

Exploring Barwon

Identifying and Responding to Elder Abuse in the Barwon Region

Facilitator:

Alexandria Jones

Barwon Community Legal
Service

Panel:

John Sheehan - Cultura

Carol Stuart - Barwon Community Legal

Mandy Strange - Better Place Australia

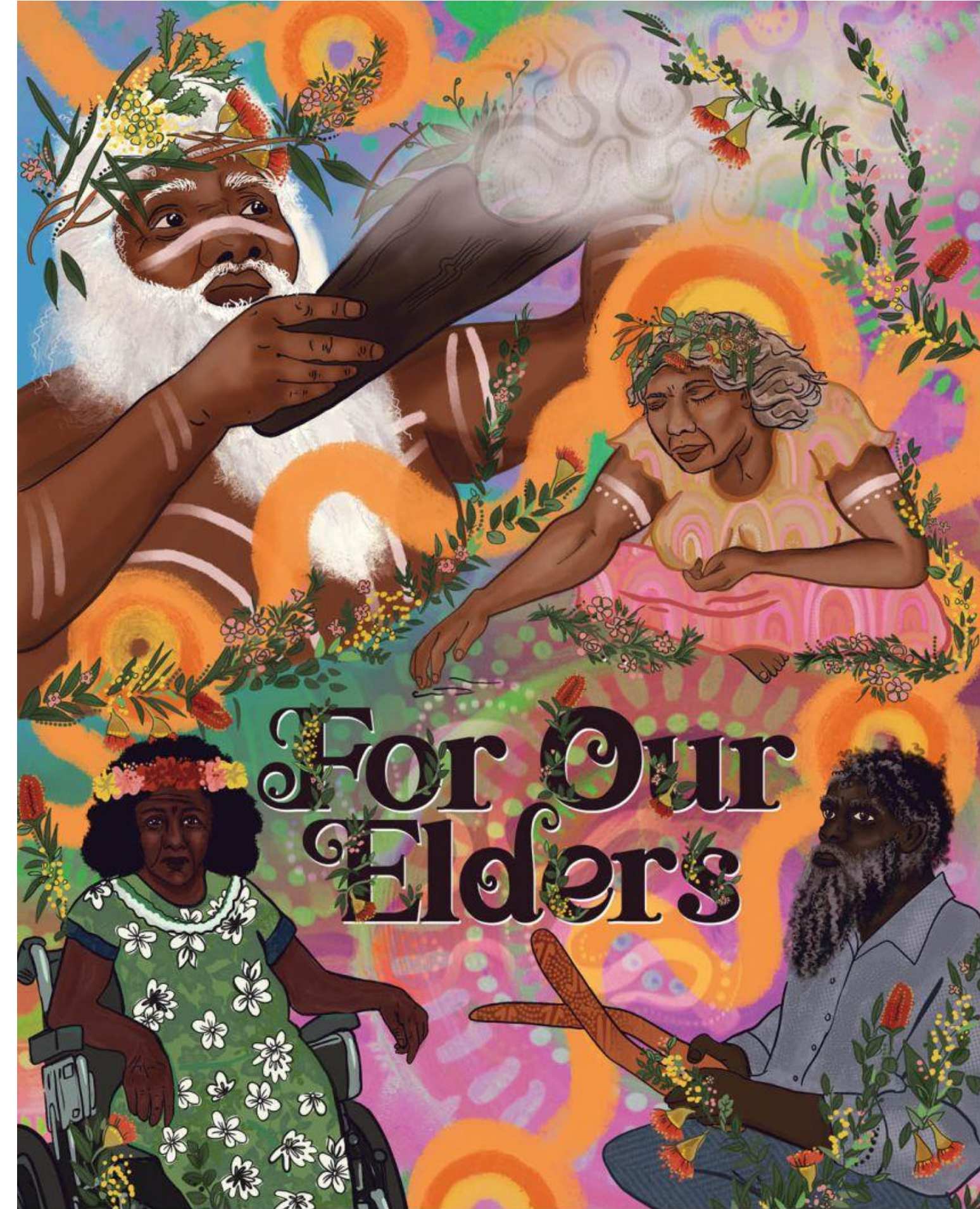
Rosemary Marsh - Wintringham

ACKNOWLEDGING COUNTRY

Barwon Community Legal Service acknowledges the traditional owners of the stolen and unceded lands on which we learn and work, and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People who are part of our Barwon region.

2023 National NAIDOC Week Poster

Bobbi Lockyer, a proud Ngarluma, Kariyarra, Nyulnyul and Yawuru artist, born and based on Kariyarra Country in Port Hedland, is the winner of the prestigious National NAIDOC Week Poster Competition for 2023 with her entry, For Our Elders.



NAIDOC Week

2-9 JULY 2023

#NAIDOC2023 #ForOurElders

@naidocweek @naidocweek facebook.com/NAIDOC

For Our Elders, Bobbi Lockyer

Where there is knowledge there are our Elders. Our Elders paved the pathways for us, taught us our knowledge, our history, they passed down their art, stories and wisdom. Our Elders are the foundation of our communities and role models for our children. With this poster I wanted to showcase how important our Elders are in passing down traditions and culture to our children and future.



Aboriginal Flag designed by Mr Harold Thomas. Torres Strait Islander Flag reproduced by kind permission of the Torres Strait Island Regional Council, designed by the late Mr Bernard Namok.



Free legal assistance



- Provide free legal information, advice and casework
- FV Intervention Order Applicant duty lawyer service - at Geelong and Colac Magistrates' Courts
- Community legal education, awareness initiatives: e.g. *Barwon Elder Abuse Primary Prevention Network* and systemic advocacy
- We offer free training and secondary consultations for community workers

We co-locate our lawyers across a wide range of community organisations including:

- The Orange Door
- SAFVC
- Barwon Health
- Colac Area Health
- MeLI
- Western Heights College
- Cultura
- Deakin Student Legal Service
- fOrT Youth Centre
- Colac and Geelong Magistrates' Courts

Areas of law

Family	Safety	Money	Housing and neighbours	Senior years	Other legal issues	Criminal law
Family law - Parenting/ property arrangements	Family Violence Intervention Orders (Duty lawyer representation and pre-court advice)	Consumer law, credit and debt	Neighbourhood disputes*	Elder abuse	Motor vehicle accidents*	Summary Criminal offences**
Separation and divorce*	Personal Safety Intervention Orders*	Fines and Infringements	Tenancy (for FV clients only)	Powers of Attorney, Guardianship and Administration	Employment law*	**Advice only (run by volunteer solicitors)
Child support	Victims of Crime Applications	Centrelink and social security		Wills*		Referrals to Victoria Legal Aid

* Indicates where we provide advice only or only as part of a specific outreach or program.

For an overview of our areas of law please see our website: <https://www.barwoncommunitylegal.org.au/areas-of-law/>

SESSION OVERVIEW

01

Overview of
elder abuse

- definition
- prevalence
- risk factors

02

Case study:
Nell's story

03

Panel
discussion :

- financial
- legal
- family
violence
- housing

04

Question time

Expert panel of local services



- **John Sheehan** - Financial Counsellor - **Cultura**
- **Carol Stuart** - Senior Community Lawyer - **Barwon Community Legal Service**
- **Rosemary Marsh** - Service Development Coordinator - **Wintringham - Community Housing and Support**
- **Mandy Strange** - Clinical and Program Leader Elder Services - **Better Place Australia**



What is Elder Abuse?

Understanding and Responding to Elder Abuse in the Barwon Region

Mandy Strange - Clinical and Program Lead Elder Services

What is Elder Abuse?

- 'Elder abuse can be defined as a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person.'

World Health Organisation (WHO – 2002)

- The RCFV (VIC) identified that elder abuse required a specialised response given the complex nature of:
 - Age related vulnerability
 - Inter family relationships and dynamics
 - Co-dependency in carer relationships

Types of Elder Abuse

- **Financial Abuse:** Illegal or improper use of an older person's money or possessions
- **Psychological/Verbal Abuse:** Causing fear, shame, intimidation, humiliation or making threats
- **Physical Abuse:** Non-accidental acts that inflict pain or injury
- **Sexual Abuse:** Sexually abusive or exploitative behaviour
- **Social Abuse:** Restricting access to family and social contacts
- **Neglect:** Failure to provide basic necessities of life and care (can be either unintentional or intentional)

Prevalence of Elder Abuse

- Australian Institute of Family Studies Prevalence Study (2021) – first national survey and most extensive study into elder abuse in Australia
- Australian data estimate 14.8% (1 in 6) prevalence of elder abuse amongst people in the community (AIFS 2021)
- People with poor physical or psychological health and higher levels of social isolation are more likely to experience elder abuse
- Almost two thirds of older people don't seek help when they are abused (61%)
- Elder abuse often remains hidden, with the most frequent action taken to stop the abuse involving the victim speaking directly to the perpetrator

Elder Abuse Statistics

Victims

- 72%: Women
- 28%: Male
- Most common age group for victims: 80–84 years
- 27.9%: Victims had cognitive impairment

Perpetrators

- Adult Child: Son (39%) Daughter (28%)
- 10%: Partner / Spouse
- 3-4%: Grandchild
- 8%: Daughter In-Law / Son In-Law
- 4-9%: Other Family Member (partners of adult children)
- 9%: Other (i.e. neighbour, friend etc)

(SRV 7 Years of Elder Abuse Victoria, AUG 2020, AIFS National Prevalence Study 2021)

Service Findings – BPA Elder Abuse Prevention Service

- **Victims**
 - 77% women
 - 22% male
- **Average age of client: 76 years**
- **27.9% of victims had cognitive impairment**
- **CALD**
 - 57% born in Australia
 - 43% CALD background
 - Mixture of cultural backgrounds: Southern European, Indian, Sri Lankan, Iranian, South East Asian

Triggers for Elder Abuse – Victim risk factors

- Change in Health Status (including cognitive impairment)
- Isolation / lacking social support
- Care dependant
- Change in life circumstances
- Have an interdependent relationship with an adult child
- History of trauma / family violence
- Intersectionality with marginalised groups
 - ❖ LGBTIQ+
 - ❖ CALD
 - ❖ Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
 - ❖ Migration status
 - ❖ Disability (cognitive, intellectual and/or physical)

Risk Factors: Perpetrator Profile

- Adult children most common perpetrator of Elder Abuse across all forms
- Elder Abuse rarely presents as a single form (co-occurring)
- Perpetrators were commonly represented with:
 - Mental health issues
 - Physical health issues
 - **Substance misuse has been identified as the greatest risk factor related to elder abuse**
 - financial hardship
 - Dependence on the victim
 - Stressors (ie: caring responsibilities), or stress from unrelated circumstances
 - Negative attitudes or resentment to the older person
 - Own history of family violence (as a witness or victim), or perpetrating family violence within an intimate partnership

(Qu Et al, National Elder Abuse Prevalance Study Final Report 2021, Storey 2020)

Better Place Australia

Level 1, 16 Park Road
(Corner Nepean Highway)
Cheltenham Vic 3192

betterplaceaustralia.com.au

Elder Abuse Intake : 1800 214 117 respectingelders@betterplace.com.au



Nell's Story

Panel Discussion

- Nell agreed to sell her property in NSW and purchase a larger property in Highton with her daughter Sally. Nell's only granddaughter Megan would also live there.
- Nell agreed to put in sale proceeds from NSW property and Sally would get a mortgage for the rest, in exchange for Sally to care for Nell as she got older, as Nell hated idea of living in an aged care facility.
- Sally was always asking Nell to pay for things and Nell ran out of savings. Sally became abusive when funds ran out.
- Sally coerced Nell into getting a \$3000 credit card in her name, which Sally quickly maxed out.
- Nell found living with her daughter incredibly stressful.
- When Nell had a fall, her daughter Sally refused to help her. Nell's granddaughter Megan called the ambulance and Nell is now in respite care. She does not want to go back to living with her daughter.
- Sally has refused to talk to Nell and is angry at Megan for continuing contact with her grandmother.
- Nell is at risk of homelessness and can't afford a private rental.



Key messages:

- Research shows older people are reluctant to seek assistance if they are experiencing elder abuse.
- Providing information on local referral services if it is safe to do so can be a good starting point – even if the older person doesn't want to take action. It is the older person's choice to take action.
- Elder abuse can be complex, and involve collaboration across multiple services: legal, health, specialist family violence, financial counselling and housing.
- There are online resources that can assist you in your practice -
 - Department of Families, Fairness and Housing Elder Abuse Learning Hub [here](#)
 - [Compass Guiding Action on Elder Abuse website](#)
 - Barwon Community Legal Service *Law for Community Workers* Online training program available via our website [here](#)



Useful resources

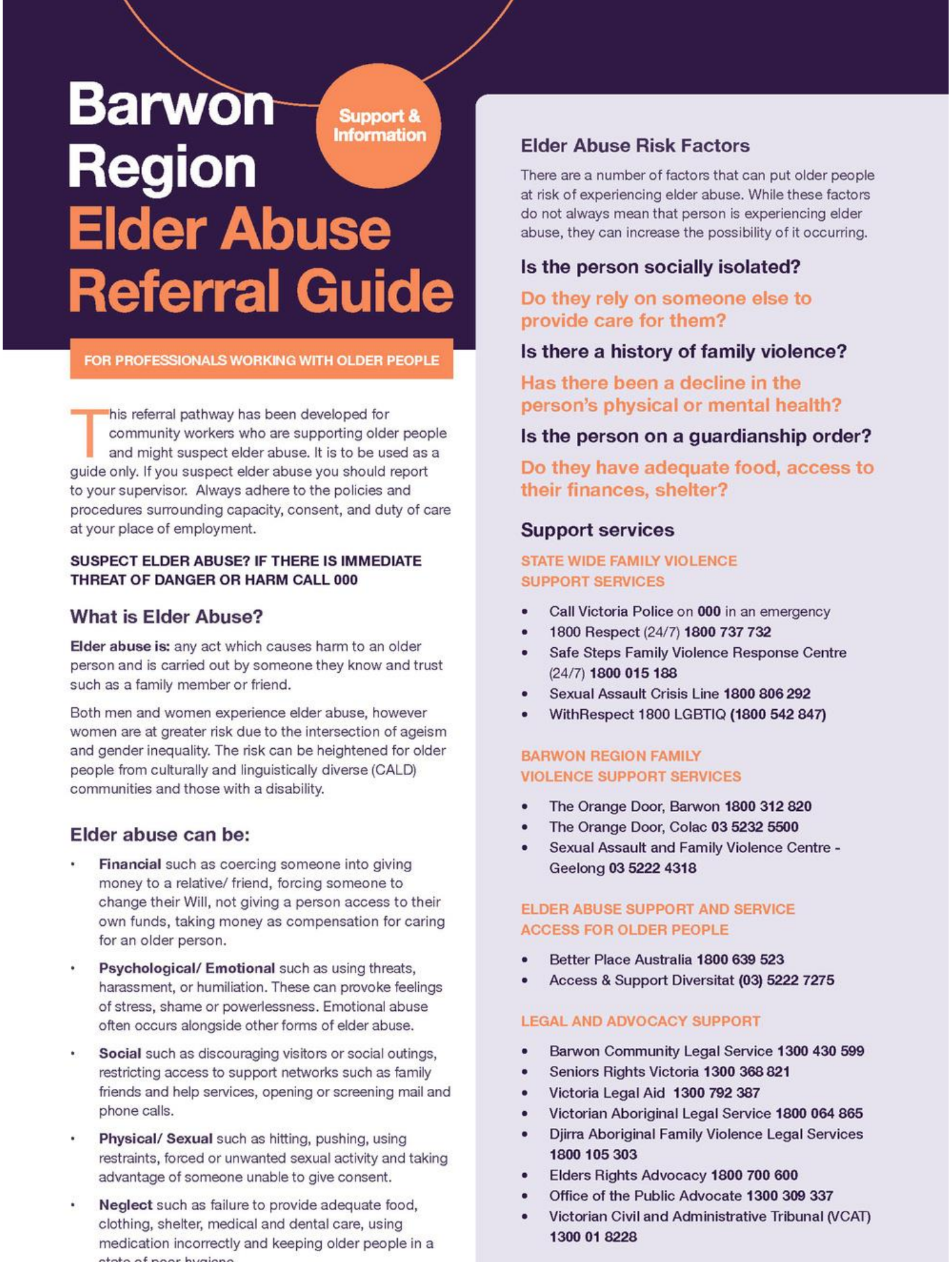
Barwon Elder Abuse Referral Guide - available [here](#)

Better Place Australia Elder Abuse Support Service contact details available [here](#)

Cultura Financial Counselling referral info available [here](#)

Barwon Community Legal Service Refer a Client via website [here](#)

Wintringham Community Housing and Support contact info via website [here](#)



Barwon Region Elder Abuse Referral Guide

Support & Information

FOR PROFESSIONALS WORKING WITH OLDER PEOPLE

This referral pathway has been developed for community workers who are supporting older people and might suspect elder abuse. It is to be used as a guide only. If you suspect elder abuse you should report to your supervisor. Always adhere to the policies and procedures surrounding capacity, consent, and duty of care at your place of employment.

SUSPECT ELDER ABUSE? IF THERE IS IMMEDIATE THREAT OF DANGER OR HARM CALL 000

What is Elder Abuse?

Elder abuse is: any act which causes harm to an older person and is carried out by someone they know and trust such as a family member or friend.

Both men and women experience elder abuse, however women are at greater risk due to the intersection of ageism and gender inequality. The risk can be heightened for older people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities and those with a disability.

Elder abuse can be:

- **Financial** such as coercing someone into giving money to a relative/ friend, forcing someone to change their Will, not giving a person access to their own funds, taking money as compensation for caring for an older person.
- **Psychological/ Emotional** such as using threats, harassment, or humiliation. These can provoke feelings of stress, shame or powerlessness. Emotional abuse often occurs alongside other forms of elder abuse.
- **Social** such as discouraging visitors or social outings, restricting access to support networks such as family friends and help services, opening or screening mail and phone calls.
- **Physical/ Sexual** such as hitting, pushing, using restraints, forced or unwanted sexual activity and taking advantage of someone unable to give consent.
- **Neglect** such as failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical and dental care, using medication incorrectly and keeping older people in a state of poor hygiene.

Elder Abuse Risk Factors

There are a number of factors that can put older people at risk of experiencing elder abuse. While these factors do not always mean that person is experiencing elder abuse, they can increase the possibility of it occurring.

Is the person socially isolated?

Do they rely on someone else to provide care for them?

Is there a history of family violence?

Has there been a decline in the person's physical or mental health?

Is the person on a guardianship order?

Do they have adequate food, access to their finances, shelter?

Support services

STATE WIDE FAMILY VIOLENCE SUPPORT SERVICES

- Call Victoria Police on **000** in an emergency
- 1800 Respect (24/7) **1800 737 732**
- Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre (24/7) **1800 015 188**
- Sexual Assault Crisis Line **1800 806 292**
- WithRespect 1800 LGBTIQ (**1800 542 847**)

BARWON REGION FAMILY VIOLENCE SUPPORT SERVICES

- The Orange Door, Barwon **1800 312 820**
- The Orange Door, Colac **03 5232 5500**
- Sexual Assault and Family Violence Centre - Geelong **03 5222 4318**

ELDER ABUSE SUPPORT AND SERVICE ACCESS FOR OLDER PEOPLE

- Better Place Australia **1800 639 523**
- Access & Support Diversitat (**03**) **5222 7275**

LEGAL AND ADVOCACY SUPPORT

- Barwon Community Legal Service **1300 430 599**
- Seniors Rights Victoria **1300 368 821**
- Victoria Legal Aid **1300 792 387**
- Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service **1800 064 865**
- Djirra Aboriginal Family Violence Legal Services **1800 105 303**
- Elders Rights Advocacy **1800 700 600**
- Office of the Public Advocate **1300 309 337**
- Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) **1300 01 8228**

Questions!