Elder abuse is 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’. The abuse or neglect may be financial, psychological, physical, verbal or sexual.

LGBTI people often have strong resilience in the face of adversity. This is one of the strengths of LGBTI people and communities. This resilience continues to contribute to significant social, cultural and legal change in creating safer, accepting and more welcoming spaces for LGBTI people at home, at work, in school, in sport, and in many other areas.

However many LGBTI people report experiencing various forms of violence, abuse, discrimination and harassment throughout or at different times in the lives and may live in fear of it happening again. This may be experienced as domestic and family violence, homophobia or transphobia or violence motivated by prejudice.

Domestic and family violence is any type of abusive behaviour used to gain and maintain control over another person. Domestic and family violence can take many forms including physical violence, sexual assault, emotional or psychological abuse, or social or financial control.

Forms of Discrimination
LGBTI elders can experience many forms of discrimination from carers, support workers, family or friends. Discrimination can include –

• Threatening to evict someone or refusing admission to aged care facilities.
• Denial of visitors or personal care services.
• Denying someone access or control of their own funds.
• Refusal to allow LGBTI people to display their affection in public, to display cultural tokens, artefacts, pictures or memorabilia or couples to share rooms.
• Refusal to place a transgender elder in a ward that matches their gender identity.
• Refusal to allow partners to participate in medical decision making.
• Withholding medications.
• Physical or psychological abuse, neglect and/or abandonment.
• Being involuntarily ‘outed’ or threatening to out somebodies gender or sexuality.
• Being prevented from dressing or presenting according to one’s identified gender.

Prevention
Tips for older people to help keep themselves safe

• Be active in the community. Keep a network of support with friends, neighbours and family members.
• Keep in touch with community health workers, church or medical practitioner.
• Seek independent advice when making any changes to your financial or living arrangements.
• Don’t make decisions or sign documents until you have all the information you need.
• The first time abuse happens SEEK HELP. Left unattended, abuse does not go away on its own.
The LOVE Project is an ACON initiative aimed at creating better conversations and improved social engagement with older LGBTI community members. By understanding people’s needs and preferences the LOVE project aims to facilitate greater social connectivity, improve social inclusion and provide appropriate health information for LGBTI elders.

facebook.com/LivingOlderVisblyEngaged | twitter.com/LOVEproject | Loveproject.org.au

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Legal rights that prevent discrimination when accessing care services

Any federally funded organisation providing home or residential care can’t discriminate against anyone based on sexuality or gender following changes in 2013 to the Sex Discrimination Act of 1984 and the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977. If they do discriminate, they can be reported to their professional body.

If you feel you have experienced discrimination or abuse contact the Anti-discrimination board NSW or NSW Elder Abuse Hotline to better understand your rights.

Legal Tools

LGBTI people may be more vulnerable to having their wishes disregarded by a relative or carer making it more important to ensure you have documents written such as a Will, Power of Attorney, Enduring Guardianship and Advanced Health Care Directive. There is a handy Legal Tools fact sheet that can be found on loveproject.org.au under Healthy Ageing for more information.

Counselling

ACON offers face to face counselling

Sydney
Call the Intake Officer: (02) 9206 2000
Hearing Impaired: (02) 9283 2088
Email: acon@acon.org.au
www.acon.org.au

Hunter Region
(02) 4962 7700
Email: hunter@acon.org.au

Northern Rivers
(02) 6622 1555
northernrivers@acon.org.au

ACON offers a Community Visitor Scheme (CVS) that is available to anyone who is a recipient of Australian Government subsidised Home Care Packages. Email communityvisitor@acon.org.au for more information.

Resources

ACON
www.acon.org.au

Another Closet – LGBTI domestic and family violence
anothercloset.com.au

Anti-discrimination Board NSW
antidiscrimination.justice.nsw.gov.au

HIV/AIDS Legal Centre
halc.org.au

The Aged-Care Rights Service
tars.com.au/elder-abuse

National LGBTI Health Alliance
lgbthealth.org.au

Organisation Intersex Australia
oiaustralia.com

The Gender Centre
gendercentre.org.au

Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations
afao.org.au

Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome Support Group Australia
aissga.org.au

Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officers
police.nsw.gov.au

NSW Elder Abuse Hotline - 1800 628 221

Anti-Discrimination Board NSW - (02) 9268 5544 or 1800 670 812 (regional NSW)

Lifeline - 1300 22 4636

Carers Australia - 1800 242 636

MensLine Australia - 1300 78 99 78

Relationships Australia - 1300 364 277

QLife Gay & Lesbian Counselling Service - 1800 184 527