



Our Community **MATTERS**

ourcommunity.com.au

Edition 12/2002

**MERRY
CHRISTMAS**



www.ourcommunity.com.au

**Wishing you
a very
Merry Christmas
and prosperous
New Year from the
team at Our
Community.**

**We are looking forward
to an exciting new year
and thank you for
your ongoing support.**

***The
Our Community
Team***

Welcome to the December 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 grants funding and fundraising news as well as practical advice and the opportunity to list for free online donations on the **National Community Giving Centre**. We also provide discounted services and products, including the great banking services deal with the National Australia Bank which provides transaction accounts specifically tailored for community groups.

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 from Dr Rhonda Galbally, CEO of ourcommunity.com.au.

It's been the most incredible year - the speediest I've ever experienced and full of highs for Our Community but sadly also with incredible lows with the Bali tragedy and the general climate of fear and intolerance that is having such an assault on multicultural Australia, a policy that until recently we have all had such cause to be proud. Hopefully in our own way Our Community is ensuring that all of our resources are available to the thousands of multicultural groups in Australia.

A key to multiculturalism are the links to other countries that provide us with a real picture about culture and issues and especially equity. This was highlighted at a wonderful Rotary dinner – special because with the Minister for Health, Senator Kay Patterson, it was attended by the incoming Rotary world president Jonathan B. Majiyagbe. As the chairman of Nigeria Red Cross, Majiyagbe has a vast knowledge of community groups and their benefits and was in Australia to support the world efforts to finally eliminate polio. Of course Rotary itself a leading community network has played a seminal role already in the campaign to eliminate polio and it is a shock to every participant to see the infection rates again increasing in countries like India.

It was an honour to address the gathering wearing at least three hats. The first was as a survivor of polio in the late forties epidemic; the second hat was as the founding CEO of VicHealth the pre-eminent health promotion body for its first decade of life and the third hat was the present role of helping Australia's community groups grow stronger.

There is no doubt that community is important in tackling any health and wellbeing issue. Providing the immunisation – the vaccine and the technology alone is not enough. It is the ownership of the need to immunise by every community network at the frontline - especially those where the participants are mothers and children – that makes it work and leading the battle are women's groups and schools. The research clearly shows that where these community networks take on the issue of immunisation, the programs become sustainable from generation to generation.

Senator Patterson told the story of polio in Australia throwing in her own experience including girls with polio in Girl Guide ranks. It reminded me of my own experience of the shame and misery felt when forced to go into the handicapped Girl Guide troop for the visit of the Queen in the 1950s. Up to then I was in my own local Girl Guide troop having a great time learning to light fires, tie knots, cook damper and read maps – we had all sorts of adventures where as a little girl with a disability you did what you could as one of the group and all mucked in together. The shock of the stigma from that experience of segregation (all for the Queen) meant that I left guides prematurely - sadly before learning to really enjoy camping.

It was good to get in a strong plug in for integration – a policy and practice strongly dependant on the tolerance and inclusion of people with disabilities by community networks - from sporting groups to schools to theatre groups to adult learning to community theatre groups and choirs. It is fantastic to see the change in attitudes and the enormously increased visibility of people with disabilities now out and about that is completely the result of integration. This same tolerance now needs to be resuscitated to again make us a multicultural country worth celebrating.

Christmas has come around so quickly and already the plans for the new year look like making 2003 another exciting and challenging year for the community sector. As this is the last newsletter for the year, I would like to take this opportunity to really thank all those people that have worked so hard and advocated so loudly for the benefit of all community groups throughout 2002.

Also in looking ahead to 2003 there is still much work to be done on issues such as public liability, deductible gift registration for all those groups who are disenfranchised and disadvantaged by the current rulings and many more. There are also a number of new initiatives that ourcommunity is undertaking in 2003 which will provide greater support and benefits for community groups. We also are really pleased to support the Communities in Control conference in April (see below for more details).

Have a safe and Happy Christmas and New Year period and we look forward to an exciting 2003.

RHONDA GALBALLY AO
Chief Executive Officer

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2. Christmas - releasing our 101 Ways to Help local communities at Christmas time.

Earlier this month we produced a guide **[Christmas 101 Tips to Help Your Local Community](#)** to encourage people think about how they could help their local communities at this time of year.

We have had a terrific response from media across the country and still have a number of articles coming up in the next week to help push that theme. Whether it is people supporting Christmas appeals, volunteering or just getting out and supporting community events, the focus is on trying to get behind your local community groups.

We have reprinted the media release below for your information but here are the direct links to the three main Christmas giving pages.

1. The 101 tips to Help Your Local Community this Christmas at www.ourcommunity.com.au/christmastips
2. The National Community Centre (which now contains about 170 appeals) at www.ourcommunity.com.au/donations AND
3. The list of Christmas Appeals that you have all supplied which can be found at www.ourcommunity.com.au/christmasappeals.

If you are sending out a Christmas email to your members/supporters or donors, why not add one of the above links - and give them some more ways ideas on how they can get behind local community groups such as yours this Christmas. Or send them direct into your own online donations page.

We have also written to Federal and State politicians and local councils seeking their help in promoting support for local community groups at this time of year.

REMEMBER LOCAL COMMUNITY IN \$6 BILLION CHRISTMAS BONANAZA

AUSTRALIAN consumers who will spend up to \$6 billion on Christmas are being encouraged to spread the "giving spirit" by supporting some of the 700,000 community and non-profit groups across Australia.

While retailers are looking to a big month of Christmas spending, community groups are also hoping shoppers direct a fraction of the festive spending towards support for local non-profit groups.

"An estimated \$6 billion will be spent on Christmas this year. It is a great celebration to share with family, friends and loved ones. What we would encourage is that people also add to their Christmas lists some of the community groups that are also important or have made a major impact on their lives," said Dr Rhonda Galbally, the CEO of www.ourcommunity.com.au, a national resource for community groups.

"December is the traditional giving season, a time when people often think of making donations or supporting community groups. Most people, when asked, want to help but often lack the know-how."

Dr Galbally said support could be through a one-off donation or through a greater involvement through volunteering either individually or as a family or workplace or even by the simple act of joining a group.

"It's not just about giving money to community and non-profit groups although, given the ongoing problems with public liability insurance, every group has had to find more dollars this year. It's really about deciding that local community is a priority and deciding to do something about it," she said.

To help individuals and workplaces with ideas of how they can help their local community, a guide Christmas - 101 tips to help your community has been compiled and can be found online at www.ourcommunity.com.au/christmastips.

More than 160 separate community appeals, ranging from the National Heart Foundation, Oxfam and Reconciliation Australia to a range of small local non-profit groups are listed on the free online donations service at the National Community Giving Centre at www.ourcommunity.com.au/donations (sponsored by the National Australia Bank). A separate list of Christmas appeals is also listed at www.ourcommunity.com.au/christmasappeals.

Dr Galbally said that the Bali tragedy and the increasing devastating effects of the drought and the bushfires had focussed the attention of many Australians on the importance of friends, family and a greater connection with their local community. "As Americans did after September 11, Australians are turning more to their local communities for support. We need to ensure that those local communities and the 700,000 groups that sustain them are strong and vibrant enough to provide that support," Dr Galbally said.

"The message for individuals - and workplaces where there is often a great sense of community - is to enjoy the Christmas spirit and where possible, see if they can spread it a little wider than previous years."

"The other thing that can't be forgotten is a healthy and well-supported community sector means a healthy economy - and more jobs. Research released recently by the Australian Bureau of Statistics showed that paid and voluntary activities in the community sector generated a massive \$29 billion in economic activity each year or almost 5 per cent of GDP."

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3. So how valuable is the community sector? Try about \$30 billion a year and 600,000 plus jobs just for starters.

If anyone needed any further proof that a healthy community sector equalled a healthy economy, that was put to rest by a recent report from the Australian Bureau of Statistics that valued the contribution of the non-profit sector.

The report found that non-profit institutions contributed \$21 billion or 3.3 per cent to Australia's gross domestic product during the 1999-2000 financial year and that when the free services provided by volunteers was factored in that figure rose to almost \$30 billion or 4.7 per cent of economic activity. Given that they were working on two-year old figures then the contribution will be even greater in 2002.

To put the figures in some perspective, when you take in the paid and volunteer work, the community sector generates more economic activity within Australia than the mining, agriculture, forestry and fishing industries, the **Non-profit Institutions Satellite Account** report found.

The report also found that non-profit institutions provided employment for 6.8 per cent of the workforce or more than 604,000 Australians.

Key findings of the report were:

- Non-profit institutions accounted for \$20.8 billion or 3.3 per cent of total gross domestic product (GDP) in 1999-2000.
- If free services provided by volunteers are valued and included, the report estimates that the contribution by the non-profit sector to Australia's economy rises to \$29.7 billion or 4.7 per cent of GDP. The economic value of volunteer services is therefore estimated to be \$8.9 billion.
- 604,000 people were employed by non-profit institutions in 1999-2000, accounting for 6.8 per cent of the workforce.
- Non-profit institutions gross value added contribution (not including volunteers) was 3.4 per cent, which was greater than the contribution made by cafes and restaurants, and cultural and recreational service industries and only fractionally less than the contribution of agriculture, forestry and fishing at 3.5 per cent.
- Again, if the services provided free by volunteers are valued and included, gross value added of non-profit institutions rises to 4.9 per cent, which is greater than the contribution of government administration and defence at 4.1 per cent and mining at 4.6 per cent.
- The types of non-profit institution activities that contributed over 10 per cent to total industry gross value in 1999-2000 were: education and research (32%), culture and recreation (22%), social services (17%), health (15%), business and professional associations and unions (3%) and all other non-profit institutions (11%)
- While non-profit institutions make a significant contribution to the gross value added of service industries, they make little, if any, to primary and goods producing industries.
- Income for non-profit institutions in 1999-2000 was \$33.5 billion, with more than 50 per cent of revenue generated through sales of goods and services.
- Expenses for non-profit institutions during the same period amounted to \$32.8 billion. Wages, superannuation and workers compensation made up 51 per cent of expenses followed by purchases of goods and services at 35 per cent of all expenditure.
- 4.4 million Australians over 18 years of age participated in some form of volunteer work with non-profit institutions through 1999-2000. The total number of hours worked by volunteers within the non-profit sector was 558 million for the 12 month period.

It is a very solid evidence that support for community groups does increase economic activity and that cuts in Government and business support for community initiatives can not only have a dire social effect but an economic one as well.

The release from the ABS can be viewed [here](#).

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4. Communities in Control - the April conference takes shape.

Because Our Community is a national organisation, we are constantly meeting with community groups in every corner of Australia from the cities and in rural and regional communities.

The reality is that about two thirds of these community groups appear to be in the same boat - they are often broke, unable to fulfill their visions, unable to experiment and try new approaches. Indeed most of the smaller community groups are living on the smell of an oily rag.

This is despite the fact that well over twenty years ago the self-help movement started in Australia and hundreds of thousands of groups of people who themselves had experienced disability, illness or disadvantage came together into groups to challenge the professional, charitable ways of treating them. These groups were established by consumers to fight for their own rights and most especially for the right to be part of the governance, design and delivery of any programs or services for consumers.

Add to these self-help community groups all of the multicultural and indigenous groups, those groups representing country women and men, all of the adult learning groups in community centres and neighbourhood houses, the playgroups for parents with small children, the senior citizen centres for older people, the bowls clubs and other local sporting and theatre groups, the environment groups and the service clubs, the youth groups and the schools and we have such a rich web of community groups run for and by the people they exist to serve.

These community controlled networks are endless and what they all have in common is intimate knowledge about what is needed for their own communities.

The fact that these groups and networks of groups do know about priorities and needs was grudgingly accepted for what seems to have been only a brief period of time. For a few years community groups across Australia were supported by governments and by some professional service provider agencies to take control over their own destinies.

The notion of having a sense of control over direction, agenda and funds by community groups is the basis for what has now been identified by international researchers as the secret ingredient called control. This community control is the magic that makes these groups so essential for the promotion of wellbeing in Australia's communities.

How in the twenty first century can these community networks best be supported? This is the topic that we will be working on at the symposium in April 7-8, 2003. What gives community groups the degree of control that is necessary to prevent many social problems and epidemics in Australia - from suicide to child abuse to depression, as well as heart disease, diabetes and cancer?

As we previously mentioned we are proud to have two of the world's leading authorities on community and its impact on our health and wellbeing - Emeritus Professor Len Syme from the School of Public Health at the University of California, Berkeley, who has led ground-breaking research into the connectin between community support and health and Professor Lisa Berkman, the head of Public Policy in the Department of Health, Social Behaviour and Epidemiology at Harvard University whose research has shown the positive impact on health of strong communities and inclusive community networks.

As well as a number of senior politicians that we will announce in the first edition of Our Community Matters in 2003 we also are pleased to announce some of the community leaders who have agreed to take part in the conference They are:

- Professor Fiona Stanley, Director, Institute for Child Heath Research, University of WA
- Jude Munro, CEO, Brisbane City Council
- Pat Turner, Chair, Lumbu Community Foundation
- Sam Lipski, CEO, Pratt Foundation.
- Kaye Owen, Director, Office of Rural Communities
- Colleen Pearce, Director, Uniting Care
- David Melzer, President, Community Broadcasting Association of Australia
- Cath Smith, Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Council of Social Services
- Marian Lau, Chairperson, Ethnic Communities Council of Australia
- Father Peter Norden, Director, Jesuit Social Services

There will also be sessions and workshops looking at strategies for funding and fundraising, dealing with media, research, effective board/council relationships.

The conference, which will cost \$150 for the two days, will be held in Melbourne on April 7-8. The updated brochure will be distributed early in the new year but anyone interested in registering straight away can contact Kate Caldecott at katec@ourcommunity.com.au.

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5. New Volunteer funding program and International Year of the Volunteer research announced by the Federal Government.

(1) Federal Government announces a new wave of volunteer grants funding.

It was great to see Sen. Amanda Vanstone announcing on International Volunteer Day that the Federal Government is bringing back the volunteer grants funding that proved such a hit for thousands of community groups during the International Year of the Volunteer in 2001.

In this newsletter we had suggested late last year that the Government should consider extending the scheme because it provided small grants that proved of great assistance to many groups that would not normally have accessed grants funding.

Sen. Vanstone said the Federal Government would provide \$3 million in equipment grants to help Australia's volunteers carry on with their vital work. The grants of up to \$5,000 for equipment will make volunteers' work easier, safer and more enjoyable.

The Volunteer Small Equipment Grants 2003 will have a particular focus on organisations that provide family support and strengthen local communities. They will also give the many worthy organisations that missed out last year another chance.

As part of last year's highly successful IYV 2001 Small Grants Program, more than 5,000 organisations benefited from the funding with 96 per cent of the groups that received money saying that the grants had had a positive impact on the organisation.

Subscribers to Easy Grants will already know about the new grants funding program (we held the Easy Grants newsletter for several days to get more details) and we will put out a special bulletin in January when the formal guidelines for the program are released.

(2) New IYV research released

It's almost a year since the International Year of the Volunteer officially ended but the Federal Government's latest report, released by Sen Vanstone on December 5, says the 12 months in which our community workers took centre stage was a success.

With all Governments – Federal- State and Local – running events that recognised the work of volunteers who now provide some 704 million hours helping out many of the 700,000 community and non-profit groups, there was no doubt that volunteers had an enormous profile.

Following on from the 2000 Olympics when many commentators from overseas rated the volunteers as the highlight of the Games, it is probably the most sustained attention on volunteers in the past decade.

So would you rate the International Year of the Volunteer as a success? Well few would disagree that it raised the level of awareness of volunteers and their work and a new report released by the Department of Family and Community Services has found that 90 per cent of those involved in IYV activities felt those activities did a good job of recognising and celebrating the work of volunteers.

An analysis of the year was conducted by Quantum Market Research which conducted phone interviews with volunteers and grant applicants for the special rounds of IYV grants and looked at the success of the year based on whether the Federal Government's three principal objectives for the IYV were met. Those principles were:

1. Recognise and celebrate the outstanding contribution volunteers make to a strong, cohesive Australian society.
2. Have community, business, the media and government work together to build an Australian society that encourages and nurtures a culture of volunteering.
3. Support Australian communities in their engagement in valuable and productive voluntary activities.

Measured against the Government's first objective, the report found:

- 97% of volunteers were able to identify the purpose of IYV with recognition and reward of the work of volunteers and raising awareness of what volunteering is being the primary purposes identified
- 62% of volunteers were aware of IYV 2001 celebrations, 24% indicated direct involvement
- 64% of volunteers felt recognised and supported during the IYV Year
- More than 90% of those involved in IYV activities felt those activities recognised and celebrated the work of volunteers well
- 92% of volunteers feel that they and many others give their time without being paid and are well respected and hard workers

Attitudinally amongst volunteers:

- 73% feel IYV has provided appreciation and support of their activities
- 73% feel IYV has shown the benefits of volunteering
- 69% feel IYV has given the community a positive perspective of their efforts
- 67% feel IYV has broadened community understanding of what volunteering involves
- 50% feel IYV has improved resources and skills for volunteer organisations to effectively undertake their activities
- 80% of the volunteers interviewed had volunteered within the last two years

Attitudinally amongst grant applicants:

- 89% feel IYV has given the community a positive perspective of volunteer efforts
- 89% feel IYV has provided appreciation and support of volunteer activities
- 89% feel IYV has shown the benefits of volunteering
- 83% feel IYV has broadened community understanding of what volunteering involves
- 62% feel IYV has improved resources and skills for volunteer organisations to effectively undertake their activities
- 71% of grant applicants reported an increased number of volunteers following IYV

A full copy of the report can be found at: <http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/content/iyveval.htm>

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6. Beyond volunteering for Australia's Future - Volunteering pioneer Margaret Bell has her say.

And also on volunteering, we are pleased to be able to carry this piece from **Margaret Bell**, the president of the Chain Reaction Foundation, a new organisation that is devoted to a vision of a stronger more inclusive and sustainable civil society in Australia. It aims to achieve its aims by working as a catalyst for change together with Partner Organisations drawn from the community, government departments and business, Chain Reaction offers:

- A strategic agenda focusing on enriching civil society and enhancing civic engagement.
- Leadership development at local, state and national levels.
- Building alliances across Partnership Organisations always striving to strengthen local institutions, organisations and communities.

Margaret is well-known to many and has been involved in volunteer leadership positions for over 20 years in her roles as founding President/CEO of Volunteering Australia, the peak national body for volunteering, founding member of the Australian Prime Minister's round table on business and community partnerships, founding Director of CIVICUS, the World Alliance for Citizen Participation, and World President of the International Association for Volunteer Effort.

Margaret writes:

"The International Year of Volunteers 2001 was an unusual success as far as UN designated years are concerned.

We were to witness the mushrooming of over 123 National Committees and hundreds of city, state and local committees which led to a plethora of activities that heightened awareness of the role of volunteerism in both economic and social development throughout the world.

Marked improvements in legislative frameworks and local infrastructure for volunteering has occurred. Networks are established among stakeholders including governments, the UN system, civil society, the private sector and others.

Once, even in very recent times when we witnessed 50,000 volunteers bringing public honour to Australia in the staging of the Olympic Games, we might have been able to rest on our laurels and say volunteering has arrived.

INTERNATIONAL EVENTS HAVE CHANGED PUBLIC PERCEPTION AND VOLUNTEERING IN ITSELF IS NOT ENOUGH.

Peoples of many countries in the world have lived for generations without the benefits of feeling safe, being fed, schooled or housed. But in recent times the fear of terrorism has been experienced to different degrees in every country leaving even those who till now have felt secure and provided for feeling exposed, vulnerable and fearful.

In some cases governments are playing on people's fears exercising the politics of name-calling and exclusion. Radical measures for community involvement are required for a new day and volunteering is simply not enough.

Chain Reaction, a recently formed not-for-profit Foundation, believes there is an antidote for fear and exclusion in communities. Based on inclusion policies, the Foundation works on the understanding that harmony will only exist in communities of the future through the practice and celebration of diversity. We use these practices of inclusion and diversity to create CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT. In multicultural Australia we are uniquely placed to do so.

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT goes beyond volunteering. Volunteering is practised in horizontal associations, which consist of social networks and associated norms, and is expressed through a variety of models most of which are good.

Service Delivery Model – based on the concept of doing something good for those in need.

Coercion Model – which “obliges” citizens to serve. Pressure is applied to give loyalty or service by an individual group, institution or government.

Reciprocal Model – based on the concept of mutuality, “something in it for me and something in it for you”. The reciprocal model contributes well to the building up of social capital in a community.

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT calls for a much wider more inclusive path which calls for an active and more reflective citizenship embracing the decision to be involved in community. It is practised by employed, unemployed and volunteers alike and across all sectors.

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT recognises that whilst horizontal ties are able to give communities a sense of identity and common purpose something more is needed in today’s environment, something that transcends various social divides (eg religions, ethnicity, socio-economic status). Horizontal structures alone can also preclude access to information and material resources that could otherwise be of greater assistance to the community as a whole.

Being “in” community today calls for an understanding of the social and political environment that shapes social structure and enables new norms to develop. This is based on both horizontal and vertical structures.

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT encourages these practises and the “trying on” of different identities. In process an individual is giving back to the community and at the same time experiencing how to “walk in the shoes of the other”.

It is pro-active and takes new options for new relationships. Agreements are made in a spirit of equality and reciprocity and partnerships are carved between individual and client or individual and the group.

There is little room in the new society to live a whole life in one identity, apart and different from others who don’t think or look like us. Choosing to try to shut off from perceived “differences” or “enemy thinking” creates fear and makes it harder and harder to live in our multi-faceted surrounds. This fear is manifest in extremes of all kinds and in different forms of fundamentalism, ethnicity and nationalism, highly dangerous for harmonious living.

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT is decided and acted upon entirely of freewill and impacts hugely on the health and well being of communities. It can cause Australian civil society to take a strong and powerful profile in developing public life and it can save us from fear.

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT is active especially around interests in a sustainable future, a clean environment, poverty eradication, human rights, low cost housing and education and health. It is a model of enormous hope, inclusive of the volunteer movement and at the same time beyond it. Nurtured well, respecting multiculturalism as a national value in Australia citizen engagement can become our strongest tool for building the kind of Australia we want to live in and to leave for our children to inherit."

For more information about the Chain Reaction Foundation, visit www.chainreaction.org.au, call (02) 9953 3287 or email Margaret on margaret.bell@chainreaction.org.au.

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7. Public Liability Insurance in 2003: Will the benefits flow to community groups or sit in the insurers' pockets?

As we near the end of 2002, the biggest issue of the year for community groups – public liability insurance – still remains a problem for most community groups.

While the Federal and State/Territory Governments have moved to adopt a national, coordinated approach to tackling insurance and most have now either introduced or passed legislation or announced they will, the response from the insurance industry is less concrete.

In 2003 the ball should be placed back in the insurers’ court and with better operating conditions than they have ever enjoyed, they should do the right thing and substantially reduce premiums.

The challenge is now for them to ensure that the expected outcome of all the legislation is achieved. The only way to do that is to ensure that benefits are returned to community groups in reduced premiums and not to insurers in windfall profits. If premiums are to stay high - and we believe that they should not given the reforms introduced and the profitable nature of the non profit sector, then the insurance industry should have to justify why.

As our research earlier in the year showed, community groups have not posed the high risk insurers have constantly claimed they do. So if we had a Christmas wish it would be for insurers to ensure that all of the community benefits intended by

Governments are passed on and help to repair the hardship experienced by thousands of groups over the past 18 months.

In other news on insurance, a statewide insurance scheme for New South Wales community groups looks closer after the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission gave interim backing to the move by three insurers in NSW, Allianz Australia Insurance Ltd, NRMA Insurance and QBE Insurance to create a public liability insurance pool for non-profit groups with a turnover of less than \$2 million.

The ACCC's chairman, Allan Fels said: "For final authorisation to be granted the applicants are required to demonstrate that there is a public benefit arising from the arrangement sufficient to outweigh any anti-competitive detriment". Parties wishing to make a submission to the ACCC about the proposed arrangement with the three insurers should contact the ACCC.

Non-profit groups in New South Wales can register their interest with the new scheme by visiting: www.community-care.com.au.

Here's a brief update on some of the other insurance news from other states and territories.

Victoria

In Victoria a number of legislative reforms were passed in October including caps on payouts, protection for volunteers, and a provision for waivers that will allow people to accept responsibility for their participation in risky activities. When Parliament next sits in Victoria, the Government will re-introduce legal cost thresholds to limit the awarding of legal costs in less serious cases and recommend changes to pre-trial procedures that will encourage people to settle claims outside court.

Queensland

The Queensland Government hopes to introduce new legislation which will see a number of changes to laws of negligence including a cap on general damages at \$250,000. They will clarify what constitutes a negligent act and will rule out liability for failure to warn of obvious risks, "like a player being hit in the eye during a cricket match," said Premier Peter Beattie. It is expected that the legislation will be introduced to Parliament in February 2003.

Western Australia

November saw a Bill passed in Western Australia's upper house which enables the Government's insurance arm to provide cover to eligible community groups that have been unable to find affordable cover, or any cover at all. Other recent changes include damages for economic loss to be capped at three times gross average weekly earnings.

South Australia

The Government is currently conducting risk awareness raising and advisory sessions for tourism groups and this will soon be extended to include volunteer and community groups. South Australia has also enacted the Volunteer Protection Act 2001, which protects volunteers working for government and incorporated bodies from liability for claims.

Tasmania

Recent reforms include restricting the level of damages for those injured where recreational drugs has contributed to an injury and ensuring that when one says "sorry" is does not constitute an admission of liability. Up-to-date information from the Tasmanian Government regarding public liability is available by phoning: 1800 003 533

Australian Capital Territory

Stage one of a three-stage process introduced structured settlements as an alternative to lump sum payouts among other changes. Stage two is currently being prepared and will look at pre-trial procedures to encourage settlements outside of court as well as longer-term national reviews.

Northern Territory

A package of reforms has been open for public comment and the Northern Territory Government is awaiting changes to the Federal Trade Practices Act prior to re-entering the legislation. As Parliament is currently not sitting, the legislation will not be re-introduced until next year.

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8. Tax Office launches new phone service for non-profit sector

Here's good news for every non-profit and community group that has queries or problems working out their tax implications - the Australian Tax Office has set up a specific Non-Profit Infoline.

The hotline at **1300 130 248** will provide Australia's 700,000 community and non-profit groups with direct access to staff trained to deal with non-profit inquiries. The Tax Office says the new phone service is a result of feedback received from the non-profit sector as part of the Tax Office's Listening to the Community Initiative.

"This service is part of our ongoing commitment to the sector. We have a team dedicated to improving communication channels with these groups. Because we recognise the value of the efforts of this sector, the Tax Office will continue to devote resources to give this sector a more user-friendly service." the Commissioner of Taxation, Mr Carmody, said.

The phone service follows recent upgrades to the For Non-Profit Organisations section of the Tax Office website. This upgrade saw the inclusion of an A-Z index, answers to frequently asked questions and the interactive Non-Profit Tax Calculator. The website's new user-centred design is the result of extensive consultation with the non-profit sector.

Consultation with the sector has also seen the development of the electronic Non-Profit News Service which keeps non-profit organisations up to date with significant tax issues affecting the community and alerts them to new products released by the Tax Office. Subscribers are also able to provide feedback and suggest topics on which they require more information.

The Tax Office has also expanded its **A Fax from Tax service** to include a new section specifically for non-profit organisations. By simply phoning **13 28 60** and following the prompts, non-profit organisations have specific tax information at their fingertips.

As part of our continuing efforts to provide a more tailored and comprehensive service to the sector, the Tax Office has recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the Centre of Philanthropy and Non-profit Studies at the Queensland University of Technology. This research partnership aims to improve tax services for all non-profit groups.

"These improvements demonstrate our serious commitment to providing the best possible services to non-profit groups. We are positive that they will make it easier for non-profit groups to work with the Tax Office." Mr Carmody said.

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9. Community Briefs.

Prime Minister announces the national winners of the 2002 Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Community Business partnerships.

The Prime Minister recently announced the seven community business partnerships which, he said, best "demonstrated how shared energy, creativity and commitment can build stronger communities".

The three winning partnerships were chosen as the leaders in their respective business category.

Small Business Award - the partnership between Access Dinghy Sailing Systems, Access Dinghy Foundation and Sailability. Together they created the 'Sailing for Everyone' program that provides affordable sailing to people with disabilities.

Medium Business Award - The partnership between TATE Associates and Melbourne Citymission. TATE worked with ten 'at risk' young people nominated by Melbourne Citymission to develop on the job skills and nationally recognised qualifications to enhance future employment prospects.

Large Business Award - The partnership between BHP Billiton and Conservation Volunteers Australia for their 'Revive our Wetlands' project that has helped protect and preserve the nation's most endangered wetlands.

There were also a number of Special Awards presented for impact on a Community by a Business and for a Long Term Partnership. For the first time, a Special Award was also presented to a media organisation for its reporting and encouragement of community business partnerships.

The 2002 Special Award for Media was presented to Geelong Business News, initiator of the 'Bollie Awards' that honour local businesses which promote business growth and opportunity within the Geelong district.

The Special Award for Impact on a Community by a Business was presented to Westpac for their innovative fundraising and corporate philanthropy projects, which has seen over \$30 million contributed towards health and education initiatives.

The Special Award for Longevity was jointly won by Otis Elevator Company and Special Olympics Australia and the Advertising Federation of Australia and the Salvation Army Oasis Youth Support Network. Team Otis has helped hundreds of people with intellectual disabilities reap the benefits of being part of a world wide sporting event and Oasis Youth Support Network has helped over 15,000 people to find secure accommodation and re-build a positive future.

National winners and Special Award winners received \$10,000 towards the extension of their community project.

Spreading Community Leadership into Asia.

Subscribers to our Scholarship Alert newsletter would have already received details of this but AsiaLink, with the support of the Levi Strauss Foundation have announced the opening of their Australia-Asia New Leaders program in 2003.

A number of full and partial Levi Strauss Scholarships are available for applicants from the community sector for the program which aims to enhance participants' knowledge of contemporary Asian societies and develops skills to manage the complexity of Australia- Asia relations.

The program aims to produce over time a regional network of key decision makers across all sectors who are focused on maintaining a prosperous and peaceful future for Australia in the region. Participants represent leaders from the corporate, government and non-profit sectors providing a challenging mix of backgrounds, views and experiences.

For more information visit the Scholarship Alert database by [clicking here](#) or visit the [Asialink](#) site. Applications close Friday 17 January 2003.

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10. Products and Services

To all those who have received a copy of OC Matters passed on by one of our members and are unsure of our services, here is some basic information. We provide three main newsletters designed to assist community, education and non-profit groups:

The Easy Grants newsletter provides a monthly summary of all grants available in your state/territory - philanthropic, corporate, state, and federal government. Click on <http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/newsletter/1/sample.pdf> for a recent sample of an Easy Grants newsletter - only \$45 a year (community group price) which includes year-round access to search our extensive grants database. To subscribe visit http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/funding/grant_main.jsp

The Raising Funds newsletter provides a monthly resource on the latest fund-raising tools and techniques from running special events to innovative ideas to find money. A sample of the Raising Funds newsletter - which costs just \$45 per year (community group price) for 12 monthly issues can be found by clicking <http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/newsletter/4/sample.pdf>. To subscribe visit http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/funding/fundraising_main.jsp.

The Scholarship Alert newsletter provides a monthly summary of all scholarships, awards and fellowships in your state/territory. Click on <http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/newsletter/3/sample.pdf> for a recent sample newsletter. Scholarship Alert costs just \$45 (community group price) for 12 monthly issues plus year-round access to search our extensive scholarships database. To subscribe visit http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/funding/scholarship_main.jsp.

The Busigrants newsletter is a perfect tool for businesses and social enterprises looking to access the hundreds of millions of dollars in business grants available to emerging and expanding businesses. The monthly Busigrants newsletter contains a summary of Federal and State Government grants funding programs as well as relevant industry awards. Perfect for any enterprise looking for assistance to expand markets or to develop new goods and services. Busigrants costs just \$195 for 12 monthly issues delivered direct to your computer screen. To view a sample of Busigrants click on <http://www.busigrants.com.au/busigrants/sample.jsp> or to subscribe click on <https://www.ourcommunity.com.au/busigrants/sub.jsp>.

The **Australian Best Practice Grantmaking Quarterly Newsletter** has been developed for grantmakers at all levels - Federal, State and local Government, philanthropic and corporate foundations and providers of scholarships. Highlighting issues and best practice examples across the grantmaking process from selection, administration, evaluations and accountability to marketing and using technology, this innovative and economical resource is essential for every government agency, philanthropic organisation or Private grantmaker. For subscription details and a summary of the first newsletter click on http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/article/view_news.do?articleid=381.

To subscribe to any of these newsletters Click here or e-mail info@ourcommunity.com.au or call us on (03) 9320 6800.

And don't forget our series of low-cost guidebooks, including:

How To: Find Money Fast - 50 Great Ideas to raise up to \$5000. This popular and practical guide gives you 50 ideas to raise money as well as providing handy advice on staging special events and setting up your own fundraising strategy. Great ideas and Great value. For more information on **How To: Find Money Fast - 50 Great Ideas to raise up to \$5000** visit http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/management/view_help_sheet.do?articleid=220

You can also purchase **How to win a Philanthropic Grant.**

For more information visit http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/management/view_help_sheet.do?articleid=56 ourcommunity.com.au also offers a free online donations and a free online volunteer service. For details visit http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/giving/giving_main.jsp

As mentioned earlier, www.ourcommunity.com.au has formed an alliance with National Australia Bank to introduce the first suite of tailored financial products for community groups. To find out more visit the Community Financial Centre at http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/financial/financial_main.jsp. The Financial Centre contains details of the National's community accounts as well as Help Sheets on reducing fees.

A recent addition to www.ourcommunity.com.au is the National Insurance Centre where we have Help Sheets on reducing risk and the latest news on the insurance issue. You can also register your interest in being part of a pooled insurance scheme to try and reduce the cost of insurance premiums. Visit the Insurance Centre at http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/insurance/insurance_main.jsp.

We have also joined with ACER computers to provide a low-cost, high-quality computer deal for community, education and non-profit groups and their members with personal computers starting from just \$1499. Visit http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/tech/hardware_packages.do for details.

And don't forget our Management Centre where we have over 100 free Help Sheets on various aspects of running a community group.

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11. Fast Forward.

If you found this newsletter helpful, please feel free to send this newsletter 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.

If you have received a grant or scholarship found on our database or successfully adapted the Raising Funds newsletter, let us know.

We now have button logos for those groups who want to set up links to ourcommunity.com.au from their own websites. You can find them on 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.

We also have brochures for any associations who want to mail out to their member groups and let them know about our products and services. Just let us know and we will be happy to supply.

If you would like to reproduce anything in this newsletter in your own group/association newsletters or websites, you are free to do so. Please just add a small credit line, "courtesy of www.ourcommunity.com.au".

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