

CASE STUDY

FINANCIAL ABUSE OF OLDER PEOPLE

Case study twelve: Isolation from assets, entitlement, and revenge

Source: CPA Australia member

Albert was approaching 78 and is a widower. He has farmed all his life and he and his wife had seven children, four boys and three girls. As well as being a farmer, Albert had been an entrepreneur, and in his prime he had established a land drainage business which had grown to be a substantial concern. He had also been a very strict father and, when younger, his children had feared him.

Retiring from full time employment at age 70 Albert had sought to make provision for the future of all his children. He had left the girls a sum of money in his will. He had divested the drainage business to three of his sons, one of whom subsequently sold his share to other two and moved to the city. Only his youngest son John, who still lived at home, wanted to continue in farming.

The farming business was struggling due to many years of drought, competition from imported food and the stranglehold on the fruit and vegetable market exercised by the major supermarkets. The government was offering assistance, but a condition of the assistance was that the applicant had to own the farm freehold or leasehold, and be farming it themselves. Albert decided that he would divest the farm, including the farmhouse, to his youngest son. There was an implicit understanding, according to Albert, that he would continue to live on the farm for the remainder of his life.

John had not been married at the time of the arrangement, but he did have a girlfriend, Theresa, who was a teacher at the local school. Theresa had been married before and had an eleven year old son. Some two years after assuming ownership of the farm, John married Theresa. For some reason there seemed to be tension between Theresa and Albert, so rather than have her move in at the farm, John leased a house in the town. A year later John and Theresa had a baby daughter.

BE HEARD.
BE RECOGNISED.



Theresa had always wanted to live on a farm and, over time, she complained that the house in town was too small for the family. She repeatedly pressured John to have Albert leave the farm so their family could move in. It makes sense, she insisted, since John was there every day anyway. In addition, the farmhouse was too large for Albert. He would be better off renting in the town.

John initially withstood the pressure, but he had never really felt close to his father. When Theresa gave him an ultimatum that she would leave if it wasn't resolved, John demanded that Albert leave the farm.

Now with minimal assets of his own, alone and well over eighty years old, Albert was confused and frightened.

- Had you been Albert's accountant at the time he divested his businesses, how would you have advised him?
- How would you advise him now?

BE HEARD.
BE RECOGNISED.

