

DISCUSSION RESOURCE

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PROJECT OF  
5TH NATIONAL ELDER  
ABUSE CONFERENCE

HOSTED BY SENIORS  
RIGHTS SERVICE



# ELDER ABUSE AND ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

JODY BROUN





## ABOUT THIS PROJECT

In February 2018, Seniors Rights Service hosted the 5th National Elder Abuse Conference, which brought together more than 500 delegates from a broad range of backgrounds. The conference culminated in an announcement by the Commonwealth Attorney-General, Hon Christian Porter MP, that a “National Plan” would be developed to ensure the protection of older people in Australian society.

To further the conversations generated by the conference, Seniors Rights Service engaged Ellen Fanning to conduct a series of interviews with experts who attended the conference. These videos, along with a discussion sheet for each video, are freely available to community members, professionals and students of all sectors, to enable engagement with the content using suggested discussion questions and to follow up with further reading.

### IMPORTANT! READ THIS BEFORE HOLDING A DISCUSSION GROUP

Many people will share and benefit from participating in study and discussion on the topics.

Due to the sensitive nature of the topics, however, group leaders should ensure they are prepared to support individuals to find qualified assistance in a timely manner, should a topic generate personal concerns or issues for individuals.

As a minimum, group leaders should have available information sheets and phone numbers from the relevant seniors' legal rights service and/or elder abuse prevention service in your state or territory (on page 4 and current as of 2018).

## ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

### SHORT DESCRIPTION

Ms Broun explains how racism and the context of colonial history put up barriers to Aboriginal people accessing services and reporting abuse. She discusses how the expectation for elderly Aboriginal people to be taken care of in the home will require greater access to training and support for their informal carers. Ms Broun outlines the various available Red Cross programs, which help reduce social isolation and which could assist in detecting elder abuse.

### FOCUS AREA

Elder abuse and Aboriginal communities

### RELATED TOPICS

Elder abuse, colonial history, Aboriginal communities

### AUDIENCES

Community members, Aboriginal health workers, Aboriginal aged-care workers, aged-care workers, health workers, banking

staff, police officers, researchers, students, advocates, policy officers

### MATERIALS FOR FURTHER READING

Grieves, V. (2009), Aboriginal Spirituality: Aboriginal Philosophy, The Basis of Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing, Discussion Paper No. 9, Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health, Darwin, accessed from [www.lowitja.org.au](http://www.lowitja.org.au) June, 2018

Walter, M. (2007), Aboriginal Poverty and Health – Exploring Connections, Chapter 5 in Anderson, I., Baum, F. & Bentley, M. (eds) (2007), Beyond Band-aids: Exploring the Underlying Social Determinants of Aboriginal Health. Papers from the Social Determinants of Aboriginal Health Workshop, Adelaide, July 2004, CRC for Aboriginal Health, Darwin, accessed from [www.lowitja.org.au](http://www.lowitja.org.au) June, 2018

### SUGGESTED AGENCIES

Red Cross – aged-care services for older people [www.redcross.org.au/get-help/community-services/services-for-older-people](http://www.redcross.org.au/get-help/community-services/services-for-older-people)



## JODY BROUN

DIRECTOR, AUSTRALIAN  
RED CROSS (NSW/ACT)

## BIOGRAPHY

Jody Broun has held various senior roles, including executive director, Aboriginal housing and infrastructure, Department of Housing and Works (WA); director of equal opportunity in public employment (WA); and director-general, Department of Aboriginal Affairs (NSW). She has been responsible for delivering community and state-wide policy and programs, developing national policy reforms and negotiating national and state government agreements. In 2014, Ms Broun joined Australian Red Cross as director NSW/ACT to continue working with vulnerable communities, and to find new and different ways to strengthen social participation.

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

***What does Ms Broun describe as the “vulnerabilities” of older Indigenous Australians?***

Ms Broun says there are many issues that result in vulnerability for older Indigenous Australians. The first is racism, which has had a significant impact on their lives. Apart from simply reducing access to services, it also has shaped their experiences if they have accessed services in the past. Ms Broun explains that when talking to authorities, doctors or other professionals throughout their lives, many Indigenous Australians have experienced racism. These past experiences, she says, have made many older Indigenous Australians less likely to contact professionals if they are experiencing elder abuse now. The context of the history they may have experienced, such as the Stolen Generation and colonialism, also means they are less likely to trust service providers who are not Indigenous. Ms Broun says that, at the very least, service providers do not understand the life experience of older Indigenous Australians, which included racism, discrimination and poor treatment by services or professionals. Ms Broun explains how ongoing experience of poverty, unemployment and addiction all arise out of this complex history and are intertwined with the issue of elder abuse.

***What examples of elder abuse are mentioned as occurring in Aboriginal communities?***

Ms Broun describes anecdotal accounts of elder abuse, such as community elders having younger community members coming to them to take their money. Often this is to feed an addiction but there can also be a cultural construct that everything is shared. Another point is that many Aboriginal people will not move to residential aged care because they do not trust institutions. So, they will be cared for at home and the carer may not know how to properly take care of nutrition, hydration and managing diabetes. Ms Broun says this can be perceived as abuse, even though there is no intention to harm.

***What examples of programs working with older Indigenous Australians does Ms Broun give?***

Ms Broun speaks of Aboriginal Community Care in South Australia working with elderly Aboriginal Australians to empower them to know their rights, and also to be able to speak up if they are experiencing abuse or mistreatment. In NSW, Red Cross volunteers make 1300 calls a day to check on the wellbeing of older Australians. They have key messages around issues such as heatwaves, and ask questions such as: “Is someone checking in on you today?” or “Are you drinking enough fluid?” If the person doesn’t answer, or if there are concerns, they will activate a visit by another contact person, or by the police or ambulance if appropriate.



STATE/TERRITORY	AGENCY CONTACT	CONTACT
<b>AUSTRALIA-WIDE</b>	<b>Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN)</b>	1800 700 600 Connects you with aged-care advocacy services in your state or territory
<b>NEW SOUTH WALES</b>	<b>Seniors Rights Service</b>	1800 424 079
	<b>NSW Elder Abuse Helpline</b>	1800 628 221
<b>AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY</b>	<b>Older Persons Abuse Prevention Referral and Information Line (APRIL)</b>	(02) 6205 3535
	<b>A.C.T. Disability, Aged and Carer Advocacy Service (ADACAS)</b>	02 6242 5060
<b>NORTHERN TERRITORY</b>	<b>Elder Abuse Information Line</b>	1800 037 072
	<b>Seniors and Disability Rights Service of Darwin Community Legal Service</b>	1800 812 953
<b>QUEENSLAND</b>	<b>Elder Abuse Prevention Unit</b>	1300 651 192
	<b>Aged and Disability Advocacy Australia (ADA Australia)</b>	1800 818 338
	<b>Caxton Legal Centre</b>	(07) 3214 6333
<b>SOUTH AUSTRALIA</b>	<b>Aged Rights Advocacy Service</b>	(08) 8232 5377 (Adelaide)
	<b>Alliance for the Prevention of Elder Abuse</b>	1800 700 600 (rural)
	<b>Legal Services Commission of South Australia</b>	1300 366 424 (08) 8111 5555
<b>TASMANIA</b>	<b>Tasmanian Elder Abuse Helpline</b>	1800 441 169
	<b>Advocacy Tasmania Inc. (ATI)</b>	(03) 6224 2240
	<b>Legal Aid Commission of Tasmania</b>	1300 366 611 (03) 6236 3800
<b>VICTORIA</b>	<b>Seniors Rights, Victoria</b>	1300 368 821
	<b>Elder Rights Advocacy (ERA)</b>	(03) 9602 3066 1800 700 600 (rural)
<b>WESTERN AUSTRALIA</b>	<b>Advocare Inc.</b>	1300 724 679 (Perth) 1800 655 566 (rural)
	<b>Older Persons Rights Service, Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre</b>	(08) 9440 1663 (Mirrabooka) (08) 9301 4413 (Joondalup)

## DISCLAIMER

This is information only, not legal advice. If you have a legal problem, call our service directly or see your lawyer. The views expressed in the video are the views of the individual making them, not those of Seniors Rights Service Inc.