

PRESS RELEASE

SENIORS RIGHTS VICTORIA

28 April 2008

A new centre, Seniors Rights Victoria, is operating at Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria will provide information, advocacy and legal services to older people who suffer abuse.

Sue Hendy, Executive Director of COTA Vic, has welcomed the initiative of the Victorian Government in providing funding through the Office of Senior Victorians and Victorian Legal Aid.

The service is led by Council on the Ageing (COTA) in partnership with the Public Interest Law Clearing House (PILCH), Eastern Community Legal Centre and Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre.

The new centre will provide telephone advice and referral, support and advocacy, and legal services to people who are suffering abuse and neglect in the community. Research has found that between 1 and 5 % older people experience some form of abuse or neglect.

A hotline **1300 368 821** has been established by Seniors Rights Victoria to provide one to one advice to people who are concerned about their own situation, and to family members or others concerned about some one they know.

"Callers may be ringing about financial, physical, emotional, or psychological abuse, or situations of neglect or mistreatment", according to the manager of Seniors Rights Victoria, Julie Nelson. "Lawyers experienced in dealing with elder abuse will be able to provide telephone advice initially, and to talk through the options available to people".

"Elder abuse is characterized by occurring within a relationship of trust, where the older person is relying on a family member or trusted other to act in their best interests", according to Ms Nelson. "it is the abuse of this trust that makes it particularly difficult for people to decide what to do about it."

Common situations may include the use of the person's money without their consent; pressure to sign documents that aren't fully understood; failing to get timely medical assistance ; or ignoring a person's social needs.

The service will operate on **1300 368 821** between 10am and 5pm on weekdays from 28 April 2008.

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