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Media Release

Respect Victoria campaign asks Victorians to prevent elder abuse during COVID-19

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“The Victorian Government is proud to relaunch Respect Victoria’s prevention of elder abuse campaign, which highlights the often hidden nature of elder abuse and encourages Victorians to call it out,” said Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence Gabrielle Williams.

“We know that the pressures of the pandemic have had significant impacts on older people in Victoria – and we want to remind all Victorians that identifying and stopping elder abuse is everybody’s business.”

“Discrimination based on age has no place in our society. By taking notice of what is happening in your family, neighbourhood or community you may be able to prevent or intervene to stop elder abuse,” said Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers, Luke Donnellan in a joint announcement.

Respect Victoria’s Chair Melanie Eagle said: “The *Respect Older People: ‘Call It Out’* campaign highlights the warning signs of elder abuse and encourages neighbours, family members, friends, carers, healthcare workers and community service providers, and community members to take action when it is safe to do so.

“The campaign is being relaunched by Respect Victoria as Victorians continue to stay home and manage community restrictions associated with the coronavirus pandemic. For some, this has led to an increased level of both physical and social isolation. For others, it may have meant moving back in with family members or needing to support adult children financially or emotionally.”

Elder abuse can be financial, physical, emotional, psychological, social or sexual.

[In Victoria, over 90% of perpetrators of elder abuse are relatives](#) - a child, grandchild, sibling, partner or other close relative. Elder abuse is also gendered, [with older women reporting abuse at more than twice the rate](#) than older men.

Respect Victoria originally ran this campaign in 2019. As a result, one in every six Victorians recalled seeing or hearing about the campaign and a staggering two in every three Victorians took action as a result of seeing the campaign.

“We want this campaign to remind older Victorians that they are seen, are respected, and have the right to be safe and free from family violence,” said Respect Victoria’s CEO Tracey Gaudry.

“We are asking all Victorians to take notice of what is happening in their families, neighbourhoods and communities – you can prevent elder abuse from occurring or escalating. We urge you to learn about the warning signs of elder abuse, have conversations with the older people in your life, and take action.”

Taking action may include starting the conversation with an older family member or friend, intervening if you see or hear an older person experiencing family violence, or contacting Seniors Rights Victoria for advice.

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The campaign will launch across metropolitan, regional and rural television, radio as well as major digital and social media channels in the coming week. The campaign will also run in Arabic, Chinese, Greek, Italian and Vietnamese across select radio stations and across multicultural convenience stores within Victoria.

If you need help or want to seek support on behalf of someone you know:

- Contact Seniors Rights Victoria on 1300 368 821 or visit their website: <https://seniorsrights.org.au/>

If you are experiencing or at risk of experiencing family violence:

- safe steps is available 24/7 on 1800 015 188, via email at safesteps@safesteps.org.au or via online chat between 9am – 9pm Monday to Friday.
- 1800 RESPECT is a national service available 24/7 on 1800 737 732 or via online chat at <https://www.1800respect.org.au/>

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call triple zero.

ENDS

Quotes from Seniors Rights Victoria Manager, Jenny Blakey:

“Callers to Seniors Rights Victoria are experiencing more anxiety and greater stress because of the pandemic. We know that historically when families experience significant financial pressures, some older family members can be pressured to surrender money and assets.”

“Elder abuse stems from the way the community views older Victorians. Unless we acknowledge and value the key part that older people play in our society, we will not reduce the rates of elder abuse. The current restrictions should not mean that older Victorians are any less engaged and included than before the COVID-19 pandemic.”