



Promoting opportunities. Protecting rights. For older Victorians.

COTA Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria

Submission to the Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria

To:

Parliament of Victoria

Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee

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1 About us

Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria is the leading not-for-profit organisation representing the interests and rights of people aged over 50 in Victoria. For over 70 years, we have led government, corporate and community thinking about the positive aspects of ageing in the state.

Today, our focus is on promoting opportunities for and protecting the rights of people 50+. We value ageing and embrace its opportunities for personal growth, contribution, and self-expression. This belief drives benefits to the nation and its states alongside communities, families, and individuals.

Seniors Rights Victoria (SRV) is the key state-wide service dedicated to advancing the rights of older people and the early intervention in, and prevention of, elder abuse in our community.

SRV has a team of experienced advocates, lawyers, and social workers who provide free information, advice, referral, legal advice, legal casework, and support to older people who are either at risk of or are experiencing elder abuse. SRV supports and empowers older people through the provision of legal advice directly to the older person.

2 About this submission

SRV welcomes the Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee's inquiry into the mechanisms for capturing data on the profile and volume of perpetrators of family violence in Victoria and barriers to achieving a full understanding of this cohort.

This submission aims to give this inquiry an understanding of the context, nature, and mechanisms in the capturing of data on perpetrators within SRV. It also aims to articulate how the profile of elder abuse perpetrators differs from that of general family violence, and what that means for the review and usage of data in this space.

3 Executive summary

This submission highlights the need for improved data collection on elder abuse perpetrators to better address the unique needs of elder abuse within the broader family violence system in Victoria.

Elder abuse perpetrators often differ from general family violence perpetrators, with adult children and other family members being the primary abusers, whereas intimate partners make up the majority of general family violence cases. The most complete study on elder abuse prevalence in Australia, published in 2021, revealed that 14.8% of Australians aged 65 and over had experienced some form of elder abuse in the preceding year. In Victoria alone, this suggests 160,000 older individuals experience elder abuse each year, underscoring the need for effective data collection for intervention.

SRV plays a vital role in collecting data on elder abuse through its state-wide helpline, as well as legal and advocacy services. However, there is a lack of comprehensive state-wide or national data on incidences of elder abuse or elder abuse perpetrators in comparison to other aspects of family violence.

Ensuring a comprehensive collection of elder abuse perpetrator data faces significant challenges, including underreporting by victims, and limited capacity of the elder abuse sector to service and record cases. These issues are compounded by inadequate suitability of general family violence organisations to handle elder abuse cases, as well as a lack of training among professionals working with older people.

Victoria offers various programs aimed at family violence perpetrator intervention that could benefit significantly from the proper collection of elder abuse perpetrator data. However, these frameworks largely focus on domestic and gendered family violence, virtually failing to service elder abuse perpetrators entirely. Responses to elder abuse require tailored approaches, recognising its unique aspects such as the more balanced gender distribution of perpetrators and the varying profile of perpetrators.

To improve elder abuse perpetrator data collection, several recommendations are proposed:

1. Raise awareness among older people about elder abuse and available support services.
2. Identify and address gaps in data collection among organisations outside family violence.
3. Enhance training for professionals on recognising, addressing, and documenting elder abuse.
4. Increase funding to elder abuse programs to expand service capacity and data collection.
5. Maintain separate statistics for elder abuse, avoiding aggregation with general family violence.
6. Revise perpetrator intervention frameworks to address elder abuse effectively.

These steps are vital for creating a comprehensive understanding and robust policy framework that addresses the distinct needs and profiles of elder abuse perpetrators, ultimately fostering a safer environment for older Victorians.

4 Context to elder abuse perpetrator data

4.1 Introduction to elder abuse

Elder abuse constitutes family violence by definition and under the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic).¹ It is defined by the World Health Organisation as “a single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person”.² It can be financial, emotional, psychological, physical, sexual, or social.

Elder abuse can occur once or many times and can vary in severity from subtle through to extreme. It can include one or a combination of the different types of abuse. Most often, elder abuse is carried out by someone known to the older person, with two thirds of our clients’ abusers being an adult child.³

Elder abuse and family violence share common foundations but differ significantly in their dynamics and requirements. Both elder abuse and family violence often involve family members as perpetrators, however, the nature of the relationships, the driving factors, and the specific circumstances in elder abuse cases are distinct, requiring the need for solutions tailored to its unique characteristics.

The most detailed and rigorous study of elder abuse prevalence in Australia, published in December 2021, found that 14.8% of those 65 and over had experienced at least one recognised form of elder abuse over the previous 12 months.⁴ This included 11.7% experiencing psychological abuse, 2.9% experiencing neglect and 2.1% experiencing financial abuse. This translates into some 640,000 older Australians experiencing elder abuse every year.

¹ Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic), s 8(3). Retrieved from: <https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/family-violence-protection-act-2008/061>. (May 2024).

² World Health Organisation. 2022. Abuse of older people. Retrieved from: <https://www.who.int/health-topics/abuse-of-older-people> (May 2024)

³ Joosten, M., Gartoulla, P., Feldman, P., Brijnath, B., & Dow, B. 2020. Seven years of elder abuse data in Victoria (2012–2019), National Ageing Research Institute in partnership with Seniors Rights Victoria. Retrieved: <https://www.nari.net.au/elder-abuse-in-victoria> (May 2024)

⁴ Qu, L., Kaspiew, R., Carson, R., Roopani, D., De Maio, J., Harvey, J., Horsfall, B. 2021. National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study: Final Report. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies. Retrieved from: <https://aifs.gov.au/research/research-reports/national-elder-abuse-prevalence-study-final-report> (May 2024)

This is especially concerning, as it places Australia as one of the leading developed nations experiencing elder abuse, ahead of Canada (10.0%),⁵ United States (9.5%),⁶ and England and Wales (14%).⁷

These figures suggest that 160,000 older Victorians are experiencing elder abuse each year to a level they are willing to identify to researchers – including 126,000 experiencing psychological abuse and 28,000 experiencing financial abuse. The prevalence of elder abuse is also only likely to increase as the population ages, which is a well-established structural trend.⁸

4.2 *Diverging profiles between elder abuse and family violence perpetrators*

Elder abuse typically involves adult children, other family members, or individuals with a family-like relationship exploiting a trust-based relationship with an older person, in contrast to general family violence where perpetrators are more often intimate partners. Just as family violence is influenced by attitudes, beliefs, and corresponding behaviours, elder abuse is similarly driven by these factors. However, where gender inequality and male aggression drive domestic and gendered violence, the primary motivators in elder abuse are ageism,⁹ intergenerational dependency, and a sense of entitlement.¹⁰

Approximately 55% of elder abuse perpetrators are men, with women constituting the remaining 45%. On the victim-survivor side, women make up about 60%, while men account for 40%.¹¹ This pattern contrasts to general family violence, where the gender disparity among both perpetrators and victims is more pronounced. Notably, this was highlighted by the Royal Commission into Family Violence's final report.¹²

⁵ Government of Canada, Department of Justice. (2021). Crime and abuse against seniors: A review of the research literature with special reference to the Canadian situation. Retrieved from: <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/fv-vf/crim/index.html> (May 2024)

⁶ Patel K, Bunachita S, Chiu H, Suresh P, Patel UK. 2021. Elder Abuse: A Comprehensive Overview and Physician-Associated Challenges. National Library of Medicine. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8110289/> (May 2024)

⁷ Office for National Statistics. 2018. Domestic abuse: findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales. [xlsx]. Office for National Statistics. Retrieved from: <https://shorturl.at/bkBXs> (May 2024)

⁸ Department of the Treasury. 2023. Intergenerational Report 2023 – Australia's future to 2063. Australian Government. Retrieved from: <https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-08/p2023-435150.pdf> (May 2024)

⁹ World Health Organisation. 2022. Tackling abuse of older people: five priorities for the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030). Geneva: World Health Organisation. Retrieved: <https://www.who.int/publications-detail-redirect/9789240052550> (May 2024)

¹⁰ Swift, H., Abrams, D., Marques, S., Vauclair, C., Bratt, C., Lima, M. 2018. Ageism in the European Region: Finding from the European Social Survey in Perspectives on Elder Abuse and Mistreatment from Selected Countries and Regions. Springer International Publishing.

¹¹ Qu, L., Kaspiew, R., Carson, R., Roopani, D., De Maio, J., Harvey, J., Horsfall, B. 2021. National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study: Final Report. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies. Retrieved from: <https://aifs.gov.au/research/research-reports/national-elder-abuse-prevalence-study-final-report> (May 2024)

¹² State of Victoria. 2016. Royal Commission into Family Violence: Summary and recommendations. Parl Paper No 132 (2014–16). Retrieved: http://rcfv.archive.royalcommission.vic.gov.au/MediaLibraries/RCFamilyViolence/Reports/RCFV_Full_Report_Interactive.pdf (May 2024)

Children, including sons (24%) and daughters (12%), and their partners (7%), constitute a significant portion of abusers, while intimate partners account for 10%. Beyond family, friends (12%), acquaintances (9%), and neighbours (7%) are notable perpetrators, especially in cases of financial, physical, and sexual abuse. Perpetrators often face personal challenges, including mental health issues (32%), financial instability (21%), and substance abuse problems, particularly alcohol.¹³

4.3 *How SRV operates*

SRV operates a state-wide helpline for older Victorians experiencing abuse, staffed by advocates who provide information, assistance, and support. Concerned individuals can contact the helpline, but only older people directly seeking help can become clients. They must contact SRV directly or consent to being contacted, as cases cannot be taken on by someone else.

The helpline advocate assesses eligibility for SRV services. If the matter aligns with SRV guidelines, the caller proceeds to intake, and an advice call is scheduled with an advocate or lawyer. Eligibility criteria include residing in Victoria, being 60 years or older (45+ for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients), experiencing or at risk of elder abuse, and having the capacity to give legal instruction.

Names of the older person and the alleged perpetrator are required for conflict checks and intake. Anonymity is allowed for general information calls, but not for advice calls. If eligible and no conflict exists, the caller is assigned a duty advocate and lawyer.

During the advice call, clients may be referred to external services or offered further SRV support if needed and desired. Many clients may opt out of legal advice due to fear of family conflict; in such cases, an advocate may continue to assist. SRV staff work with clients until their issues are resolved or improved, at which point the case is closed.

4.4 *Collected data*

SRV collects a range of data to understand and address the various aspects of elder abuse. This data is primarily gathered during advice calls and intake processes.

The key types of data collected include demographic information, types of abuse, perpetrator details, and outcomes of cases.

¹³ Qu, L., Kaspiew, R., Carson, R., Roopani, D., De Maio, J., Harvey, J., Horsfall, B. 2021. National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study: Final Report. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies. Retrieved from: <https://aifs.gov.au/research/research-reports/national-elder-abuse-prevalence-study-final-report> (May 2024)

Data directly relating to perpetrators includes:

- Information on the relationship between the older person and the perpetrator.
- Gender and age of the perpetrators.
- Types of abuse committed by perpetrators.
- Whether the older person lives with the perpetrator.

SRV's administrative officer then collates data for reporting to our various funders, including the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and Victorian Legal Aid. The collected data is entered into our case management system Actionstep. This system is accessible to the relevant parties within SRV, including our helpline operators, advocates, legal service and administrative staff.

The collected data serves multiple purposes. Primarily, it is used for reporting to our funders and stakeholders, but it also plays an important role in shaping and guiding SRV research and advocacy within the elder abuse and public policy environment.

Additionally, the data has been used in past inter-organisational projects aimed at developing understanding of the legal needs of older Victorians, the profiles of perpetrators, and identifying gaps in our current knowledge of elder abuse. This includes the studies *Seven Years of Elder Abuse Data in Victoria (2020)*, and the *National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study (2021)*.

5 Challenges in elder abuse perpetrator data collection

The main challenges to ensuring a comprehensive collection of elder abuse perpetrator data include underreporting of elder abuse, limited capacity within the elder abuse sector to service and record cases, and the general family violence system's inability to address elder abuse as a form of family violence. Additionally, a lack of training and awareness among professionals working with older people to recognise, respond to, and document elder abuse.

5.1 Service demand

As Victoria's population ages, the incidence of elder abuse is rising, placing unprecedented demand on service providers. This growing incidence, coupled with funding cuts, has significantly strained the capacity of organizations like SRV to meet this demand, which can lead cases to falling through the cracks. Consequently, instances of elder abuse can go unnoticed and unrecorded within the broader family violence system, resulting in incomplete data. This trend is evident in SRV's ongoing operations.

In the fiscal year 2022/23, SRV responded to 5,085 calls on its elder abuse helpline, marking a 50% increase compared to the previous year and a 40% rise from 2020/21. This surge in helpline activity is a clear indicator of the escalating issue. Furthermore, the demand for non-legal advice saw a substantial 40% increase, with SRV conducting 374 sessions in 2022/23, compared to the previous year.

The organisation also experienced a 20% rise in the number of cases it opened. Historically, about 25% of advices led to legal cases, but over the past three years, this figure has been between 35-38%, reflecting the growing complexity and severity of the issues faced by older Victorians.

Similarly, following recent funding cuts, SRV's ability to respond effectively has been significantly hampered. The organisation is currently able to respond to only about 24% of total calls and 46% of voicemails, indicating a reduced capacity of the Helpline and our intake. With SRV the only state-wide community legal centre solely focused on elder abuse, our reduced ability to respond to demand means that the state is in a weaker position to understand the true rate of elder abuse in the community and collect data on elder abuse perpetrators.

5.2 *Underreporting of elder abuse*

In elder abuse cases, it is common for older individuals to choose not to report their abuse to Victoria Police or seek help from organisations such as SRV. This reluctance has created a blind spot, resulting in an incomplete picture of elder abuse in Australia. The underreporting of elder abuse is especially significant when it comes to notifying the police, further obscuring the true extent of the issue.

Elder abuse often goes unreported for several reasons. Firstly, older individuals might not recognise certain behaviours as abusive. This lack of recognition can stem from little to no understanding of what is elder abuse.¹⁴ They may also have a limited definition of elder abuse, often excluding forms like sexual and emotional abuse. Additionally, most victim-survivors often do not self-identify as victims of family violence. They typically deny experiencing elder abuse when asked directly but acknowledge specific abusive acts when described in detail.¹⁵

This familial dynamic older people have with their abuser further complicates elder abuse cases, as the older person may rely on these individuals for essential needs like translation, care, and social interaction. Furthermore, the prospect of reporting their children or close relatives to authorities can evoke deep feelings of guilt and shame.¹⁶ This leads to a reluctance in following through with reporting.

¹⁴ Dow, B., Gahan, L., Gaffy, E. et al. 2020. Barriers to Disclosing Elder Abuse and Taking Action in Australia. J Fam Viol 35, 853–861. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-019-00084-w> (May 2024)

¹⁵ Qu, L., Kaspiew, R., Carson, R., Roopani, D., De Maio, J., Harvey, J., Horsfall, B. 2021. National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study: Final Report. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies. Retrieved from: <https://aifs.gov.au/research/research-reports/national-elder-abuse-prevalence-study-final-report> (May 2024)

¹⁶ Jackson, S. L., & Hafemeister, T. L. 2015. The impact of relationship dynamics on the detection and reporting of elder abuse occurring in domestic settings. Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect, 27(2), 121–145. doi:10.1080/08841166.2015.1039101 (May 2024)

5.3 Identification and response from professionals working with older people

The *Family Violence Data Collection Framework* mandates data collection from four tiers of professionals:¹⁷

- Tier 1: Specialist family violence and sexual assault practitioners
- Tier 2: Workers in core support services or intervention agencies
- Tier 3: Workers in mainstream services and non-family violence specific agencies
- Tier 4: Workers in universal services and organisations

Organisations with professionals from tiers 3 and 4 play a crucial role in collecting elder abuse data due to significant underreporting and the reluctance of older individuals to seek help. These organisations include health services, banks, welfare providers, aged care facilities, and others that work directly with older people.

If these organisations are not effectively utilised to identify and respond to elder abuse, many cases will go unnoticed, resulting in incomplete data on elder abuse in Victoria. Every referral point within these organisations offers an opportunity to collect detailed data on elder abuse cases and assess the effectiveness of various interventions.

The Royal Commission into Family Violence noted that aged care facilities and hospitals play "an important role in identifying, reporting, and preventing elder abuse".¹⁸ The commission reported that professionals such as healthcare workers are more likely to detect elder abuse if they routinely ask older people about abuse, have an elder abuse protocol, and are trained on the relevant laws regarding abuse.

However, many organisations that routinely interact with older people may not be collecting information on family violence, despite having opportunities to do so.

Professionals who work with older people, too, might struggle to identify elder abuse, and even when they do, they may be uncertain about the appropriate response. Health professionals generally possess a broad understanding of the various types of elder abuse, however, their proficiency in recognising and detecting signs that a client or patient is suffering from abuse can vary significantly.¹⁹

¹⁷ Family Safety Victoria. 2 Dec 2019. Victorian Family Violence Data Collection Framework. Department of Families Fairness and Housing. Retrieved from: <https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-family-violence-data-collection-framework> (May 2024)

¹⁸ State of Victoria. 2016. Royal Commission into Family Violence: Summary and recommendations. Parl Paper No 132 (2014–16). Retrieved: http://rcfv.archive.royalcommission.vic.gov.au/MediaLibraries/RCFamilyViolence/Reports/RCFV_Full_Report_Interactive.pdf (May 2024)

¹⁹ Dow, B., Vrantidis, F., O'Brien, M., Joosten, M., & Gahan, L. 2018. Elder Abuse in Australia. International handbook of elder abuse and mistreatment. Retrieved from: <https://ojs.wsb.edu.pl/index.php/bgs/article/download/855/640/1801> (May 2024)

5.4 *Existing family violence services on elder abuse*

While the work done by family violence services is commendable, it usually does not cater to the specific needs of elder abuse victim-survivors and are often ill-suited for managing such cases. For instance, the victim-survivor might be male, which can be atypical in the broader context of family violence.

Additionally, the perpetrator might not fit the conventional profile associated with family violence, complicating the recognition and response to the abuse. Moreover, victim-survivors might form an initial impression that family violence services and institutions do not cater to their specific situation, whether due to the nature of the abuse or their personal circumstances, thereby deterring them from seeking the help.

For instance, research in Western Australia found that, of the older people and relevant organisations surveyed, 47.9% of respondents believed the abuse of older people is not recognised or integrated into existing family violence responses.²⁰ Several focus group participants similarly observed that while responses to family and domestic violence are well-developed in Western Australia, existing resources could potentially be extended or adapted to address the abuse of older people.

This has implications for Victoria, which is widely seen as leading the country on the issue of family violence. Feedback from SRV clients offers anecdotal support for the view that elder abuse victim-survivors do not see themselves reflected in the current family violence response and services in Victoria.

Better Place Australia, Victoria's only family violence service organisation with staff dedicated to elder abuse cases, has highlighted that specialist elder abuse services are being replaced by generalist family violence services that are not designed for older people.²¹ This issue is reflected in the Orange Door locations, where only 6 of the 36 sites have staff specialised in elder abuse, indicating a need for specialised staff to be present, notably leaving 30 locations ill-equipped to handle these cases.

This lack of integration of elder abuse into family violence services means many cases fall through the cracks unless victim-survivors are further referred to elder abuse organisations such as SRV. This creates a significant blind spot, hindering the comprehensive collection of data on perpetrators and their profiles.

²⁰ Stevens, C., Baldassar, L., O'Brien, E., Cokis, E., Krzyzowski, L., Du Plooy, M.G.C., Jones, B., Noonan, G. & Ottolini, F. (2023). Everyone's business: Research into responses to the abuse of older people (elder abuse) in Western Australia. Perth: Social Ageing (SAGE) Futures Lab.

²¹ Paul, M. (2023, July 10). Mary-Lou says an elder abuse service saved her from her son — now the Victorian trial's ending. [ABC News]. Retrieved from <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-07-10/victorian-elder-abuse-government-funding-cut/102574702>

6 Impact of poor collection and use of elder abuse perpetrator data in shaping intervention programs and frameworks

The lack of data around the perpetrators of elder abuse, or a failure to recognise the well-established diversity in perpetrators of elder abuse, means that Victoria response to perpetrators of family violence is not appropriate, at this stage, for perpetrators of elder abuse.

Victoria offers a range of programs and services aimed at addressing family violence perpetration, guided by key government frameworks and guidelines. Despite several of these documents being published after the Royal Commission, which identified elder abuse as a distinct form of family violence, there remains a significant gap in addressing elder abuse perpetrators or victim-survivors.

These frameworks include:

- Perpetrator Case Management Program - Operational Guidelines (2018).
- Men's Behaviour Change Minimum Standards (2018).
- A Framework for Comprehensive Assessment in Men's Behaviour Change Programs (2009).
- Enhancing Access to Men's Behaviour Change Programs (2009).

All these documents focus primarily on domestic and gendered family violence, with a particular emphasis on men's behaviour change programs. Even the Perpetrator Case Management Program - Operational Guidelines, which is less explicit, still aligns predominantly with the dynamics of male behaviour change.

The corresponding programs designed for people who use violence include:

- Enhanced service intake to improve accessibility for perpetrators.
- Men's behaviour change programs and subsequent casework and follow-up.
- Case management for people who use violence.
- Fathering programs.
- Programs tailored for diverse communities, including Aboriginal, LGBTI, and people with disabilities.

However, these perpetrator intervention policies, guidelines, frameworks, and services in Victoria do not extend these considerations to perpetrators of elder abuse. While it is vital to reflect the gender divide in the experience of family violence, including elder abuse, that gender divide is less pronounced in elder abuse and there are nuanced differences in drivers and risk factors.

There is a pressing need for frameworks with a similar spirit but a different design, specifically addressing the unique dynamics and requirements of elder abuse situations. While these programs are commendable in their scope and intention, they fall short in addressing the unique needs of victim-survivors and the unique profile of elder abuse perpetrators.

7 Key areas of improvement

7.1 *Address underreporting by raising awareness among older people about elder abuse and providing information on where to seek help.*

Underreporting of elder abuse remains a significant challenge in capturing accurate data and providing adequate support. Many older individuals may not recognise certain behaviours as abusive, often due to a limited understanding of what constitutes elder abuse.

Additionally, the fear of familial repercussions and feelings of guilt or shame can further prevent them from seeking help. Raising awareness through targeted campaigns and greater investment in community education can educate older people about the various forms of elder abuse and the importance of seeking help. Providing clear information on where and how to get assistance can empower them to report abuse, thus improving data collection and enabling timely interventions.

7.2 *Identify gaps in elder abuse data collection, particularly among tier 3 and 4 organisations under the Family Violence Data Collection Framework, and implement strategies to ensure comprehensive data collection.*

Despite the Family Violence Data Collection Framework's mandate for data collection across various tiers, significant gaps remain, especially among tier 3 and 4 organisations. These gaps result in underreporting and incomplete data on elder abuse. Identifying these gaps involves evaluating current practices and understanding barriers to effective data collection.

Implementing strategies such as standardised reporting protocols, better integration of elder abuse indicators into existing systems, and regular audits can ensure comprehensive and accurate data collection. This, in turn, enables better resource allocation and more effective policy responses.

7.3 *Enhance training and awareness for professionals working with older people on recognising, and addressing elder abuse and encouraging dialogue and disclosure.*

Professionals in tier 3 and 4 organisations, such as health services, banks, and aged care facilities, often interact directly with older individuals but may lack the training to identify and respond to signs of elder abuse. Enhancing their awareness and skills through comprehensive training programs can improve their ability to recognise abuse and respond appropriately.

Encouraging dialogue and creating a safe environment for older individuals to disclose abuse can lead to earlier detection and support. This approach ensures that more cases are identified and reported, contributing to a more complete picture of elder abuse in Victoria.

7.4 *Avoid aggregating elder abuse data with general family violence statistics; maintain separate statistics specifically for elder abuse.*

Aggregating elder abuse data with general family violence statistics obscures the unique nature and characteristics of elder abuse. Elder abuse perpetrators often differ significantly from those in general family violence cases, with a higher prevalence of adult children and other family members or family-like individuals as perpetrators.

Maintaining separate statistics for elder abuse ensures that these differences are recognised and addressed in policy and program development. It also allows for more accurate monitoring of trends and effectiveness of interventions specific to elder abuse.

7.5 *Develop new perpetrator intervention frameworks and programs that account for diverse profile of elder abuse perpetrators.*

The inadequate use of elder abuse perpetrator data has led to perpetrator intervention frameworks and programs in Victoria being primarily focused on domestic and gendered family violence, aligned with the typical perpetrator profiles of these forms of violence. To ensure more effective interventions, it is crucial to develop new frameworks and programs tailored to the specific profiles of elder abuse perpetrators.

These frameworks should include strategies that address underlying issues such as ageism, intergenerational dependency, and entitlement, while providing appropriate support for diverse groups of perpetrators and victims.

7.6 *Increase funding to existing elder abuse programs and organisations to expand service capacity and collect a larger volume of data.*

The growing incidence of elder abuse, coupled with funding cuts, has significantly strained the capacity of organisations like SRV to respond effectively. Increasing funding to these programs can expand their service capacity, allowing them to handle more cases, and hence improve data collection efforts, enabling these organisations to collect a greater volume of data on elder abuse. This investment is crucial for developing effective interventions, programs, and public policy.