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MEDIA RELEASE

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Elder abuse report highlights need for government and community cooperation

The National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC) and the National Older Persons Legal Services Network have today welcomed the tabling of a comprehensive report of the Australian Law Reform Commission *Elder Abuse – A National Legal Response* as an important milestone in tackling the growing problem of elder abuse.

The Report tabled last night in Parliament on the eve of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, makes 43 recommendations for law reform across a wide array of issues including aged care, wills, power of attorney, social security and banking.

“We welcome the ALRC’s key report, which provides an important blueprint for addressing elder abuse in Australia” said Nassim Arrage, CEO of NACLC.

“Community Legal Centres play a key role in assisting people experiencing elder abuse across Australia” he added.

“The prevailing forces generated by an aging population, increasing ageism, a generation of younger to middle aged Australians locked out of the housing market, fragmenting social capital, lax banking controls and growing mental health and substance abuse issues have created the perfect conditions for an elder abuse epidemic” said Scott McDougall, Convenor of the Network and Director of Caxton Legal Centre in Brisbane.

“Importantly, the ALRC has recognised the need for a National Plan to combat elder abuse to be led by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG)” he added.

“However, many of the areas requiring reform fall within the jurisdictions of the States so it is critical that the Commonwealth and the States work together over a sustained period to comprehensively address this issue” said Mr McDougall.

“Clearly governments must commit significant time and resources to this issue. However, addressing this issue also requires Government, Non-Government Organisations and the private sector to work together to develop a ‘whole of community’ response” he added.

“This is not just a job for government – it is the responsibility of communities, families and individuals to take multi-pronged action to empower and protect our elders and ultimately ourselves from harm” concluded Mr McDougall.

For further information or to arrange an interview contact:
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NACLC acknowledges the traditional owners of the lands across Australia and particularly the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, traditional owners of the land on which the NACLC office is situated. We pay deep respect to Elders past and present.