Free **'Capacity Building'** Newsletter that Builds Stronger Community Groups and Schools

Our Community MATTERS

Your community knowledge bank helping groups survive, improve, grow and innovate

Resources, News, Innovations and Tips on:
- ✓ Funding, Finance & Membership Management
- ✓ Leadership & Advocacy
- ✓ Management & Training
- ✓ Marketing & Media
- ✓ Boards, Committees & Governance
- ✓ Community & Business Partnerships
- ✓ Insurance & Risk Management

www.ourcommunity.com.au

August edition 2004

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 and board and committee advice and the opportunity to list for free online donations through the **Australian Giving Centre**.

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**.

In this Issue

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1. Welcome by Rhonda Galbally AO, CEO of ourcommunity.com.au

August has been absolutely full on - a most exciting month.

The Community Business Partnership workshops have hotted up and it is absolutely inspiring to meet community groups and businesses engaged in so many fantastic partnerships across Australia. Local communities are abuzz with dynamism and creativity. Chambers of commerce are putting in major effort and new relationships are now developing between community groups and businesses in local communities– very much supported by local government (continually providing the local community glue).

It is really encouraging to see so much innovation around the subject of community business partnerships and many of the small and medium groups and businesses could teach many of the bigger companies a lesson or two on real engagement and commitment that is reflected by a "whole of business" values-based approach (see article further down).

This work is being done as part of the Australian Government's Community Business Partnerships Brokerage Service, an initiative of the Department of Family and Community Services.

I have also been on the promotion trail for my new book "*Just Passions*" which has provided an opportunity to focus attention on community and hear from community people on the issues raised in it – particularly disability, women's (and men's) liberation, new family structures and issues like mental illness, work, health promotion, technology and most important the vital place of community groups. The responses from readers reminded of the contribution of people like Ron Casey, Jenny Florence, Sir James Gobbo, Nugget Coombes, Eva Cox, Barry Jones, Phillip Adams, Fiona Smith, Gus Nossal, Germaine Greer – many of the figures from the histories of the great social movements of our time - has also been pleasing.

What is most inspiring is to hear the stories come from the community groups themselves and - more importantly – to hear their own vision and hope for the future.

Also encouraging during the swag of seminars and meetings has been that the reaction to the recent publication of, The Guide for Community Treasurers (free from **http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/treasurer** any Westpac bank branch) and which was developed by Westpac Bank and Our Community. It is certainly hitting the mark.

The feedback from the groups is that the guide is extremely practical - a step by step guide for every community group treasurer in Australia that takes them through the entire process. I am pleased that Westpac has led the way in providing this invaluable free resource for every community group – an initiative that is strengthening the role of financial management in the entire Australian community sector. It also reinforces their recent award as the Australian leader in corporate social responsibility.

RHONDA GALBALLY AO
Chief Executive Officer

2. Another good reason why community groups need to keep their members happy.

Signing up members has a double benefit for community groups, providing both a source of income and important voluntary labour, a new report has concluded.

The report, Linking Society & Economy Through Membership: Associations in New South Wales, found that the majority of the 627,000 people who volunteered for associations were also members.

"Besides providing important financial support – $149 million – members also undertake a range of activities on behalf of their associations. This might be arranging soccer fixtures in a sports club, or running a stall at a fundraising jumble sale," the ACCORD report says.

"Members (also) buy services from their associations, maybe in the form of food and beverages in a club, newsletters and magazines from a hobby society, or computer time from a community services organisation. This income is larger than membership fees, totalling $260 million.

"There is a further important role that members play, which is in the governance and strategic management of their associations."

The report found that 130,000 members were carrying out governance roles for NSW associations, "a significant voluntary input without which these organisations would not be able to operate".

And nearly 80 per cent of associations received income from membership fees, 12 per cent of which relied on the members' dues for more than three in every four dollars of their total income.

The report, the first detailed picture of associations in NSW, is based on the findings of a survey of 5000 associations conducted late last year.

"Associations are by far the most common form of incorporation for community groups in Australia, and as such they are an important part of the nation's third sector and its civil society," says author, ACCORD Senior Research Fellow Andrew Passey.

"Up until now, however, little has been known about them."

The report attempts to answer questions about associations' membership, volunteers and staff, their source of funds, their expenditure, the services they provide, the industries they operate in, the regional patterns of activity, how they are regulated and what their links are.

Other findings include:

- NSW associations have an average membership of 246 people (although the median of 50 suggests a small number of associations have relatively large memberships), and employ more than 28,000 staff.
- The sector has a total income of $1.6 billion, with government, members, fundraising and sale of services being the main income sources.
- The NSW West region has the highest density of associations, followed by the Coastal North. More than four in 10 people in the West are members of an association and more than one in four volunteers for an association.
- Most associations work at the local level only, typically drawing their membership from people living locally. They are, however, networked more widely – many associations are members of formal networks at the national or international level.
- Informal networking is also significant – more than three-quarters report working regularly or sometimes with other non-profit organisations.
- The majority of associations claim to benefit a community wider than their membership – 55 per cent reported they worked primarily for the wider community in which they were situated, as opposed to 45 per cent primarily working for members only.

The full report, which includes a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) for the sector, can be downloaded from the ACCORD website at
http://www.accord.org.au/publications/ACCORD_report_linking_society.pdf.

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3. Are Insurers ripping off community groups?

When insurers started making noises about a public liability "crisis", the main focus of the campaign was centred on community groups and claims that they represented a much greater "risk" and cost through claims. Insurers refused to insure many community groups leading to the cancellation of hundreds of events, festivals and activities around Australia. Those that did get insurance faced premium hikes of up to 1000 per cent.

The end result was a massive community outcry which then resulted in State and Territory Governments taking legislative steps to provide a better environment for insurers. Those changes were supposed to lead to lower premiums for community groups.

The question is now whether community groups have actually seen a drop in their premiums because the continuing evidence of insurers reporting windfall profits and the latest report from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's public liability monitoring, would suggest that savings are yet to flow through to the community.

The latest report by the ACCC found that public liability insurance premiums rose by 17 per cent last year after a 44 per cent rise in 2002. The report also found that insurers expect public liability premium increases in 2004 to be constrained to 4 per cent. Some insurers commented that the savings in 2004 premiums were conservative and that reforms may have a larger impact in the medium term. That remains to be seen.

Unfortunately the ACCC report doesn't break down the figures for non-profit groups. It would be handy if they did because it would certainly help to allay suspicions among the community sector that it paid too high a price despite no clear evidence they were to blame for the "crisis".

While groups are still paying $500 a year for a dozen ladies to meet every month for morning tea in their own homes, then the premiums are too high. It is not good enough that they "only" rise by 4 per cent at a time when insurers are recording massive profits and few community group claims are being lodged.

When legislative changes were made in 2002, we sent out a press release with the headline "Great news for insurers but will they pass it on?" The answer so far appears to be NO. While insurers are happy to talk about their corporate social responsibility, the best way they can make an impact in the community is to drop the price of insurance premiums – a move that helps every group.

The Opposition recently suggested that insurers that failed to pass on the benefits of public liability reforms could be faced with fines of up to $10m. It suggested amending the Trade Practices legislation to allow the ACCC to take action against insurance companies that failed to reduce premiums while reaping excessive profits. Anything that could be done to ensure the groups who suffered the pain actually enjoyed some of the benefits is a step forward and we support all Governments addressing the issue of insurance companies profiting from the legislative changes at the expense of our valuable community groups.

4. Businesses promoting corporate social responsibility need to do the same in house.

There has been a big increase in the number of corporate businesses that now have formal volunteering schemes in place as part of their attempts at corporate social responsibility.

While it is terrific that businesses are looking to give back to the community and immerse themselves in the communities in which they operate, they sometimes overlook the basic in the search for the spectacular.

Which is why it was encouraging to see the comments of Christine James-Brown, head of United Way International, one of the bigger international community agencies. Ms James-Brown warned earlier this month during a visit to Australia that businesses' attempts at corporate social responsibility would end in a culture of cynicism and mistrust with employees if they didn't practice the same values within their own operations.

Ms James-Brown told the Age Newspaper that businesses need to espouse the same values internally and then employees can take those values and promote them to the wider community. She told The Age newspaper that "when you think about volunteerism, you start with the internals for the organisation: treating employees fairly, and employees knowing that they are being treated fairly. That's everything from family leave opportunities to making sure that there is no problem with child labor laws."

"A company can't just say: 'I want to look good, I'm going to start a volunteer program'. It really has to understand that it's layered on to how the employees feel the company is treating them, their families and the community. If they feel good about it, then they'll say: 'Yes, I want to be part of promoting this company in the community', and that's when they'll really get involved.

"It has to start with a commitment to a certain set of values, and the volunteerism flows out of that," Ms James-Brown told The Age's Leon Gettler. "Now, you can get people to do something once without really being value-based, but that's not going to be sustainable. If employees feel they are not well treated, they are not going to want to do it."

Our Community CEO Rhonda Galbally echoed the sentiments and said there was a tendency for big companies to value "team-building" volunteering days while failing to support employees who take an hour off to volunteer to do kinder duty or to leave early on a Friday afternoon to coach a junior soccer team – or to care for their elderly parents.

"Commitment to corporate social responsibility is a "whole of business" approach where the contribution employees make in their own local communities should rate as highly and be as well-supported as the special one-off company-endorsed activities," Dr Galbally said. "They also need to consider whether rather than one-off efforts they can look at what they do and whether they can tailor products and services that can benefit all community groups, not just the lucky ones."

5. Rural community groups face greater challenges in evaluating impact, report finds.

Many regional Australian groups often find the demands of grantmakers or funding agencies to evaluate their projects almost as daunting as completing the project itself. It is a situation that is mirrored in Britain according to a research report.

The National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) found that rural groups wanted to evaluate projects but often lacked the skills, time and resources to effectively carry it out. The report, *The impact of impact assessment: the experience of rural voluntary community organisations in evaluating change* also found there was a danger that funders were insisting on evaluation without actually knowing how an organisation should do it. Therefore they were imposing a burden without building the capacity to deal with it.

The researchers also concluded that evaluation should be used as a tool to enhance improvement rather than monitor performance and that grantmakers should get together with grant recipients at the start of the process to work out what resources were needed to develop the skills to carry out evaluations.

The report found that while there are clear benefits to be gained from the assessment of impacts, there may also be occasions upon which an organisation feels that the demands created by the assessment process are disproportionately high or that the assessment of impacts is placing undue limitations on other activities. In these cases a balance needs to be struck between the benefits of the assessment and its possible cost.

It also found that for rural groups the difficulties facing all volunteer groups were exacerbated by challenges such as:
- scattered and isolated client bases,
- low critical mass increasing delivery costs,
- the requirement for outreach work (with implications in terms of human and financial resources),
- the challenges associated with addressing social exclusion in rural areas,
- poor access to a trained workforce, especially those with specialist skills,
- lack of suitable venues where activities can take place;
- lack of public transport; and
- lack of consistency in support from voluntary sector infrastructure.

Some of the over-arching recommendations contained in the report included:
- Impacts assessment needs to be approached as a tool for enhancing performance improvement and organisational development within voluntary community organisations (VCOs), not simply as a reporting requirement.
- It is crucial that impact is evaluated in a way that is meaningful to users and that any learning is acted upon.
- There is a clear need for skills development and capacity building in relation to the assessment of impacts for both VCOs working in rural areas and those organisations that fund them.
- Impacts assessment needs to be built in to projects rather than bolted on after the event.
- Assessment criteria should be negotiated during grant or contract discussions and should not be altered during the course of the program except by mutual consent.
- VCOs and funders should consider the potential value of evaluating global impact rather than focusing on component projects in isolation. This should allow organisations to produce a single impact report that they could 'passport' across different funders.
- A database of indicators of impact could be developed to meet the need of VCOs and funders for support in developing appropriate tools for assessing impact.
- Both funders and VCOs should think about the impact of impact assessment on activities they wish to support. In particular they will need to make a balanced assessment about any capacity that may be diverted from delivery activity towards assessment activity and make a judgement about the degree of assessment they require on that basis.
- In order to get the most from the assessment process VCOs may need to work on developing their relationships with funders.
- Processes for evaluating impacts need to be tied into internal planning process and related both to other monitoring and reporting activity and to organisational strategies for performance improvement.
- Good internal communication processes and a wider promotion of the strategic benefits associated with evaluation activity are required to ensure staff buy-in into the assessment process.
- VCOs will need to assess both the financial costs and the capacity demands related to assessing the impacts of their projects and programs and make representations to funders about any potential negative impacts that requirements may have.
- Organisations need to think strategically about achieving a balance between being held to account by funders and their responsibilities to be accountable to other stakeholders.
- Organisations should focus on transparency with all stakeholders not just funders.
- In certain cases VCOs may need to make a strategic decision not to enter into (or not to renew) a funding agreement where they feel that the negative effects of undertaking impact assessment are too great.

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For a copy of the NCVO report email Brian Walsh at **brianw@ourcommunity.com.au**

6. Our Community Leaders – Great Australian Leaders in Focus: Dr Jim Varghese.

Dr Jim **Varghese,** the Director-General of the Department of Primary Industries in Queensland is the subject of this month's *Great Australian Leaders in Focus* segment, a series which features the thoughts of some of Australia's best-known community leaders.

He joins the list of leaders we have already interviewed including **Ian Kiernan**, **Sir Gustav Nossal**, **Professor Fiona Stanley**, **Peter Garrett**, **John Eales**, **Stephanie Alexander**, **Molly Harriss Olson** and **Professor Allan Fels**.

All those interviews can now be read on the **Leadership Centre** at **www.ourcommunity.com.au**. Also on the Leadership Centre, which is a joint initiative with the Department of Family and Community Services, is a series of free **Help Sheets** and Australia's **largest free database of leadership courses** and opportunities.

Dr Varghese has had a long career in the public service and has headed departments in several states, including Victoria and Queensland. He is presently the Director-General of the Department of Primary Industries in Queensland.

We started by asking Jim Varghese who he considered to be the three great leaders of our time? And Why?

Dr Jim Varghese:
- **Nelson Mandela.** Vision, persistence, commitment, integrity, inspirational.
- **Gandhi.** Vision, persistence, commitment, integrity, inspirational.
- **Dalai Lama.** Vision, persistence, commitment, integrity, inspirational.

Our Community: What are the three attributes you would consider to be essential to a leader? And Why?
- **Vision.** Ability to paint the big picture and strategically inform the detail comprising the bigger picture.
- **Engagement.** Capacity to communicate, convey a powerful vision and support the detail underpinning it in a way that empowers and engages every person regardless of hierarchical position.
- **Integrity.** The interdependent harmony between emotion intellect and values that is – connecting what you feel, think and believe to create personal centredness.

Our Community: What are the three greatest barriers to new leaders emerging in Australia?

Dr Jim Varghese:
- Lack of Vision/Lack of Leadership and excessive focus on the managerial dimension. Pragmatism replacing the failure to provide engaging strategic vision and supporting detail.
- Lack of Engagement –Inability to empower people and work with highly collaborative leadership models.
- Integrity – Lack of understanding of personal centeredness and value in promoting the interdependent harmony of what you think, feel and believe.

What advice would you give to a potential leader to take them to the next stage?

Dr Jim Varghese:
Learn to understand in the context of learning and reflection:
- Yourself
- How you want others to view you
- How others view you in a way that you don't see
- When you ought to know that you don't know.

I would give this advice in the context of learning and reflection.

Our Community: Nature/nurture – are leaders born or bred?

Dr Jim Varghese: Good leaders are bred or some are born leaders. However, born leaders need to develop and nurture innate leadership abilities. In my view the best leaders are bred, they seek to learn and grow through answering these four learning questions:

- What do I know about myself and the world around me?
- How do I engage with the wider community?
- What is my role and understanding as a citizen of Australia and the world?
- How do I engage with technology and the environment?

Our Community: What do you consider to be the three top leadership issues facing the nation?

Dr Jim Varghese:
- Lack of a National Vision for Australia, eg. "Smart Nation" etc.
- Preparation for the knowledge based economy and the critical role of social capital in this new economy.
- Failure to nurture shared national and community values.

Our Community: What insights have you gained personally on your leadership journey?

Dr Jim Varghese:
Gained invaluable insights in these areas:
- Myself as a person and how it impacts on those I live and work with.
- How others view me in ways that I do not realise – positive and negative.
- How I project an image of how I want others to view me, that has been for many years quite unnecessary and counterproductive.

My significant learning is that what you see is what you get - You don't have to project an image or even work on one if you remain true to yourself. The growing ability to learn and reflect is the greatest gift of my learning journey.

Who have been your own leadership mentors and how did they assist in development your own leadership style?

Dr Jim Varghese:

- **Parents.** Understanding of self and cultural background.
  Spouse and Children. Receiving and giving love and affection.
- **Lynn Brown, Secretary, Victorian Public Service Board.** Encourage me to believe in my potential when I did not.
- **George Brouwer, Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet.** Promoted me on the basis of being different and innovative. Complimented me on my "bright" red bowtie at my first interview for a position in the Senior Executive Service in the Victorian Public Service.
- **University of Melbourne Executive MBA.** Challenged me both intellectually and personally; and helped me conceptualise leadership models.
- **Executive Leadership Development Program – Queensland Office of Public Service.** Helped me to understand non rational behaviours and linkages to performance outcomes.
- **Special Leave – Three and Half Months Gardening Leave (while Governments were changing!)** Helped me to grow enormously in developing personal courage when your job has disappeared without warning or reason.
- **Friends/People who I have worked with in three Government Departments.** Working through various collaborative leadership models.

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7. Victorian Research develops 11 indicators to measure community strength.

Following on from the efforts of the Australian Bureau of Statistics to measure community, the Victorian Government has now released new research showing Victorian communities are becoming stronger across a range of areas including community safety, involvement and participation.

The Minister for Victorian Communities and Deputy Premier John Thwaites released the Department for Victorian Communities report, *Indicators of Community Strength* earlier this month, saying it was the first time community strength in Victoria had been quantified using a standard set of key indicators.

A set of eleven indicators are used to measure and track community strength over time. In 2003 of the 11 indicators, six had shown improvement, two had remained stable, and two had fallen slightly."

Victorians surveyed indicated an improvement in:
- Feeling valued by society – rose 13 per cent to 55 per cent;
- Feeling safe walking alone down the street after dark – rose 4 per cent to 59 per cent;
- Enjoying diversity, including multiculturalism in the local area – rose 4 per cent to 73 per cent;

- Feeling there are opportunities to have a real say on issues that are important – rose 6 per cent to 42 per cent;
- Participation in volunteering – rose 3 per cent to 35 per cent; and
- Their ability to raise $2000 within two days in an emergency – rose 1 per cent to 80 per cent.

Other indicators remained steady:
- Ability to get help from friends, family or neighbours – steady at 92 per cent;
- Membership of organised school groups – steady at 15 per cent.

There was a decline in:
- Membership of all groups – declined 5 per cent to 63 per cent;
- Membership of sports groups – declined 1 per cent to 28 per cent.

Mr Thwaites said the results were encouraging, and that the indicators would allow policy makers to target policy areas to ensure communities continued to grow stronger. Congratulations to the Minister and staff for developing some meaningful data, a need highlighted in the **Communities in Control Manifesto** released last year.

The information is collected through the Victorian Public Health Survey. A report summarising the research findings can be obtained from the Department for Victorian Communities by visiting **http://www.dvc.vic.gov.au**.

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8. Calling all women – get on Board!

A series of free seminars designed to inspire women and provide them with the skills and confidence to serve on Boards and Committees was launched in the Victorian town of Ouyen earlier this month.

The 12 Women on Boards! seminars are being run for the Office of Women's Policy (part of the Department for Victorian Communities) by Our Community.

The main barriers women face in taking an equal place in decision-making and leadership positions occur before they even apply for a position. These interactive and highly practical seminars are designed to help more women get through the front door, with topics including:

- What you need to know and do before joining a Board or Committee
- The Victorian Women's Register – what it is and why you should be on it
- Are you ready? Questions to ask before nominating for a position
- Understanding Boards and Committees and how they work
- Finding a Board or Committee to suit your skills and experience
- Survival skills for women on Boards and Committees
- Legal, financial and ethical responsibilities
- Preparing your CV for a Board position

Participants also receive a collection of 20 help sheets designed to guide them from the initial stages of getting on a Board, through the responsibilities and challenges they will face during their service and when they decide to move on.

The Victorian State Government has met its target of having women make up 40 per cent of new appointments to its Boards and Committees and is now aiming for 50 per cent.

The Women on Boards! seminar series is one of two new projects designed to help reach this goal. The second program, the Women's Executive Search Service, will identify female candidates for positions that are traditionally difficult to fill with women, such as engineering and agricultural Boards – so there is no longer a situation where people can say, "We couldn't find any appropriate women."

Both projects are designed to complement existing Office of Women's Policy efforts, such as the Victorian Women's Register, a database of almost 1800 women interested in nominating for Boards and Committees. (More information about the Register is online at **www.women.vic.gov.au**.)

More Women on Boards! seminars will be held around Victoria in the next three months and the times and locations will be announced in the next edition of Our Community Matters. Here are some initial dates for your diary:

- Ouyen – August 11, 6.30pm – 8.30pm

- Wodonga – September 21, 7pm – 9pm
- Shepparton – October 12, 11am – 1pm
- Bairnsdale – October 27, 7pm – 9pm
- Ballarat – November 3, 1pm – 3pm
- Hamilton – November 3, 7pm – 9pm
- Horsham – November 4, 1pm – 3pm (TBC)
- Warragul – November 8, 11am – 1pm
- Werribee – November 10, 2.30pm – 4.30pm
- Bendigo – November 18, 3pm – 5pm
- Craigieburn – November 24, 2pm – 4pm
- City – date tba

For more information about seminar times and locations call Kathy Richardson at Our Community on 9320 6800 or email **kathyr@ourcommunity.com.au**.

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9. Resources. More Help Sheets to assist with your community business partnership.

We have again added to the list of resources now available through the Community Business Partnership Brokerage Service at **www.ourcommunity.com.au/partnerships** - an initiative of the Prime Minister's Community Business Partnership, administered through the Australian Government's Department of Family and Community Services.

There are now more than 150 Help Sheets up on the Community Business Partnerships Brokerage Service site covering everything from finding a partner, the types of partnership models, how you can expand your partnership as well as tips on entering agreements, setting out responsibilities etc.

We have revamped the Resources section, to cope with the significantly expanded resources, and have now divided the Help Sheets up into five areas:

Help Sheets Part 1	Help Sheets Part 2	Help Sheets Part 3	Help Sheets Part 4	Help Sheets Part 5
Before you get started in a partnership	Now you're involved in a partnership	If things go wrong with your parnership	Ending a Partnership	General Resources
Click Here >	Click Here >	Click Here >	Click Here >	Click Here >

The general resources is a new addition and contains a number of Help Sheets to assist groups in getting media attention, applying for grants and supervising volunteers for partnership programs.

This section includes:

- Expert tips from successful community business partnerships.
- Information on working with the media.
- Advice on successfully engaging and involving volunteers.
- What to do when organising a special event, and.
- Ways your partnership can gain grants or apply for awards.

The section on Your Partnership and the Media includes these Help Sheets:

- **Why Make a Noise?**

- **How to Publicise your Partnership**

- **Where you Should Mention your Partnership in the Media**

- **Media Contacts**

- **Preparing and Writing a Media Release**

- **Following Up a Media Release**

- **Media Conferences and Events**

- **Elements of a Successful Media Event or Conference**

- **Crisis Management and the Media**

10. Help Sheet to help you promote your website.

Last month we provided you with links to a series of help sheets to assist groups in developing their website and some of the elements and features that are needed if you want to draw traffic and engage your members.

This month we want to provide you with a link to a website that provides 29 detailed tips on how you can promote your website to the wider world and ensure that more people know your site is there.

The site is home to the The Web Marketing Checklist: 29 Ways to Promote Your Website and can be found at **http://www.wilsonweb.com/articles/checklist.htm?wmt040728**.

It is not a site strictly restricted to non-profit groups but there are plenty of ideas that will assist community groups in taking their message to a wider audience.

Tips include the technical advice on how to ensure that search engines such as **google.com.au** or **yahoo.com.au** pick up your site and how to increase the number of links to your site as well as strategies to draw people to your site.

The site again is at **http://www.wilsonweb.com/articles/checklist.htm?wmt040728**.

11. Community Briefs

ACT announces boost for Canberra's community sector.

THE ACT Government has announced a range of measures, including IT upgrades, new training and an overhaul of complicated consultation guidelines, to provide a further boost to Canberra's invaluable community sector.

The ACT Chief Minister said many community groups often delivered miracles on a shoestring and said the Government made eight commitments to help community groups to
continue delivering their vital services throughout the ACT. He said the Government would:

- Close the digital divide for community sector organisations through an initiative to help them upgrade their computer hardware and arrange broadband access, with a commitment of up to $1,000 per organisation.
- Implement a new scheme to help close the digital divide for the broader community. Info-xchange Australia has been funded to establish an ACT PC Reuse Scheme which will make hundreds of low-cost refurbished PCs available to low-income families.
- Ensure that the community sector can operate in an environment of financial security by resolving, once and for all, the question of community sector funding indexation.
- Establish a new Community Sector Taskforce, with community representation and a funded project officer, to work towards community sector enterprise bargaining. This will ensure that improved wages and conditions are accessible for community sector workers.
- Provide additional resources to the community sector this financial year for training in governance. This training will focus on small agencies with limited resources and will include out-of-hours training for volunteers, executives and boards.
- Consider ways of assisting the portability of entitlements, such as long service leave, within the community sector.
- Scrap the current consultation guidelines, which are confusing, over-long and prescriptive, and replace them with a more user-friendly document to guide government agencies in community consultations.
- Resolve initial problems encountered in implementing the new Standard Service Agreement.

New stats provide groups with all the key data on children in NSW.

In this newsletter we have always tried to point out new resources where community groups can access information that helps to inform them and also to provide empirical data for funding applications and the like.

So our congratulations to the NSW Government and the NSW Commission for Children and Young People which has produced a fabulous website jam-packed with key data about the safetywelfare and well-being of children and young people in New South Wales aged 0-17 years.

The NSW Commission for Children and Young People has developed Kids' Stats (**http://www.kidsstats.kids.nsw.gov.au/index.aspx**) to monitor how well kids are doing in the key areas of their lives.

The website will monitor data on the key areas of Family,Child care, School and work, Community, Child health, Crime and safety and Economic security. For some of these areas detailed information is available on a regular basis. In others, further work is needed. Each year Kid's Stats will be updated to provide the most current data available. We will also be adding articles examining specific aspects of kids' lives in greater depth.

The site is accessible at **www.kidsstats.kids.nsw.gov.au/index.aspx**

Making buildings accessible to people with disabilities.

To celebrate Disability Action Week, the group **Access For All** (**www.accessforall.org.au/home_page.htm**) has produced a small booklet called *EASY GUIDE To Building Smart Houses and Public Facilities.*

The guide by no means covers all the items required to complete a building, but aims to ensure that the errors most commonly found in respect to people with disabilities, can be avoided and will, we believe, enable the members of the building profession to get it right the first time. While the booklet is aimed at builders it is a solid reference tool for any community group wanting to ensure their facilities are accessible to everyone in the community.

The cost of the booklet is $5.00 including postage. Anyone wanting more details can contact Sheila King at **accessforall@bigpond.com**.

The Communities in Control video.

We have had to order another batch of the Communities in Control video twin-packs with commuity groups and local councils snapping up the first batch.

If you missed the conference and are keen on seeing the presentations, from keynote speakers including Sir David Henshaw, Shelley Martin, John Thwaites, Peter Costello, Clive Hamilton, Richard Eckersley, Phillip Adams, Mike Pratt and the Hypothetical hosted by Simon Longstaff then you can order the video by clicking on **www.ourcommunity.com.au/files/cic_video_order2004.pdf**.

The speeches are also all available free online at **http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/control/control_article.jsp?articleId=1073**.

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12. 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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