

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 2006 - Issued August 25, 2006

Welcome to the latest edition of *Our Community Matters*, your regular free community sector 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. Our Community 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 donations service that has so far raised almost \$5 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 by emailing kathyr@ourcommunity.com.au

In this Issue

Contents

1. [Community View by Rhonda Galbally - Strong Communities: Ways Forward](#)
2. [Volunteering surfaces as key issue in State of the Community Survey 2006](#)
3. [Community group learning opportunities unveiled – dates for your diary](#)
4. [Using your annual report to market your message](#)
5. [Giving and volunteering web pages keep on getting better](#)
6. [More Good Moves coming for the community sector](#)
7. [Electronic Democracy: new technology fails to make an impact](#)
8. [Legally Speaking: the legal definition of "volunteer"](#)
9. [Reader Feedback – not-for-profit amalgamations](#)
10. [Community Briefs](#)
11. [Good Moves: Community Jobs and \(NEW!!\) Board/Committee vacancies](#)
12. [Fast Forward](#)
13. [About Our Community](#)

Groundbreaking Report Released Strong Communities: Ways Forward

The Hon John Thwaites, Minister for Victorian Communities and Deputy Premier, has just released a groundbreaking report that is aimed at assisting Victorian communities and community groups in the years ahead.

The report – **Strong Communities: Ways Forward** – is an Australian first in its breadth of consultation (involving a massive 2000 people and communities), readability, and practical solutions – containing as it does more than 90 recommendations signalling the realistic reform agenda that communities desire.

The report shines a light on what communities really want – expressing how they think government, business and communities can reshape their outlook, operating culture and programs to best serve Victoria's communities to gain in strength, viability and sustainability.

Strong Communities: Ways Forward is dotted with best-practice stories of community building, as well as great examples of what the Victorian Government is currently doing to renew communities.

Importantly, it provides a fresh perspective on what governments everywhere can do to answer the expressed needs of communities – identifying key challenges to government, business and to the community itself.

The report was developed in response to a request by Minister Thwaites to identify what works and what could work better for community strengthening in Victoria.

The exact brief was to advise Minister Thwaites on “successful initiatives in community building, including volunteering, what works, what are the barriers to success and the lessons that can be applied across projects”.

Strong Communities: Ways Forward Case Studies:

- The Honeysuckle Recreation and Environment Project
- e-ACE (Electronic Atherton Community Enterprise)
- Victorian Volunteer Small Grants
- Just Romans
- Sorghum Sisters Community Enterprise
- Access for All Abilities
- Wimmera Transport Connections Program
- Winda Mara Aboriginal Cooperative Community Dreaming Leadership Project
- Youthcentral
- Young Parents Access Program
- Enterprising Women
- Women Who Mean Business
- Golden Plains Community Planning
- Community Building in Ararat
- Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre
- Tangambalanga Community Centre
- Rosedale Multi-Purpose Community Centre
- Seniors 'Go For Your Life' in Boroondara
- Best Start - Broadmeadows
- Somali Community

The Minister established the Ministerial Advisory Committee for Victorian Communities, Chaired by the former Premier of Victoria, The Honourable Joan Kirner, with Deputy Chair Denis Moriarty of Our Community.

Other Committee members include:

- Ms Mary Salce, Chair, Women in Rural Communities Taskforce
- Mr Paul Briggs, President, Rumbalara Netball and Football Club
- Fr Joe Caddy, Chief Executive Officer, Centacare Catholic Family Services
- Ms Debbie Coyle, Manager, Wimmera Volunteers Inc
- Ms Carmel Guerra, Director, Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues
- Ms Julie Hansen, Former Mayor, Surf Coast Shire
- Ms Janine Kirk, Executive Director, Committee for Melbourne
- Ms Val Lang, Secretary, National Rural Women's Coalition
- Ms Lyndsay Mason, Community Building Projects Officer, Hobsons Bay City Council
- Ms Rae Perry, Chief Operations Officer, Victorian Local Governance Association
- Ms Cath Smith, Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Council of Social Services
- Mr Dave Robson, Director, Industry Training Australia
- Mr Andrew Seager, Head, Business Customer Experience, Westpac Banking Corporation
- Mr Rob Spence, Chief Executive Officer, Municipal Association of Victoria
- Ms Stella Young, Communications Manager, Arts Access

The report is presented in three parts:

- Part A: Introduction and Conceptual Framework
- Part B: Development in Practice and their Learnings
- Part C: Recommendations and Ways Forward

I strongly encourage all Australian community groups to have a look at the report, particularly Part C. This section is an enlightening and exciting read with recommendations grouped under the following headings:

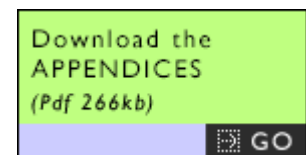
- Whole-of-government Principles and Practice
- Community Planning
- Place-based Community Renewal
- Networks and Partnerships
- Measurement and Evaluation
- Community Infrastructure
- Inclusion and Access
- Funding and Support
- Branding and Communication

Significant kudos needs to go to the Minister for Victorian Communities for commissioning the report and continuing the passion for reform and community ownership.

This report now ensures that Victorian communities will be fair and square at the centre of helping to genuinely reform the way government does business.

Committee Chair The Hon Joan Kirner also deserves significant recognition. Thanks to her Committee – itself a shining example of community diversity – a practical report has now been produced that will be of immeasurable use to both government and Victorian communities.

Rhonda Galbally AO
Chief Executive Officer



[Back to Top](#)

2. Volunteering surfaces as key issue in State of the Community Survey 2006

Volunteering has emerged as a burning issue in Australian community organisations, the 2006 State of the Community Survey has revealed.

The survey of more than 450 Australian community groups, conducted by Our Community in the lead-up to the recent 2006 Communities in Control conference, found that giving time was the best thing people could do to help community organisations.

When asked what the community could do to help the group achieve its mission, the top five responses from community groups were:

- to give more time through volunteering;
- to contribute to lobbying efforts;
- offering pro bono services;
- becoming a member; and
- offering to join the board or committee of management.

“Giving more money” did not even make the top five, indicating that time-based contributions are overwhelmingly favoured by Australian groups.

The top five responses were the same as in 2005, however “giving time through volunteering” jumped to number one spot, garnering 37% of responses in 2006, compared to 28% last year.

Lack of funding appears to be an increasingly pressing issue for Australian community organisations, with 54% of respondents nominating this as the biggest challenge facing their organisation, up 10% from 2005.

Another significant change in perceived challenges from 2005 to 2006 occurred in the area of volunteering. “Difficulties obtaining volunteers” was identified as a top challenge by 14% of respondents to the 2005 survey, rising to 18% in 2006.

Difficulties gaining a public profile (19%), lack of cohesion between various levels of government (18%) and lack of influence over public policy (17%) rounded out the top five challenges in 2006.

Volunteering issues also rose to the surface when respondents were asked what their community group needed to be more effective. In a similar result to last year, most respondents said they needed more funding to be more effective (up from 46% in 2005 to 51% in 2006), with “more political clout”, “more volunteers”, “more and better business partnerships” and “a higher public profile” finished off the top five.

Another major change in this area from 2005 to 2006 was – again – in the area of volunteering, with the percentage of respondents pin-pointing “more volunteers” as a key to effectiveness rising from 16% in 2005 to 21% in 2006.

Another major finding of the State of the Community survey relates to the performance of the boards and committees of management that are overseeing Australia’s community groups.

People’s faith in boards and committees appears to have taken a dramatic dive in the past 12 months, with only 48% of respondents saying the board/committee of their organisation was doing a good job, down from 63% in 2005.

A lack of introspection could be at least in part responsible for this finding, with 29% of organisations saying their board/committee had never conducted a self-evaluation, although this figure was down from 37% in 2005.

The skills most in demand for community group boards and committees were strategic planning, marketing, PR and communications, fundraising, and governance. The major change in this area in the past 12 months occurred in the proportion of organisations seeking fundraising skills for their board/committee, up from 24% in 2005 to 33% in 2006.

The State of the Community survey also asked respondent to indicate who they thought had the most influence or power over Australian community issues – with some surprising results.

The media emerged as top dog when it came to influence over the community, with a third of respondents saying it wielded most influence. The Federal Government came in second (27%), and corporations third (13%).

State and local governments were well down the list, identified as the top influencer by only 7% and 4% of respondents respectively. And in what is perhaps a sign of the times, religious and faith bodies scored the lowest of all the options offered, nominated as the main source of influence over community issues by just 1% of respondents.

When asked who *should* have the most influence or power over Australian communities, the responses were practically reversed, although religious/faith organisations remained close to the bottom of the list on 1%, with only the media and corporations scoring lower.

A total of 38% of respondents said individuals should have the most influence, followed by individual community organisations (16%), and peak community organisations (15%). Local government scored 9% of responses, with federal and state governments being nominated by 5% and 3% of respondents respectively.

Looking at the big picture, respondents were also asked to identify the two biggest challenges facing the community today.

Perhaps not surprisingly from a sample of community sector workers and supporters, exactly half said the biggest challenge was loss of community connection.

This was followed by financial issues (including inflation, interest, rates, petrol prices, etc.), which was nominated by 37% of respondents, inadequate work/life balance (34%), loss of faith in government (18%) and family issues (17%). “Terrorism” was the lowest scoring response, garnering just one tick.

The survey also sought to gauge how the sector as a whole was faring.

When asked how the state of the community sector today compared with 12 months ago, 52% said “about the same”. However, in a worrying sign, a total of 39% said the community sector was either “weaker” or “much weaker” than it was a year ago – a bleaker sentiment than in 2005, when only 21% said the sector had weakened.

Just 9% of respondents to the 2006 survey said the Australian community sector was “stronger” or “much stronger”.

Other results from the 2006 survey included:

- **Income** – The primary source of income for respondents was State Government grants (49%), followed by Federal Government grants (29%) and membership fees (15%). This is a similar result to the 2005 survey, with one major change being a downturn in the number of groups nominating local government grants as a primary source of income, from 19% in 2005 to 11% this year. The number of groups nominating partnerships/sponsorships as a primary source of income increased from 9% in 2005 to 17% in 2006.
- **Financial Health** – The vast majority of respondents reported a healthy financial position. A total of 61% said their group's financial position was "OK", 21% said it was "Good" and 4% said it was "Excellent". A total of 13 said their group's financial position was "Weak" or "Awful". This indicated a slight improvement in fortunes from last year when 16% said their finances were weak or awful.
- **Participation** – A slight majority of respondents (41%) said participation in their organisation (by members, volunteers/ board/committee members, etc.) was about the same as it was a year ago, with 39% saying participation was increasing. However one in five respondents said participation was decreasing.
- **Governance** – 53% of respondents said their organisation had a standard governance structure, with staff focusing on operations and the board/committee focusing on governance. This number was up slightly from 50% in 2005. A total of 5% of respondents said that staff and the board/committee were unclear about their responsibilities, down from 6.6% in 2005.

[Back to Top](#)

3. Community group learning opportunities unveiled – dates for your diary

A huge variety of learning and networking opportunities will be offered for community group board and committee members, staff and volunteers, as well as government grantmakers, with the release of an exciting program of Our Community seminars and conferences.

Events coming up over the next few months will help build the knowledge and capacity of community groups through tailored and highly practical programs.

Among the opportunities coming up on the Our Community calendar include:

- **Killing Me Softly:
The Conflict Resolution Conference**
Friday, September 8, 2006
Moonee Valley Racing Club, Moonee Ponds, Melbourne
Preventing, Negotiating and Resolving Conflict in your Community Organisation
www.ourcommunity.com.au/kms
- **Board Builder Conference 2006:
Better Boards; Better Meetings; Better Staff-Board Relationships; Better Outcomes**
Friday, November 17, 2006
Moonee Valley Racing Club, Moonee Ponds, Melbourne
The national conference for community boards, committees and councils
www.ourcommunity.com.au/boardbuilder2006
- **Best Practice in Grantmaking 2007:
A Practical Conference for Government Grantmakers**
Friday, February 22, 2007
(Venue to be confirmed)
Providing a roadmap to efficiency and effectiveness in contemporary government grantmaking
www.ourcommunity.com.au/bestpracticeconference2007
- **Communities in Control 2007**
June 3, 4 & 5, 2007
Moonee Valley Racing Club, Moonee Ponds, Melbourne
www.ourcommunity.com.au/cic

For more information about Our Community's seminars and conferences, contact Lisa Reed by email to lisar@ourcommunity.com.au or telephone (03) 9320 6820.

[Back to Top](#)

4. Using your annual report to market your message

All over Australia, community organisations are now preparing to pull together their annual reports.

The best annual reports are those that achieve the three “I’s” – being innovative, inspiring and informative. The worst ones are, well, just plain dull.

Community groups whose reports fall into the latter category are missing a valuable opportunity to present their best face to current or potential sponsors and funders, business supporters, MPs and anyone they are working with now or may work with or want to impress in the future.

It’s a way to showcase what you’ve achieved during the previous 12 months and where you plan to get to in the next year and beyond.

Annual reports also provide a chance to demonstrate to the world your aims and visions for the coming year, and your group’s overriding ethos – what it is that drives your work.

There are some steps every group can take to help turn their annual report into a valuable marketing tool:

- **Put someone in charge** of coordinating the job to make sure it is not rushed or – worse – forgotten. Give this person the authority to command others to contribute.
- **Give the report a similar “look”** to your other documents. Pay extra attention to the front cover – make it look attractive and professional.
- **Make sure that the content of your report is clear**, concise, consistent and upbeat. Include information about your group’s programs, achievements and some case studies to illustrate these successes.
- **Include high quality photos** and graphics and keep text-based contributions such as the CEO’s and Chair’s reports as brief and lively as possible.
- **Include lots of lists** – of donors, supporters, sponsors, board members, helpers. Make sure you thank them too.
- **Take special care with financial information** and graphics – have your treasurer make sure they are clear and accurate.
- **Include your contact details**, website and email addresses, and some ways people can help your group – where or how they can volunteer, donate, discuss sponsorship or get more information.
- **Distribute the report widely** – to group members, sponsors, supporters, donors, volunteers, fundraisers, politicians and members of the local council and local media.

Reporting for Fun

Children’s cancer charity Camp Quality is one group that has embraced wholeheartedly the concept of the annual report being a valuable marketing tool.

As profiled in a recent edition of Our Community’s [Board Builder](#) newsletter, the organisation wanted to show its supporters that fun is an important element of its work. It did this by introducing a light-hearted style and even a sound component that involved a chicken clucking whenever the page with the financials opened up. Now that’s innovative!

Camp Quality is quick to point out that the extra effort in pulling together a great report has paid off in spades, helping to lift the group’s profile and sparking some large donations.



Annual reports do not need to be stuffy and staid. Choose a format and a style that suits the mission and outlook of your organisation.

More information about marketing your organisation can be found at the Marketing, Media and Post Centre – a joint project between Our Community and Australia Post – at www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing.

[Back to Top](#)

5. Giving and volunteering web pages keep on getting better

Nobody involved with a community group needs any reminding that Australian society relies absolutely on the 4.5 million volunteers who put in 750 million hours of voluntary work each year.

Pitching in to help out is the primary way of strengthening communities, and here at Our Community we do our best to press our website visitors to take an active role in the organisations they support rather than passively falling in behind.

These days volunteering means more than just dropping in on disadvantaged people to leave soup and blankets and good advice. Modern volunteering involves working with people and communities, not just for them – becoming involved in their activities and committed to their goals. It involves people identifying what matters to them and throwing all their enthusiasm behind it.

In an effort to help people find those organisations and causes closest to their hearts, minds and capabilities, Our Community has recently introduced a number of new web pages in the [Giving Centre](#), which is supported by Westpac.

Starting from the main “Giving Time” entry page at www.ourcommunity.com.au/volunteering, we ask visitors to analyse their situation, asking:

- **“What are your priorities?”**
You want the world to be different – perhaps a little different, with a new bus stop at the end of the road, or perhaps completely different, with a new heaven and a new earth, or perhaps something in between. Think out the changes you want to see, and find out who’s working for them now.
- **“What do you have to offer?”**
Are you a leader? A clear thinker? A warm and loving person? An expert on trains/birds/scones/laws/posters/cows/whatever? Do you have a strong back, or a medical degree, or a lifetime of experience in the real world? Think a bit about what side of yourself is going to be brought to the front in your volunteer work.
- **“What’s needed?”**
Sometimes there’s an overriding volunteer priority, and everybody has to jump on to the fire truck or raise money for flood or fire victims. Some things are urgent and important, but a volunteer without training would just be in the way. Look around for something that needs to be done where your contribution can make a difference.
- **“What restrictions are there on your participation?”**
The contribution people can make is restricted by
 - geography (if they live in Alice Springs they can’t volunteer for a surf club)
 - resources (if they haven’t got a car they can’t volunteer far afield; if they haven’t got a computer they can’t offer to edit the annual reports)
 - internet access (if they don’t have a fast link they can’t be a virtual volunteer)
 - other commitments (if they only have a hour a week free from work and children they shouldn’t try and take on the club presidency)

Our Community’s new volunteering pages are designed to steer people to the causes and organisations that will best suit their circumstances. Visitors can opt to search for volunteering opportunities by geographic area, or in their area of interest (the environment, say, or youth work), or in organisations looking for their particular skills.

We hope that this will make volunteering easier, increasing the proportion of people who make it through the inquiry processes and come knocking at the door of your organisation wanting to be involved.

We’d like to improve our offerings, and so we’d be most grateful for any feedback you can offer.

- What do you think of the Our Community volunteering site?
- How would you improve it?
- How do your volunteers find out about you now?

Send your responses to Kathy Richardson at kathyr@ourcommunity.com.au with “volunteering” in the subject line.

[Back to Top](#)

6. More Good Moves coming up for the community sector

Since it was launched in October last year, Our Community's jobs website and regular *Good Moves* jobs bulletin has gone from strength to strength, providing a unique opportunity for community organisations to tell a highly targeted audience about the jobs they have available.

The *Good Moves* bulletin carries a large variety of job ads at all levels, in all community sectors, and in all states and territories. Job ads are also posted once a month in this newsletter (see [Part 11](#)) – magnifying the reach of the advertisement.

Capitalising on the success of the *Good Moves* initiative – and in line with our belief that serving on a board or committee is one of the most valuable contributions a person can make to the community – we have now decided to extend the service to include unpaid community group board and committee vacancies alongside the jobs.

From this week, vacancies listed on the Board Matching Service at www.ourcommunity.com.au/board-match will not only be posted on the Our Community website, but also listed in the weekly *Good Moves* bulletin, as well as this newsletter.

This free service is designed to help community organisations improve the effectiveness of their boards and committees by opening them up to a wider pool of candidates and thereby increasing their chances of finding the people and the skills they need to prosper.

The move will also help promote to the wider community the many benefits of serving on a community group board or committee – including development of new skills, improved networks, and a stronger, more meaningful connection to their local community.

Community organisations wanting to post a board vacancy can do so at www.ourcommunity.com.au/board-match. All new positions will be included in the *Good Moves* bulletin.

Of course, paid jobs will continue to be the focus of *Good Moves* – ads can be posted or viewed at www.ourcommunity.com.au/jobs. The advertisement rate for jobs will remain at a low \$30 per listing, while board/committee positions will be listed without charge.

For more information on the *Good News* service, contact Kate Caldecott at katec@ourcommunity.com.au or telephone (03) 9320 6804.

[Back to Top](#)

7. Electronic Democracy – new technology fails to make an impact

The impacts of new computing and communications technologies on democratic processes and participation in Australia are explored in a new report out from the Democratic Audit of Australia thinktank.

The report – *Electronic Democracy? The Impact of New Communications Technologies on Australian Democracy* – comes to the depressing but unarguable conclusion that we have in general made very little use of these technologies.

“Overall, the audit demonstrates that new media technologies have not, in themselves, led to a dramatic opening up of democratic institutions or organisations in Australia,” it says.

As the report stresses, new computers and communications technologies have no direct political implications in themselves; political changes will come about only if we twist technology to our own purposes.

Australian “parties, parliaments, and government departments have not been particularly proactive in taking on these opportunities to enhance participation”, and in the upshot “key aspects of the political system such as parties, parliaments and the public service are no more open to public participation following the introduction of these technologies than they were prior to their advent.”

Still, the report finds some “positive and progressive” uses of new technology, as well as many “cynical or anti-democratic activities”.

Positive examples include:

- Political parties, particularly the minors, using the technology to spread their views outside the mainstream commercial media;
- New forms of direct communication between the public and individual parliamentarians;
- Enhanced forms of participation by government organisations through more sophisticated online systems; and
- Alternative news and media vehicles, virtual protest and pressure groups, and the mobilisation of citizens into political action.

Negatives include:

- The general avoidance of direct communication between government agencies and the community in policy development processes.
- The continuing dominance of political communication by highly concentrated mass media;
- The continuing resource problems with fostering grassroots participation;
- The increasing use of technology to monitor citizens' behaviour and the move to a 'surveillance society'; and
- A general reluctance in the wider Australian community to engage politically through new communications channels.

It's not over till the fat lady downloads her aria, however, and the report concludes that "the process of developing an information society remains an ongoing project".

Political actors continue to learn and experiment and given the high speed of change in our digital age, there remains the distinct possibility that we are still in the transition phase of changes with significant democratic implications.

The Democratic Audit of Australia is funded by the Australian National University and the Australian Research Council "to promote public debate about democratic issues and how Australia's democratic arrangements might be improved".

The full document is online at

http://democratic.audit.anu.edu.au/papers/focussed_audits/20060809_chen_et_al_electr_dem.pdf

Lessons for the community sector

All not-for-profits with advocacy functions should look carefully at how they're using the new media to spread and manage information about themselves and their policy ideas.

- Do your website, your e-newsletters, your online polling, your text messaging, and your podcasts work together to give a complete picture of your work and a cue for policy suggestions?
- Of the things you do, which of them should change to meet the challenges of the new technology?

[Back to Top](#)

8. Legally Speaking: the legal definition of "volunteer"

As a new feature of 'Our Community Matters', we will be providing a regular column answering some of the frequently asked legal questions we get at Our Community. The responses are provided thanks to Richard Thompson, Principal of Archer Thompson Lawyers.

What is a Volunteer?

There is no single definition of a volunteer. The courts, the Commonwealth and the states have slightly different definitions depending on the context (tax, defence, employment, insurance etc).

A common factor in almost all definitions is that there is no payment, however there are some exceptions, as we see in some of the more common definitions of a "volunteer" below:

1. Blacks Law Dictionary defines a "volunteer" as "a person who gives his or her services without any express or implied remuneration".

2. The Oxford Dictionary defines "volunteer" as "unpaid (voluntary work)".

3. The COMMONWEALTH VOLUNTEERS PROTECTION ACT 2003 says people doing work on a "voluntary basis" are those who receive no remuneration (other than reimbursement of expenses), or those who do the work for less than the going rate. (It also specifies that to fit into the definition of "volunteer" the person must not be under a court order to do the work.)

4. In the recently amended **WORKPLACE RELATIONS ACT 1996** (commonly referred to as Work Choices) volunteers are not defined, however *voluntary emergency management activity* is defined and excluded from the termination of employment sections. The Act says an employer must not terminate an employee's employment if they are temporarily absent from work because they are carrying out a "voluntary emergency management activity" – and to qualify under term, the employee must be dealing with an emergency or natural disaster on a voluntary basis (receiving an honorarium, gratuity or similar payment does not exclude you from this definition) and must be a member of (or have a "member-like association with") a recognised emergency management body.

5. In *Clark and Secretary, Department of Family and Community Services [2005] AATA 625 (29 June 2005)* the Administrative Appeals Tribunal stated that the definition of voluntary work (contained in [s 1035\(3\)](#) of the Social Security Act 1991) undertaken for charity, welfare or community organisations did not include care provided on a voluntary basis for individuals. "The definition clearly requires that the work be provided for charitable, welfare or community organisations," the Tribunal said.

6. Under the Victorian **WORKING WITH CHILDREN ACT 2005 – SECT 8**, [child-related work](#) includes voluntary work and practical training as well as paid employment. Section 27 exempts volunteers whose [child](#) is participating or ordinarily participates in the relevant activity from the children check.

Are volunteers covered by Equal Opportunity laws?

Yes, Equal Opportunity laws apply to all, including volunteers. Check the relevant Commonwealth and state legislation for details of the exceptions which may apply to all workers, not just volunteers.

Richard Thompson is the principal lawyer with Archer Thompson Lawyers, a Melbourne-based firm with associated offices in Hobart, Sydney and the Gold Coast, and arrangements with like-minded firms throughout the rest of Australia. Richard has been advising and representing not-for-profit organisations for 17 years and provides specialist advice in employment and commercial law matters. The firm offers not-for-profit clients free initial consultations and an upfront estimate of all legal costs. Call 0411 867 795 or email richard@archerthompson.com.au for more information.

[Back to Top](#)

9. Reader Feedback – not-for-profit amalgamations

We had a lot of feedback following last month's article by Rhonda Galbally on the *BRW* magazine calls for not-for-profit amalgamations. Below we have reprinted just a few of the responses we received.

Coordinator of the Barwon Network of Neighbourhood Centres, Kylie Pollock, writes:

"Bravo Rhonda! Amalgamation of community groups would be madness. It would be counter-productive to community participation and self-determination and would increase the burden of disease."

Louise Chocholis also agreed with Rhonda's arguments:

"Absolute agreement with Rhonda Galbally's article," she wrote.

However, management consultant John Coxon took a rather different view:

"As a consultant and project manager working within the nfp sector I am acutely aware of areas of duplication. I am also involved with a group of nfps that are proactively addressing this issue through the formation of an alliance.

"The call by *BRW* for rationalisation of the not-for-profit sector makes sound business sense, after all the aim of the nfp sector is to direct

[FLASHBACK] Not-for-profit Amalgamations

"The recent call in BRW to rationalise the numbers of groups and to get them to amalgamate might be good for charities, but it is disaster for prevention if it also by default comes to apply to community groups. We need more not fewer participative community groups. Every parent who has lost a child needs a Compassionate Friends self-help group to join. Every person with a disability and their parents should have a group to join for support and to advocate for their rights. Every neighbourhood needs a community house. Every person from a different ethnic background should have a group to join to celebrate and preserve their cultural life. Every community member needs local sports, recreation and arts groups such as choirs and community theatre groups to join ...

"Whatever the outcome for charities, strong, functional community groups that exist for people to join and participate in should flower like a thousand blooms, and they should be resourced to bloom most particularly in disadvantaged areas and for disadvantaged groups – run by and for communities."

funding into programs for those in need; not the building of mini-empires.

“Few would dispute that the not-for-profit sector operates on lean margins, in many instances almost zero margins. This impacts on salaries paid to staff and the ability to hire and retain the best people for the job. Rationalisation may lead to improved working conditions and it may lead to greater opportunities within the sector. It is possible it will reduce the level of staff poaching that currently takes place as people seek additional challenges within their work.

“... Is there a negative aspect to rationalisation? I don't believe so. It is possible some agencies would merge with others and some familiar names would disappear. It is possible there would be a short-term drop in the levels of employment or recruitment, though this would reverse with time. It is possible the distance between provider and participant will increase, however that will be resolved through skilled management – and maybe, that will be the biggest point of resistance. The group most likely to have to change during rationalisation is management. In the short term there will be a need for fewer managers; in the long term there will be a need for better, more effective management. Many smaller agencies are headed by their founder, some of which may find it difficult to see past egos to view the bigger picture. Others will survive, yet as organisations grow, different types of managers with different skills will be needed, which will, in turn, place pressure on those survivors.”

[Back to Top](#)

10. Community Briefs

Partnerships awards announced

Alcoa, IBM, the Yothu Yindi Foundation and the Brotherhood of St Laurence were among the organisations recognised for excellence in community-business partnerships as part of the National Community Business Partnership Week between August 21 and 25.

The state and territory winners of Prime Ministers Awards for Excellence in Community Business Partnerships were announced at functions held all over Australia during Partnership Week.

The winners were recognised in four categories – for small, medium and larger businesses in each state and territory, as well as for multi-state companies and their community partners.

Each of the state and territory winners is now in the running for the national prize for the top community-business partnerships in their category.

For a list of the state and territory awards, refer to the Prime Minister's Community-Business Partnership website: www.partnerships.gov.au/events/events_cbp_week.shtml.

Desperately seeking community

Speaking of partnerships, a company based in Goulburn, NSW, has approached Our Community seeking a community partner in that area.

This is a terrific opportunity for a community organisation based in Goulburn to link up with a company that is motivated to make a positive difference to the community.

If you're interested in this opportunity, enter your details in the Community-Business Partnerships "Matching Service" section of the Our Community website at www.ourcommunity.com.au/partnerships.

This serves as a useful reminder to all community organisations around Australia to get themselves listed on the Matching Service so that like-minded businesses looking to form a partnership can find you.

The Community-Business Partnerships Centre and Matching Service – an initiative of the Australian Government's Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs that is sustained by Our Community – also contains a partnerships Wizard, plus dozens of free help sheets, ideas and other resources to help you learn how to put your best face forward when looking for a partnership with a business.

Marketing guidance online

A new resource has been released to help community groups get to grips with all their marketing, promotional, mail-out and media needs.

The brochure – available to download from the Our Community website - has been produced to help guide community groups through the Marketing, Media and Post Centre.

The Centre – at www.ourcommunity.com.au/mmp - is an initiative of Our Community and Australia Post that is designed to help community groups to improve their marketing, increase media support and coverage, and stage effective mail campaigns.

A huge range of free resources – including a library of free layouts and images, more than a hundred free help sheets, a list of media contacts and a range of other tips and tools – are available on the site.

The brochure can be downloaded at www.ourcommunity.com.au/files/mmpbrochure.pdf.

ATO update

The Australian Tax Office has updated [GiftPack](#), its information pack on the extremely complicated area of what it takes to be a deductible gift recipient, to include such things as [new DGR categories](#).

It has also released a new publication on [Fringe benefits tax for non-profit organisations](#) – and we must remind you all again that FBT for not-for-profits involves not just lunch vouchers but salary packaging devices that can make your staff budget spread a great deal further.

Click on the name of the publication above to go to the relevant ATO page or type these addresses into your browser:

- GiftPack - <http://ato.gov.au/nonprofit/content.asp?doc=/content/77184.htm>
- Fringe benefits tax for not-for-profit organisations - <http://ato.gov.au/nonprofit/content.asp?doc=/content/76660.htm>

You must do this today

Want to save money for your organisation?

Want fee-free bank accounts?

Want better service?

Want a full range of products tailored to the community sector?

Want a FREE review of your banking needs?

Our Community and Westpac have just launched the “Community Solutions – Better Banking for Community Groups” suite of services.

Email denism@ourcommunity.com.au to arrange for a Westpac representative to contact you.

The process: A very friendly Westpac representative will visit you at a time suitable to you, with the aim of gaining an understanding of your organisation’s administration and finance processes and needs - and how this is applied to your current banking arrangements. Westpac also wants to find out what you dislike about your current banking so they can put together a customised package for your organisation.

You will receive advice on:

- **Cutting costs**
- **Streamlining current administration processes**
- **Increasing returns on working capital and investments**

Email denism@ourcommunity.com.au



ourcommunity.com.au



Community Geographic Domain Names now available

Community organisations can now apply to set up an internet address that reflects the geographic address of their locality.

Community groups that are able to demonstrate that they represent the local community can now apply for a Community Geographic Domain Name (CGDM) via the website at www.aucd.org.au.

The world-first project is designed to aid the creation of community website portals that reflect community interests such as local business, tourism, historical and cultural information, as well as information about special interest groups, local events and news.

Sites already set up include www.ballarat.vic.au, www.bathurst.nsw.au, www.wollongong.nsw.au, and www.wyndham.wa.au.

The CGDM website contains application forms, as well as:

- A Search Facility – to allow community groups to find out instantly if their geographic place name website is still available
- A How-to Kit – to help in the completion of applications and the development of community websites
- “Community Site in a Box” – an optional “off the shelf” website, including a content management system (a cost applies)

The site is at www.aucd.org.au

Community organisations urged to have their say on ICT

Australian not-for-profit organisations are being urged to take part in a new online survey designed to provide information intelligence on how Australian groups are using technology and what they want for the future.

Survey organisers - the Not-For-Profit Network, the National Nonprofit ICT Coalition consortium and Digital Business Insights – believe that the use of information and communications technology (ICT) by not-for-profit organisations has become a key issue for the sector.

However the lack of comprehensive and accurate information on this issue is hindering planning for service delivery and policy development.

“The right choice of ICT can help increase productivity and improve service delivery in any organisation,” the organisers says.

“The wrong choice of ICT can actually reduce productivity or worsen service delivery, so it’s important to know what works best in our industry, what doesn’t and why.”

You can find out more about the survey – which closes on September 9, 2006 – at www.communit.info/nnic/survey.php or complete it online at www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=421932460447.

Accounting resources available for download

As we reported in last month’s newsletter, a new system of accounting for community organisations is now up and running in Queensland.

The standard Chart of Accounts and data dictionary was developed by Queensland University of Technology’s Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies (CPNS) for small not-for-profit organisations that receive government funding.

The project aims to rationalise the acquittal requirements placed on not-for-profit organisations by government funders.

“At present there is little consistency between departments in the financial treatment and accounting terms used in grant and tender reporting,” CPNS says.

“This creates a heavy compliance burden on (not-for-profit organisations) when acquitting grants. They are

often required to go back to vouchers and manually recalculate the cost of financial transactions when reporting on expenditure in specific programs.”

Chart of Accounts project resources are now available online at <https://olt.qut.edu.au/bus/DYO/index.cfm?fa=displayPage&rNum=1856978>.

Community organisations can download (in Excel or PDF format) the full 22-page Chart of Accounts document, or individual documents relating to assets, liabilities, equity, income, cost of goods sold, and expenses. Pre-populated data files (in MYOB and QuickBooks formats) and training manuals are also available.

CPNS director Prof. Myles McGregor Lowndes said the New South Wales and Victorian Governments were also moving to introduce similar systems in their states.

Turning barcodes into cash

Soy milk manufacturer Soy Life will be giving away a cash prize of \$5000 a month to community groups such as schools, sporting clubs and youth groups as part of a Soy Life Community Fund promotion.

To go in the running for the cash, groups need to complete a nomination form, providing some brief information about what they need the money for, and lodge it along with 50 Soy Life product barcodes.

The promotion is expected to last for at least the next six months, but organisations need to enter their details only once to go in the running for the monthly prize.

Eligible projects could include renovation of a local clubhouse or hall, support for a fundraising drive, upgrading of school equipment, etc.

The cash prize will go to one entry per month, with the winner selected by a Soy Life judging panel.

The first monthly winner will be announced at the end of next month. Find out more or download a nomination form at www.soylife.com.au.

Breaching the distance between HQ and the regions

In the years since humankind first came down from the trees there have probably been no more than a handful of occasions when the words “Head office is on the phone” have been greeted with a sincere “Oh, good.”

Friction between HQ and the regions will probably always be with us.

A recent UK [survey](#) by consultants nfpSynergy looked into how HQ–regional relationships were functioning in UK charities, looking at the balance between the need for central consistency and the need to tailor plans to local contexts.

The results were largely negative. Fewer than one in three respondents thought that their organisational structure had achieved the right regional/HQ balance. Barely one in three was positive about the consultation/action balance. In addition, only 40% felt there was good quality communication between the HQ and the regions.

Individual efforts to fix problems often make things worse, with interviewees saying things like “How can you instigate cultural change and foster understanding when those who are moaning about it are actually part of the problem?” or “I tried to get out and visit site offices, but they just complained that I was there to check up on what they were doing.”

Healthy tension is no bad thing, the report concludes, but ‘us versus them’ blinkers are dangerous and can have a negative impact on the brand, the volunteers, fundraising, and organisational cohesion generally.

Full details of the report are posted as a PDF at <http://dotm1.net/t.aspx?l=194663&i=59620045>.

11. Community Jobs & Board/Committee vacancies



Good Moves :: Jobs Bulletin

www.ourcommunity.com.au

JOB VACANCY LISTINGS (Paid Positions)

Australian Capital Territory

Job Title	Organisation	
Advocacy Officer	Amnesty International Australia	Details
National Director	Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia Inc.	Details
Office Administrator	Focus ACT	Details

New South Wales

Job Title	Organisation	
Manager - Activism	Amnesty International Australia	Details
Fundraising Project Manager	Amnesty International Australia	Details
Human Resources Manager	Amnesty International Australia	Details
Indigenous Rights Campaigner	Amnesty International Australia	Details
Youth Coordinator	Amnesty International Australia	Details
Centre	Hunter Volunteer Centre Inc.	Details
Afghani Case Worker (for newly arrived migrants and refugee families)	Auburn Migrant Resource Centre	Details
Iraqi Case Worker (for newly arrived migrants and refugee families)	Auburn Migrant Resource Centre	Details
Families Support Co-ordinator - Families First Project (for newly arrived migrants and refugee families)	Auburn Migrant Resource Centre	Details
Administration and Member Services Officer - \$35,000pa	North Sydney Chamber of Commerce	Details

South Australia

Job Title	Organisation	
Actions Coordinator	Amnesty International Australia	Details

Victoria

Job Title	Organisation	
Community Development Officer - Metro Access	Manningham City Council	Details
Housing Project Officer (HPO)	Kids Under Cover	Details
Vicnord Manager	Vicnord	Details
Business Manager - Not for profit	Rusher Rogers Recruiting	Details
ArtLife and Art Day West Coordinator	Footscray Community Arts Centre	Details
Professional In Residence, Community Relations	Footscray Community Arts Centre	Details
Program Manager	Footscray Community Arts Centre	Details
Program Manager	MACE Incorporated	Details
Donor Development Officer	UnitingCare SHARE Community Appeal	Details
Pancake Day Media Officer	UnitingCare	Details
Executive Officer	Changemakers Australia	Details
Marketing & Events Officer	Cystic Fibrosis Victoria	Details
Parish Pastoral Associate	Saint Ignatius Catholic Church, Richmond	Details
Director of Development	Unable to disclose	Details

BOARD/COMMITTEE VACANCY LISTINGS (Volunteer Positions)

Job Title	Organisation	
General Board Member	Bendigo Animal Shelter (VIC)	Details
Various positions in Housing Associations across NSW	NSW Federation of Housing Associations	Details
Treasurer, General Board Member	Garden of Eden Inc. (VIC)	Details
Treasurer, General Board Member	Barwon CASA Counselling Services (VIC)	Details
General Board Member x 2	Interchange Inner East (VIC)	Details

Good Moves Newsletter - Your best choice to find and advertise a job/board vacancy

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. People can sign up to receive their own copy at www.ourcommunity.com.au/signup.

If you would like to reproduce anything in this newsletter in your own newsletters or websites, you are free to do so. Please just add a small credit line, "courtesy of www.ourcommunity.com.au" and a direct link to the www.ourcommunity.com.au site if on a web page.

13. About Our Community

Our Community is a world-leading social enterprise providing:

1. www.ourcommunity.com.au - Australia's most useful website and publishing house, encompassing the nation's largest and most diverse membership base and 12 knowledge and service hubs – accelerating the impact of Australia's 700,000 community organisations
2. [Australia's Giving Centre](#) – Helping individuals and business give in every way
3. [Australian Institute for Community Practice and Governance](#) - practical and accessible certificated training delivered locally through our training Institute
4. [Centre for Best Practice in Grantmaking](#) - the unique suite of grantmaking services for government
5. [Centre for Community-Business Partnerships](#) - cutting edge Corporate Social Responsibility resources for large, medium and small business and community organisations

Our Community's website currently consists of 15 major Centres of Excellence.

Make a Difference

- [Australian Giving Centre](#): Helping Individuals and Workplaces Give in Every Way
- [Centre for Community-Business Partnerships](#): Connect, Make a Difference and Form a Partnership
- [Boards, Committees & Governance Centre](#): Build a Better Board; Be a Better Board Member; and Find a Board Position

Find & Manage Money

- [Community Funding Centre](#): Helping all Community Groups and Schools Find Money
- [Community Financial Centre](#): Banking Solutions and Services
- [Centre for Best Practice in Grantmaking](#): Achieving Best Practice with Grants, Awards and Scholarship Programs

Build Capacity

- [Marketing, Media & Post Centre](#): Delivering Better Results for Community Groups
- [Australian Institute of Community Practice & Governance \(AICPG\)](#): The A-Z of Training & Resources for Managing Community Groups
- [Leadership Centre](#): Community Groups Can Do: Leadership
- [Communities in Control](#): Giving Voice – and Support – to Grassroots Community Groups
- [Jobs / Recruitment](#): The First Place for Good Moves in the Community Sector
- [Centre for What Works](#): The First and Best Place for Community

Buy Supplies & Be Informed

- [Community Marketplace](#): Providing all Community Groups with Excellent Value Products and Services
- [Insurance & Risk Management Centre](#): Helping Community Groups Manage Risk & Get Insurance
- [TechCommunity Centre](#): Technology Resources and Services for Community Groups
- [Calendar of Key Events](#): Listing of nationally significant events

If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, please email service@ourcommunity.com.au and put "Unsubscribe-OCM" in the subject line.