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| Preventing elder abuse – the top tips Elder abuse is unacceptable. Understand and protect your rights. Older people have a right to live free from abuse and violence. Abusive behaviour is not acceptable and is not a normal part of relationships.  Elder abuse is an act that causes harm to an older person by someone they know and trust. Elder abuse can be financial, psychological, social, physical, sexual and/or neglect. |

# Ideas that may help prevent or minimise the risk of elder abuse

## Stay connected to family, friends, neighbours and services

Maintaining strong social connections as we age is vitally important for our health and wellbeing. There are great opportunities to explore new interests and make new friends too. Your local council, community health or legal centre, library, church or community group will have information on their website or at their centre on available activities or volunteering opportunities.

## Planning for the future is important

It is helpful, as we age, to make time to plan for the future. Ageing well should include thinking about and planning for our health, lifestyle, medical, financial, legal and family matters so that these are addressed before they become concerns later in life. This will ensure our preferences are known and we are prepared should our circumstances change, and we need support to maintain our independence.

## Consider key ‘legal’ documents such as powers of attorney, medical treatment decision maker, wills, advance care plans and advance care directives

You can take steps to put in place arrangements for the lifestyle and care you want in the future. Using key documents can help to manage your affairs for as long as possible. There are various resources available to guide your decision making or you may wish to seek independent advice by speaking to your doctor, lawyer, accountant or financial adviser. Resources include:

* [You Decide Who Decides & Take Control (Office of the Public Advocate Victoria)](https://www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au/your-rights/enduring-power-of-attorney/planning-ahead) (<https://www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au/your-rights/enduring-power-of-attorney/planning-ahead>)
* [Your voice – Trust your choice: Tips for seniors making enduring powers of attorney](https://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/find-legal-answers/free-publications-and-resources/your-voice-trust-your-choice-tips-for-seniors-making-enduring-powers-of-attorney) (<https://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/find-legal-answers/free-publications-and-resources/your-voice-trust-your-choice-tips-for-seniors-making-enduring-powers-of-attorney>)
* [Create your advance care plan in Victoria](https://www.advancecareplanning.org.au/create-your-plan/create-your-plan-vic) (<https://www.advancecareplanning.org.au/create-your-plan/create-your-plan-vic>)

## Make your wishes and expectations known – have the ‘challenging’ conversations

When you think about your lifestyle and care in the future, make sure those that matter to you (for example, family and friends) understand your desires and aspirations. Help those close to you to better understand your wishes.

If you are thinking of nominating someone to make decisions for you in the future, check that they are willing to take on this responsibility. Make sure they understand and respect your wishes and will be able to communicate these effectively at a time when you will be unable to do so.

## Don’t be pressured or intimidated into immediate decisions

Don’t feel pressured to make immediate decisions you are not comfortable with. This could include being asked to lend money to help family members. It is important to take the time you need and to seek independent advice if appropriate. There are services that can help you and provide advice.

**Seniors Rights Victoria** is a community legal centre that is focused on elder abuse. It operates a state-wide helpline and provides information, education, short term support, legal advice, advocacy and referral services.

**The Orange Door** is a free service for adults, children and young people who are experiencing or have experienced family violence and families who need extra support with the care of children.

**Better Place Australia** is a not-for-profit organisation that works with people to build their resilience and resolve difficult emotional or financial personal circumstances through counselling services, education programs, mediation and dispute resolution services or working with a psychologist to address mental stress.

**Financial Counselling Victoria** is a peak body and a professional association for financial counsellors in Victoria. This means they provide support and resources to financial counsellors, who help Victorians that are in financial difficulty with information, support and advocacy. These services are free, independent and confidential.

## Confirm arrangements in writing but don’t sign documents under duress

It can be very helpful to record key financial or lifestyle decisions in writing, including for example the loan of money or assets. However, don’t feel pressured to sign documents or make new financial arrangements that are of concern to you. Take time to talk with a trusted friend, family member or seek independent advice.

## Take care if considering access to, or transfer of, assets

If you are thinking of transferring some or all your assets to a family member then it is very important to exercise caution. For example, some older people transfer assets to their adult children in return for an expectation of care or support in the future. Make sure you take the necessary steps to protect your rights and interests. Consider entering into a formal Family Agreement. (Refer to *Care for your assets: Money, Ageing and Family*, Second (revised) edition 2017 in the Tips section, Resources and Education tab on the Seniors Rights Victoria website, or contact Seniors Rights Victoria for information/advice.)

There may be many other implications to consider such as how this would affect family relationships, your pension, tax and future aged care fees. Seek appropriate independent and expert advice.

## Seek advice if you have concerns

If you have concerns, act as soon as possible. Many options exist. You may want to start by talking to a friend you trust or your doctor/GP, a health provider, family mediation service or an aged care assessment service to name just a few.

Police can make referrals for support for you. In an emergency, call 000.

Please refer to the Help section at the end of this document for further information on who to contact for advice or support.

## Concerned about someone else?

Information and resources are available to support a person who is concerned about or supporting someone who is experiencing violence and abuse. For example, *Concerned about an older person* is a booklet produced by Seniors Rights Victoria. A copy is available at <https://seniorsrights.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Concerned-About-an-Older-Person-WEB_Final.pdf>

**Always remember that if you are in immediate danger, call 000.**

**Help is available**

The following services can provide information, advice and support if you are concerned about or

experiencing elder abuse.

**Seniors Rights Victoria** Call 1300 368 821 between 10.00 am – 5.00 pm Monday - Friday (excluding public holidays) or at [**https://seniorsrights.org.au/**](https://seniorsrights.org.au/)

**Find your nearest Orange Door –** [**https://orangedoor.vic.gov.au/**](https://orangedoor.vic.gov.au/)

**1800RESPECT** Call 1800 737 732 or chat online at [www.1800respect.org.au](http://www.1800respect.org.au). A 24 hour

service that provides information, counselling and support services.

**Better Place Australia (family and relationship services including mediation)** Call 1800 639 523[**https://www.betterplaceaustralia.com.au/**](https://www.betterplaceaustralia.com.au/)

**Financial Counselling Victoria** Call the National Debt Helpline on 1800 007 007 [**https://ndh.org.au/**](https://ndh.org.au/) OR [**https://fcvic.org.au/about-financial-counselling/**](https://fcvic.org.au/about-financial-counselling/)

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