



EMBARGOED UNTIL 9AM DECEMBER 10TH

AGEISM DRIVING INVISIBILITY OF OLDER WOMEN & COSTS LIVES

A report released on December 10th identifies ageism as a driving factor leading to invisibility of older women, including their exclusion in strategies to end violence against women.

The [un]Silencing of Older Women - A Life Stages Approach to the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Their Children report has been written by elder abuse experts and advocates for older women as a companion document to the National Plan to address the continuing exclusion of older women from funding, policy, research and strategies to end violence against women and promote gender equality.

Lead author Dr Catherine Barrett, CEO of Celebrate Ageing Ltd said:

We believe older women face increasing gender inequalities as they age, due to ageism. Older women are silenced by a failure to understand how historical inequalities, like marital rape immunity laws, have shaped their expectations of relationships and the supports they can access. The silence is then compounded by research and data collection that reveals low rates of reporting by older women – and attributes this to low prevalence of violence, rather than our failure to create safe spaces for older women to disclose. Old age is not a protective factor against family violence.

The report notes the 2022-2032 National Plan refers to a ‘life stages’ approach which recognises women have different needs at different point in their lives. However, the 52-page Activities Addendum for the Plan only mentions older women twice. Report co-author Yumi Lee, CEO of the Older Women’s Network said:

The Rapid Review of Evidence Based Approaches to Prevent Gender Based Violence called for prioritising communities that experience marginalisation – including older women. This is a great step forward – but it is not enough without the funding and action plan to back it. We need to see older women explicitly included in all aspects of the National Plan. There is an urgent need to address the homicide, homelessness and sexual assault of older women.

The report is being released for 16 Days of Activism to end Violence Against Women and will be followed in the new year by a Gender Lens Report for Elder Abuse Prevention.

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Older Women Paying The Price of Invisibility

28

28 OLDER WOMEN (55+) WERE MURDERED IN DFV HOMICIDES IN 2023, COMPARED WITH 14 IN 2013

34%

34% OF SINGLE OLDER WOMEN LIVE IN POVERTY

40-50

40-50 SEXUAL ASSAULTS REPORTED WEEKLY IN AGED CARE, MOST VICTIM/SURVIVORS ARE WOMEN

40%

40% INCREASE IN HOMELESSNESS AMONG OLDER WOMEN BETWEEN 2011-2021

61%

61% OF OLDER WOMEN ARE RELIANT ON THE OLD AGE PENSION

7,300

7,300 OLDER WOMEN ARE CURRENTLY HOMELESS

365,000

365,000 OLDER WOMEN REPORTED EXPERIENCING ELDER ABUSE IN 2023

400,000

>400,000+ WOMEN 45+ ARE AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS