

## Shining light on violation of human rights

Walk to talk  
elder abuse

Governor of Tasmania Barbara Baker, Francine Jaques and Greens member for Clack Helen Burnet lead the walk. Picture: Linda Hizzroon

**Eliso Kaine**

Paula and Francis Xiberras claim an elderly family member was given just \$100 of his own money over the last four years of his life from the aged care home where he spent his final years.

The sisters marched through Hobart on Friday with more than 150 others to draw attention to elder abuse, as part of the Council On The Ageing (COYA) Tasmania's commitment to Walk Against Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

COYA says elder abuse may involve physical or sexual abuse, taking an older person's money or possessions, neglecting them, making threats or stopping their social contacts. Elder abuse is a violation of human rights.

Paula Xiberras said it was important to recognise it was not only relatives who could abuse older people, but also organisations that are char-



Francis and Paula Xiberras speak out against elder abuse at the awareness day walk.

tered with protecting them.

"It was admitted in the aged care reform that nursing homes do commit abuse, they do neglect," she said.

"Why are (people) always blaming families?"

The sisters said they had been accused of elder abuse from some institutions while they were trying to organise the finances of their relative.

"(Certain institutions) are making a profit, and they are able to get people in a very vulnerable position," Paula noted.

The sisters' family member developed dementia and was put into a home before he had appointed a power of attorney.

And once he was diagnosed, he was no longer legally allowed to make the decision to appoint one.

The Hobart march culminated at Mathon House when COYA Tasmania chief executive Bridgid Wilkinson told the crowd, many dressed in purple, the shocking elder abuse statistics.

"Each year, one in six older people experience abuse," she said.

Public Trustee Tasmania chief executive Todd Kennedy said those numbers were likely lower than reality due to a tendency not to report.

Groups also marched in Burnie and Launceston, with bridges and buildings lit up in purple this week to display a commitment to combating elder abuse.

[eliso.kaine@news.com.au](mailto:eliso.kaine@news.com.au)