

Fundraising from Vulnerable People

Introduction

The following policy is based on **Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Fundraising: people in vulnerable circumstances Guidelines dated October 2016**

How a CFWA conducts its fundraising is an important part of a successful strategy and is crucial to its reputation. CFWA's fundraising practices should be consistent with the values of the organisation, and should always treat donors and potential donors fairly and respectfully.

People in vulnerable circumstances

Not all people are able to make a confident, informed choice about donating to charity. Some people may not have the capacity to make such decisions, some may be in a vulnerable position, and others may require extra support or care.

CFWA should be aware of people's vulnerabilities and take steps to ensure that their fundraising practices do not target or exploit people in such circumstances.

The extent to which a person's capacity to make a decision about donating is reduced will depend on their particular circumstances. Some people in vulnerable circumstances may still be capable of making an informed decision if they have extra care and support.

Having the capacity to make a decision to donate to charity means that a person is able to, either alone or with support, fully understand the information presented to them, carefully.

How do you identify people in vulnerable circumstances?

Understandably, it can be difficult to detect vulnerability when asking people to donate to charity, particularly when the interaction is not face to face. Individual capacity to make a decision depends on a range of factors and some are more obvious than others. However, charity fundraisers should be aware of some of the common signs of vulnerability, and act with considerable care when interacting with people who may be in vulnerable circumstances.

Common signs that a person may be in a vulnerable circumstance can include:

1. A lack of comprehension of what is being said

2. Continually asking for statements or questions to be repeated
3. Making statements that indicate others look after their affairs (for example, “my son/daughter normally looks after these matters for me”)
4. Responses that indicate the person does not fully understand the language being spoken
5. Any expressions of being uncomfortable, stressed or anxious
6. Irrational, confusing or erratic responses to simple statements or questions
7. Excuses to not talk or interact
8. A reliance on the immediate care or support of a charity, and
9. Eagerness to donate (sometimes large sums of money) without sufficient knowledge of the cause or without asking the types of questions a regular donor would in the same situation.

Charities should be aware of the signs of vulnerability and not seek donations from people who appear to not have the capacity to make informed decisions about donating.

Consider the information and the consequences of their decision, and communicate their decision clearly.

How should CFWA fundraisers interact with people in vulnerable circumstances?

Not all fundraising activities are the same, and different forms of fundraising may be subject to different laws in different jurisdictions. For example, telephone fundraising, email campaigns and face-to-face street collecting are all subject to different regulations.

How charity fundraisers should respond to the needs of people in vulnerable circumstances will depend on the nature of the activity and the interaction. However, there are some steps that charity fundraisers should take to ensure they are treating people in vulnerable circumstances fairly regardless of the type of fundraising activity:

- Speak clearly, slowly and use terms that the person can understand
- Make it clear who the fundraiser is and for which charity they are collecting
- Repeat important pieces of information, particularly the consequences of a decision to donate
- As the interaction progresses, check that the person understands and is happy to continue
- Do not put pressure on the person to make a donation, politely accept any refusals to donate without reservation
- Ask the person if they need to consult someone else about the decision
- If seeking substantial gifts or bequests, provide an opportunity for the donor to seek advice
- Provide the person with relevant information and options for donating later so they can consider their decision in their own time.

If a charity fundraiser reasonably thinks that a potential donor may be in vulnerable circumstances and not able to make a confident and informed decision to donate at the time of the interaction, it is important that they **do not accept the donation**. In situations such as this, a charity fundraiser should allow the person some time to think about the donation and provide a way for them to contact the charity later with a decision. 5

If a charity learns that a donation has been made by a vulnerable person without informed consent, CFWA will refund the donation to the original donor only.

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