

Media Release

from the fundraising sector

New FIA Code protects the vulnerable

- Guidance for dealing with people in vulnerable circumstances

21 November 2017

Fundraising Institute Australia (FIA) has introduced measures in its new Code to protect people in vulnerable circumstances.

The Code says: “Members will not accept a Donation where they have a reasonable belief that the Donor is in vulnerable circumstances or lacks capacity to make a decision to Donate.”¹

“As our population ages and more people with disabilities are enabled by modern medicine to live at home rather than in healthcare facilities, a greater onus is placed on fundraisers to demonstrate care and sensitivity in contacting them,” said Rob Edwards, CEO of FIA. “It is far better for us to be tackling these issues as a sector and pursuing effective self-regulatory solutions rather than waiting for a regulator to intervene.”

“The ACNC welcomes the FIA’s new Code which will help ensure fundraising organisations conduct ethical, accountable and transparent fundraising. It is important for fundraisers to be able to recognise people in vulnerable circumstances and act ethically and responsibly when engaging them. Charity boards should ensure they have good fundraising practices in place as part of running a well-governed, accountable organisation,” said Acting ACNC Commissioner Murray Baird.

FIA has also introduced a Practice Note as well as web-based training to help members identify and respond appropriately when a donor appears to be in vulnerable circumstances. The Practice Note contains information on identifying and managing people in vulnerable circumstances encountered during fundraising activity.

https://www.fia.org.au/data/People_in_Vulnerable_Circumstances_Practice_Note.pdf

The FIA Code Authority is monitoring member compliance with the Code using ‘mystery shopping’ and will respond to any complaints of breach. A range of sanctions is available according to the seriousness of non-compliance.

¹ FIA Code clause 4.7. <https://www.fia.org.au/pages/fia-code.html>

About Fundraising Institute Australia (FIA)

With over 1500 members, Fundraising Institute Australia is the largest representative body for the \$12.5 billion charitable and not-for-profit fundraising sector, which is supported by some 14.9 million Australians. FIA members include charities operating domestically and internationally as well as organisations and professionals that provide services to them. FIA advocates for the interests of the sector, administers a self-regulatory Code, educates fundraising practitioners, promotes research and creates forums for the exchange of knowledge and ideas.

BACKGROUND

In 2015, FIA was contacted by (then) Communications Minister Malcolm Turnbull expressing his concern about the conduct of some fundraisers towards people in vulnerable circumstances, particularly people with dementia, intellectual disability or other mental health issues who are not in a position to make an informed decision about whether to give a donation. FIA responded by establishing a Sustainability Taskforce to examine sector practices and propose changes to self-regulation. The Taskforce found that, with the population ageing, there is a growing risk that people in vulnerable circumstances may unintentionally be contacted by a fundraiser. It concluded that reducing the number of mailings, phone calls and other forms of charitable appeals to people in vulnerable circumstances is important to the long-term sustainability of the sector.

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