

DISCUSSION RESOURCE

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PROJECT OF
5TH NATIONAL ELDER
ABUSE CONFERENCE

HOSTED BY SENIORS
RIGHTS SERVICE



ELDER ABUSE AND CULTURAL VIEWS OF AGEING AND AGED CARE

MARY PATETSOS





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 5 and current as of 2018).

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

SHORT DESCRIPTION

Ms Patetsos talks about how older Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds may have “role models” of ageing that come from their own parents or grandparents, who aged in their country of origin and many years ago. In Australia, she says, these culturally diverse Australians must “make it up as they go along” and must challenge their expectations of what it is to be old as an Australian citizen when you may speak a language other than English. Ms Patetsos talks of risks to elder abuse arising from “not creating the scaffolding around themselves” to prevent risks of isolation or financial exploitation. Ms Patetsos argues that the provision of information in suitable formats and in community languages is crucial to ensure our CALD seniors understand their rights, and the responsibilities of others towards them. Ms Patetsos says this is the key to older people from CALD backgrounds being able to live as good a life as possible and minimise the risk of abuse.

FOCUS AREA

Elder abuse and cultural views of ageing and aged care

RELATED TOPICS

Elder abuse prevention, elder abuse intervention, cultural views of ageing, cultural views of aged care, CALD communities, community education

AUDIENCES

Community members, aged-care workers, health workers, researchers, students, advocates, policy officers

MATERIALS FOR FURTHER READING

DFederation of Ethnic Communities Councils (FECCA) Submission # 292, Australian Law Reform Commission Elder Abuse Inquiry, accessed from www.alrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/subs/292_fecca_submission_-_elder_abuse_discussion_paper.pdf

SUGGESTED AGENCIES

Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils (FECCA) <http://fecca.org.au/>



MARY PATETSOS

CHAIR, FEDERATION OF
ETHNIC COMMUNITIES'
COUNCILS

BIOGRAPHY

Mary Patetsos is a professional board director, serving on both national and South Australian boards with a rare blend of academic qualifications and expertise. Her skills and experience, combined with an extensive national network, enable her to add significant value to organisations at many levels. Her commitment to achieve positive change drives her ambition. She contends that a strong belief in the worthiness of learning and work have become her key motivators.

ELDER ABUSE AND CULTURAL VIEWS OF AGEING AND AGED CARE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What examples does Ms Patetsos give of issues facing older Australians of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds?

Ms Patetsos says older Australians of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds are having to "learn how to look after themselves" as older people in Australia from a culturally diverse background. She explains that for some, the role model of ageing may have been their own parents or grandparents, who would sit in the village square. In Australia, they may have to adapt this idea and sit in a coffee shop. Ms Patetsos says others may not have seen their own parents age, so they have no direct role model for ageing. She says the expectations for some CALD seniors about what it means to be "old" and how care should be arranged may be different from their children's expectations. She says CALD seniors are having to learn what to do as they go along, because there is the speed of change to contend with, such as technology, women working, families breaking up, all things they "don't know naturally how to deal with". On top of this, Ms Patetsos says, there is the added element of being an ageing Australian who speaks a language other than English.

What specific vulnerabilities does Ms Patetsos talk about in relation to older people of CALD backgrounds?

Ms Patetsos says isolation is perhaps the greatest vulnerability. She describes how many CALD seniors may have worked in manufacturing and low-paid jobs during their working lives, which meant they did not have the opportunity to acquire very much English. Then as they aged, their English may have deteriorated, their peers passed away, their social circles may have become smaller and smaller, transport may have become an issue and they may have become even further isolated. Once "behind closed doors" and isolated, they are more vulnerable. Ms Patetsos explains that many CALD seniors don't understand their rights and may experience exploitation, such as through the pressure of expectations that they should spend their money on their children rather than themselves.

What "scaffolding" does Ms Patetsos see as vital to preventing elder abuse in CALD communities?

Ms Patetsos says "language is the key" and providing information in a variety of languages on topics such as rights, Australian law and legal frameworks around rights. Ms Patetsos gives the example of providing information that a person's home is their home and no one can forcibly take their property away from them. Ms Patetsos says we need to make information accessible in languages and formats that people can understand. Ms Patetsos says there are differences between Australians of CALD backgrounds who migrated decades ago and those who

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arrived more recently from source countries that are relatively new to Australian migration. She says communities that settled here many years ago have an understanding of the protections of Australian laws and services, and language assistance will support them to continue the process of navigating life as an older Australian of CALD background. She says many of these seniors will be prepared to engage with the resources and supports they are eligible for, and will work that into their lives and their cultural views of ageing. For more newly arrived communities, Mrs Patetsos says, there can be greater challenges for individuals, particularly when they are visibly different (such as Australians originally from African countries) as they may be facing discrimination. In addition, she says, these newly arrived cultural groups do not have the infrastructure around them that more established communities may have (such as Greek or Vietnamese Australians). The needs of more recently arrived Australians are more acute, she says, and they need supports “really quickly”. Ms Patetsos adds that there may also be some issues where cultural practices are clearly unlawful and unacceptable under Australian law and these should not be ignored by the broader society and excused as “cultural practice”.



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