

ACU PROFESSOR OF AGEING LEADS AT THE HISTORIC ELDER ABUSE PREVENTION CONFERENCE

Professor Tracey McDonald AM FACN GAICD, Faculty of Health Sciences



Image: Professor Tracey McDonald AM

Professor Tracey McDonald AM was invited to address the 5th Elder Abuse Conference sponsored by The Elder Rights Service on 19th to 20th February 2018.

It was attended by over 550 high profile national and international delegates from the legal, finance, banking, health, welfare and government sectors determined to see an end to the abuse of older people, especially within trust relationships. Professor McDonald is regarded as a leader in this field as she participated in the United Nations World Expert Group meeting in Malta in 2007 to look at social policy on ageing at the national level and the challenges for national capacity development. In 2008 she was co-author on the United Nations writing group on *Guidelines for the National Implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action* which was published in January 2008 and translated for distribution to all UN member states. She also lead

sessions at the United Nations World Expert Group that met in Bonn, Germany in 2009 to develop the proposal for a Convention on the Rights of Older Persons which is nearing completion after many years of debate. Locally she is a member of the Elder Abuse Prevention Steering Committee in NSW.

At this conference, Professor McDonald presented her research on indicators and elder abuse risk calibration factors to a packed room of leaders who appreciated hearing practical information that informs their responses to elder abuse. She also joined an expert panel led by Jane Caro, Journalist and commentator, to discuss the phenomenon of abuses against older women, the major group targeted for abuse by predators.

In response to the question, *How have we come to this situation?* she described it as a 'perfect storm' that has been gathering for decades and now is gaining momentum as a result of the degradation of women by liberal access by children and others to pornographic depictions of females; and the 'instrumentalization' of women through their lifespans, that is, that many women are valued by their families according to their usefulness to others until the day they need something back- their *use by date*. At that time women face great danger of being regarded by those around them as having little or no value and burdensome – and many are then neglected, exploited, stripped of assets and socially isolated by their families. Sadly, the older and more disabled women become the more these abuses within trust relationships are thought to be occurring.

Australia's Attorney General, Christian Porter, announced the resourcing needed to develop a National Plan of Action on Elder Abuse to the enthusiastic applause of all present. Professor McDonald was one of the invited participants at the follow-up strategy meeting on 21st February 2018 where the outcomes of the conference were analysed and discussed as a prelude to working with the Government to ensure that the National Plan on Elder Abuse has integrity and outcomes that inform the responses of all sectors in direct contact with potential victims of all types of abuse of older people.

The three days were electric with enthusiasm and commitment to an idea whose time has come, that is, that abuse of older people within trust relationships must be stopped and that the Australian community should regard this type of abuse as the third part of a triptych with domestic violence and child abuse.

Link to interview below:

http://seniorsrightsservice.org.au/tars_news/profile-prof-tracey-mcdonald/