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## **RDNS SA SPEAKS OUT AGAINST ELDER ABUSE**

One in twenty older Australians are experiencing some form of abuse and more can be done to reduce this alarming statistic says not-for profit community health and care provider, the Royal District Nursing Service (RDNS SA).

Elder abuse is an act that causes harm to an older person, often carried out by someone the older person knows and trusts. This could be a family member, friend or carer and the abuse could be physical, psychological, financial, social, neglect or sexual.

Ahead of Elder Abuse Awareness Day on Wednesday 15 June 2016, RDNS SA General Manager Health SA, Bronwyn Masters, said elder abuse is a prevailing issue and the organisation wants to work with the community to reduce its prevalence.

“In South Australia over the past five years, elder abuse has most commonly included financial and emotional abuse and in 80 per cent of cases the abuse was carried out by a family member. These rates are expected to increase as our population ages,” Ms Masters said.

“While elder abuse can be a hidden problem because it happens within the relationships where it is least expected to occur, raising awareness of the signs of elder abuse and where to go for assistance will help us start to better protect the rights of older South Australians.”

Warning signs of elder abuse may include an older person seeming fearful, anxious or isolated. There may be injuries, or an absence of personal care. Disappearance of possessions, unexplained financial transactions, and changes to a will, title or other documents are also of concern, as are arguments with a caregiver.

RDNS SA Registered Nurse, Margaret Mifsud, who has witnessed elder abuse first hand, said it is important to look past the consequences of making other people unhappy, as long as the right thing is being done for the person affected. The focus should always be on that person.

“You might get backlash from the family but the priority is that person and taking care of them not the family. They play a part and they’re important as well but when you see someone suffering abuse – do something,” Ms Mifsud said.

“Go with your gut. Generally you know when something is wrong and there is a lot of support out there – you just have to know where to go.”

If you suspect abuse is occurring or you want to talk to someone about your own experiences, there is help available. You can call SA Health’s elder abuse prevention phone line on 1800 372 310 for free confidential, state wide advice. The line is open Monday to Friday from 10am to 3pm and outside of these hours you can leave a message for a return phone call.

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## About the Silver Chain Group

We are a not-for-profit organisation delivering community health and care services across Australia. We help people of all ages to receive the care they need to remain happy and healthy at home.

We have a proud history of serving Australians for over 110 years in Western Australia and more than 120 years as RDNS in South Australia. We currently deliver our services in Western Australia, Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia.

With over 3,200 staff and 380 volunteers, we assist more than 82,000 people to remain living in their homes and community every year.

For more information, please see [rdns.org.au](http://rdns.org.au).

