

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (Tuesday 15 June)**

### **Comments by COTA SA chief executive Jane Mussared**

“Widespread, sometimes unconscious, ageism causes us to undervalue older lives.

“Ageism is at the heart of elder abuse, causing us to walk past behaviours, attitudes and actions that cause harm to older people and which we would not accept at any other stage of life.

“We all have a responsibility to confront and challenge our attitudes and perceptions of ageing, and step up against elder abuse.

“Research by the World Health Organisation confirms that ageism is widespread and pernicious. It is at the heart of elder abuse, experienced in some form by 16% of people aged over 60 although the actual rate is likely to be significantly higher due to a lack of awareness and reporting.

“World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is a date on the calendar to remind us all to sit up and take notice. It is time for us all to be better informed about elder abuse whether physical, sexual, psychological, or financial.

“Elder abuse is especially difficult because it often occurs within the context of a family or close network. The perpetrator may be someone who is loved and trusted. Older people can be reluctant to call out elder abuse because they fear it will risk a relationship and lead to isolation from family and friends. Some older people, who rely on another’s care or support, may feel especially vulnerable.

“Older people, as evidence to the Royal Commission highlighted, simply do not know about their rights to protection from abuse.

“The COVID-19 pandemic increased opportunities and risks for elder abuse, with many older people confined to their home during lockdowns or by choice to minimise their exposure to the virus. This limited their access to the networks which often are critical in identifying abuse, such as GPs, community groups, friends and extended family.

“Along with being better informed about elder abuse and what we can do about it, it is time we confronted our own ageism.

“Until we overcome the systemic devaluation of older people in our community, we cannot truly stop the abuse of the safety, rights and freedoms of people of all ages.”

**COTA SA is an older people’s movement and the peak body representing the rights, interests and futures of more than 633,000 older South Australians aged over 50.**

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