

# Abuse of elderly increasing

## Move to protect the rights of seniors

**Welfare** | Shaun Turton

AN ELDERLY woman forced to cook, clean and provide a home for her free-loading 40-year-old grandson is just one of a growing number of "elder abuse" cases in Man-ningham, welfare workers say.

Doncare chief executive Doreen Stoves said the trend was noticed among people seeking emergency relief.

"This is an issue that is hard to determine because families don't speak out about it," Ms Stoves said. "It's like domestic violence was a few years ago.

"It's not until you talk to someone about why they're out of food that they reveal their grandchildren have been taking money out of their accounts."

Elder abuse can be inflicted by anyone with whom an older person has a trusting relationship.

It can take many forms, including physical, psychological and financial harm

Ms Stoves said the elderly woman was advised of her rights and her grandson subsequently started paying rent and board.

She said other cases encountered by Doncare included a grandmother in her 70s who was threatened by her grandson who suffered mental health problems and another grandparent forced to care full-time for her grandchild.

Doncare seniors social support group co-ordinator Helen Mackenzie said seniors should not feel they were being pressured or threatened by their adult relatives.

"They have the right to feel safe and secure in their own environment and own homes," she said.

Council On The Ageing chief executive Sue Hendy said more research was needed to quantify the problem in Australia.

The council's legal advice and support service for people suffering elder abuse is Seniors Rights Victoria on 1900 269 991