

# COVID-19

## Community Sector Impact Survey



INSTITUTE OF  
**COMMUNITY DIRECTORS**  
AUSTRALIA  
► Knowledge ► Connections ► Credentials



Proudly supported by:  
**ourcommunity.com.au**  
Where not-for-profits go for help



## About the survey

Our Community conducted an online survey of the not-for-profit sector in late April 2020. A total of 366 individuals responded.

The survey was designed to help us understand what impact the COVID-19 pandemic is having on the Australian not-for-profit sector, particularly small-medium organisations, with a view to mobilising help for the sector during the **GivingTuesdayNow** campaign (May 5-26, 2020).

The survey opened at 4pm on Tuesday April 28 and closed at 11pm on Thursday April 30.

## About the not-for-profit sector

There are more than 600,000 not-for-profit organisations in Australia, together employing more than 1 million people (almost 10% of the Australian workforce). The 2017 Australian Charities Report found the sector had total revenue of \$146.1 billion. While it is well recognised for its enormous social contribution to Australia, the sector makes a massive economic contribution as well. The sector covers many activities and services, spanning health and wellbeing, housing and homelessness, disaster relief, animal welfare, sports, religion, the environment, education and social justice.

## About Our Community

**Our Community** is a social enterprise and accredited B Corporation that services the Australian not-for-profit sector, and the organisations that support the sector.

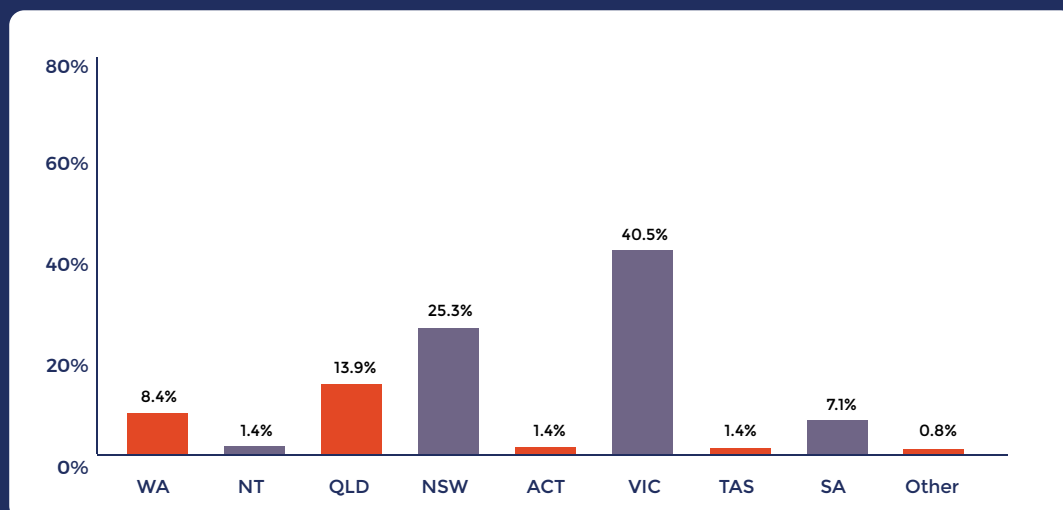
Our Community's mission is to build stronger communities through stronger community organisations. We work towards that goal by providing advice, connections, training and easy-to-use tech for the people and organisations sharing the same motivation.

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, Our Community launched the **Save Our Sector (SOS) campaign**, providing free information, tools and practical advice designed to help not-for-profit organisations navigate the many challenges thrown up by the crisis. These resources include news updates, instructional help sheets, policy templates and webinars.

## Sample

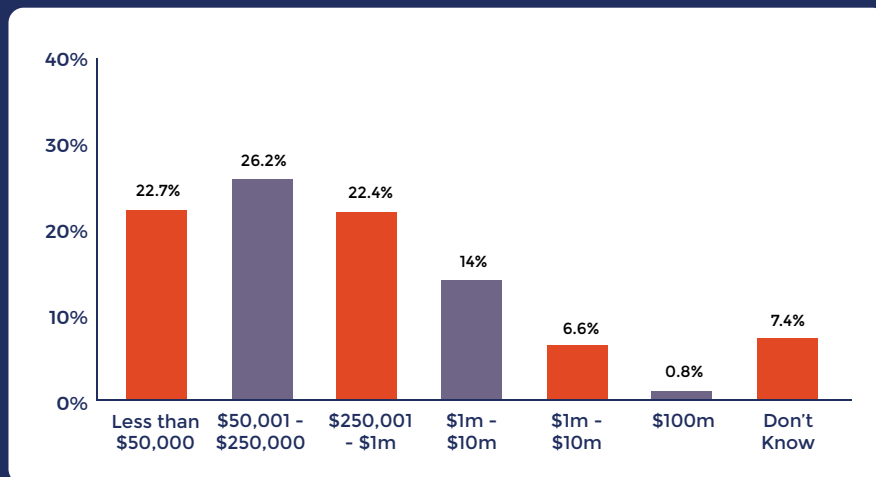
A total of 366 individuals completed Our Community's April 2020 survey. The sample was dominated by organisations in the eastern states, but all states and territories were represented.

### Q1. Organisation headquarters



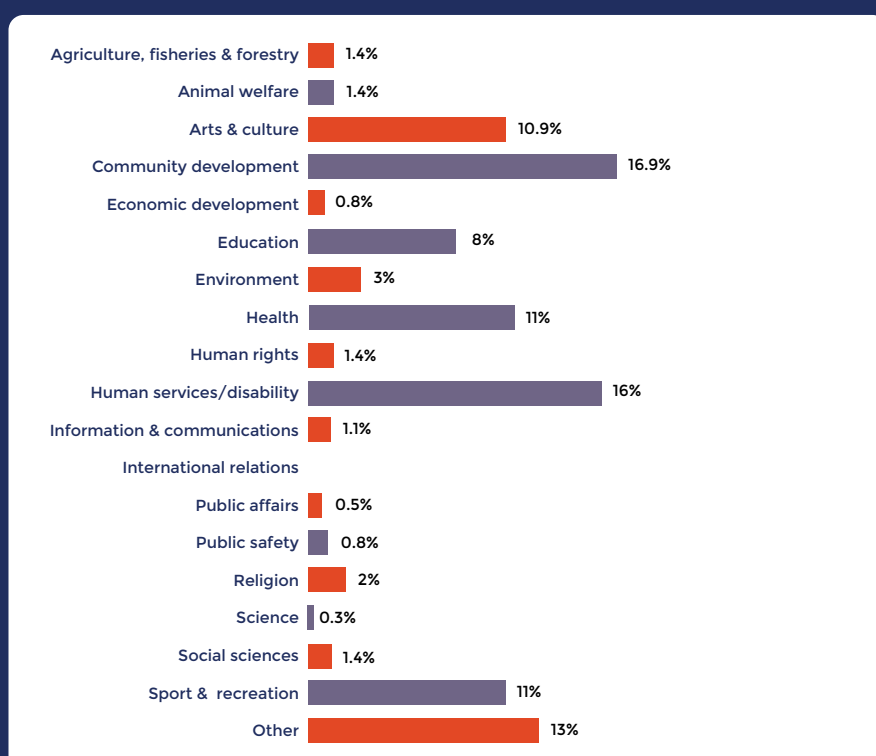
Most respondents represented small-medium not-for-profit organisations: 49% of respondents were from small organisations (with annual revenue of less than \$250,000); 22% were from medium organisations (\$250,000–\$1 million) and 21% were from large organisations (\$1 million+).

### Q3. Organisation size (annual revenue)



A majority of respondents came from the community development, human services, health, arts and culture, sport and recreation, and education sectors. Together these comprised 74% of the sample.

### Q4. Sector distribution



# NAVIGATING DISRUPTION

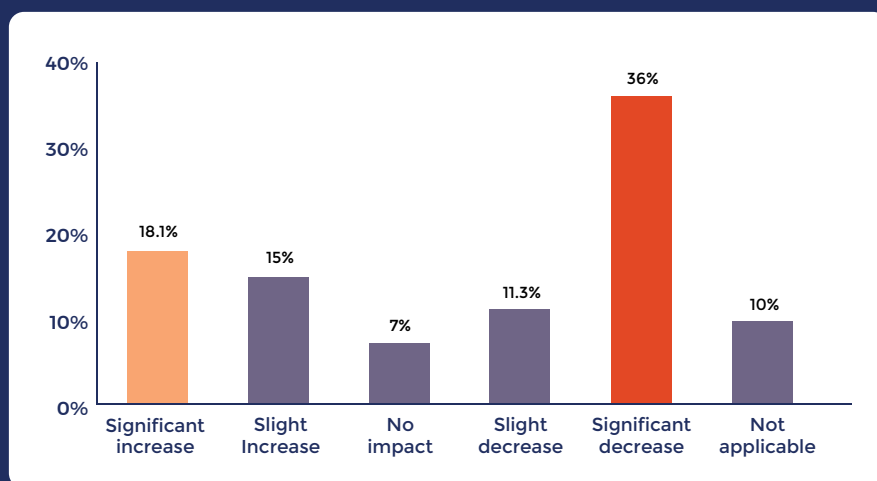
## Demand for services: a tale of two sectors

Our survey unearthed a sector that's split between organisations that have had a surge in demand for their services, and those experiencing a downturn in demand, with not many organisations in between.

Almost half of respondents (47%) experienced a **decrease** in demand (of those, 36% reported a *significant* decrease), while 33% experienced an **increase** in demand (18% reported a *significant* increase).

Only 7% of respondents said they had experienced no impact.

### Q5. How has COVID-19 affected demand for your services?



### Sample of comments

#### DEMAND DOWN

- 👍 "Facility closed to all participants"
- 👍 "We can no longer run our sport"
- 👍 "All activities in our village hall & recreation ground have had to cease."
- 👍 "Closure of schools has curtailed in situ delivery of programs and services"
- 👍 "We are a community orchestra and live performances are currently banned. Our audiences fit in the group of over 100 category. All income from performance has ceased"
- 👍 "Golf courses closed so no income but all the same expenses"
- 👍 "Our Cinema has closed by Govt order"
- 👍 "The Community House is closed so demand for all usual services has ceased"
- 👍 "We provide support services for over 500 other non-profit groups. Most have stopped operating for time being"
- 👍 "We have had to cancel all our courses up until June, and possibly beyond"
- 👍 "We have had to (temporarily) close our doors and our volunteers (at this stage) no longer have a place to serve"
- 👍 "Golf course closed, no income, no social interaction with other members"
- 👍 "We've effectively shut down and will see significantly decreased income and hopefully decreased expenditure to match"

## Sample of comments

### DEMAND UP

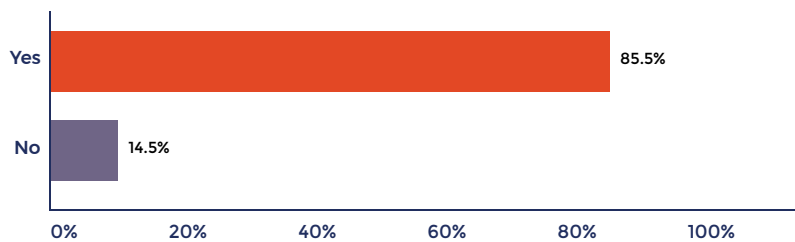
- 👍 "We operate a family violence response service and we are experiencing unprecedented demand"
- 👍 "Our food program has had great demands put on it"
- 👍 "More people needing material aid"
- 👍 "Need to communicate more with members regarding anxiety due to immunocompromised susceptibility"
- 👍 "People more isolated due to inability to communicate via phone / video chat, have been reaching out to us for support and understanding"
- 👍 "Assist(ing) with transport and shopping has increased"

## The impact of social distancing

Not-for-profits have not been spared the immense disruption brought about by social distancing rules designed to halt the spread of the novel coronavirus. A total of 86% of respondents said their work had been affected by these rules.

As the comments show, some groups have had their activities curtailed as a result of social distancing rules; others have adapted and continue their work in a different format; some have closed.

### Q6. Have social distancing laws impacted on your ability to carry on with your work?



## Sample of comments

- 👍 "We have cancelled all our volunteers, volunteer programs and Friends / Landcare Group involvement. A small team of staff are struggling with large workloads which we usually bowl over easily with our many volunteer partners."
- 👍 "Members (volunteers) unable to provide face-to-face support due to members being older and higher risk. Communication via phone and WhatsApp."
- 👍 "We can no longer fund raise or have our 2 volunteer shops open, these shops at the hospital generate 80% of our revenue."
- 👍 "We have had to close the centre and try a limited online approach to our offerings"
- 👍 "Have had to close our homeless services involving volunteer contact, which is most of our operations."

### 👍 "Can't support needy seniors"

👍 "1. events cancelled. 2. fund raising decreased 3. member social meeting groups cancelled 4. increased online activity which increases workload. 5. cancellation of planned funded research activities due to loss of funding."

👍 "Groups have ceased that run on a weekly basis at the cottage. School programs have ceased. Gym for community cannot operate. Community cannot meet for cuppas etc."

👍 "Ban on activities on NSW Crown Reserves. No camping, no family gatherings, no ANZAC Day service in the village hall (normally attended by 300 people in a village with a population of 100)."

### 👍 "We have closed down."

👍 "We have been directed to cease direct client service face to face within the building, therefore we are limited to telephone contacts only and face to face contact can be done via a laptop or PC with a camera which we do not have. We are awaiting a community COVID-19 donation in order to purchase needed equipment to function."

👍 "We were amongst one of the first industries to close (we are an indoor play centre with a cafe)."

👍 "We have had to change a lot of contacts to online or over the phone for no interest loans and counselling support. Our food aid is now by appointment only, so we have to prepare hampers instead of allowing people to choose their own."

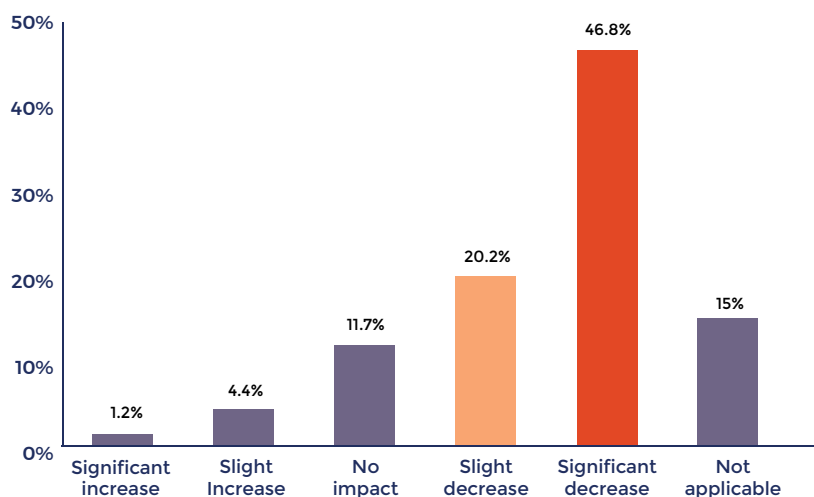
## Fundraising

With a large portion of the population now out of work (or fearful about losing income over the coming months), it's not surprising to see that many organisations have taken a big hit to their fundraising income. Almost half of the groups we surveyed said they'd already experienced a significant decrease in fundraising income, with a further 20% experiencing a slight decrease.

Decreases in income range from 1% to 100%, with a median estimated downturn of 53%; i.e. of all organisations that have experienced a downturn in fundraising income, the typical organisation has lost more than half its income.

A small portion of respondents said they'd experienced an uptick in fundraising income; in that group, the typical increase was around 10%.

## Q9. Effect on donations and fundraising income



## Sample of comments

- 👍 "Lack of membership subscriptions and income from tutors, classes and art demonstrations has an impact."
- 👍 "Income has stopped apart from some small donations."
- 👍 "Cancelled our biggest fundraiser events (trail runs). Planning to trial some virtual trail runs for people's mental health and wellbeing. Won't make the money but good to maintain the momentum."
- 👍 "Income has been diversified towards grants instead of fee for service."
- 👍 "We have had to postpone a big fundraising event. Unsure whether it will generate as much revenue in the future as it is an art auction and who will be able to buy the artwork now?"
- 👍 "Yet to launch our major appeal so hard to tell."
- 👍 "Most of our revenue comes from ride entry fees and memberships and we are down dramatically in both these areas."
- 👍 "Most income derived from people using our Crown Reserve facilities."
- 👍 "April is traditionally our fundraising / awareness raising month and all activities were cancelled. This led to lost revenue but also lost opportunities for promotion and connection."
- 👍 "We shall lose \$220,000 from scheduled events that have been postponed."
- 👍 "A personal request via Facebook to celebrate the voluntary CEO(s) 70th Birthday has generated one off donations."
- 👍 "Corporate sponsors have reduced the contribution."
- 👍 "We receive recurrent base funding and then apply for grants to undertake projects. We are at full capacity now so there has been no financial impact. We don't fund raise or seek donations luckily."
- 👍 "Government rebates for JobKeeper etc will increase our income, but we've had to close Op Shop."
- 👍 "Due to community events being cancelled, which are huge income spinners for the whole community there is significant decrease in opportunity to raise money."
- 👍 "Local mobilisation is not possible."
- 👍 "Unable to maintain fundraising ventures and therefore have had a significant drop in income with greater cost in expenditure."
- 👍 "No work means no income or donations."
- 👍 "Donations are a very small part of our income. We are yet to decide whether to hold our annual mid-year appeal"
- 👍 "No one is allowed in the clubhouse so no income is happening at all."

*"We feel it is not the right time to ask people to donate. Much like the bushfire crisis."*



## Reductions in staff

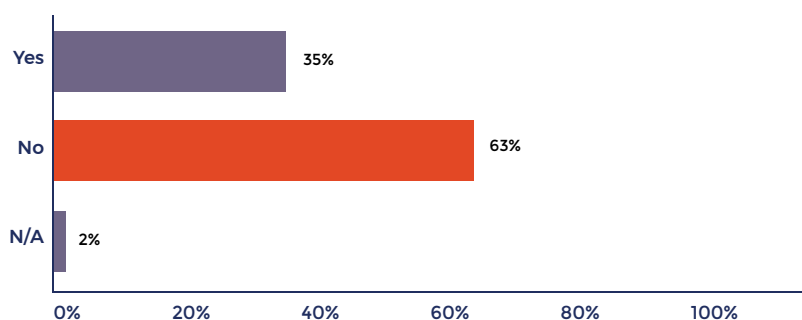
While much has been said about the effect of the pandemic on business employment, a less-told story is its effect on community sector employees, a predominantly female, predominantly poorly paid workforce.

Not-for-profit organisations range from 100% voluntary groups to massive multi-state and international organisations with thousands of staff, and everything in between. Taken in its entirety, the not-for-profit sector employs more than a million people across Australia.

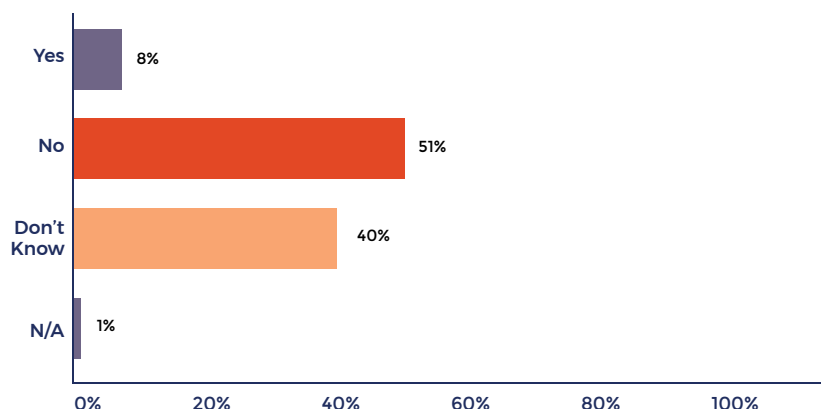
Of the 240 respondents whose organisations employ staff (72% of respondents), 35% said they had already reduced staff numbers, and a further 8% planned to do so.

The comments section reveals a more nuanced story, with many organisations battling to hang onto staff by reducing hours, rather than shedding employees. Many are hanging on in the expectation of receiving JobKeeper assistance.

### Q13. Has your organisation reduced staff members as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?



### Q14. Is your organisation planning to reduce staff numbers in the future?





## Sample of comments

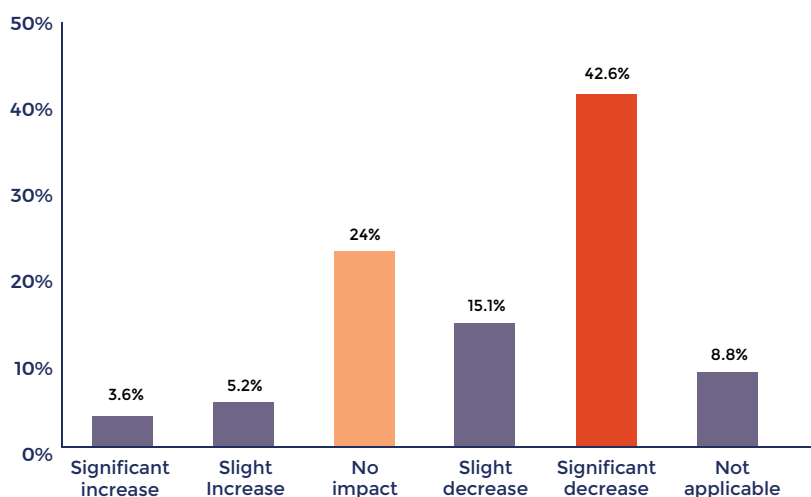
- 👍 "Trying to keep all staff; waiting to learn whether successful with JobKeeper application."
- 👍 "Staff employed on a sessional basis can no longer continue."
- 👍 "Only have one paid part-time coordinator; however, volunteers have not been able to continue to assist with the running of the centre."
- 👍 "Paying same wage until JobKeeper payment refunds."
- 👍 "The staff are engaged on a subcontracting basis and provided by the government, at this point staff numbers have not decreased but will very soon."
- 👍 "Social enterprise staff gone and staff for group programs that can't be delivered gone."
- 👍 "Several people have had their job go into hibernation or had their hours reduced."
- 👍 "Have been able to bring some back due to JobKeeper scheme."
- 👍 "May need to in the future, if Centre continues to remain closed (and therefore no income)."
- 👍 "Concern is that staff may gain other employment and thus not return post pandemic."
- 👍 "We have 2 full time employees and 6 part time/ casual project officers and we are keeping them all going. We have good reserves and we feel we have a moral obligation to keep our PT/Casual staff going."
- 👍 "We anticipate JobKeeper will sustain us until we recover."

## Effect on volunteerism

A total of 248 respondents to our survey (74% of the sample) said they relied on volunteers to deliver programs or services. Of those, 58% had experienced a drop in volunteer numbers as a result of the pandemic, with 43% reporting a *significant* drop in numbers.

The fact that many organisations rely on older volunteers is a big factor in workforce decline, although in some cases there is just less demand for volunteers.

### Q16. How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your volunteering workforce?



## Sample of comments

- 👍 “Unable to continue with any volunteer programs at the moment.”
- 👍 “Many volunteers are older people and therefore staying home.”
- 👍 “We have a duty of care to keep our volunteers and partner organisations safe. All of these programs have been cancelled and meetings are online (Webex / Zoom/etc).”
- 👍 “Volunteers unable to deliver the support we do due to COVID-19 restrictions”
- 👍 “Drop is 100% as being instructed not to continue our work or even meet on a social basis, which frankly is just not sensible.”
- 👍 “They have all been stood down.”
- 👍 “They are available, but most are unable to volunteer due to social distancing, so we will see how many return once this is over.”
- 👍 “Our volunteers are predominantly seniors. As such they are all socially isolating.”
- 👍 “Government doesn’t require them to meet their hours so they all abandoned us.”
- 👍 “Not needed as we are closed.”
- 👍 “With limited volunteer work to do, there are less opportunities for volunteers.”
- 👍 “We really need more volunteers but we struggle on.”
- 👍 “We have once a week working bees and our volunteers are still all attending.”

## Adapting to disruption

What are not-for-profits doing to adapt to the “new normal”?

Like most of us, they’re getting very familiar with Zoom and other forms of online communication. It seems inevitable (and is evident in the comments) that a legacy of the pandemic will be the acceleration of the traditionally laggard not-for-profit sector towards embracing digital technology.

Aside from that, responses are as varied as the work that the organisations do. Overall, the comments represent a story of adaptability rather than defeat. Many are working hard to keep working, keep spirits up, and combat loneliness among staff, volunteers and clients.

A great number of comments are reproduced in this section to demonstrate both the commonalities and the variability of the responses.

**“It seems inevitable (and is evident in the comments) that a legacy of the pandemic will be the acceleration of the traditionally laggard not-for-profit sector towards embracing digital technology.”**

## Q19. What has your group done to respond/adapt to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic?

social shut online platforms community members resources operate contact development need facebook well models home engage increased set offering children moved live etc respond people week group material delivered COVID social distancing service delivery also put use event changed daily closed Tried meetings participants work online meetings provide gone alone community many programs assist support social media services maintain online information staff take volunteers food clients practicing members income keep developed training newsletters work home communications activities created staff working home team help reduced adapt office continue ways zoom cancelled delivery situation connected one best funding making established vulnerable sharing new digital time video will Developed new emails Looking face face possible

### Sample of comments

- 👍 "Set up alternative approaches to delivering services; Increased hygiene and safety training and access to items and equipment to support this."
- 👍 "Closed premises, increased social media positivity, encouraged new projects and above all increased contact."
- 👍 "Our management board held a crisis meeting immediately, formed a working party of key staff and management members, which developed a specific Covid19 Management Plan draft and presented the full Board with positive steps to continue supporting our vulnerable community, whilst keeping all Staff, volunteers, clients and community safe and working within government legislation."
- 👍 "Innovated to provide online courses via Zoom."
- 👍 "We have quickly written policies and procedures, undertaken risk assessments to protect staff, volunteers and clients, and pivoted nimbly to ensure ongoing, smooth service delivery to people in crisis."
- 👍 "Adapted our services to offer online support."
- 👍 "Doing 'virtual' events (eg 'virtual' Wellbeing in Nature' walks where everyone does their own walk instead of together and sends photos/reports to share; 'virtual' Veggie Swap market), trying to engage members more (although a challenge as many aren't tech savvy or social media participants) with additional newsletters and emails as well as additional social media activity and on-line events."
- 👍 "Planning using online communication. Maintaining our presence with members also via the internet."
- 👍 "Our company has changed the way we run social support. We are phoning over 500 clients per week which is proving highly successful and appreciated by our older clients."
- 👍 "Working from home, training and networking gone online, live chats with information."
- 👍 "Return as much perishable stock as possible, negotiate 3 months freeze on rent and lease payments, re-allocated some staff to different areas, some staff working from home."

## Sample of comments

- 👍 "Created online resources and classes to alleviate the effect of social distancing and our centre's shutdown on our members/clients. Proactively ringing all members/clients who do not access the internet to ensure they are OK and coping. Advanced plans to move to cloud computing so as to facilitate better work from home options."
- 👍 "Rather than fear the future, we are working hard to create a path by getting projects shovel ready, reaching out to other organisations to partner and sharing positive stories."
- 👍 "Gone online. Our meetings are via Zoom, sharing information on WhatsApp and Facebook. We keep communicating the needs of the refugee families we support with our networks and continue to find ways to help where it is needed, but via networks rather than face to face."
- 👍 "Work from home and use email/phone to communicate with members/ supporters/ volunteers."
- 👍 "We have remained positive, engaged our members and have put up a virtual event to keep people working their horses and maintaining their fitness while we are all self isolating. We have used social media to discuss the challenges facing the sport, asked for suggestions on how the members see a restart and used the time to provide educative opportunities for our members."
- 👍 "Closed our facilities and just doing a minimum amount of maintenance."
- 👍 "Provide more online support, collaborate with national research centre to deliver webinar, and moved our red carpet documentary launch to an online watch party."
- 👍 "We are updating our on-line advertising methods to be ready with an improved service to patrons when we reopen."
- 👍 "At this stage we are not able to respond or adapt as the government has decreed that we can't open up. If allowed we would restrict entry, undertake same precautions as the supermarkets and apply social distancing rules in both the work areas and the lunchroom."
- 👍 "Cancelled Society meetings, and cancelled Heritage Bus Tours."
- 👍 "We have sought and promptly circulated information and resources to sustain morale and to give a positive focus on the opportunities arising from minimal in person delivery. This has enabled staff to creatively develop online versions of programs and services. We have learnt to use online meeting platforms to provide mutual support and to share learnings. We have participated in webinars and podcasts to broaden our knowledge, understanding and access to wider networks. We have strengthened our team collaboration in pursuit of our vision. We have modelled our values: Be strong, Be calm, Be kind, Try hard in these unique circumstances."
- 👍 "We have a red and green card RUOK system in place for isolators; we are delivering fresh meals daily; we have moved to an online system which provides daily check ins and social interaction with the business"

*"We are zooming, zigging and zagging, zapping and zipping in a state of zestfulness until we reach a post coronavirus zone."*

Jill Hitchcock,  
Alamein Neighbourhood  
& Learning Centre, VIC



## Sample of comments

- 👍 "We initiated a 'Phone a friend' service. Our registered volunteers who wished to participate put their name down along with their interests. We then put social media advertising out offering the 'phone a friend' service. The idea being that the call would be more than just to see how people were but by pairing up similar interests, could give the opportunity for a great chat. Thus addressing social isolation issues."
- 👍 "Published beautiful music clips to members and posted on the website"
- 👍 "We continue virtual meetings via hangouts. As president I call all members on a rotating 2 week basis. We have a Facebook group page to chat, joke, message the group. We conduct small projects such as xmas cakes for Children's Hospital nurses, toy lions/tigers with lollies and thank you cards to 200 police officers for their commitment and service. Gifts to Ambulance services personnel to recognise their service. Support for sub continental student to provide emergency food parcels. Donation to Legacy in lieu of Anzac Day remembrance."
- 👍 "Cancelled events; put rehearsals online."
- 👍 "We have increased our online communications, increased FB presence and made phone calls to those we know to be isolated and vulnerable. We check in with all of our user groups, our friends and neighbours. We are in constant contact with people!"
- 👍 "closed the Shed"
- 👍 "We have been offering emotional support via telephone and face to face support via the internet apps of the client's for counselling and for any other type of assistance that we are able to offer within our limited resources."
- 👍 "Provided services needed in our community that are essential. This includes our low-income support services and community pantry"
- 👍 "Working remotely via online and telephone. Looking at ways to deliver group program online, still a work in progress."
- 👍 "keep calm and carry on."
- 👍 "Create awareness on covid-19 and hand washing interventions, online marketing and more marketing interventions"
- 👍 "We have taken our training online. We have pivoted to focus our attention from organisational safety to parental and home safety of children. Webinars with experts for parents."
- 👍 "Followed all the government ruling as no groups to operate or numbers of people gathering in a space. Signs are put up regarding information received from NSW Health. e.g. washing hands, have you travelled etc. Wipe down computers, door handles, tables and other surfaces etc continuously throughout the day with antibacterial spray. Put hand sanitiser on every one that walks in the cottage, ask the questions, if they have travelled, been in contact with any who has the COVID-19 etc. One client at a time in the office, one in the waiting room and if more clients are here outside in designated areas which practises safe distancing 1.5 meters apart. Phone contact with clients, Facebook and online contact."

*"We have modelled our values:  
Be strong, Be calm, Be kind,  
Try hard in these unique  
circumstances."*

Victoria Triggs,  
Therapeutic Engagement Support  
Services Association Incorporated, VIC



## Sample of comments

- 👍 "Very little. We are doing what is allowed. We've made arrangements to pick things up with our customers when we can."
- 👍 "Nothing at the moment till we can get back to training"
- 👍 "Our employees are working from home and we are exploring ways to produce and deliver interesting video vignettes of people discussing various NRM issues, hints on sustainable living, including renewable energy, gardening, waste management, sustainable agriculture, managing pastures, carbon sequestration etc and make these available on our website and Facebook page as well as sharing content with other people/organisations. We will also be trialling info webinars with experts who would normal deliver at our field days and workshops."
- 👍 "We are looking to run our Respect the Badge program with schools online."
- 👍 "Engage players in online performance from home, secured Boost Funding from Creative Partnerships Aust. and launching a fund raising campaign through Australian Cultural Fund next week, using recordings of these online performances to raise funds for professionally recorded concert to be broadcast free in late June early July."
- 👍 "Gone digital"
- 👍 "We are greeting children at the door and not allowing parents to enter to reduce internal traffic. We are doing lots more teaching and reinforcing of hygiene practises for children. We are doing lots more intensive cleaning. We are sending educational bags home for self-isolating families every week. We are doing live stream story time and Zoom music lessons every day for the children who are self-isolating. Those children at school do it here and can also see their friends at home."
- 👍 "Re-allocated staff to development and training activities"
- 👍 "Increased online presence, at a cost to (our organisation). Also changed corporate meetings to online platforms when applicable."
- 👍 "Reduced expenses, Social Media communications"
- 👍 "Most of our employees are working from home, so we have had to adapt our playgroups, mentoring and after school programs to be able to provide families and young people with support online. We are making sure we also share fun activities that they can do at home to ease the pressure and have a break."
- 👍 "We regularly send emails and have phone calls to members to make sure they are well and happy and encourage them to contact each other more."
- 👍 "Volunteers have responded when and wherever they are able to assist and this is a blessing as our organisation runs on volunteer assistance and community generous donations that will be dramatically reduced."
- 👍 "Flexible, nimble and responsive"

*"We screamed, we stamped our feet, we took a breath and just dealt with issues as they arose. We then screamed and breathed some more and put our big girl pants on and moved forward."*

Marline Squance,  
Autoimmune Resource & Research Centre,  
NSW





## Sample of comments

- 👍 "Our services have gone online and our emergency food relief service has reduced physical contact and no clients come inside the building proper now. They pick up food and leave. No community hub operating. We have postponed or cancelled community events and I have set up an 'Adopt a community member' program in response to isolation of people in our community"
- 👍 "Until lock-down we altered the way the club played club competitions"
- 👍 "We have used this close-down period to upgrade the playing surface of all our three lawns which will provide playing surfaces up to international standards. This is a positive result coming from this enforced close down"
- 👍 "Social distancing. Found alternative ways to expend funding that has been given for certain programs."
- 👍 "We have stayed open to support the community but have not been able to provide services or operate the op shop which brings in most of our funds to operate. We have practiced social distancing and keep our premises clean and practiced personal cleanliness."
- 👍 "Been responsive, flexible and adaptable to the needs of our community"
- 👍 "We had split our paid team members into two teams working week on, week off. We have adapted a lot of our delivery to respond to the needs of our clients"
- 👍 "We are closed but maintaining some programs and maintenance"
- 👍 "Programs have changed to go online. Social distancing, workplace modifications, extra PPE."
- 👍 "Continued digitally involving members"
- 👍 "We have continued to work on site using social distancing. Our community centre is closed but I go out the front in the street, talk to people offer support. Also provide free meals that are takeaway cooked by 2 paid staff as it was difficult to social distance in the kitchen for the volunteers."
- 👍 "We have gone online to keep up communication with our family (members)"
- 👍 "All of our staff pulled together to promptly and calmly develop flexible, coherent and safe approaches to allow us to continue our work in the field, in a Covid-safe manner, and to set up remote work options for all office staff. We also immediately began to explore alternative delivery options for our community engagement and environmental education and to liaise with clients and funding bodies about alternative delivery."
- 👍 "Be a compassionate, open, visible, inviting, delivery meals service to older Australians."
- 👍 "Telehealth, shut down face to face service, all staff working from home"
- 👍 "Increased On air to provide some positive media instead of sensational media"
- 👍 "We have closed our Op Shop and Community Centre. We have also changed our services to replace some of the income we have lost which has actually led to us hiring more staff. We have given staff the ability to work from home if they wish."
- 👍 "YouTube podcasts, bulk text messages, Facebook"

*"We have adapted and are hosting many of our programs and activities on Zoom. We are also making social telephone calls to vulnerable people in our community and organising welfare checks."*



# SUPPORTING THE SECTOR THAT SUPPORTS OUR COMMUNITIES

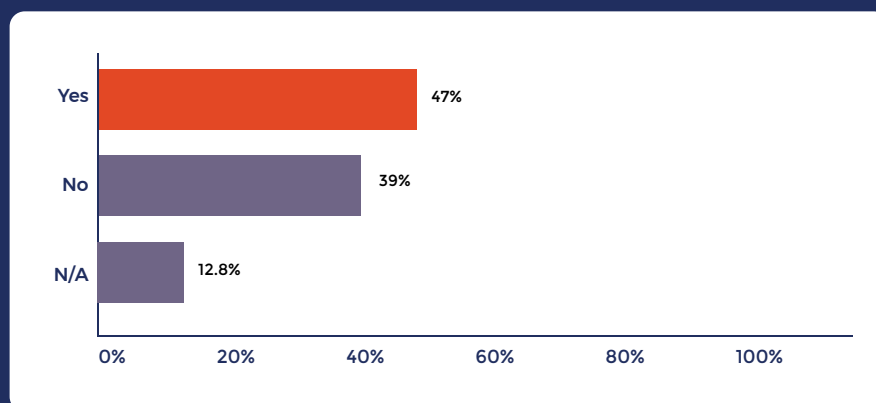
## Stepping up to the plate

There was some good news in the survey, with 47% of respondents saying they had received the support they needed from government, peak bodies and philanthropy.

The comments reveal some fantastic examples of funders and other supporters providing useful (or even lifesaving) help, although there are some tales of woe as well.

All tiers of government were praised for providing timely and relevant support, with JobKeeper mentioned as a lifeline multiple times.

### Q17. Have you got the support you need from government, peak bodies and philanthropy



## Sample of comments

### THUMBS UP

- 👍 "Local government – Quick Response Grants (are) enabling us to purchase IT equipment to work remotely."
- 👍 "Regular communication from government and peak bodies has been important in formulating our response."
- 👍 "Stimulus packages helping. Working with our community and business partners to get 'shovel ready' for any potential economic stimulus packages so we can create employment and business outcomes whilst at the same time ticking off Strategic Plan goals."
- 👍 "JobKeeper support for financial reasons – covers us closing the op shop which was fully volunteer run"
- 👍 "We receive our base funding from three local councils. We have no indication that that funding is threatened and we haven't had to seek further support. Our projects are funded through obtaining grants and these are safe."
- 👍 "Personal support from the local and federal MPs, government ER stimulus package, guidance lobbying and support from our peak body."



👍 “Peak bodies such as Our Community have provided free webinars to give latest information and applicable resources.”

👍 “Community Broadcasting Foundation; JobSeeker; ATO”

👍 “Local Council, peak bodies including NHVic, VCOSS, Our Community, Not for Profit Law (webinars, info etc), DHHS and NHCP Networker”

👍 “We have received the Job Keeper and another grant”

👍 “Mainly through fund raising with volunteers and other support from community donations.”

👍 “Council has waived some costs.”

👍 “The free Preschool incentive has helped.”

👍 “State, Federal & Local Govt”

👍 “(1) Fed Govt’s Cash flow boost for NFPs; (2) 3 months free rent for our office & depot from local government; (3) project variations for govt grants to allow deferral or online delivery of community engagement components of environmental projects”

👍 “The free Preschool incentive has helped.”

👍 “Our landlord has temporarily suspended rent charges which goes a long way to keeping what money we have in our bank account.”

## THUMBS DOWN

👎 “I would love to get some information on support for organisations that don’t employ anyone. While we are not as impacted we are all feeling a bit lost.”

👎 “No support provided at this stage.”

👎 “Major sponsor ... has held back on sponsorship”

👎 “Don’t think we qualify for anything?”

👎 “Government decisions have also caused a large amount of grief due to mixed messages and not acting quick enough on arising issues particularly in regards to supply of medications.”

👎 “From government to a degree but not from peak bodies or philanthropy”

👎 “It has been disappointing to get no support from insurance underwriters. Our public liability bill is our largest expense and we have not been able to negotiate a reduction in the premium even though we are running none or only virtual programs now. If we were to continue to be in isolation our insurance would send us broke.”

👎 “Zero financial assistance for charities.”

👎 “There are a few grants that we are excluded from as NFPs even though we operate under an ABN and pay GST”

👎 “Financial support is taking a long time to deliver and is costing us in ability to take on new business”

## The months ahead

We asked respondents to tell us what else they need.

While many are grateful for information channels that have opened up, some groups wish they had access to information tailored to their needs.

Some would like more volunteers, and some simply need to be able to re-open soon. Some need discounts or waivers of costs.

Financial support is the biggest and most pressing need. Sometimes the need is relatively small – help with paying bills that will keep the lights on or help with paying for postage; other groups are seeking financial help (or capacity building support) so they can transition to online forms of working. Many have an eye towards community needs that will open up over the coming months that they will struggle to fulfil without additional financial support.

Perhaps the most poignant comment came from the person who said, “We need a rest. We have been significantly impacted by drought and bushfire.”

## Q19. What additional support/change do you need right now? (Leave blank if you do not need additional support)

fundraising donations year new working online Additional funding  
paid staff assist client staff operating keep from community fees  
pay None US cover volunteers sector government Access  
grants help support small funding Jobkeeper need back  
financial support already services NFP organisations  
moment will additional financial information need support  
activities increase many impacted restrictions lifted income  
Extra capacity ASSISTANCE people costs offered available

### Sample of comments

- 👍 "We need a rest. We have also been significantly impacted by drought and bushfire."
- 👍 "Support to pay for volunteer expenses."
- 👍 "To be reassured that local, state and federal community grants will still be available. Also other philanthropic funding will still be available."
- 👍 "Monetary donations to help pay our postage costs."
- 👍 "Additional funding required to make up the 50% shortfall in income from Child Care, and the 100% drop in income for Community Centre activities, room hire, etc."
- 👍 "Volunteers!!"
- 👍 "We would like to have had specific information pertinent to our organisation rather than so many links to general information."
- 👍 "Assistance with wage costs, as we do not employ staff direct, funding support has been difficult to get."
- 👍 "Talking with partners about the Working For Victoria program. This could help share the workload whilst our many volunteers are socially isolating. Keen to see some conservation economic stimulus packages and support for bushfire impacted communities through these packages too."
- 👍 "Funding. Pro bono ITC skills, video recording."
- 👍 "We have the capacity to scale after Covid19. Would be great to secure grants to replace lost fundraising revenue to support our refugee community."
- 👍 "Funds to support us pay staff and cover utilities."
- 👍 "It's become vital for everyone to be connected via technology. Unfortunately not everyone is, nor do they have the right tools."
- 👍 "We are fine so long as we qualify for JobKeeper."
- 👍 "We need the government to allow us to start back operating under the same restrictions as for the rest of the public. i.e. 10 persons at one time while practising social distancing."
- 👍 "Some financial support to assist with the transfer to 'online' servicing. Equipment, Data and training"
- 👍 "Additional funding long term because the economic impact is going to be felt well beyond the 6 months so that we can address recovery needs and support for the next 18 months."
- 👍 "Support to pay for services that can't be cancelled or controlled e.g. electricity, lawn mowing."

- 👍 “We need funds to pay at least one person to be the Service Coordinator as it is too difficult to rely totally on a volunteer labour to operate a community organisation.”
- 👍 “More funding to plug the gap in less fundraising revenue.”
- 👍 “We estimate that we will require discretionary funds to assist community post-lockdown. We will not be able to fund this during the recovery of our usual services/offerings. Post-lockdown social distancing reg(ulation)s are also likely to drastically affect income.”
- 👍 “We need at least \$100,000 to fulfill our ongoing commitments.”
- 👍 “Financial support and strong instruction on changing to online activities.”
- 👍 “We need utility companies to significantly reduce our charges, to minimal, we only have need to keep two freezers and one fridge going and that is it. We have temporarily suspended our NBN account with the assistance of Optus. But we would appreciate the companies we use reaching out to us.”
- 👍 “Access to the same grants as any business”
- 👍 “As a volunteer-run organisation we aren’t eligible for any current Government support. Peak sports bodies haven’t offered any support as yet.”
- 👍 “Financial support to support others”
- 👍 “Reductions in insurance premiums equal to the drop in productivity.”

# SOS

## Save Our Sector

We’re helping the not-for-profit sector to **survive, reinvent & sustain**. We’re here to help you stay afloat until we get to the other side of COVID-19.

[www.communitydirectors.com.au/save-our-sector](http://www.communitydirectors.com.au/save-our-sector)



**ourcommunity.com.au**  
Where not-for-profits go for help

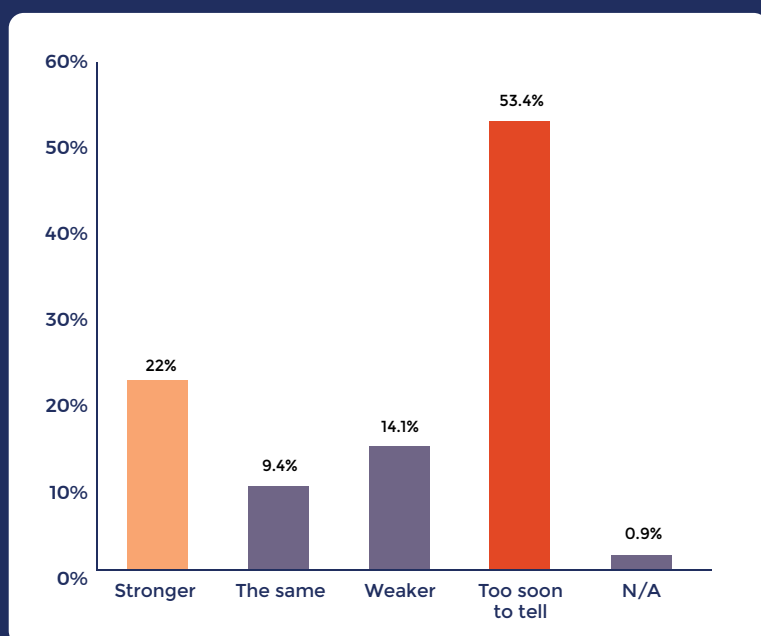
# WHAT WILL THE FUTURE HOLD?

## Too soon to tell

The not-for-profit sector representatives we surveyed are clear that we still have a long way to go in getting through this pandemic, with more than half saying it was too soon to tell how their group might emerge at the end of it all.

Notably 22% expect to emerge from the pandemic stronger than they were before, with comments revealing many examples of the pragmatism, resilience and innovation that the sector is known for.

### Q8. How will your organisation emerge from the pandemic



### Sample of comments

- 👍 "We are collaborating with many other organisations so we will get through this together. If we just looked out for ourselves, we would struggle to be around."
- 👍 "We are in a holding pattern, hoping to get back to what we do so well eventually."
- 👍 "We are using social media and have adapted to some online performances."

- 👍 "The pandemic has highlighted shortcomings that we were unaware of and that we have now had the opportunity to address."
- 👍 "We are exploring ways to deliver information differently. That will help in the future but we haven't had to curtail our activities, we've just had to be innovative in the way we engage and deliver."

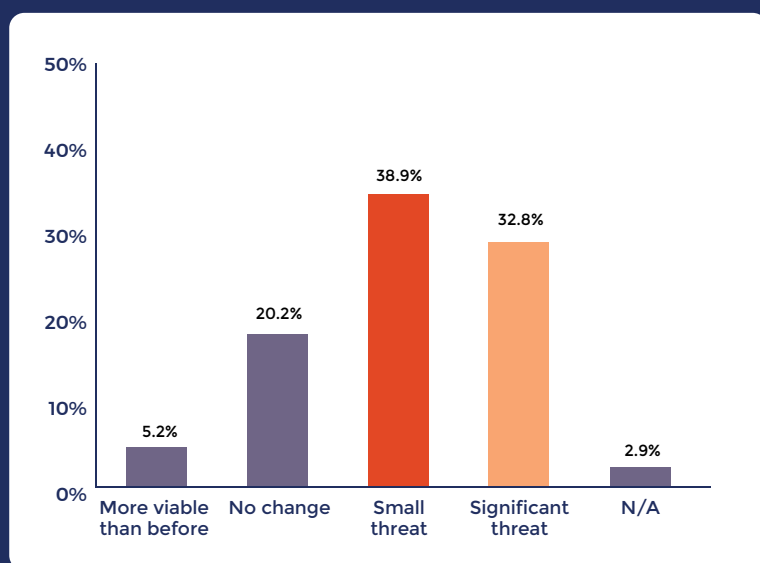
## Future viability

Most not-for-profit organisations we surveyed say their viability is under threat as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (a third say they face a *significant* threat).

Again, notably a quarter of organisations report no change, or a positive change to their outlook.

The Commonwealth Government's JobKeeper payments have been a vital lifeline for many organisations.

### Q7. How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the viability of your organisation?



### Sample of comments

👍 "Our social enterprises, which were dependent on income generated from business, are all now closed or being given for free. Market garden farm produce now free, community Cafe closed ... Moved to a giving model rather than capacity building."

👍 "We operate conservatively and prudently and should recover when things return to normal"

👍 "Not being able to continue our operations has a significant effect on our viability. We rent our premises so no income in spite of much of the community looking for us to undertake work for them."

👍 "56% drop in sponsorship."

👍 "The economic stimulus packages (ATO rebate and JobKeeper) will help to get through the next 6 months, but after that the whole landscape is likely to change as our key financial partners (local, state and federal governments) will have much reduced budgets."

👍 "Zero income due to restrictions on activities on Crown Reserves."

👍 "We are very lucky to have some reserves that will allow us to get through with a small loss of income."

👍 "No green fees or fundraising can happen as not allowed to play golf or even walk on the course."

- 👍 “Limited reserves, minimal income whilst continuing costs re employment of key staff. JobKeeper covers only part of salaries and on costs, and has to be paid in advance.”
- 👍 “No funds coming in from concert performances.”
- 👍 “Our income remains the same and our costs, more or less the same. We have spent money on updating technology but less on motor vehicle expenses.”
- 👍 “We will lose 50% of staff (3) due to downturn in fundraising.”
- 👍 “We rely on fundraising dollars to pay for activities and staffing. The only saving grace has been the JobKeeper payments to help retain staff.”
- 👍 “No income (but) all the same expenses.”
- 👍 “Our capacity to commence new students is seriously hampered. Therefore we anticipate increased negative impact on revenue as each month goes by and current students complete.”
- 👍 “Our main source of income is venue hire, which is not possible during the shutdown.”

## What will the sector look like a year from now?

Finally, we asked respondents to give us one word to describe what they think the sector will look like a year from now.

The range of responses reflect the unavoidable uncertainty we all face right now.

“Resurgent”, “messy”, “bruised”, “disrupted” and “evolved” were among the most thoughtful and evocative descriptions received. “Relieved!” also stood out.

The most common responses are represented in the word cloud below.

**Q20. In one word, describe what you think the Australian not-for-profit sector will look like a year from now**

community sector think Rebuilding impact  
recovering better Brighter reduced Exhausted  
Different groups will survive Stronger  
unknown Smaller Bleak Resilient increase  
Struggling Sad support Appreciated  
Transformed diminished Leaner  
Competitive organisations



## THE FINAL WORD



*"I do think society will have changed when this is over. Old ingrained habits will be forgotten & people will create new patterns of socialising & general living."*

*"My hope is that we will be a society less reliant on consumerism & be more reliant on looking out for others (might be a case of 'tell him he's dreaming!')"*

Ian Roberts, Blyth Cinema, South Australia

The 2020

# Festival of Community Directors

A year-long celebration  
of community governance

**Find out more**  
[communitydirectors.com.au/festival](https://communitydirectors.com.au/festival)