



Elder  
Abuse  
Prevention  
Unit

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# Queensland Focus

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## 2019 Elder Abuse Conference

The 6th National Elder Abuse conference will be hosted by QLD's own Caxton Legal in partnership with ADA Australia.

### Be sure to save the date:

- July 22 - 23rd, 2019.

It will be held at Brisbane's Convention and Exhibition Centre. If you would like to register your interest email:

[info@neac2019.com.au](mailto:info@neac2019.com.au)

Stay tuned for more details on keynote

## AIFS — Elder Abuse Research Update

### Key Facts:

- Preliminary stages of elder abuse prevalence study nearly complete.
- Prevalence study expected to begin end of 2018 (stage 2)
- Stage 2 results expected early 2020.

The Australian Attorney-General's Department (the department) has funded a national research agenda which aims to build the evidence base on the prevalence, drivers and dynamics of abuse of older Australians.

Since 2016, a number of projects have been commissioned to address different knowledge gaps about elder abuse, with a particular focus on measuring the prevalence of elder abuse in Australia. Two pieces of formative research were conducted to provide an overview of issues surrounding elder abuse in Australia, identify key gaps in knowledge (and options to address them) and outline methodological approaches for a national prevalence study.

**Stage 1** of conducting a national prevalence study began in 2017, with the goals of developing a research definition for elder abuse, developing and testing survey tools and undertaking secondary analysis of existing datasets to fill key knowledge gaps. Results from this stage are expected early 2019.

**Stage 2** of the research agenda involves undertaking the prevalence study, comprised of 2 complimentary surveys. Around 5000-6000 older Australians (66+) will complete one survey, while 2500 people aged 18+ will complete the other aimed at the general community.

Considerations for future research priorities may include co-designing research in collaboration with Indigenous and CALD communities and conducting research on elder abuse within a broader scope of inquiry, such as in studies of dementia, ageing or family violence.

## My Health Records — update

A reminder to all that the opt-out period for the individual My Health Records has been extended until January 31st, 2019. Here are some recent legislative/ proposed changes, as reported by the ABC [here](#).

- Legislative change: Law enforcement may only access a My Health Record with an appropriate court order
- Legislative change: If a person cancels their health record, it must be "destroyed"
- "Proposed" change: increased penalties for improper use of a record
- "Proposed" change: information and privacy protections regarding minors and 'associated persons' within family violence situations
- "Proposed" change: Employer ban on requesting/ using health record information
- "Proposed" change: Insurer ban on accessing health record information

Many issues are still being debated, such as what constitutes "destroyed" and how teenagers will be able to maintain control and privacy over their health record.

People can opt-out via [myhealthrecord.gov.au](http://myhealthrecord.gov.au), by calling 1800 723 471 or by completing a form and returning it by mail. Forms can be obtained through many Australia Post shopfronts and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations.

Service funded by:



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## EveryAGE Counts Campaign launched!

“We need to remove the barriers that prevent full participation of older people. At the heart of these barriers are ageist norms and negative attitudes towards getting older and older people.”

Source: *The drivers of ageism: summary report – The Benevolent Society*

In mid October 2018, the Benevolent Society launched the long-term campaign, ‘EveryAGE Counts’, in partnership with a number of influential organisations in Australia. The campaign has its own website – [everyagecounts.org.au](http://everyagecounts.org.au) – where Australians of all ages can take a pledge, watch the campaign video (right) and share their own stories.

The website also hosts a body of **foundational research** that has guided the campaign, as well as its long-term plans and strategies to combat Ageism. The research was launched back in 2017 and explores, **what drives ageism?** The multipronged research took a variety of approaches, such as re-viewing academic literature, conducting surveys and investigating qualitative data. For a quick brief, you can read about the research projects findings in its ‘Drivers of Ageism – summary report’ [here](#). The report summarises important findings such as the difference between the number of people that believe ‘ageism’ is an importance issue and those that actually hold ageist beliefs.

Another interesting read is the [EveryAGE Counts Policy Directions to Challenge Ageism](#) report, which outlines **policy positions on political leadership** and priority work areas to challenge ageism. The campaign will continue to form more specific policy positions in areas such as health, media representation, housing, digital inclusion (and more) as it engages with community and stakeholders and continues its research efforts.



Hold ‘cntrl’ and click picture

### What does ‘Ageism’ have to do with Elder Abuse?

Quoting the EveryAGE Counts summary report (p. 15):

*“Behavioural discrimination occurs in a variety of settings – the literature tells us it is particularly evident in the workplace and in health care. There are also increasing concerns about the extent of elder abuse in the Australian community – both in institutional and family settings”.*

In 2017, NARI’s [‘understanding elder abuse’](#) report also drew clear links between elder abuse and ageism (p. 14).

*“It is important to consider ageism in regard to elder abuse interventions and prevention measures to ensure that older people are not being treated without respect to their agency and decision-making ability.”*

The campaign, and its greater goal of combating ageism, will clearly be important as we move toward a mature approach to elder abuse prevention strategies.

“ageism is often described as discrimination against your future self”

Source: *Campaign launch media release – The Benevolent Society*

# Older people and poverty in Australia

## Taking a peek at the 2018 ACOSS & UNSW poverty report

Anti-poverty week fell on October 14-20 this year, a week where all Australians are encouraged to be involved in raising awareness of poverty related issues. During this week, the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS), in partnership with the University of New South Wales (UNSW), presented their 5<sup>th</sup> Poverty in Australia report, gaining the attention of both the media and politicians. Although the report most prominently highlights the struggles of the many sole parents and their children living below the poverty line, it also presents important data about how older Australians are faring.

Interestingly, the report indicates that a large number of older Australians (defined as 65+) live very close to the relative poverty line. This ultimately means that small financial changes, such as a change to the pension (or lack thereof), can determine whether large numbers of seniors will live above or below the poverty line. Demonstrating this fact, the stats show that older people overall are **less** likely to experience poverty when the poverty line is set at 50% of the median income. They are **more** likely, however, when the poverty line is set at 60%. This seems to emphasize that large numbers of older people may be vulnerable to policy changes or unexpected life events — including victims of financial elder abuse.

Amongst its commentary on older people, the report notes that the most vulnerable demographics of seniors are those that are not in a partner relationship and/ or live in a rental property (whether private or public). People renting their property make up around 10% of the aged population and are more than twice as likely to be living in poverty than other older people.

Reinforcing the report's findings, a recent ABC article reported that the National Debt Helpline was on track to receive record numbers of calls from older Australians in 2018. Older Australians were largely struggling to meet rental and mortgage payments. The Salvos Moneycare service was also reported to have received a large increase in calls from older people concerned about 'severe debt' – debt larger than 6 times their annual income.

### Support:

- Both **St. Vincent de Paul Society** (1800 846 643) and **The Salvation Army** (1300 371 288) offer emergency assistance with items such as food, clothing and household items.
- The [National Debt Helpline](https://www.ndh.gov.au/) (1800 007 007) provides FREE financial counselling for people feeling

### Where to find the report?

- [Davidson, P., Saunders, P., Bradbury, B. and Wong, M. \(2018\), Poverty in Australia, 2018. ACOSS/UNSW Poverty and Inequality Partnership Report No. 2, Sydney: ACOSS](#)

### Referenced ABC article:

- <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-10-16/elderly-financial-hardship-increases/10378570>

# Suicide Prevention & Mental Health Apps

## What's the deal? ... and how do you choose one?

Sources: Black Dog Institute, ABC, EAPU & Beyond Blue

Suicide prevention initiatives are often targeted at younger generations, particularly the emergence of suicide prevention apps. However, suicide remains a key issue for older people too, especially older men. Last year, the ABC reported that [men aged over 85 have the highest rate of suicide](#). Not only are they the most 'at risk' demographic in Australia, the suicide rate of men aged 85+ doubles that of 15-19 year olds. Many older people also continue to support adult children experiencing mental health issues and an increasing number are becoming the primary carers of grandchildren.

Safety planning helps people reduce immediate suicide risks and a variety of apps support people to engage in this process — preferably with a health professional or someone they trust. As older people continue to become increasingly “tech savvy”, suicide prevention apps may be a useful tool to consider as we move further into the future — either as a personal tool for an older person or a means of support for a family member.

So which app is best and how can you know a good mental health app when you see one? Last year, the Black Dog Institute conducted a survey of publicly available apps targeted at suicide prevention. While they identified 123 apps for review, only 40% of these were still available 9 months later. In other words, one app was removed (on average) every 3 days — a clear sign of the rapid turn-over of apps and constant development in this area. The Black Dog Institute recommends you ask some very basic questions when searching for an app:

1. **Don't just look at app ratings** – high star-ratings or numbers of downloads might indicate the popularity of an app, but this doesn't equate to mental health quality.
2. **It sounds obvious** – but look at who developed the app. Do they have experience and a good reputation in mental health?
3. **The humble privacy policy** – With health apps, it's important to know how your data is protected.
4. **Look for evidence** – is there any evidence that the app is effective in achieving its goal?

Of course, there are likely several apps that might adequately meet this criteria. However, one app in our search that appeared to meet this criteria is the [BeyondNOW app](#), created by [Beyond Blue](#). The app supports people to create a safety plan (again, preferably alongside a health professional or trusted person), which identifies people to take action in the following areas:

- Recognising warning signs
- Creating a safe environment
- Identifying reasons to live
- Internal coping strategies
- Socialisation strategies for distraction and support
- Trusted contacts for assisting with a crisis
- Professional contacts for assisting with a crisis

Familiarising yourself with the app may even act as a good refresher for many professionals on the topic of safety planning. The app comes with in-built suggestions that can act as prompts on each of the steps, and once completed, users can email their safety plan to trusted health and personal supports.

### Crisis support

**Lifeline:** 13 11 14

**Suicide Callback Service:** 1300 659 467

### Other supports

**MensLine Australia:** 1300 789 978

**Beyond Blue:** 1300 22 46 36

# Elder abuse in the media



## October:

[NSW man who shot parents to get part of their estate](#) — ABC News — 22 Oct 2018

[What is 'quality' in aged care? Here's what studies say](#) — The Conversation — 24 Oct 2018

[Public guardian wants banks to prevent elder abuse](#) — 4BC News Talk — 25 Oct 2018

[Community network gains momentum to prevent elder abuse](#) — The Courier — 25 Oct 2018

[Human rights bill to be introduced in Queensland this week](#) — Brisbane Times — 29 Oct 2018

## November:

[Bringing social justice to accounting work: Anna Tantau CPA](#) — In The Black CPA Australia — 1 Nov 2018

[The effects of elder abuse on mental health](#) — The Border Mail — 2 Nov 2018

[Elder abuse: seniors rights service to hold discussion in Tamworth](#) — The Northern Daily — 5 Nov 2018

[Can elder mediation prevent abuse?](#) — The Ageing Agenda — 12 Nov 2018

[Dementia's hidden darkness: violence and domestic abuse](#) — The Conversation — 13 Nov 2018

[New resources to help prevent elder abuse](#) — The Ageing Agenda — 16 Nov 2018

[Biggest increase in NSW police numbers for more than 30 years](#) — Sydney Morning Herald — 20 Nov 2018

[State Government welcomes elder abuse inquiry's final report](#) — The Mirage — 20 Nov 2018

[It's hard to think about, but frail older women in nursing homes get sexually abused too](#) — The Conversation — 22 Nov 2018

[Three massive factors for senior financial wellbeing](#) — Bluenotes — 29 Nov 2018

## December:

[Rise in calls to elder abuse hot line sparks fears of 'inheritance impatience'](#) — WA News — 3 Dec 2018

[Public Trustee helping more vulnerable Tasmanians](#) — Mirage News — 6 Dec 2018

## Research:

### EveryAGE Counts Campaign:

- [The drivers of ageism: summary report](#) — The Benevolent Society — Sept. 2017
- [The drivers of ageism: full report](#) — The Benevolent Society — Sept. 2017
- [Policy changes to challenge Ageism](#) — The Benevolent Society — Oct. 2018



### Journals:

- [Utilization of formal support services for elder abuse: do informal supports make a difference?](#) — The Gerontologist — 21 Jun 2018
- [Detecting and reporting domestic abuse of the elderly: mapping the practical concerns of experienced radiographers](#) — University of Cumbria — 2 Jul 2018
- [Identifying forensic injuries of elder abuse](#) — Pathology — 2 Jul 2018
- [Addressing the measurement challenge in elder abuse interventions: need for a severity framework](#) — Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect — 14 Sep 2018
- [Help-seeking among victims of elder abuse: findings from the National Elder Mistreatment Study](#) — The Journals of Gerontology — 17 Oct 2018
- [Screening for intimate partner violence, elder abuse, and abuse of vulnerable adults](#) — JAMA — 23 Oct 2018
- [Mistreatment of older adults and associated psychological distress: findings of a pilot study](#) — Asian Journal of Nursing Education and Research — 24 Oct 2018

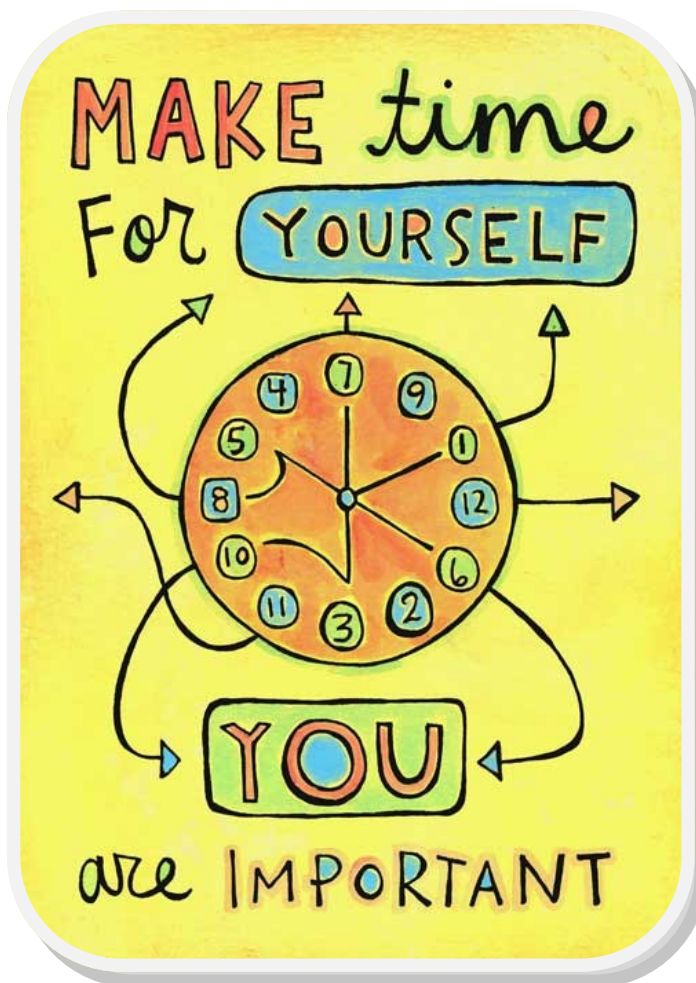
## Self Care

Please forgive me for including an article about 'self-care' in the 'end-of-year' newsletter. We all know it's an ongoing process, however now might be a good time to rethink how we are tracking and what we regularly do to manage our own selves.

One prominent scale that has continued to be used since the late 1960s is the Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale. The scale lists common stressful events and assigns number of 'Life Change Units' associated with its perceived significance. Unfortunately, stress is a very subjective thing and interpretations of your own score is difficult. This is because of the large interpersonal differences between people's reactions and ability to cope with potentially stressful situations. Despite this, the tool (accessible [here](#)) has proven reasonably consistent across cultures at predicting accumulated stress — though personal responses will vary and require some personal reflection.

While the Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale attempts to bring mindfulness of the accumulation of stressful life events, you might find it more useful to simply reflect on your own self-care strategies across a variety of domains such as physically, emotionally, within relationships and in the workplace. A self-care assessment can be found [here](#), which is an adaptation from Saakvitne, Pearlman, & Staff of TSI/CAAP (1996). *Transforming the pain: A workbook on vicarious traumatization*. Norton.

I hope you will find the time to engage with the topic and that these will be useful tools for you. And remember: **be kind to yourself!**



### LINKING SENIORS AND THEIR FAMILIES TO INFORMATION



Seniors Enquiry Line is a Queensland-wide telephone information and referral service which links seniors, their families, friends and carers with information on a wide variety of services throughout Queensland.

The services covered include those relating to retirement, concessions, leisure, accommodation, health, finance, the law, computers, home help, transport and many other areas relevant to Queensland seniors.

Call Seniors Enquiry Line on **1300 135 500** for the cost of a local call, weekdays from 9.00am to 5.00pm or you can visit the website [www.seniorsenquiryline.com.au](http://www.seniorsenquiryline.com.au).

### Disclaimer

Editor's note: *opinions expressed in this edition of "Queensland Focus" do not necessarily reflect those of the Elder Abuse Prevention Unit (EAPU) or UnitingCare Queensland. Articles in this newsletter may be used with the permission of the contributing author. This publication is a guide only and should not substitute independent legal advice.*

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