Respect, Dignity and Ageing

A Filipino community education resource kit about elder abuse prevention
The Ethnic Communities’ Council of Victoria (ECCV) acknowledges the assistance of the Victorian Government Aged Care Branch in the development of this resource kit.

An activity of the ECCV project in collaboration with Senior Rights Victoria to raise awareness in ethnic communities around elder abuse.

The ECCV also acknowledges the Filipino community advisory group whose expertise and valuable input form the basis of this resource kit.

- Australian Filipino Community Services (AFCS)
- Bayanihan Australia Community Network Inc (BACNI)
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- Phil Australian Foundation Inc.
- Filipino Australian Friendship Association Geelong
- Filipino Seniors & Carers Support Group Gippsland
- Philippines Times
- Pilipino Elderly Association of South East Region (PEASER)
- Pilipino Seniors Support Group - Frankston
- SBS Filipino
- Young Generation Filipino Senior Citizen’s Club of South-East
- Association Filipino Australian Golden Age of Victoria Inc (AFAGAVI)
- Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre
- Seniors Rights Victoria

Some of the resources were adapted from the St Ives Uniting Church and UnitingCare Ageing Respect for Seniors Campaign in New South Wales, Australia. In particular, the ‘As Life Goes On’ DVD and resource kit.

www.respectforseniors.org

Disclaimer: all stories included in this kit are fictional and all photographs are stock images. Any similarities to real life situations are coincidental.
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1. BACKGROUND

Elder abuse is any act which causes harm to an older person and is carried out by someone they know and trust such as family or friends.

1.1 Filipino community in Australia

The Filipino community in Victoria is an emerging ageing community in Victoria meaning that it is the ageing population of the future. The emerging ageing communities are less established and lack resources to adequately address the needs of its seniors. At the 2011 Census there were 37,957 Philippines-born people in Victoria, increasing by 39% from the 2006 Census. In Victoria, 4800 Philippines-born people are between the ages of 55 and 64, and over 2000 are over 65 years of age. The Philippines is now number seven in top overseas arrivals in the last five years in Victoria (3.7% or 11,389 people).

Currently there are significantly more Filipino-born females than males residing in Victoria, a 2 to 1 ratio. There are 14,641 Filipino-born males and 23,316 Filipino-born females in Victoria. The Filipino community is distributed throughout Metropolitan Melbourne; with largest population residing in the following Local Government Areas: Brimbank; Wyndham; Casey; Melton and Hume.

Filipino (Tagalog) and English are the official languages of the Philippines. As such, English proficiency is high in the Filipino community. According to 2006 Census only 2.5 per cent of the Philippines-born persons living in Victoria rated speaking English “Not well” or “not at all”. However, 281 Tagalog or Filipino speakers over the age of 60 reported speaking English “Not Well” or “Not at all” in 2011 Census (approximately 14%).

There was a significant increase in Filipino migrants arriving to Australia between 1960s and 1980s most of whom were professionals arriving to Australia for their specific skills. From 1976, over 33, 000 Filipino-born migrants settled to Australia and increased to more than 80 per cent on yearly basis as result of the introduction of the Family Reunion Program in 1973; in particular spouse and fiancée category. During the 1980s, Filipino women constituted the largest arrivals under the family reunion schemes, joining their Australian husbands and fiancés. Many of them resettled to rural regions of Australia. More recently, parents have been sponsored to join their adult children living in Australia, and that has led to an increase in older Filipinos arriving to Australia.

1.2 Elder abuse in the Filipino community

There is no evidence that elder abuse or mistreatment of older people is more prevalent in the Filipino community than any other community. However, ECCV consultations indicate that it may be more hidden and more under-reported in ethnic communities than in the general population.

The traditional Filipino cultural worldview is collectivist. In collectivist cultures, individuals tend to put the goals of the family before their own personal aspirations. This needs to be understood as it affects the way elder abuse is perceived. The principle of ‘what’s best for the common good’ is more likely to be applied than the individualistic view of ‘what’s in it for me’. In collective cultures people are less likely to move between groups

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1 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011 Population and Housing Census, Persons counted as Place of Usual Residence.
2 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
than in individualistic cultures. Older people from collectivist cultures may not highly value or subscribe to the concept of individual rights. They may also be less likely to consider action that separates them from their family.

**Stigma and barriers to access**

‘Hiya’ is the Filipino term encompassing a combination of powerful emotions. The term literally means shame or embarrassment, but is so influential within the Filipino culture that it “inhibits self-assertion, as it is a kind of anxiety or fear of being exposed and unprotected.” Research has shown that the value of ‘hiya’ accounts for the underutilisation of services and non-participation to local providers.\(^6\)

Accessing outside help is seen as not coping and not meeting traditional family standards and community expectations. Filipinos will go to great lengths to deny that they have a problem to ‘outsiders’, as it is more acceptable to receive formal support from the Filipino community (through Church groups etc.) than from what is perceived as ‘Anglo’ services.\(^7\)

**Intergenerational conflict and migration**

Intergenerational misunderstandings and conflicting expectations are common to all families due to the impact of time on the cultural context within which a person develops their worldview. However, ECCV consultation indicates the process of migration can exacerbate this issue.

Typically the older generation can become more inward and backward looking, idealising traditional values and practices. The younger generation in contrast, tend to be future-orientated and more adaptive to the dominant cultural values of contemporary Australia.

Intergenerational conflict arising from differences and misunderstandings in expectations is a significant issue for the Filipino speaking community.

Caution is needed to use and translate the term ‘elder abuse’ into Tagalog. The direct translation for ‘abuse’ is a strong word with specific and confronting connotations.

See appendix four: *Understanding elder abuse in the Filipino immigrant community of Victoria*

### 1.3 Project background

This resource kit was developed as part of the Ethnic Communities’ Council of Victoria (ECCV) project that aims to empower, inform and resource culturally diverse seniors, and ethnic community support services, by raising awareness about seniors’ rights and elder abuse prevention, including the role of Seniors Rights Victoria and how to access this and other supports.

The three-year (2012 – 2015) project is delivered in partnership with Seniors Rights Victoria and focuses on six ethnic communities. For more information visit [www.eccv.org.au](http://www.eccv.org.au)

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\(^6\) Centre for Philippine Concerns 2003 *Pilipino Kami: We are Filipino* pp 7

\(^7\) ibid
2 RESOURCE KIT: AN OVERVIEW

The Filipino community resource kit on elder abuse prevention provides the information to deliver talks and facilitate discussions to groups of older seniors from Filipino backgrounds in the community. It includes notes on facilitating open discussion with groups based on three culturally appropriate narratives.

The resource kit has been designed to support bilingual people to deliver community education Filipino community. It is important that the educators have an understanding of abuse of older people and are connected with an agency that has expertise in elder abuse, such as Senior Rights Victoria and/or relevant ethnic welfare organisations.

The kit includes some basic information on facilitation. It doesn’t provide notes or resources on peer education, public speaking or adult learning principles. It is assumed that the speakers have completed the bilingual education professional development, delivered by Seniors Rights Victoria and the ECCV, which covers these topics and additional information on elder abuse and services available.

Community education aims

1. To increase understanding in Filipino seniors around their rights and dignity

2. To encourage family and community members to explore how they can help prevent abuse.

3. To provide the community with information about relevant services and supports if they are experiencing abuse or have concerns about making major life decisions.

Key message

We all have a right to respect and dignity as we get older.

If people need help, they do not need to suffer in silence. Help is available for any older person who is not being respectfully treated by their family or friends.

The community education is based on a presentation and open discussion format that uses scenarios or stories to stimulate discussion around the issues. While it is important to try and cover all of the information, you should develop your own style in delivering the education and feel comfortable about altering the structure or format accordingly. The format should also respond to the size of the group and their familiarity with the subject.
Each session should include the following fundamentals:

- The session is delivered the most appropriate language for the group (see below)
- The key message is delivered.
- The session is interactive and empowering.
- There is an opportunity to speak one-on-one with the facilitator after the session.
- Groups are offered a follow up session to discuss the issue further.
- Participants each receive a leaflet of relevant services for further information or support.
- The session is designed to be one hour in duration or less.
- The facilitator is experienced in public speaking, working with groups and facilitation.
- While there is an expectation that the facilitator is well informed, there isn’t an expectation that he/she is an expert on elder abuse. It is essential they have sound knowledge of where to refer people.
- Interactions within the session are directed by the older adult. The rights of older adults and their right to self-determination are acknowledged and respected.

2.1 Using the kit in English

This kit has been designed to be delivered in the first language of the participants. Although there are high rates of English in the Australian Filipino community, many vulnerable older people may have low English proficiency. Due to the large numbers of languages and dialects spoken in the Philippines, many people also may not understand Tagalog. For this reason it is important to ensure that the sessions are delivered in the most appropriate first language for the participants. The sessions can either be delivered by

- a bilingual worker from the community
- a bilingual community worker in partnership with an external educator
- an English-speaking educator with an interpreter (noting the difficulty in finding interpreters for many Filipino languages)

If you intend to use the kit to run education sessions through an interpreter, it is important to consider the following questions:

1. Is the facilitator trained in working with an interpreter?
2. Does the interpreter have an understanding of elder abuse prevention and appropriate translations of stigmatised or bureaucratic terminology?
3. Has adequate time been allocated for briefing the interpreter prior to the session start (this should include clarification of their willingness to discuss sensitive issues)?
4. Has the talk and discussion been shortened to take into account the additional time needed for interpreting?

2.2 Handling disclosures of elder abuse

Presentations on the abuse of older adults should begin with a reminder that, due to the need to respect confidentiality, specific details regarding an incident(s) of abuse of an older adult cannot be discussed. Despite this caution, the sensitive nature of the subject matter being presented is sometimes viewed by participants as an opportunity to either:

a) Ask general questions during the presentation about an incident of abuse about which they are concerned or

b) To speak individually to the presenter after the presentation about a specific incident
It is therefore suggested that the speaker be prepared to address such disclosures and keep referring the audience members to the relevant worker within an ethnic welfare organisation or the telephone help line of Senior Rights Victoria. The facilitator should have elder abuse print materials to distribute at the talk.

2.3 Philosophy and guiding principles

Abuse of older adults is hard to talk about and evokes strong emotions. Sometimes well-meaning people who are attempting to assist an abused person tell them what they ‘should’ do and/or act on behalf of the person in a manner that is against their wishes.

It is essential to acknowledge the rights of older adults and their right to self-determination when discussing this issue. It is the older adult who must direct the nature of any interaction.

2.4 Self-care

Those presenting on elder abuse should be aware that they may, at times, experience strong emotional feelings as a result of disclosures of abuse. It is important to consider different coping mechanisms should this occur.

2.5 Use of narratives

The use of narrative is a powerful way to ensure community education is relevant to the target audience. Three narratives (stories) have been developed to facilitate a practical understanding of the attitudes, values, beliefs and circumstances that can underpin situations of elder abuse or prevent a person from seeking help. They are designed to have a broad relevance to the Filipino speaking community, in addition to those individuals who may be experiencing abuse.

The narratives are not case stories in that they are fictional and do not describe real people. They are based on input from the Filipino community advisory group around more commonly seen situations of elder abuse. Creative license has been used to generate three stories that encompass most of the key issues.

It is recommended that the narratives are used to actively engage the participants in the subject matter, to encourage them to explore the attitudes and values that underpin situations of abuse and share their strategies for addressing abusive or disrespectful situations. This format also allows the facilitator to work with where at an appropriate level for the group, whilst delivering the key messages.

The facilitator should choose which story is most appropriate to engage the group in discussion.

2.6 Disclaimer

We recognise there is diversity within any cultural group and the values and attitudes explored within this kit are by no means applicable to all older members of the Filipino community.

2.7 Overview of the scenarios

Familiarise yourself with the stories. Try not to read the narrative directly from the file. Imagine that you are telling a story to the audience. This will make it more engaging.

Be clear about where behaviour or conflict becomes abusive and therefore unacceptable.
Each scenario contains the following information

- A short narrative
- The key message of the story
- The aim of telling the story
- Suggested questions to open up discussion
- Background information about the types of elder abuse indicated in the story
- Background information about issues, attitudes and values that can underlie situations of abuse. Please note that these may not be in themselves abusive.
- Elements of each scenario have been translated into Tagalog to support the delivery of the session directly in that language. Remember that not all Filipinos speak Tagalog, however, it is one of the official languages of the Philippines.

Overview of the questions

Question 1: What are the issues that could be of concern in this story? Do you think it ever happens in the community?
Explores the ability of participants to identify issues in the story. Explores attitudes towards and awareness of those issues that potentially lead to elder abuse.

Question 2 How might the older person feel about this situation?
Stimulates thought about how the older person feels and how the situation may be abusive. The question opens up discussion on the values, attitudes, hopes and fears of the older person as well as motivations of other characters as they relate to abuse or compromised dignity.

Question 3 What are the rights that the older person might (respectfully) expect? What would be acceptable or unacceptable in the family conversation and decisions about their situation?
Draws out the potential risks or various types and degrees of abuse (subtle to overt) within each scenario. Asks participants to identify what is respectful behaviour, particularly towards older people, and the basic rights an older person should expect.

Question 4 What are traditional ways this family would have managed this situation in the Philippines? How have things changed in Australia?
Stimulates thought on traditional strategies or attitudes that may no longer work or may even be counterproductive in a modern Australian context. Important issues are increased dependence and the reluctance to seek help outside of the family.

Question 5 What would you advise the older person and their family to do? What else do they need to think about in this situation?
This question allows the participants to share and explore strategies to alleviate or prevent abusive or disrespectful situations.

Question 6 Where could the older person and his/her family get support in finding more information and making these decisions?
This question encourages participants to share information about services and supports.
2.8 Session format and structure

Small groups (12 people or less)

The recommended format is a short presentation followed by group discussion based on the narratives. The session ends with a summary, group feedback and a short time for individual consultation with the facilitator. Participants receive a pamphlet on elder abuse prevention and a short tick-box evaluation form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presentation</th>
<th>Introduces session and topic in presentation format. See Appendix One</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 mins</td>
<td>• To introduce facilitator and theme of session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• To give basic information about elder abuse, its prevalence and different types</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• To introduce discussion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discussion</th>
<th>Use scenarios and questions to facilitate discussion around different situations of elder abuse. This is an open discussion format. See section three.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20—30 mins</td>
<td>• Empowerment approach helps group discover risks/triggers/prevention strategies to elder abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Encourages participants to discuss, understand and challenge relevant attitudes and values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• To deliver subsidiary key messages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>See Appendix One</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 mins</td>
<td>• To reinforce key messages, allow for final questions and end session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• To offer a follow up session and one-one confidential time with facilitator in a safe place.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>See Appendix Four.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 mins</td>
<td>• To inform the development of community education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• To give participants the opportunity to raise any concern</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 1-1 time     | To provide basic information and referral to anyone who maybe experiencing abuse or is concerned about anyone who may be experiencing abuse |
| 10 mins      | • To allow for any questions that a person doesn’t want to raise in front of others.                                       |

| Pamphlet     | • Basic information about elder abuse and key services: Senior Rights Victoria plus a bilingual welfare agency, TIS and the Victoria Police (for times of crisis). |

Dramatic interpretations of narratives

The Filipino advisory group highlighted drama and theatre productions as a strategy for engaging Filipino seniors. The dramatization of the scenarios below into a role play or short play that can be performed live, on radio or in an audio-visual format was considered a way to make the message accessible for the community.

For this reason, facilitators are encouraged to choose what they consider the most appropriate way to deliver key messages, but should ensure that the sessions include the fundamentals outlined above. In particular, the setting should be a safe space for audience members who may be experiencing abuse at home.
Large groups  There are a number of options for groups that are larger (13 people or more).

1. **Give an interactive presentation**
   Adapt the material into a 40 minute presentation. Use the scenarios and questions to get people to think. Drawbacks: participants’ role is more passive, maybe difficult to keep them engaged and interested.

2. **Create a small group of ‘interested’ people**
   Deliver the introduction and then ask if interested people would like to join a breakaway group to discuss the topic further. Drawbacks: people may not want to publically acknowledge interest due to stigma or privacy issues.

3. **Conduct multiple visits to each group**
   For example see the women from the group one week and the men from the group the following week. This may enable the group to explore issues more relevant to them. Drawbacks: high demand on staff resources.

4. **Break into small groups for self-directed discussion**
   The facilitator still leads and feeds in questions for each group to discuss independently. The groups could then feedback at the end of each story. Drawbacks: time consuming, less able to guide discussion or feed in key messages.

5. **Increase number of facilitators**
   Give the introduction to the whole group and then break into smaller groups each with their own facilitator. Drawbacks: high demand on staff resources.

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**TIPS**

**Set up the space differently**
People attend seniors group to socialise and it is natural for them to continue talking during the presentation. By moving the chairs you change the dynamic and engage the audience more fully.

**Find a champion within the group.**
The support of a respected person the group knows is invaluable. This could be a committee member, or coordinator such as a priest, chaplain or welfare worker. Speak to them before the day of the session. Ask them to introduce the session and emphasise its importance.
3 SCENARIOS

3.1 Scenario one: Intergenerational expectations and family conflict.

Nanay Maria’s story

Nanay Maria lives with her son and daughter-in-law. She looks after her two little grandchildren and helps with the housework. She did not expect things to be so different in Australia – so much work to do, and with no help in the home – but she is happy to be with her family and does not want to seem ungrateful.

One day she overheard her daughter-in-law say that when the children start school they won’t need her help anymore. Maria is shocked. She has nowhere else to go and expected her family to look after her in her old age. She feels ashamed and has no one to talk to – she does not want to embarrass her son.

Key message

Life in Australia is different and we have all adapted. Sometimes our children have unrealistic expectations of us. Family does not always understand how we are feeling and what we are able to do as we age. It’s important to help our families, but it is also important to talk about limitations.

Questions

1. What are the issues and concerns in this story? Do you think it ever happens in the community?

2. How might Maria feel about this situation? How might her son and daughter-in-law feel? Why may they have different perspectives?

3. What are traditional ways this family would have managed this situation in the Philippines? How have things changed in Australia?

4. What would be respectful for Maria in this family’s relationship and decisions about the future?

5. What would you advise Maria and her family to do? What else do they need to think about in this situation?

6. Where could Maria and her family get support to help their situation?

Background

Older people’s expectations of financial and emotional support from their adult children can clash with limitations placed on adult children because of economic and cultural practicalities in contemporary Australia. Intergenerational conflict is normal to all cultures but may be exacerbated by migration.
Types of abuse that could be indicated in this story

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Abuse</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional mistreatment</td>
<td><em>Family accommodation may come with emotionally abusive conditions</em> Not including an older person in major decisions about their future. Making an older person feel that if they are not useful they have to leave. Treating the older person as if they are a burden or stupid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social mistreatment</td>
<td>Giving family responsibilities priority over social interaction of an older person. Not supporting them to or actively preventing them from visiting friends outside the home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td>Overburdening of older person with caring for the grandchildren. Overburdening of older person with housework. The aged care needs of the older person may not be adequately met by the family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial mistreatment</td>
<td>Older person may not have access to their own money and are financially dependent on their adult children.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Underlying issues, attitudes or values that could influence the people in this story

**Tradition of living with extended family** – Extended family living arrangements allow for the family to collectively support each other within defined roles. It is traditionally expected that the older person will mind the grandchildren and perform household chores whilst the adult child provides accommodation, food and living expenses for their parents. Extended family living arrangements can create multiple levels of dependency for the older person. Differences in expectations and conflict can be exacerbated when the adult child is in an intercultural marriage.

**Lack of understanding of the importance of social interaction** – The importance of social contact for a person’s health and wellbeing may not be understood by the extended family.

**Lack of understanding of the impact of old age** – The impact of old age may not be well understood or recognised in the community, so the older person may be expected to perform household chores and childcare beyond their level of comfort.

**Migration in later life** – People who arrived in Australia in later life to be with extended family are often highly dependent on their family. Many may not speak English or understand the Australian systems. Many have left their support networks behind. Older people arriving on the Contributory Parent Visa may have transferred their assets to their children and cannot access a pension. Expectations of life in Australia may be quite different to the reality. The family may not have talked through or understood the wider implications and pressure of the situation, or considered how circumstances may have changed.

**Traditional concern about what other people think** – There is a very strong cultural expectation that adult children will look after and respect their parents in later life. Older people can feel deep shame if they are not being adequately looked after by their children. They may risk social isolation rather than risk having to answer questions about their family.

**Fear of homelessness or isolation** – Where an older person is living with extended family, speaking up about a difficult family environment may put them at risk of homelessness. The family is their lifeline and they may not want to jeopardise the relationship with their family, even if they are unhappy.

**Caring for grandchildren** – Adult children may expect their parents (particularly their mothers) to care for their grandchildren. Older parents may enjoy this role, or they may feel overburdened. Some people may fear repercussions if they are no longer able to care for the grandchildren – a loss of purpose and increased dependence. Families should not take the older person for granted in the role of carer.

**Control of money by adult children** – Adult children are often made “nominees” for Centrelink entitlements and give an allowance to the older person, who may be unaware of their entitlements and do not have direct access to their bank accounts. Fear of appearing ungrateful may prevent an older person from asking about their money.
3.2 Scenario two: “Out of my hands”
Family decisions and thinking about the future

Erlinda’s Story: Erlinda has been living in a small rural town since migrating to Australia with her husband John thirty years ago. It has been a reasonably caring marriage even though they have no children and few friends. As John gets older and his health deteriorates, he relies on Erlinda alone to care for him, refusing to accept offers of home help. She is finding caring for him more and more difficult as she gets older.

Last time John’s children visited, they told Erlinda that soon they would be getting their farm back. Erlinda had not thought about what would happen when John dies, and assumed she would stay in the house forever. She is afraid to mention it to John, in case he gets angry again and threatens to send her back to the Philippines.

Key message: Throughout our life we can be faced with difficult situations. Although these can be daunting, there are choices. Help is available for you to understand your options, even when it feels like there is not. Your needs are just as important as those of other family members.

AIM: to empower older people to take an active role in decisions about their future and to inform them on what options are available.

Questions

1. What are the issues and concerns in this story? Do you think it ever happens in the community?
2. How might Erlinda feel about this situation? How might John and his children feel? Why might they see the situation differently?
3. What are traditional ways this family would have coped with a family member becoming different, losing physical and emotional independence? How have things changed in Australia?
4. What would be respectful for Erlinda and John in this family’s relationship and decisions about the future?
5. What would you advise Erlinda and her family to do? What do they need to think about in this situation?
6. Where could Erlinda and her family get support in finding more information and making these decisions?

Background
In the 1970’s and 1980’s many Filipino women migrated to Australia in intercultural marriages, often moving to rural areas with their husbands. As their husbands age and their needs increase, there may be an added care burden for these women. Traditionally there is a lack of forward planning regarding Wills and Powers of Attorney, leaving them at risk of homelessness. Often women do not learn to drive and may not have access to their own money, making them dependent. Lack of transport and services in rural areas (including “conflicts” in legal firms) increases isolation and reduces options for help.
Types of abuse that could be indicated in this story

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Abuse</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>Aggressive language, shouting, pushing and slamming doors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional abuse</td>
<td>Threats to send back to the Philippines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Telling the woman that she is uneducated and cannot be trusted with decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adult children putting pressure on their Filipino stepmother to cope alone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial abuse</td>
<td>Not allowing access to benefits and entitlements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Failure to consider wife in the will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td>The failure of the adult children to support their stepmother could be neglect. Support could mean helping her access services. They may actively block services from outside the family and expect her to take on caring for her husband alone.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Underlying attitudes or values that could influence the people in this story

Stigma around intercultural marriages – There is stigma around intercultural marriages in “mainstream” Australian society and amongst some Filipinos, who may “blame the victim”. This can prevent a woman from seeking help.

Lack of awareness of options – A person may continue in an abusive situation because they are not aware of other options or supports. There may be an expectation that problems should be solved within a family, which prevents seeking outside help. Help may not be sought until a time of crisis, and by then it may be too late.

History of abusive relationship – There may be a history of abuse in some intercultural marriages. This abuse may be physical, such as shouting, pushing, hitting or it may be social, such as controlling who the woman sees and her access to money. Where there is a history of abuse, it is likely to get worse with the introduction of a condition such as dementia.

Lack of forward planning – Traditionally, it is unacceptable to discuss wills or powers of attorney. This may be exacerbated in an intercultural marriage, where there could be three cultures living under one roof and influencing decisions. The Filipino woman may be disadvantaged by being excluded from decision-making about transfer of assets, and by her dependency on her husband.

Rural isolation – Geographical isolation may increase the social isolation of Filipino women living in rural areas. There are fewer services and transport options in rural areas. Filipinos often are reluctant to leave the areas where they first migrated to, and tend to stay in place, even when their circumstances change.

Dependency – There may be layers of dependency due to lack of control of money, lack of assets, and lack of ability to drive, exacerbated by a lack of public transport options in rural areas.

Coping with change – Loss and grief may go unrecognised due to feelings of duty to family members. If the emotions around a significant illness are unacknowledged, the emotional needs of the carer may not be met. This may impact on their capacity to provide adequate care.

Stigma around accepting help outside of the family – It is traditional for the family to care for their older or frail members. Accepting help from outside the family can be seen as shameful or a failure. This can be exacerbated by a lack of culturally relevant services, or previous negative experiences of seeking help outside the family. Such stigma could prevent a family discussing the situation openly and honestly.
Paula’s story
Paula’s youngest son Eduardo has recently moved back in with her, following his break up with his girlfriend. Paula likes to send money to her family back in the Philippines every fortnight from her pension, but Eduardo put a stop to that, saying “See, mum? You can’t handle money. It’s best if I look after it for you before you give it all away!” Now Eduardo pays her bills and gives her a small amount of money every fortnight from her pension.

One day at the senior citizen’s club, Paula was embarrassed when she did not have money to go to the pageant. Her friends told her how much money they received from Centrelink and she was surprised. When she asked Eduardo about it, he got very angry and refused to take her to the social club again. Paula stays in her room, and feels very lonely.

Key message
When communities talk about these issues, it gives older people permission to speak up if they are experiencing mistreatment. Mistreatment is more common than we realise and can happen to anyone regardless of gender, cultural, religious or socio-economic background. Sometimes mistreatment is unintentional, and many people may not be aware of the consequences of their behaviour.

AIM
To challenge stigma around situations of mistreatment that prevent a person seeking help. To educate the family about possible impacts of how they treat their older relatives.

Questions
1. What are the issues and concerns in this story? Do you think it ever happens in the community?
2. How might Paula feel about this situation? How might Eduardo feel? Why might they see the situation differently?
3. What is the role of the wider community, Paula’s friends and social networks in this situation? How can they influence the way Paula feels?
4. What would be respectful for Paula in this family’s relationship and decisions about their future?
5. What would you advise Paula and her family to do? What do they need to think about in this situation?
6. Where could Paula and her family get support to find out more information and improve their situation?

Background
Financial abuse can be the type of abuse that people feel most comfortable talking about in public. However, it often is connected to other types of abuse that are equally destructive. We are not aware that the Filipino community experiences these issues any more than other cultural groups. However, we do know that people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are less likely to seek support.
Some types of abuse that could be indicated in this story

**Financial abuse**
- Taking money without permission
- Misuse of Financial Enduring Power of Attorney or misuse of “nominee” status
- Not paying bills as agreed
- Selling possessions without permission
- Selling or taking control of assets without permission – often through asking an older person to sign a form they don’t understand.

**Emotional abuse**
- Telling an older person they are stupid or useless, or can’t handle their own money
- Making an older person feel uncomfortable or unhappy

**Social abuse**
- Isolating an older person from their social networks through making it uncomfortable for friends to visit or not supporting them to see friends outside.

Underlying issues, attitudes or values that could influence the people in this story

**Role of the family and wider community** – Stigma and unchallenged attitudes that exist at a family and community level can have a profound effect on whether or not a person seeks help. Keeping the family together can be viewed as preferable to protecting the rights of an older individual, particularly women. The community may indirectly collude with the abuser by prioritising their interests above that of the victim. Conversely the family and community have the potential to support a person experiencing elder abuse to seek help through providing a social lifeline.

**Traditional trust of family** – Whilst this is in many ways a positive cultural trait, it can lead to making long-term arrangements without discussing expectations or potential changes in circumstances. Independent legal or financial advice is often not sought. There is a lack of understanding of Enduring Power of Attorney, and options available to them.

**Stigma about accepting help outside the family** – It is traditional for adult children to care for and “pamper” older people. Accepting help from outside the family can be seen as shameful. There is a strong desire to solve problems within the family and not to “air dirty laundry”.

**Increased dependency on children following migration** – Parents recognise they have had to depend more on children following migration and may feel the transfer of their assets is part of making this situation more equal. They may feel a sense of gratitude and obligation towards their children, who may have assisted them with visas, and this prevents them from speaking out about their needs. They do not want to appear ungrateful.

**Ageist attitudes** – Adult children may dismiss an older person’s ability to make decisions or control their own money. It is common for ageist attitudes to influence the perception of younger people on what an older person can and can’t do. This may lead to an adult child “taking over” their older parents lives “for their own good”, and result in unintentional or intentional mistreatment.

**Adult children with issues** – Stigma around their child’s issues can prevent people seeking help, as can the fear that telling someone can make the situation worse or cause problems for the adult child. Complex feelings of love, guilt and responsibility may also prevent an older person from seeking help. Many older people in this situation do not want to take legal action, they want help for their adult child. They may need support to set boundaries around protecting their own rights and wellbeing whilst maintaining a relationship with the adult child.
4. Community education and media messages

- Throughout our life we can be faced with difficult situations. Although these can be daunting, there are choices. Don’t suffer in silence - help is around the corner, even when it feels like it isn’t. Your needs are just as important as those of other family members.

- Life in Australia is different and we have all adapted. Sometimes our children have unrealistic expectations of us. Family does not always understand how we are feeling and what we are able to do as we age. It’s important to help our families, but it is also important to talk about limitations.

- When communities and community groups talk openly about this issue, it gives people permission to speak up if they or someone they know is experiencing abuse.

- Sometimes mistreatment is unintentional, and many people may not be aware of the consequences of their behaviour and that the older person may be experiencing this behaviour as abusive.

- Planning for the future with family members can help prevent misunderstandings and protect older people from being mistreated. Respectful family relationships mean listening to all members of the family.

- Mistreatment is more common than we realise and can happen to anyone regardless of gender, cultural, religious or socio-economic background.

- Australian research estimates between one and five per cent of older people may experience some form of elder abuse. Elder abuse may be more hidden and more under-reported in ethnic communities than in the general population.

- The abuse of older people by someone they trust can take many forms. It can be about their financial, emotional, social, physical, spiritual or sexual wellbeing. Mistreatment can also mean the absence of care, this is called neglect.

- When older people are abused it is often a complex situation with many influencing factors. The complexities can include cultural, generational and family influences.

- Each situation is unique and there are often no simple solutions to family tensions. However, there are services and resources that can help. Help may be available for other members of the family, not just the person experiencing the abuse.
5. APPENDICES

5.1 Appendix one: Presentation

Introduction

Introduce yourself and thank the group for inviting you to deliver the talk. Say a little about your involvement (history) with your organisation or with Senior Rights Victoria.

If the group is less than 12 ask them to introduce themselves and say how long they have been a member of the group. Ask them to say a short sentence about what respect/dignity means to them.

If the group is larger, ask the group to think about what respect/dignity means to them and then elicit a few example answers from the group.

Today’s session

It is important to be clear about what the presentation or discussion is about. Outline what the topic is and what will NOT be covered. These are the questions the session will answer:

- What is respectful or disrespectful behaviour towards older people in relationships with family and friends? What does it mean to us as individuals, families and communities when an older person’s dignity is compromised by someone they trust?
- What are some ways that older people experience disrespect and mistreatment?
- How have traditional ways of maintaining dignity as we age been affected by migration to Australia?
- How can we prevent the mistreatment of older people in our families and communities?
- What kind of help is there for older people that are experiencing this problem and what help is there to support the family to build healthier relationships?

Key message

We all have a right to respect and dignity as we get older.

If people need help, they do not need to suffer in silence. Help is available for any older person who is not being respectfully treated by their family or friends

Definition of elder abuse

Spend some time explaining the kind of elder abuse that will be covered in today’s session. The extent of elder abuse and that it is difficult to estimate as a significant proportion goes underreported.

- The Victorian Government defines elder abuse as ‘any act occurring within a relationship of trust which results in harm to the older person’.
- The relationship of trust can be with a partner, family member, friend or carer.
- Usually the ‘relationship of trust’ is with another family member and in most incidences the family member is the son or daughter.

Make sure people understand what is meant by the ‘relationship of trust’. Maybe ask them to name one person with whom they have a similar ‘relationship of trust’ or identify someone e.g. partner, husband, wife, sister, sons, daughters, cousins etc.
This kind of mistreatment of older people is more common than we realise.

Australian researchers estimate that 2 to 5% of older people (over 65 years old) in the community experience elder abuse.

There are 6800 people over 55 from Filipino backgrounds in Victoria. Five per cent of this is more than 380 people.

Any older person may experience mistreatment. Men and women of any income level, any cultural group, persons in good health or persons with physical or mental disabilities may all be mistreated by someone close to them.

There is no evidence to show that elder abuse occurs more in any one cultural community than any other. However, when an older person has a migrant background, they may be less likely to seek help or know about what help is available for them and their family.

Forms of mistreatment and neglect

The mistreatment of older people by people they trust can take many forms. It can be about their financial, emotional, social, physical, or sexual wellbeing. Mistreatment can also mean the absence of care, this is called neglect.

Give one short example for each type of abuse. Some ideas are below

Financial: Taking an older person’s pension and not allowing them to spend it
Physical: Shouting, pushing, hitting, locking a person in a room
Emotional: Threatening to send an older person back to the Philippines
Social: Not allowing an older person to go to social events
Sexual: Non-consensual sexual contact or language
Neglect: Failure to provide the basic necessities of life, such as food, warmth and shelter

Frame the discussion

- We have some stories that show how disrespect and mistreatment can occur.
- These stories do not describe real life people but they do reflect commonly seen situations.
- I will ask some questions so that we can discuss the story and what is happening for that person, for that family.
- Please respect other people’s time to speak in the discussion.
- At the end of the session there will be some time to talk to me individually if you are concerned about someone you know.
- We don’t have to cover everything today. I can come back another time to talk about this some more.

Narratives and discussion

Tell the story and ask the question. Be clear what the key message is of the story and that this comes through the discussion. Conclude each story with the question what could this person do? List the possible options and supports (emphasise the role of SRV and ethnic agencies as well as sharing useful participant strategies). Repeat the above for stories two and three if time permitting. Remember that additional resources can be provided if using “Erlinda's story”, such as safety planning for older people.
Conclusion

Ask participants what is the main message that they have come away with from the discussion.

- Recap the key messages of each story or any strong themes that have emerged.

The mistreatment of older adults has many forms. It can be intentional or unintentional.

The needs and wellbeing of older people are as important as other members of the family.

No-one needs to accept a disrespectful and unhappy situation. If people need help they should speak to someone they trust

Staying connected to social networks is an important part of having some independence.

- Bilingual workers in Filipino community organisations can often help explain options or connect people to other services. Senior Rights Victoria specialises in helping older people who are being mistreated.

- Senior Rights Victoria can offer a range of services through a (free) interpreter.
  - Free and confidential advice for people over 60 years old
  - Telephone service or home visits
  - Short term advocacy and support
  - Specialist free legal advice

Give the pamphlet at this point and the evaluation forms. Ask the group evaluation questions.

Always leave sufficient time for any questions and one on one consultation at the end of the session.
## 5.3 Appendix three: Supports and services

| Elder abuse | Senior Rights Victoria  
Helpline 1300 368 821  
info@seniorsrights.org.au | Information, support, advice and education to help prevent elder abuse and safeguard the rights, dignity and independence of older people. Services include a Helpline, specialist legal services, short-term support and advocacy for individuals and community education. |
|---|---|---|
| Filipino welfare services | Australian Filipino Community Services  
(03) 9791-8366  
Filipino Community Council of Victoria  
(03) 9687 9011  
Bayanihan Community Network | Range of bicultural services including aged care social support, counselling, chaplaincy services, carers kitchen and volunteer coordination  
Range of bicultural services including aged care and community services.  
Networking and advocacy |
| Filipino Social support | Filipino Seniors Support Group Inc.  
Filipino Seniors & Carers Support Group  
Association of Filipino-Australian Golden Age of Victoria  
Filipino Australian Association of Ballarat  
Filipino Australian Friendship Association  
Philippine Elderly Association South East Region  
Young Generation Filipino Senior Citizen’s Club of South East | Frankston  
Gippsland  
Sunshine  
Ballarat  
Geelong  
Clarinda, Kingston, Glen Eira, Monash  
South East Melbourne |
| Interpreter services | Telephone Interpreter Service (TIS) National  
131 450 | Call TIS for a telephone interpreter. Available wherever you see the interpreter sign and can be available for other organisations also. |
| Debriefing and professional support | 1800 RESPECT  
1800 737732 | A free, confidential national helpline counselling service that offers professional debriefing to practitioners, friends and family who are dealing with sexual, domestic or family violence or are upset by disclosures of abuse. Counsellors are qualified practitioners and are trained in cultural competency and have at least three years’ counselling experience. Callers can remain anonymous |
| Family violence | In Touch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence  
1800 755 988 freecall  
03 9413 6500 | A statewide family violence service provider with bicultural, bilingual services and programs. Services include crisis intervention and recovery, prevention and awareness raising, education and research and advocacy. |
Victoria Police
000 and ask for the police or call your local police station and make an appointment

Victoria Police is governed by the Code of Practice for the investigation of family violence. This outlines how Victoria Police will respond effectively to, and ensure the safety and wellbeing of victims, and to make appropriate referrals to other agencies. Police will provide interpreters at all stages of the investigation.

Housing
Home at Last
1300 765 178 freecall

Free and confidential advice, support and advocacy to older people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or want to plan their housing future. Available to older Victorians on a low income with lower assets.

Legal support
The Law Institute of Victoria
03 9607 9550
www.liv.asn.au/Referral
referrals@liv.asn.au

Can make a referral to a lawyer or solicitor who can give 30mins of free legal advice. The telephone (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm) and online referral service can help find the right area of law.

Victorian Legal Aid
03 9269 0167
03 9269 0120 English
1800 677 402 (country callers)

Free legal helpline for general information over the phone about the law. Open Monday to Friday, 8.45 am to 5.15 pm.

Legal support
Community legal centres
www.communitylaw.org.au

Independent community organisations that provide free legal services to the public. They help clients who face economic and social disadvantage, are ineligible for legal aid and cannot afford a private lawyer. CLCs can provide legal information, initial advice and in some cases ongoing assistance.

Seniors Rights Victoria
Helpline 1300 368 821
info@seniorsrights.org.au

Free legal advice from specialist solicitors that is not means tested.

General services
General Practitioners

Can be the first to recognise or respond to elder abuse. Their principal action is referral. Issues can arise where both the perpetrator and victim of abuse share the same GP.

Centrelink social workers
131 202
multilingual phone service
Mon-Fri, 8am– 5pm

Social workers can provide brochures and information about elder abuse and financial abuse. However, this service is not geared to elder abuse prevention.

Community Health centres

Community health centres operate from a social model of health and acknowledge the social, environmental and economic factors that affect health, as well as the biological and medical factors.

Aged Care Assessment Service (ACAS)

ACAS are independent teams who assist frail older people and their carers identify what kind of care will best meet their needs. Assessment teams are multi-disciplinary and can include health
Home and Community Care (HACC) Assessment Service
Contact the relevant local government to request a HACC Assessment

Lifeline
13 11 14

Gambler’s Help
Northern: 1300 133 445
ghintake@bchs.org.au
Eastern: 1300 131 973
Western: (03) 9296 1234
Inner metro: (03) 9653 3250
Southern: (03) 9575 5353

professionals such as medical officers, social workers, nurses, occupational therapists and physiotherapists.

ACAS Assessment Officers have received training in elder abuse awareness and prevention.

HACC Assessment officers can provide a Living at Home Assessment. This takes place, wherever possible in the client’s home and assists people to explore a range of ways to live independently and remain active members of their community. Clients can refer themselves to a HACC Assessment Service or be referred by a GP, health service or community organisation.

HACC Assessment officers may have received training in elder abuse awareness and prevention.

Lifeline is a 24-hour telephone counselling service that is available every day of the year to anyone and everyone. The service is only available in English.

Free and confidential service to reduce gambling related harm. Counselling, financial counselling, peer support, community education. Online counselling available here: http://www.gamblinghelponline.org.au/ and immediate phone support here: 1800 858 858
5.4 Appendix four: Evaluation form

**Process Questions** to be completed by the community education facilitator

**Facilitator details:**

Name ____________________________  Organisation ____________________________

**Seniors group details:**

Name ____________________________

Location (LGA) ____________________________

Cultural background ____________________________

**Seniors group Coordinator/President details:**

Name ____________________________  Email ____________________________

Phone ____________________________

**Community education session details:**

Date ____________________________  Number of attendees Male □

Female □

Style of community education □ Presentation only

□ Open discussion only

□ Joint presentation & open discussion

**Results questions (overpage)**

Facilitator to complete form in spaces available on the basis of group feedback immediately at the end of the session.

Options for coordinating feedback:

1. For large groups (over 12 people)
   a) Ask for two or three volunteers to give you feedback about the session immediately afterwards.
   b) Ask the group leader to give feedback on behalf of the group.
   c) When there are multiple bilingual workers, coordinate small groups for feedback, each coordinated by a bilingual worker who completes the form.

2. For small groups (less than 12 people) it is possible to ask the questions to the group as a whole.
In this session we have talked about respect and dignity for older people in family relationships.

1. Has anything changed about your understanding of this issue as a result of today’s session?

2. What did you find most interesting about today’s session?

3. What would you like to find out more information about?

4. In what ways could we improve these sessions?

5. Would you share the information you have received today with other members of your community?
The following tables collate information gathered from the Filipino community advisory group as part of the ECCV project to raise awareness in ethnic communities around elder abuse (2012-2015). The group met between August 2013 and April 2014.

We recommend that caution be applied when making any generalisations based on ethnicity or cultural background. As with all communities, there is considerable diversity of views, beliefs and attitudes within the Philippines born population of Victoria and their descendants. However, this information provides the broad Filipino cultural context for elder abuse and its prevention and may help service providers understand Filipino clients and communities better in relation to this issue.

**Advisory group membership**

- Association Filipino Australian Golden Age of Victoria Inc (AFAGAVI)
- Australian Filipino Community Services (AFCS)
- Bayanihan Australia Community Network Inc (BACNI)
- Cumberland Manor Residential Aged Care
- Filipino Australian Friendship Association Geelong
- Filipino Community Council of Victoria (FCCVI)
- Filipino Seniors & Carers Support Group Gippsland
- Phil Australian Foundation Inc.
- Philippines Times
- Pilipino Elderly Association South East Region (PEASER)
- Filipino Seniors Support Group Frankston Inc.
- SBS Filipino
- Seniors Rights Victoria
- Young Generation Fillipino Senior Citizens Club of South East
## Filipino community Cultural context

### Common cultural beliefs for Filipino Australians

**Traditional trust of family members**

There is a strong tradition of trusting family members. While this is in many ways a positive cultural trait, it can lead to making arrangements such as Centrelink nominees or living arrangements without discussing expectations, planning for things that may go wrong or getting any independent legal or financial advice.

**Traditional concern about other people’s views – saving face and the good name of the family**

“Hiya” is the Filipino term encompassing a combination of powerful emotions. The term means shame or embarrassment, but is so influential within the Filipino culture that it inhibits self-assertion, as it is an anxiety or fear of being exposed and unprotected.” The views of the wider community can strongly influence family and individual decisions, and many older Filipinos would rather suffer in silence than expose themselves to deep shame by admitting a problem exists. Saving face and upholding the reputation of the family may lead to issues remaining secret.

**Importance of family and expectation that problems are solved within the family**

The family is a source of identity, support and the main commitment for older people. It is expected that problems are solved within the family. Accessing outside help is seen as not coping and not meeting traditional family standards and community expectations.

**Importance of keeping family together**

There are strong community expectations around keeping families together, even when a person may be experiencing mistreatment within the family. This creates enormous pressure on people to stay in a potentially abusive situation, and leaving the family may have wider social repercussions for an older person.

**Avoidance of conflict – the collectivist culture**

Like many cultures who migrate to Australia, the Filipino culture is collectivist rather than individualistic. This means the individual is more likely to put aside personal goals for the sake of family harmony. This leads to an avoidance of conflict.

**Greater reliance on children throughout the post migration period**

Second generation Australians from non-English speaking backgrounds may have had considerably more responsibility around their parents’ and family’s affairs. A sense of gratitude may prevent older people from speaking out for fear of appearing ungrateful.

**Role of the Church in the Filipino community**

Church groups and networks are important, particularly to the older generation, and are often the first place newly arrived migrants go to meet people. Eighty per cent of the Philippines is Catholic. Filipinos may turn to church leaders for support in times of crisis.

### Expectations

**An expectation that older parents will look after grandchildren and that parents must provide for children**

In Australia, most Filipino women aged 60 and above are the carer, or ‘taga-alaga’ of their grandchildren. They are usually left at home to look after kids, drop them to school and pick them up from school. They are ‘taongbahay’, staying at home to ensure that the family home is neat and tidy and food is always ready when the children and grandchildren come home from work and school.

**An expectation of being looked after in old age**

It is traditional that the older generation is looked after by their children as they reach frailty in older age. The Filipino’s sense of reciprocal obligation and gratitude to their elderly relatives is known as ‘utang na loob’, literally meaning ‘debt from within’. It is therefore common in Filipino society for three generations of family to live in the same house.

**An expectation that the extended family will live together**
Dependency

While dependency may exist, it is not always the case that the older person will be abused. However, it can be a trigger if someone decides to exploit the vulnerability of the older person.

Contributory (Aged) Parent Visa

Many older Filipinos arrive in Australia on a Contributory Parent Visa. They are highly dependent on their sponsors (adult children). The older person’s assets may be divested to family members prior to migrating. There is a two-way indebtedness. The children are indebted to the parents who have raised them and the parents are indebted to the children who have paid for the visa. This can exacerbate the imbalance of power and level of dependency. The ten year wait for access to an Australian aged or disability pension can put enormous pressure on the family.

Making long-term arrangements on the basis of trust alone

There is a strong tradition of trusting family members. This can lead to making arrangements such as living arrangements without discussing expectations, or planning for the unexpected or changes over time (such as care needs). Wills, powers of attorney and advanced care planning are not commonly discussed or understood. Filipinos can be uncomfortable with impersonal bureaucratic systems and processes. Families may not know the obligations associated with powers of attorney and guardianship.

Lack of awareness of options

Community members may have restricted access to information about services and supports, including those associated with elder abuse. There is a lack of understanding of the service system.

Multiple levels of dependency due to living with extended family

Living with the extended family is mostly a healthy and productive societal structure, but it can result in older people having multiple layers of dependency across domestic financial and social spheres. It is traditional for the adult child to have the balance of power in the household, and the older person may be vulnerable if this power is abused. Adult children may control their older parent’s money “for their own good”. A sense of indebtedness and a wish not to appear ungrateful may lead to reluctance to voice needs or ask for help.

Lack of transport options

Often Filipino women do not learn to drive when they migrate to Australia. Even women who do drive may not have access to a car. This makes them dependent on husbands or adult children for transport, especially in rural areas with very limited public transport options.

Isolation

Rural isolation

Many Filipino women migrated to rural areas in the 1970s and 1980s in intercultural marriages, and may be geographically and socially isolated. This is compounded by lack of transport, lack of social opportunities and lack of services.

Relationship conflict

This may include physical, emotional and social abuse including control of social interaction and finances.

Intergenerational conflict

This may exist due to the impact of migration on the family. Traditional cultural values can clash with the contemporary Australian context, cultural values, practicalities and pressures. There may be a lack of understanding and communication around the differences in expectations.

Change in care needs

Overburdening of carers

There can be a reluctance to accept support from outside the family. Filipino women in intercultural marriages may be looking after much older husbands without support. Grandparents may be overburdened by caring for grandchildren.

Cognitive decline

Dementia increases dependency on family members. If a relationship has a history of abusive behaviour, the onset of dementia can escalate the level of abuse.

Lack of understanding of the impact of ageing

Ageing may not be well understood or recognised in the community, so the older person may be expected to preform household chores and childcare beyond their level of comfort. Dementia is not well understood.
### Barriers to seeking help

#### Fear of consequences
- **Fear of what other people will think** – losing face or losing reputation, destroying the good name of the family
- **Fear of making the situation worse**
- **Fear of losing family relationships** – being ostracised by family and community
- **Fear of homelessness or being sent back to the Philippines** – lack of awareness of housing options, lack of alternatives

#### Stigma
- **Shame** – embarrassment about lack of knowledge and shame about family problems
- **Collusion of the extended family and community with the abuser**
  - It can be the case that the extended family advises the victim of the abuse to accept and live with the situation rather than cause a family rift. There may be pressure from the wider community to “keep the family together”. This can be due to stigma or it may be a result of social conditioning that leads people to see the abuse as in some way normal. This is particularly relevant for women experiencing abuse
  - **“Blame the victim”**
    - Family and the wider community may “blame the victim” for the situation, particularly in intercultural marriages where the Filipino woman may experience stigma from both within the Filipino and wider community.
  - **Seeing the situation as normal**
    - Families may not understand the impact of their behaviour on older members of the family, or the boundaries of what constitutes mistreatment. An older person and their family may come to see the behaviour as normal and therefore acceptable. It may be preferable to be in this situation than consider the alternatives.

#### Restricted access to supports and resources
- **Difficulty accessing services or supports**
  - Lack of culturally appropriate services that are accessible or responsive to the needs of the person seeking help. Older Filipinos may be uncomfortable with bureaucracy, unfamiliar with the service system and intimidated by using the telephone.
- **Lack of services in regional areas**
  - Many Filipinos live in regional areas which have a lack of support services, particularly culturally appropriate services. Legal firms in small country towns may have “conflicts” preventing them from taking Filipino women as clients if their husbands are already a client. There are large distances between services and a lack of transport options. Many women may not drive or have access to a car.
- **Local government or service boundaries**
  - The Filipino community is scattered throughout metropolitan and regional Victoria. Agencies may be restricted from delivering services outside their own boundaries which means there are less options for people to access support if it is outside the area they live in.
- **Language**
  - Although there is high English proficiency in the Filipino community compared with some other ethnic groups, many older people may have low English proficiency. There are a large number of languages in the Philippines and a lack of interpreters for many of them. Filipinos may not read or understand Tagalog. Many older people do not know about culturally appropriate services as they cannot access information.
## Types of elder abuse

| Financial, property and assets | Mismanagement of the older person’s finances or assets, possibly associated with the misuse of nominee status for Centrelink entitlements or enduring power of attorney.  
An older person being given documents to sign without full knowledge of what they are, or knowledge of the potential repercussions of signing the document.  
An older person either handing over their pension to a family member or not having access to the pension in the first place when it is paid into a bank account they cannot access.  
An older person giving money to family member to pay bills that are then not paid.  
The selling of an older person’s possessions by a family member without their consent.  
Women are often not on the deeds of property. In the event that the husband passes away first, children may have control of the family assets and finances. Due to low financial literacy, the older woman may be unaware of this process occurring or its implications to her welfare and rights.  
Abuse of an assets for care arrangement - adult children may take control of the home in exchange for caring for their older parents, however, fail to provide adequate care. |
| Emotional, Psycho | Threats to send back to the Philippines – may occur in intercultural marriages or to grandparents once grandchildren are older and no longer need caring for  
Threats to restrict access to grandchildren  
Being told that they can’t handle their own money, are ignorant or stupid – controlling an older person’s money may be justified as “for their own good”. Sending money overseas to relatives may be used as “proof” that an older person can’t manage their own finances. |
| Social | Not being allowed to keep or make friendships. There can be a lack of understanding of the importance of social interaction in the wider community.  
Preventing an older person from attending social events An older person may rely on their family for transport. This can be withdrawn or used as a method of control, particularly if social clubs are a source of information and support for the older person. |
| Sexual | The huge stigma around this means that although it occurs, it is rarely disclosed  
Perpetrators are generally the husband and may be part of long-term family violence that has “grown old” |
| Physical | Yelling or abusive language  
Hitting  
Aggressive behaviour such as throwing items  
Family violence “grown old” |
| Neglect | Neglect related to abuse in an assets for care situation - Care is either not given or is not adequate. An older person may rely on children to buy food and pay bills, and this does not occur. This is likely to be very hidden due to shame and stigma. It can occur even when the older person isn’t living with the perpetrator.  
Inability to meet caring needs - This can occur where there is stress in the care relationship and the carer isn’t coping. |
5.6 Appendix six: Legal terminology explained

What is an enduring power of attorney (medical treatment)?

An enduring power of attorney (medical treatment) is a legal document where you (the donor) appoint someone (the agent) to make medical decisions for you. These may include agreeing to medication, surgery, and other medical procedures. Enduring means it continues (endures) when you are unable to make these types of decisions for yourself.

You complete, sign, and have witnessed an enduring power of attorney (medical treatment) form – giving power of attorney to someone you choose. Their power begins when you are unable to make decisions. Your agent’s decisions have the same legal force as if you had made them yourself.

Download the factsheet: enduring power of attorney (medical treatment) from the Office of the Public Advocate

What is an enduring power of attorney (financial)?

An enduring power of attorney (financial) is a legal document where an individual (the ‘donor’) can give another person (the ‘attorney’) the legal right to make financial and legal decisions for them. This may include managing matters such as banking, property, and paying bills. ‘Enduring’ means the power continues (endures) even when an individual is unable to make these types of decisions for themselves due to accident or illness resulting in incapacity, either temporary or permanent.

The power can be executed by completing an Enduring Power of Attorney (Financial) form, giving power of attorney to a person chosen by the donor. The form must be signed and witnessed.

The time at which the powers take effect can be specified on the form as can conditions on the decisions an attorney can make. The attorney agrees by signing the acceptance section of the form. The attorney’s decisions have the same legal force as if the donor had made them.

Download the factsheet: enduring power of attorney (financial) from the Office of the Public Advocate

What is an enduring power of guardianship?

An enduring power of guardianship is a legal document where you (the donor) appoint someone (the guardian) to make personal and lifestyle decisions for you – like where you live and the health care you receive. Enduring means it continues (endures) when you are unable to make these types of decisions for yourself.

Download the factsheet: guardianship from the Office of the Public Advocate

The above information has been taken from the Office of the Public Advocate Victoria. Further information can be found at www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au
Mistreatment can affect an older person’s financial, emotional or physical wellbeing.

It may be deliberate. It can also happen when people don’t understand that the older person may be experiencing their behaviour as abusive.

The mistreatment of older people is more common than we realise and can happen to anyone, male or female, from any cultural background.

Kahit na nakasisira ng loob ang mga isyung ito, mayroon kayong mga mapagpapilian. Huwag magtuloy sa katahimikan - madali kayong matutulungan, kahit na kung sa pakiramdam ninyo, ito ay mahirap manganong anong pangangailangan ay kasing importante ng mga pangangailangan ng mga ibang miyembro ng pamilya.

Some older people experience disrespectful behaviour from people they know and trust.

When we talk about these issues, it gives people permission to speak up if they are experiencing abuse.

Although these can be daunting, there are choices. Don’t suffer in silence - help is around the corner, even when it feels like it isn’t. Your needs are just as important as those of other family members.

Impormasyon ng lokal na grupo ito
Local group information here:


“My son has my bank card to pay my bills. When my friends told me how much pension money I should have, he stopped driving me to the seniors club.”

“Tinatakot ako ng aking asawa na paauihin niya ako sa Pilipinas kapag humihingi ako ng pero sa kanya.”

“My husband threatens to send me back to the Philippines if I ask him for money.”


“My son-in-law told me to sign documents. I didn’t know what they were. Now my house is for sale.”

“Sinabi ng anak kong babae na hindi ko na raw mapag malakas ang aking mga apong lalaki kung hindi ko ilinisin ang kanyang bahay. Pagod na pagod na ako pero wala akong ibang mapupuntahan.”

“My daughter said I can’t see my grandsons anymore unless I clean her house. I am very tired but I have nowhere else to go.”

Kontak para sa suporta
Contact for support:

Seniors Rights Victoria

1300 368 821

Sa pamamagitan ng Pilipinong interpreter, Tulong para sa mga matatandang nakaranasan ng abuso:

Help through an interpreter for older people experiencing abuse:

- Libre at kumpidensyal na payo para sa mga taong higit sa 60 anyos
  Free and confidential advice for people over 60 years old

- Serbisyo pangtelepono o mga pagdalaw sa inyong tahanan
  Telephone service or home visits

- Maikling panahon na pagtatanggol at suporta
  Short term advocacy and support

- Libreng ispesyalistang payo ukol sa batas sa Australia
  Specialist advice about laws in Australia

Interpreter

131 450

Humiling ng Pilipinong interpreter
Ask for a Filipino interpreter