

DISCUSSION RESOURCE

together  
making  
change

PROJECT OF  
5TH NATIONAL ELDER  
ABUSE CONFERENCE

HOSTED BY SENIORS  
RIGHTS SERVICE



## A CARER'S PERSPECTIVE

CAROLINE BAUM





## ABOUT THIS PROJECT

In February 2018, Seniors Rights Service hosted the 5th National Elder Abuse Conference, which brought together more than 500 delegates from a broad range of backgrounds. The conference culminated in an announcement by the Commonwealth Attorney-General, Hon Christian Porter MP, that a “National Plan” would be developed to ensure the protection of older people in Australian society.

To further the conversations generated by the conference, Seniors Rights Service engaged Ellen Fanning to conduct a series of interviews with experts who attended the conference. These videos, along with a discussion sheet for each video, are freely available to community members, professionals and students of all sectors, to enable engagement with the content using suggested discussion questions and to follow up with further reading.

### IMPORTANT! READ THIS BEFORE HOLDING A DISCUSSION GROUP

Many people will share and benefit from participating in study and discussion on the topics.

Due to the sensitive nature of the topics, however, group leaders should ensure they are prepared to support individuals to find qualified assistance in a timely manner, should a topic generate personal concerns or issues for individuals.

As a minimum, group leaders should have available information sheets and phone numbers from the relevant seniors' legal rights service and/or elder abuse prevention service in your state or territory (on page 4 and current as of 2018).

## ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

### SHORT DESCRIPTION

Using her personal experiences of being a carer, Ms Baum reflects that people step into a caring role with a lot of illusions, and find the reality can be extremely challenging, personally and psychologically. Ms Baum highlights the fact that carers can also be mistreated and abused, and that this is not spoken about much in policy or community discussions on elder abuse. She strongly advocates the need for carers to have respite and to seek assistance to develop skills such as resilience.

### FOCUS AREA

Carers experiencing abuse or mistreatment

### RELATED TOPICS

Elder abuse prevention, elder abuse intervention, carers, carer support, respite, dementia

### AUDIENCES

Carers, community members, community members, health workers, aged-care workers,

carer support workers, carer educators, community workers, researchers, students, policy officers, advocates

### MATERIALS FOR FURTHER READING

Kohn, R., and Verhoek-Ofstedahl (2011), Caregiving And Elder Abuse, Med Health R I. 2011 Feb; 94(2): 47–49, accessed from [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4961478/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4961478/)  
Carers Australia, Submission #157, Australian Law Reform Commission Elder Abuse Inquiry  
Carers NSW, Submission #321, Australian Law Reform Commission Elder Abuse Inquiry  
Carers Victoria, Submission #348, Australian Law Reform Commission Elder Abuse Inquiry  
Carers Queensland Submission #27, Australian Law Reform Commission Elder Abuse Inquiry  
All submissions accessed from [www.alrc.gov.au/inquiries/elder-abuse/submissions](http://www.alrc.gov.au/inquiries/elder-abuse/submissions)

### SUGGESTED AGENCIES

For the Carers Association in your state, see Carers Australia, [www.carersaustralia.com.au](http://www.carersaustralia.com.au)



## CAROLINE BAUM

JOURNALIST,  
BROADCASTER  
AND CARER

### BIOGRAPHY

**Caroline Baum is a distinguished journalist and radio and television broadcaster and author. Ms Baum is also an accomplished moderator of writers' festivals and events; she consults to arts organisations, and is a contributor to online and traditional media on culture and contemporary life. Ms Baum is a carer for her 90-year-old mother.**

## A CARER'S PERSPECTIVE

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

***What were some of the "great challenges" Ms Baum and her mother faced when they cared for Ms Baum's father? What did she say she learnt from this experience?***

Mr Baum had sudden-onset vascular dementia. Ms Baum says her father went into hospital for an operation and came out with dementia, which meant there was no time for the family to gradually adjust to this change. This meant Ms Baum had no time to consider the caring role. She says that when her father came home, he was "as mad as a meat-axe". He didn't know who he was and didn't know he needed care. She describes him as "psychotic", "violent", "delusional", and says he "would often abscond". Ms Baum says he often saw her and her mother as "the enemy", although she also describes moments when he would have "little bursts of sanity, like sun coming through clouds". What Ms Baum has learnt from these extraordinary experiences is that carers find themselves facing complex questions such as whether they have "enough love in the tank" to take on the role of "advocate and carer". She also speaks of how, early in her caring role, she had unrealistic expectations of being "a model daughter", then realised it was okay to be "the same flawed daughter" she felt she always was. Ms Baum says her caring experiences also led to her finding a reserve of empathy and compassion that transcended past family histories.

***What does Ms Baum have to say about elder abuse and informal carers?***

Ms Baum says "the elephant in the room" at the (Elder Abuse) conference was about carers experiencing abuse from the care recipient. She says this is "not spoken about much" and that even if carers are not directly abused in terms of violence, there can be rudeness, bitterness, and even "spiteful resentment of the fact that you now have control over someone's life – their finances and other aspects of their well-being".

***What does Ms Baum say about addressing abuse directed at carers?***

Ms Baum does not offer specific comment on addressing carer-directed abuse, but argues there should be greater recognition that this is probably common. She says carers "burn out all the time" and may not be good at saying, "I need to step away now. I need to take a break. I need me time. I need privacy." Ms Baum also says seeking respite and carer education or carer support have been very beneficial in her life.



STATE/TERRITORY	AGENCY CONTACT	CONTACT
<b>AUSTRALIA-WIDE</b>	<b>Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN)</b>	1800 700 600 Connects you with aged-care advocacy services in your state or territory
<b>NEW SOUTH WALES</b>	<b>Seniors Rights Service</b>	1800 424 079
	<b>NSW Elder Abuse Helpline</b>	1800 628 221
<b>AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY</b>	<b>Older Persons Abuse Prevention Referral and Information Line (APRIL)</b>	(02) 6205 3535
	<b>A.C.T. Disability, Aged and Carer Advocacy Service (ADACAS)</b>	02 6242 5060
<b>NORTHERN TERRITORY</b>	<b>Elder Abuse Information Line</b>	1800 037 072
	<b>Seniors and Disability Rights Service of Darwin Community Legal Service</b>	1800 812 953
<b>QUEENSLAND</b>	<b>Elder Abuse Prevention Unit</b>	1300 651 192
	<b>Aged and Disability Advocacy Australia (ADA Australia)</b>	1800 818 338
	<b>Caxton Legal Centre</b>	(07) 3214 6333
<b>SOUTH AUSTRALIA</b>	<b>Aged Rights Advocacy Service</b>	(08) 8232 5377 (Adelaide)
	<b>Alliance for the Prevention of Elder Abuse</b>	1800 700 600 (rural)
	<b>Legal Services Commission of South Australia</b>	1300 366 424 (08) 8111 5555
<b>TASMANIA</b>	<b>Tasmanian Elder Abuse Helpline</b>	1800 441 169
	<b>Advocacy Tasmania Inc. (ATI)</b>	(03) 6224 2240
	<b>Legal Aid Commission of Tasmania</b>	1300 366 611 (03) 6236 3800
<b>VICTORIA</b>	<b>Seniors Rights, Victoria</b>	1300 368 821
	<b>Elder Rights Advocacy (ERA)</b>	(03) 9602 3066 1800 700 600 (rural)
<b>WESTERN AUSTRALIA</b>	<b>Advocare Inc.</b>	1300 724 679 (Perth) 1800 655 566 (rural)
	<b>Older Persons Rights Service, Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre</b>	(08) 9440 1663 (Mirrabooka) (08) 9301 4413 (Joondalup)

## DISCLAIMER

This is information only, not legal advice. If you have a legal problem, call our service directly or see your lawyer. The views expressed in the video are the views of the individual making them, not those of Seniors Rights Service Inc.