

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### A New Era for the Rights of Older Victorians.

**Melbourne 15th June 2008** - A niece corresponds regularly with her aunt only to find some months later that her letters have not arrived. Upon investigation, the niece discovers that the letters are being removed from the aunt's mail box by the next door neighbour. That's not all, the aunt has also changed her will leaving all her assets, including her house, to the next door neighbour's daughter. This incident of imposed isolation and possible financial abuse is one of the many enquiries received by the new helpline of Seniors Rights Victoria.

Helen Szoke, the Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive Officer of the Victorian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, will officially open Seniors Rights Victoria, at the Melbourne Town Hall on Monday, June 16th, at 9.30 a.m.

In the Foreword to Report of the Elder Abuse Prevention Project, the Committee Chairman, Barney Cooney, said "Age can be accompanied by vulnerability. There are those who exploit that vulnerability and abuse older people physically, mentally, financially, socially and spiritually. Unfortunately the evidence suggests that the family itself is the context of much of this abuse"

Mr Cooney said "When abuse, mistreatment and exploitation of older people occurs, society needs to make available information, support and practical assistance to help them find a remedy for their suffering and, hopefully, to regain a life of good quality."

Senior Rights Victoria is a service that will support older Victorians by offering free legal advice and information on their rights and services to assist them; as well as work to prevent abuse through systemic policy work and advocacy activities, providing a range of educational programs to workers in the field and raising community awareness about the issue.

The Victorian Government is committed to safeguarding the rights, dignity and independence of older Victorians.

The opening of Senior Rights Victoria marks Victoria's contribution to World Elder Abuse Awareness Day which occurs on June 15th. This year's theme is "*Building Networks to Address Elder Abuse: Pathways to Human Rights*".

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