



Elder Abuse

Stories to
Understand

The
Warm
Safe
Home
Project

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Credits

Stories to Understand was developed through the Warm Safe Home Project, an elder abuse prevention activity delivered by the Everybody's Business Elder Abuse Prevention Network. This network is coordinated by Carer Connect (auspiced by Mpower Inc).

Everybody's Business Elder Abuse Prevention Network is funded by the Victorian State Government's Department of Families, Fairness and Housing.

This booklet contains **three stories**, with accompanying artworks that describe situations in which the rights of an older person have been violated by another person.

Storytelling enables us to imagine and think about the human side of challenging issues like elder abuse.

Importantly, each of the stories in this booklet describes services and support that can be accessed to intervene in these situations.



STORY 1:

Mind your own business, I'm handling it!

Lucy and Barry had worked hard all of their married lives to build a property that they could be proud of.

While there was never much money, they always made time for family and instilled good values in their five children.

The older boys made good livings for themselves and daughter, Kylie, ran a business with her husband in a nearby town.

Their youngest son Gerard took over running the family farm. Gerard and his young family had the main house, while Lucy and Barry moved into the old farmhouse.

Barry still worked on the farm every day and Lucy offered extra childcare when Gerard's wife Janine worked.

Sunday Mass was a tradition that Lucy and Barry never missed. It was a social event that allowed friends to get together and chat.

Barry would joke about working more since he "retired" and Lucy would talk constantly about the grandchildren and what they were doing.

Deborah, a friend from church, became a bit worried when Lucy and Barry missed two weeks in a row and decided to mention it to Kylie.

Kylie explained that, "Mum seemed to be doing a lot of running around and dad is working a lot but they seem well."

The conversation did raise concern and so Kylie decided that it was time to visit her parents.

Dad was in the dairy, as usual, but mum's car was gone so she popped in to make a cup of tea while she waited.

She was surprised to find a sink full of dirty dishes and no hot water to wash them.

A check showed that the gas bottles were empty.

Cobden Men's Shed and Cobden Art Group

Individual artist credit:

- 🏠 Farm House: Valerie Coverdale
- 🏠 Pink Roof House: Emily Whiteside, Marilyn Kimber & Valerie Coverdale
- 🏠 Church: Linda Castaldo & Valerie Coverdale
- 🏠 Yellow House: Jeanette Warner

When she bought this up with her brother, he became agitated.

She could tell that dad didn't want her to make a fuss. He told her to head home and that mum would ring her later.

Lucy didn't call. Kylie was worried. She rang her brother to ask what was going on.

He told her to "Mind your own business, mum and dad are fine, I'm handling it."

Kylie was really concerned and confused.

A friend said to call the police who could do a welfare check on her parents.

The police payed Barry and Lucy a friendly visit and found that there was very little food in the house, the gas had not been refilled and that the phone had been disconnected.

After speaking with Gerard, it became clear that the farm was not making enough money to cover all the bills.

The police were able to connect Gerard with financial counselling that helped him to re-organise the farm's finances.

A legal agreement was put in place to ensure that Lucy and Barry had proper access to food and utilities in the future no matter what was happening with the farm.

With better financial management Gerard was able to employ a casual milker and Janine enrolled their children in after school care to lighten the childcare load on Lucy.

Barry still helped on the farm but there were many fewer early starts and late finishes.



STORY 2:

A Place to Call Home

Valery and Bruce were still paying off their home loan when Bruce passed away, suddenly.

As Bruce did not have life insurance, Valery still had to pay the mortgage even though she was not working.

When her daughter, Samantha, suggested that she sell the house and move in with her and her family, it sounded like a good solution.

The house sold quickly and Valery thought it only fair to put the left over towards Samantha's mortgage.

Things worked out well for a while but after about three months things changed.

There was a lot of yelling.

She felt unwelcome in the home and was frightened that she would do or say the wrong thing.

Things came to a head one afternoon when her son in law screamed at her about where she had parked her car in the driveway.

This was the last straw. Enough was enough. She had to move out.

Valery was able to move in with her youngest daughter and her family in their small, three bedroom home.

Space was tight and Valery had to share a room with her grandson.

Valery was expected to do housework in exchange for her accommodation.

The lack of space and privacy caused Narelle and her husband to argue.

This was history repeating itself and Valery knew that she would soon have to find somewhere else to live again.

The thought of being homeless was very scary.

A friend told Valery about "Home at Last", a housing support service for older people run by Housing for the Aged Action Group.

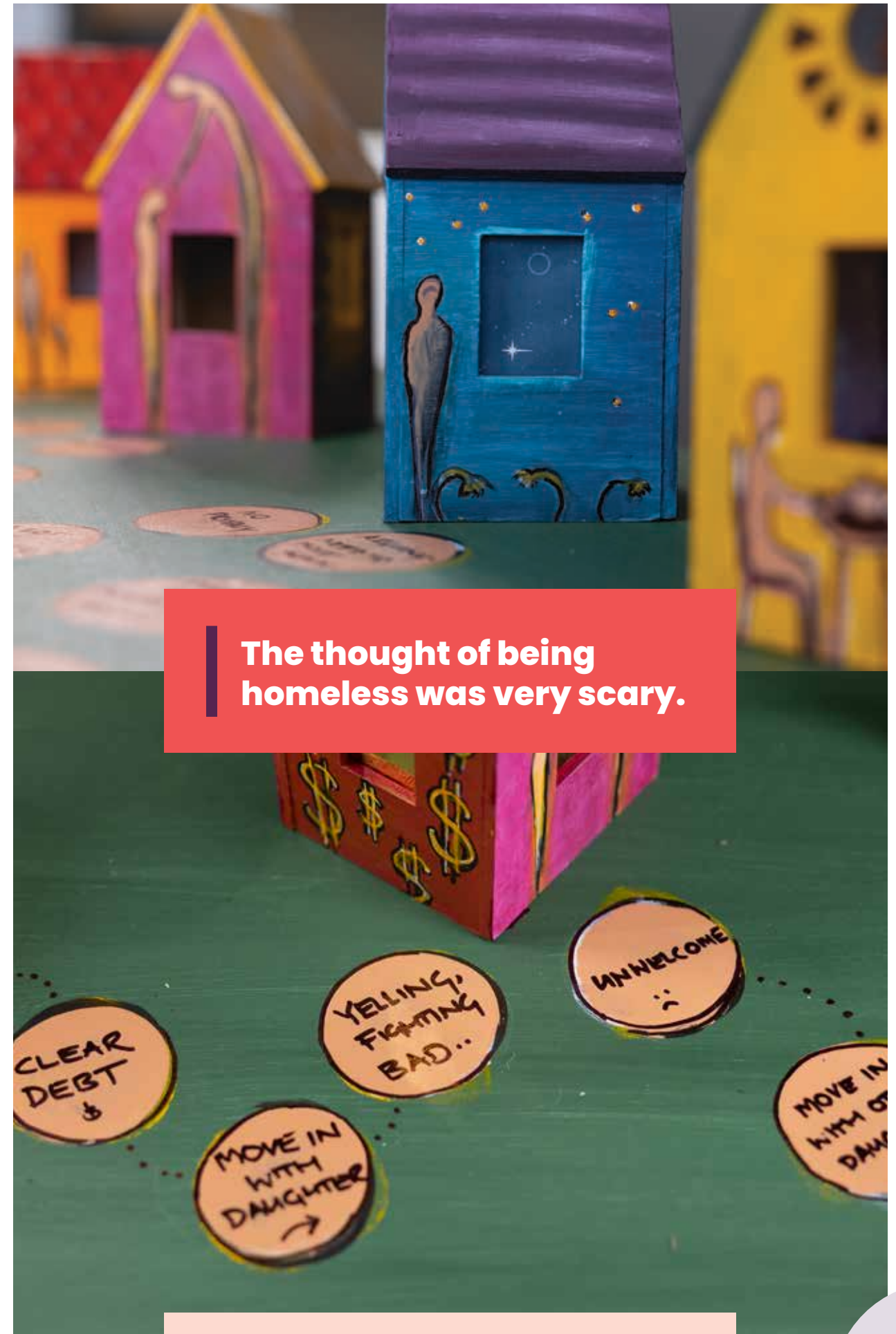
Valery contacted Home at Last and was connected with an outreach worker who put her on the priority waiting list for social housing.

She also spoke with Seniors Rights Victoria who helped her manage the situation with her daughters.

In June 2019, Valery was offered a new public housing property.

Valery has made friends with her neighbours and her relationship with Narelle and Samantha has also improved.

She feels much more optimistic about her future now that she has a new place to call home.



The thought of being homeless was very scary.

STORY 3:

Mum deserves better than that.

ELDER ABUSE AWARE

How do I cash in on this?

Penshurst Men's Shed

Individual artist credit:

📦 Artwork: Mary Steward & Elizabeth Siecker

🏠 Woodwork: Rod Orchard

Marianne was admitted to Hospital after her doctor noticed bruising during a routine check-up.

Marianne told a hospital social worker that her adult son, James, had lost his temper and had grabbed her.

She said that he helped her around the house, and that he also helped her pay her bills and do grocery shopping. She explained that he "really was a good boy deep down".

He was her only living relative and she was worried about laying charges against him.

James had moved in with her following the breakdown of his marriage.

She said that she was worried because he was drinking more than usual and she thought that he had a gambling problem.

He would get angry with her anytime she mentioned that he may need help.

The social worker was worried for Marianne's safety and encouraged her to talk to officers from the Victoria Police Family Violence Unit about options to keep her safe.

Marianne was able to discreetly meet the officers in a quiet park near the hospital.

They were calm and kind. Marianne felt as though they really cared as they listened to her story.

The police officers were concerned for Marianne's safety and that James had access to her bank accounts.

They worked with the social worker and a local family violence referral service to arrange for safe short-term accommodation for Marianne.

An investigation found that James had been taking money without Marianne's permission.

They interviewed James and he admitted to taking the money to fund his gambling habit.

Marianne insisted that she did not want to press charges over the missing money or the assault, she also did not want to force James to move out.

Marianne did say that she wanted her son to change his behaviour and the police said that they could help with this. The police applied for an Intervention Order against James on Marianne's behalf.

When the magistrate read the conditions of the Intervention Order he asked James if he understood the seriousness of the situation.

James nodded his head and replied, "Yes I do your honour and I know that mum deserves better from me."

James agreed to see a financial counselling gambling specialist and a drug and alcohol counsellor.

James was also connected with the Salvo Connect Housing Service and was able to move into his own rental property later that year.

James and his mum still see each other several times a week and every Sunday for lunch.

How to recognise elder abuse

Elder abuse is any act that causes harm to an older person and is carried out by someone they trust such as family, friend, or carer. It is a form of family violence with 92% of abuse perpetrators related or in a de facto relationship with the victim, and 66.8% being an adult child of the victim. Of adult children who perpetrate elder abuse, 60% identifying as male and 40% identifying as female.¹

Elder abuse can be:



Hitting, kicking, pushing



Shouting, swearing



Breaking or throwing things



Not being allowed to see your own family



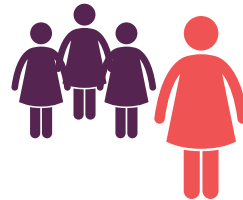
Not being allowed to use your own money



Being made to do sexual acts you don't like



When you feel afraid



Not being allowed to see your friends

Why we need to end ageism

Ageism is a type of discrimination that allows elder abuse to happen. It involves negative stereotypes about ageing, such as ideas about loss of physical and intellectual capacity, and false notions about being a burden on society. Ageism is used to justify giving less time and opportunities to older people and excluding them from decision making. It is also used to justify “inheritance impatience” where a younger relative feels entitled to an older person’s property.

For older people, ageism is an everyday challenge. Overlooked for employment, restricted from social services and stereotyped in the media, ageism marginalises and excludes older people in their communities. Ageism is everywhere, yet it is the most socially “normalised” of any prejudice and is not yet widely opposed like racism or sexism. It leads to discrimination and isolation of older people and significantly impacts their overall health and wellbeing.

Ageism fails to recognise the human rights, needs, dignity, and valuable contribution of older people (COTA Victoria & Seniors Rights Victoria, Challenging Ageism).

Challenging Ageism

No matter our age, we are all ageing. A toddler learning to walk, a fifteen-year-old getting a pimple, or an adult getting grey hair are all in fact signs of ageing. What happens when we accept the fact that we are ageing every day? That ageing is a natural life process, in fact ageing is simply living.

By changing the way we think about getting older we have the opportunity to work together to create a society where every person is valued, connected and respected, at every life stage. Positive community and self-perceptions about ageing are good for all of us.

Why it's ageist

PHRASE

Grandpa is too old to do that

You can't teach an old dog new tricks

60 is the new 30

She had a senior's moment

WHY IT'S AGEIST

Using phrases like this reinforces to young people that old people are less able. If Grandpa can't get on the floor to play because he has a sore knee or sore back – this is what we need to say, not that he is too old.

Older people are very capable of learning new things. They may learn differently to younger people or even take more time to learn a new skill, but they can still learn.

Phrases like this suggest that the 'better' age is the younger age. Each age is different and there is nothing wrong with that.

We all forget simple things. When a young person can't find their keys we don't say they had a 'youth moment'; we accept their absentmindedness as normal. Being older shouldn't change the way we view this.

10 things you can do

The Commissioner for Senior Victorians, Gerard Mansour has developed 10 tips for older people to prevent and minimise abuse for older people:

1. Have **zero tolerance** for elder abuse – older people should understand and protect their rights.
2. Older people should try to **stay connected to family**, friends and services. Maintaining social connections is important as people age.
3. Older people should **seek advice** if they are concerned. Talk to a friend or a GP, or call the Seniors Rights hotline. You can also contact local services such as The Orange Door.
4. Older people should **plan for the future**, don't wait for a crisis to make important decisions. Think about future risks and plan for these and what could go wrong.
5. Older people should **consider key legal decisions** for the future, i.e. power of attorney, wills, advanced care plans and advanced care directives. Older people should be empowered to think about their wishes and make plans accordingly.
6. Older people should be encouraged to **talk about their wishes**, even if these are challenging conversations, so that what they want is clear to family and friends.
7. Advise older people to **take time to make decisions** and don't feel pressured or intimidated to make decisions quickly. Seek support if needed.
8. Older people should consider putting things in writing, but remember to **not feel pressured to sign documents** until they are ready.
9. When considering **transferring assets**, older people should take time and **think carefully about this decision**. Take steps to protect your rights in the future.
10. Older people who are concerned for their safety, should act by calling the **Police**, the **Seniors Rights Victoria Hotline** or **1800 RESPECT**.



Elder abuse is wrong and there are things that can be done to stop it.

Talking to a trusted friend or relative, or your GP can be an important first step in seeking help.

If someone is in immediate danger call 000.

Services and supports

A list of services and supports to help people stay connected and to get help when they need it.

Seniors Rights Victoria

For concerns about elder abuse in the home, family, or community. Seniors Rights Victoria work with people of all backgrounds. Callers are connected with a qualified social worker and lawyer to support them with their concerns. Interpreters are available where needed.

This service runs a free, confidential helpline 10am–5pm Mon–Fri: 1300 368 821.

Their website has a range of information and tip sheets to support older people to understand and protect their rights.

Free call: 1300 368 821

www.seniorsrights.org.au

Elders Rights Advocacy

For concerns about elder abuse in residential aged care or in Commonwealth supported in home care. Elder Rights Advocacy supports older people, their families and representatives with issues related to Commonwealth funded aged care services. Their service is free, independent and confidential.

Free call: 1800 700 600

www.era.asn.au

Support for Elder Abuse & other forms of Family Violence

Victoria Police

For concerns about someone's welfare and assistance with family violence including non-physical violence. Contact your local police station and ask to speak to the Family Violence Liaison Officer.

Camperdown (03) 5593 1000
Hamilton (03) 5551 9100
Portland (03) 5522 1500
Warrnambool (03) 5560 1333.

DJIRRA

Culturally safe, practical support for Aboriginal women and Aboriginal people who have experienced family violence. Djirra's Aboriginal Family Violence Legal Service is dedicated to supporting Aboriginal people who are experiencing or have experienced family violence (women and men). They also assist non-Aboriginal people experiencing family violence who are parents of Aboriginal children.

Monday-Friday 9:00am - 5:00pm: 03 5562 5755 or free call 1800 105 303

Emma House Domestic Violence Services

Support to women and children who are experiencing family violence, including women experiencing elder abuse. Emma House can act as a contact point for adult male victims of family violence to refer the person to appropriate services.

Monday-Friday 9:00am - 5:00pm: 03 5561 1934 or free call 1800 366238.

Centacare's Victims Assistance Program

Assistance to any person, including men and gender diverse people who have experienced or witnessed a violent crime such as elder abuse. Referrals into this program are accepted directly through Centacare Victims Assistance Program Central Contact Line.

Monday - Friday, 9am-5pm: 1300 033 818 or call Victims of Crime Helpline 8am-11pm everyday: free call 1800 819 817.

The Orange Door

Support for adults, children and young people experiencing family violence. Services for people who use violence. You can seek help or support if you are a migrant or a refugee or do not have permanent residency. Can also connect you to services that can help, such as counselling, accommodation, family violence support, mental health and drug and alcohol services, parenting support groups, services for children, financial help, or legal assistance

9am to 5pm Monday to Friday (closed public holidays): 1800 271 180 571-575 Raglan Parade Warrnambool, 3280

Rainbow Door

Specialist peer support workers offer information, support and referral, risk assessment and safety planning. If you are unsure about where to go for assistance, need to talk about what's going on for you or would like to see a counsellor about your relationship/s then Rainbow Door staff can talk to you and offer support and options for where to go.

10 am - 5 pm Everyday
Phone 1800 729 246 Text 0480 017 246
Email support@rainbowdoor.org.au

Support For Families, Carers, & Older People

Services Australia

My Aged Care face-to-face services - Aged Care Specialist Officers can help you with aged care matters. Free face-to-face services:

- providing in-depth information on the different types of aged care services
- checking if you're eligible for government-funded services and making a referral for an aged care assessment
- helping you appoint a representative for My Aged Care
- providing financial information about aged care services
- connecting you to local support services.

Call 1800 227 475

Carer Gateway

By calling Carer Gateway, you will be connected with a new Australia-wide network of Carer Gateway service providers. They will talk through what you need and help you to find local services and support to help you.

Phone 1800 422 737
www.carergateway.gov.au

Carer Connect

Network of carer and respite services across the South West. Member organisations provide essential carer and respite services to people who provide care and support to family members and friends with a disability, mental illness, chronic health issue or age-related condition. Information about these services is found on their website

carerconnect.com.au
Or call: (03) 5561 8111 (via MPower)

Better Place Australia

To enhance family relationships and prevent, manage and resolve family conflict. Their services include family mediation, conciliation, arbitration, counselling, family therapy, elder abuse prevention and relationship education.

Call 1800 639 523

Western Region Alcohol & Drug Centre - Family & Friends Support Meetings.

For people affected by a loved one's addiction to alcohol, drugs, gambling or other problematic behaviors. Meetings are held on Monday evenings: in-person in Warrnambool once a month, every other Monday online.

WRAD also run programs for people seeking help with their own alcohol and/or drug use.

WRAD Health, 172 Merri St Warrnambool.
Phone 03 5564 5777
www.wrad.org.au

Financial Matters

Bethany Community Support

Free, non-judgmental financial counselling and financial wellbeing services. Can help to: understand and manage debts, bill payments and financial commitments; set up and manage payment plans and personal budgets; access government financial support, including the utility relief scheme.

They also support people impacted by gambling harm, including those requiring support with their own gambling problem.

Warrnambool Office Ground Floor Bayside Plaza, 24-36 Fairy St, Warrnambool, VIC 3280

www.bethany.org.au
P: 1300 510 439 (free call)
Email: info@bethany.org.au

Rural Financial Counselling Service Western Victoria

Confidential, Independent, Local and Free. Financial counselling and wellbeing program to support farmers and regional small business owners, and their families, navigating the challenges of operating through times of financial or personal uncertainty, stress or change.

1300 735 578
www.wswrcs.com.au

Housing

HOME at Last (Housing for the Aged Action Group)

Free service that provides confidential advice, information and support for older people to find a home for life. Home at Last can assist people to find secure, affordable housing options.

**Confidential Phone Service 10 am–4 pm,
Monday to Friday: 1300 765 178**

Salvo Connect

Salvation Army Housing (SAH) and Salvation Army Housing (Victoria) (SAHV) homes for individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, are on low incomes and those with specific support needs. They run a range of programs which include Long term housing, Transitional housing, Crisis accommodation and Rooming house properties.

Warrnambool: (03) 5564 9111
Hamilton: (03) 5572 5822

Online Safety, Scams & Legal Matters

Be Connected – eSafety for Seniors

Be Connected presentations provide older Australians with the knowledge and skills to use technology with confidence and keep safer online. Their live streamed presentations step through the essentials, in an easy to understand format with their knowledgeable and friendly presenter.

Sessions are free and are run online.

**Register to book your spot at
beconnected.esafety.gov.au/bookings**

**[https://beconnected.esafety.gov.au/
online-safety-presentations](https://beconnected.esafety.gov.au/online-safety-presentations)**

Consumer Action Law Center

Free, independent and confidential advice to people struggling with a range of consumer and financial issues, including advice on scams.

**LEGAL HELP LINE Tuesday, Wednesday
and Thursday 10 am – 1 pm: 1800 466 477**

Consumer Action Law Centre have a dedicated support team for Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander people living in Victoria.

**www.koorihelp.consumeraction.org.au
Free Call: 1800 574 457**

Office Of The Public Advocate

Information and advice on legal processes such as Powers of Attorney and Medical Treatment Decision Making. Their free guide book, Your Voice Trust Your Choice, can assist you to make an informed decision when appointing your Power of Attorney and Medical Treatment Decision Maker.

**Order it via Office of the Public Advocate
website [www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.
au/our-services/publications-forms](http://www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au/our-services/publications-forms)**

**Advice Service 9am–4.45pm, Monday to
Friday: 1300 309 337**

Justice Connect

Easy-to-use website with tools and resources on different legal topics. It is preferred if applications for assistance are made through their website where possible: www.justiceconnect.org.au

Justice Connect can connect older people with pro bono lawyers, who can help with:

- supportive decision making (guardianship and administration)
- financial abuse, including misuse of powers of attorney; debts and loans; transfer of title to property
- contract matters involving undue influence or other unfair conduct
- disputes about arrangements where assets are given in exchange for the promise of care
- tenancy
- discrimination.

**Visit: [help.justiceconnect.org.au/
seniorslaw](http://help.justiceconnect.org.au/seniorslaw)
Or call: (03) 8636 4400**

Social Connections

Libraries, Community Centers, Neighborhood Houses, & Men's Sheds are a great starting point for connecting with people, hobbies, and other interests.

From Warrnambool's Archie Graham Community Centre to Portland's Fawthrop Community Centre community centers offer social activities, lifelong learning, important information, exercise programs, and gardening programs.

Neighbourhood Houses in Simpson, Camperdown, Hamilton, West Warrnambool, East Warrnambool, Casterton, and Port Fairy are welcoming to people of all ages and offer a range of activities, and the opportunity for you to share your skills too.

You will find Mens Sheds in Penshurst, Lismore, Cobden, Portland, Warrnambool, Simpson, Crossley, Camperdown, MacCarthur, Mortlake, Port Fairy, Terang and Timboon, Hamilton, Coleraine and Cavendish and beyond.

Libraries enrich the whole region with books, digital learning, DVDs, and activities.



Help for Elder Abuse **Quick Guide:**

If someone is in immediate
danger call **000**

If you are concerned about someone
at home or in a domestic setting, call
Seniors Rights Victoria on **1300 368 821**
10am–5pm, Monday–Friday
seniorsrights.org.au

If you are concerned about someone
who is accessing aged care services, call
Elder Rights Advocacy on **1800 700 600.**