

# National Elder Abuse

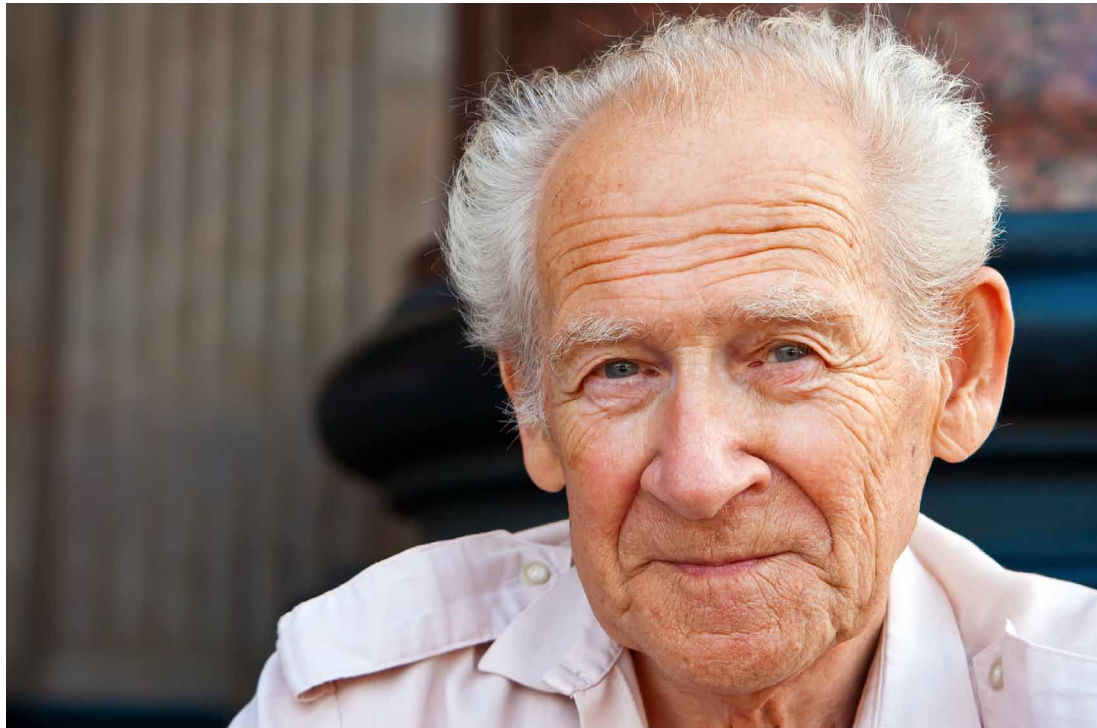
Annual Report 2015 - 2016



**Advocare**  
incorporated

Empowering People

# Introduction



Advocare Incorporated is the leading provider of aged care advocacy, information, education and resources in Western Australia. A key part of our role is to highlight the issue of elder abuse nationally. We do this by conducting research into the prevalence of elder abuse and working collaboratively with our sister organisations across Australia to better raise the awareness of elder abuse both at a local and at government level.

This report provides a breakdown of Elder Abuse cases throughout Australia during the period 1st July 2015 to 30th June 2016. It comprises further analysis of elder abuse trends seen by elder abuse advocacy and information agencies throughout Australia since the inception of the report in 2013/14.

Previous reports are available online from  
<http://www.advocare.org.au/resources/>

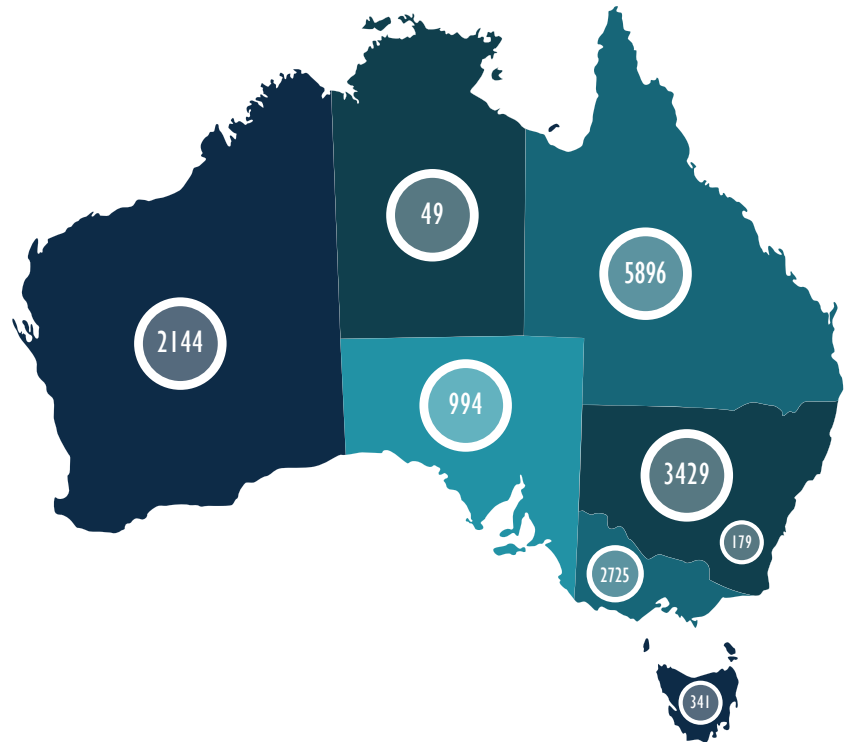
The report shows a clear rise in the incidences of elder abuse in the past three years, however, this is also attributed to an increase in the number of agencies contributing to the report in 2015/16.  
Please see page 12 for a list of contributing agencies.

# Number of Elder Abuse Information and Advocacy Cases by State

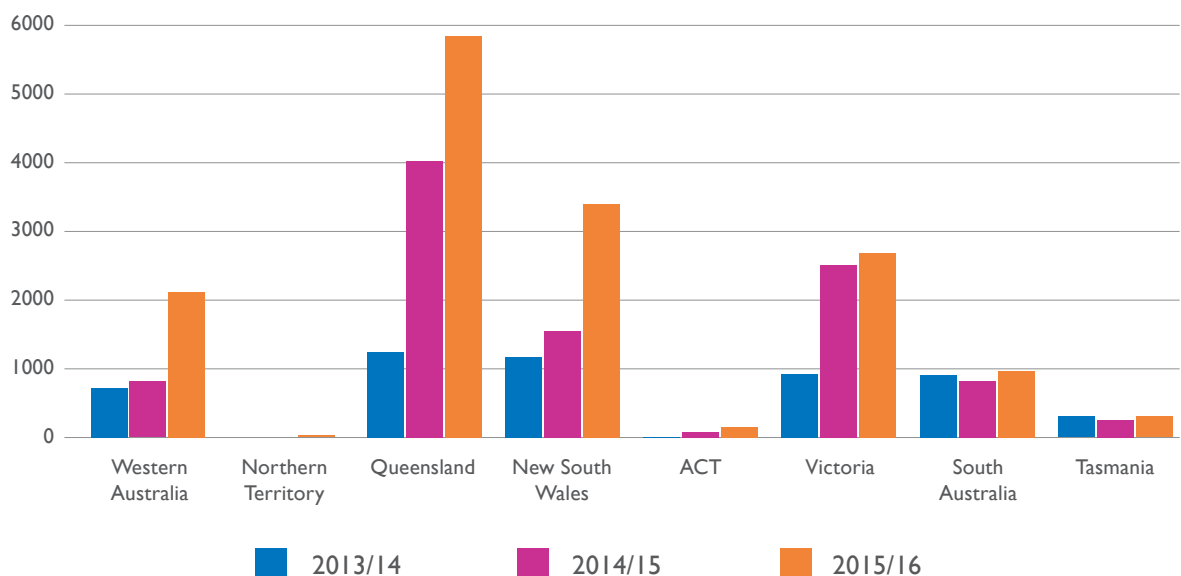
The World Health Organisation indicates 10%\* of older people may experience elder abuse. The figures above show a demonstrated need to raise the profile of elder abuse, to protect older people from abuse.

The World Health Organisation, defines elder abuse as 'a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person'

[www.who.int/ageing/projects/elder\\_abuse/en/](http://www.who.int/ageing/projects/elder_abuse/en/)

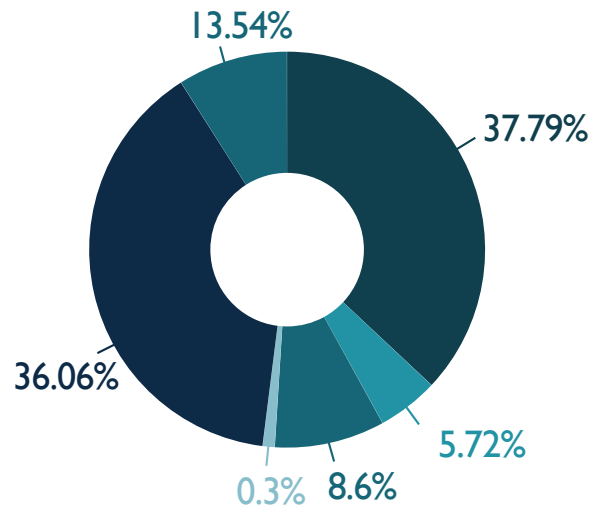


## Elder Abuse Information & Advocacy Case by State



# Types of Elder Abuse

Financial	37.79% of cases
Social	5.72% of cases
Physical	8.6% of cases
Sexual	0.3% of cases
Psychological	36.05% of cases
Neglect	13.54% of cases



## Financial

- Forced changes to legal documents such as someone's Will or house title
- Misappropriation of money
- Denying access to personal funds
- Forging signatures
- Misuse of a bank card
- Enduring Power of Attorney



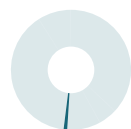
## Social

- Preventing contact with family or friends
- Cancelling services
- Withholding mail, or disconnecting the phone
- Living in, and taking control of the person's home
- Preventing the older person from engaging in cultural or religious practices



## Physical

- Slapping, hitting, kicking, tripping, shoving, burning or bruising
- Physical restraint
- Over or under-medicating
- Handling an older person too roughly



## Sexual

- Sexual assault
- Sexual harassment
- Inappropriate touching
- Sexually offensive materials against an older person's will
- Making unwanted comments about an older person's body



## Psychological

- Verbal intimidation, humiliation, harassment and shouting
- Threats of various forms
- Withholding affection
- Removal of decision making power
- An enduring guardian acting inappropriately



## Neglect

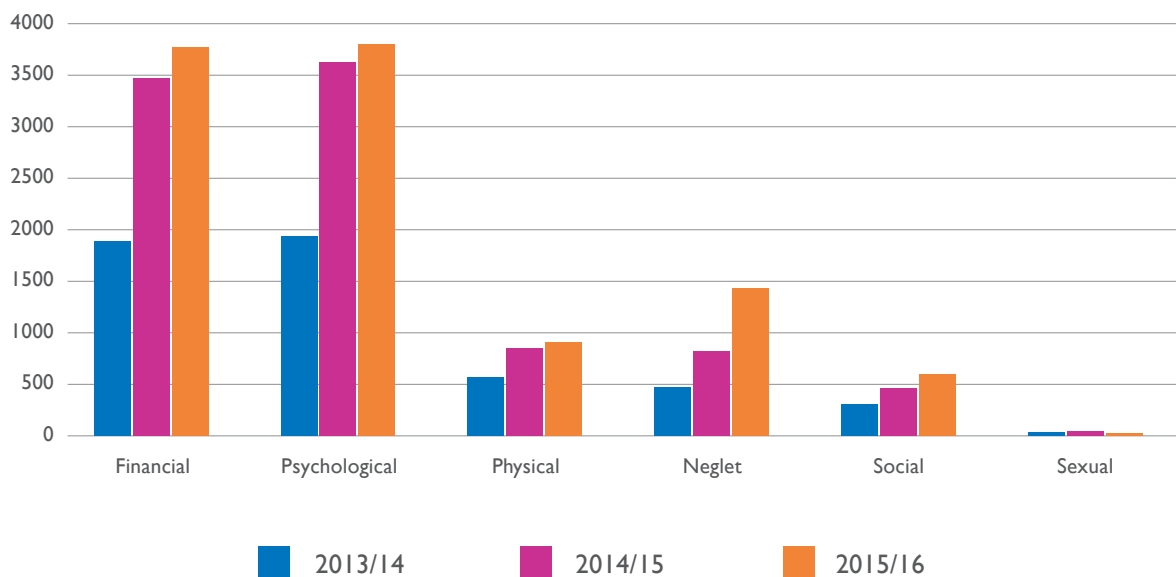
- Preventing an older person from accessing aged care services
- Receiving carers allowance but not providing care
- Failing to provide adequate food, water, clothing, medical treatment, medication, warmth or shelter

# Types of Elder Abuse



Financial and Psychological abuse continue to be the most prevalent forms of elder abuse.

## Elder Abuse Types





## Total Clients



**6,903**  
Clients Assisted

19,127 clients have been assisted with elder abuse issues since 2013/14.

In 2015/16 agencies assisted 1064 clients who identified as having additional needs\*.

Additional needs are defined as either:

- Culturally and linguistically diverse people
- Rural and remote people
- People with a disability
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Care Leavers - people who have previously been in care
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people

\*Not all clients provide this information.

# The Impact of Elder Abuse

The consequences of abuse can be substantial\*:

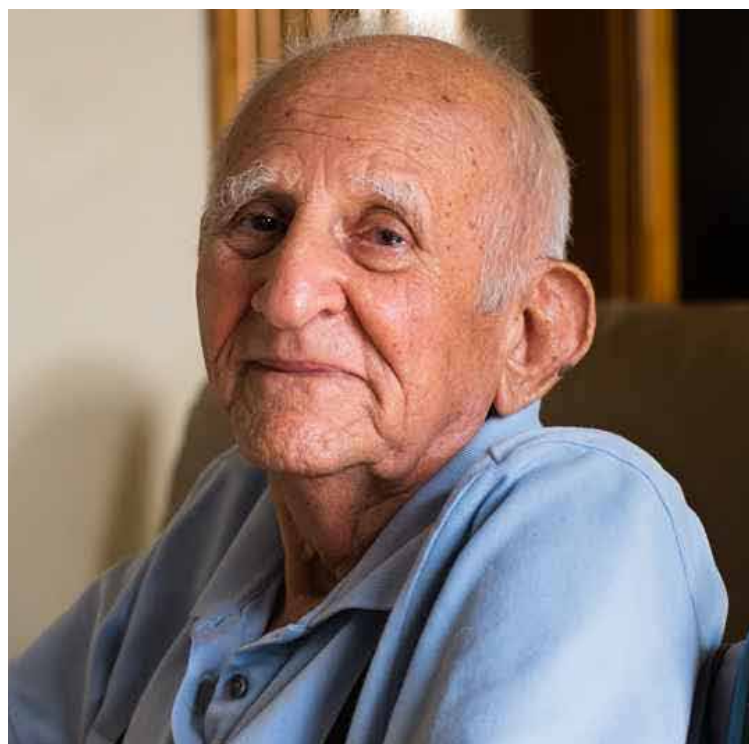
Many older people survive on a limited income, so that losing even a small sum of money can have a significant impact on their lives.

Older people suffering abuse can also experience feelings of helplessness, alienation, guilt, shame, fear, anxiety and denial.

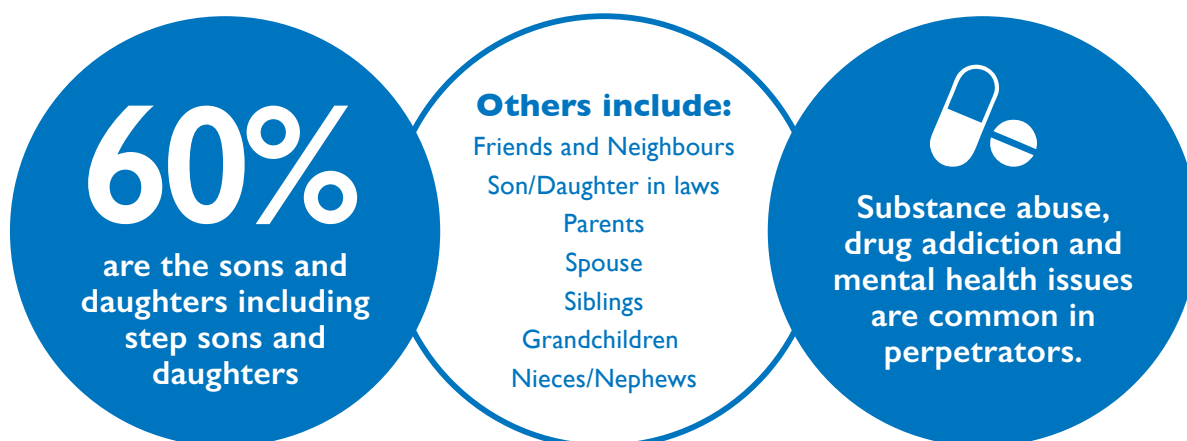
Elder abuse causes extreme stress that may present an additional risk of death.

Even a relatively minor injury can cause serious and permanent damage in an older person, who are generally weaker and more vulnerable than younger adults.

\*The World Health Organisation's "World Report on Violence and Health" (2002)



## Elder Abuse Perpetrators:



Substance abuse, drug addiction and mental health issues are often common in perpetrators

# Advocacy and Information



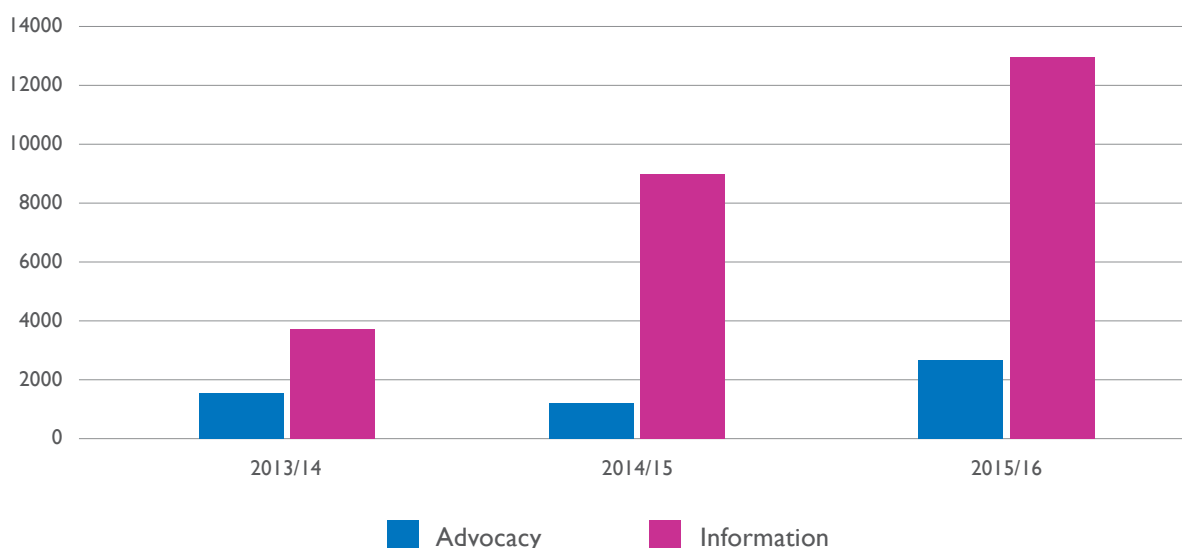
Advocacy is the preferred model in elder abuse prevention, as it enables advocates to support the wishes of the older person whilst encouraging their independence under a model of empowerment.

In many cases clients are perfectly capable of self-advocating, but may need extra information to be able to proceed. This information can include information about support services, information about rights and responsibilities, or often just someone to listen to their story.

Elder abuse agencies across Australia offer information services, and provide clients with all the information, resources, referrals and support they need to self-advocate.

\*Information calls include referrals and general enquiries about elder abuse. This does not include out of scope calls

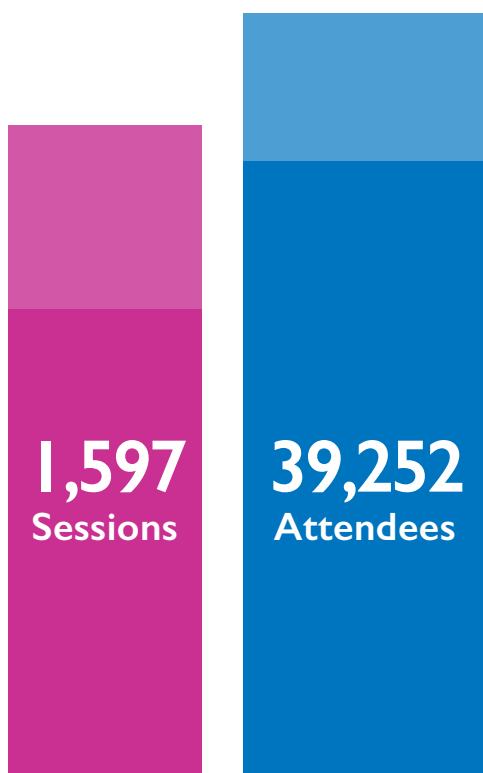
## Advocacy Information 2013 - 2016



There has been a clear increase in the number of calls received by advocacy agencies throughout Australia between 2013 and 2016.



# Education and Information Sessions



There has been a total of 3,639 education sessions since 2013 with a total of 82,583 attendees.

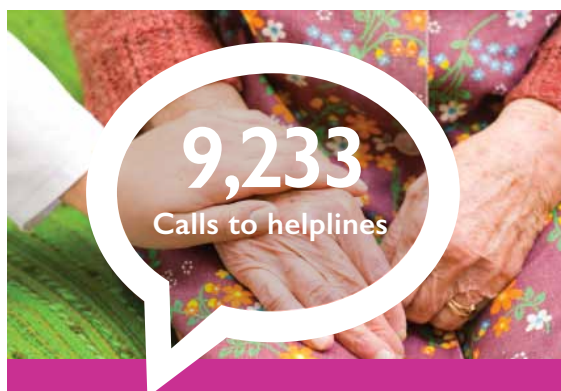
Raising awareness of how to recognise and respond to elder abuse is everyone's business, and a critical part of reducing abuse. Elder abuse agencies across Australia cover 7.69 million square kilometres to provide education and information sessions to:

- Staff working with older people
- Older community groups
- Aged care consumers and
- Special needs groups

People who attend elder abuse education sessions, report feeling:

- More empowered
- Able to recognise and respond to elder abuse
- Resourced with enough information to become an elder abuse champion

# Elder Abuse Helplines



The Elder Abuse Helplines are designed to give older people an easier way to find and access services to help them address elder abuse.

The helplines are staffed by professional and experienced advocates who are able to take their information and refer them to advocates, legal services or other agencies who can help.

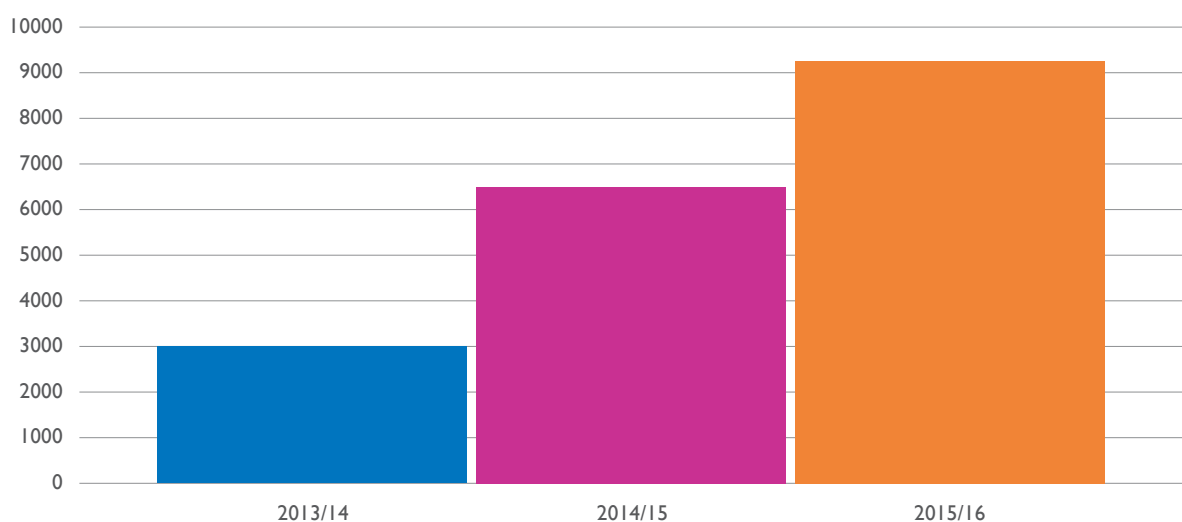
Calls to Elder Abuse Helplines have increase significantly since 2013 highlighting the need for this vital service.



## Helpline Numbers

Australian Capital Territory	02 6205 3535
New South Wales	1800 628 221
Northern Territory	1800 037 072
Queensland	1300 651 192
South Australia	1800 372 310
Tasmania	1800 441 169
Victoria	1300 368 821
Western Australia	1300 724 679

## Helpline Calls 2013 - 2016



# Case Studies

## Fern's Story

Fern, 69, who identifies as a lesbian, contacted Advocare after her carer/former partner Betty became abusive towards her and told her she was no longer welcome in their home. Betty had asked Fern to move in with her and had promised her she would provide care and a place for Fern to live as long as necessary. Fern had her own home but sold this when she moved in with Betty. Fern and Betty's relationship deteriorated and Betty became psychologically abusive towards Fern and insisted she had to move out. Fern felt unwelcome in what she had thought was her home and had no recourse to stay as her name was not on the title for the unit. All her savings had been spent while living with Betty as she had assumed she would not need to purchase another house. The lack of funds and suitable accommodation options meant Fern continued to live with her former partner in a hostile environment, under threat of being kicked out at any point.



Fern accessed the advocacy agency for support around housing and care options. She met with an advocate who discussed her options for care which included living in the community with support or residential care. Due to her lack of funds and limited housing options for low income seniors Fern decided to enter low level residential care. She expressed concerns at finding a facility that was LGBTI friendly, and one which would have a bed quickly available. Facilities that she contacted had long waitlists and the client was worried that if she accessed respite Betty would throw out all her possessions and she would not be able to return there while waiting for a permanent placement. The advocacy agency assisted Fern to locate facilities in the area she wanted to live and explained the process of accessing residential care and the types of fees she may be charged. They discussed the lifestyle changes Fern may encounter and made sure Fern was aware of her rights. Fern found a facility she liked and after a short time on a waiting list was offered a bed. Fern was grateful to be out of the stressful home situation and no longer worrying about where she would live.

*Case studies courtesy of Advocare Incorporated.*

# Case Studies

## May's Story

May is an 84 year old Vietnamese woman with extremely limited English language skills. May moved to Perth from another State to live with one of her sons. May and her son jointly co-owned the property in which they were residing (two other children contributed funds to their mother in order for her to own an equal share in the house). The son remarried and this had subsequently resulted in conflict and abuse towards May from both her son and daughter-in-law. This included attempts to force May to sign an Enduring Power of Attorney (effective immediately), documents stating that she owes her son significant sums of money and immigration documents stating that her daughter-in-law is providing her with care and support (May is independent). She was also threatened verbally the matters escalated to pushing and slapping.



May was assisted to contact an advocate through a social worker whilst in hospital. May was referred for legal advice through a community legal service and was also linked up to a Vietnamese speaking solicitor who is assisted her with correspondence to her son demanding return of personal property. The advocate provided May with information about her rights and options to address the situation. She also received support from the advocate to explore alternative housing options upon the sale of the jointly owned property as she was unable to purchase another property on her own.

*Case studies courtesy of Advocare Incorporated.*

# Acknowledgements

The National Elder Abuse Annual Report could not be compiled without the support from contributing organisations throughout Australia. Advocare would like to thank the following organisations for their valuable contribution to this report and to the ongoing work around the issue of elder abuse.

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## Australian Capital Territory

**ACT Office for Women**  
(02) 6205 3535

**ACT Disability, Aged and Carer  
Advocacy Service (ADACAS)**  
(02) 6242 5060  
adacas@adacas.org.au

## New South Wales

**NSW Elder Abuse Helpline & Resource  
Unit**  
1800 628 221

## Northern Territory

**CatholicCare NT – Aged Care Advocacy**  
08 8944 2000  
darwin@catholiccarent.org.au

**Darwin Community Legal Service –  
Aged and Disability**  
1800 037 072  
info@dcls.org.au

## Queensland

**Elder Abuse Prevention Unit**  
07 3867 2525  
eapu@uccommunity.org.au

**Caxton Legal Centre Inc.**  
07 3214 6333  
caxton@caxton.org.au

## South Australia

**Aged Rights Advocacy Service  
Adelaide**  
08 8232 5377  
aras@agedrights.asn.au

## Tasmania

**Advocacy Tasmania**  
1800 005 131  
advocacy@advocacytasmania.org.au

**Council on the Ageing (COTA)**  
03 6231 3265  
admin@cotatas.org.au

## Victoria

**Eastern Communities Legal Centre**  
03 9285 4822  
eclc@eclc.org.au

**Seniors Rights Victoria**  
1300 368 821  
info@seniorsrights.org.au

**Elder Rights Advocacy**  
03 9602 3066

**Justice Connect: Seniors Law**  
03 8636 4400

## Western Australia

**Older Peoples Rights Service (OPRS)**  
08 9440 1663  
mirrabooka@nsclegal.org.au





Advocare Incorporated compiled information from elder abuse support agencies across Australia to prepare this report. Later versions of the Elder Abuse National Annual Report hope to include statistics and information from many more agencies working throughout Australia.

For any information about this report or media enquiries, please contact:

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