



Lauren Mesiti  
Committee Clerk  
Select Committee into Elder Abuse  
Legislative Council  
Parliament House  
PERTH WA 6000  
[eld@parliament.wa.gov.au](mailto:eld@parliament.wa.gov.au)

17 November 2017

Dear Ms Mesiti,

Please find attached the Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG) and the National Ageing Research Institute's (NARI's) submission in response to the Select Committee into Elder Abuse inquiry terms of reference.

We are happy for this submission to be released to the public.

We would be honoured to appear before the Committee if a hearing is held at a later date.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'James Beckford Saunders'.

James Beckford Saunders  
CEO  
Australia Association of Gerontology

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Briony Dow'.

Associate Professor Briony Dow  
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# Legislative Council of Western Australia

## Select Committee Inquiry into Elder Abuse

### About us

The Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG) is Australia's peak national body linking professionals working across the multidisciplinary fields and sectors of ageing. Since 1964, we have connected research, policy and practice on evidence based approaches to improve the experience of ageing. We have an Elder Abuse Special Interest Group to promote exchanges between AAG members who have an interest in research, advocacy, and increasing knowledge or awareness of elder abuse.

The National Ageing Research Institute (NARI) is recognised as a leading research institute in the area of ageing including falls and balance, pain, dementia, physical activity, healthy ageing, public

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NARI made two submissions to the inquiry - dated 17 August 2016 and 27 February 2017 which can be found here:

<https://www.aag.asn.au/news-publications/aag-submissions/alrc-inquiry-into-elder-abuse>

The ALRC launched its final report Elder Abuse - A National Legal Response on 15 June 2017. The joint AAG-NARI submissions were quoted six times in the report and cited a further eleven times in the footnotes.

### Our comments

AAG and NARI make the following comments about the issues raised in the terms of reference:

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## Definition of elder abuse

## Prevalence

## Forms of elder abuse

## Risk factors

These issues are addressed in our submission dated 17 August 2016 (at pages 1 to 6) and in chapter 2 of the ALRC Final Report (titled 'Concepts and Context').

In June 2017, NARI published 'Understanding elder abuse: a scoping study' with Melbourne Social Equity Institute. The paper is a consideration of the research literature to understand how elder abuse is conceptualised, what interventions have been used to address it, and how effective these interventions have been. The paper is available online at:

[http://socialequity.unimelb.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0012/2449659/Elder-Abuse-A-Scoping-Study-MSEI-and-NARI.pdf](http://socialequity.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/2449659/Elder-Abuse-A-Scoping-Study-MSEI-and-NARI.pdf)

## Legislative and policy frameworks

## Capacity of the police

## Strategies for safeguarding older people

These issues are addressed in our submission dated 27 February 2017 (at pages 1 to 3), and in chapters 3, 13 and 14 of the ALRC Final Report (titled 'A Plan to Combat Elder Abuse, Criminal Justice Responses and Safeguarding Adults at Risk').

We reiterate that a national approach, with consistent laws and coordinated responses is a key element in addressing elder abuse. Western Australia should consider the work that has been (or is being) undertaken across the Commonwealth, states and territories. In August 2016 NARI received a Major Grant from Gandel Philanthropy to develop an *Action Plan on Elder Abuse for Victoria*. NARI has begun scoping what is being done in Victoria at a research, policy and practice level. This project seeks to identify gaps in understanding and service, and identify the organisations or services that could potentially address those gaps. The final report will be launched by NARI in 2018 and will include the following key recommendations:

- Better training of health and aged care workers
- Better and less confronting pathways for older people to access help
- Expanded services (to rural/remote and special needs groups)
- Address ageism – empower older people to be their own advocates
- Clarify the relationship between family violence and elder abuse so older people know which services are for them
- Better understanding of elder abuse within culturally diverse groups
- Better housing options for both older people and perpetrators
- Programs that address perpetrator risk factors
- Better data collection and research to understand what works

We note that:

- the Macquarie Law Journal is planning to publish a special edition on 'Elder abuse: legal, regulatory and policy challenges in July 2018. Further information is available at: <https://www.mq.edu.au/about/about-the-university/faculties-and-departments/faculty-of-arts/departments-and-centres/macquarie-law-school/our-research/call-for-papers-mqjl-Vol-18.pdf>
- the Seniors Rights Service is planning to hold a National Elder Abuse Conference titled 'Together Making Change' in Sydney in February 2018. Further information is available at: <http://togethertakingchange.org.au/>

## Initiatives to empower older people

Paragraph 3.69 of the ALRC Final Report lists its recommendations that are particularly targeted at empowering older people to protect themselves from abuse.

We reiterate that we support an empowerment approach as it assumes capacity and is respectful of older people's right to make their own decisions. However we note that there are some people for whom this approach may not work, including people with cognitive impairment or other limitations on their capacity. Further, older people from diverse groups may need support services that are specifically targeted to their cultural context (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI); culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD); and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) communities). People living in regional and remote (RRR) communities may also need additional support to access services. Finally, it is critical that interventions address the perpetrator's behaviour and the underlying risk factors that enable elder abuse to occur.

## Service delivery and agency responses

These issues are addressed in our submission dated 17 August 2016 (at pages 7 to 9) and our submission dated 27 February 2017 (at pages 4 to 8), and in chapters 4 to 12 the ALRC Final Report which deal with:

- Aged care
- Enduring appointments
- Family agreements
- Superannuation
- Wills
- Banking
- Guardianship and financial administration, and
- Social security.

We reiterate that consideration needs to be given to how to ensure that people experiencing elder abuse will be directed to the most appropriate service regardless of where they initially seek help (i.e. a no wrong door approach). This will require knowledge sharing and referral protocols between organisations that 'deal with older people' and organisations that deal with other relevant forms of abuse. For example, centres against sexual assault and family violence support organisations will have a range of responses and services that may be appropriate for older people in some circumstances.

## Any other relevant matter: data, research and evaluation

We addressed the need for better data, research and evaluation in our submission dated 27 February 2017 at pages 2-3). Our suggestions were adopted by the ALRC in paragraphs 3.163 to 3.184 its Final Report. For example:

*3.179 The ALRC agrees that there needs to be extensive research and evaluation in relation to elder abuse, including several distinct elements concerned with: identifying risk factors, identifying gaps, and assessing existing responses.*

We note that the Australian Institute of Family Studies has been commissioned by the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department to conduct the Elder Abuse National Research Strengthening the Evidence Base Project (Stage One). Further information is available at:

<https://aifs.gov.au/projects/elder-abuse-national-research-strengthening-evidence-base-stage-one>

[AAG's 50<sup>th</sup> Conference in Perth](#) from the 8-10 November held a symposium on Day of the conference on Attitudes to Ageing/Elder Abuse facilitated by Dr Danny Hills, Senior Lecturer at Monash University, including these presentations:

- Charles Waldegrave, Coordinator and Lead Researcher, Family Centre Social Policy Research Unit: The prevalence, health and wellbeing impacts of elder abuse
- Amy Warren, student at Curtin University: Women's experiences of seeking help for domestic elder abuse
- Dr Ruth Williams, The Hallmark Ageing Research Initiative (Hari): Ageism in Australia: prevalence and causes
- Associate Professor Briony Dow, NARI, and Associate Professor Jeromey Temple, University of Melbourne: Violence, mental health and ageing in Indigenous Communities

The presentation slides will become available on [AAG's website](#) within the coming month, or they can be obtained through the contact details below.

## Authorisation

This submission has been authorised by the Chief Executive Officer of AAG and the Director of NARI.



James Beckford Saunders  
CEO  
Australia Association of Gerontology



Associate Professor Briony Dow  
Director  
National Ageing Research Institute

## Contact

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