

**January 17, 2023**

### **More seniors getting legal help for elder abuse**

A growing number of seniors are seeking legal help for elder abuse - in particular, financial abuse - with Legal Aid NSW lawyers recovering almost \$1.9 million in clients' funds.

Legal Aid NSW is encouraging more seniors to contact the Elder Abuse Service (EAS) for free legal help or visit us at the [2023 Seniors Festival Expo](#) for more information following a 20 per cent jump in self-referrals in 2021-22.

It comes after the Elder Abuse Prevalence Study in 2021 found one in six older Australians reported experiencing abuse in the twelve months prior to being surveyed.

Senior solicitor at the Elder Abuse Service (EAS) Mary Lovelock said perpetrators are most often family members like children or grandchildren who take advantage.

Ms Lovelock said the most common abuse is a "granny flat" arrangement where the older person has given a significant sum of money to a child in return for the promise of care.

"We have had several clients come to us with this issue who are on the verge of homelessness. It can cause significant financial and mental stress for already vulnerable people," she said.

She has also seen financial abuse involving money misappropriated under Powers of Attorney, unpaid loans, property fraudulently transferred and debts fraudulently created in the name of the older person - even money refunded by banks.

Because elder abuse can sometimes be hard to identify - particularly when it's in the form of psychological abuse – Ms Lovelock said it is essential seniors talk to a lawyer to understand their rights.

"We have helped hundreds of seniors recoup money and defend their rights. We are here to support you and everything you say to a solicitor is confidential under client-professional privilege," she said.

Solicitors from the service will be available to offer free advice and information on the issue and other common legal issues at the upcoming 2023 Seniors Festival Expo, held at the International Convention Centre in Sydney on Feb 2 and 3, 2023.

The 2023 Legal Aid Topics for Seniors Diary, which includes key tips around common legal issues like scams and will planning, will be distributed for free at the expo.

The EAS will also be running a webinar on 9 February 2023 with a filming of Piano Forte followed by a panel discussion about financial elder abuse as well as wills, Powers of Attorney and Guardianship via this link: [https://legalaid-nsw-gov-au.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_x6W-cvmCRe2aZD47hNaLdA](https://legalaid-nsw-gov-au.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_x6W-cvmCRe2aZD47hNaLdA)

The EAS supports older residents (over 65yo or over 50 for our First Nations clients) who are at risk of or experiencing elder abuse and reside on the Central Coast or Lower Hunter. You can contact the service with any questions, referrals or to make an appointment by phoning (02) 4324 5611

**Ms Lovelock is available for media interviews.**

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