

SAFEGUARDING YOUR INDEPENDENCE

Empowering the older person to have their wishes heard

Over 15% of older people aged over 60 will face at least one incidence of abuse, according to estimates from the World Health Organisation¹. In Australia, incidences of abuse is estimated to affect 6%² of older people. Of the types of abuse, some of the most common forms of abuse are financial and psychological abuse.

FMC Mediation and Counselling is a not for profit agency in Australia that has been providing family dispute resolution support, relationship support, psychological services and financial counselling for over thirty years. From eight offices and 14 outreach locations FMC supports over 9000 Victorians every year to help them take back control of their lives.

The **Respecting Elders Support and Conflict Resolution Service** developed by FMC works to empower the older person and to ensure elder abuse will cease or is prevented. This unique model of support and mediation is different to the family dispute resolution model used in the Australian family law context. The service uses support and resilience building for the older person through counselling and coaching and seeks to bring the older person to a point of self-determination that does not involve the dissolution of their family relationship.

Many older people value their family relationship above all and do not want family separation nor for their children to be punished or prosecuted. Of the older clients seen by FMC, 90% want to retain a relationship with the family member who is the abuse instigator.

Elder Abuse is often overshadowed by a complex mix of factors such as social stigma and embarrassment, a fear of family retribution and isolation from grandchildren or family. There is often a reluctance to report their perpetrators, often their adult children, for fear of punitive consequences affecting them. For many older people, the legal system also forms a significant source of stress and financial burden on top of their experience of abuse.

Preventative responses to elder abuse are undeveloped in Australia. The 2016 Victorian Royal Commission on Family Violence Report³ recognises that most existing family violence services and perpetrator interventions are not geared towards the unique dynamics of elder abuse. A subsequent 2018 report on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence in Australia⁴ further moves to highlight the significant impact family violence has on victims, families and the community.

The Respecting Elders service is non- adversarial and works with the older person and family members to prevent the abuse and foster a safe, positive future relationship with family members. The innovation focuses on changing the locus of control to the older person through clarifying roles, obligations and responsibilities within the family or with the carer.

More information on FMC's Respecting Elders Support and Conflict Resolution service, visit <https://www.mediation.com.au/>

For more information, please contact **Graeme Westaway, Executive Manager Corporate and Digital Communications** graeme.westaway@mediation.com.au

Useful Links

¹ [Elder abuse prevalence in community settings: a systematic review and meta-analysis](#)

² [Profile of elder abuse in Victoria 2016 Summary Report](#)

³ [Royal Commission into Family Violence 2016 Report](#)

⁴ [Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence in Australia 2018 Report](#)