



for the rights of older people



# newsletter

aged rights advocacy service inc.

Issue 2, 2008

## Message from the CEO

Welcome to our second newsletter for 2008.

I would like to thank all of the residents and their representatives who attended the Residential Care Forum in October. It was a great success with everyone having opportunities to give their views. We talked about how to make resident groups more effective and gained a lot of useful information from the participants. It was also a great opportunity for people from a number of facilities to meet and to share stories about how the management of their homes support their resident groups. You will see the results of this forum as part of guidelines that are to be distributed across Australia to help residents have their say in decision making. Your home will have access to the guidelines too and we would be pleased to assist you in using them for your resident and representative groups.

This newsletter has some articles about a very important and serious issue - how to safeguard the interests of older people, regardless of where they live. We go out to talk to many groups in the community and are amazed at how many people in the audience then go on to tell us about a friend or relative who is being mistreated by someone they should be able to trust.

In the coming months ARAS will be:

- Raising awareness about the prevention of abuse through a radio and media campaign.
- Educating aged care staff about what it looks like and what they can do to assist older people to prevent abuse.
- Producing written information to distribute through aged care organisations.

The main theme is that "There is **no excuse** for abuse". If you would like further information call ARAS.

**Marilyn Crabtree, CEO**

## 2 Successful Resolutions in Community Services

1) Mr Smith is 80 years old and is finding it increasingly difficult to look after his house and garden, shop and cook for himself. Recently, his 47-year-old son, Harry, who has a mental illness, has come to live with him.

As a result, Mr Smith has found himself to be more and more housebound. He tries to get some home-based services through Home and Community Care (HACC), particularly house and garden maintenance on a regular basis so he could spend some quality time with Harry. However, the only service Mr Smith is offered is a respite service at a Day Centre for Harry, and Harry refuses to go.

Mr Smith contacts ARAS because he does not know what to do and is feeling the pressure of his circumstances. ARAS is able to successfully advocate for Mr Smith to receive some home help services, not only on the grounds of his eligibility as a frail older person but because he is a carer.

The service provider is also able to refer Harry to Mental Health Services, which will increase Harry's independence.

2) ARAS' Aboriginal advocate received a call from the relative of an elder who lived in a remote community and was accessing a HACC meals service on a daily basis.

The relative complained that on several occasions the meal had not been delivered and the older person had consequently gone without a midday meal. When the relative had tried to enquire about the reasons for this lapse in the service, he had not understood the explanation given or how the matter of reimbursement for the meals was going to be arranged.

The relative requested ARAS' Aboriginal advocate make enquiries and seek an assurance from the service provider that this would not occur again.

The ARAS advocate was able to obtain a response from the service provider that satisfied the older person and her family.

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## Feedback Form: your feedback is important to us

ARAS is committed to continuously improving its service and welcomes any comments, suggestions or complaints about any aspect of the services we have provided. Please answer the questions below and either send it to us or call us and tell us your views.

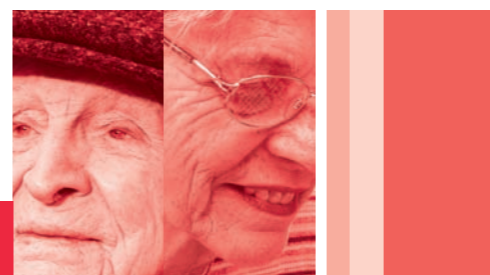
1) How do you know about the Aged Rights Advocacy Service?

2) What are the helpful things that ARAS has done for you?

3) Do you have any suggestions that would help ARAS to improve its service?

4) Do you find the ARAS Newsletter informative and useful?

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## Contact ARAS

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## Care for Older People

Sometimes people hear or witness situations where an older person is receiving poor care or experiencing harm or mistreatment from others.

Take the case of Alf who lives in an aged care facility. Alf told a visiting relative that his bank account had been overdrawn on a regular basis by his daughter who was his Enduring Power of Attorney. Alf said that he found it difficult to ask his daughter for money when he wanted it and when he bought some socks the other day she got cross with him and made him return them. Alf told his relative he was too frightened to change the way his finances were managed. This is financial abuse.

In Alf's case, the relative talked to the manager of the aged care facility.

With Alf's permission, the manager arranged that an advocate from ARAS visit him. The advocate provided Alf with a range of options to stop the financial abuse. Now, with the support of the manager of his aged care facility Alf has made new arrangements for the management of his money.

Alf was lucky. He spoke up and got help.

If you become aware of anything that concerns you about how an older person is being treated or if things happen to you that worry you, then speak up.

You can talk to the manager of the aged care service, contact the Aged Care Complaints Investigation Scheme or call ARAS.

## Effective Resident Committees Research

Since ARAS began we have promoted the importance of an effective resident group and the benefits this can bring to residents or their representatives, particularly being more involved in making decisions.

A project between ARAS and the University of Adelaide is gathering information to use in a set of guidelines about running successful resident committees. Although many of the actions will be simple, the results for residents and their representatives will be important.

Residents have indicated they felt empowered taking part in the research.

The following are some of the ideas for making a group more effective;

- create a social atmosphere
- using a microphone
- have smaller groups this allows for better participation and discussion
- make the meeting informal and fun
- value the input of residents at meetings
- management to give feedback on issues raised as soon as practical
- families to notified of the minutes

How well is your resident group running? If you would like an advocate to visit your group to talk about what you can do to make your group more effective, please give us a call.

## Abuse Prevention Program

ARAS assisted over 750 people last year with information, options and support to overcome abusive situations. Nearly three quarters of these calls related to mistreatment by adult sons and daughters towards their parents still living in the community.

It is estimated that one in twenty people over the age of 65 experience mistreatment by family or close friends. It does not relate only to physical harm but also includes psychological and sexual abuse, social isolation and neglect. The most commonly reported form is psychological abuse, followed by financial abuse. As expected these are often linked.

For example adult children may intimidate the older person into giving them money by threatening to stop visits from their grand children. Or they may threaten to 'put them in a nursing home' or tell others that the older person is 'losing the plot'.

Advocates recognise the importance of family relationships but people have a right to be treated with dignity and respect, to be and feel safe and to manage their own money and make decisions about how they live their lives.

The ARAS service is free and confidential and advocates can visit people at home or wherever they feel safe, to talk about the situation and clarify what action the older person could take to stop the abuse and prevent further harm. The older person remains in control of their decisions at all times and advocates provide support as required. Contact ARAS for more information.

An Enduring Power of Attorney (EPA) can be a useful financial safeguard. What should you consider when instructing your attorney(s)?

- Do you want to limit the type of financial decisions your attorney(s) can make?
- Do you want another person to monitor your attorney's work by getting regular financial statements?
- Do you want your attorney(s) to consult with other family or friends?
- Do you want your assets or income managed in a special way?
- Do you want to continue to give donations or gifts?



**ARAS Advocates Rob Nankivell and Doris Gioffre presenting brochures from the Abuse Prevention Program**