SAHMRI
South Australian Health & Medical Research Institute

WARDLIPARINGGA

Aboriginal research in Aboriginal hands

What keeps you safe: approaches to promote the safety of older Aboriginal people

Final Report

Version: 5.4

Client: The Department for Health and Wellbeing, Office for Ageing Well

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Background

The safety of older Aboriginal people and a better understanding of Elder abuse prevention is a clear priority as the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 55 years and over is increasing and is projected to more than double from 59,400 in 2011 to up to 130,800 in 2026[1].

Identifying and measuring Elder abuse in Indigenous settings is challenging. The Australian Institute of Family Studies (2016) reported that mainstream conceptualisation of elder mistreatment requires reconsideration in Indigenous contexts; substantially more work and the collection of quality and consistent data is required to better understand Elder mistreatment amongst Indigenous peoples. There are no precise statistics on the prevalence of Elder abuse in the Aboriginal population in Australia and the strategies which would be effective in preventing this abuse have not been identified.

The Wardliparingga Aboriginal Research Unit within the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI) was commissioned by the Office for Ageing Well to make recommendations for resources and strategies that focus on promoting the rights and safety of older Aboriginal people. This project addressed the health, wellbeing and security priority of the State Ageing Plan with a specific focus on the Aboriginal community.

The approach included a Systematic Literature Review and consultations with Aboriginal community members and service providers working in aged care and related areas.

The overall aim was to produce recommendations for a set of evidence-based resources to assist in promoting and safeguarding the rights and safety of older Aboriginal people.

The World Health Organization (2002) provides the following comprehensive definitions of Elder abuse types[2]:

Physical abuse: the infliction of pain or injury, physical coercion, or physical or drug induced restraint.

Psychological or emotional abuse: the infliction of mental anguish.

Financial or material abuse: the illegal or improper exploitation or use of funds or resources of the older person.

Sexual abuse: non-consensual sexual contact of any kind with the older person.

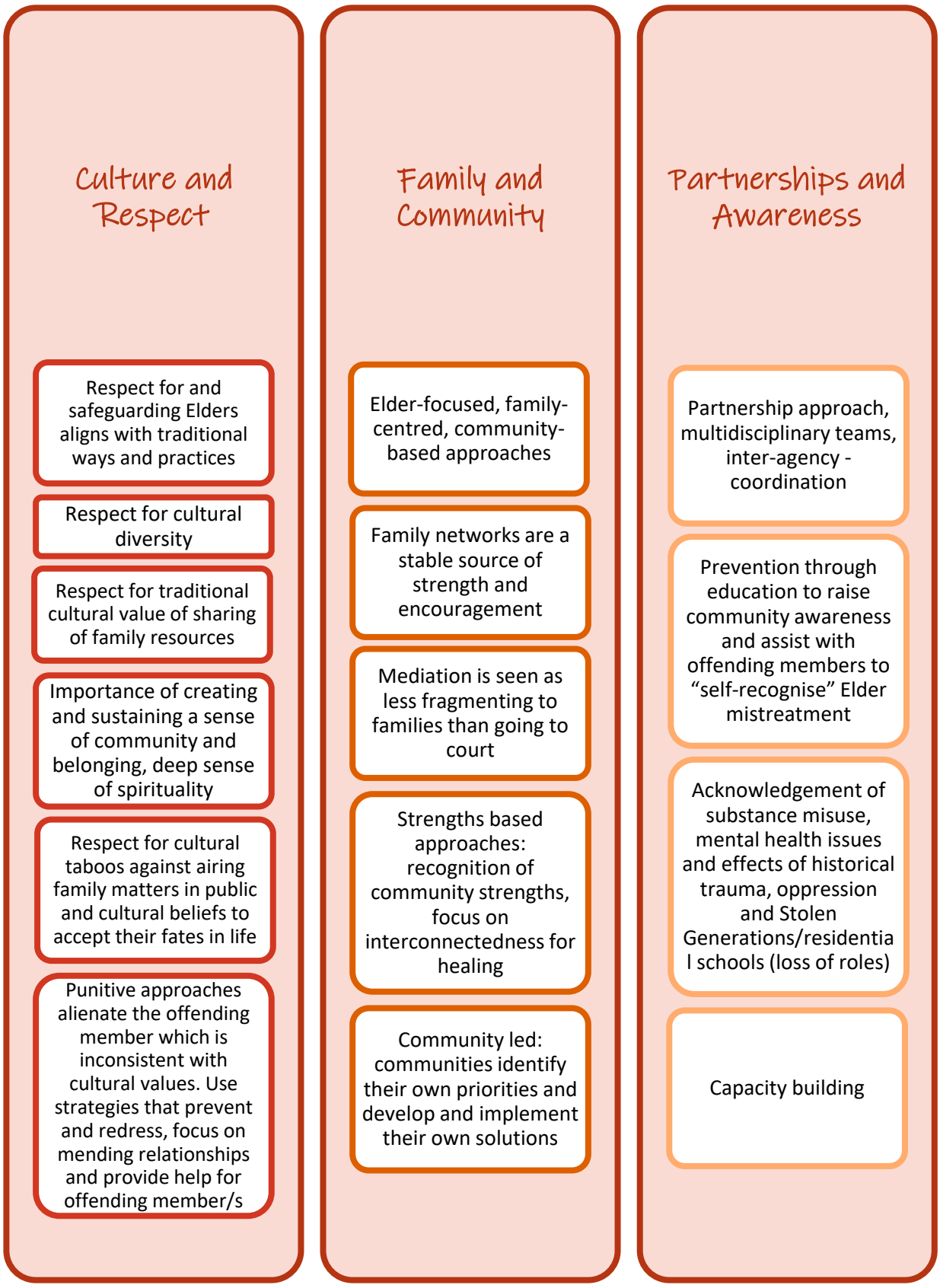
Neglect: the refusal or failure to fulfil a care giving obligation. This may or may not involve a conscious and intentional attempt to inflict physical or emotional distress on the older person.

[1] Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2017. Census of Population and Housing: Reflecting Australia - Stories from the Census, 2016. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, 2016. ABS cat.no. 2071.0. Canberra: ABS.

[2] Krug, E., & World Health Organization. (2002). World report on violence and health. Geneva: World Health Organization.

Principles and Values for Keeping Older Aboriginal People Safe

The following principles and values were identified through the literature and consultations and attribution is included in the Technical Report.



Key Recommendations

Three key recommendations have been developed for strategies and resources to safeguard older Aboriginal people's rights and assist in preventing Elder abuse and mistreatment. Importantly, any resources need to be tailored to different geographic areas. For example, remote and regional SA will require different resource approaches than urban SA. Aboriginal community members should be engaged at all levels of development through community co-design. Any resources or strategies should align with the principles and values identified in this research and should be designed in respect to and consideration of the Enablers and Barriers listed on pages 25-26. The key recommendations come directly from the findings of the consultations and the Systematic Literature Review, as demonstrated in the below table.

Enable Community Co-design

Enabling community co-design goes across all of the recommendations. Aboriginal community should be involved in the planning and design of all resources or strategies relating to preventing Aboriginal Elder abuse or mistreatment.

1. Raise Awareness and Provide Useful and Effective Information

"The best resource is probably literature that's easy for people to read...if you could do something in the predominant languages of the region"

- Staff interview

Supported by publications: 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13*

2. Enable and Support Older Aboriginal People to Connect with and to Continue their Culture

"Women's camps help because once women get together and they can talk with each other... once they know in the community, then, you get that extra support"

- Community Interview

Supported by publications: 01, 02, 06, 09, 10, 11, 12*

3. Uphold the Safety of Older Aboriginal People

"You just need to work with them, encourage them, tell them that they're not alone, support, encouragament"

- Community interview

Supported by publications: 02, 04, 05, 06, 10, 12*

*For more information on the publications, see section: ***Themes from the Literature***

1. Raise Awareness and Provide Useful and Effective Information

The Aboriginal community should have access to useful and effective information about Elder abuse and mistreatment including types, warning signs, risk factors and where to get help. For example, this report could be shared with relevant community and aged care sector services. Aboriginal community should be involved in the planning and co-design of all resources or strategies relating to preventing Aboriginal Elder abuse or mistreatment.

Ideas from the consultations and literature...

What: Create a web-based application or website to provide information about support for older Aboriginal people.

Considerations:

- Use a community co-design approach
- Use the principles and values outlined in this report to make decisions about funding
- Engage an appropriate design or marketing company
- Consider language barriers and use of appropriate visual aids
- Promote the application or website

Ideas from the consultations and literature...

What: A community-led awareness campaign about Elder abuse and prevention would aim to raise awareness of types and signs of Elder Abuse and where to get help. The campaign could involve Aboriginal community champions with lived experience and could also use imagery and artwork that comes directly from the community members.

Considerations:

- Connect with relevant local Aboriginal services or community centers
- Establish a community reference group
- Facilitate yarning circles
- Involve community throughout the planning development of resources
- With appropriate permission and reimbursement, use community artwork or imagery of community members in the resources

Ideas from the consultations and literature...

What: Create clear and effective posters and pamphlets to raise awareness and provide useful information about Elder abuse and mistreatment.

Considerations:

- Use a community co-design approach
- Use the principles and values outlined in this report to make decisions about funding
- Use both traditional and modern images to depict information
- Engage an appropriate design or marketing company
- Consider language barriers and use of appropriate visual aids

2. Enable and Support Older Aboriginal People to Connect with and to Continue their Culture

Older Aboriginal people may need support be able to continue their deep connection to culture, family and spirituality. Practicing culture can strengthen and safeguard Elder wellbeing. Any barriers to cultural connection (access to programs, transport or financial barriers) should be carefully addressed.

Ideas from the consultations and literature...

What: Support Aboriginal Elders to engage with a cultural camp for Elders that connects Elders with youth and promotes strong intergenerational relationships.

Considerations:

- Use the principles and values outlined in this report to make decisions about funding regarding cultural camps for Aboriginal Elders
- Educate community about available services and programs
- Provide transport and assistance for Elders to attend the camp

Ideas from the consultations and literature...

What: Support Aboriginal Elders to engage with cultural workshops such as a traditional wood carving workshop at an Aboriginal men's shed.

Considerations:

- Consider what cultural programs exist for Aboriginal Elders
- Provide transport for Elders to attend cultural events
- Provide mobility support for Elders to engage in cultural practices

3. Uphold the Safety of Older Aboriginal People

Older Aboriginal people should have access to safe environments to gain respite and support from harmful situations and their safety should always be upheld.

Ideas from the consultations and literature...

What: Establish a community *Healing House* as a shared safe space for Aboriginal Elders to gain respite.

Considerations:

- Use the principles and values outlined in this report to make decisions about funding
- Identify existing safe environments for Elders to gain respite and support
- Promote safe environments to community for uptake

Ideas from the consultations and literature...

What: Establish an Aboriginal support phone line for Elders facing mistreatment and abuse.

Considerations:

- Use a community co-design approach
- Use the principles and values outlined in this report to make decisions about funding
- Investigate language and geographical barriers. For example, there may need to be Northern and Southern zones for South Australia's urban population
- Promote the phone line for community uptake

Ideas from the consultations and literature...

What: Make mediators and advocates accessible to older Aboriginal people for prevention as well as intervention to provide information about warning signs and risk factors and to safeguard older Aboriginal people in potentially harmful situations.

Considerations:

- Use the principles and values outlined in this report to make decisions about funding regarding Aboriginal mediators and advocates working in Elder abuse prevention
- Educate community about available services

Comparing Results from the Systematic Literature Review and the Consultations

The below table shows themes that emerged from the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and Consultations. Similar or related themes are shown in the same colour.

SLR: Social and cultural strengths and protective factors of older Indigenous peoples and communities

Strengthening Indigenous communities

Raising awareness, education and capacity strengthening

Strength from spirituality and culture

Empowerment through **community leadership**

Acknowledging the unique role of older Indigenous peoples

Honouring, respecting and using wisdom of older peoples

Identifying and prioritising the needs of older people

Specifically-designed and funded services

Enhancing relationships

Healing relationships and redress rather than punishment

Mentoring for youth

Bridging the generation gap

Family coming together to discuss and develop a plan for wellbeing of their older person

SLR: Service response needed

Community led partnerships

Community led partnerships between service providers, families and communities

Multiple agencies coming together with community, building rapport and positive relationships

Culturally appropriate staff, services, structures and procedures

Training for service providers in cultural awareness and impacts of colonisation

Culturally appropriate and trustworthy information packages

Appropriate and effective response structures and procedures

Recognition of diversity and differing needs

Seek funding and design programs specifically for older people

Indigenous identified workforce

Consultations

Capacity building

Raise awareness through community champions

Community leadership should underpin resource development and implementation

Education

Effective Cultural awareness training

Raise awareness
Advocacy
Safe Environments
Access to Services
Increase Aboriginal Staff

Mentoring for youth

Building relationships and respect between generations

Mediation, redress – healing of relationships

Involving an impartial party in resolution

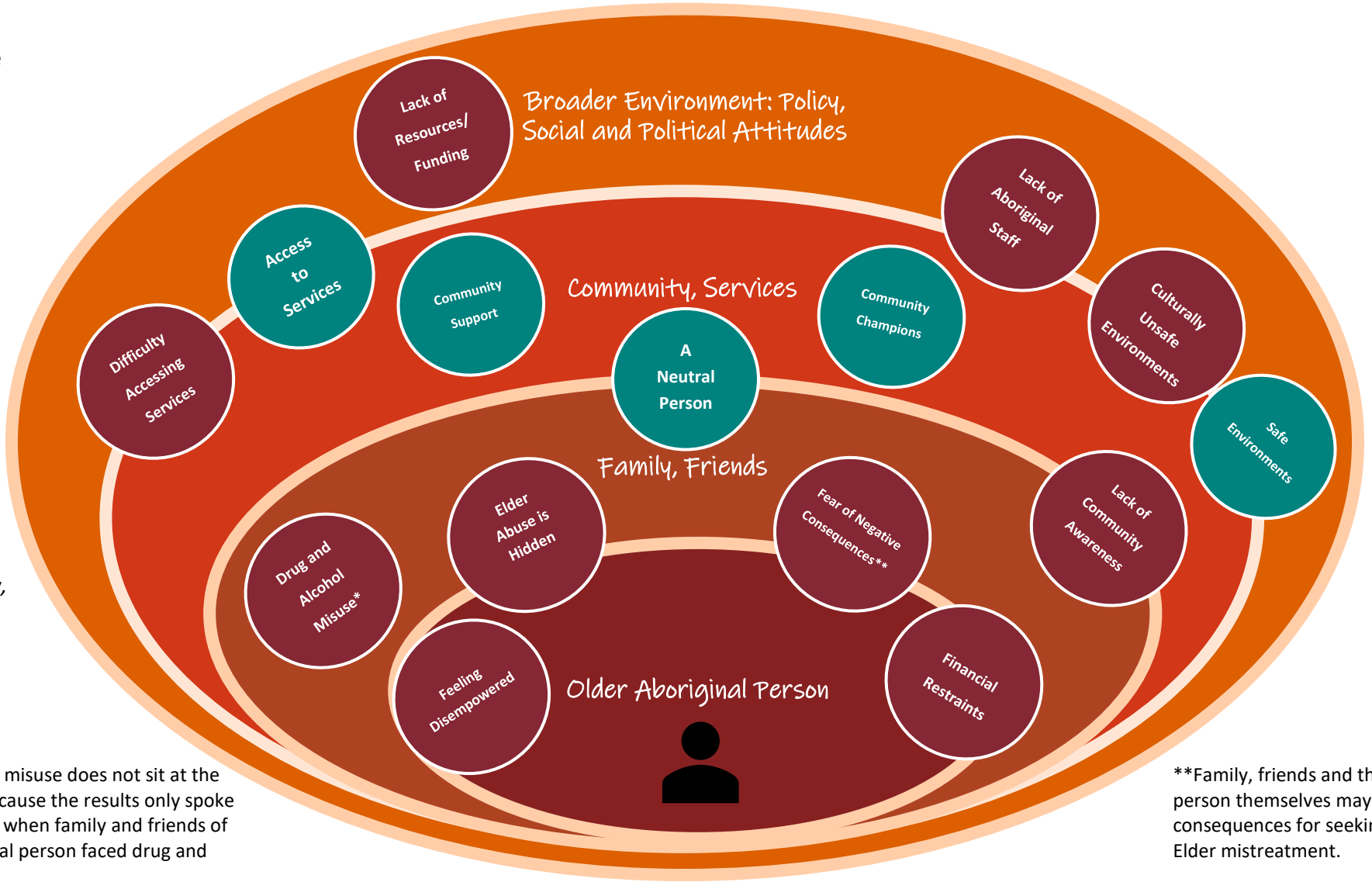
Service collaboration

Seek and strengthen collaborations with partner services

Further **engagement** with regional and remote locations

Barriers and Enablers to Keeping Older Aboriginal People Safe in SA Communities

This model presents a summary of the **barriers** and **enablers** to keeping older Aboriginal people safe as identified through the consultations. Some of the **barriers** and **enablers** go across more than one of the layers. For example, ***A Neutral Person*** overlaps both *Family, Friends* and *Community, Services.*



*Drug and alcohol misuse does not sit at the individual level because the results only spoke of this as a barrier when family and friends of the older Aboriginal person faced drug and alcohol misuse.

**Family, friends and the older Aboriginal person themselves may fear negative consequences for seeking support for Elder mistreatment.

What did the Literature Tell us About Keeping Older Aboriginal People Safe?

A systematic literature review was conducted to determine strategies or interventions that have been identified, developed or used to promote the physical, emotional and financial safety of older Indigenous peoples in Australia, Canada the United States of America and New Zealand.

There was only one relevant peer-reviewed publication for Australia that identified strategies to address or prevent Elder Abuse amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This study reported on a survey and consultations conducted in Queensland in 2005, with suggestions for videos, resources and individual community responses. An additional 14 documents in the "grey literature" were identified, i.e. they were not published in journals or easily available publicly.

Five of the fourteen documents specifically focused on strategies for preventing or addressing abuse for older Aboriginal people; the remainder focused on the entire population, with a section that discussed strategies specifically developed for older Aboriginal people.

One publication and thirteen grey literature documents were identified for Canada. The publication and thesis concerned the use of Community Response Networks in Northern British Colombia. There were nine published articles and two grey literature documents from the United States of America. A unique feature of the USA documents was the focus on legal codes developed by communities or tribes to protect their older people.

There were no published articles found for New Zealand. This finding was further investigated with Maori colleagues who indicated that Elder abuse is only beginning to be discussed in New Zealand. Of the eleven grey literature documents identified, only two were specifically focused on Maori and older Maori people.

Defining Elder Abuse

The following definitions have been generated by the research team through undertaking the Systematic Literature Review.

Elder

"Elder" has a specific meaning in Aboriginal communities i.e. someone who has gained recognition as a custodian of knowledge and lore, and who has permission to disclose knowledge and beliefs (not necessarily based on age).

"elder" is used in this SLR referring to Aboriginal older people (50 years and older, due to lower life expectancy).

Abuse

"Abuse" is sometimes considered a term that is inapt and confrontational in relation to the wider issues of Indigenous elder abuse.

"Elder mistreatment" was commonly the preferred terminology used for "elder abuse" in the literature involving Indigenous peoples.

Themes from the Literature

Two broad themes emerged from the analysis of the identified studies with respect to strategies and interventions to prevent Elder abuse amongst Indigenous peoples. These were:

1. **Social and cultural strengths and protective factors of older Indigenous peoples and communities**

2. **Service responsiveness and approaches**

Key

To assist with reading the following analysis of the literature, the key below has been provided to identify the specific documents from which the information was sourced. The numbers corresponding to the references are listed at the end of the sections. The full reference list is included at the end of the report on page 29.

Australia	**Canada**		
Harris (2005)	Owen-Williams (2012)	Podnieks (2008)	Harbison (2004)
01	**02**	**03**	**04**

USA								
Staff Editions (2016)	Smyer (2011)	Kasunic (2010)	Miller-Cribbs (2009)	Holkup (2007)	Holkup (2003)	Brown (1999)	Carson (1999)	Rittman (1999)
05	**06**	**07**	**08**	**09**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**

THEME 1: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL STRENGTHS AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS OF OLDER INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND COMMUNITIES

The need to recognise and use social and cultural strengths and protective factors of older Indigenous peoples and communities was an overarching theme identified in the papers. *Strengthening Indigenous Communities* encompasses raising awareness, capacity strengthening, strength in culture and empowerment through community leadership. A way to support this community leadership and strength in culture is through acknowledging the unique role of older Indigenous people particularly as powerful teachers and healers. Also identified in the papers was the need for a holistic approach that focusses on treating and healing within the whole family, enabling strength and cohesion.

Strengthening Indigenous Communities

Raising awareness, education and capacity strengthening of older people and community members

The most often reported strategy under this heading was raising awareness and capacity strengthening of older people and community members. This was described in 11 of the 13 peer-reviewed publications, and 13 of 14 Australian, 10 of 12 Canadian, four of 11 New Zealand, and one of the USA grey literature documents. These publications highlighted the need for education to be provided for older Indigenous people in relation to their legal rights and financial security. Specific education for older people on what elder mistreatment is, preventive measures and where and how to access assistance was also highlighted in the literature. The papers also noted that delivery of this kind of education should be extended to family members and the wider community through the use of culturally appropriate resources. Such community education would also aim to assist those mistreating older people to "self-recognise" elder mistreatment. (01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13)

Strength drawn from spirituality and culture

Eight of the published papers included a focus on drawing strength from culture and spirituality. This theme was also present in the grey literature review. Cultural abuse relates to the loss of cultural values and practices, and spiritual abuse interferes with spiritual connections and growth. Many studies found that Indigenous communities have the ability to create and sustain a sense of belonging, and that strengthening spirituality and cultural practices protects against elder mistreatment. Strategies and interventions that recognise community strengths and focus on interconnectedness for healing, pride in culture, and preservation for traditional culture and languages are highly effective in the prevention of elder abuse. (01, 02, 06, 09, 10, 11, 12)

Empowerment through community leadership

A second key area referenced in many publications was the importance of empowerment of community members, including older people, through community

led partnerships in the development of prevention strategies, implementation of interventions and responses to elder mistreatment occurrences within their communities. (01, 02, 03, 05, 07, 09, 10, 11, 12)

Acknowledging the Unique Role of Older Indigenous Peoples

Honouring, respecting and using the wisdom of older peoples

The third most common area of focus was honouring, respecting and using the wisdom of older people. Nine of the peer reviewed papers, and a majority of the Australian, Canadian and New Zealand grey literature documents also identified this approach. Elder abuse was described as a cultural paradox: older people traditionally hold a special and respected place in Indigenous communities due to their life experience, knowledge and wisdom and elder abuse is contradictory to traditional ways of honouring, respecting and utilising elder wisdom. Many publications highlighted the benefit of recognising older people as having power as healers and teachers. In order to counter the negative influences of social change on traditional values, there is a need to return to traditional ways, to not only honour and respect older people but also draw on and utilise their wisdom. (01, 02, 03, 05, 06, 09, 10, 11, 12)

Identifying and prioritising the specific needs of older people

The focus on respecting the wisdom of older peoples goes hand-in-hand with acknowledging the uniqueness of older Indigenous peoples. The international studies showed that strategies to help Indigenous communities to take responsibility for ensuring the health and safety of their older people living within their communities by keeping up with their living situations and their needs are likely to be successful. Such strategies included providing a space for older people to come together, to identify and address the health and wellbeing needs of older people within the community, and the facilitation of local activities to avoid isolation. (02, 03, 04, 06, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13)

Specifically-designed and funded services for older people

Prioritising the needs of older Indigenous peoples also requires adequate funding by governments for services. A number of publications emphasised that these services should be specifically designed by communities to address the needs of older people. Such services can assist communities and families by also providing support, culturally appropriate resources and respite for caregivers. (02, 04, 05, 06, 10, 12)

Enhancing Relationships

Healing of relationships and redress

Key barriers to older people reporting mistreatment include loyalty towards the person who is mistreating them, financial, social and family dependence, and fear of losing closeness with those involved, and severing relationships. Older people are reluctant to seek help due to a perceived need to resolve issues within the family, as

external punitive approaches isolate members and are inconsistent with cultural values. Prevention and redress approaches focussing on mediation, healing of relationships and sourcing help for people who have mistreated an older person are described as less fragmenting to families. A holistic approach is preferred which focusses on treating and healing within the whole family, enabling strength and cohesion to be derived from crises. (03, 05, 06, 09, 10, 11, 13)

Bridging the generation gap

Improving communication between generations and the sharing of older people's knowledge were identified as important strategies across a number of publications. Activities aimed at restoring respect and dignity of older people through community interconnectedness and "honouring elders". included older peoples visits to schools, community events that were inclusive of all age groups, specific organised community activities such as sporting and traditional activities, and the utilisation of technology to help bridge the generation gap. Studies identified that when older people are respected and valued as members of their communities this has a protective factor. In addition, including older family members with the raising of children enables traditional values to be transferred and fostered. (01, 02, 10)

Family members coming together to discuss and develop a plan for wellbeing of their older person

Four studies described using a case conference model to support an older person focussed, family centred and community-based approach to interventions to prevent and address elder mistreatment. In the United States of America, a case conference model was implemented to improve communication within families, and between families and service providers, facilitated by a trained community member. This forum allowed families to resolve problems without the service providers present to decide on the steps needed for the mistreatment to cease. The maintaining of family networks was identified as an important protective factor as well as a stable source of strength and encouragement. (06, 09, 10, 11)

Indigenous laws and legal codes to protect older people

A small number of US publications referred to codes or agreements which allow communities to establish laws to protect older people from abuse within their jurisdictions. These codes assist in both the identification and appropriate resolution of elder mistreatment, outlining referral pathways and the ways in which protection services for older people are delivered. (05, 06, 10, 12)

THEME 2: SERVICE RESPONSIVENESS AND APPROACHES

Service responsiveness and approaches was the second overarching theme identified in the documents. This theme relates to culturally appropriate, safe and affective approaches to keeping older Indigenous peoples safe and ensuring culturally appropriate staff, services, structures and procedures are in place.

Community led partnerships

Community led partnerships between service providers and families and communities

The most common strategy identified in the literature to improve service responses and approaches was the promotion of community led partnerships between service providers and families and communities. It is crucial that services work in partnership with families and community members in relation to the prevention and response to elder mistreatment. Particular emphasis was placed on ensuring that communities identify their own priorities and develop and implement their own solutions and that service responses are then led by these community initiatives and elder mistreatment responses. (01, 02, 03, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11)

Culturally appropriate staff, services, structures and procedures

Training for service providers in cultural awareness and the impacts of colonisation

The need for cultural awareness training for service providers to enable them to better understand cultural factors, family dynamics and responsibilities was identified. An emphasis was also placed on understanding the impact of colonisation and past government policies (particularly the removal of children), intergenerational trauma, oppression, and disruption to traditional roles and transmission of knowledge between generations. Improved understanding contributed to the breaking down of barriers that prevent Indigenous older people accessing services, particularly in relation to distrust of services. Cultural taboos such as not airing family matters in public, and beliefs related to fate were raised as important factors for service providers to understand and respect, and then work with. (02, 05, 06, 08, 10, 11, 12)

Multiple agencies coming together with community, building rapport and positive relationships

The importance of agencies coming together in a coordinated effort, building rapport with older people, was highlighted in the literature. This included agency visits with older people, for example, law enforcement personnel establishing and building on positive relationships to break down barriers. (01, 02, 03, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09, 10)

Recognition of diversity and differing needs of older people

In the United States two articles identified recognition of diversity and differing needs of older people, coordination, multiple agencies coming together and appropriate and effectives structures and procedure in place. Further to undertaking cultural awareness training, service providers often need to recognise the diversity of Indigenous communities and the differing needs of older people as individuals. Some services identified the importance of focusing on the needs of the older person and being family-centred and community based rather than service focussed. (02, 11, 12)

Increased capacity and response

Service providers working with Indigenous communities in the areas of prevention of elder mistreatment and response need to have the capacity to identify and take appropriate action on elder mistreatment within respective cultural contexts. For example, cultural norms of reciprocity and responsibilities of grandparents which complicate perceptions of whether and how elder mistreatment occurs. (02, 05, 06, 07, 08, 10, 11, 12)

Developing information packages that are culturally appropriate and trustworthy

Development of culturally appropriate information and resources on raising awareness, prevention and response to elder mistreatment using a range of mediums (e.g. information packages, websites, toolkits, publications, newsletters, events, games, animated videos, storytelling, radio and television advertisements, billboards) is promoted throughout various community organisations i.e. medical centres, hospitals, sporting clubs, legal offices. The most effective packages are developed through consultation and in partnership with the communities that they are being developed for, to ensure appropriateness, consistency and trustworthiness. (01, 05, 07)

Seek funding and design programs specifically for older people

Some service providers sought additional funding and partnership with the communities they served and designed specific programs to address the needs of older people. These services included support services available to families caring for an older family member. (04, 05, 10, 12)

Coordinated multi-disciplinary, multi-agency approaches and interagency collaboration

Many publications described a need for a coordinated approach involving multiple agencies and multi-disciplinary team members. This included active collaboration between agencies for a more efficient experience by older people and their families accessing their services in the event of elder mistreatment incidences. (02, 03, 04, 05, 07, 08, 09, 10)

Appropriate and effective response structures and procedures in place

The importance of agencies and organisations having an appropriate and effective structures in place to respond to the

needs of older peoples experiencing mistreatment, that placed these older people at the centre of the decision-making process, was also identified. Policies and procedures for mistreatment aligned with appropriate and effective with concepts of holistic health and recognition of the impact of colonisation. (02, 03, 04, 07, 08, 10, 11)

Addressing social determinants

Effective prevention strategies and interventions for elder mistreatment often also addressed the underlying social determinants. For example, mental health issues and substance misuse within families and communities were identified as risk factors to elder mistreatment; therefore, interventions to help address these contributed to the prevention of elder mistreatment incidents. (02, 06, 10, 13)

Indigenous identified workforce

Having Indigenous people employed in a range of positions within the services increased the effectiveness of strategies, interventions and responses to elder mistreatment in Indigenous communities. Indigenous support increased older peoples' uptake of activities and services therefore contributing to lesser incidences of elder mistreatment and increased access to services. (01, 09, 10)

What did Older Aboriginal People and Service Providers say About Keeping People Safe?

Consultations were conducted with 22 Aboriginal community members and staff from aged care related services in South Australia. The only criteria were that participants had to be 18 years or older. Participants elected if they wanted to be involved in a one-on-one interview or a focus group. Interviews and focus groups went for approximately 30 minutes to one hour.

Interview and Focus Group Questions

The following questions were included as a guide for the Researcher:

- **Do you think these strategies would be useful for Aboriginal Communities in SA?**
- **Do you have any other strategy ideas?**
- **What is your approach?**
- **What has worked well/ not worked well?**
- **What resources would be effective in preventing Elder mistreatment?**
  They were also invited to discuss barriers and enablers to preventing Elder abuse.

	Community Members (n = 13)	**Service Providers (n = 9)**
Male/ Female	M = 4 F = 9	M = 4 F = 5
Urban/ Regional/ Remote	Urban = 11 Regional = 0 Remote = 2	Urban = 6 Regional = 2 Remote = 1
Aboriginal/ non-Aboriginal	Aboriginal = 13 Non-Aboriginal = 0	Aboriginal = 5 Non-Aboriginal = 4
Organisation (number of participants)		Murray Mallee Aged Care (1), Aboriginal Elders Village (1), Northern Carers Network (2), Silverchain (1), Aged Rights Advocacy Service (2), Catalyst Foundation (1), Oodnadatta Aged Care (former employee) (1)

Strategies to Keep Older Aboriginal People Safe

The Systematic Literature Review (SLR) identified five strategies used in international Indigenous populations that are effective in keeping older Indigenous people safe. These strategies are:

- **Raise awareness (identification, types, signs, where to go for help)**
- **Mentoring for youth**
- **Mediation, redress – healing of relationships**
- **Capacity building (community led – develop and implement their own solutions)**
- **Education for service providers**

The following presents community member and service provider participants' reflections and comments on the five strategies.

Raise Awareness

Participants saw the importance of using community champions such as Aboriginal AFL role models and other recognizable and respected Aboriginal community leaders to raise awareness of Elder Abuse including types, signs and ways to get help and support. An anti-smoking campaign by Drug and Alcohol Services SA that used images of prominent South Australian Aboriginal people in their marketing was given as an example of an effective approach to raising awareness. It was suggested that using prominent and respected figures can combat the shame and isolation that exists around Elder abuse and that community will better engage with such an approach.

"I think if you get a group of youth in a room and just get the men that they idolise, to talk to them, because I've noticed that if they don't know that person, that facilitator, they, too, don't listen". – Community Interview C010203

Mentoring for Youth

One service provides mentoring camps that focus on strengthening relationships and building respect between Aboriginal Elders and youth. This camp is coordinated by Aboriginal staff and other services. However, sourcing funding is difficult and often very short term.

Participants identified the need to involve the right people and the right country for appropriate mentoring to occur. For example, there is a need to consider if the Elders are from the same language group as the young people and consider the location of the mentoring and if it is appropriate for that language group.

Stronger connections and more opportunities for collaboration between youth organisations and organisations involving older Aboriginal people would facilitate building relationships and respect between young and older Aboriginal people.

"The mentoring camp was the Elders' idea. Three traditional women came to me and said, "This is how we want you to do it with youth. This is how we want to tackle Elder abuse; go and get the money to do it," and I did, I went and got the money for the mentoring camps. So, I am trying to follow the

traditional way of working around this subject, but we need funding for that." – Staff Interview S0102

Mediation – redress – healing of relationships

In resolving situations of Elder abuse, participants saw the importance of involving an impartial party.

"Someone outside the family. - They need to link into a service to get the proper carer. - I don't think families should be the carers. I honestly believe they should be somebody outside of the family. Because families would automatically take advantage, and it's where somebody from the outside, hopefully, they wouldn't do that. Even if there is a family member there, caring, you still need the outside contacts". – Community Interview C010203

However, mediation can be difficult and requires appropriate resourcing and skills.

"we are not going to sit at a table with the abuser and the elderly person and try to make them see sense, eye-to-eye, because when we leave that person can get much worse with the elderly person. We are not going to – escalate things for the elderly person". – Staff Interview S0102

"(Mediation) could cause more problems because if you had a mother and a daughter in a room talking about, "Oh, she keeps taking my," that's like me dobbing on them. Making that kid look bad, and then that kid would - Retaliate. It might work while there's a mediator in the room, but you've got to go home with them". – Community Interview C010203

Capacity Building

Older Aboriginal people are passionate about helping their community and want to be given opportunities to do this. Participants spoke of changing the focus from *building the capacity of the community* to providing opportunities for community leadership and ways for communities to develop, implement and drive their own solutions.

"We just need to work with (those facing Elder abuse), encourage them, tell them that they're not alone, support, encouragement". – Community Interview C010203

Education for Service Providers

Rather than training in identifying abuse in general, participants spoke of cultural awareness training as a clear priority for non-Aboriginal service providers. Cultural awareness education is seen as most effective when provided face to face and through learning from Aboriginal people who share their lived experience.

However, community members said that services often fall short in providing effective cultural education for service providers and there was a concern that people do not always engage with cultural education sessions.

"I've been a facilitator lots of times for (cultural education sessions), and you just find out that they only come to that class to tick a box. And they don't listen, and they're sitting down there with their phones or they're

sitting down there talking and laughing. They're not interested, they're not" – Community Interview C010203

Additional Strategies

Participants identified four distinct additional strategies that would be effective in keeping older Aboriginal people safe in their communities in South Australia. These additional strategies are detailed below.

Representation and Advocacy

Both staff and community member participants spoke of the importance of having a strong advocate when facing a situation of Elder abuse or mistreatment.

"(Our clients) have said, "Enough is enough. I've got somebody like you that is strong, that's able to come in and be my voice when I'm feeling emotional or I can't speak out for myself, I know you're going to be a strong advocate" - Staff Interview S0102

Safe Environments - support for Elders to live away from their abuser/s

Community member participants spoke of the importance of safe environments that can provide respite for Elders facing harmful situations.

"They need to link into a service to get the proper carer. And there needs to be more of those housing projects that have got fences around them, but only for Aboriginal people. It's just a one-bedroom place, so they can't relatives staying over. And I think one of the rules is the relatives cannot stay over. But on that thing, too, you put them in there, of course, they're going to fret for the family. But being their own house, they can do anything" Community Interview - C010203

Participants spoke about the Aboriginal Community Care SA, Aboriginal Elders Village as an example of a safe environment. The Aboriginal Elders Village screens visitors and provides protection from people who humbug. Participants also recognized that living in the Village may get lonely as family may not visit and recognized challenges with access to the Village.

Community members in one focus group spoke about the need for a "Healing House" as a safe place in the community for Elders to go to if in need of respite. However, those attending the Healing House would need to be protected from a potential abuser seeing their attendance as disloyalty or an attempt to escape.

Access to Aboriginal Services

Community members spoke of having difficulty accessing Aboriginal services that would support them in situations of Elder abuse and mistreatment due to the services being far from where they live. Participants said that increased access to these Aboriginal services would help in keeping older Aboriginal people safe.

The Aboriginal services discussed were:

- **The Aboriginal Elders Village, Aboriginal Community Care SA**
- **Women's groups**
- **Men's groups**
- **Aboriginal health services**

Increase Aboriginal Staff Representation in Aged Care Services - including interpreters

Both staff and community participants identified the importance of having more Aboriginal staff represented within the aged care sector and services for older Aboriginal people. Aboriginal staff have a deep knowledge and understanding of their community needs and cultural knowledge that facilitates quality service provision and encourages client use of services.

Barriers and Enablers to Keeping Older Aboriginal People Safe in SA Communities

Participants were asked to discuss potential barriers and enablers to seeking assistance for Elder Abuse in South Australia.

Enablers

There were no substantial differences in results for community member and service provider groups and so combined results are presented below.

- **Community Support** - When community members come together to support those facing Elder abuse and seek assistance together
- **Community Champions** - Aboriginal role models and leaders who speak up against Elder Abuse or teach others by telling their story
- **A Neutral Person** –This might be a carer or mediator. Someone outside of the family who can provide support
- **A Safe Living Environment** – Support for the Elder to live away from the abuser or having access to a safe environment
- **Access to Services** – Accessible services including Aboriginal Organisations and community groups
- **Aboriginal Staff and Interpreters** – Access to Aboriginal staff who can provide culturally appropriate support
- **Linking Services** - Making service navigation easier for older Aboriginal people and allowing people to access a broader range of support

Barriers

The below results are presented separately for community member and service provider participants. Two of the themes (underlined) were the same for both groups.

Both Community Members and Service Providers (Barriers)

- **Shame** – People can feel too ashamed to seek assistance when facing Elder abuse. In Aboriginal family structures, often, the role of the Elder is to provide support and guidance to younger family members. Facing Elder abuse can bring shame to someone in that position.
- **Difficulty Getting Away from Abuser/s** - Aboriginal people are often strongly connected to their immediate and extended family members. Often, many people will know where the older person is living and will have access to them. Therefore, it can be difficult to get out of a harmful situation.

Community Members (Barriers)

- **Elder Abuse is Hidden** - Shame or fear can lead to the Elder facing the abuse to hide it or cover up the situation. Additionally, people may not consider their situation as abuse.
- **Fear of Negative Consequences** – The older person may fear negative consequences from the abuser/s. They might also be afraid that family members will get in trouble if they seek assistance. The Elder may also face threats from offspring that they won't see their grandchildren again.
- **Drug and Alcohol Misuse** – Drug and alcohol misuse by family members can lead to the Elder abuse and create a harmful environment for the older person.
- **Feeling Disempowered** – There can be a lack of respect by younger people and the broader community towards the older Aboriginal person that leads to disempowerment.
- **Difficulty Accessing Services** – Aboriginal services may not be centrally located, and people may not have access to appropriate transport.
- **Services are not Culturally Appropriate or Inclusive** - Some Elders don't access mainstream services due to feeling uncomfortable, excluded or unsafe.
- **Financial Restraints** – Older Aboriginal people often cannot afford to live in a retirement village and often live with many family members. Family members can financially abuse the older person by, for example, taking their bank card.

Service Providers (Barriers)

- **Lack of Aboriginal Staff** – Non-aboriginal staff don't always have the skills or experience to be able to work appropriately or effectively with the Aboriginal community.
- **Lack of Resources and Funding** – Services do not have adequate resources or funding to be able to reach people.
- **Lack of Community Awareness** – There is little education in the community about Elder abuse-prevention and warning signs.

Additional Recommendations from the Consultations

1. **Community Leadership Should Underpin the Implementation of the Strategies and the Resource Development**

Provide opportunities for community leadership and raise awareness of Elder abuse through community champions and role models.

2. **Further Engagement with Regional and Remote Locations**

The Expert Advisory Group, as well as both community member and staff participants advised us that a different approach to resources in urban, remote and rural areas would be required. Regional and remote representation was lacking in the recruitment and a recommendation would be to further engage with remote and regional areas.

3. **Encourage Agencies to Establish Reconciliation Action Plans and to Seek Cultural Awareness Training for Staff Working with Older Aboriginal People**

Effective and engaging cultural awareness training is needed to ensure that services better represent the cultural values of the population they serve. Effective training is delivered face to face with an opportunity for people to learn from an Aboriginal person who shares their lived experience.

4. **Encourage Service Collaboration**

Services should continue and improve on working together to keep older Aboriginal people safe in South Australia. For example, mentoring could occur with Aboriginal youth services and organisations involving older Aboriginal people to facilitate better relationships, respect and learning between younger and older Aboriginal people.

There are other services accessed by older Aboriginal people such as art centers and community centers that should be considered. Staff at these services may not be trained in identifying and preventing elder abuse although there could be opportunities for identifying and providing support to those accessing the services.

The Research Team

The project was led by Professor Annette Braunack-Mayer as the Principal Researcher. Project officer Janet Stajic and Research Assistant Anna Dowling are the two Aboriginal members of the research team and there are seven Aboriginal members on the Expert Advisory Group. Additional research support was provided by Dr Janet Kelly, Dr Anna Dawson, Karen Laverty and Kathy Mott.

The Research Officer led the implementation of the study with mentorship from senior researchers and guidance from the Expert Advisory Committee. Aboriginal research team members and Aboriginal members of the Expert Advisory Committee contributed to the interpretation of results from the systematic literature review and the design of the consultation process. Senior Researchers supported the Research Assistant to conduct consultations with SA Aboriginal communities and key stakeholders in the development of the resources. The Research Assistant provided administrative and research support throughout the project, particularly in engaging with stakeholders and participants.

Expert Advisory Group

An Expert Advisory group comprising of representatives from the Council of Aboriginal Elders SA, Aged Care Services, the Office for the Aging and other relevant organisations was established by Wardliparingga and provided oversight and governance to the project including the consultation phase.

Ethics

Ethics approval was granted by the Aboriginal Health Research Ethics Committee of South Australia (Protocol: 04-18-759) and the SA Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC/18/SAH/15). The research was conducted in alignment with the principles within the SAHMRI Research Accord. The Expert Advisory Group was involved throughout the research process, including in recruitment and question development, ensuring cultural safety and respect was a priority.

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