

ELDER ABUSE

Reports show rise of financial abuse

The NSW Government released a report on Elder Abuse in 2016. The Committee found evidence that elder abuse is a significant and growing problem in our community. Financial abuse emerged during the inquiry as a substantial problem demanding urgent action on the part of government. The report refers to claims that the law as it stands provides insufficient safeguards against financial abuse, that it does not treat many forms of financial abuse as criminal, and indeed, that the law itself is significant enabler of abuse. A need for increased awareness of financial abuse was noted. See the report here:

[https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/DBAssets/InquiryReport/ReportAcrobat/6063/Report 44 - Elder abuse in New South Wales.pdf](https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/DBAssets/InquiryReport/ReportAcrobat/6063/Report%2044%20-%20Elder%20abuse%20in%20New%20South%20Wales.pdf)

In June 2017, the Australian Government Attorney-General's Department launched the Australian Law Reform Commission's (ALRC) report on elder abuse: *Elder Abuse – A National Legal Response*.

<https://www.attorneygeneral.gov.au/Mediareleases/Pages/2017/SecondQuarter/Building-the-national-response-to-elder-abuse.aspx>

It also found that elderly persons are victims of financial fraud. It recommended that a national register of enduring powers of attorney be established to prevent greedy children from using the document as a "licence to steal" from their elderly parents. The paper notes that "the potential for pressure and coercion in setting up the instruments" [the powers of attorney appointing children to act on their parent's behalf] and that "early inheritance syndrome" is on the rise. "With Australians living longer than ever before, the ALRC inquiry heard many examples of children who were impatient to get their hands on their parents' money and tried to claim their inheritance before they were entitled to it."

While the exact prevalence of elder abuse is not established in NSW, the ALRC reported that "at the international level, the WHO (2015) recently reported that estimated prevalence rates of elder abuse in high- or middle-income countries ranged from 2% to 14% ... and that the perpetrators are likely to be related to the victim...[and] one study suggests that neglect could be as high as 20% among women in the older age group (Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health, 2014). Older women are significantly more likely to be victims than older men, and most abuse is intergenerational (i.e., involving abuse of parents by adult children), with sons being perpetrators to a greater extent than daughters."

The report is accessible here:

http://www.alrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/pdfs/publications/elder_abuse_131_final_report_31_may_2017.pdf

What has this got to do with euthanasia? A portrayal of the mixed motives for family support of euthanasia was the topic of the winning short film in this year's Tropfest festival, 'The Mother Situation'.

<http://mobile.abc.net.au/news/2017-02-12/tropfest-matt-day-takes-top-honours-for-the-mother-situation/8263168?pfmredir=sm>