



Elka's Story

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A history of family conflict

Elka is an 85-year old Greek woman whose husband passed away 12 months ago. She has six adult children and many grandchildren. She has close connections with her local church and Greek community. However, her access to activities and support has been restricted due to the impact of COVID 19 restrictions.

Following the death of her husband she had a stroke and as a result has some physical impairments which impact some of her daily activities, although she manages to live independently in her own home.

Whilst English is her second language she communicates well in English. A Greek interpreter was initially engaged in meetings to assist with communication, however once a relationship was developed, she was comfortable communicating in English.

Elka has good relationships with her children, however there is a long history of conflict between the siblings and their partners, some relating to family business interests and bad decisions made in the past. This has been of concern to Elka at times.

One of Elka's sons has significant mental health issues and has a history of gambling. This has also been a source of conflict in the family which causes Elka some distress. He recently pressured Elka into lending him a significant amount of money (\$50,000) which has left her in a financially vulnerable position.

As a result of COVID 19, one of her grandsons lost his job, was unable to pay his rent and was at risk of homelessness. He moved in with Elka as she had a spare room. Initially all went well, however he started

to take over her home. He did not listen to her requests to stop this behaviour or respect her way of living. This included him disregarding her religious practices, coming and going at all hours, and not complying with COVID19 restrictions.

All of this was causing a great deal of stress and anxiety for Elka and her family was concerned that she was becoming reclusive and depressed.

Process

Elka was referred to Better Place Australia by her daughter for support, advocacy and to assist with managing the conflict in her family.

The Family Consultant worked with Elka to clarify her wishes and to identify a plan moving forward. Elka expressly stated that she wanted her grandson to move out and for her to regain her independence and live alone in her own home.

She also wanted to discuss the repayment of the loan with her son and look at options for retrieving the money.

Financial counselling: A referral was made for a Financial Counsellor to assist Elka with her financial situation and determine her financial literacy. Following this and in discussion with the Family Consultant, it became apparent that Elka would need legal and advocacy support to assist her in negotiations with her son regarding the return of her money.

The Family Consultant worked with family and community members and police to assist with the removal of her grandson and ensured her safety throughout the process.

Outcome

Elka's grandson moved out of her home with support of family and police and this occurred when Elka was not at home. He was helped to identify alternative accommodation and supported with employment options through referrals to an alternative agency.

Family meeting: Elka was referred to a community legal service who were able to support her in retrieving money from her son. Following their involvement, the Family Consultant arranged a family meeting to discuss a planned approach for repayment with agreement from her son and support from other family members.

Counselling Support: Elka was provided with counselling support (via the Family Consultant) was able to reengage with some of her religious and community activities and reported to feel stronger and less depressed.

About Better Place Australia

[Better Place Australia](#) is a not-for-profit agency in Australia that has been providing family dispute resolution support, relationship support, psychological services, and financial counselling for over thirty-five years.

With over 23 locations, Better Place Australia offers a range of conflict and support services for older people and their families, providing psychological services through the Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACFs) to support the mental health needs of residents, and the Respecting Elders Elder Abuse services, Barwon Orange Door support and conflict resolution services.

To find out more about the Respecting Elders Support Service, please contact: [1800 214 117](tel:1800214117) or email respectingelders@betterplace.com.au