

April edition 2005

Welcome to the latest edition of *Our Community Matters*, our regular free community update. It is yet another benefit of membership of www.ourcommunity.com.au - the premier destination for Australia's 700,000 community, education and non-profit groups. Ourcommunity.com.au provides community groups with the latest funding and fundraising news as well as practical management, board, marketing and community business partnership information.

Our Community also operates the [Australian Giving Centre](#), the free online donation service that has so far raised more than \$4 million for Australian community appeals.

A summary of our services is listed at the end of this newsletter. If you have trouble reading this newsletter or have any comments please let us know at brianw@ourcommunity.com.au.

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1. Welcome by Rhonda Galbally AO, CEO of [ourcommunity.com.au](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au)

Welcome to Our Community Matters.

Stand up and tell the world (well at least 1500 people) how good your group is

Since our inception, Our Community has always been about producing the resources to help community organisations, and particularly those small community participation groups. to be the best possible group they can be.

Well now we are trying to find the group that has put that information to the test and wants to let the rest of the world know how good they are – and why.

In short, we are trying to find the 2005 Community Idol – the community group that stands out from the pack and is a great example of all that is good in inclusive, participative, innovative groups.

So I am calling on all the groups who think they fit the mould as a Community Idol to enter this competition and explain why they should be crowned the Community Idol. A representatives of each of the three groups judged as finalists will be interviewed at the Communities in Control conference by well-known ABC radio and television presenter James O’Loughlin and the winning group will be presented at the end of the conference with the award and \$3000 in cash.

It should be a lot of fun so enter your group now. There is more information below or entry forms can be found at www.ourcommunity.com.au/communityidol.

Conference filling up.

We have had an extraordinary response to the Communities in Control conference (Melbourne, June 6-7, 2005) and I urge anyone who stills want to attend not to waste too much time in booking a spot or yet again you will miss out. (Bookings for the conference are already way ahead of where they were at the same time last year).

The response is a great stamp of approval for both the line-up of speakers and also for the Communities in Control concept. Many of those who have booked attended last year or have been convinced by someone who did to see for themselves. Word of mouth is a powerful force in the world of community.

Visit www.ourcommunity.com.au/control/control_main.jsp for a copy of the conference program or to find out more about the list of presenters for the conference and the Boards day.

I look forward to seeing you there.

Looking for new Board members? Put your request online.

We’ve had a great response to the launch of the new Boards, Committees and Governance Centre, a fantastic addition to our website that is devoted entirely to not-for-profit governance.

The Centre is at www.ourcommunity.com.au/boards.

Two of the most popular sections of this part of the website have been the Policy Bank (see article further on) and the Board Matching Service, which is a free service that enables community groups to post their Board and Committee vacancies online. Motivated individuals who are interested in the vacancy will then provide you with details about their skills and suitability.

One of the major difficulties of community groups I meet about the place is in finding great new members for their boards and committees so I would like to encourage everyone to use this new service.

It is a very easy process – just go to www.ourcommunity.com.au/board-match, click on the “Post a Board Position” button and fill in your group’s details and information about your board or committee vacancy.

RHONDA GALBALLY AO
Chief Executive Officer

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2. Could your group be the first Australian Community (Group) Idol?

Do you think your community group is a leader in its field?

Well if it is then you should consider entering your group in the first ever Australian Community Idol award being run in conjunction with the Communities in Control conference.

The group named as the 2005 Australian Community Group Idol will receive prize money of \$3000 as well as a full set of Our Community books valued at over \$360 and a year's subscription to our series of monthly and quarterly newsletters. The two other finalists will also receive the package of books and newsletters.

We are encouraging groups to get better at identifying the elements that are great about their group and to "sing" about their successes in managing an innovative, forward-thinking, inclusive and vibrant group that raises the bar on how community groups should operate.

Part of being able to convince funding agencies, donors, sponsors, members and supporters is being able to succinctly and enthusiastically tell the world what is great about your group.

So enter the Community Idol contest and nominate your own group now

As well as being incorporated and having been in existence for more than two years, each group will need to explain how it:

- Promotes accessibility and equal participation in your community
- Has built a dynamic Board or committee of management
- Has pursued excellence in fundraising
- Has worked with local business to develop genuine community business partnerships
- Has shown leadership and advocacy
- Has a track record of community work that makes it stand out from the pack

A group of eminent community leaders will select the three finalists who will appear at the Communities in Control conference where they will be interviewed by ABC television and radio broadcaster James O'Loughlin on what it is that makes their group special. (One representative from each of the three groups named as finalists will be flown (if interstate) to Melbourne for the conference.

The conference delegates representing the community sector from across Australia will then vote on the group they think is the 2005 Community Idol.

It is not about the biggest or the best resourced group but about how your group is leading the way in providing for your community.

Entries close on May 16, 2005. The three finalists will be advised by phone before the end of May.

To apply online or to download a hardcopy application form, please visit the site at www.ourcommunity.com.au/communityidol.

And keep in mind that if you wanted to attend the Communities in Control conference then book now because places are filling very quickly. There are already nearly 700 people who have paid up to attend the conference which looks set to be another sell-out this year.

The conference, titled *Imagine: A health Future. Imagine: Where Communities are in control*, will again be held at the Moonee Valley Racecourse in Melbourne on **June 6-7, 2005** with a special Boards and committees capacity-building day on **Sunday, June 5, 2005**.

Conference speakers include 2005 Pratt International Fellow and City of Vancouver CEO, Ms Judy Rogers, who was awarded a United Nations award for innovation for her community-building efforts, High Court judge, Justice Michael Kirby, Geraldine Doogue and Michelle Grattan, Dick Estens, Barry Jones, Rick Farley, ABS boss Dennis Trewin, Robert Manne and Clover Moore among others.

To book for the conference, the special Boards day (or both), visit www.ourcommunity.com.au/control/control_main.jsp or call Steve Moriarty on (03) 9320 6811.

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3. High time for insurers to pass on lower prices to community groups – survey.

Has your group experienced a drop in your public liability insurance premium in the past year?

If the answer is no, you are not alone. Not many groups have seen their premiums fall according to the findings of an Our Community survey of the impact of the public liability insurance reforms on community groups.

The survey found that the vast majority of groups had either experienced a price hike or their premiums had remained unchanged despite legislative reforms aimed at reducing the cost for groups.

It is a disappointing result given the fact that all State Governments have enacted legislation over the past two years that the insurance industry said was necessary to produce an environment that would result in lower premiums.

The State Governments have done their bit. The community groups have had to spend more time and effort addressing the issue of risk management to create a safer environment.

Now the time is ripe for the insurance industry to do the right thing by community groups and immediately start offering substantially lower premiums at prices that actually reflect the low level of risks posed by the non-profit sector.

We have included the release that went out last week and we have used the results to advocate for changes to the way the monitoring system is being run. Business may well be experiencing price falls but few of the smaller and most vulnerable groups seemed to have shared the benefits.

While this survey was restricted to one state, we are considering running another survey Australia-wide in six months time to see if insurers have responded.

The survey also showed, as did our original survey of over 1000 groups around Australia in 2002, that groups actually pose a very, very low risk for insurers.

Here is the release that went out.

INSURERS are failing to pass onto community groups the windfall gains brought by public liability insurance legislative reforms, an Our Community survey of Victorian groups has found.

The survey conducted by www.ourcommunity.com.au found that 92 per cent of the community groups had not experienced any drop in insurance premium prices over the past two years.

In fact 62 per cent of respondents to the survey said their insurance premiums had risen while 30 per cent reported they had not changed.

Almost a quarter (23 per cent) said premiums had risen by more than 20 per cent.

Only eight per cent of respondents reported a fall in the cost of their public liability insurance premiums – a finding which is at odds with claims by insurers and the ACCC that premiums had dropped by an average 15-17 per cent.

The survey also found that more than 94 per cent of the 275 groups in the survey had not had a claim against them in the past five years, mirroring a similar result in an Our Community survey of over 1000 groups in 2002.

Other findings included:

- Only 8 per cent of the groups did not have any insurance – which was down from 17 per cent at the height of the public liability crisis in 2002.
- One in 10 groups said they had been forced to curtail or cancel some form of activities or events as a result of not being able to obtain or afford insurance.
- A further 12 per cent of respondents have amalgamated or joined with other groups due to problems associated with insurance in the past four years.
- 93 per cent of the groups who responded to the survey had been in operation for more than five years with 84 per cent in existence for more than 10 years.
- 30 per cent of groups survived on less than \$5000 a year with a further 29 per cent having income of between \$5000-25,000.

The survey unearthed one group running a country show in existence since 1886 which saw their quote for insurance costs rise from \$467 to over \$1100 this year. They are currently uninsured.

Dr Rhonda Galbally AO, the CEO of ourcommunity.com.au, said it was high time the insurance industry shared the windfall gains they had won through legislative reforms.

Dr Galbally said the Victorian Government had led the way in dealing with the public liability insurance crisis and providing risk management information and support for community groups across the State. The Government was instrumental in developing the Community Group Insurance scheme, run by the Municipal Association of Victoria and Jardine Lloyd Thompson, which had provided coverage for hundreds of festivals, events and community groups that were unable to access affordable cover from other insurers.

"The Victorian Government – indeed all Governments – provided the legislative reforms. The insurance industry has been quick to reap the rewards but as this survey shows, they have been slower in passing on the full benefits to community groups," Dr Galbally said.

"The Government has acted and now it is time for the insurance industry to deliver lower premiums that truly reflect the low level of risk posed by community groups."

Dr Galbally said the survey showed that the price monitoring by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission needed to be changed so that the results distinguished between the community and business sectors.

"When community groups are paying up to half their annual income in public liability insurance they get pretty annoyed listening to the insurance industry telling them that everything is fine," she said.

"The insurers are enjoying booming share prices and record profits. It's time they stopped charging community groups so much for their public liability insurance."

If you have any thoughts or experiences on the public liability insurance issue please email Patrick Moriarty at patrickm@ourcommunity.com.au.

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4. Make a withdrawal (and deposit) at the Policy Bank.

To survive and thrive, an organisation needs inspiration and a strong view of where it's going – but it also needs some signposts to help provide direction and to keep everyone on the same path.

Putting in place policies and procedures can go a long way to providing those signposts.

So it is probably not surprising that the [Policy Bank](#) is emerging as one of the most popular sections of the new Boards, Committees and Governance Centre at www.ourcommunity.com.au/policybank.

Policies and procedures are designed to guide Board and Committee members, as well as staff and volunteers, in their conduct and decision-making.

They spell out the organisation's standards and – importantly – who is responsible for what, helping to ensure greater consistency and transparency.

The Policy Bank is a free resource, providing model documents and templates that can be downloaded and adapted to suit the needs of your own organisation. While each organisation might have different issues or priorities, these documents provide a framework that groups can build their policies around.

It is a living resource and more and more policies will be added as time goes on (read on for details about how you can contribute) but community groups already have close to 30 great human resources policies to choose from.

The policies, which are listed under eight different topic headings, have been contributed free of charge by global management consulting firm **Accenture** – an illustration of the company's strong commitment to Australian community groups and to using their own expertise in the area of human resource management to assist as many groups as possible.

Examples include:

- **Equal Employment Opportunity** – ensuring all decisions relating to employment are based on merit and that the organisation complies with all of its legal obligations in this respect.

Visit www.ourcommunity.com.au/boards/boards_article.jsp?articleid=1453#5

- **Grievance and Dispute Resolution** – providing advice on the preferred process for resolution of grievances raised by employees and volunteers.
Visit www.ourcommunity.com.au/files/boards/grievance.doc
- **Recruitment Policies** – outlining processes for selecting personnel, and procedures for induction of new employees/volunteers.
Visit www.ourcommunity.com.au/boards/boards_article.jsp?articleid=1453#7
- **Retirement, Dismissal, Resignation and Redundancy** – providing processes for appropriate staff/volunteer recognition and treatment in the event of “separation”.
Visit www.ourcommunity.com.au/boards/boards_article.jsp?articleid=1453#8
- **Staff Performance** – policies and procedures relating to staff/volunteer annual performance reviews, performance management and disciplinary procedures.
Visit www.ourcommunity.com.au/boards/boards_article.jsp?articleid=1453#6
- **Long Service, Annual, Unpaid, Compassionate, Parental and Sick Leave** – detailing entitlements, eligibility and procedures for claiming.
Visit www.ourcommunity.com.au/boards/boards_article.jsp?articleid=1453#4
- **Occupational Health and Safety** – spelling out responsibilities of staff and volunteers in relation to providing and maintaining a safe working environment that is without risk to health.
Visit www.ourcommunity.com.au/boards/boards_article.jsp?articleid=1453#5

Your community group can contribute to this growing body of knowledge by sending us your own policies and procedures so we can share them with others (a list of the sort of documents we’re looking for is provided [here](#)).

You can email your policies to kathyr@ourcommunity.com.au, fax to (03) 9326 6859 or post to Kathy Richardson.

And don’t forget.

The Board, Committees & Governance Centre at www.ourcommunity.com.au/boards also features:

- **The Resource Centre** – comprising dozens of free help sheets providing practical, jargon-free information about how people can join or improve a community group Board or Committee.
- **How-To Guides** – information about Our Community’s range of easy-to-read governance handbooks.
- **Seminars & Workshops** – upcoming training for Victorian not-for-profit Boards and Committees, organised as part of the Victorian on Boards project.
- **Business on Boards** – a comprehensive resource to help guide companies wishing to engage with their communities by encouraging staff to join a community group Board.
- **Consultants’ Register** – a free listing of not-for-profit Board experts – who they are and how to contact them.
- **Diversity on Boards** – comprising help sheets, links and other resources that can help your Board to meet the diversity challenge and enrich your decision-making process.

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5. Know what’s happening in your backyard – New ABS stats provide help

Last year in this newsletter we told all our members about a fantastic new service on the Australian Bureau of Statistics website that provided a statistical breakdown of information for each local government area or statistical area across Australia.

The hard facts and figures are a great resource for groups preparing funding applications, submissions or even to inform their media and marketing campaigns.

Well now the service has been extended so that community groups and individuals can now easily access five years of key economic and social information about their local area at no cost from the one location – the ABS website which you can get to by clicking www.ourcommunity.com.au/abs.

The ABS has expanded its **National Regional Profile** (NRP) to provide five years of data, spanning 1999 to 2003. It has also added indicators, including sources of income, motor vehicle sales, and the value of agricultural production.

Andrea Woods of the ABS Rural and Regional Statistics National Centre said that with the click of a button, people can get a picture of their local area through the NRP including population, births and deaths, unemployment, income support customers, taxable income, wage and salary earners, building approvals, sources of income and motor vehicle sales.

"People and organisations who need a snapshot of their local region now have access to more information and are able to see changes in their region over time. They also can compare their local area to other regions.

"The new profiles are available for most regions from Local Government Area up to national level."

ABS developed the NRP in response to requests for more accessible information on regions. It is intended that more indicators will be added in the future, to make the profiles even more comprehensive.

To download the statistical information from your local area, visit www.ourcommunity.com.au/abs and click on the map of Australia on the right hand side of the screen.

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6. Research supports need for trust, transparency and openness.

Trust, transparency and feedback have emerged as important factors in giving attitudes among Australian individuals and businesses, according to preliminary findings of Federal Government research into the nation's philanthropy.

The preliminary findings of the research report - *Giving Australia: Research on Philanthropy in Australia* – have also shown there is a strong expectation by businesses in both rural and urban areas of Australia that they should support their community.

The preliminary findings of the project, initiated by the Prime Minister's Community Business Partnership (PMCBP), have been drawn from interviews and focus group discussions right across Australia - with interview subjects a mix of individuals, businesses and non profits.

Those undertaking the project – a mix of seven research and education bodies led by ACOSS – are about halfway through the project's interviews and focus group discussions. Among the key preliminary findings of the project are:

- **Trust is important and may be declining.** Trust in the charity or nonprofit sector for potential donors was highlighted as being important - trust that the money is going where charities say it is and trust that money will not be wasted on what is considered unnecessary expenses.
- **Givers don't like aggressive marketing.** Givers are feeling intruded upon by non-government organisations: they all detest what they perceive to be aggressive and pushy attempts to get donations. Telemarketing has been identified as the "number one enemy" – with individual givers expressing a strong dislike for unsolicited calls by "organisations for causes with which they have no affinity".
- **Feedback for giving and volunteering is rare but is reinforcing.** In giving, individuals wanted to know their donation had made a difference – but they often did not receive feedback on this. Givers also felt that volunteer recognition and "seeing their contribution made a difference" were also very important.
- **Business felt non profits needed to be more transparent and accountable.** Businesses said there had been an erosion of trust by business – especially larger small-medium enterprises - that money given would be used for its stated purpose. Many business givers felt this loss of confidence affected the wider community and "pulled back" the amount people were willing to donate.
- **Businesses felt non profits should give relevant feedback.** Many businesses surveyed wanted more information on how their contributions were helping, but received little information back from non profits.
- **"Giving stress"- requests for giving cannot always be met.** Givers are feeling overwhelmed with the number of organisations asking for their money and they feel bad that they cannot support them all.

- **Businesses “inundated” with requests to help.** While businesses said they were genuinely interested in helping community organisations, there was a strong feeling they were being inundated with written requests and phone calls – and were struggling to manage these. This has given rise to calls for ‘best practice’ guidelines for corporate giving and for fewer ‘cold calls’ by nonprofits.
- **Non profits need to strengthen the whole organisation, not just finances.** The research has found a belief among non profits that strengthening their capacity is about strengthening the whole organisation, not just the finances.
- **Non profits felt compliance issues could often be a drain on resources, and that donors and governments were “reluctant” to fund infrastructure.** The latter issue was seen as a real obstacle in non profits’ struggle for sustainability.

Visit www.partnerships.gov.au/pdf/prelim_qual_findings.pdf for a copy of the preliminary findings.

Following on from our piece in the last newsletter, the Giving Project has been given extra funding to take into account the impact of the Tsunami appeals on giving in Australia.

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7. Boost your media profile by using the Marketing, Media & Post Centre.

One of the toughest tasks for community groups is knowing what it is about their group and what they are doing that would interest other people in the community – and more importantly – interest the local media in reporting it.

We all love to read about what is happening in our geographic or interest area but we constantly hear complaints from some groups that another organisation is always featured in the media and their work is overlooked.

The simple answer is usually that the group that is featured in the local newspaper or on the radio or television is more adept at packaging up what they are doing in a form that is interesting to the media and the public.

There are a number of free Help Sheets available on the new Marketing, Media & Post Centre (www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketingmediapostcentre), a new initiative that we have been able to develop with the fantastic support of Australia Post.

A number of the help sheets deal with preparing a media strategy and developing a press release. Even community groups that have excellent relationships with local media will prepare a media release as an exercise in determining the key points of interest.

A media release helps to tighten the message and focus on the important elements. Those who are in the habit of writing releases also tend to be better able to communicate their group’s achievements to the public. You can’t assume that because you know what is going on in your group, everyone else knows. You need to be able to explain it simply in a language the rest of the community can understand.

That’s not to say every media release gets run because there is just too much competition but at least you are ahead of the pack.

Here are some tips to help with your next release.

- Prepare for writing the release by writing down all the most important points that you want to get across. Then place them in descending order from most important to least important.
- Consider what is the angle or point of difference that makes your story “news” to other people. What will they be most interested in? What is unique or different?
- Write the first couple of paragraphs, ensuring you answer the main questions: WHO? WHAT? WHERE? WHEN? and WHY? And then go onto explain HOW.
- If this is proving difficult, go back and see if you need to refine your message.
- Write the rest of your release, continuing to put the major points in order of importance.
- Keep your release short. Use plain, clear and simple language and avoid jargon or expressions people outside your group would not understand.
- Include quotes from your group’s spokesperson (president/director etc). Include their contact

details so people can chase up further information.

- Think of a snappy headline that has a bit of kick and grabs the attention of the reader and encourages them to read on.
- Before you send it out, check over it to make sure that it answers WHO? WHAT? WHERE? WHEN? And WHY? Also check to ensure your contact details are included and are correct.
- The next step is then to send out to the relevant media outlets that they are targeting.

Visit www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketingmediapostcentre for more information on preparing a media release.

And don't forget....

The centre also features a free listing of metropolitan, suburban and regional media outlets to make it easier for you to contact the most relevant media organisation once you have prepared your release.

To find the directory of media organisations in your state or territory visit:

VIC: www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing_article.jsp?articleId=1527
NSW: www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing_article.jsp?articleId=1524
SA: www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing_article.jsp?articleId=1528
ACT: www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing_article.jsp?articleId=1531
WA: www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing_article.jsp?articleId=1530
TAS: www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing_article.jsp?articleId=1526
NT: www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing_article.jsp?articleId=1529
QLD: www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing_article.jsp?articleId=1525

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8. Tell the world about your successful community business partnership.

Community groups wanting to sing about their successful relationship with a business partner should be preparing their entries for the 2005 Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Community Business Partnerships.

This year marks the seventh year of the awards, designed to "recognise excellence in partnerships between business and the community". Since the award's inception in 1999, more than 1000 partnerships have been nominated.

Community business partnerships can be nominated for awards in a number of categories, including those involving small, medium and large businesses in each state and territory of Australia. Multi-state awards may also be presented to successful partnerships operating in more than one state.

In addition, special awards will be presented for:

- The business that, through its partnership, has had the greatest positive impact on its community.
- The media organisation that has most prominently and positively reported on community business partnerships and corporate social responsibility; and.
- An outstanding partnership that has been operating for more than five years.

Nominations are now open for the awards. Community groups and businesses can only nominate using the official nomination form. The nomination needs to be accompanied by a good explanation of the partnership, addressing the relevant selection criteria (in most cases there are just three criteria).

The nominations do not need to be elaborate or professionally produced because, when short-listing, the judges concentrate on your explanation of the partnership not the presentation of the document.

There are different nomination forms for different award categories, with the forms available for download at this address: http://www.partnerships.gov.au/awards/awards_2005.shtml).

Nominations close on May 6, with State and Territory winners in the small, medium and large categories announced in late August. Special Awards and national award winners will be announced at a dinner in Melbourne around mid October.

Take 2 - And now for the 2004 winners....

The winners of the 2004 Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Community Business Partnerships will be announced on April 13. This announcement and the awards dinner was delayed by last year's election.

Take 3 - And if you want to start preparing now for the 2006 awards.

If your community organisation doesn't have a successful community business partnership but would like to know how to get started, the best step you can take is to visit the Community Business Partnerships Brokerage Service at www.ourcommunity.com.au/partnerships.

In fact for those groups that are strangers to working with business, the best step is **Step One – the essential facts you must know about community business partnerships.**

Visit www.ourcommunity.com.au/files/essential_facts_business.pdf to download the free 23-page starter's guide.

Take 4 – Publicise your Community Business Partnership online.

Our Community is further expanding its services in the area of Community Business Partnerships and we will soon be producing a listing and further Case Studies of Community Business Partnerships. Does your community group have business partnership? Who is it with? How has it been successful?

Tell us in a few words who it is with and what are you doing. If you could email chrisr@ourcommunity.com.au with those details – the sooner you do it – the greater chance to give some publicity to your business partner –and a great chance to keep the business partner.

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9. BRW says the non-profit sector worth \$70 billion.

While the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates the community sector spends about \$29 billion a year, a recent investigation by the BRW magazine estimates the figure is closer to \$70 billion.

The investigation found that churches alone generated almost \$23 billion in 2004, with the Catholic Church turning over almost two-thirds of that.

The BRW list of 200 charities adds up to an estimated \$22.8 billion, not including clubs, which are worth at least another \$8.8 billion, and health funds at \$7.5 billion. The top five churches alone turned over \$21.7 billion in 2004 according to the report.

RSL Care was the largest non-religious community group with total revenue of \$600 million, ranking it the ninth largest charity of all.

Australian Red Cross was in 17th place on the table with total revenue of \$374.5 million, while World Vision Australia was 28th with \$234.4 million.

The magazine said that the size of the industry had grown as the Federal Government had outsourced more and more welfare service delivery to the major charities although it said the level of transparency and accountability had not grown at the same rate. It called for clear and consistent standards of reporting across the sector to improve transparency and accountability.

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10. Community Briefs

Media training coming up.

For those community organisations who have soaked up the information from the Marketing, Media & Post Centre (www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketingmediapostcentre) and are looking for some extra advice from media and marketing experts from around the country, keep an eye out for the next round of Media Team Australia workshops.

Media Team Australia (www.mediateam.com.au) is a new non-profit organisation that is harnessing the knowledge and time of a number of well-known journalists and media and marketing professionals to help community groups to establish better strategies and tactics in getting media attention.

The workshops have attracted a stellar line-up of journalists, editors and media commentators and also presentations from some of the country's best-known public relations and lobbying professionals, including industry leaders David Epstein and Ian Smith.

While workshops were being held in Sydney this week, there are also seminars on media and marketing planned for Perth in the coming weeks (dates to be announced).

Media Team is also holding a pre-budget media session soon in Canberra to assist those organisations who want their message to be heard in response to the Federal budget. The lessons learned are obviously just as applicable when commenting on state budgets

For more information on the workshops, which are great value given the quality of the presenters and access to journalists and commentators working in the news and social affairs field, or to make a booking visit www.mediateam.com.au or email Annie O'Rourke at admin@mediateam.com.au.

Inaccessible and Unacceptable!

Here is a good example of advocacy and leadership from the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations that have sent out an email calling for action to support a building standard that would ensure that lifts were put in buildings of two or more storeys height.

We have reproduced the flyer in full to both encourage people to take action and also to show other groups a good example of how to increase awareness and mobilise the community to take action. For more information contact the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations at afdo@afdo.org.au or (03) 9662 3324.

Negotiations to develop an Access to Premises Standard under the Disability Discrimination Act have hit a snag, with a push to introduce a Standard that would not require lifts in 2 and 3 storey buildings.

This would make it legal to discriminate against:

- people using mobility devices such as wheelchairs, scooters and walking frames
- people who are temporarily on crutches or who have injuries
- people with small children in prams or strollers
- older people who can no longer easily walk up steps

As well as the many other people who for a range of reasons cannot or would prefer not to have to walk up multiple flights of stairs.

People living in regional and rural Australia will be particularly hard hit, because there are few buildings taller than 3 storeys in these communities.

Why is this being proposed?

The property industry has argued that equitable access to buildings is too expensive.

This is not true. Australia can easily afford the estimated annual net cost of \$700 million (for 15 years).

The current federal budget surplus is **\$4.5 billion** (estimated). If it needs to, the Government can subsidise the cost of accessibility for small businesses.

What can you do?

Tell the Government that Australia cannot afford **not** to introduce equitable access – particularly with an ageing population.

- Call or visit your local Member of Parliament and ask him or her to oppose this proposal.
- Write to your local Federal Member of Parliament opposing the proposal and send a copy to the Prime Minister and the Attorney-General.
- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper.
- Call your local talk-back radio program and tell them what is happening and why you think it is wrong.
- Contact your local kindergartens, child care centres, seniors clubs and other organisations and let them know what is happening.

If you think it is unacceptable well then get active. Try using the media contact above!

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11. Fast Forward

If you found this newsletter helpful, please feel free to send it onto your friends and fellow community groups in your area. We would also like your input into this newsletter.

If you have any thoughts or any issues you would like addressed we would appreciate hearing from you. You can send your comments to brianw@ourcommunity.com.au or call (03) 9320 6813.

We now have button logos for those groups who want to set up links to www.ourcommunity.com.au from their own websites. You can find them in the media centre. Just visit http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/article/view_image_list.do and right click your mouse on the image you want and then click on SAVE to your own computer. If you have any problems just contact brianw@ourcommunity.com.au or call (03) 9320 6813.

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