



Dear Sean,

## FIA Addresses Vulnerable Donor Issue

FIA is taking a proactive lead in addressing the emerging vulnerable donor issue which has caused major problems for the sector in the UK.

Last week in Sydney 20 FIA members and staff were invited by the Federal Department of Communications and the Arts to a meeting on **Protecting Vulnerable Australians: Telemarketing Fundraising by Charities**.



The meeting follows a letter to FIA last year by then Communications Minister Malcolm Turnbull detailing complaints from the family of an 88-year old, and letters from the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) to a number of charities about a range of telemarketing complaints.

As members who received the ACMA letter will be aware, the regulator focused on the charity exemption from the Do Not Call Register (DNCR).

From the outset, and at the meeting, FIA stressed that successfully addressing the issue of vulnerable donors was broader than both the DNCR and the charity exemption. This was recognised with the inclusion of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) and the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) at the meeting.

On behalf of the sector, I presented on **Current Fundraising Practices**.

It was stressed that although the level of complaints in Australia was very low in comparison to the total number of calls made by charities, FIA is taking the issue very seriously and proposed to:

- Review its existing [Standard of Charitable Telemarketing Fundraising Practice](#), and
- Examine the UK Institute of Fundraising's [Guidance for Fundraisers: Responding to the Needs of People in Vulnerable Circumstances and Helping Donors Make Informed Decisions](#) for possible application in Australia.

Senior Department of Communications official Rohan Buettel said that the Government was concerned about telemarketing by charities to vulnerable Australians and listed the possible responses as:

- Self-regulation
- An ACMA code
- Legislative changes
- Reversal of the DNCR exemption for charities

In conclusion he said that reversal of the exemption would be like 'taking a sledgehammer to crack a nut' and it was to be hoped that a lower level solution could be found in the first instance.

The meeting was also told that the Telemarketing Industry Standards which regulate timing and conduct of calls is due for review by ACMA next year and the OAIC is in the process of drafting guidance which will be relevant to this area.

**Vulnerable donors are becoming an active issues management area for FIA and members will be kept**

informed on an ongoing basis. The positive involvement of members has been key to FIA's proactive approach.

Kind regards,

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