

**7<sup>th</sup> NATIONAL ELDER ABUSE CONFERENCE**  
**HOSTED BY THE COUNCIL ON THE AGEING (COTA) TASMANIA**  
**RECEPTION REMARKS BY**  
**HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC**  
**GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA**  
**BALL ROOM, TUESDAY 15 FEBRUARY 2022**

Good evening, everyone. I warmly welcome you all to Government House in our magnificent Ballroom for this reception for delegates attending the 7<sup>th</sup> National Elder Abuse Conference.

I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land: the palawa people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community. I recognise a history of truth, which acknowledges the impacts of colonisation upon our First People. I stand for a future that respects and acknowledges Aboriginal stories, culture, language and history.

I acknowledge amongst us:

- The Honourable Elise Archer, Attorney-General;
- Conference co-hosts, Mr David Strong, President of COTA Tasmania and Ms Jenny Blakely, co-chair of Elder Abuse Action Australia;
- Older scholarship recipients; and
- Other leaders in the campaign against elder abuse from around Australia attending the conference.

Don and I are very happy to be able to host you as part of the conference program. This is the first time that your annual conference has been held in Tasmania. May I, in particular, extend a special welcome to all those who have joined us from other parts of Australia. I hope that as well as your important work associated with the conference that have time to look around and enjoy our beautiful island State.

The statistics presented for the prevalence of elder abuse are appalling. In a 2020 research paper presented to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety<sup>1</sup>, it was identified that abuse may occur across a range of areas. These include physical, psychological, financial, sexual, social abuse, and neglect. The prevalence of reported elder abuse in aged residential care was estimated to be nearly 40%. It is

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<sup>1</sup> Research Paper 17 *Experimental Estimates of the Prevalence of Elder Abuse in Australian Aged Care Facilities* Dec 2020. Commonwealth of Australia.

even more confronting that international studies of aged care revealed that almost 65% of staff admitted to some form of elder abuse in the last year.

Neglect, such as concerns around being helped to shower, access medications, wound care and pain management has been linked to aged care staff being unable to spend sufficient time attending to individual needs. I experienced this personally with my mother, who was in an aged care home for many years.

We are considering some of the most vulnerable people in society and it is clear that we have a huge problem.

Your conference with the theme: “Walk the Talk” invites delegates to participate in dialogue, debate and conversation about addressing and ending the totally unacceptable abuse of older people wherever it occurs – in aged care residential settings, at home or in the public systems that surround us.

Sessions over the past two days have presented, amongst the many topics, an early predictive model to identify and prevent elder abuse, the progress in the past year on the Royal Commission into Elder Abuse, as well as ways to respond to elder abuse in our communities, hospitals and aged care settings.

Tomorrow, for the third and final day of your conference program, invited sector leaders will progress the conference call to action in a thinktank presentation. They will develop an action plan for all represented organisations to adopt.

You have a very full program with concurrent sessions to cater for the different perspectives and focus of delegates. I look forward to the results of your conference towards a society that reflects the vision of Elder Abuse Action Australia — to respect and value older Australians and free them from elder abuse. The well-known quote of Mahatma Gandhi is apposite, “the true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members.”<sup>2</sup>

In closing, I thank all of the organisers of the conference for choosing Hobart as the venue and for all of your work to bring the conference to fruition. May I also thank the sponsors for their support which has been instrumental in being able to present the conference.

Despite the challenges of restrictions to keep our community safe, it is encouraging to see so many delegates. The importance of your work is unquestionable. I thank everyone involved for your efforts to address and combat elder abuse in our community. Now, please join me in enjoying the refreshments. I also invite you to look around our State Rooms while you are here.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://quotefancy.com/quote/856011/Mahatma-Gandhi> accessed 15/02/22