

MEDIA RELEASE
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The Hidden Shame of Elder Abuse

FMC's Respecting Elders service responds to an emerging subclass of family violence

Family Mediation & Counselling (FMC) Victoria is pleased to announce the launch of its new philanthropically funded service "Respecting Elders". This innovation is a support and conflict resolution service that aims to empower the older person to stop or prevent Elder Abuse. Respecting Elders will be launched by the Age Discrimination Commissioner Hon Dr. Kay Patterson AO on Thursday the 11th of May in Melbourne.

Elder Abuse like other forms of family violence is a controlling behaviour or action that frightens or intimidates an older person. Distressingly it is most likely to be perpetrated by a son or daughter of the older person. * Data shows that financial abuse and psychological/emotional abuse together are the most common forms of abuse reported by older Victorians. Victims are most likely to be female (72.5%), the estimates of incidence are from 6% to 10% of older people.

FMC's CEO Serge Sardo says "Sadly, more than 90% of elder abuse occurs within the family context. In the initial pilot of the Respecting Elders service we found that an older person may not identify what is happening to them as Elder abuse. They may want to cover up the signs of conflict due to fear of what may happen or to 'protect' the family. Our service offers a non-threatening way for older people to resolve conflict in their lives".

The FMC Respecting Elders Service encourages any older person who is feeling that they are being controlled and isolated that they break the silence. A phone call to a FMC counsellor will start a process of consultation and support. The aim of Respecting Elders Service is to ultimately reinstate the elderly person's respect and allow them to live their own life, defined by their wishes.

This project is funded by the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation and will be delivered in partnership with Seniors Rights Victoria and Eastern Community Legal Centre (ECLC). Building upon FMC's Senior Mediation program, Financial Counselling and Family Counselling programs, FMC will work with ECLC to deliver the community awareness strategy. The FMC and ECLC partnership brings together a significant network of agencies and referral pathways for older people. This will enable a reduction in social isolation for the individual and through the greater awareness, reduce the incidences of abuse.

*Profile of elder abuse in Victoria. Analysis of data about people seeking help from Seniors Rights Victoria. SUMMARY REPORT. June 2015. National Ageing Research Institute in partnership with Seniors Rights Victoria

FMC BACKGROUND

FMC is a not for profit organisation established in 1985. FMC provides services across Victoria from over 20 locations to over 7500 clients each year. FMC supports individuals, couples and families (including children and young people) through their conflict issues, financial, relationship and mental health issues. 52% of our clients have a household income of less than \$50,000, 40% have the presence of Family Violence in their situation. FMC can be seen at www.mediation.com.au & www.financialfirstaid.org.au. FMC is funded to provide Family Law services, Family Dispute Resolution Mediation services, Relationship and Family Counselling services, Specialist Children Counselling and Early Intervention services for children, Support services for families experiencing mental health issues, Financial Counselling and Financial Capability services. FMC also conducts community education.

For more information or interviews please contact **Graeme Westaway, Executive Manager Communications (0438 318 311)** graeme.westaway@mediation.com.au