

IMPORTANCE OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICE IN ADDRESSING ELDER ABUSE

CULTURAL COMPETENCY – CRITICAL FOR PRACTITIONERS RESPONDING TO ELDER
ABUSE IN CALD COMMUNITIES

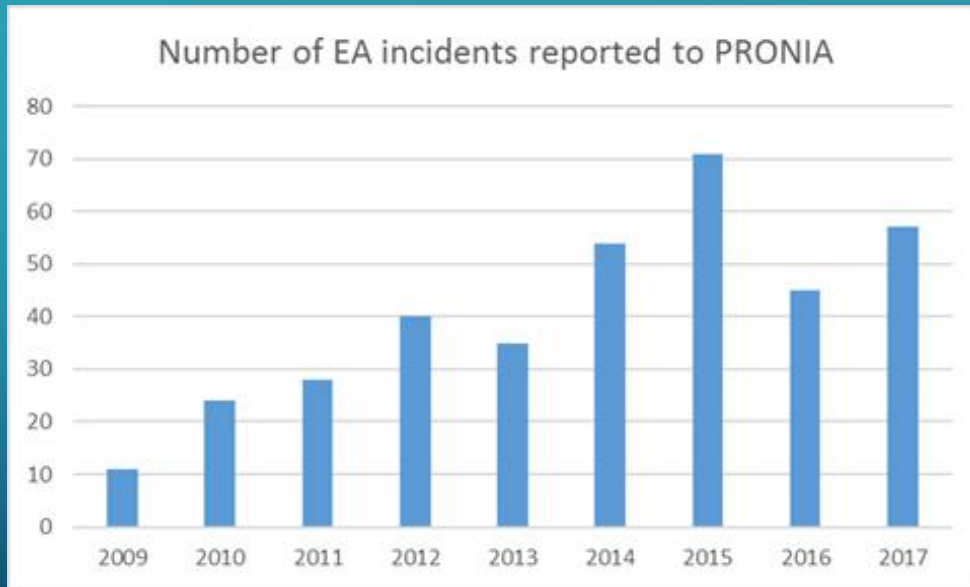
PRONIA- 45 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN PROVISION OF DIRECT SUPPORT TO VICTIMS OF ELDER ABUSE AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

- FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY ARE HIGHLY DEVELOPED SKILLS AMONG PRONIA CASEWORK OFFICERS AS THE SERVICE DEMONSTRATES ONGOING EFFECTIVE RESPONSES TO ELDER ABUSE CRISIS SITUATIONS INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO:
- HOMELESSNESS, PERSONAL SAFETY, FINANCIAL EMERGENCY RELIEF, ASSISTANCE IN LIAISING WITH THE POLICE AND THE MAGISTRATE COURTS AND COUNSELLING SERVICES.

SINCE 2009 PRONIA COMMUNITY SERVICES UNIT HAS EFFECTIVELY RESPONDED TO MORE THAN 350 CASES OF ELDER ABUSE

- PROVISION OF CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY APPROPRIATE SERVICES; CASEWORK,
- COUNSELLING,
- ADVOCACY
- PRACTICAL ASSISTANCE, REFERRAL
- PROVISION OF FINANCIAL EMERGENCY RELIEF

STATISTICAL BREAKDOWN PER YEAR





COLLABORATION WITH HAAG – HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP

- Since 2013 HAAG has provided affordable, secure and long term housing to 66 clients referred by PRONIA. 80% of female clients assisted stated that they were victims of Elder Abuse.

A TYPICAL ELDER ABUSE REPORTING SCENARIO:

- The elderly person abused is female and over 70 years of age
- The abuser is her son – typically aged between 30 and 55
- The abuser is either a Boomerang Child or has never left the family home.
- The abuser has a long term AOD issue
- The abused mother asks if the PRONIA CW can befriend the abuser and “ show him the way to Virtue”
- Over the last 10 years due to inflated property prices, the abuser will not hesitate to ask for his share of his inheritance NOW.

REPORTING OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

- Client reports Elder Abuse issue to PRONIA CW
- PRONIA CW – Conducts CRAF Family Violence Framework based Assessment
- PRONIA CW- Provides usually a brief Psychological Intervention & refers client to PRONIA Family Counsellor or CALD Counsellor
- PRONIA CW informs client of possible legal options e.g Intervention Order- an option most clients refuse to explore.
- Referral to HAAG – Housing for the Aged Action Group to address housing issue should the client state that she cannot live at home any longer.

HAAG ASSESSMENT AT PRONIA HEAD OFFICE

- 95% of Elder Abuse Victims who cannot live at home any longer opt to be assessed by HAAG at PRONIA head office. This practice provides clients a safe space to express their emotions and concerns without prejudice.
- Several first generation CALD clients tend to be in hesitant in engaging with services, especially mainstream services. It can be quite a difficult task in Communicating to CALD clients that confidentiality is guaranteed.
- PRONIA CW plays a facilitators and interpreters role during this assessment.
- The assessment and application time rarely exceeds 45 minutes. Client has a clear understanding of the process and the time frames which apply between the application and housing allocation.

SO WHAT HAPPENS IN BETWEEN?

- During this time the client is assigned ONE housing support officer from HAAG who assists in all the practical issues; Advocacy, delegation , letters of support, walking client through prospective properties.
- PRONIA CW continues to play a supporting, facilitative and advocacy role during this time.
- Typically, the client during this time usually stays at a supportive friends place or remains at home having the knowledge of what to do in an acute situation and a clear understanding of her safety plan.
- Since 2013 all eligible PRONIA referrals have waited no longer than 14 weeks to be allocated secure, long term and affordable housing; A total of 66 clients- PRONIA referrals- have secured such housing.

SETTLING IN

- HAAG assists clients with removals costs, basic whitegoods, bedding purchases with two weeks rent in advance as a Housing Bond. PRONIA since 2014 has been assisting on average four HAAG clients per month who cannot afford to pay \$200 in bonds to secure long term housing. PRONIA provides this assistance to such HAAG clients through its Financial Emergency Relief Fund.

WHY DO CALD CLIENTS RESIST REPORTING ELDER ABUSE ?

- Resistance factors:
- Stigma: What will people say?
- Parental Martyrdom: I will sacrifice ANYTHING for my children
- Distrust in systems: I do not want to be on file.
- Religion: The Lord is Great/ a miracle may occur and the abuser maybe cured.

FURTHER BARRIERS IN REPORTING

- Concerned about repercussions
- Family loyalty
- Fear of being moved out of home
- Only alternative accommodation may be residential care
- May not realise that abuse is occurring
- Guilt
- Lack of Knowledge/ language barriers

SCENARIO

- In May 2017 PRONIA CW received a call from an Inner City refuge for people who are homeless.
- Refuge officer contacted PRONIA CW stating that a Greek speaking lady in her late 70s had been frequenting the refuge for a week and presented in a state of neglect.
- Client spoke very broken English and would appear at Refuge daily for food and a shower.
- PRONIA CW attended the Refuge and develops rapport with lady.
- Lady stated that both her children aged 40+ “ collect a lot of papers and that it is very difficult for her to enter her home”.
- PRONIA CW and Refuge worker obtained consent from lady to drive past her home.
- Both workers faced a very confronting sight; 40 square meters of rubbish and clutter 3 meters high. As the client was a home owner, the DHHS could not order an industrial clean up.

SCENARIO (CONT.)

- PRONIA CW contacted lady's GP to raise concerns about the lady's current situation and mental health.
- GP stated that his client and her two adult children “ were a bit odd” and that there was no need for an intervention of any form.
- PRONIA CW obtained consent to contact the Lady's son who in turn stated that he will “ organize a bit of a clean- up within the year”.
- The next day PRONIA CW attended the Refuge; The elderly lady stated that her neighbor had vandalized her property.

SCENARIO (CONT.)

- PRONIA CW suggested to report incident to local Police station. Lady agreed to do so after hesitating initially.
- PRONIA CW escorted lady to Police station and acted as an advocate and interpreter.
- St Vincent's Psychiatric services liaison officer was contacted who attended the Police station to assess the lady.

SCENARIO (CONT.)

- Meanwhile local Police officers performed a peripheral inspection of the property and noted the acute hoarding issue.
- Police officers fed back to Psychiatric services officer who stated that the lady's home was a fire hazard and that she would have to stay at St. Vincent's Hospital for a few days.
- The lady also stated that the Electricity had been cut off for 3 years.

SCENARIO (CONT.)

- The elderly lady stated that she was willing to enter the hospital as she would have a warm bed to sleep in and meals.
- The St Vincent's liaison, the PRONIA CW and the Refuge worker escorted the elderly lady to hospital in a Police Vehicle.
- The elderly lady appeared relieved as she entered the hospital and thanked all workers involved for admitting her.

OUTCOMES

- In July 2017 following a VCAT hearing the elderly lady had an independent guardian and a financial administrator appointed to manage her affairs.
- Industrial cleaning was completed in August 2017
- Between May 2017 and September 2017- the elderly Greek speaking lady was residing at the St. Vincent's Acute Inpatient Service (AIS) in a safe environment until the Industrial clean up had been completed.
- The elderly lady returned home in September 2017 and receives specialist services from a local Community Mental Health Centre