

Friday 19 August 2016

MEDIA RELEASE

End elder abuse

Alzheimer's Australia has provided a submission in response to the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) June 2016 Issues Paper, *Elder Abuse*.

Alzheimer's Australia National President, Professor Graeme Samuel AC, says too many Australians living with dementia or cognitive impairment are experiencing elder abuse, often perpetrated by those close to them.

"People living with dementia have a heightened risk of abuse, as they may find it difficult or impossible to fully comprehend, recall, or report the abuse. Even if reported, these accounts are sometimes dismissed as being unreliable.

"With the growing prevalence of dementia, it is imperative that there are national safeguards in place to protect people with dementia from all forms of abuse, be that financial abuse, physical abuse or neglect, sexual abuse, or emotional and psychological abuse," Professor Samuel said.

This submission takes a broad approach to elder abuse, and its impact on people with dementia. Including deliberate financial exploitation by families and carers, intentional physical assault by staff of residential aged care facilities as well as more subtle forms of human rights abuses, such as chronic neglect by families and carers, or inappropriate use of physical and chemical restraint of residents in aged care.

Alzheimer's Australia believes that a multi-faceted response to elder abuse is needed, which addresses not only the legal context and response, but also addresses the systemic factors which lead to the abuse of the human rights of people with dementia.

The submission includes several case studies from people with dementia and their carers which provide a harrowing account of many forms of elder abuse that are occurring every day.

"Elder abuse has to be addressed as a matter of urgency, our submission has offered twenty-four recommendations, which outline the factors that enable such abuses to happen, and proposes means to prevent and address abuse of people with dementia in Australia," Professor Samuel said.

Some broad measures that have been highlighted include:

- Improving the capacity of family carers and of residential aged care facility staff, to help ensure they can provide adequate care for people with dementia
- Improve the performance and quality of aged care services and health services in caring for people with dementia
- Legislative and legal system reforms to prevent and address elder abuse
- Better information for consumers on the legal rights of people with dementia, and about how these rights can be enforced
- Improving understanding and awareness of elder abuse throughout the whole community

"We hope the matters raised in this submission will be of assistance to the Australian Law Reform Commission in the development of recommendations to prevent and address elder abuse, particularly in relation to people with dementia," Professor Samuel said.

Alzheimer's Australia's submission to the ALRC is available [here](#).

Alzheimer's Australia is the peak body for people with dementia and their families and carers. It provides advocacy, support services, education and information. More than 353,800 people have dementia in Australia. This number is projected to reach more than half a million by 2030.

-End-

National Dementia Helpline: 1800 100 500

An interpreter service is available

(The National Dementia Helpline is an Australian Government Initiative)

Dementia is a National Health Priority Area

fightdementia.org.au

Media enquiries: Bianca Armytage 0407 019 430 Bianca.armytage@alzheimers.org.au