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Abuse and mistreatment of older people in Australia – insights from recent targeted research

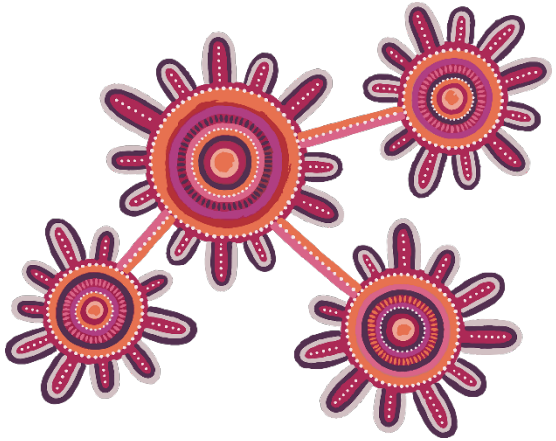
Professor Victoria Hovane – Tjallara Consulting
Dr Rachel Carson – Australian Institute of Family Studies
Associate Professor Bridget Harris, Dr Naomi Pfizner and Dr Kate Burns – Monash University
Dr Chris Dowling – Australian Institute of Criminology

AIFS Conference 2026 – 11 September 2026

Acknowledgement of Country

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The Australian Institute of Family Studies acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to lands and waters. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to Elders past and present.

Research projects

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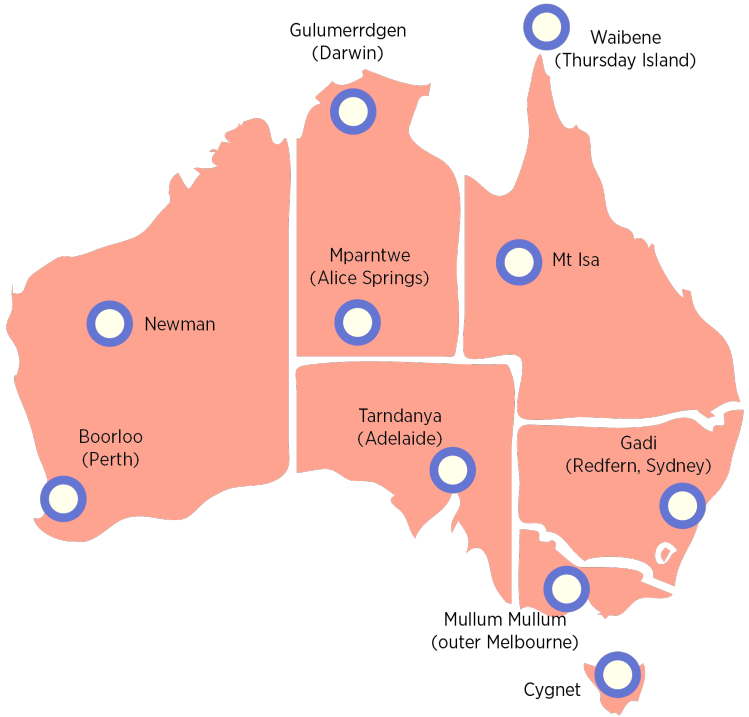
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Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Older People	Prof. Victoria Hovane, Ralph Mogridge and AIFS
LGBTIQA+ Older People	AIFS and Queerspace
Regional, Rural & Remote Communities	Monash University Gender and Family Violence Prevention Centre
Elder Abuse Perpetration	Australian Institute of Criminology
Cognitive Impairment & Elder Abuse	Monash University Criminology

Research design for the research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander older people

- Group discussions in the form of yarning circles (*n* = 19) and individual interviews (*n* = 8) with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and men aged 50 years or older from across Australia.
- Professor Hovane led the yarning circles and interviews with women and Ralph Mogridge led the yarning circles and interviews with men.
- It is estimated that they travelled at least 46,937.95 kms to undertake the yarning circles and interviews held at 10 sites (see Figure 1).
- This approach enabled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander older people from a broad range of urban, regional, rural and remote locations and from all Australian states and territories, except for the ACT, to participate in this research.

Figure 1: Fieldwork locations



Research design for the research with LGBTIQA+ older people

Queerspace

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- **Two concurrent national surveys** (*n* = 335)
  - Younger LGBTIQA+ people aged 18-64 years and 18-49 years for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQA+ people
  - Older LGBTIQA+ people aged 65 years+ and 50 years + for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQA+ people (and analyses of data for 55+ years)
- **Focus groups** with LGBTIQA+ older people (*n* = 32) and **interviews** with LGBTIQA+ older people (*n* = 10)
- **Desktop review** of relevant research literature

NOTE:

- The data captured includes the **5 types** of abuse types in the NEAPS + discrimination.
- Due to differences in design and methodology, findings from the current study and NEAPS are not directly comparable but consideration against NEAPS place the findings in the context of the experiences of the wider Australian population.

Abuse and mistreatment of older people with cognitive impairment in Australia

This research sought to capture lessons and insights from stakeholders and older adults with lived experience to provide a rich understanding of the experiences, support needs, and challenges to addressing, responding, and preventing the abuse of older adults with cognitive impairment as well as future opportunities to enhance policy and practice

January 2025 – June 2026

Participants from all states and territories in Australia

384 people participated in this research

Multi-phased, mixed-method approach

- National interviews and focus groups with practitioners (medical, legal, specialist services, in-home care)
- National survey (medical)
- National portal for friends and family
- National interviews with older people with cognitive impairment who have experienced abuse or mistreatment

Questions for panel discussion

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How do we understand abuse and mistreatment of older people?

- What is the social context for this abuse and mistreatment and what does it look like?

What are the drivers and context for this abuse and mistreatment?

- What are the drivers, societal and community factors?
- Who experiences abuse and mistreatment and who is abusing or mistreating older people?

What do practitioners need to know?

- Help seeking, experiences of services and how can services help older people and their families?

Q and A session with audience