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Joint Media Release for immediate distribution

## RAISING TASMANIAN LGBTIQ+ PEOPLE'S AWARENESS OF ELDER ABUSE

A small collaborative research study with older Tasmanian LGBTIQ+ participants about the awareness of elder abuse has found there are areas of significant concern around effects of trauma, potential abuse and mistreatment, lack of trust and existing resources on elder abuse that include representation or visibility of LGBTIQ+ people.

The study\* was conducted by Tasmania's peak body advocating for older Tasmanians, COTA Tasmania in conjunction with Working It Out which is Tasmania's sexuality, gender and intersex support, advocacy and education service.

It was undertaken to address the relative absence of LGBTIQ+ people in research about elder abuse and to gauge how elder abuse, ageism and LGBTIQ+ discrimination is understood by older LGBTIQ+ Tasmanians.

Elder abuse is a serious issue that affects one in six older Australians living in our community every year. The loss of trust, dignity, and self-esteem caused by elder abuse have significant impacts on the quality of life of older people. This is further compounded for older LGBTIQ+ people.

Study participants were from the east, north-west and south of the State, and included a diverse representation of lesbian women, a bisexual man, a transgender woman, and a lesbian woman with innate variations of sex characteristics.

Interim CEO of COTA Tasmania, Brigid Wilkinson and CEO of WIO, Lynn Jarvis said both organisations were pleased participants were willing to contribute their experiences confidentially, providing both organisations with valuable insights to help shape their respective advocacy efforts in this space.

These insights resulted in 13 findings under three key theme areas of advocacy, education, and research.

"The study has highlighted the importance of understanding that elder abuse is not just a problem for older people. It's a societal issue that affects all of us across all walks of life, in business, in the community, in our homes, and can compound other forms of discrimination and injustice," Brigid Wilkinson said.

"This is why advocacy, education and further research are so important. They are areas that COTA Tasmania and WIO actively support and contribute to which require ongoing commitment and resourcing.

"It's important to remember that no one deserves to be abused, no matter their age. We all have a responsibility to speak out against elder abuse and to ensure that older people in our community are treated with respect and dignity.

“One of the most effective ways to prevent elder abuse is to have open and honest conversations about the issue. By talking openly about elder abuse, we can help reduce the stigma surrounding the issue and encourage people to seek help when they need it,” Brigid said.

Lynn Jarvis said she was delighted to be able to release the report and speak to members of the community about the results at the TasPride Parade and Party in the Park in Nipaluna Tasmania at the weekend.

“The TasPride Parade and Party has been a great platform to raise awareness of this study and continue conversations about elder abuse with the LGBTIQ+ community,” Lynn said.

To view the full report, go [to cotatas.org.au/news-items/raising-tasmanian-lgbtq-peoples-awareness-of-elder-abuse/](https://cotatas.org.au/news-items/raising-tasmanian-lgbtq-peoples-awareness-of-elder-abuse/) or [www.workingitout.org.au](https://www.workingitout.org.au)

If you or someone you know is experiencing elder abuse, help is available. The Tasmanian Elder Abuse Helpline 1800 441 169 is a confidential service that can provide information on what elder abuse is and options for support. They can also refer people to free services such as Legal Aid's Senior Assist and Relationships Australia Tasmania's Elder Relationship Service.

\*The Tasmanian study has been informed by the recommendations of Australia's first ever national Elder Abuse Prevalence Study conducted in 2021.

Link: <https://aifs.gov.au/research/research-reports/national-elder-abuse-prevalence-study-final-report>

#### **Details:**

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*Pictures from Tas Pride Parade and Party, 10 February 2024*