

15 June 2020

Recognising our vulnerable elderly on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

Today, on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation Tasmanian Branch (ANMF) are encouraging all members, nurses, midwives and care workers to take the opportunity to start conversations, raise awareness and lead action to prevent elder abuse in our community.

The World Health Organisation defines Elder Abuse as “a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person”. This can occur in any setting, whether it be in the community or in care settings like residential aged care.

“Our members often see the reality of this abuse when vulnerable elderly patients present to healthcare facilities in the community, acute care, or residential aged care settings. They are aware of the signs and understand the actions required to deal with the situation. They work hard to ensure the safety of elderly Tasmanian’s in their care.”

“World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is about extending this awareness to the broader community, to openly discuss the ways in which abuse can occur, what it looks like and how to prevent it. After all, these are some of the most vulnerable in our community. They deserve respect, gratitude and above all else, to be treated with care.”

However, what the recent Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety shows us is that even the elderly in residential aged care facilities are not immune to the effects of inappropriate action to prevent harm or distress.

“The interim report from the commission was titled ‘neglect’ which clearly highlights that, the evidence to date shows how badly the elderly in our society are being failed at a time in their lives where they should be being supported and revered,” said Ms Shepherd.

The ANMF believe that the Federal Government have an opportunity on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day to take affirmative action based on the interim report and recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety including the implementation of legislated staffing ratio’s and transparent reporting requirements for residential aged care providers receiving Federal Government funding.

“By implementing ratios and ensuring transparency for Government funding, those working in aged care settings would be more available to support residents in their care with daily activities like, toileting, showering and meals in a timely manner. More importantly it would improve safety for all residents, with the number of falls and pressure sores reducing as a result of adequate staff availability to assist with mobilization and re-positioning.”

“We know that our members work tirelessly to provide the best care they can for the elderly patients they treat. On World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, we recognise and commend them for this. However, we are again calling on the Federal Government to support these workers and their elderly patients by ensuring the provision of adequate staffing and resources.”

“As such, ANMF members will today be wearing purple to show their support for the elderly in our community and highlight to the Federal Government the urgent need for them to lead the way in preventing elder abuse by making legislated changes in residential aged care facilities.”

“No longer do we want to see neglect, rather it is time for the Federal Government to protect,” said Ms Shepherd.

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