

Better Place Australia submission in response to the
consultation draft on the

National Plan to End the Abuse and Mistreatment of Older People

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Executive Summary

Better Place Australia (BPA) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the **National Plan to End the Abuse and Mistreatment of Older People 2024–2034**. As a specialist family violence service exclusively supporting older Australians, BPA has extensive experience in elder abuse prevention, intervention, and systemic advocacy. Additionally, BPA auspices an Elder Abuse Prevention Network that focuses on ageism awareness. While the consultation draft outlines broad goals, it lacks the **comprehensive service integration, social support structures, and funding transparency** needed to ensure a truly effective national response.

Elder abuse is a complex issue that requires multi-sector collaboration, flexible service models, and a balance between legal and social interventions. The current federal approach overemphasises legal responses while underinvesting in the social work-led, relationship-centred, and trauma-informed supports that many older people prefer. BPA's experience demonstrates that many older Australians experiencing elder abuse do not seek legal action but rather require case management, mediation, and advocacy to achieve safety and autonomy. Without investment in non-legal, community-based interventions, many older Australians will be left without their preferred appropriate support.

This submission highlights 6 critical gaps in the **National Plan** that require urgent attention:

1. **The absence of an integrated engagement and support model** that recognises the diverse needs of victims, at-risk individuals, and supportive families.
2. **Inadequate engagement with the public**, particularly the failure to fully utilise [Compass.info](#) digital opportunity and coordinate federal awareness campaigns with specialist elder abuse services and networks.
3. **Diminishing federal funding for direct social support**, particularly in the areas of mediation, case management, and trauma-informed elder abuse responses.
4. **A fragmented view of families**, treating them primarily as perpetrators rather than recognising their role as protective factors when adequately supported.
5. **Not recognising** the opportunity that **existing funded family support services** and locations offer as an opportunity for wide local place-based support.
6. A rigid, overly legalistic approach that fails to account for new research, evolving service models, and emerging insights in elder abuse prevention and response.
7. **A lack of funding transparency and balance**, with insufficient tracking of expenditure across legal, social, and preventative interventions.



Without addressing these gaps, the National Plan risks being disconnected from frontline realities and failing to provide the nuanced, multi-disciplinary support that older Australians require. Better Place Australia urges the Australian Government to adopt a more integrated, dynamic, and socially responsive framework to ensure that elder abuse is not just criminalised but prevented and meaningfully addressed through early intervention, education, and family-centred approaches.

Overview of Better Place Australia's Elder Abuse Prevention Service

History

Better Place Australia (BPA) has provided a specialist Elder Abuse Prevention Service since 2017. The service was developed with an innovation grant from the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation. Subsequent to this, the Victorian State Government has funded the service. The BPA service is recognised as a specialised family violence service and a Family Violence Information Sharing Entity. This means BPA can share information related to assessing or managing family violence risk. Initially, BPA was commissioned to support victims and families through the Integrated Model of Care (IMOC) across 3 of the 5 funded locations from 2018 until 2023, when this service was no longer funded by the Victorian State Government. Since 2020 BPA has gradually been funded to support The Orange Door with a specialised service expanding from 1 location to 5 currently and a workforce of 5 social worker staff. There is no other specialised support service like this in Victoria. The BPA elder abuse client journey is described in [Appendix 1](#). We have supported over 2,000 cases of elder abuse over this time.

The impact of the defunding of the IMOC service has resulted in a reduction in client capacity, as can be seen in the graph below (Figure 1) showing case numbers per month. The closure took effect in August 2023. Prior to this, the trend in case numbers was increasing upwards. Subsequent to this, the decline is evident.

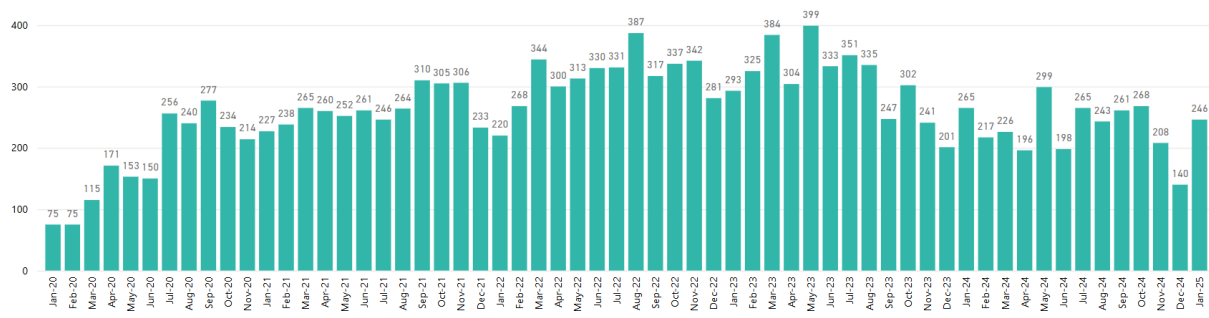


Figure 1. Elder Abuse case numbers per month



Current practice

Better Place Australia (BPA) is the **only specialist family violence service in Victoria** dedicated exclusively to working with older people. No other comparable service exists in the state.

BPA's **specialist elder abuse prevention service** is distinguished by its expertise, collaborative networks, and tailored approach to supporting older victim-survivors. The service is **MARAM-aligned** and prescribed under the **Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme** and **Child Information Sharing Scheme**, ensuring an integrated, risk-informed response.

Our team has a comprehensive understanding of the Aged Care, Administration, and Guardianship Acts, with regular engagement with VCAT. We maintain strong partnerships with Victoria Police, including Family Violence Command, Family Violence Investigation Units, and Family Violence Liaison Officers, ensuring coordinated responses to elder abuse.

Recognising mobility and access barriers, BPA provides face-to-face and outreach services to older people who may struggle to access support. Our practitioners are highly experienced in working with older victim-survivors, including male victims of family violence. Increasingly, we also support grandparents with permanent care of adolescent grandchildren who are using violence, many of whom have complex mental health, disability, or behavioural challenges.

BPA has extensive expertise in cases where either the **older person or the perpetrator has dementia or cognitive impairment**, navigating the complexities and heightened risks these situations present. Our **established referral pathways, collaborative networks, and deep knowledge of both community and residential aged care systems** enable us to provide a **comprehensive, coordinated response**.

We offer support to both **older people and their families**, with specialised skills in assisting **victim-survivors experiencing cognitive decline and/or dementia**. Our **proven elder abuse prevention service** ensures effective, evidence-based interventions. BPA staff are also highly trained in **supporting older women who have experienced intimate partner violence and sexual violence**.

With significant experience in **managing high-risk cases**, BPA practitioners regularly collaborate with the **Risk Assessment and Management Panel RAMP, Victoria Police, the Office of Public Prosecutions, and the Victorian Civil and**

Administrative Tribunal (VCAT). We also **secure urgent safety funding and implement protective measures** when required, ensuring the highest level of support and security for older victim-survivors.

The nature of our clients

As BPA clients are predominantly on incomes less than \$50k, support is mostly provided in client's homes or by phone. Although family violence is indicated in nearly all cases only 35% have an active intervention order, a characteristic unique to elder abuse. Our case notes show that 40% of parties coercing the older person are female and that 30% of victims are males.

Males, who were victims requiring support, represented 1 in 3 of our cases. This proportion has diminished since the IMOC funding withdrawal, to being 1 in 4 cases.

The average age of the victims is 73. In clients over the age of 80, the proportion of males increases to 30% compared to those under 80 of 25%.

Clients are from culturally diverse backgrounds as can be seen in the below graph (Figure 2).

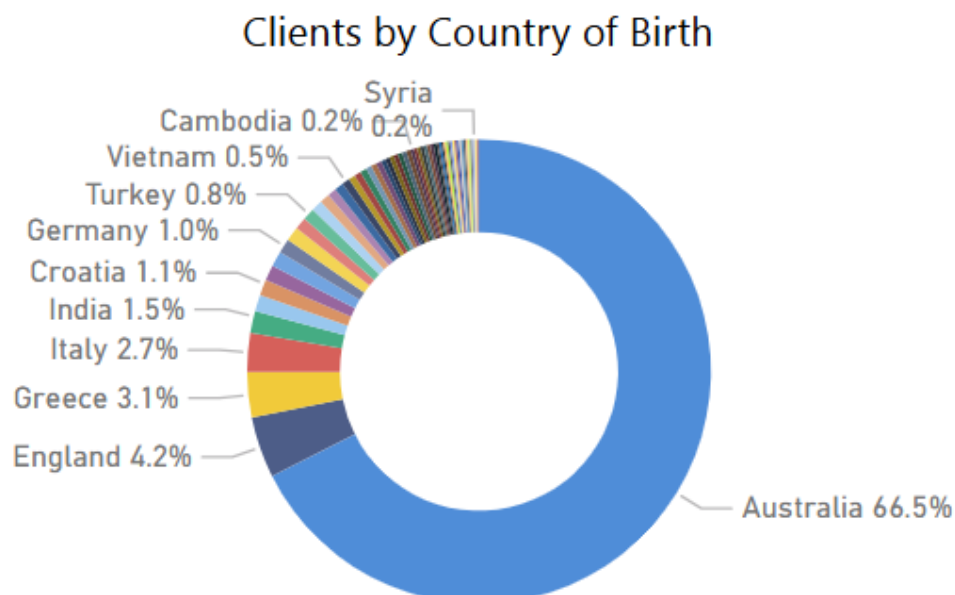


Figure 2. BPA Clients by Country of Birth

What does the BPA social work practice involve?

At BPA, our social work practice is designed to support older individuals experiencing or at risk of elder abuse. Our approach is holistic, trauma-informed, and strength-based, ensuring that each person receives the tailored support they need to regain autonomy and safety.

Our services include:

- **Comprehensive risk assessment and safety planning** – Identifying risks and developing individualised plans to enhance safety and wellbeing.
- **Advocacy** – Supporting older individuals in navigating systems and asserting their rights.
- **Psychoeducation and supportive counselling** – Providing emotional support and education on elder abuse dynamics and protective strategies.
- **Empowerment and coaching** – Helping individuals build confidence and skills to regain control over their lives.
- **Case management** – Coordinating services and ensuring continuity of care.
- **Trauma-informed and strength-based practice** – Recognising past experiences and focusing on resilience and strengths.
- **Pathways to financial counselling and psychological support** – Connecting individuals with specialised services to address financial and emotional wellbeing.
- **Warm referrals to appropriate support services** – Ensuring access to tailored support beyond our immediate scope.
- **Elder mediation (non-legally binding)** – Facilitating conversations to address conflicts and improve family relationships where appropriate.
- **Liaison with key services** – collaborating with:
 - **Police and family violence agencies** – To address immediate safety concerns.
 - **Judicial system (Magistrate's Court, VCAT, RAMP, housing and mental health services)** – To advocate for legal and housing protections.
 - **Legal services (e.g., aged care navigation)** – To help individuals understand their legal rights and options.
- **Court support for IVO applications** – Assisting individuals in seeking intervention orders to enhance their safety.

Victoria – an overstretched system

1. Demand for the BPA service

BPA has experienced increasing demand for its Elder Abuse Prevention Service. The August 2023 withdrawal of funding for the Victorian Government-funded Integrated Model of Care (IMOC) elder abuse prevention stream has put even greater pressure on the remaining Orange Door support service.

Key challenges post August 2023 until January 2025 include:

- **Waitlist:** 30-40 individuals are on the waitlist at any given time, with an average wait time of up to **12 weeks** for services.
- **Escalating Cases:** BPA data shows a significant escalation in:
 - Sexual assault cases (from 2% to 8%).
 - Physical violence cases (from 30% to 45%).
 - Social abuse (from 9% to 22%).
- **Complexity of Cases:** These complexities are reflected in an increase in Risk Assessment Management Panel (RAMP) referrals, completed suicide, adolescent violence in the home, and child protection notifications. Reflecting older people acting as carers for grandchildren.
- **Secondary Consults:** BPA has seen a high demand for secondary consultations for external staff, averaging 20-30 per month.

2. Inability to respond to non-critical cases

Subsequent to the IMOC defunding decision in 2023, BPA has experienced a **contraction in service capacity**. The cohort most affected by the capacity reduction has been **individuals aged over 65 who are not experiencing sexual violence or physical abuse but may be experiencing financial and psychological abuse**. This "silent majority" of at-risk individuals, often dealing with familial conflict and referred by health services or community agencies, are **no** longer receiving the support they require. Key issues include:

- **Reduced client base:** BPA now primarily responds to cases brought to the attention of authorities (police/courts), with diminished community referrals due to funding cuts to the IMOC program.
- **Unaddressed risk:** Many older individuals at risk of elder abuse are not seeking help due to a lack of accessible services, increasing the likelihood of unreported abuse and fatalities. The training and capability work that was

provided as a part of the IMOC and SHRFV projects has also been ceased, meaning many non-specialist professionals feel ill-equipped to manage elder abuse and don't know where to turn for direction.

- **Timeliness of response: For older people who need** a timely response (i.e., window of opportunity) the current service system fails them and by the time they receive a response, many older people are "just putting up with it".
- **'Post-Code Lottery'**: By only funding the BPA service in five Orange Door regions, results in the other 13 regions receiving an inequitable response.

3. Deprivation of access for older Victorians

BPA has been raising ongoing concerns about **inadequate access** to appropriate services for older Victorians since the IMOC defunding.

Key points are:

- Only **5 of the 18** Orange Door hubs across Victoria have an elder abuse specialist family violence service, limiting access for many older Victorians. With limited access to the 'window of opportunity' most older people who make their first disclosure will go by unnoticed due to service limitations.
- Older people experiencing coercion and abuse **are unlikely to seek help** from protective agencies due to fears of consequences, severing family ties, or concerns for their abuser. BPA advocates for a more accessible engagement model that addresses these barriers.
- The response to elder abuse requires a bifocal service response. BPA has developed a service model framework and considers that it is timely to discuss this service model that supports the victim safely and also develops support pathways for the person using violence. Such a model is consistent with research within the mainstream family violence sector that **better intervention with perpetrators results in better outcomes for victims**. Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety. (2020)

4. Concerning gaps in Victorian support

The Victorian system response does not provide a sufficiently resourced triage response to those at risk or experiencing elder abuse. The current **Elder Abuse Helpline** is directed to the Seniors Rights Victoria (SRV) call line. The 2023 Annual Report of COTA Victoria (auspicing SRV) details, pp23-24, that the Helpline received **12,356** inbound calls, and the Helpline was only able to respond to **3,556 callers**. This represents a 30% decrease in the number of contacts made compared to the previous year. Indicating that 70% of inbound calls are not 'live' responded to. For

the whole year, SRV had appointments with 251 clients. They opened 107 cases for the year.

Nationally, approximately 1 in 6 older Australians (15%) experience some form of elder abuse annually (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2024).

While specific prevalence data for Victoria alone is limited, it's reasonable to infer that the state's figures align closely with the national average. This would indicate that based on national estimates that 15% of older Australians experience elder abuse, approximately **163,500 Victorians** aged 65 and over may be affected by elder abuse each year.

In the 12 months leading up to March 2024, Victoria Police received over **6,000 reports** of elder abuse, accounting for approximately 6.5% of all family violence incidents in the state (Compass 2024).

Over the past 5 years, there has been a 32% increase in reported elder abuse cases, which may reflect both a rise in incidents and improved awareness and reporting mechanisms.

It's important to note that elder abuse is frequently underreported, suggesting that the actual prevalence may be higher. Efforts are ongoing to improve data collection and provide more comprehensive support services to address and prevent elder abuse in Victoria.

Overall BPA concludes that most elder abuse goes unreported. Of a projection of 163,500 affected only 6,026 cases or **3.7% of those at risk** are able to access the family violence system through The Orange Door.

As the following diagram shows (Figure 3), the ability of the Victorian system to offer specialised elder abuse support is under challenge.

Victorian Elder Abuse Data Overview

Prevalence	Vic Police	Legal	Social Support	BPA	Locations
<p>National, 2022:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 17% (4.4 million) of Australians were aged 65+ - 23.8% of this group lived in an area of most socio-economic disadvantage. - 27.6% lived in a lone person household <p>Of this age group, in the previous 12 months, 14.8% (598,000) had experienced some type of abuse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychological 11.7% (471,300) • Neglect 2.9% (115,500) • Financial 2.1% (83,800) • Physical 1.8% (71,900) • Sexual 0.1% (39,500) 	<p>Number of 65+ Victorian family violence victims 2023-24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female 2607 • Male 1549 <p>Highest recorded* incidences by LGA with 65yo+ victim:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Casey 317 • Greater Geelong 282 • Brimbank 282 • Greater Dandenong 246 • Hume 198 • Whittlesea 193 • East Gippsland 192 • Mornington Peninsula 185 • Wyndham 187 • Monash 187 • Darebin 183 • Frankston 173 • Latrobe 154 • Yarra Ranges 146 • Kingston 142 • Knox 140 • Ballarat 131 • Greater Bendigo 121 • Mildura 111 <p>*50% or more above the Vic LGA average of 79</p>	<p>Vic Justice system 65+ victims data from 2023-24:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6341 incidents • 4152 unique victims • 3399 unique perpetrators • 24% breaches of IVO • 1775 offenders charged • 91% new IVO • 1058 heard in court • 72% charges proven: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 26% custody - 10% community supervision - 36% other outcome <p>65+yo victims on FVIO applications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female: 1630 • Male: 980 <p>58% of alleged perpetrators were the adult children of the victim, 66% of these female.</p>	<p>Orange door clients, 65+, 2023-24:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male 2225 • Female 3801 • Total 6026 <p>Victims Assistance Program family violence clients, 65+, 2023-24:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male 85 • Female 27 • Total 113 <p>The Seniors Rights Victoria Helpline (1300 368 821) could only respond to 3,556 (29%), of 1236 calls; 44% of callers were experiencing or at risk of experiencing elder abuse.</p> <p>100% of 251 SRV appointment cases received legal advice, 86% non-legal advice and follow-up support, 28% identified as either homeless or at risk of homelessness due to elder abuse.</p>	<p>2023-24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 482 clients seen 	<p>The Victorian area-specific data is divided 79 LGAs within 17 DFFH regions, in 4 police regions.</p> <p>Specific elder abuse police figures are shown at left.</p> <p>General family violence figures identify those LGAs over the 1657 per 100,000 general Vic occurrence (of broader family violence): 37 were above average.</p> <p>The worst areas of incidence (above 4000 per 100,000) were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Latrobe 5072 • Horsham 4580 • Wellington 4558 • East Gippsland 4358 <p>All three LGAs of Southern Melbourne DFFH region were above the state average:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cardinia 1713 • Casey 1740 • Greater Dandenong 2087
National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study: Final Report, 2021	Victoria Police LG 17 forms, crimestatistics.vic.gov.au	crimestatistics.vic.gov.au (Justice System. All courts) COTA Annual Report 23-24 p28	Council of the Ageing Annual report 23-24 (COTA).	Better Place Australia 2023-24	Victoria Police LG 17 forms, crimestatistics.vic.gov.au

*From perpetrator figures, some may include multiple victims



Identified gaps in elder abuse support

Council of the Ageing Annual report 23-24 (COTA), p23 Seniors Rights: of 1240 calls, Helpline was only able to respond to 29%, 71% of calls were not responded to.

Areas of highest importance (general family violence): Gippsland, Cardinia, Casey, Greater Dandenong.

Justice system: 92% of initial recorded incidents never progress to court.

Seniors Rights Victoria reports more legal cases spanning longer periods: SRV supported legal cases remained open for an average 538 days. "Significant adverse impact on older people who are experiencing financial disadvantage, are at risk of homelessness, or living with disability or declining health. Without appropriate support, many older people may choose not to progress legal matters."

Figure 3. Victorian Elder Abuse Data Overview

5. A confusing system for older people, their families and carers

In developing a support response to situations where elder abuse is suspected or reported, a multi-agency constellation has evolved in Victoria. To an individual, family member or referring agency, this constellation is confusing, each of the responding agencies or authorities has a particular focus that may or may not provide the appropriate response. For some agencies, no response can be provided if the contact is not directly made by the victims themselves. As Figure 4 shows, having 20 response channels of who to call is problematic. From the UK experience, informal supporters report emotional stress and difficulties navigating support services (Dominguez et al. 2022). The lack of a consistent and promoted first point of contact is evident and demonstrates a concerning low priority by policymakers in their investment into a coherent and effective system response. The following summary of 'who to call' illustrates this issue (Figure 4), showing multiple supporting agencies.

Victorian Elder Abuse Prevention Mud map of who to call



Figure 4. Victorian Elder Abuse Prevention Mud Map

Conclusion

The National Plan will not succeed as it is a *Castle in the Air* that floats and is not grounded in the realities of a state system that is overstretched and putting older people at risk.

This submission next examines the National Plan by identifying 6 themes that demonstrate structural issues and omissions throughout its construct.

Theme 1: Absence of an Elder Abuse prevention service response model

1. Introduction to the Elder Abuse Tiered Response System Model

The proposed National Plan lacks a theoretical model or framework to underpin the service response. This section outlines two models which would enable a more comprehensive and responsive elder abuse service system. Developed by **Better Place Australia (BPA)**, Figure 5 presents a model of a proposed **stepped care approach** to the elder abuse system. The model allows for a system that is designed to provide the least intrusive and most supportive responses first, escalating only when necessary.

- **Community awareness** (primary prevention) focuses on broad education, early intervention, and referrer awareness to prevent elder abuse before it occurs.
- **Individual support** and **family focus** provide tailored interventions that empower older individuals and their families through capacity building, mediation, and advocacy.
- **Civil resolution** and **criminal proceedings** (tertiary intervention) involve legal and protective measures when earlier support is insufficient to ensure safety.

The lower section of the model highlights the **critical balance** in elder abuse responses: **early intervention reduces individual costs and emotional trauma**, while **legal escalation can increase family conflict, reduce the older person's autonomy, and heighten perceived risks**. This structured, tiered response system ensures that support is provided at the **right level, at the right time**, in alignment with BPA's commitment to **empowering older individuals and minimising harm**.

This **stepped care approach** is useful because it ensures that responses to elder abuse are **targeted, proportional, and effective**, rather than defaulting to legal interventions that can be adversarial and strain relationships. **BPA** understands that many older individuals experiencing coercion or financial pressure still care about their family members and want to maintain relationships where safely possible. This model **prioritises early support, counselling and advocacy**, allowing for intervention **before harm escalates**, while still providing legal pathways when safety is at risk.

The model also acknowledges that not all older people have easy access to legal support, particularly those in **marginalised groups, remote areas, or with cognitive impairments**. By emphasising **awareness, capacity building, and social work-led interventions**, the model **reduces the burden on older people** to navigate complex systems alone. This is particularly relevant given BPA's role as a **prescribed Victorian service able to share information to reduce risk**, ensuring that older individuals receive coordinated support rather than fragmented, reactive responses.

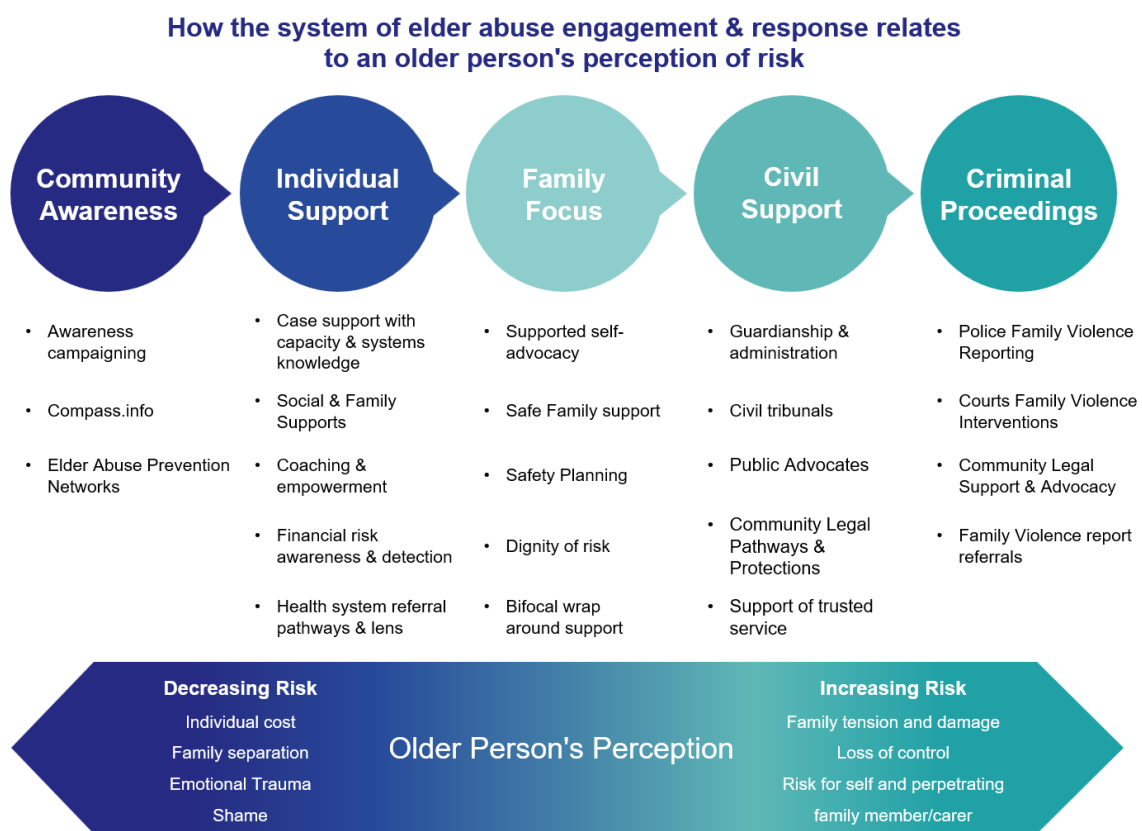


Figure 5. An Overview of the Elder Abuse Tiered Response System Model

1.1 The lack of an Elder Abuse prevention service response model

The Applied Ecological Bi-Focal Intergenerational Model, developed by Schiamberg and Gans (1999) (Figure 6), offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the risks and protective factors of elder abuse, particularly by adult children. It is a service model that supports the victim safely and develops supported referral pathways for the person using violence. In Australia, it is cited by both the Queensland Elder Abuse Prevention Unit and Better Place Australia's specialist

family violence service as a very relevant model for identifying potential risks and protective factors for elder abuse.

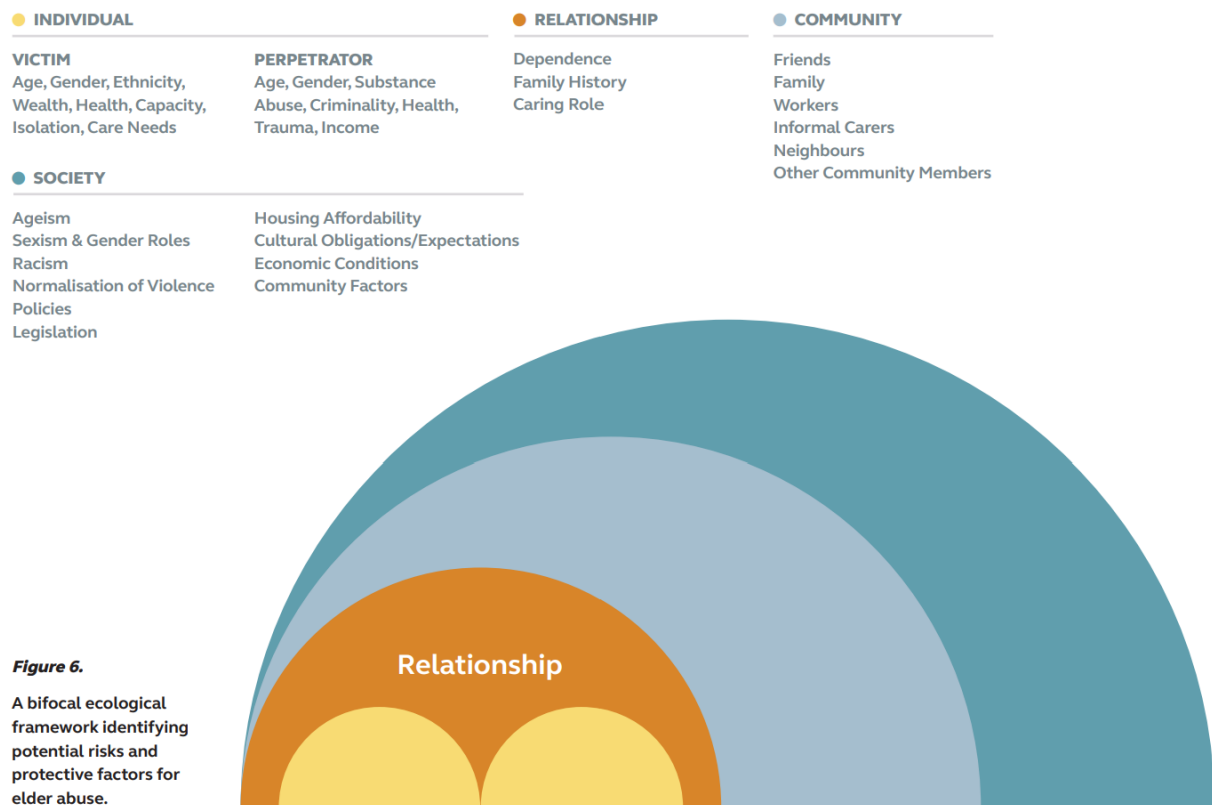


Figure 6. Bi-focal ecological framework identifying potential risks and protective factors for elder abuse.

The **Applied Ecological Bi-Focal Intergenerational Model** and **BPA's Elder Abuse Tiered Response System Model** differ in their purpose and application. The **Ecological Model** provides a **theoretical framework** for understanding elder abuse, particularly within family systems, by identifying **risk and protective factors** across individual, family, community, and societal levels. It takes a bi-focal approach, addressing both the older person experiencing abuse and the person using violence, emphasising supported referral pathways rather than punitive responses, consistent with Bolkan et al. (2023). In contrast, **BPA's Tiered Response System Model** is a **practical service response**, structuring interventions **progressively from primary prevention to tertiary intervention**, ensuring that the least intrusive, most supportive responses are prioritised before escalating to legal or protective measures. While the **Ecological Model** helps predict and understand abuse dynamics, the **Tiered Response System Model** ensures that **interventions are timely, structured, and responsive to the level of risk**. The Ecological Model is referenced by **BPA's specialist family violence service** and the **Queensland**

Elder Abuse Prevention Unit for **risk assessment and systemic understanding**, while BPA's Tiered Response System Model promotes **practical, accessible, and scalable interventions** that provide older people with the right support at the right time. Ultimately, these models are **complementary**, with the Ecological Model informing risk identification and protective factors whilst BPA's Tiered Response System Model suggests structured interventions **progressively from** least intrusive, most supportive responses, to protective measures **prioritising escalation** to legal and protections.

1.2 Bridging theory and practice: strengthening the National Plan to end the abuse and mistreatment of older people

The **Applied Ecological Bi-Focal Intergenerational Model** and **BPA's Elder Abuse Tiered Response System Model** offer complementary insights into addressing elder abuse. The **Ecological Model** provides a **theoretical foundation**, identifying **risk and protective factors** across individual, family, community, and societal levels. It adopts a **bi-focal perspective**, recognising that elder abuse often involves **complex intergenerational relationships**, where both the older person and the perpetrator need to be considered in prevention and intervention efforts. This model is already referenced by **BPA's specialist family violence service** and the **Queensland Elder Abuse Prevention Unit** as a key framework for risk assessment and systemic understanding.

BPA's Tiered Response System Model, on the other hand, translates this **theoretical understanding into a structured service response**. It provides a **clear, progressive pathway** from primary prevention (awareness and early intervention) to tertiary responses (legal and protective measures), ensuring that **support is proportionate to the level of risk**. This approach prioritises **less intrusive, relationship-preserving interventions** before escalating to legal mechanisms, aligning with BPA's focus on **empowerment, counselling, mediation, and family-centred responses**.

Despite the clear value of **both models in shaping a coordinated, multi-level response to elder abuse**, the **National Plan to End the Abuse and Mistreatment of Older People 2024–2034** fails to incorporate a **structured theoretical framework** to guide its prevention and intervention strategies. This **significant gap** weakens the plan's ability to deliver a **cohesive, evidence-based response** to elder abuse. Without an **underpinning model**, the plan risks **fragmented implementation and missed opportunities to integrate prevention, early intervention, and systemic reform** effectively. This absence may also reflect an absence in the report *Findings from the Evaluation of the National Plan to Respond*

to the Abuse of Older Australians (Elder Abuse) 2019–2023 (McEwan et al. 2024) of a synthesis model. BPA understands that with such a large body of research, not all data could be included. Unfortunately, the knowledge gained from the 2,000 BPA clients cases was not considered in the consultation.

1.3 Key limitations of the National Plan

1.3.1 Lack of an explicit theoretical model

The National Plan outlines **priority areas and actions** but does not ground them in a **formal, multi-level framework** that captures the **interplay between older individuals, their families, service systems, and broader societal structures**. The **Applied Ecological Bi-Focal Model** provides a structured lens to understand how **ageism, economic pressures, family dynamics, and policy environments contribute to elder abuse**, yet this insight is absent from the plan.

1.3.2 Insufficient attention to the intergenerational nature of abuse

While the plan acknowledges **family- and caregiver-related abuse**, it **fails to explore intergenerational patterns**—a critical oversight given that many **adult children who perpetrate elder abuse have histories of dependence, mental health challenges, or unresolved family conflict**. The **Bi-Focal approach** of the Ecological Model—examining **both the older person and the perpetrator within their shared and individual contexts**—is essential for **developing effective, family-centred interventions** that move beyond punitive responses. It also encompasses the intersectionality that arises in many cases.

1.3.3 A weak ecological perspective in prevention efforts

Although the National Plan emphasises **public awareness and workforce training**, it does not **clearly map how individual, community, and systemic influences interact** to create or mitigate risk. The **Ecological Model** highlights the **broader structural factors** that shape elder abuse, including **ageism, housing insecurity, financial stress, and gaps in aged care and family support services**. A more **explicit ecological approach** could strengthen **policy interventions by addressing the root causes of abuse, not just its symptoms**.

1.3.4 Lack of multi-level policy responses

The plan provides **general commitments to improving services** but lacks **clear mechanisms to align interventions across multiple levels**—from **individual and family-based interventions** (micro-level) to **community services and aged care settings** (meso-level) and **broader legislative and economic policies** (macro-level). By incorporating an ecological model, policymakers could better recognise that **elder abuse prevention requires systemic shifts**, not just increased service provision.

1.4 How the National Plan could be strengthened using these models

To **bridge these gaps**, the **National Plan should integrate an explicit theoretical framework** that informs policy development, service design, and funding decisions. Specifically, the plan could:

- **Adopt an applied ecological approach to guide prevention, intervention, and systemic reform**, ensuring responses **capture the complexity of elder abuse dynamics**.
- **Recognise the intergenerational nature** of many abuse cases and promote **family-centred, restorative interventions** alongside protective measures.
- **Ensure multi-level responses** that **go beyond individual interventions**, incorporating **policy and community-level changes** to address risk factors at their root.
- **Support research and data collection using an ecological lens**, ensuring **future policies** tackle both **individual vulnerabilities** and **systemic enablers of abuse**.

1.5 Conclusion

The **absence of a guiding model** in the National Plan **weakens its ability to provide an integrated, multi-level response** to elder abuse. By incorporating the Applied Ecological Bi-Focal Model and aligning it with **BPA's Tiered Response System Model**, the plan could **offer a more robust, evidence-informed approach** that balances **prevention, early intervention, and systemic reform**. Without this shift, the plan risks **remaining a collection of disconnected initiatives**, rather than a **cohesive national strategy** capable of **truly ending elder abuse in Australia**.

Theme 2: Engagement with the public

Compass.info: a missed opportunity for awareness and support pathways

2. Introduction

As Australia's primary elder abuse information hub, the website Compass.info plays a vital role in public education, professional training, and awareness-raising. However, its potential as a gateway to support services is underutilised and not meaningfully acknowledged in the consultation draft of the National Plan. A more strategic integration of Compass into the national elder abuse response could enhance prevention, streamline access to services, and improve early intervention efforts.

The concern

Despite its existing role in educating the public and professionals, Compass is not mentioned in a substantial way within the draft plan. This oversight diminishes the impact of national awareness-building efforts and weakens service integration.

Why this matters

Compass is a critical prevention tool, providing essential public education and professional training on elder abuse. This includes GPs and allied health professionals.

Many professionals and frontline workers rely on Compass for best practice guidance, yet its role is not substantially reflected in national policy.

Compass presents a major opportunity to create a seamless pathway for older people and their families—transitioning them from web search to enquiry, live chat, and ultimately, local service connection for intake and assessment. Compass is also designed for easy access for older people.

Of course, as explained in the earlier Victorian response section, resources are already stretched and stretched. The risk of stimulating demand beyond capacity is real.

Recommendations

- Embed Compass.info into the National Plan, ensuring it is funded, promoted, and recognised as a key awareness and referral tool.
- Work jointly with government-funded elder abuse programs to actively incorporate Compass as a primary referral and education resource.
- Promote and expand Compass to expand its training and awareness materials in multiple languages, improving accessibility for culturally diverse communities.
- Review and develop an integrated model that connects online enquiries to real-time service bookings, ensuring that older people and their families can transition smoothly from information-seeking to direct support.

Final thought

Compass.info has the potential to be more than just an information hub—it should function as a streamlined entry point into support services. By positioning Compass as a key gateway for intake, assessment, and referrals, the National Plan could significantly improve accessibility, early intervention, and service coordination for older Australians experiencing or at risk of elder abuse. The capacity of the system however will need to be increased to be able to respond to this more integrated system. Centralising preliminary enquiries and a short intake will reduce the resource needs for this function within current support services who can then devote more resources to service support and safety planning.

2.1 Public awareness raising

Effective elder abuse prevention relies not only on service responses but also on public awareness and strategic communication. Initiatives such as the *Framing Age Message Guide* (Southern Melbourne Elder Abuse Prevention Network 2023) demonstrate the importance of shifting societal attitudes around ageing and elder abuse. By using evidence-based communication strategies, this guide helps challenge ageist stereotypes, reduce victim-blaming narratives, and promote constructive discussions about the rights and autonomy of older people. Campaigns that align with these principles can increase public recognition of elder abuse, encourage early help-seeking, and ensure that older Australians feel empowered rather than stigmatised when accessing support.

In Victoria, there are 8 Elder Abuse Prevention Networks (EAPN). They conduct ageism and elder abuse awareness campaigns with a focus on primary prevention. A number of these networks have been successfully collaborating in campaigning with

the third layer of government – *local councils*. The Southern Melbourne EAPN has run a number of events and forums with the councils and has been facilitating ageism awareness training with the councils.

However, recent awareness-raising efforts by the federal government failed to engage with key elder abuse prevention networks in Victoria or frontline services that directly support older people experiencing mistreatment (Dreyfus 2024). Despite the existence of specialist networks, community organisations, and state-funded elder abuse programs, the campaign was developed in isolation, missing a critical opportunity to integrate real-world expertise and sector knowledge. This oversight weakened the effectiveness of the campaign by failing to leverage the experience of those who work with older people every day, ensuring that messaging was both practical and aligned with on-the-ground realities.

Frontline services play a crucial role in translating awareness into action. Without collaboration with these services, public messaging risks creating an influx of concern without clear referral pathways, leaving older people and their families uncertain about where to seek support. Victoria has established strong elder abuse prevention networks, yet their absence from the federal government's campaign planning reflects a broader disconnect between policy and practice. Awareness alone is not enough—campaigns must be linked to clear service pathways, ensuring that people who recognise abuse know where to turn for help.

For future initiatives to be truly effective, the federal government must:

- Ensure early and meaningful engagement with elder abuse prevention networks and frontline services to align public messaging with real-world service pathways.
- Use resources such as the *Framing Age Message Guide* to create age-positive, stigma-free awareness campaigns that empower older people rather than reinforce vulnerability.
- Invest in coordinated, state-supported awareness efforts that complement existing elder abuse prevention work, rather than operating in isolation.

Raising awareness of elder abuse is essential, but without sector collaboration and clear pathways to support, awareness alone is insufficient. Future campaigns must be integrated with service networks, ensuring that older people who recognise mistreatment are connected to timely, accessible, and appropriate assistance.

2.2 What do older Victorians want?

BPA has reflected upon the hidden phenomenon of disclosure and reporting of abuse against older adults. Walsh et al. (2024) interviews with older adults who have experienced abuse and service providers reveal that fear, shame, and lack of awareness are significant obstacles to reporting. In order to deepen our understanding of the barriers before the abuse has commenced, BPA commissioned a **short survey by the Centre for Better Relationships** to explore the willingness of **539 older Victorians** to seek support if mistreated by a **family member or carer**. The results indicated that many would reach out for help, **approximately 1 in 5 (17%) said they were unlikely to do so**. Notably, **men were significantly less likely than women** to seek support in **4 out of 6** situations surveyed.

Respondents were most likely to seek help (82%) if they were denied access to essential needs such as food, clothing, or medical care. However, they were least likely (74%) to reach out for support if they were spoken to in a way that made them feel shamed or threatened, highlighting the challenge of addressing psychological and emotional abuse.

2.3 Barriers to seeking support

When asked why an older person might hesitate to contact support services, the most common reason cited was fear. Respondents expressed concerns that seeking help could worsen the situation, particularly due to fear of retaliation from the perpetrator.

Other barriers included:

- Lack of awareness about available support services.
- Fear of not being believed by service providers.
- Shame and embarrassment about mistreatment by a family member.
- Reluctance to create family conflict or risk losing the carer/support system they depend on.
- A belief in self-protection, with some respondents stating they could handle the situation on their own.

This survey is consistent with Dow et al. (2020) in their study exploring the reluctance of older Australians to report elder abuse, particularly when perpetrators are their adult children.

2.4 Where older Victorians would seek support

Survey responses indicated that trusted personal connections are the preferred first point of contact. Older Victorians reported that they would initially seek advice from a trusted family member, friend, or their general practitioner before engaging in formal services.

While some respondents indicated they would consider protective services such as police or legal intervention, most expressed a preference for social support services. There was a strong emphasis on professional services that provide advice, guidance, and mediation, rather than taking immediate legal or punitive action against the perpetrator.

Responses also revealed a lack of awareness about existing support services, including the Elder Abuse Hotline, suggesting the need for stronger public education efforts.

Sample quotes from respondents

'Older people don't like to make a fuss or talk about their issues. A counsellor for them to just talk to could help relieve stress.'

'I think there should be a direct number older people can call for advice and support to have peace of mind. Staff available 24/7, and to investigate all claims.'

'Services for older people are fragmented, and it is hard to know where to go.'

'Due to the long-term close relationship, it might be hard to take that 'next step' to share with or involve a third party from outside the immediate family circle.'

'Help to make up my own mind what to do, help to understand the consequences of what I could do, and help to make any changes I considered necessary.'

'Fear of not being believed. Fear that the person they contact may side with the abuser. Not knowing who to contact.'

'The number one reason would have to be fear, also rumours being spread that you are now unable to do what is best needed for yourself.'

2.5 Final thought

The findings highlight the **complex barriers older people face** when seeking support, particularly **fear, lack of awareness, and family-related concerns**. There is a **strong preference for advisory and mediation-based services**, rather than direct legal intervention. Improving **awareness of available services** and **enhancing accessibility through clear, trusted referral pathways** will be critical in ensuring that older people receive the **right support at the right time**.

2.6 Limited inclusion of lived experience in consultation

Older people's voices were not strongly represented in the consultation process for the Draft National Plan. While some community input was sought, the lived experience is not evident as a primary driver of the Plan's formulation. To be a person-centred approach requires co-design initiatives reflecting older people's desired responses.

The voice of the older person can be brought into discussions for example as the following link to Phil's video shows

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=skrfQCXQw4A>

2.7 Recommendations

- Expand direct engagement with older Australians who have experienced abuse.
- Use consumer advisory panels (e.g., older people's councils, advocacy groups) to shape policy priorities.

2.8 Conclusion

To ensure the success of the National Plan to End the Abuse and Mistreatment of Older People, the Australian Government must:

- Recognise the role of social support alongside legal interventions.
- Ensure accessible, well-funded elder abuse services at all levels of government.
- Acknowledge the critical role of families, not-for-profits, and local governments in elder abuse prevention.

Theme 3: Diminishing funding for direct social support

3. Federal support for social support

The previous National Plan included federal **funding for social support, mediation, and counselling** through a single provider, recognising that many older people and their families prefer **social and relational interventions over legal action**.

However, the current consultation appears to **shift** the Australian Government's role toward legal responses, emphasising **legislation and regulation** while making no mention of direct **social support for victims, those at risk, or their families**. This narrowing of focus represents a **significant gap**, as it sidelines the very services that older Australians are most likely to seek in the early stages of mistreatment.

Older people overwhelmingly prefer to engage with **social and family support services** rather than pursuing legal or criminal avenues. Mediation, case management, and trauma-informed counselling are often **more effective than legal interventions alone**, particularly in cases involving **family coercion, financial abuse, or dependency dynamics**. Without **federally funded social support programs**, many older people will delay seeking assistance **until their situation reaches crisis point**, by which time relationships may be irreparable, and safety risks may have escalated. A balanced approach—where legal responses exist **alongside strong social and family-based interventions**—is critical to ensuring that elder abuse prevention strategies are effective.

A key issue in this federal policy gap is the **lack of recognition of social workers** as frontline responders in elder abuse cases. **Social work is a key practice** at the Victorian Government state level **but appears to be absent from federal responsibilities**, despite its **proven role in family violence and elder abuse response**. The **2016 Royal Commission into Family Violence in Victoria** recommended **minimum qualifications for family violence practitioners**, recognising that **social workers are best placed to provide this specialised support**. Given that elder abuse is **a form of family violence**, social workers should be at the forefront of risk assessment, case management, and trauma-informed intervention. Furthermore, specialised elder abuse support has become its own discipline that requires extensive training, experience and supervision. BPA would argue that this recognition of the specialised nature of elder abuse response is ignored. Parents take their children to a trained child psychologist rather than a

generalist psychologist. BPA is of the view that a similar approach needs to be adopted for elder abuse.

Older people, particularly those experiencing **family-based mistreatment**, often feel more comfortable seeking guidance from specialist social workers rather than legal professionals, reinforcing the need for **a structured, federally funded elder abuse social work program**.

Expanding federal funding for **elder mediation, case management, and specialised trauma-informed support** would ensure that older Australians have **multiple pathways to seek help**. Social workers should also be included as **formal members of triage teams**, providing options beyond legal interventions and ensuring that victims receive **holistic, person-centred support**. Without this, the National Plan risks creating a **one-dimensional, enforcement-heavy approach** that fails to meet the real needs of older people and their families.

For the National Plan to be truly effective, it must:

- **Fund national elder abuse specialist social work teams** within aged care, health, and community services, ensuring access to trained professionals.
- **Expand federal funding for family counselling, elder mediation and case management**, ensuring older people have relational, non-adversarial pathways for resolving conflict.
- **Mandate training for social workers in elder abuse prevention and intervention**, ensuring frontline responders are equipped with specialised skills.
- **Formally include social workers in elder abuse triage teams**, ensuring that support extends beyond legal interventions.

By failing to incorporate **social work, mediation, and family-based interventions**, the National Plan ignores a crucial part of the solution. A truly **integrated elder abuse response** requires **both social and legal support**, ensuring that older people can access the help they need before crisis intervention becomes the only option.

3.1 A critical gap in the National Plan: excluding older people from family relationship services

One of the most significant oversights in the *National Plan to End the Abuse and Mistreatment of Older People 2024–2034* is its failure to integrate elder abuse responses with **federal government services such as Family Relationship Services (FRSP)**. These services provide vital support for individuals and families facing conflict, offering mediation, counselling, and assistance for those experiencing family violence. Even though elder abuse often arises from **intergenerational conflict, coercion, and financial pressure within families**, the National Plan does not recognise older people as a priority group for these services. This exclusion raises an important question: *why is family relationship support available for separating couples, parents, and younger families in crisis, but not for older Australians who experience similar patterns of family violence and coercion?*

Older people experiencing family-based mistreatment, including financial abuse and emotional coercion, often wish to preserve relationships rather than pursue adversarial legal action. Family relationship services already play a crucial role in helping families resolve disputes, yet older Australians are largely **overlooked as potential beneficiaries** of these services. Instead, they are often directed into aged care pathways or legal interventions, which may not align with their personal needs or preferences. A more integrated approach would provide older Australians access to **mediation and support within a family-centred framework**, ensuring that their rights, autonomy, and safety are upheld without forcing them into formal legal processes.

The absence of elder abuse integration into current family relationship services reflects a fragmented policy response. Older Australians seeking help must navigate a complex and disconnected service landscape, often with little guidance on where to turn. If the National Plan were to acknowledge older people as legitimate recipients of relationship support services, it could provide a **preventative, restorative alternative** that reduces harm before crises escalate. Family relationship services already possess the expertise to manage complex family conflicts, and with the right training and funding, they could offer tailored interventions for older people experiencing abuse. They also have a strong national infrastructure in the over 60 Family Relationship Centres that are effectively a hub for family services comprising multiple related support services. Incorporating elder abuse response services within this existing infrastructure would be extremely cost-effective.

To strengthen the National Plan, elder abuse should be formally embedded within family relationship services, allowing for mediation, counselling, and family dispute resolution to be accessible to older Australians and their families. Practitioners in these services should receive additional specialist training on elder abuse dynamics, ensuring that complex issues like financial coercion, intergenerational conflict, and dependency are properly addressed. Storey et al. (2025), investigated the prevalence and reasons behind older adults withdrawing from abuse support services and found that 34% of victims discontinued services, often due to denial of abuse or unwillingness to engage with intervention plans. The findings underscore the need for tailored approaches that address victims' readiness and barriers to accepting support. Family relationship services are well-versed in the conflict dynamics within families and have strategies to engage parties in a mediation process. This skill set would be usefully employed in elder abuse prevention responses.

By excluding family relationship services from the elder abuse response, the National Plan reinforces **age-based gaps in service provision** that deny older people the same relationship support that younger families receive. A more integrated, whole-of-life approach would acknowledge that family conflict does not end at retirement age and that older Australians deserve access to the same services that promote family wellbeing and prevent harm across the lifespan. Without this shift, the National Plan risks failing to provide meaningful, preventative solutions that respect the dignity, autonomy, and relationships of older people experiencing mistreatment and can be seen as a form of systemic ageism.

3.2 Recommendations

- **Establish dedicated elder abuse social work programs:**
Create federally funded specialist social work teams within aged care, health, and community services. These teams should focus exclusively on elder abuse, offering early intervention, case management, and trauma-informed support.
- **Expand funding for mediation and counselling services:**
Increase federal investment in elder mediation, family counselling, and case management. This would provide older people with relational and non-adversarial pathways to resolve conflicts, addressing issues such as financial abuse and family coercion before they escalate.
- **Integrate social work into triage and response teams:**
Formally include trained social workers in elder abuse triage teams. Their expertise can ensure that cases are assessed holistically, providing options

beyond legal intervention and tailoring support to the unique dynamics of elder mistreatment.

- **Develop specialised training and qualification standards:**
Mandate comprehensive training for social workers in elder abuse prevention and intervention, similar to the qualifications required in state-level family violence responses. Establishing minimum standards will ensure that practitioners are well-equipped to handle the complexities of elder abuse.
- **Integrate elder abuse into family relationship services:**
Recognise older Australians as a priority group within existing Family Relationship Services. Leveraging the national network of Family Relationship Centres can offer cost-effective, tailored mediation and support, bridging the current gap in service provision for older individuals.
- **Promote a balanced, integrated approach:**
Ensure that federal policies balance legal responses with strong social support mechanisms. By integrating both legal and relational interventions, the National Plan can offer a more comprehensive response that respects older people's preferences and preserves family relationships.

3.3 Conclusion

The current shift in federal policy toward a predominantly legal framework for addressing elder abuse represents a critical oversight. By sidelining direct social support—such as mediation, case management, and trauma-informed counselling—the National Plan fails to acknowledge the nuanced needs and preferences of older Australians who often seek help through relational and supportive pathways. Integrating dedicated social work programs and expanding the role of family relationship services could bridge this gap, offering early, person-centred interventions that prevent crises before they escalate. Ultimately, a balanced strategy that harmonises legal responses with robust, federally funded social supports is essential for safeguarding the dignity, autonomy, and wellbeing of older people.

Theme 4: Families as a protective factor

4. The importance of families in elder abuse prevention and response

Families play a central role in the lives of older people, yet the National Plan consultation draft fails to adequately integrate families as key support networks. While elder abuse is often perpetrated by family members, this does not mean that all family involvement should be viewed through a risk-focused lens. Many older people do not want to report a family member to legal authorities but still need the abuse to stop. Rather than leveraging families as potential allies in preventing and addressing elder abuse, the consultation process primarily framed family involvement as a risk factor rather than a source of support. This overlooks the critical role of family in early intervention, advocacy, and conflict resolution, and risks pushing older people into more adversarial and crisis-driven pathways instead of preventative and relationship-preserving solutions.

4.1 Families as a protective factor against elder abuse

The consultation plan focused heavily on institutional responses, such as legal action, aged care interventions, and government oversight, rather than acknowledging how families—when properly supported—can act as a protective factor against elder abuse. Australian research identified that lower levels of contact with family and friends were associated with a higher likelihood of experiencing elder abuse, Qu, I. et al (2021). Regular, positive family engagement reduces it. Better Place Australia's experience demonstrates that family counselling, supporting self-determination for the older person, and financial counselling support can help resolve disputes before legal intervention is necessary. A prevention-focused model would seek to empower families with the tools to recognise, respond to, and prevent elder abuse, rather than treating them solely as a source of risk. This process is embedded in a MARAM-informed assessment framework and safety planning if required.

4.2 Recognising the complexity of family dynamics

The consultation process oversimplifies family dynamics, treating family members either as perpetrators or as passive actors with no role in safeguarding. In reality, many adult children and caregivers are not abusive but lack the knowledge or resources to effectively support an older relative experiencing mistreatment. Others fear that seeking assistance could have unintended legal consequences, particularly if they are worried about being accused of coercion when trying to protect an older

family member from exploitation. A more nuanced approach is needed—one that recognises the diversity of family situations and provides support, awareness raising, support resources and intervention strategies tailored to different needs. Social workers can play a large role in supporting families to navigate conflict, advocate for older relatives, and protect them from harm in a non-adversarial way. BPA has had a number of cases of the perpetrator presenting as a victim. Victoria Police utilises the L17 form to document family violence incidents, including those involving elder abuse. While the L17 captures demographic information such as age, facilitating the identification of elder abuse cases, there have been concerns regarding the misidentification of the predominant aggressor in family violence situations, Parliament of Victoria (2024). Misidentification can occur due to various factors, including misinterpretation of self-defence actions by victims, leading to significant consequences for those wrongly labelled as perpetrators. This issue underscores the complexity of family dynamics and how interventions need to be better informed and better supported for elder abuse victims.

4.3 Addressing financial abuse with family support

Financial exploitation is one of the most common forms of elder abuse, yet the consultation draft primarily focused on legal protections, such as reforms to Enduring Powers of Attorney (EPOA), rather than exploring complementary family-based solutions. While legal measures are necessary, they do not address the underlying family conflicts, coercion, or financial stressors that often drive elder financial abuse. BPA's data shows that early engagement with financial counsellors and family counselling can prevent financial coercion from escalating into a legal crisis, particularly before a crisis has evolved. A more effective response would include EPOA and financial literacy education for both older people and their families, as well as structured oversight mechanisms—such as mandatory financial health check-ups when EPOAs are activated—to ensure that financial decisions are transparent and protective without being unnecessarily restrictive. Financial institutions also have a role to play, working collaboratively with families to detect and prevent financial abuse while still safeguarding an older person's autonomy. Enacting an EPOA involves issues of capacity. How are these institutions intending to establish this proof as a pre-requirement to enactment?

Financial institutions do have a role to play, implementing independent safeguards and early intervention strategies to detect and prevent financial abuse while still safeguarding an older person's autonomy. A nationally consistent framework integrating these measures would ensure a more comprehensive and equitable approach to preventing elder financial abuse.

4.4 Strengthening family involvement in aged care responses

Families are often the first to notice changes in an older person's wellbeing, yet the consultation draft does not adequately integrate them into aged care safeguarding frameworks. It may be that aged care facilities fail to inform families when concerns about elder abuse arise, even when the older person would benefit from family involvement. This lack of communication can create barriers to effective safeguarding and advocacy. Families should not be treated as secondary stakeholders in aged care responses but rather as key partners in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of older residents. A stronger model would require aged care providers to notify family members—where appropriate and with consent—when elder abuse concerns arise. In addition, aged care policies should include structured family engagement strategies, ensuring that family members are kept informed, consulted in care decisions, and included in elder abuse awareness-raising efforts. BPA provides mental health support to over 120 aged care facilities. We have created learning modules for aged care workers that raise awareness of responding to elder abuse and cognition challenges. We consider that there is a substantial deficit in knowledge and that more resources are required to improve responses for residents and supporting families. Additionally, specific awareness raising across a family also requires focus.

4.5 Education and resources for families on supported decision making

The National Plan addresses supported decision-making (SDM) in empowering older adults experiencing abuse. Strickland et al. (2021) analyse models and suggest that SDM can be a valuable strategy in addressing elder abuse. BPA considers that SDM needs greater prominence in the plan and that it should also be described as a means and prescription for family education and resourcing. The common adult children's phrase 'We are going to put Mum into a nursing home' is problematic in terms of its inherent ageism and deprivation of the older person's agency. Although benevolent in its intent, it demonstrates a complete lack of awareness of the older persons' rights to self-determination. There is a clear and pressing need for education and resources to deepen understanding of older people's rights and ways for families to make better-informed decisions. Provision of educational materials at key transition points such as EPOA creation and entry into aged care, BPA recommends this support with appropriate educational resources.

4.6 Encouraging restorative approaches to family conflict

Many older people who experience mistreatment by a family member do not want punitive legal action but still want the abuse to stop. The consultation draft prioritises legal responses without fully considering restorative and conflict-resolution-based solutions, such as family counselling and mediation. BPA's family mediation model has proven effective in helping families resolve disputes while safely maintaining relationships (where appropriate) and safeguarding the older person's rights. This approach reflects recent research by Burnes et al. (2023). Expanding access to elder mediation and trauma-informed family support programs would provide older Australians with a viable alternative to court-based interventions, particularly in cases where risk is assessed as low, and no criminality is present. Without a funding model that supports earlier interventions, the BPA support service can only respond to high-risk cases.

4.7 The need for a balanced approach inclusive of families

The National Plan consultation process failed to integrate families as both potential perpetrators and crucial supporters. While legal and institutional responses remain important, early intervention, family engagement, and mediation are proven strategies for preventing cases of elder abuse from escalating into crisis. However, the consultation draft lacks a cohesive vision for how these elements fit together, resulting in a fragmented and incomplete response. A stepped model of intervention, which recognises the role of families at different stages of the abuse response, would provide greater clarity and a more person-centred approach to safeguarding older people.

4.8 What's needed?

A shift is required away from a focus on purely legalistic approaches to elder abuse towards early intervention and restorative strategies that involve families in a constructive and proactive way. Families should be provided with awareness raising, learning opportunities and support to recognise and respond to elder abuse before it escalates into a crisis. Collaboration between aged care providers, government agencies, and family networks must be strengthened to ensure a whole-of-community safeguarding approach.

4.9 Recommendations for a more integrated family response

- Expand access to social worker supported elder abuse prevention services, helping families resolve disputes before legal intervention is necessary.
- Develop family-based elder abuse prevention programs, including education on financial decision-making and power dynamics.
- Encourage intergenerational family conversations about safeguarding older relatives through mediation and counselling services.
- Require aged care providers to notify families (with consent) when elder abuse concerns arise and include them in safeguarding discussions.
- Increase funding for family-inclusive support services, ensuring that early intervention programs prioritise keeping families intact while protecting older people's rights and safety.
- Establish a network of family-focused elder abuse prevention counsellors, ensuring that families experiencing distress have access to professional guidance.
- Provide training for families on recognising the early warning signs of elder abuse, particularly in cases of financial exploitation and coercion.
- Develop and promote community-based support groups for caregivers and families of older people experiencing abuse, ensuring they have access to peer support and professional guidance.

4.10 Conclusion: integrating families into the elder abuse response

The National Plan consultation draft does not provide a coherent, integrated strategy for engaging families in elder abuse prevention and response. Instead, it fragments responsibilities across legal, aged care, and government services, missing an opportunity to leverage families as protective factors and early responders. By failing to fully incorporate family-inclusive support models, elder mediation, and preventative education, the plan risks pushing older people into more adversarial systems that may not align with their wishes. A more balanced, stepped approach—one that integrates families, social support, and legal responses—is essential to ensuring older Australians receive the right interventions at the right time.

Theme 5: Need for a dynamic approach informed by ever-growing insights

The plan reflects the authorship of a legislative hand. The plan has a degree of rigidity in its matrix structure of principles, focus areas and priorities. In an area of expanding knowledge and uneven support systems, this rigidity and desire to use legislation to force control may be problematic. As the prior themes 1 to 4 covered earlier, there are gaps within the plan as it stands. The need for an ability to respond to be more dynamic in its approach and respond to improved data and service system insights is evident. A desire to focus on a locus of control, for example, the harmonisation of enduring powers of attorneys, is desirable but it can obstruct a superior systems view. The plan will emanate decisions about where to best invest in policy and change to reach its aim of ending the abuse and mistreatment of older people over 10 years.

While the plan lays out a comprehensive vision supported by 2 detailed 5-year action plans, BPA is concerned that it may be too rigid to adapt effectively to emerging research, evolving service models, and demographic changes over time.

One potential limitation is the fixed nature of the plan's decade-long structure. While a long-term approach ensures continuity, it may also make it difficult to adjust strategies in response to new developments. The plan commits to monitoring and evaluation, but it does not clearly outline how new research findings or shifts in population needs will be systematically integrated into its strategies. Without built-in mechanisms for adaptation, there is a risk that the plan will not fully account for changes in elder abuse patterns, service capacity, or broader social trends affecting older Australians.

To strengthen its effectiveness, the plan could benefit from a more dynamic and flexible approach that allows for regular reassessment and policy adjustments. Introducing biennial or triennial review cycles would enable ongoing assessment of progress and allow for the incorporation of new evidence or demographic trends. Additionally, maintaining active engagement with stakeholders—including older adults, caregivers, researchers, and service providers—could ensure that the plan remains relevant and responsive to real-world challenges. Another key consideration is the development of policy frameworks that allow for iterative adjustments, so that successful pilot programs or innovative prevention strategies can be scaled up, while ineffective approaches can be phased out.

By embedding mechanisms for ongoing adaptation, the plan could better navigate the complexities of elder abuse and remain responsive to the evolving needs of Australia's ageing population. Ensuring flexibility would allow for a more effective response to the issue, balancing the long-term vision with the ability to integrate new knowledge and practice improvements as they emerge.

BPA would draw attention to a number of recent research reports and findings that demonstrate how recent research insights can inform the dynamic development of the plan.

5. Strengthening intervention models

The **Vulnerable Elder Protection Team (VEPT)** (Baek et al. 2023) was developed as an emergency department/hospital-based elder mistreatment response team. Its evaluation highlights:

- The need for **systematic, rigorous evaluation** of elder abuse interventions.
- Challenges in assessing mistreatment, particularly where an older adult chooses to remain in an unsafe environment.
- Consideration of the potential for **intervention and reporting to increase the risk** of future abuse.

The **person-centred care approach** suggests that elder abuse interventions should be **guided by the preferences of victims**, even when this includes maintaining relationships with perpetrators. This model **prioritises trust-building** and recognises that safety may be defined differently by individuals experiencing abuse. This reflects what is known as the dignity of risk whereby older person's autonomy to make decisions reflects their right to make 'bad decisions' and take risks.

5.1 Financial exploitation and empowerment approaches

5.1.1 The Successful Aging Through Financial Empowerment (SAFE) program (Hall & Lichtenberg 2025) demonstrates the success of financial coaching in reducing financial exploitation among older adults:

- **Empowerment-centred financial coaching** has proven effective in reducing stress and improving financial security.
- Interventions that focus on **victim agency and decision-making** rather than solely legalistic responses are particularly impactful.

5.1.2 Family-driven interventions have also been shown to be effective, particularly when families engage in **restorative justice principles**,

honouring the victim's wishes while ensuring accountability for perpetrators. In their 2022 case study, Kilaberia and Stum examine a family's successful intervention in elder family financial exploitation. The family effectively addressed the exploitation by honouring the victim's wishes, supporting and holding the perpetrator accountable, restoring family relationships, and making collective decisions. The study highlights the importance of a family systems approach and the application of restorative justice principles

5.2 Addressing systemic gaps in elder abuse research

The **Global Elder Abuse Mega-Map** (Mikton et al. 2022) identifies **data gaps in elder abuse prevalence and intervention effectiveness**, particularly in low-income settings. It does suggest though while multidisciplinary teams are effective in elder abuse intervention, **lack of funding and victim refusal** remain major barriers to intervention implementation.

5.3 Framing ageism and elder abuse in public discourse

5.3.1 Research suggests that **videos and multimedia interventions** (Lytle 2024) are more effective in **reducing ageism** compared to text-based or infographic materials. The **concept of self-ageism**—where older adults internalise negative stereotypes—has been proposed as an area needing intervention alongside broader anti-ageism efforts.

5.3.2 Findings from the **Australian Human Rights Commission's *Shaping Perceptions* study** (Australian Human Rights Commission 2024) further emphasise how **ageism in media and public discourse reinforces negative stereotypes about aging**. The study reveals that older Australians are frequently portrayed as **dependent, frail, and a burden on society**, which contributes to a **culture that tolerates their exclusion from decision-making and services**. When older people are framed as **passive, incapable, or a drain on resources**, it becomes easier to **justify reducing their autonomy, ignoring their voices, and deprioritising their rights in policy and funding decisions**. The study confirms that ageism is embedded in both cultural narratives and systemic policies, which makes a direct, explicit response to ageism essential for any meaningful elder abuse prevention strategy. The National Plan must not only acknowledge ageism as a key driver of elder abuse but also commit to proactive measures that challenge discriminatory attitudes and practices

5.3.3 In their 2024 study, Okun and Ayalon investigate strategies to combat ageism, focusing on the often-overlooked concept of self-ageism. Surveying 731 Israelis aged 60–85, they identify "inner work"—personal efforts by older adults to challenge internalised ageist beliefs—as a crucial fifth strategy, complementing existing approaches like legal reforms, intergenerational programs, educational initiatives, and media campaigns. The authors emphasise the importance of involving older adults in all stages of anti-ageism campaigns to effectively address both societal and self-directed ageism.

5.4 Wellbeing

In their 2023 study, Martinez et al. explore the application of person-centred care within elder mistreatment interventions, focusing on integrating victim preferences into risk-reduction plans. Through a detailed case study, they demonstrate that building a trusting relationship over time allows for the incorporation of individualised definitions of safety and wellbeing, even when these preferences involve maintaining contact with the abuser or staying in one's home. The National Plan lacks sophistication and appreciation of the balance of elder mistreatment risk levels with the support of victim autonomy. Wellbeing ensured by interventions respect personal choices while monitoring safety. This is a key aspect of the BPA service and is not understood by the National Plan.

5.5 No perfect response

In their study, Storey et al. (2022) examined 164 elder abuse cases managed by a community agency's multidisciplinary team, identifying 369 distinct interventions. Through content analysis, these interventions were categorised into 30 strategies and 12 higher-order categories to assess efficacy. Findings revealed that 35% of interventions had positive outcomes, including novel approaches targeting perpetrators, such as physical treatment, social support, and communication; however, **21% of interventions could not be implemented, often due to funding constraints or victim refusal, underscoring the need for policy and practice adjustments to enhance intervention success.** This supports the proposition of a stepped model of care response and the need for multidisciplinary services support.

5.6 Recommendations

- **Regular review cycles:** Implement biennial or triennial assessments to integrate new research and adapt to evolving demographic trends.
- **Adaptive policy frameworks:** Build in mechanisms for iterative policy adjustments, allowing successful pilots to be scaled and ineffective strategies phased out.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** Establish continuous consultation with older adults, caregivers, researchers, and service providers to ensure the plan remains responsive.
- **Enhanced evaluation:** Strengthen data collection and systematic evaluations to monitor intervention outcomes and identify emerging gaps.

5.7 Conclusion

The static, decade-long framework of the current plan risks becoming outdated in the face of rapidly evolving research, service models, and demographic shifts. A dynamic approach—incorporating regular review cycles, adaptive policy frameworks, and ongoing stakeholder engagement—is essential to bridge these gaps. By systematically integrating new evidence and fine-tuning interventions based on real-world outcomes, the plan can remain both relevant and effective. Ultimately, fostering flexibility in policy-making will ensure that elder abuse prevention strategies are responsive, evidence-based, and attuned to the complex realities of an aging population.

Theme 6: Ensuring transparency and balance in federal elder abuse funding

The Australian Human Rights Commission's survey on Financial Enduring Powers of Attorney strengthens the argument for a more balanced funding and policy approach to elder abuse by highlighting key gaps in public awareness, understanding, and access to safeguards, Australian Human Rights Commission. (2024). While the National Plan consultation draft places heavy emphasis on legal interventions, this survey underscores that legal mechanisms alone are insufficient unless accompanied by education, oversight, and social support systems that help older Australians make informed decisions and protect themselves from financial exploitation.

A key finding of the survey is that while 88% of Australians are aware they can appoint someone to manage their financial affairs, only 50% recognise the term "enduring power of attorney", and 87% have not set one up. This lack of engagement suggests that simply having legal provisions does not translate into widespread understanding or use, reinforcing the need for better education and access to financial planning support. Moreover, 37% of principals appointed decision-makers with risk factors for elder abuse, highlighting the reality that financial abuse prevention requires more than just legal instruments—it demands proactive guidance, oversight, and social interventions to mitigate risk.

The imbalance in federal elder abuse policy and funding is further exposed by the survey's call for national consistency in FEPOA laws, better public education, and a national awareness strategy. These recommendations align with BPA's argument that a social work-informed, family violence-based approach must complement legal interventions. However, beyond FEPOA inconsistencies, the survey findings reinforce the broader issue that **Australia's response to elder abuse remains fragmented across states and territories, leading to inconsistent protections, service gaps, and barriers to access** for older Australians.

For over a decade, elder abuse prevention efforts have developed in silos, resulting in **uneven service availability, varied legal protections, and a lack of cohesive national oversight**. The **federal government should fund the development of a nationally consistent response to elder abuse** that ensures a uniform, evidence-based, and accessible approach prioritising prevention, intervention, and support.

6. Why federal funding is needed for a nationally consistent response

- **Elder abuse is a national issue:** With an ageing population and growing recognition of elder abuse, a systematic, national approach is necessary to replace **disparate state-based responses**. The National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians (Elder Abuse) 2019-2023 laid some groundwork, but its impact was **limited without sustained federal funding**.
- **Current responses are uneven:** Different state and territory programs result in **varying levels of service access, risk assessment frameworks, and legal protections**. Some states have specialist elder abuse services, while others rely on **generic family violence or community support models**, which may not address the unique needs of older people.
- **Federal leadership would ensure sustainable and integrated services:** A **federally funded model could establish a minimum standard of response**, ensuring every older Australian has access to **risk assessment, legal protections, social work interventions, and financial and psychological support**. It would also **reduce duplication and improve coordination** between aged care, legal services, financial counselling, and family violence agencies.
- **Data collection and research gaps need national oversight:** There is **no national prevalence study that includes aged care residents**, leaving a critical gap in understanding the true extent of abuse. Federal leadership could **fund comprehensive data collection and monitoring** to improve policy and service planning.
- **Aged care is already a federal responsibility:** Many older Australians experiencing abuse live in or interact with **federally regulated aged care services**. A **specialist elder abuse response within aged care**—beyond existing complaint mechanisms—could help **prevent and address abuse** within these settings.
- **Cost savings and social impact:** Elder abuse has **long-term health, legal, and social costs** affecting the broader system, including **healthcare, social services, and the justice system**. Early intervention and specialist support **reduce hospitalisations, homelessness, and crisis service reliance**, making a national investment cost-effective.

6.1 What a nationally consistent response could look like

- **Federally funded, social worker supported, specialist elder abuse prevention services** in every state and territory.
- **A national risk assessment and intervention framework** for consistent service provision.
- **Stronger collaboration between aged care, legal, financial, and health services.**
- **A dedicated elder abuse data collection strategy** to inform future policy.
- **A national education and awareness campaign** to reduce stigma and improve reporting.

6.2 Strengthening federal funding transparency

The BPA survey of Older People's preferences in seeking support challenges the National Plan's **narrow focus on legal responses**, demonstrating that **education, family engagement, and proactive safeguards are just as critical as legal protections in preventing financial elder abuse**. BPA's calls for a **rebalancing of federal funding priorities**, ensuring that **legal frameworks are complemented by well-funded, accessible social support systems**. A more **integrated, multi-disciplinary approach**—one that includes **social work-led interventions, financial education, and mediation services**—would better align with how older Australians engage with financial decision-making and safeguard themselves against abuse.

6.3 Recommendations

For the National Plan to be effective, it must:

- **Clearly articulate how funding will be allocated across different intervention types** (legal, social work, mediation, prevention, and crisis response).
- **Commit to tracking and publicly reporting expenditures** over the 10-year period, ensuring **transparency in funding priorities**.
- **Acknowledge and address the imbalance** in federal elder abuse funding, ensuring that **social work-led intervention models receive equal investment alongside legal services**.
- **Fund dedicated elder abuse social work services** that can operate independently of legal practices while having referral pathways to legal support when needed.

- **Ensure a nationally consistent, evidence-based elder abuse response** that prioritises **equitable access, prevention, intervention, and ongoing support** for all older Australians.

6.4 Conclusion

A federally funded, **nationally consistent elder abuse response** would **close service gaps, improve protections, and ensure equitable access to support across Australia**. Given the increasing urgency of this issue, **now is the time for the federal government to take leadership in creating a robust, sustainable, and integrated national response**.

Critique of the proposed program logic framework

7. Lack of concrete evaluation measures

- The **program logic** emphasises **monitoring and evaluation**, but it does not specify how the effectiveness of interventions will be measured. Research highlights the need for **rigorous program evaluations**, Baek, D., et al. (2023).
- The **Vulnerable Elder Protection Team** research shows that outcomes can be measured and that varied definitions of elder mistreatment pose measurement challenges, Baek, D., et al, (2023).
- **Recommendation:** Define **measurable indicators** for success (e.g., reduction in repeat abuse cases, service utilisation rates) rather than relying on broad, long-term outcomes.

7.1 Weak focus on person-centred and trauma-informed care

- While the **program logic** mentions **person-centred and trauma-informed approaches**, it does not address how these will be **operationalised** in service delivery.
- Martinez et al. (2023) notes that **person-centred elder abuse interventions** must include victim priorities, even when they involve **maintaining relationships with perpetrators**.
- **Recommendation:** Develop clear **guidelines** for how **person-centred care will be integrated** into interventions and how service providers will be trained.

7.2 Insufficient consideration of financial exploitation

- Financial exploitation is recognised in the **program logic**, but the approach seems to focus mainly on **Enduring Power of Attorney (EPOA) reforms**.
- Research shows that **financial coaching and empowerment-based approaches** (e.g., SAFE program) are effective in preventing exploitation.
- Financial capability raising in families – Banks' role in encouraging family awareness of financial abuse.

- **Recommendation:** Include **financial coaching interventions** to support older adults in managing their finances **independently and securely**.

7.3 Limited recognition of informal and family-led interventions

- The **program logic** primarily focuses on **formal services and legal frameworks**, but research (Kilaberia & Stum 2022) has shown that **family-driven interventions** using **restorative justice principles** can be highly effective.
- **Recommendation:** Consider supporting **family mediation and intervention models** that allow for **non-adversarial resolutions**.

7.4 Consideration of unintended consequences of mandatory reporting

- The **logic** indicates **increased reporting**, however it may be that **mandatory reporting may increase risk** for older adults who do not want formal intervention.
- **Recommendation:** Include **risk mitigation strategies** for cases where reporting might escalate harm, and **explore alternative, voluntary intervention options**.

7.5 Lack of integration with broader ageism and social connection strategies

- Gendron et al. (2016) call for ongoing scrutiny of linguistic practices to combat ageism effectively. The **program logic** lists **reducing ageism** as a goal, but it does not specify **evidence-based methods**.
- Research (Lytle 2024) also finds **that multimedia campaigns (e.g., videos) are the most effective at reducing ageist attitudes**, compared to written information alone. The virtue of a national communications campaign is evident (McEwen et al. 2024).
- Existing Elder Abuse Prevention Networks in Victoria are **running ageism campaigns and synchronising messages** with local councils to achieve greater reach.
- **Recommendation:** Invest in **ageism reduction interventions** that **emphasise intergenerational contact and media representation**.

7.6 Need for stronger multidisciplinary collaboration

- The **program logic** mentions **system coordination**, but research indicates that **multidisciplinary teams improve outcomes** (Storey 2021).
- **Recommendation:** Clearly define **the roles of different sectors** (healthcare, legal, financial, social services) in an **integrated response model**.

7.7 Better use of existing place-based resources and locations to support families and older people

- Reduce silos between support systems and promote inclusivity of older people as family members able to use existing family support services at Family Relationship Centres and the other hundreds of FRSP locations across Australia.

7.8 Conclusion

The **National Plan to End the Abuse and Mistreatment of Older People 2024-2034 program logic** provides a **broad strategic framework** but needs:

1. **Stronger evaluation metrics** to assess effectiveness.
2. **Operationalised person-centred and trauma-informed care** principles.
3. **Expanded financial exploitation prevention approaches** (including financial coaching).
4. **Recognition of informal, family-driven interventions**.
5. **Risk mitigation strategies for mandatory reporting**.
6. **Better ageism reduction strategies, including media-based interventions and using Elder Abuse Prevention networks for messaging**.
7. **A clearer multidisciplinary model for coordination**.
8. **Promote access for older people and families to use existing family support services**.

Application of the SMART goals and tracking framework.

BPA has reviewed the proposed goals and tracking framework and comments as follows.

8. Short-term outcomes (2027)

Current issues in proposed smart alignment

- **Not specific:** Lacks clear definitions of ‘increased and earlier help-seeking’ and what constitutes ‘improved service capacity.’
- **Not measurable:** No baseline data or targets for service access, reporting rates, or system improvements.
- **Not achievable:** No indication of how these improvements will be funded or supported.
- **Not relevant:** Broad statements about ‘equity’ without addressing which groups are at the greatest risk.
- **Not time-bound:** No interim steps or clear deadlines.

SMART-aligned targets for 2027

Current outcome	SMART-aligned version
Increased and earlier help-seeking and reporting of mistreatment or abuse	Increase reports to elder abuse services by 20% by 2027 , through targeted awareness campaigns and improved referral pathways.
Increased equity of access to services providing support for older people	Expand elder abuse services to reach 80% of regional and remote communities by 2027 , with annual progress reviews.
Improved integration, capacity, and capability of services	Train at least 5,000 frontline workers in trauma-informed elder abuse response by 2027 , ensuring compliance with best practices.
Improved data quality	Develop and implement a national elder abuse reporting system by 2026 , with annual public reports on prevalence and response effectiveness.

9. Medium-term outcomes (2030)

Current issues in proposed SMART alignment

- **Not specific:** Terms like ‘age-friendly,’ ‘inclusive,’ and ‘connected’ are vague and subjective.
- **Not measurable:** No clear way to track ‘reduced opportunity for abuse’ or ‘enhanced legal and aged care frameworks.’
- **Not achievable:** No concrete implementation steps outlined for systemic change.
- **Not relevant:** No explicit focus on vulnerable groups, such as First Nations people, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, or LGBTQ+ elders.
- **Not time-bound:** No deadline for community-wide behaviour change.

SMART-aligned targets for 2030

Current outcome	SMART-aligned version
Whole of community and systems sustain behaviours to prevent and respond to abuse	Reduce prevalence of elder abuse by 15% by 2030 , measured through national elder abuse surveys and service data.
Communities are more age-friendly, inclusive, and connected	Implement intergenerational programs in 75% of local government areas by 2030 , fostering community inclusion.
Reduced opportunity for abuse and mistreatment	Strengthen legal protections for financial elder abuse by introducing national Power of Attorney (EPOA) consistency by 2029.
Enhanced legal and aged care frameworks	Ensure 100% of aged care facilities comply with new safeguarding laws by 2030 , with enforcement audits.
Reporting aligns better with actual prevalence	Double the number of older people accessing elder abuse prevention and support services by 2030 , ensuring reporting gaps are addressed.

10. Long-term outcomes (2034)

Current issues in proposed SMART alignment

- **Not specific:** 'Whole of community promotes older people's rights' is too broad without concrete actions.
- **Not measurable:** No clear benchmarks for 'service sustainability' or 'institutional safeguards.'
- **Not achievable:** No strategy for ensuring compliance across different jurisdictions.
- **Not relevant:** No mention of technology, AI, or digital risks, which are becoming increasing factors in elder abuse.
- **Not time-bound:** No phased approach toward achieving these long-term outcomes.

A better set of outcomes for measuring SMART-aligned targets for 2034

Current outcome	SMART-aligned version
Whole of community and systems promote older people's rights	Ensure 90% of Australians demonstrate awareness of elder rights through national surveys by 2034 , following public education campaigns.
Services operate with sustained capacity for trauma-informed approaches	Embed mandatory trauma-informed elder abuse training in 100% of social work, aged care, and legal qualifications by 2032.
Institutions identify, prevent, and report financial abuse	Reduce financial elder abuse cases by 30% by 2034 , through banking safeguards, education, and improved legal protections.
Government reforms fully integrated	Ensure all elder abuse prevention measures outlined in Aged Care Royal Commission reforms are fully implemented by 2033.
Ongoing improvements in data collection and research	Develop a nationally linked elder abuse database by 2032 , integrating law enforcement, aged care, and health sectors.

11. Suggested approach to a better framing

BPA proposed SMART goal tracking framework

11.1 Short-term goals (by 2027)

Goal	SMART target	Responsible party	Milestones and progress measures
Increase elder abuse reporting	Increase reports to elder abuse services by 20% through awareness campaigns and improved referral pathways.	Government agencies, elder advocacy groups	2025: Integrate national campaign into State campaigns 2026: Implement hotline expansion and digital referrals interface 2027: Assess impact via service utilisation data.
Expand service accessibility	Ensure 80% of regional and remote communities have access to elder abuse support services.	State and territory governments, community organisations	2025: Identify service gaps 2026: Pilot programs in remote areas 2027: Evaluate service reach.
Improve professional training	Train 5,000 frontline workers (health, aged care, legal) in trauma-informed elder abuse response.	Aged care sector, training institutions	2025: Develop training curriculum 2026: Implement training 2027: Evaluate effectiveness.
Develop national elder abuse reporting system	Launch a nationally linked elder abuse reporting database to track cases and outcomes.	Federal government, research bodies	2025: Secure funding 2026: System development 2027: Full rollout.

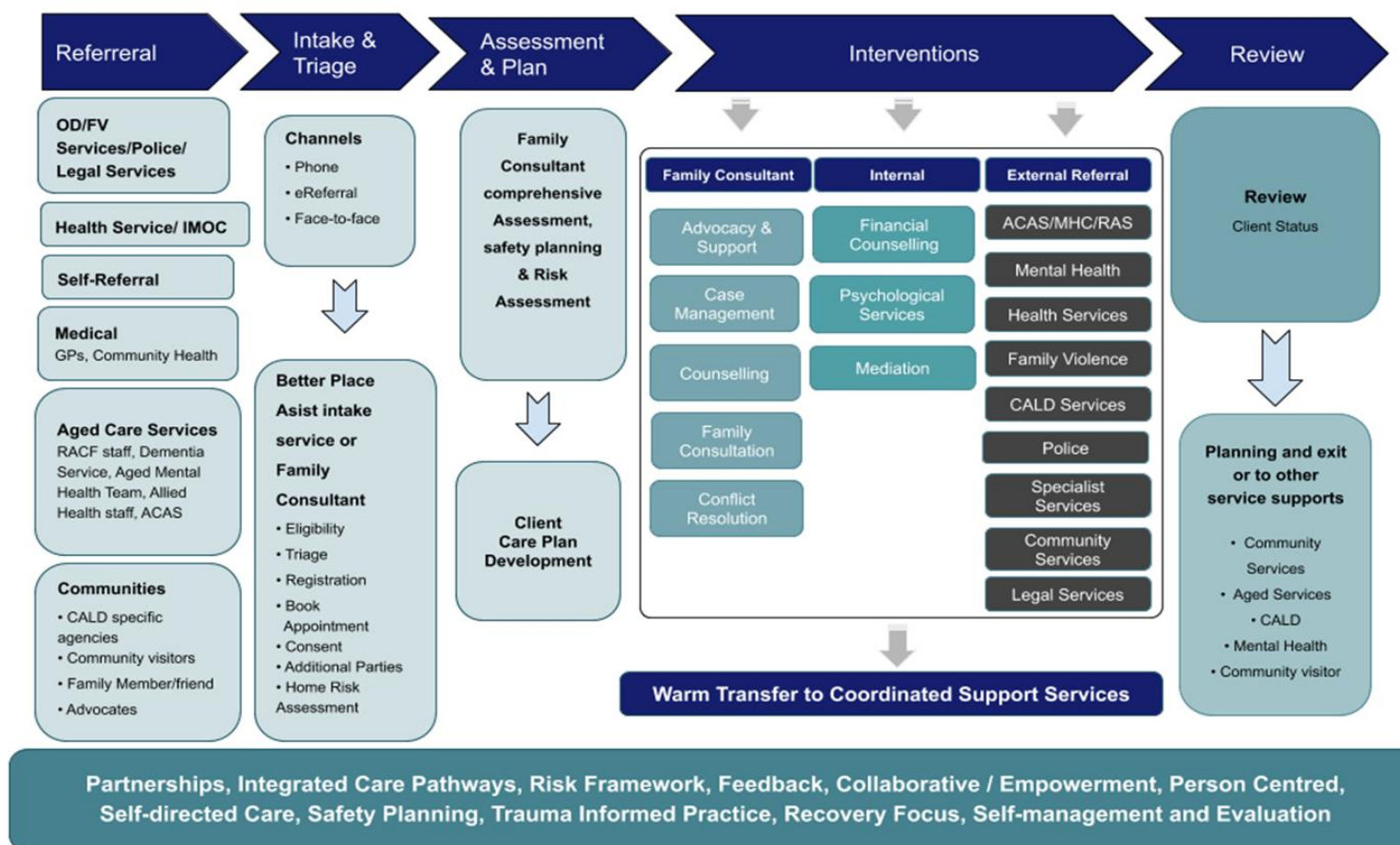
11.2 Medium-term goals (by 2030)

Goal	SMART target	Responsible party	Milestones and progress measures
Reduce elder abuse prevalence	Achieve a 15% reduction in elder abuse cases through targeted prevention efforts.	Government agencies, elder advocacy groups	2028: Implement community education 2029: Assess progress using prevalence surveys 2030: Adjust policy interventions as needed.
Strengthen financial abuse protections	Introduce national consistency in Power of Attorney (EPOA) laws to prevent financial abuse.	Federal and state governments, financial institutions	2027: Draft legislative framework 2028: Conduct stakeholder consultations 2029: Pass national legislation.
Enhance aged care legal compliance	Ensure 100% of aged care facilities comply with safeguarding laws via regular audits.	Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission	2027: Develop enforcement guidelines 2028: Conduct facility audits 2030: Public reporting on compliance rates.
Double access to elder abuse prevention services	Expand services so twice as many older Australians can access support.	State and territory governments, community organisations	2028: Increase funding allocation 2029: Scale service delivery 2030: Evaluate access and effectiveness.

11.3 Long-term goals (by 2034)

Goal	SMART Target	Responsible party	Milestones and progress measures
Increase awareness of elder rights	Ensure 90% of Australians understand elder rights via national surveys.	Federal government, media, education sector	2030: Launch national education campaign 2032: Conduct mid-term evaluation 2034: Assess public awareness levels.
Ensure sustained trauma-informed care	Embed mandatory elder abuse training in 100% of social work, aged care, and legal programs.	Universities, aged care sector	2028: Update accreditation requirements 2030: Implement training 2034: Monitor compliance.
Reduce financial elder abuse cases	Achieve a 30% reduction in financial abuse cases through banking safeguards and education.	Banks, financial regulators, legal sector	2028: Strengthen fraud detection policies 2030: Conduct financial literacy training 2034: Evaluate impact.
Fully integrate elder abuse protections in legislation	Implement all elder abuse reforms from the Aged Care Royal Commission.	Federal and state governments, legal sector	2026: Begin legislative reviews 2028: Pass reforms 2034: Conduct full impact assessment.

Appendix 1 – BPA Elder Abuse Specialist service client journey



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