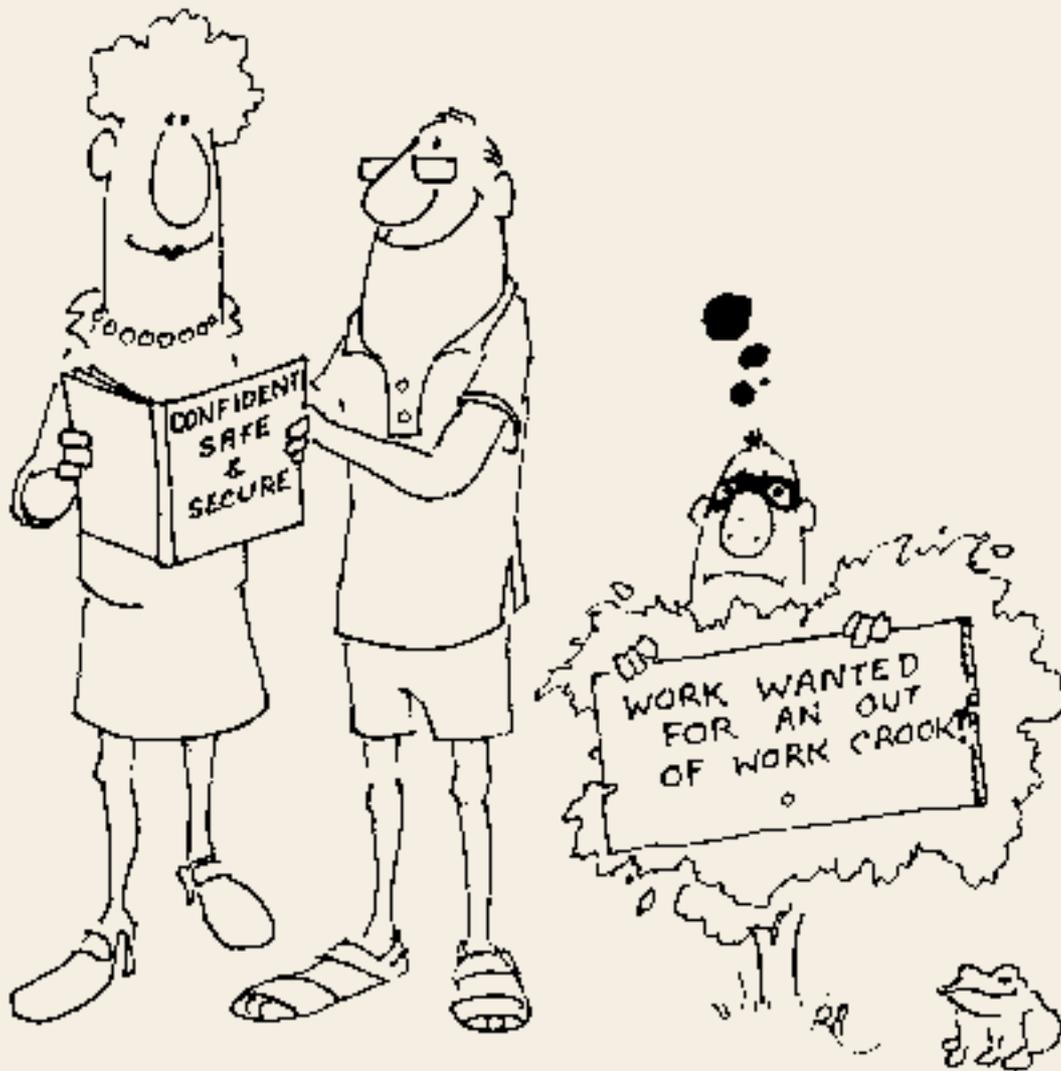


Confident, Safe & Secure Living in Queensland

A Handbook on Safety for Seniors



Version 2, June 2005

FOR EMERGENCIES

PHONE TRIPLE ZERO (000)

Produced by the Seniors Task Force

Minister for Police and Corrective Services

Queensland Police Service

Department of Communities

Department of Justice and Attorney-General

Office of Fair Trading

Queensland Health

Department of Housing

Australian Pensioners' & Superannuants' League

Crime and Misconduct Commission

Queensland Retail Traders and Shopkeepers Association

Ministerial Advisory Council for Older Persons

Local Government Association of Queensland

Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland

Happy Seniors Club

Keriba Mabaigal Torres Strait Islander Corporation for Culture and Heritage

Reconciliation Queensland

Council on the Ageing/National Seniors

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Confident, Safe & Secure Living in Queensland is also available on the web sites of:

- Queensland Police Service
www.police.qld.gov.au/pr/program/seniors/safety/default.shtml
- Department of Communities
www.communities/seniors/publications/index.html

In an emergency, phone Triple Zero (000) to contact:

- **Police Service**
for life threatening matters or crimes in progress
- **Ambulance Service**
- **Fire Service**

When you call Triple Zero (000), you will be connected to an operator who will ask which service you need - police, fire or ambulance.

When connected to that service you will be asked by another operator for:

- Your street name
- Your street number or location
- What has happened
- Your name
- Your phone number
- And any other information that will help, such as the type of problem or how many people are involved.

Write your emergency phone numbers below or, if you have a key-pad touch phone, enter the numbers in the speed dial keys, to quickly dial numbers such as:

- Triple Zero (000)
- Local police station ph: _____
- Local ambulance ph: _____
- Local fire station ph: _____
- A relative or close friend ph: _____
- Local emergency hospital ph: _____
- Your doctor ph: _____
- Your chemist ph: _____
- The local council ph: _____
- Your electricity supplier ph: _____
- Your electrician ph: _____
- Your plumber ph: _____

Keep an up-to-date list of your medication/s that includes:

- the name of each medicine
- your dosage you take each day, and
- where you keep your medication.

Put this list near your phone or in another prominent place so it can be found easily in an emergency.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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*The Hon Judy Spence MP, Minister for Police and
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Queensland Police Service

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Department of Communities

Department of Housing

Office of Fair Trading

Ministerial Advisory Council for Older Persons

Older People Speak Out

Council On The Ageing

National Seniors Association

Queensland Fire and Rescue Service

Artist Russ Ames

Useful contacts

Banking and Financial Services Ombudsman..... 1300 780 808

Australian Securities and Investments Commission .. 1300 300 630

Carelink 1800 052 222

Carer Respite 1800 059 059

Department of Housing 1300 880 882

DV Connect (24 hr Domestic Violence help)

 Women's Line..... 1800 811 811

 Men's Line 1800 600 636

Elder Abuse Prevention Unit 1300 651 192

 www.eapu.com.au

Guardianship & Administration Tribunal 3234 0666

 1300 780 666

 (outside Brisbane)

Home and Community Care (HACC) 1800 052 222

Home Assist Secure 1800 642 902

Legal Aid Queensland 1300 651 188

 www.legalaid.qld.gov.au

Lifeline Financial 3250 1900

Office of Fair Trading 1300 658 030

 TTY 3246 1588

 www.fairtrading.qld.gov.au

Office of the Adult Guardian 1300 653 187

Parentline 1300 301 300

Public Trustee..... 1300 651 591

 www.pt.qld.gov.au

Queensland Aged and Disability Advocacy Inc 3637 6000

 1800 818 338

 (outside Brisbane)

Queensland Law Society..... 3842 5842

 www.qls.com.au

Queensland Police Service:

 Crime Stoppers 1800 333 000

 Crime Prevention Unit 3234 2111

 Neighbourhood Watch 3234 2111

 Safety Audit Program 3234 2111

 General enquiries contact your local police station

Relationships Australia 1300 364 277

Residential Tenancies Authority..... 1300 366 311

Retirement Village Association

(represented by HQ Queensland) 3725 5555

Safety House Association of Queensland 3356 9922

Seniors Enquiry Line 1300 135 500

TRANSInfo 13 12 30

 TTY 13 36 77

Translating and Interpreting Service 131 450

Tenant Advice and Advocacy Service 1800 642 902

Victims Counselling and Support Service 1300 139 703

Foreword

All Queenslanders have the right to feel safe and secure, whether in their own home or while participating in community activities.

Yet a fear of crime is preventing some seniors from living life to the full.

While statistically seniors are shown to be at a low risk of crime, the personal, financial and emotional impacts of being victimised can sometimes be greater for older Queenslanders.

It is important then that our community develops strategies to better protect seniors as our population ages.

The Seniors Task Force was formed in February 2004 in an effort to combat crime and fear of crime felt by seniors.

This Seniors Safety Handbook is the first initiative of the Task Force.

It provides seniors with practical information and handy hints on personal and property security and will assist seniors to live life to the full and - most importantly - without fear.

I commend this Seniors Safety Handbook to you in the hope it will enhance and support your well-being and independence.



*Judy Spence MP
Minister for Police and Corrective Services*

As the Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors, I am committed to helping communities to be safe and secure by working together to prevent and respond to crime.

Statistics show seniors have a low risk of becoming victims of crime. However when victimised, the impacts can be very traumatic. They are often also fearful of crime. Simple and practical strategies, such as those outlined in this handbook, can help to reduce fear and empower seniors with the skills to participate more confidently within their own communities.



*Warren Pitt MP
Minister for Communities, Disability
Services and Seniors*

The Service is committed to preventing crime, and this handbook is one example of how we are working in partnership with the community to help seniors feel safe. Please use it as a guide to give you the confidence to live life feeling safe and secure.



*Commissioner Bob Atkinson
Queensland Police Service*

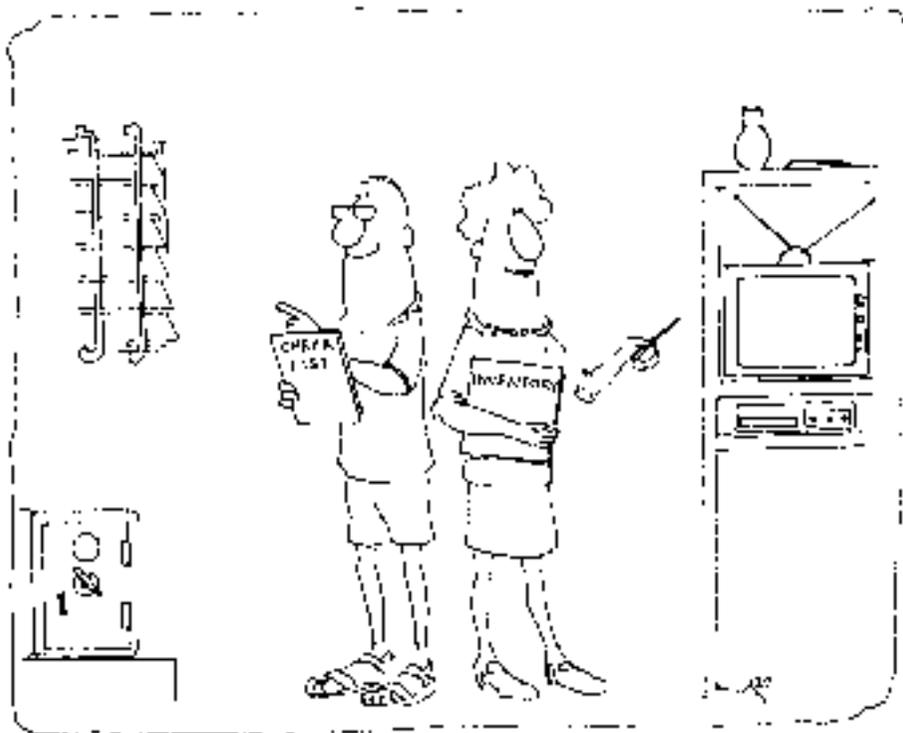
How to use this handbook

One of the reasons older people are less likely to be victims of crime is that they know the importance of taking precautions!

This handbook gathers the most important precautions into different sections for you to refer to, and provides checklists to assess if you need to take further action.

The checklists have been designed so you can tick the items off that have been done, and take note of other items you might want to do sooner or later.

The handbook also lists services available in Queensland to help seniors.



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Myth and reality

The myth:

Older people are more likely to be victims of crime than any other age group.

The reality:

Contrary to common belief, seniors are relatively safe compared to other age groups. Young people are more likely to be victims of crime than other members of the community, and seniors are the least likely age group to be victimised.

The lifestyle of seniors helps make their lives safer - they are less likely to go out at night, tend to spend more time at home, and are generally wiser and more likely to take precautions.

However, emotive statements by public figures and the media's tendency to highlight offences against older people can result in a disproportionate fear of crime amongst seniors.

This unnecessary fear can lead to a lack of confidence about going out alone, whether it's on public transport or walking in the neighbourhood. It can also result in a decrease in quality of life, deterioration in health and social isolation.

People who are actively involved in their communities, however, tend to be more confident about their safety, have less fear of crime, and live longer.

The aim of this handbook is to dispel myths about crime and seniors, and provide practical, easy ways for seniors to help keep themselves safe when at home and out and about.

Safety and security when out and about

Feeling confident when you are out in the street, in a car or on public transport is vital to mobility and enjoying community life and recreational activities. This section covers a range of sensible strategies that will help to make your outings safe and enjoyable.

To feel secure when you're out and about, choose common sense tips that suit your lifestyle and budget - and that you have the ability to use comfortably.

For example, a personal security alarm or whistle may help you feel safe and confident. Such devices make a loud noise when used, and in an emergency may deter criminals and attract the attention of people around you.

Be careful however, personal alarms may cause hearing damage. If you need to use one, make sure you hold it away from you, and other people.

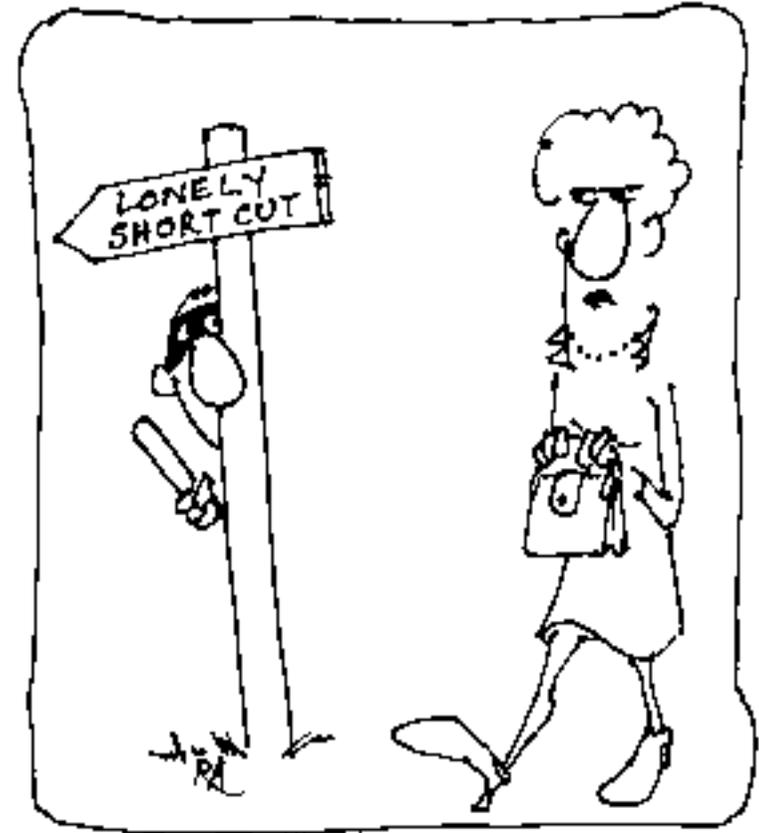


When walking

- Before leaving home, take time to lock up carefully.
- Take only what you need with you.
- Arrange with someone to go with you.
- Avoid short-cuts through parks or vacant land, especially at night.
- Use busy, well-lit streets.
- If it is necessary to use poorly lit streets, walk as far from doorways as possible.
- If you think you are being followed or in danger of being confronted:
 - cross the street; or
 - try to get the attention of people nearby - shout as loudly as you can ('Help!'/ 'Fire!'); or
 - seek help at the nearest house, shop or busy public place.
- Learn where Safety Houses are in your area and, if you feel you are in danger, be aware that you can use them. Safety Houses are indicated by a yellow, triangular safety house symbol located on the letterbox or the front door of a shop or business.
- If you need to use a Safety House, tell the person inside what has happened so they can report your problem to police.



"I love walking around my neighbourhood, but I've made sure I know where the Safety Houses are just in case someone makes me feel a bit nervous."
Valmai, 67



- If you are confronted by someone who is trying to take your bag, GIVE IT TO THEM. This may go against all your instincts, but remember that no amount of money or inconvenience is worth personal injury.
- At the same time, take note of what the offender looks like and, if a vehicle is involved, take note of its registration number and call the police.
- Always carry a phone card, a mobile phone or change for a telephone call.
- Always carry some form of identification with your name and address.

When shopping

- Carry your handbag in front of your body and keep your wallet (containing your cash/cards) separate in a pocket or a money belt.
- Carry only the money you need and pay large bills by cheque or by phone using a credit card.
- Put your money in different parts of your handbag or pockets so it's not all in one place.
- Keep your bag with you at all times:
 - avoid carrying or leaving your bag on a shopping trolley; and
 - avoid leaving it at your feet in public places or on the hook of a door in a public toilet or a change room.

"I was using an ATM once and this suspicious-looking bloke was hanging around, so I just pressed the cancel button and said out loud that I'd forgotten my PIN number again!"
Bill, 74

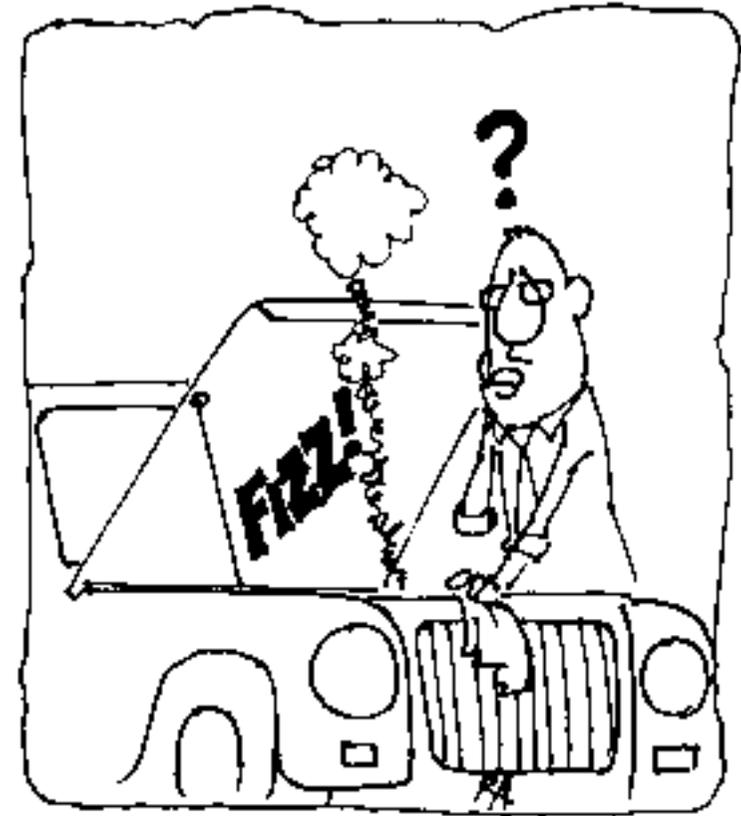
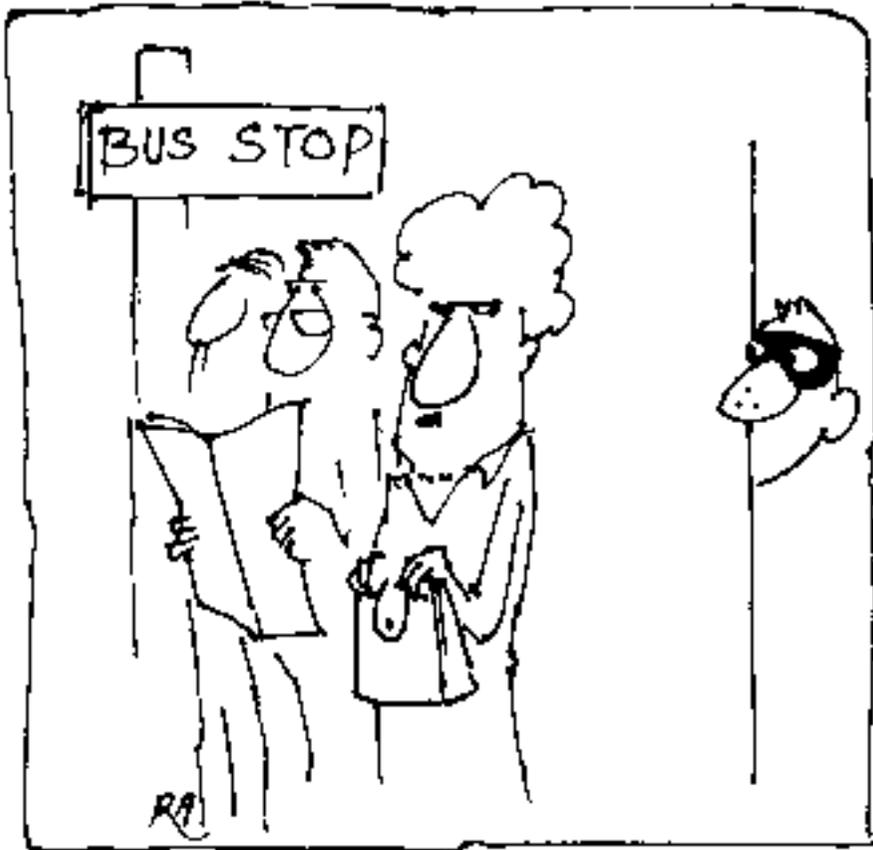
- When using an ATM (automatic teller machine), don't let people see where you put money in your bag or wallet.
- Use ATMs located in public view where you can be seen by other people.
- Don't give anyone else your personal identification number (PIN).



"When I go out with a bit of money, I put some in my purse, some in my pocket and the rest in my handbag so it's not all together."
Val, 76

On public transport

- To reduce waiting times, know the bus or train timetable. For South East Queensland information, phone TRANSInfo on 13 12 30 (TTY 13 36 77).
- When waiting at the bus stop or train station, stand with other people if possible.
- If the bus or train is empty, or nearly empty, sit near the bus driver or the train guard or driver.
- If travelling by taxi, have the driver wait until you have safely gone inside the building.



When driving

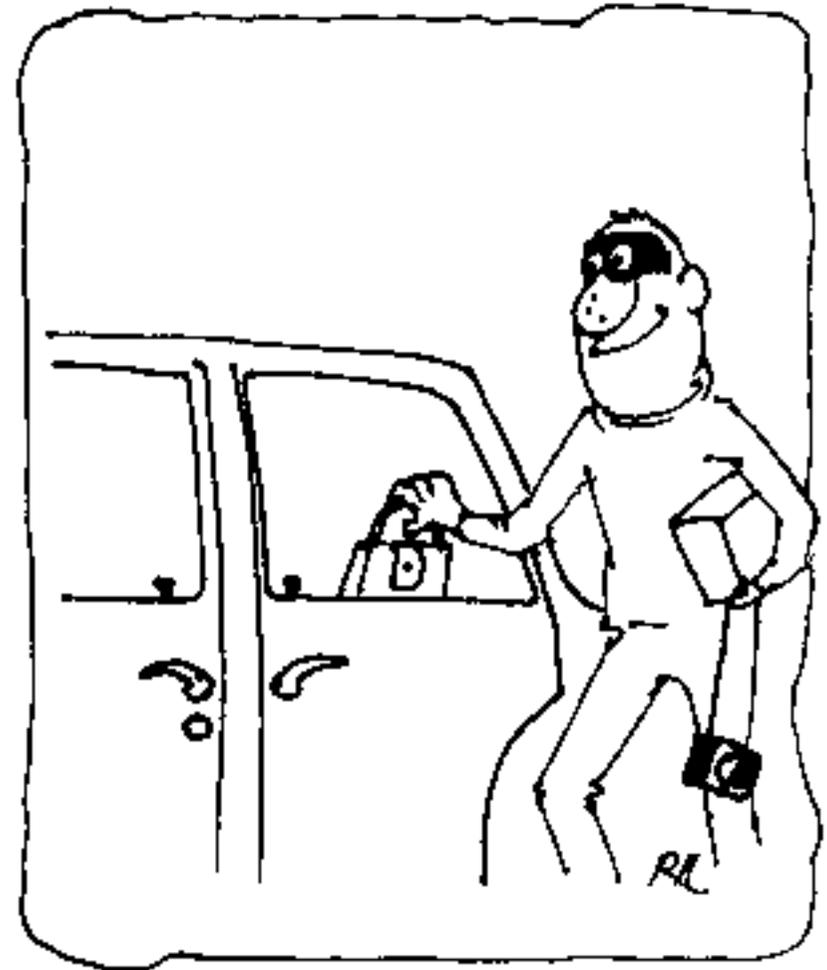
- If you are going somewhere unfamiliar, plan your route carefully in advance.
- Avoid travelling on isolated roads, especially at night.
- Ensure that your car is in good condition and has plenty of oil, petrol and water.
- Never pick up a hitchhiker.
- Park your car in well-lit areas and don't leave valuables inside.
- Have your keys ready before you walk to your car.

SAFETY AWAY FROM HOME CHECKLIST

Tick the boxes where no further action is required or you know to take that precaution.

- Plan your outings
- Lock premises
- When walking, avoid short-cuts and dark, unlit areas
- Know what to do if you're followed or confronted when walking
- When walking, carry a phone card, a mobile phone or money for a phone call
- When walking, carry some form of identification
- Know the location of Safety Houses and when to use them
- When shopping, have a plan for keeping your handbag and wallet secure
- Put your money in different pockets or parts of your handbag
- When using an ATM, protect your money
- Use ATMs in public places where you can be seen by many people
- Know the bus or train timetable
- Stand with other people at the bus stop or train station
- Sit near the bus driver or train driver/guard
- When returning home in a taxi, have the driver wait until you're safely inside
- Avoid driving on isolated roads
- Keep car in good condition

- Park car in well-lit areas
- Don't leave valuables in parked car
- Never pick up hitchhikers
- Lock your car doors and keep valuables out of sight when driving
- Consider carrying a whistle or a personal security alarm



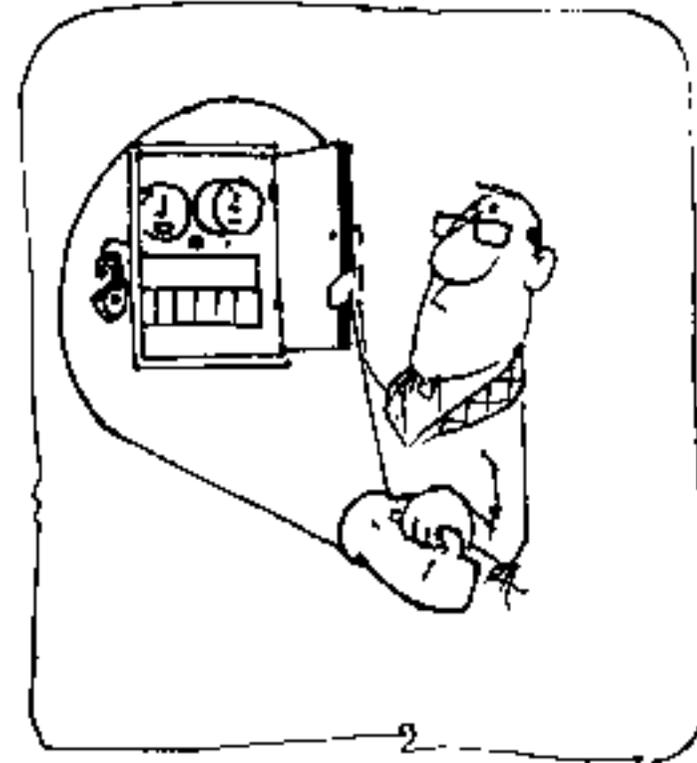
Safety and security at home

Securing your home

You don't need to spend lots of money on security. Simple and low-cost changes can make your house look occupied and deter intruders. The following suggestions are a guide to what can be done.

Outside security

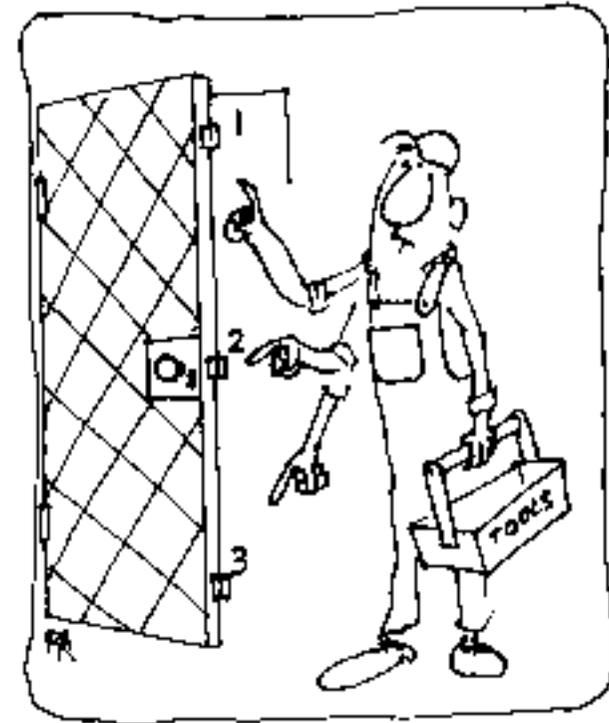
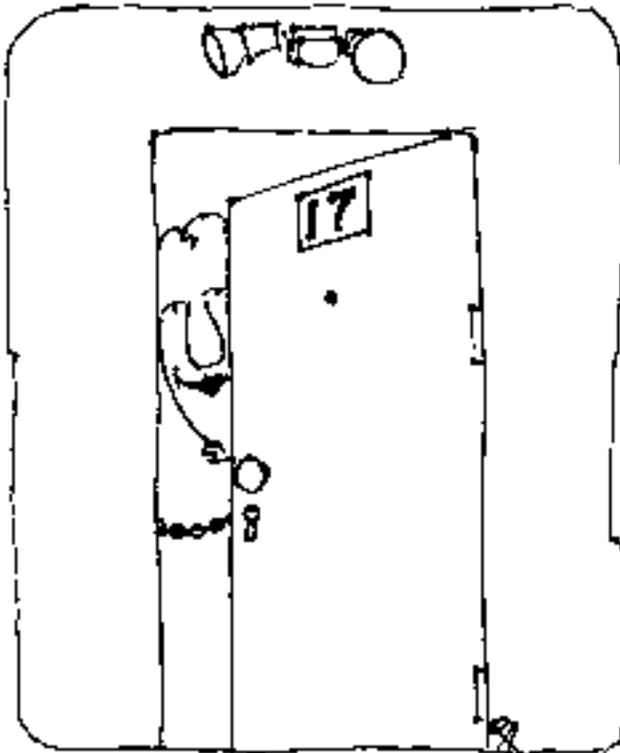
- Make sure your house number is easy to see from the street - both day and night.
- Trim bushes and trees that obscure windows.
- Consider removing bushes or trees that could be used as hiding places by intruders.



- Ensure that doorway and outside lighting will illuminate your yard.
- Consider installing sensor lights that turn on when you come home at night, and will deter prowlers.
- Check your lights regularly to make sure they are working.
- Consider keeping a dog.
- Consider securing your electricity meter box. Your electricity supplier can help arrange this. (Energex ph: 13 12 53, Ergon Energy ph: 13 10 46)
- Keep ladders and tools locked in your garage, garden shed or under the house.
- Lock up your wheelie bin/s or keep them under the house.

Doors

- External wooden doors should be of solid core construction and fitted with deadlocks that can be opened from the inside without a key.
- If your deadlocks need a key to open from the inside, leave the keys in the locks and make sure they are unlocked when you're at home.
- If your door has glass panels, hang the key near the door when you're home, but out of reach of anyone who could smash a pane.
- A peephole in all external doors and a light outside allow you to see who is there, day and night, without having to open the door.



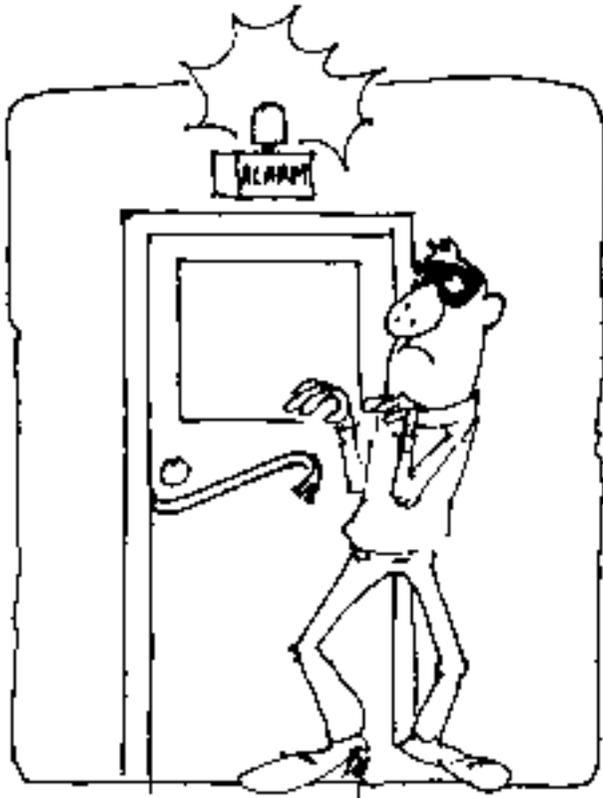
- A security chain between the door and the wall will help you check who's at the door.
- Fit good quality aluminium or steel security screen doors to all entrances.
- Security doors offer valuable protection when your main door is open for ventilation.
- Keep security doors locked at all times.
- Make sure all your door locks can be opened with the same key.
- Fit double-sided locking handles and patio door bolts to sliding doors.
- A snug fitting block of wood placed in the lower sliding door channel can make it difficult for intruders to open the door.

Windows

- Install quality key-operated window locks to all windows.
- Make sure all your window locks can be unlocked with the same key.
- Install security screens to deter intruders so you can leave your windows open in hot weather.
- If possible, replace louvre windows with sliding windows, or install security screens over your louvres.

Internal security

- Access to your home can be gained through the roof, so attach hinges and a sliding bolt to your ceiling access cover (manhole).



- If watching TV, using the vacuum cleaner or other noisy tools or equipment, keep external doors locked.
- Consider installing an alarm system. Advice on suitable security alarms for your home is available from reputable security companies, locksmiths and hardware stores.
- If you have an alarm system, advertise it by displaying a security sticker.

Other tips

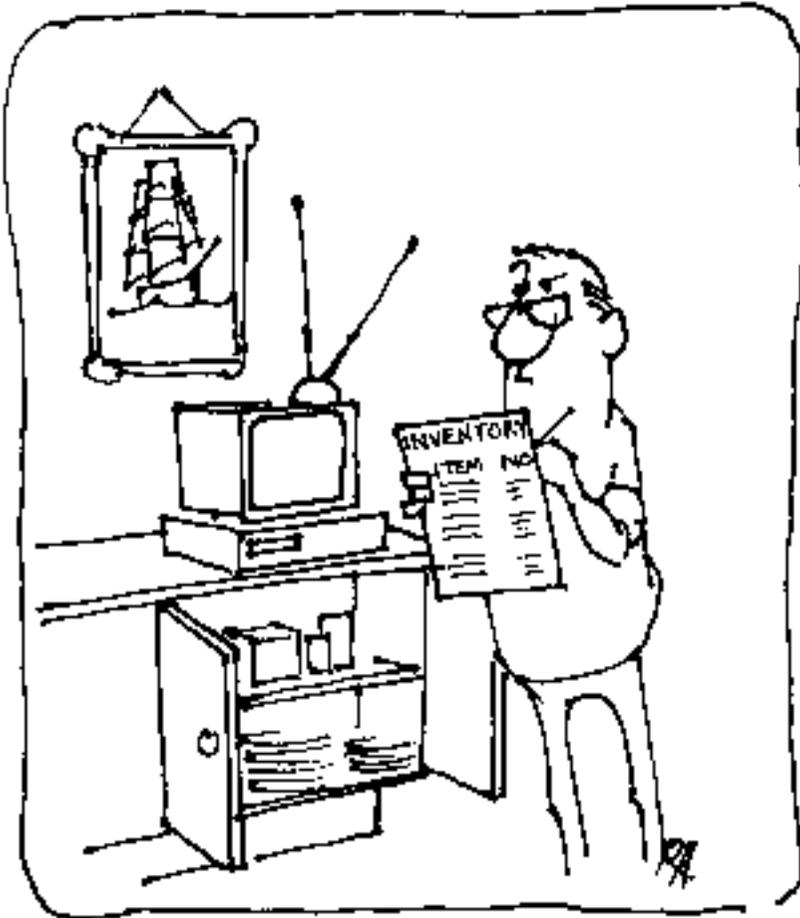
- Self-tapping screws in the top frame of your windows and sliding doors will stop them being lifted out (but make sure there's enough clearance for the door or window to slide).
- When you buy new electrical goods, don't leave the packaging outside so burglars will know you have new products.
- Don't keep lots of money in your house unless it's in a good-quality safe.
- Consider using a safety deposit box at your bank for storing valuable items.
- Don't leave keys hidden outside.

For emergencies

- Plan at least two escape routes so you can leave your home quickly in an emergency.
- Make sure one or more window security screens open from the inside to allow an easy exit.
- Store emergency numbers in the speed dials of your home and mobile phones, or keep them clearly written beside your phone.

Property inventory

- Compile a detailed inventory of your property (see page 22 for a sample inventory list).
- Record the serial numbers, makes, models, colour and size of your specific items.
- Keep the inventory in a safe place away from home and update it when you get new property.



Property marking

Marking your items clearly identifies them as your property. Property marking will deter burglars by making it difficult for them to dispose of your goods and help police return them to you.

Here are a few tips on how to identify your property:

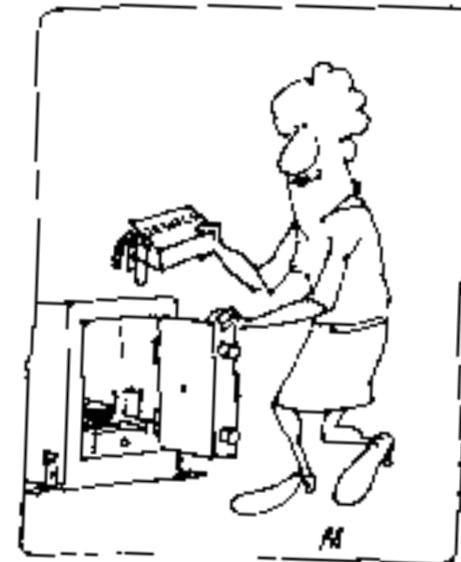
- Use an engraver to mark items on your inventory list.
- Engravers may be available for loan from your nearest Neighbourhood Watch group or your local police station.
- Take photographs or videotape items that can't be engraved such as jewellery, watches, silverware, collectables, stamp and coin collections, furs, antiques, paintings and furniture.
- Put a ruler or matchbox beside each item to show its size.
- Preferably, mark your property with your initials, date of birth and the letter 'Q' (for Queensland), e.g., John Smith was born on 01-02-65, so his personal code would be JS010265Q.
- Or mark your property with your driver's licence number and the letter 'Q'. If your driver's licence number is 12 345 678, mark your property with the code '1234578Q'.
- Fill out a Property Identification Form from your local police station so police will have your code if your property is stolen.
- Stickers are available from Neighbourhood Watch to show your property has been marked - display these stickers on your property and in prominent places around the house.

HOME SECURITY ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Tick the boxes where no further action is required or you know to take that precaution. Where you decide action is needed, rate it either A for urgent action, or B if you feel action is necessary but can wait. If you feel you can afford the cost of the action, rate it A1 or B1.

- House number clearly visible from the street, even at night
- Doors and windows clearly visible from the street
- Automatic light timers installed internally
- Sensor-activated lights installed externally
- All darkened areas around the house able to be illuminated
- Front light bright enough for night-time callers to be clearly seen
- All lights working
- Lights left on when you go out
- All external wooden doors solid core
- Quality security screen doors installed at all external entrances
- All external doors fitted with deadlocks
- Door locks keyed alike so one key unlocks all doors
- All windows fitted with locks, with one key that unlocks all windows
- Emergency escape routes planned
- Front door fitted with wide-angle peephole and safety chain
- Keys not hidden outside

- Sliding doors and windows unable to be lifted off their tracks
- Louvre windows fitted with bars or grilles
- Property engraved and valuable property photographed
- Police Property Identification Form filled out
- Property inventory list compiled
- Meter box locked
- All gates secured
- Garage/garden shed locked when not in use
- Garden tools locked away when not in use
- Dog on duty
- Security alarm installed, used and serviced regularly
- Ceiling access cover (manhole) fitted with hinges and sliding pad bolt



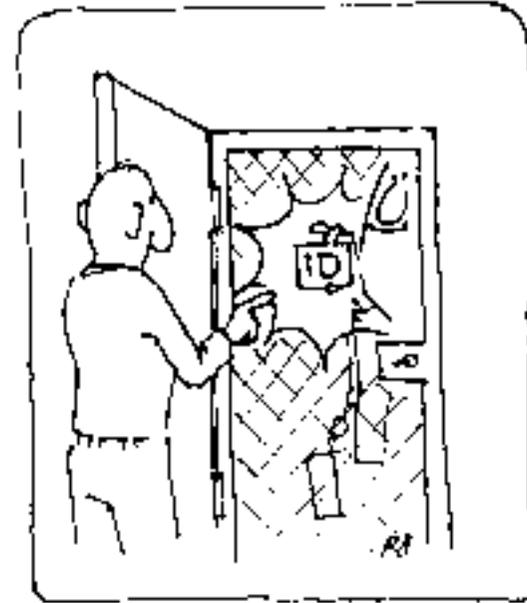
Being safe at home

By using some of the simple personal safety precautions that follow, you can help minimise your risks at home.

When a visitor arrives

- Open your door only to people you know and trust.
- Use your peephole, door chain or a window to see who's at the door before opening it.
- Check the credentials of charity workers and don't let them into your home.
- Always check the credentials of service repair people and sales people.
- Talk to these people through a locked security door. If you are unsure about a person's motives, ask for the name of their company and their identification card, then telephone the company to check their credentials.
- Use the phone book to find the number rather than relying on the number the person gives you.
- Ring your local police if their actions seem suspicious.
- If someone is at the door and you are alone and feeling insecure, pretend there is someone else in the house (preferably a male).
- Be discreet if you live alone. It is better not to indicate on unit or flat directories or nameplates whether you are Ms, Miss, Mrs or Mr. Just use your surname. In the phone book, use initials and surname only.
- If a stranger or caller asks to use your telephone, direct them to the nearest public phone, or make the call for them while keeping them outside.

"When I lived at home by myself, I used to keep a pair of my late husband's shoes at the front door and hang some of his clothes on the line." Gladys, 84



About the telephone

- Don't give your name, phone number, address or details of who lives in your home to unknown telephone callers.
- In case of nuisance calls, say nothing and hang up. If calls persist, contact your phone company and seek their advice.
- Keep police, ambulance, relatives' and doctor's telephone numbers clearly written down next to your phone/s.
- If you have a key-pad touch phone, key these emergency numbers into the speed dial buttons.
- Also, enter these emergency numbers as speed dials into your mobile phone.



- If possible, have a phone extension or keep your mobile phone in your bedroom.
- Make arrangements to have regular contact with someone you trust. Try setting up a code, such as three rings on the phone each morning, or simply lifting your blind at the start of each day so that they know you're okay.

If there's an intruder

- If you're at home and find an intruder, you could:
 - activate the burglar alarm;
 - get to the nearest phone (bedroom) and quietly call the police; and/or
 - switch on lights and make a lot of noise moving about, but **DON'T CONFRONT THE INTRUDER.**
- If the intruder confronts you, try to stay calm, but shout and scream, especially if you believe this noise might be heard by a neighbour.

- Keep as much distance as possible between you and the intruder.
- If you arrive home and suspect an intruder is inside, **DO NOT ENTER THE HOUSE.** Go to a neighbour's house and call the police on Triple Zero (000). Keep out of sight and a safe distance from the house.
- If you see anyone leaving, try to remember what they look like (what they're wearing, hair colour, complexion) and take a description of their car and its registration number.

In rural areas

Although country areas may be considered safer than cities because residents usually know each other, crime still occurs.

Properties are often isolated and can be easily entered, which can make farming communities easier targets for criminals.

In addition to the other safety tips in this handbook, the following actions can be used in rural areas to make life safer:

- If your phone isn't always reliable, establish a signal with your neighbour to alert them if there is a problem or you require help.
- The signal may be a bell, a siren or simply continually sounding a car horn.
- Tell local people who regularly pass your property (such as bus drivers and delivery people) of your signal.
- Encourage others to report anything that seems suspicious, is out of the ordinary or may be a concern.

"My neighbour and I have a system where we both hang tea towels in the window each morning so we know we're okay." Clem, 69

PERSONAL SAFETY STRATEGY CHECKLIST

Tick the boxes where no further action is required or you know to take that precaution.

- Use your peephole, door chain or window to identify a caller
- Keep security door locked
- Have surname and initial only in phone book
- Have surname only on unit or flat directories
- Check the credentials of service repair people and sales people
- Don't allow charity collectors to come inside
- Direct callers wanting to use your telephone to the nearest public phone
- Don't provide personal information to unknown callers
- Hang up on nuisance calls
- Have emergency phone numbers keyed into your phone/s or written clearly near your phone/s
- Have an extension telephone in the bedroom
- Have a strategy that informs neighbours/friends that all is okay
- Know what to do if an intruder is on the property or in the house
- Arrange a signal with your neighbour for problems
- Tell regular visitors of your signal
- Encourage others to report suspicious or unusual activity

Elder abuse

Elder abuse is any behaviour within a relationship of trust that harms an older person. It can happen to anyone, across all ethnic groups, all levels of education and all economic backgrounds. It is estimated that in Queensland about 25,000 older people are abused each year by someone they trust.

Types of abuse

- *Financial mistreatment* - illegal or improper use of a person's money or possessions.
- *Psychological mistreatment* - causing fear or shame, intimidating, humiliating or threatening.
- *Physical mistreatment* - inflicting pain or injury, e.g. hitting, slapping, restraining or over-medicating.
- *Sexual mistreatment* - sexually harassing, assaulting or embarrassing.
- *Social mistreatment* - preventing a person from having social contact with family members or friends.
- *Neglect* - intentional or unintentional failure to provide necessities of life and care.

Why don't we hear more about it?

- It is only recently that elder abuse has been recognised.
- Those who suffer mistreatment are sometimes isolated.
- People might feel ashamed to admit that someone close to them is abusing them.
- Some people might blame themselves for what is happening to them.
- Older people might think that abuse does not happen to others.

- Some people might be afraid of what will happen to them if they tell others about their situation.
- Media stories about elder abuse might influence the way the community views older people.

What contributes to elder abuse?

- Attitudes towards older people by family members and others in the community.
- Increased isolation from others.
- Language and cultural barriers restricting what people know about services or access available to them.
- Family members feeling it's their duty to provide care to ageing parents and their refusal to accept outside help.
- Widening cultural gap between the generations in the family.



- A family member's financial dependence on the older person.
- An abuser's drug or alcohol dependency.
- An older person's dementia contributing to the carer's stress.

What can be done?

- The use of services and community resources is everyone's right, not a charity. Many services assist older people to remain living at home and to retain a quality lifestyle.
- There are organisations and groups that provide assistance to carers.
- Participation of older people in social and educational activities might benefit the whole family and reduce stress, anger and conflict.
- Talking it over with someone you trust, e.g. your doctor.
- Develop a network of people you trust and can talk to about anything.
- Living with the family is not always the best option and separation might improve relationships.
- Not making decisions or signing papers without proper explanation or legal advice.
- Calling police if you are in immediate physical danger.
- When in need, request an accredited interpreter for a confidential service.
- If you have been a victim of elder abuse, you can apply for a protection order at no cost from the Magistrates Court under the *Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989* to protect you against future violence or abuse.

Help and information

- **Elder Abuse Prevention Unit, ph: 1300 651 192**, provides a statewide confidential telephone information, support and referral service for anyone experiencing abuse or witnessing the abuse of an older person. Phone from 9am-5pm, Monday-Friday for the cost of a local call.
- **Victims Counselling and Support Service, ph: 1300 139 703**, provides a range of free support services to victims of crime and their families 24 hours a day.
- **Crime Stoppers, ph: 1800 333 000**, is a 24-hour telephone hotline for members of the public to provide anonymous information about criminal activity.
- **Seniors Enquiry Line, ph: 1300 135 500**, provides information and referrals for seniors on a range of issues.
- **DV Connect** is a 24-hour Domestic Violence contact for men and women. **Women's Line: 1800 811 811, Men's Line: 1800 600 636.**
- **Office of the Adult Guardian, ph: 1300 653 187**, helps people with impaired decision-making capacity by acting as their decision-maker in certain circumstances, being an advocate, and giving advice about decision-making on behalf of adults with impaired capacity. It also investigates allegations of physical and financial neglect or abuse.

When you go on holidays

When you go on vacation, it's a good idea to leave your house looking 'lived in'.

The following checklist will help you reduce the chance of your house being broken into while you're away.

Tick each box when the job has been done.

- Ask a trusted friend or relative to 'house sit' for you while you are away (and you won't need to take any of the following precautions)
- Make sure all windows and doors are locked in your home/garage/shed
- Cancel milk and paper deliveries
- Have your mail collected by a friend or neighbour, or have it held or redirected by the Post Office
- Arrange for someone to remove junk mail, mow your lawn and water plants
- Don't leave a message on your answering machine, or a note on the door, that tells callers you're away
- Turn down your phone's volume so it can't be heard ringing unanswered
- Or consider having your phone diverted to a friend or relative while you're away (contact Telstra for more information)
- Inform police and a trusted neighbour of your absence and leave a contact name and phone number
- Consider using automatic timers on a light, TV or radio to switch on at night

- Leave a few inexpensive laundry items (e.g. towels) on the line
- Leave a key with a trusted neighbour and ask him/her to rearrange blinds etc to make your house look 'lived in'
- Don't leave keys concealed outside the house
- Lock small valuables in a safe or bank safety deposit box
- Use the most secure room in your home to store valuables
- Disconnect the electrical supply on radio-controlled or electronic garage doors and use good-quality locks
- Have your wheelie bin locked away or chained to a post away from windows
- Have a friend, relative or neighbour bring in your wheelie bin after it's been emptied
- Lock away tools, ladders and anything that could be used to get into your house, garage or shed
- Ask a neighbour to park their car in your driveway occasionally to give the impression that someone is coming and going



Be aware of fraud

Seniors are more likely to become victims of fraud than any other crime. Fraud against seniors is most common when goods or services are sold or bought over the telephone or via door-to-door traders.

The best way to avoid being caught by fraud is to be aware - keep informed about the latest con schemes by reading the newspaper, listening to the radio, watching TV and talking to friends.

Also, be sceptical about schemes that sound too good to be true or have to be kept secret.

Common types of fraud

The most common areas for fraud are:

Home construction, building and repairs

- Check the contractor's reputation and for proper identification.
- Check for complaints against the contractor with the Building Services Authority (BSA).
- Obtain estimates from reputable contractors.
- Remember, the cheapest quote may not be the best.
- Never pay for work in advance on small projects, and make sure deposits and progress payments are detailed in the contract for large jobs.
- Never be rushed into signing a contract.
- Contact Home Assist Secure for the names of reputable tradespeople.

Vehicle purchases and mechanical repairs

- Always obtain quotes for repairs.
- Your vehicle manufacturer or the RACQ can advise on how long specific repairs should take.
- If buying a vehicle privately, check with the Register of Encumbered Vehicles (REVS) and the Written-Off Vehicle Register (WOVR) by phoning 3246 1599.
- If you think there's a problem with your purchase or repairs, check with organisations such as the RACQ and the Office of Fair Trading.

Telemarketing

- Many businesses sell products over the phone.
- Reputable direct marketing businesses follow a Code of Practice that restricts calls to between 8am-9pm daily, with no calls on Christmas Day, Good Friday and Easter Sunday.



- Criminals use the same techniques as legitimate companies to sell over the phone.
- Hang up or request more details or documentation if you're unsure about a caller's honesty.
- Don't give them any private information about yourself, your finances or bank details.

Credit cards

Changes in technology are resulting in sophisticated counterfeiting of credit cards. Your best protection is to protect your card.

- Don't leave your cards where other people might see them.
- Report lost or stolen cards immediately.
- Keep a list of all your cards and numbers somewhere safe (not in your wallet or purse).
- Protect your personal identification number (PIN) and always check your monthly statement to make sure there are no purchases, withdrawals or charges you don't know about.

If you are unsure about using a credit card, cheques can be a safer alternative that provide a record of your purchase.

Door-to-door traders

Door-to-door sellers can only call between 9am-6pm Monday to Friday and 9am-5pm on Saturday, unless they have an exemption from the Office of Fair Trading.

If people come to your door offering to perform work, they must provide:

- a written contract if the value of the work is more than \$75, and
- a 10 day cooling off period during which they cannot demand or accept money or commence work.

If you are considering hiring a door-to-door trader:

- do not pay up front
- get more than one quote and get each in writing, and
- demand to see proof of identity.

If the value of the work is more than \$1000, employ only licensed tradespeople registered with the Building Services Authority (BSA) and ask to see their BSA licence card.

Help and information

Fraud

- If you suspect you are a victim of fraud, call **Crime Stoppers, ph: 1800 333 000**. Brochures on fraud and its prevention are available by contacting your local police station or Queensland Police Headquarters on 3364 6464. Information is also available on-line at:
www.police.qld.gov.au/pr/program/fraud/whatis.shtml

Scams and consumer advice

- Contact the **Office of Fair Trading, ph: 1300 658 030** (TTY 3246 1588), for advice on how to deal with a consumer complaint or if you want more information on how to protect yourself from fraud or to identify scams. Fair Trading also has booklets to help you guard against scams. 'ConsumerWise' can be obtained by phoning 1300 658 030 or visiting the web site at:
www.fairtrading.qld.gov.au/oft/oftweb.nsf

Consumers online

- Commonwealth Government consumer information is available from:
www.consumersonline.gov.au
www.scamwatch.gov.au

Supporting safety

The Queensland Government is committed to promoting the confidence and safety of older people. As well as using programs, services and resources that the Government funds to assist seniors, older people can take precautions to protect themselves.

Government initiatives include:

- **Home Assist Secure** provides free information and referrals on home repairs, maintenance, modifications and security. Subsidised help with minor home maintenance repairs and modifications for health, safety and security reasons is also available for eligible clients. Home Assist Secure services are located across Queensland.
For further information, phone the Department of Housing on 1300 880 882.

- **Older Peoples Action Projects** aim to reduce senior Queenslanders' fear of crime and improve their sense of safety and security. They provide information, referral and support for vulnerable seniors at risk of social isolation or elder abuse to help them participate in the community.

Services are based in Brisbane, Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Ipswich, Ayr, Bowen, Maryborough, Rockhampton, Smithfield, Thursday Island, Toowoomba, Torquay and Yarrabah.

For further information, contact the Department of Communities, Office for Seniors on 3224 2625.

- **Safety Audit Program** is a crime prevention initiative that aims to reduce opportunities for crime in public places. It enables the community to identify possible crime sites in public areas and makes recommendations to authorities and owners to prevent or reduce crime.
For further information contact your local police station or the Queensland Police Service, Crime Prevention Unit, on 3234 2111.



DISCLAIMER

Confident, Safe and Secure Living in Queensland has been prepared by the State of Queensland as a community service. While care has been taken to provide sound advice, the handbook should not be used as a substitute for professional security advice.

The Crown in Right of the State of Queensland, its servants and agents will not be held liable for any loss or damage, however so arising, from use of or reliance on the information contained in this handbook.



Queensland Government
Department of Communities