

Media Release

The Hon Luke Donnellan MP
Minister for Child Protection
Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers



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FUNDING KEY SERVICES TO PROTECT OLDER VICTORIANS

Older Victorians at risk of abuse or isolation will have better access to the support they need, with a funding boost for key services from the Victorian Government.

Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers Luke Donnellan and Minister for Prevention of Family Violence Gabrielle Williams today announced an additional \$1.5 million in funding to mark World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

The investment includes \$1.1 million to ensure Council on the Ageing – as the auspice of Seniors Rights Victoria (SRV) and Seniors Information Outreach (SIO) – can continue to provide vital information, support and referrals that protect the rights of older people, particularly those that may be at greater risk of abuse or isolation.

An extra \$300,000 will also ensure 10 Elder Abuse Prevention Networks can continue throughout the year. By bringing together local community groups, organisations and businesses, these networks raise awareness of, and help stop, elder abuse from happening in the first place.

With \$120,000 in funding for the Office of the Public Advocate as well, they'll be able to identify options to safeguard at-risk adults as part of Victoria's work on the National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians.

Elder abuse is a form of family abuse and includes any act within a trusted relationship which results in harm to an older person. It can take many forms and financial abuse is one of the most common. With more people facing stress and hardship during the coronavirus pandemic, there are concerns elder abuse may increase.

To help combat loneliness and social isolation in our older community, the Victorian Government has recently brought forward and reimaged the 2020 Seniors Festival and Seniors of the Year awards, and expanded the state-wide coronavirus phone line to proactively reach out to vulnerable people – including senior Victorians.

SRV's free confidential helpline provides support, referrals and legal advice for older people, and community education and support for professionals. The helpline is open from 10am – 5pm weekdays on 1300 368 821.

SIO provides a free information service to older people, their families and carers through outreach programs held across Victoria with local services. The service is open weekdays from 9.30am – 4.00pm on 1300 135 090.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers Luke Donnellan

"While being in quarantine and limiting physical interaction is vital to slowing the spread of the coronavirus, we know it can be difficult for people's health and wellbeing – particularly for Victorians who may already be isolated."

"We must keep older Victorians well, which is why elder abuse prevention and early intervention is so critical. This funding will give Victorians confidence that supports are in place for older people to continue to get help."

Quotes attributable to Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence Gabrielle Williams

"Negative stereotypes contribute to a culture where older people are afforded less power and control. We must change these social attitudes to prevent elder abuse from happening in the first place."

"We must focus on prevention. That is why the Victorian Government is proud to continue to support our state's Elder Abuse Prevention Networks."

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