

Respect for Seniors Project

Interim Report

“Respect is better than food and drink”

(WHO/IPNEA: Missing Voices 2002)

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Executive Summary

This Interim report provides an overview of the key findings and initiatives of the Respect for Seniors Project. The project commenced in 2008 with research and literature reviews to identify any gaps that could be addressed in the prevention of abuse against the elderly. The work continues through an “action research” cycle of research and community consultation to raise community awareness and develop protective factors against “ageism” and abuse.

The vision of the project is for attitudinal and behavioural change through community engagement. The aim and goals of the project are to promote a culture of respect for seniors through a social awareness campaign. Social awareness campaigns provide social education on an identified need within the community in order to develop community responses to that need.

The particular target groups of the project are potential and existing victims and abusers within the community. A “strengths-based” approach promotes empowerment of individuals and the community through awareness and the development of respectful intergenerational relationships.

Summary of Key Research Findings

- Ryan (2008) identified a link between respect and the prevention of elder abuse and raised the issue of lack of respect for the elderly in the Australian culture
- Lane (2008) identified a two tiered approach based on a general social education campaign and the development of more targeted programs for older people in the community, which has provided the underlying strategy for the project.
- Rosic (2010) established the complexity and diversity of perceptions of the concept of respect. Mutual respect in relationships, and respectful relationships as a core element for life with dignity and freedom from abuse, were also identified as being of primary importance.
- Fernandez (2010) identified ageism and lack of respect towards the elderly as having a significant impact on self-perception, health and inter-generational interactions of the elderly. Conversely, the promotion of self-respect and respect for others in relationships, as well as between generations, was identified as having a positive impact.
- Budd (2010) identified that the complex process of recognising, responding to and preventing abuse requires well coordinated interagency protocols, policies and best-practice guidelines for all community service providers. Principles of education and empowerment should inform the design and implementation of protocols so that older adults at risk of abuse are able to make informed decisions to assert their rights based on relevant information.
- Jones (2010) found that family tensions may arise in relation to the differences in generational perception of how to meet obligations and expectations for the care of elderly parents.

Summary of Research Recommendations

- i. Further research was recommended to explore patterns within relationships and possible interventions to assist seniors to develop protective factors and the capacity for mutually respectful relationships (Rosic, 2010).
- ii. Further research into the place of respect in family relationships involving the elderly, and development of the "Circle of Respect" as a social education tool in addressing ageism and promoting respectful relationships were recommended (Fernandez, 2010).
- iii. An extension of the Respect for Seniors Campaign across all sectors in the community with an interdisciplinary approach involving relevant organisations and government bodies to increase community awareness;
- iv. Pilot workshops be developed based on identified protective factors to develop coping skills and strategies in order to combat ageism and abuse;
- v. Development of training and education of aged care personnel based on "As Time Goes On" DVD and "Circle of Respect" concept;
- vi. Interventions to address potential and existing abuse based on principles of "restorative practices" be researched and developed to support individual approaches that maintain respect for relationships that are important to older people (Budd, 2010)
- vii. Interventions that encourage clear communication and realistic expectations in the adult children-ageing parent relationship would reduce the risk of abuse (Jones, 2010).

Project Initiatives

- Respect for Seniors Campaign and “Wear Purple Day” launched in July, 2009 at St Ives Uniting Church, and extended in 2010 to include a selected number of other parishes in NSW. This will be expanded in 2011 to Uniting Church parishes throughout NSW.
- An inaugural “elders” interview, “This is Your Life” in 2010 to promote positive attitudes towards older people and combat ageism.
- The Respect for Seniors Website: www.respectforseniors.org as an information and education resource
- “As Life Goes On” DVD as an educational resource for organisations and the community
- Development of a resource kit, including the DVD, to be used in community forums and to be distributed state-wide to all local councils
- Community forums have been trialled as a method of raising awareness
- Seniors sessions “Toward Respect Together” are currently being piloted as a preventative education resource
- A number of intergenerational initiatives in collaboration with a local schools program are being explored in the current pilot.

Future Directions for the Respect for Seniors Project

- The marketing of community forums in partnership with local councils and other relevant organisations to promote further awareness of the Respect for Seniors Campaign and assist in countering media stereotypes that promote ageist attitudes in the community as recognised as in the research (Deakin, 2010; Budd, 2010)
- The seniors sessions initiative “Towards Respect Together” to address ageism and abuse through empowerment and the development of protective factors extended into aged care under the direction of pastoral care teams (Budd, 2010)
- “Family Conversations” based on restorative practices developed both in the community and within the aged care environment as a means of addressing potential or actual abuse.
- Training and education of aged care staff based on the “Circle of Respect” concept and “As Time Goes On” DVD to provide significant information on issues around respect and abuse of the elderly. The development of an understanding of the range of intervention strategies available to allow for appropriate responses to more complex situations, particularly those involving emotional or psychological abuse.
- “Wear Purple Day” is an awareness raising initiative that has the potential to promote the Respect for Seniors Campaign beyond the local parishes and community.

- Development of the “This is Your Life” concept and intergenerational initiatives currently being piloted through local schools to counter ageist attitudes and promote mutual respect in intergenerational relationships.

Section 1: Overview

The Respect for Seniors Project was initiated by the Minister, Doug Purnell, and committee members of St Ives Uniting Church in May 2008. Previous meetings between representatives of the Church and Ku-ring-gai Council's Community Development team to identify key needs and issues in the Ku-ring-gai community had identified "domestic violence" as a hidden issue within the northern Sydney region. The Church committee considered a recommendation for an education initiative to raise awareness of abuse in the community. Seniors were identified by the Church as a group that could potentially benefit from a community preventative education program. The emphasis was to be on prevention, to combat "ageism" against seniors through the promotion of positive attitudes towards older members in the community which would enhance their quality of life.

The Northern Sydney Regional Aged Care Board of the Uniting Church provided funding for the employment of a Seniors Worker to identify how the project could contribute to the prevention of abuse of the elderly. Raising awareness of respect for older members in the community became the positive focus of the project.

The Respect for Seniors Project has been based on, and supported by, both unfunded research commissioned by the project and international and contemporary Australian funded research. Although not an intention of the initial project brief, the project research and pilot programs that have been developed may be regarded as a platform for further research and training.

The Respect for Seniors Project is based on the concept of “primary prevention through social education”. The aim is to raise awareness of underlying ageism in the community that contributes to abuse against the elderly, particularly in the form of domestic or family violence. Through initiatives that promote intergenerational community involvement based on respectful interactions, and through programs that help develop protective factors for the elderly against abuse, the project aims to bring about attitudinal and behavioural change with a subsequent improvement in the quality of life older members of the community.

Section 2: Elder Abuse in Context

International and Australian research, including the WHO/INPEA, "Missing Voices" report (2002), and the Benetas/Deakin University (2010) report "Respect in an Ageing Society" has consistently concluded that societal ageism underpins a lack of respect for the elderly. The NSW Ministerial Advisory Committee on Ageing, in the discussion paper "Entitled to Respect (2007), considers ageism "a damaging form of prejudice" (P: 4) that can lead to discrimination and should be considered when discussing abuse of the elderly. The World Health Organisation report "Missing Voices" (2002) found that older adults in all countries studied identified disrespect as the most painful form of mistreatment.

Abuse of the elderly, generally considered those over 60-65, has been described as a "hidden phenomenon" that affects 4-6% of seniors (WHO/INPEA, 2002). However, the figure may be up to five times this, particularly with financial abuse, due to under-reporting because of fear and lack of opportunity (O'Connor et al. (2009), cited in Ryan (2008). Abuse of the elderly may encompass one or more of the following areas: economic; neglect; physical; sexual; and psychological/emotional. Whatever form abuse takes it ultimately "results in unnecessary suffering, injury or pain, the loss or violation of human rights, and a decreased quality of life for the older person." (WHO/INPEA, 2002, p16)

To address this identified need, the Respect for Seniors Project aims to work with the community and seniors to promote the empowerment of seniors and to facilitate behaviour change in the community.

Section 3: Developing the Respect for Seniors Project

Objectives

The vision of the project is for attitudinal and behavioural change through community engagement, with the aim to “help promote a culture of respect for seniors in our community.” (Matthews, 2008) An “action research” method was utilised as an approach that allows for continuous development of social education initiatives in response to identified need in the community. This approach is also consistent with the goals of the project as a social awareness campaign. Social awareness campaigns provide social education on an identified need within the community in order to develop community responses to that need.

The project aims to empower the elderly and promote a culture of respect for seniors through a campaign to raise awareness of ageism in the community, in conjunction with preventative education programs that facilitate the development of protective factors against abuse. The project employs a “strengths-based” approach with the focus being on respectful relationships. This reflects the Australian Federal Government’s approach to domestic violence prevention, which is based on the concept that respectful relationships do not tolerate abuse (Time for Action, 2009), and is supported by the NSW Ministerial Advisory Committee on Ageing (2007) report “Entitled to Respect”, which considers “Ageism is everybody’s business.”

The target groups in the project are considered to be potential and existing victims and abusers within the community. With the focus on prevention through attitudinal and behavioural change based on

Mutual Respect, (Rosic, 2010) the project aims to be inter-generationally inclusive, from school-aged to the elderly themselves. This "Asset-Based Community Development" approach allows for empowerment through ownership of the process of change in a community by that community (McNIGHT and Kratzmann, 1993; 1997). Community forums may be seen as an example of a "grassroots" initiative that allows for community empowerment and change through exploring the diverse concepts of respect.

A collaborative approach has been taken through establishing connections with other community organisations and NSW government bodies concerned with the abuse of the elderly. A number of organisations have expressed interest in the promotion and organisation of community forums, which focus on the development of respectful relationships with the elderly, and an educational program designed to help develop coping strategies to deal with environmental and emotional sources of stress. The aim is to increase self-esteem and quality of life for the elderly. This approach may be seen to provide a basis for primary prevention of abuse and neglect of the elderly by developing personal and community protective factors, and to augment other community projects focusing on abuse.

The value of such a multi-level approach targeting individuals, community, relationships and societal change has been acknowledged in regard to domestic violence in the Australian Government report "Time for Action" (2009). Faith-based institutions were considered in the report as having a preventative role by countering beliefs that may support abuse.

Section 4: The Action Research Process

An "action research cycle" approach was utilised, whereby new research and literature reviews that identified areas of concern not otherwise being addressed, the gaps, provided the basis for further research and the development of pilot programs set up in the local community. These programs are considered to be a precursor to a wider community involvement in the preventative campaign and complement initiatives undertaken by other community groups.

A literature review of elder abuse (Ryan, 2008) identified a link between respect and the prevention of elder abuse and raised the issue of lack of respect for the elderly in the Australian culture. Also identified was the issue of redefining "elder" in the Australian context due to the indigenous use of the term "elder" as a mark of respect. Emotional attachment (dependency) was identified as a hindrance to intervention, and a gap in the knowledge base related to "emotional dependency" was identified. The issue of barriers to leaving abusive situations was also noted.

"Just a Number: an exploration into the concepts of ageing" prepared by Fran Lane (2009), provided a literature review of current interventions. The research also identified a number of primary prevention measures to address ageism through the development of self identity as a protective factor against ageism and abuse of the elderly.

This research identified a two tiered approach based on a general social education campaign and the development of more targeted

programs for older people in the community, which provided the underlying strategy for the project.

Concepts of respect and mutual respect, in relation to addressing ageism in an Australian context, were considered by adult and school student focus groups and incorporated in the next round of research. A literature review and focus group report "Mutual Respect" (Rosic, 2010) established the complexity and diversity of perceptions of the concept of respect. Mutual respect in relationships, and respectful relationships as a core element for life with dignity and freedom from abuse, were also identified as being of primary importance. Further research was recommended to explore patterns within relationships and possible interventions to assist seniors to develop protective factors and the capacity for mutually respectful relationships.

"Concepts of Respect as an approach to addressing ageism" (Fernandez, 2010) identified ageism and lack of respect towards the elderly as having a significant impact on self-perception, health and inter-generational interactions of the elderly. Conversely, the promotion of self-respect and respect for others in relationships, as well as between generations, was identified as having a positive impact.

A recommendation was also made for further research into the place of respect in family relationships involving the elderly. The development of the "Circle of Respect" as a social education tool in addressing ageism and promoting respectful relationships was considered important.

Integral to the research process was the use of focus groups. Consequently, this allowed both community participation and the

promotion of community awareness, the primary goal of the project.

A literature review (Budd, 2010), into current primary interventions within the Australian elder abuse field focused on prevention rather than response to existing abuse. The aim of the review was to identify any gaps in the current initiatives that could be addressed by the project. A number of issues were identified and recommendations made that may have relevance for future directions of the Respect for Seniors Campaign that are beyond the scope of the current project.

The report identified that the complex process of recognising, responding to and preventing abuse requires well coordinated interagency protocols, policies and best-practice guidelines for all community service providers. Principles of education and empowerment should inform the design and implementation of protocols so that older adults at risk of abuse are able to make informed decisions to assert their rights based on relevant information.

The cultural context of the elderly, both societal and individual, was seen as an issue that impacts on the provision of services. The recognition of ageism, life experiences, family dynamics and the importance of maintaining healthy relationships means that strategies need to be tailored to the individual needs of clients in order to provide effective and ethical interventions. The least restrictive intervention strategies possible may be considered to be the most effective and provide a model of support that facilitates self determination and addresses risk factors for abuse before the situation reaches the critical end of the continuum.

An extension of the Respect for Seniors Campaign across all sectors in the community with an interdisciplinary approach involving relevant organisations and government bodies was recommended to increase community awareness. The recommendation for pilot workshops to be developed based on the protective factors identified in "Just a Number... an exploration of ageing as a means of primary intervention is now being trialled. These senior sessions "Towards Respect Together" commenced in August 2010 in a self-care facility in the northern region based on developing coping skills and strategies to combat ageism and abuse.

A recommendation was made for further training and education of staff in aged care. The DVD "As Time Goes On", produced as an educational tool for the community, may also be useful for training in aged care. The further development of the DVD is part of an ongoing initiative of the project.

Structured online and face to face interviews with 20-50 year olds were conducted in order to gain further understanding of community attitudes and generate awareness of the issues around respect. In parallel with the interviews, a study into the impact the perception of roles and obligations between adult children and ageing parents has on the quality of the life of their mutual relationship was undertaken (Jones,2010). A key finding was that family tensions may arise in relation to differing generational perceptions of how to meet obligations and expectations around care of ageing parent.

A recommendation for the development of clear communication and realistic expectations in the adult children-ageing parent relationship is incorporated at an individual level in the "Towards Respect Together" sessions. A further community initiative, "Family

Conversations”, is being considered by the project to address this issue at a family level and the seniors sessions are currently being trialled.

“The Infantilisation of Elderly Australians: Age and the Social Dynamics of Disrespect” (Ryan, 2010) provides valuable research into ageism in the Australian context. Recommendations for educational initiatives at the societal, structural and individual level to address the issues associated with ageism may be seen to support the current and proposed future initiatives of the Respect for Seniors Project.

Section 5: Project Initiatives

Supported by the project's research activities, in 2009 the St Ives Uniting Church began a number of social awareness activities with a positive focus on Respect to address issues that contributed to abuse of the elderly.

Social Education Campaign

The Respect for Seniors Campaign was formally launched in conjunction with "Wear Purple Day" in July, 2009 at St Ives Uniting Church, which recognised "World Elder Abuse Prevention Day", and extended in 2010 to include a selected number of Uniting Church parishes and Uniting Care facilities and Community Services throughout the Northern Region. This will be expanded in 2011 to other Uniting Church parishes throughout NSW.

The address at the 2010 St Ives Uniting Church "Wear Purple Day" was given by the Ambassador for Ageing, Noelene Brown. The inaugural "Elders Interview" with a chosen "elder" was also conducted with the intention being to highlight and promote the contribution made by seniors in the community.

"Wear Purple Day" may be seen as a positive community initiative to mark "World Elder Abuse Awareness Day", which was begun by the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, co-authors with the World Health Organisation of the report "Missing Voices" (2002) into abuse of the elderly.

Community involvement to raise awareness has been extensive. A Carers Morning Tea at St Ives Uniting Church October 2008, in collaboration with Ku-ring-gai Council was well attended. A Respect for Seniors Display was highly visible with distinctive purple coloured flags throughout the centre at the St Ives Village Shopping Centre 2010 Seniors Week Expo. Seniors groups and community organisations, including Probus, Lions, Rotary, and the RSL, have stated their willingness to be involved in the dissemination of information and participation in the Respect for Seniors Campaign.

Community forums have considered the issues involved in "Improving the Quality of Life of Seniors." Discussions are based on concepts of respect, and other issues of concern associated with ageing.

The need to engage younger generations in this preventative approach against ageism and the promotion of respect for seniors is reflected in the inter-generational initiative "This is Your Life," a link between the seniors sessions and local schools in the northern region. For example a focus group of students at Epping Boys High as part of the research.

The production of the DVD "As Life Goes On" depicting various scenarios involving the elderly is designed to both raise awareness and stimulate further discussion in the community. The DVD will be distributed state-wide to local councils as part of a resource kit to be used in community forums.

The Respect for Seniors Website: www.respectforseniors.org has been established as an information tool to combat ageism and promote respect in the community. The site has the potential to

include information on current events and initiatives connected with respect for the elderly, and research papers completed as part of the Respect for Seniors Project are accessible to all without cost. These may also be requested in print version.

Several successful grant applications to Government departments, totalling \$21,000, have allowed for the development of the DVD and facilitated the pilot of the "Towards Respect Together" seniors sessions in the community.

Individual Focus

Seniors sessions "Toward Respect Together" commenced in August 2010 in a self-care facility in the northern region. With the aim of developing protective factors against ageism and abuse, the sessions include such issues as valuing relationships and maintaining support networks during the lifespan. Recommendations on these sessions will be included in the final report at the end of the current funding.

Section 6: Current Research and Initiatives

Research into the potential for restorative practices in addressing the complexity of issues involved in abuse of the elderly, particularly regarding barriers to reporting abuse, is ongoing. The development of future community and organisational initiatives and interventions based on restorative practices is considered as being consistent with the philosophy of mutual respect which underpins the Respect for Seniors Project.

Further individual and intergenerational initiatives based on the research and recommendations are currently in progress and will recommendations will be made at the end of the current funding.

Section 7: Future Directions for the Respect for Seniors Campaign

The Benetas/Deakin University research project "Respect in an Ageing Society" (2010), in considering the complexity of respect for the elderly in the Australian context, reflected many of the findings of the Respect for Seniors Project, including issues of ageism. A conclusion of the report that has relevance to the future of this project beyond the current funding regards the necessity to address ageism beyond the individual level.

Human service providers, as well as all members of the Australian community would benefit from a greater understanding of how best to achieve respect for the older community... In the development of programs and initiatives for older people in Australia, one important theme has been missing-respect (P30)

The initiatives already undertaken by the Respect for Seniors Project may be considered as an important step in meeting this need both at an individual and community level. This has been acknowledged through the support given in various forms from local councils, community organisations and government bodies. The intention is for the project to be ultimately self-sustaining. Although funding is available to continue project development until May/June 2011, the opportunity to extend and further develop the programs and initiatives to their full potential is beyond the current brief of the project.

There are a number of project initiatives that provide opportunities for further development and promotion at an organisational level.

The marketing of community forums, in partnership with local councils and other relevant organisations, would promote further awareness of the Respect for Seniors Campaign and assist in countering media stereotypes that promote ageist attitudes in the community as recognised as in the research (Deakin, 2010; Budd, 2010). Resource kits are currently being developed and have support from local council. Included in the resource material will be the DVD "As Time Goes On".

The "Towards Respect Together" initiative to address ageism and abuse through empowerment and the development of protective factors could be extended into aged care under the direction of pastoral care teams. Budd (2010) considers that "Spiritually specific services such as Uniting Care Ageing are in a unique position to provide opportunities for older adults to seek support within an environment that they can trust and feel comfortable with." (p.25)

"Family Conversations" based on restorative practices could be developed both in the community and within the aged care environment as a means of addressing potential or actual abuse. The Victorian Department of Human Services, 2009 (cited in Budd, 2010) stated that respecting existing valued relationships is important when considering interventions with older people.

Budd (2010) proposes courses which help to improve the quality of interpersonal relationships in families with older people should be developed by organisations such as Relationships Australia, Lifeline and Uniting Care Ageing. Budd also considers that older people themselves would be more likely to access trusted organisations such as UCA and Lifeline. Pastoral care teams and other trained persons are considered to be appropriate for "facilitating a dialogue

within families and ultimately connecting them with local services that can assist and support their specific needs.” (P, 25)

“Family Conversations” also have the potential to address specific issues as identified in the Benetas/Deakin report (2010) “that impact on respect for older people.” (P, 15) Lack of understanding between generations, the importance of family in the maintenance of self-worth for older people, different value systems are issues that have the potential to be addressed.

Training and education of aged care staff based on the “Circle of Respect” concept and the “As Time Goes On” DVD would provide significant information on issues around respect and abuse of the elderly. The development of an understanding of the range of intervention strategies available would allow for appropriate responses to more complex situations, particularly those involving emotional or psychological abuse (Budd, 2010).

“Wear Purple Day” is an awareness raising initiative that has the potential to promote the Respect for Seniors Campaign beyond the local parishes and community. The 2009 St Ives Uniting Church inaugural “Wear Purple Day” was extended in 2010 to other Uniting Church parishes and Uniting Care Ageing facilities and will be extended further in 2011. The presence of the Ambassador for Ageing, Noelene Brown in 2010, and the support of local councils and other organisations points to the possibilities for further development of this initiative as a flag bearer for the Respect for Seniors Campaign state-wide.

Development of the "This is Your Life" concept and intergenerational initiatives currently being piloted through local schools would help to meet a gap identified in the Benetas/Deakin (2010) report for educational institutions to "...provide a forum for young people to learn about the experiences of the older generations and to be exposed to information about older people and their needs." (P, 28)

The Respect for Seniors Website has the potential to be an effective method for raising awareness, community involvement and the dissemination of information. Development of this site through posting research papers, events, and highlighting initiatives that promote respect for older people would be a continuing learning and awareness tool for individuals the wider community.

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