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## **Elder abuse needs immediate action: National Seniors**

National Seniors Australia says immediate action is needed to address the shameful issue of elder abuse in Australia.

The advocacy group's Chief Advocate Ian Henschke said a four-year national plan to respond to the abuse of older Australians released today by the federal government placed too much emphasis on further research and too little on addressing what is a shameful community issue.

Mr Henschke said the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety had documented large numbers of incidents of abuse in home and residential care and it was well known that vulnerable people suffering abuse were often hesitant to report it, for a variety of reasons.

"The government's announcement to introduce a free national hotline to report elder abuse is a positive step, provided people are aware of it," Mr Henschke said.

"Research among our members has shown six out of 10 haven't heard of the Complaints Commissioner for Aged Care. So, it's important that the federal government provides funding to educate people about where they can complain about elder abuse.

"What we need is more immediate and direct national action to provide appropriate protection for vulnerable older Australians. National seniors is always be supportive of good research but in this case the priority is action."

Mr Henschke said National Seniors Australia had last year joined forces with the Australian Banking Association, the Council on the Ageing and Legal Aid to tackle financial elder abuse.

The group had called for an online register of power of attorney orders and a dedicated body to crack down on financial abuse of the elderly. It also wanted standardised power-of-attorney laws across Australia.

About five per cent of older Australians were subjected to financial abuse, where they were taken advantage of by trusted family, friends, carers or others.

"As a society, we can and need to do more to support older people who are being exploited in this way," Mr Henschke said.

"The government made a commitment in last year's budget to standardise power of attorney orders and this needs to be addressed as a priority.

"We are appealing to all governments at all levels to work together to achieve meaningful progress in this area to protect some of the most vulnerable people in our community."

ENDS

**National Seniors Chief Advocate Ian Henschke is available for comment.**

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National Seniors was established in 1976 and is the largest independent advocacy group for older Australians.

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