com

Website: <http://www.ageing2011.com/EOI.htm>

Additional Date Claimers 2010—2011:

May 2011—Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month

15 June 2011—World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

1 October 2011—International Day of Older People

Editor's Note: Opinions expressed in this edition "Queensland Focus", do not necessarily reflect those of The Elder Abuse Prevention Unit (EAPU). Articles in this newsletter may be used with the permission of the contributing author.



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