

Our Community **MATTERS**

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Resources, News, Innovations and Tips on:

- ✓ Funding, Finance & Membership Management
- ✓ Leadership & Advocacy
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1. Community View: The National Compact (Opportunities & Challenges)



Rhonda Galbally AO
CEO

The community sector is now engaged in developing a national compact with the Federal Government. (Declaration of interest: I have sat on the expert panel to advise on the consultation process.)

A Compact has the potential to do an enormous amount of good, as long as it doesn't leave out the most important part of the business – that is, the people that the community sector is there to serve.

In the nature of things, Compacts involve organisations, not individuals. That's what organisations are there for – to speak collectively on behalf of people who have too little power individually to influence the course of events.

Inevitably, though, this means that sector organisations are understandably more likely to stress the reforms that involve government action in shifting what for more than 10 years has been a serious power imbalance between government and community agencies. They may pay less attention to reforms that involve the organisations themselves changing; changes that might lead to the genuine inclusion of those for whom community organisations exist – in the design and delivery of services and/or activities, as well as governance.

Over the years, for example, there's been much justified criticism of the purchaser/provider model, where the government sets out its requirements and has community organisations tender to provide them. The criticism is based on the very valid grounds that this purchaser-provider relationship isn't a partnership – it isn't in the spirit of a Compact, in fact. It denies community organisations any opportunity to focus on the outcomes rather than outputs (and to decide what those outcomes might be) or to question whether government might be focusing on the wrong things.

The power imbalance implicit in purchaser-provider relationships mean that solutions aren't created to solve difficult but central community problems. The creativity necessary to design the new approaches and deliver them differently requires mutual respect and joint endeavour between government and community organisations. Developing new solutions requires that the accumulated wisdom of community organisations is called on and used.

However, while community organisations are all too conscious of the ill effects of government agencies neglecting the hard-earned wisdom of community organisations they aren't always alert to the risks of community organisations neglecting the hard-earned wisdom of their clients, users, and constituencies. If the community sector is asking for change, it must be also willing to change where change is called for.

In the governance area, for example, the Communities In Control Manifesto from 2003 recommended that “to maintain their relevance and legitimacy and learning, Boards should reflect the diversity of their communities, consumers, and society.”

This year's Communities in Control Governance Charter went into more detail –

- The Board should ensure that its membership profile largely reflects the composition of the Australian community. There should be tangible efforts to increase the representation of women, minority ethnic groups, under-represented age groups, people with disabilities, and Indigenous Australians.

“If the community sector is asking for change, it must be also willing to change where change is called for.”

- Where an organisation is responsible for the delivery of services or provides opportunities to participate, the Board should respond to the needs of its own users for representation on the organisation's Board.
- The Board should ensure that all members brought on to the Board from disadvantaged groups are given adequate support ...

And the Board is not the only area where we need to live up to our own rhetoric. As well as ensuring that the people they serve are represented on the Board, the Charter makes it clear that community organisations must also “work to encourage in all the operations of the organisation social diversity, access and inclusion, community participation, and consumer participation...”

If the NFP sector is to retain and build on its legitimacy as representatives of the disadvantaged and the disempowered, it must work on its own deep inclusiveness of those it serves.

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2. Community sector senate review released

The Senate Report on '*Disclosure Regimes for Charities and Not-for-profit Organisations*' has just been released. Interesting times ahead.

[Click here](#) for the full report, or read a summary of the recommendations below.

Recommendation 1: The committee recommends that all Australian Governments agree on common terminology for referring to organisations within the Sector. Governments should also develop a common meaning for terms referring to the size of these organisations, including 'micro', 'small', 'medium' and 'large'. This standard terminology should be adopted by all government departments.

Recommendation 2: The committee recommends that the Government establish a unit within the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet specifically to manage issues arising for Not-For-Profit Organisations. The unit should report to a Minister for the Third Sector.

Recommendation 3: The committee recommends that there be a single independent national regulator for Not-For-Profit Organisations.

Recommendation 4: The committee recommends that the Australian National Regulator for Not-For-Profit Organisations should have similar functions to regulators overseas, and particularly in the UK, including a Register for Not-For-Profit Organisations with a compulsory sign-up requirement. The committee recommends consultation with the Sector to formulate the duties of the National Regulator.

As a minimum, the Regulator should:

- a) Develop and maintain a Register of all Not-For-Profit Organisations in Australia. Once registered, the Commission should issue each organisation with a unique identifying number or allow organisations with an ABN to use that number as their Not-For-Profit identifier. This could be enabled using existing ASIC website resources.
- b) Develop and maintain an accessible, searchable public interface.
- c) Undertake either an annual descriptive analysis of the organisations that it regulates or provide the required information annually to the ABS for collation and analysis.
- d) Secure compliance with the relevant legislation.
- e) Develop best practice standards for the operation of Not-For-Profit Organisations.
- f) Educate / Advise Not-For-Profit Organisations on best practice standards.
- g) Investigate complaints relating to the operations of the organisations.
- h) Educate the public about the role of Not-For-Profit Organisations. The voluntary codes of conduct developed by ACFID and FIA respectively should be considered by the Regulator when implementing its own code of conduct.

Recommendation 5: The committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government develop the legislation that will be required in order to establish a national regulator for Australia.

Recommendation 6: The committee recommends that, once a Register is established and populated, this information should be provided to the ABS, who should prepare and publish a comprehensive study to provide government with a clearer picture of the size and composition of the Third Sector.

Recommendation 7: The committee recommends that a single, mandatory, specialist legal structure be adopted for Not-For-Profit Organisations through a referral of state and territory powers. Given the degree of change such a legal structure would mean for some not-for-profit organisations, the legal structure must be developed in full consultation with these organisations.

Recommendation 8: The committee recommends that the Henry Review include an examination of taxation measures affecting Not-For-Profit Organisations with a view to simplifying these arrangements and reducing confusion and cost of compliance for these organisations.

Recommendation 9: The committee recommends that a National Fundraising Act be developed following a referral of powers from states and territories to the Commonwealth.

This Act should include the following minimum features:

- It should apply nationally.
- It should apply to all organisations.
- It should require accounts or records to be submitted following the fundraising period with the level of reporting commensurate with the size of the organisation or amount raised.
- It should include a provision for the granting of a license.
- It should clearly regulate contemporary fundraising activities such as internet fundraising.

Recommendation 10: The committee recommends that a tiered reporting system be established under the legislation for a specialist legal structure.

Recommendation 11: The committee recommends that the tiers be assigned to organisations based on total annual revenue.

Recommendation 12: The committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government work with the Sector to implement a standard chart of accounts for use by all departments and Not-For-Profit Organisations as a priority.

Recommendation 13: The committee recommends that a new disclosure regime contain elements of narrative and numeric reporting as well as financial, in acknowledgement that the stakeholders of the Sector want different information to that of shareholders in the Business Sector. The financial reporting should be transparent and facilitate comparison across charities.

Recommendation 14: The committee recommends that the national regulator investigate the cost vs benefit of a GuideStar-type system (a website portal that publishes information on the aims and activities of Not-For-Profit Organisations) in Australia to encompass all Not-For-Profit Organisations.

Recommendation 15: The committee recommends that a Taskforce be established for the purposes of implementing the recommendations of this report. The Taskforce should report to COAG. Its membership should include:

- a government representative from the Commonwealth;
- a COAG-elected representative to speak for states and territories;
- one or more qualified legal experts with expertise with the major pieces of legislation affecting Not-For-Profit organisations;
- a representative from an organisation which manages private charitable foundations;
- an accountant with not-for-profit expertise; and
- a number of representatives from the peak bodies of Not-For-Profit Organisations, including a representative from a peak body for social enterprises.

The Taskforce should actively seek to ensure that the measures of reform that it implements do not impose an unreasonable reporting burden on small and micro Not-For-Profit Organisations.

Points to ponder

It's worth noting that what's being suggested is that the new Regulator should "g) Investigate complaints relating to the operations of the organisations". It doesn't say anything about what powers the Regulator would have if a complaint is found to be justified, and in the absence of anything specific the Regulator would have no ability to correct any abuses it finds.

The government is still cautious about sticking its fingers into that particular rat trap.

Note, too, that questions of tax concessions and the scope of DGR – things that have as much influence over not-for-profits as do the Associations Act or the Fundraising Act – have been handed off to the tax inquiry (The Henry Review) and aren't addressed here.

The Henry Review on Australia's Future Tax System, the Treasury Review of Financial Reporting for Unlisted Companies, the National Compact consultations and the Productivity Commission instructions to measure the contribution of third-sector organisations to our economy – all of which touch on the community sector – are all still in train.

Watch this space.

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3. Giving down, giving up

While overseas reports are consistently showing that charitable donations appear to be heading south, the same cannot be said of donations through the Australian Giving Centre.

New data from the Giving Centre – the online donations service operated by Our Community with the support of Westpac – reveal that giving during November was up more than 30% on November 2007 figures, despite the global financial crisis.

- More than \$163,000 was donated for community causes listed at the Giving Centre during November – up from about \$125,000 in November 2007 and \$65,000 in November 2006.
- More than 1300 community causes are currently listed.
- More than \$570,000 has been received this financial year alone.
- As at December 15, donations for the month had reached \$115,000.

Total donations made through the Australian Giving Centre may well top \$10 million during 2009.

If your group is not listed, make a New Year's Resolution to do so. All the information you need is at www.ourcommunity.com.au/receivedonations.

Psssst

'Our Community will be unveiling some major changes to the Australian Giving Centre early in 2009, including greatly enhanced functionality and a new look.

This is just one more reason to have your appeal listed with us.

Not to mention the fact that we remain **the only Australian online giving service that doesn't take a cut of the donations** – no set-up fees, hosting fees, handling fees, or transaction charges.

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4. Community groups ring in Christmas with cards cash

The Christmas Giving Cards initiative has wound up for another year, with a huge variety of community groups across Australia sharing in the spoils.

A \$1 donation was made to a community group of the sender's choice for every Giving Card purchased, with orders ranging from the minimum of 10 cards, right up to 650 cards (though most orders fell somewhere in between).

Along with a number of individuals and families ordering cards, orders have come from more than half a dozen MPs from across Australia and from all ends of the political spectrum, as well as small and large businesses, educational establishments and local government bodies.

Several community organisations bought Giving Cards for themselves, and will get a \$1-per-card "cash back" for their own groups.

Other organisations sent information about the cards out through their membership and supporter networks, encouraging people to buy Giving Cards and name their groups as the recipient of the \$1 –per-card donation.

Money generated through this initiative seemed to be well spread throughout the community sector, with beneficiary groups including:

- **Animal welfare groups** (Delta Society; Capricorn Animal Aid; Buddies for Wildlife)
- **Community services organisations** (Mission Australia; Mama Rene's Charitable Foundation Ltd; St Kilda Gatehouse; Jesuit Social Services; St Vincent De Paul Society; Footscray Anglican Sudanese Welfare Committee, Salvation Army, Catherine House)
- **Schools & educational organisations** (Loganlea State School; Robinson College; Learning for Life; Roadcraft Driver Education; Brunswick North West Primary School; Hills Montessori School; Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation)
- **Disability organisations** (The Hawkevale Trust; Coffs Coast Autism Parent Support Group Inc.)
- **Arts groups** (The Abbotsford Convent)
- **Children's charities** (Children's Leukaemia & Cancer Research Foundation; Child Fund Australia; Kidslink International)
- **Groups that serve young people** (Youngcare; Western Chances; Byron Youth Service)
- **Environmental groups** (Conservation Volunteers Australia; Men of the Trees; Australian Conservation Foundation; Landcare Australia; Australian Environment Foundation;)
- **Health organisations** (Bendigo Health; Diabetes Australia; Bendigo Hospital; Rural Flying Doctors Service; Port Lincoln Renal Unit; Inner South Community Health Service; Kyabram & District Health Service; The Flying Doctor Service; Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre; Diabetes Australia; Movember Foundation)
- **Support groups** (Pierre Robin Australia Inc.; Heart Support Australia; Cerebral Palsy Support Network; Genetic Support Network of Victoria Inc.; Good Grief Ltd; Lifeline)
- **Sports Groups** (Lake Macquarie City Petanque Club; Balmain District Junior Rugby League)
- **International NGOs** (Australian Red Cross)
- **Philanthropic organisations** (Foundation Boroondara; Inner North Community Foundation; Brighton Benevolent Society; Hannah's Chance Foundation)
- **Parents support groups** (Old Beach Playgroup)

- **Emergency services organisations** (Port Macquarie Surf Life Saving Club)
- **Advocacy groups** (Victorian Gay & Lesbian Rights Lobby)
- **Economic development groups** (Greater Esk Tourism Inc.)

The Giving Cards initiative, which is supported by Australia Post, is set to return bigger and better next year. Mark it in your diary and make sure your group doesn't miss out!



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5. Community benefits from carbon scheme

Community groups will receive government assistance to adjust to the national Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS), with promises of information, education and subsidies for energy-efficient equipment.

The Federal Government's white paper, released earlier in the week, noted that while most community groups would not be required to participate in the CPRS, they may experience higher operating costs as a result of its introduction.

Because community groups may not be aware of their exposure, the first "stream" of the Climate Change Action Fund is a commitment of \$130 million over five years to help smaller businesses and community groups understand how the impacts of carbon prices may flow through to their operations.

More targeted information will provide tailored advice through community and industry associations.

The second stream, \$1.4 billion over five years, will help organisations invest in energy-efficient equipment. Partial reimbursement will be provided for purchase and installation costs of equipment that meets energy saving criteria, such as hot water systems, insulation, lighting, heating, ventilation and refrigeration.

A third stream, a "structural adjustment provision," may also benefit community groups. It is designed to help those communities heavily impacted by the introduction of the scheme.

It has been suggested that it will be some time before such impacts are felt, and \$200 million has been earmarked for this stream from 2010-2011.

Detailed guidelines and eligibility criteria are expected to be produced during the first half of next year, with program delivery to follow in the second half of the year.

All funding details will be published in Our Community's monthly *EasyGrants* newsletter as they become available.

With increased costs, the direct relevance of climate change will become apparent to many community groups. But as the UK Charity Commission recently found, it is becoming increasingly clear that the environment is an issue the sector as a whole cannot afford to ignore.

Going Green

A Charity Commission report, *Going Green: charities and environmental responsibility*, found that environmental activities enhanced a group's main purpose, even if that purpose was not related to the environment. There are potential cost savings and reputational benefits.

The report, based on interviews with 21 charities, found drivers for environmental initiatives included reputation, key individuals, pressure from service users/members and trustees (board members).

Barriers included – predictably – lack of resources, time and money, but also insufficient space for recycling, lack of information, conflicting priorities, buildings that were not environmentally-friendly and landlords not interested in environmental issues.

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6. Report uncovers “hair-raising examples” of malpractice

As the article above indicates, there's some chance that we will end up with a national regulator for community and not-for-profit organisations.

What would an organisation like this do? You can get some idea by looking at the operation of the UK Charities Commission, which has released a report, *Charities Back on Track*, on its compliance work – its oversight of how British charities are meeting their statutory responsibilities.

Most interesting, perhaps, are the Commission's case studies – “hair-raising examples” of charity malpractice, as the Commission chief Andrew Hind described them.

There was, for example, Smart Kids Playgroup, where there was a lack of clarity about who owned (and could sell) a building – the organisation, or its founder.

Trying to work out who the building actually belonged to was made more difficult by the fact the trustees had kept no proper accounts or financial records, and had allowed a large number of relevant documents to be destroyed. It took time, but we were finally able to decide that the proceeds of the sale belonged to the charity, not the supervisor.

The Commission summed up the lessons:

Informal or – worse – no governance arrangements at all are a sure recipe for confusion. Establishing good governance systems should come right at the start of a charity's life and be regularly reviewed and updated to keep up to date with changing circumstances.

Another case study involved fraud.

The Ravidassia Community Centre provided a place of worship and cultural and leisure opportunities for the local community. An internal dispute over who were the rightful trustees and who had membership rights meant the charity's governance had broken down. Draft accounts and reports for the previous year had not been properly completed so the charity's financial position was unclear. Financial supervision and internal controls lapsed.

In these circumstances, it was relatively easy for the treasurer to open a new bank account in the charity's name but under his sole control, into which he put nearly £25,000 of the charity's money. Later he was found guilty of forging cheques.

We froze the bank account involved, an annual general meeting was called, and a new Executive Committee appointed. We gave the Committee advice on implementing robust financial controls and producing annual accounts and reports. They were then able to recover the misappropriated £25,000.

And what were the lessons there?

If trustees allow themselves to become sidetracked by other issues it will always be easier for an unscrupulous individual to take opportunistic advantage. Trustees have individual and collective responsibility to make sure they have robust financial controls – the harder it is made to commit fraud, the less the temptation to do so.

Here's one that most certainly has Australian application.

The Summertime Trust was set up to provide holidays for disabled children. They were approached by a professional fundraiser, who offered to sell competition tickets, pens and badges on their behalf during a ten-year contract. The deal involved the charity getting 20% of the money raised, with the fundraiser keeping 80%. The fundraiser would also receive one-third of any donations made to the charity as a 'management fee'.

We found that the contract did not comply with the law, that the terms tied the charity to a one-sided exclusive contract for a decade and that the ratio of money going to the charity was very small. For example, in one four-month period the fundraiser raised nearly £250,000 but the charity received less than £50,000.

Money raised was not paid gross to the charity, and the trustees were completely unaware of how much was being raised and of the regular breaches of legal requirements. After receiving our advice and guidance, the trustees put various controls in place to monitor the fundraising activity and ensure it complied with fundraising regulations. However, as the fundraiser refused to co-operate, the trustees gave him notice to terminate all further fundraising in the charity's name.

The triumph of virtue recorded here would be even more impressive if the report didn't have to note that (a) the fundraiser carried on fundraising in the charity's name regardless, and (b) after rejecting the tainted money the charity went bust a year later due to lack of funds. Some community groups shut their eyes and hold their noses because that money is hard to replace from other sources.

It's worth noting, too, the cases where the Commission didn't intervene – the cases that show the limits of even an active and expansionist oversight agency.

A faith-based membership charity found itself in trouble when the introduction of new trustees led to a dispute developing between the old and new groups. The new group emerged the strongest, and there were a range of complaints about their behaviour, including allegations that the new Chair was fixing the election to ensure his re-election.

The damage was serious, that is, and there were allegations that someone was breaking the rules – but the Commission still didn't bite.

Our assessment was that we could not intervene, because deciding on the organisation's membership rules was a matter for the trustees who had agreed them. Our view was that it was an internal dispute between the trustees, and that it was the trustee's responsibility to address it.

We informed all the trustees and the complainant group of our position and advised them to seek to appoint an external independent person or organisation to help them resolve their dispute.

The Commission adds

Deliberate wrongdoing in charities remains rare, and the vast majority of cases which come to our attention can be resolved by providing advice and guidance to help trustees put the necessary solutions in place.

The Charities Commission – and any Australian equivalent, if we get one – is there to tell you to do your job, not to do it for you. The Commission's report highlights the overriding importance of good governance, another reason you should ensure your board/committee members are up to speed and on the ball.

Sending them to attend the upcoming Board Builder Conference (Melbourne – February 27) would be a good place to start. Reserve a spot now at www.ourcommunity.com.au/boardbuilder2009.

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7. Marketing Guru



Q. How can we personalise our mail-outs without going to too much bother or expense?

A. Personalising your mail out increases the chance that recipients will read what you have to say, as well as act on your correspondence.

Personalisation is easy and usually pretty cheap too.

Using a database, word processor and mail merge function is the simplest way of personally addressing both your letters and the envelopes you send them in.

The same function can be used to insert various personalised paragraphs throughout your letters – useful if you wish to thank someone for a recent donation and tell them the difference it has made, or if you are holding a function and wish to invite those people whose addresses are close by (rather than, say, interstate).

As for the envelope, placing an actual stamp in the top right corner is a great start, as people will respond more favourably to a stamped letter than one which is just postage paid.

Hand-writing the recipient's name on the envelope is another personalisation option, but one which can be time-consuming for big mail-outs.

The envelopes themselves can be of different colours, sizes or shapes. The Innovative Envelopes section of the Australia Post website (see [here](#)) has more information about individualising the envelopes you use in your mail-outs.

The Marketing Guru is an initiative of the Marketing, Media and Post Centre, the online resource for community organisations provided by Our Community and Australia Post. Send your questions to guru@ourcommunity.com.au.

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8. A blue, blue Christmas

As many of us prepare for the joy of Christmas, remember that not everyone is celebrating at this time of year ...

Christmas is the time for loneliness – a time when calls to [Lifeline](#) go up.

As QUT relationships psychologist [Dr Matthew Bambling](#) says, loneliness is one of the biggest emerging problems in Australia and Christmas magnifies loneliness because many people do not have sustaining relationships.

“They might have friends but the friends are off doing things and they are left on their own. If you haven't got a social network nothing is worse than being alone at Christmas because it is a time of symbolic meaning for getting together and enjoying the company of others.”

A new and important report on [Loneliness in Australia](#) from researchers at the University of Tasmania analyses the Australian way of loneliness and links the problem not to our accidental mishaps but to the fundamental nature of modern society.

Report co-authors Adrian Franklin and Bruce Tranter suggest that there is

a major discontinuity in the *quality* of social relationships at all levels of society, where solid commitments have given way to contingent, flexible and conditional arrangements – all of which have an unsettlingly ‘until further notice’ character.

Such changes can be identified with political and policy commitments (where such solid things as ‘full employment’ and ‘regional policy’ have given way to ‘flexible’ and ‘free market’ patterns of capital

investment); with employment commitments (where cradle-to-grave employers/employees have given way to short-term contracts etc), and with personal, marital and familial relationships (where solid, lifetime commitments to partners, friends and family have given way to 'until further notice' relationships resulting from freer divorce, serial partnerships, social and spatial mobility etc).

As a result of these shifts we have traded commitments and security for freedoms and choices, and as a result of that we spend more time 'between relationships', in 'insecure relationships' and find it increasingly difficult to commit ourselves to others, generally.

The nature of loneliness has changed. Whereas it was once associated with those who were detached from social relationships, today it increasingly stems from the *nature* of social relationships themselves. They still exist but they no longer work in the same way. The old sociological relationships are still named and enacted, but they enact something different, something *less*.

Whereas once a great many people were woven together with long chains of dependency and secure commitments to enduring ties, today we have extensive and built-in structures of loneliness.

That's not something we're going to fix before Christmas, so listen to Dr. Bambling.

"Don't be ashamed to connect with friends ask them if you can spend Christmas with them," he says. "If you know someone who hasn't got something on, include them. Or volunteer for a charity group – some people have their most meaningful and happiest Christmases helping others."

Once again, community groups stop the cracks in our society's care for others. There are worse jobs.

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9. Our Community Hero: Michelle O'Rourke, Toowoomba

Congratulations to this month's Community Hero, Michelle O'Rourke, a volunteer at the Kath Dickson Family Centre in Toowoomba, Qld.

The Centre is a not-for-profit, community based organisation dedicated to the care and education of young children and adult learners. Michelle's nominator, Samantha Miller writes:

"Michelle finished school at Toowoomba West Special School and almost immediately began to volunteer at the Kath Dickson Family Centre.

"Faithfully in rain, hail or shine Michelle arrives for work up to 5 days a week and has done this for 20 years. What an achievement!

"Michelle works in our toy library helping the children and families in the Darling Downs district. She is responsible for a large workload of restocking shelves, cleaning toys, stocking art supplies, assisting at play group and training other volunteers – just to name a few duties. I would be lost without Michelle.

"Michelle always wears a smile and gives everyone she meets a touch of that special Michelle magic. Michelle is not only an asset to the Kath Dickson Family Centre, but also to our entire community. We love Michelle!"

Michelle will receive a Community Heroes certificate, a selection of Our Community books and a 12-month subscription to a range of Our Community newsletters. If you would like to read about past Community Heroes, or find out how to nominate a Community Hero, visit www.ourcommunity.com.au/heroes



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10. Talking Finances ... by Westpac Head of Community Markets, Vanessa Nolan-Woods

The recent financial upheaval has brought home how our actions have the capacity to affect the lives of others.

We are truly a global community, and events like 'Giving Week,' which was held from 1-7 December, provide us with a great opportunity to really live like a community.

In my own work foyer the Christmas Giving Tree is laden with gifts, serving as a reminder of fairness and sustainability in our community.

It's just one of many Giving Trees and other collection facilities available in Westpac branches around the country, enabling anyone to give, no matter the size of their gift.

There has been some recent speculation that community organisations will receive fewer donations as a result of the financial upheaval being felt across the globe.

We were pleasantly surprised when we took a closer look at the cash donation statistics from the Australian Giving Centre (www.ourcommunity.com.au/giving). It's great to know that donations have gone up so dramatically this year.

I encourage you to have a look at the Australian Giving Centre to see the great variety of ways we can give these days – in time, goods, services or even land!

One job to consider for the New Year is to package up all the ways that people can give to your community group – one-off volunteering, ongoing volunteering, membership of the board, donations, bequests, in-kind support, etc. etc. – and present them (on your website, in your brochures) as a menu. That way you can make sure that people feeling the pinch financially know how they can continue giving to your group, and those suffering time-deprivation can do the opposite.

Don't forget to include in your list some suggestions of how local businesses and their employees can help out.

I know that many of Westpac's bankers are really in touch with their local communities, applying the gift of their financial skills in their own time to local community organisations.

Plus, like many businesses, Westpac matches employees' donations through our Matching Gifts program, raising much-needed dollars for the community sector each year – and showing that conscience is definitely not incompatible with commerce.

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11. COMMUNITY CLASSIFIEDS – Notices, Offers, Awards, Giveaways & Tips

TO GIVE AWAY: Medical Equipment (Campbelltown, South Australia)

A retired general practitioner in Campbelltown, South Australia, has a variety of medical equipment to give away to a good cause.

Items include an obstetric case, three stethoscopes, two reflex hammers, towel clips, forceps, a height tape measure, a Spencer Wills artery clip, two Bunsen burners, an E&T mirror, hypodermic needle packs, a laryngoscope, surgical sutures, medicine glasses, a peak flow meter, artery clips, a glove finger stall, an anaesthetic mask and tubes, a paediatric anaesthetic mask, an eye pressure meter, 5 stainless steel kidney bowls and other dishes, and 2 proctoscopes.

If your group could use this equipment, please contact Carlien Dunstone by telephoning (08) 8337 6879.

TO GIVE AWAY: Eye glasses & accessories (Australia-wide)

An American community organisation called Sight Angels (www.communityofangels.org) is seeking organisations in Australia that could distribute a number of eyeglasses and accessories to those in need.

Rx and reading glasses plus accessories are available for groups whose clients/members could put them to use.

Sight Angels would cover the cost of the shipping. The glasses would be sent in a US flat rate postal box unless arrangements could be made with another humanitarian organisation that ships from the US to Australia.

Depending on what items are available to ship and how many organisations are able to distribute the glasses, there could be around 40 to 50 items per box per organisation.

The organisation would ideally like to put in place a shipment before the end of the year.

If you are interested in finding out more, contact Betsy Rose at globalainc@aol.com.

TO GIVE AWAY: hats & satchels (Canberra but can be shipped)

Universities Australia has recently changed its name and logo and has around 50 floppy hats and 250 conference satchels (all branded with the old logo) available to donate to a not-for-profit organisation.

The hats are in dark blue cotton. The satchels are black polyester with two handles and a zip. They measure 3700 mm wide by 2800mm high with a compartment at the front for a nametag and a web section on the gusset (700 mm wide) for a mobile phone or pen.

Universities Australia is willing to pay the shipping involved in getting these items to your group.

Interested groups should contact Arminia Sorbara – email to a.sorbara@universitiesaustralia.edu.au or call (02) 6285 8116.

TO GIVE AWAY: business & polo shirts (Newcastle, but can ship)

The Sharp Electronics Group is undergoing a logo change and has four or five dozen brand new business and polo shirts to give away.

The sizes vary from S, M, L, XL & XXL.

They have the company name embroidered on the left breast but are of very good quality.

The company is based in Newcastle.

If your group could use these shirts contact Joe Davidson by email to Joe.Davidson@sharpnew.com.au or telephone (02) 4962 1313.

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Board Builder Conference 2009

The leading national conference for community
boards, committees and governing councils

BETTER BOARDS : BETTER OUTCOMES

Friday, 27 February, 2009
9.30am – 4.30pm
Telstra Dome, Melbourne

**BOOK NOW: Call 03 9320 6800 or visit
www.ourcommunity.com.au/boardbuilder2009**



ourcommunity.com.au

A stellar list of
speakers, including
Australian Treasurer
WAYNE SWAN
BOOK NOW!
Conference sells
out every year!

12. Community Briefs

Book now for 2009 training

Our Community's training arm, The Australian Institute of Community Practice and Governance, has released its training calendar for the first half of 2009.

Bookings are now open for courses such as the Certificate IV in Business (Governance), a nationally recognised and respected governance qualification for those working on or with the governing structures of Australian community organisations.

Also available are seminars on Community Fundraising, Winning Grants and the Secrets of Successful Boards.

The calendar includes information about the popular Best Practice in Grants Management Conference, our annual conference for grantmakers (Melbourne – February 20), and the Board Builder Conference (Melbourne – February 27), which this year will feature the Treasurer of Australia, The Honourable Wayne Swan.

This affordable, practical training, which is offered in major centres all over Australia, helps community sector staff, volunteers and supporters keep up to date and learn how to lift their organisation from ordinary to extraordinary.

All training is delivered by experienced, engaging community sector practitioners, and has been road-tested in the field to guarantee its relevance and applicability at the coalface.

To find out more about each of the training opportunities available, or to make a booking go to: www.ourcommunity.com.au/training/calendar.form.

My Word! High Court dismisses ATO appeal in long running 'charitable business' case

After more than two years of court battles, the High Court has dismissed the Commissioner of Taxation's final appeal in the long-running Word Investments charity tax case.

The case centred on the activities of Melbourne funeral business Bethel Funerals and the not-for-profit organisation which runs it – Wycliffe Bible Translators. Wycliffe runs Bethel to raise money for its work to translate the Bible into different languages. That work is carried out under the umbrella of a second business – Word Investments Limited.

The Australian Tax Office claimed Word Investments' work was too entrepreneurial and therefore decided it should not be tax-exempt, despite the fact the money raised through Word funded Wycliffe's charitable work. Wycliffe disagreed.

The case moved through the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, the Federal Court, the Full Bench of the Federal Court and, most recently, the High Court, which dismissed the ATO's appeal on December 3.

In a joint statement accompanying the ruling, four of the five High Court judges which heard the case emphasised that to determine if an institution was charitable, it was necessary to look at its purposes and not just its activities. If the purpose of all the activities was charitable, according to the four judges, then the organisation was charitable. The commercial nature of the activity did not prevent the company from being a charity.

In a dissenting statement, High Court Justice Michael Kirby said the law should draw the line at what he described as "unrelated" revenue raising activity.

The ATO says it has noted the clear guidance of the High Court and will "move promptly to analyse the decision and implications for implementation".

A full account of the decision appeared in the December edition of the Raising Funds newsletter.

Changes to NSW fundraising regulations

Recent changes to New South Wales's fundraising regulations are now in force.

The new rules, which came into effect at the start of September, comprise 12 main changes. They include:

- That face-to-face collectors don't have to wear a prominent ID badge if the fundraising appeal is part of a fundraising event or function, and it is clear to people attending which organisation is conducting the appeal.
- An unincorporated association is only required to notify of an amendment to its constitution when the change affects its charitable objects, non-profit nature or disposition of funds when it is wound up.
- Unincorporated associations which raise amounts of \$100,000 or more gross income from fundraising in a financial year must lodge a periodic return to the Minister. Previously, the cut-off amount was \$20,000.
- The maximum percentage of expenses in relation to donation appeals is increased from 40% to 50%. Licensed fundraisers are required to take reasonable steps not to exceed that amount.

A full list of the changes is available from the NSW Government's Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing: www.olgr.nsw.gov.au/charitable_latest_news.asp.

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step

The Victorian government has noticed some of the problems with existing legislation governing community organisations, and after an extensive period of consultation has worked its way through the complicated processes necessary to produce a new Associations Incorporation Amendment Bill 2008.

It doesn't propose any major changes in the laws, though it does make a number of minor but significant improvements. For example, it has proposed an amendment that changes the name of the person responsible for reporting to the government from the impenetrable "public officer" (which requires a good deal of extra explanation) to the better-known "secretary".

It would normally be important to go into the amendments in detail, carefully explaining the importance of each to community groups of different sizes and kinds. This time, however, not so much – because the Victorian Bill, worthy though it is, is probably not going to go any further – and if it does, it won't be around for long.

It's been gazumped by the proposals of the Senate Committee on *Disclosure Regimes for Charities and Not-for-profit Organisations*, in particular Recommendation 7, which recommends the establishment of a single legal structure throughout Australia (see Item 2 above).

A road by any other name...

Land Victoria's Office of Geographic Names (OGN) is reviewing the *Guidelines for Geographic Names* and as part of the review is inviting feedback from community groups and other stakeholders.

The key areas under review are geographic features, locality boundaries and roads. The policies and principles that govern the standardisation of naming places are under consideration.

Organisations which provide information to, or rely on information collected from, the OGN are invited to provide feedback on the format and content of the current guidelines.

For more details go to: www.dse.vic.gov.au/guidelinesreview.

Tell the Treasurer

Federal Treasurer Wayne Swan has invited Australian community groups, businesses, individuals and families to provide input into the 2009-2010 Budget.

The Treasurer says submissions from the public will be core considerations for the Rudd Government in developing a strong economic policy to combat current and long-term economic challenges.

A total of 5000 submissions from a wide range of individuals and groups were made for the 2008-2009 Budget.

The final date for submissions is Friday, January 16, 2009 but the Government says they should be lodged as soon as possible to be given full consideration in the Budget process.

Lengthier submissions should ideally include an executive summary of no more than two pages, and be accompanied by an electronic version, either on disk or CD, or emailed in Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat format.

Submissions should be forwarded to: Budget Policy Division, Department of the Treasury, Langton Crescent, PARKES ACT 2600, or email to: prebudgetsubs@treasury.gov.au.

Philanthropy scholarships on offer

Two scholarships are being offered to students enrolling in 2009 for the Graduate Certificate stage of the Master of Business (Philanthropy and Social Investment) delivered by the Asia Pacific Centre for Philanthropy and Social Investment at Swinburne University of Technology.

The scholarships, provided by Trust Foundation, are valued at \$10,000 each and offer a full fee waiver for one year.

They are open to students who have enrolled for the Graduate Certificate stage of the Master of Business (Philanthropy and Social Investment) and are Australian citizens or have permanent residency status in Australia.

The selection criteria are: sound academic record, evidence of significant professional and/or voluntary contribution to philanthropic or community affairs and circumstances which make the payment of fees without assistance difficult.

Applications close on Friday, January 30, 2009.

For more information go to www.future.swinburne.edu.au/scholarships/schols-info.php?a=P&ID=76.

Christmas comes early for Gold Coast community groups

Gold Coast Mayor Ron Clarke has presented all community organisations registered with the local Gold Coast Gives initiative with a *Board Builder* newsletter subscription to acknowledge their contribution to local giving.

The 12-month subscription to the newsletter, which is produced by Our Community (which also hosts the Gold Coast Gives service), will support local groups to maintain and improve their governance.

In previous years, registered groups have received a subscription to the *EasyGrants* newsletter, access to Our Community training and a range of books from Our Community's collection.

If you're a Gold Coast group, and you're not yet signed up with the free Gold Coast Gives initiative, find out more at www.ourcommunity.com.au/goldcoastgives.

Other councils interested in finding out about local government giving should contact Kate Caldecott on (03) 9320 6804 or email katec@ourcommunity.com.au.

Multicultural news website launched

A multicultural news website has been launched as part of a project to give a voice to people rarely heard in the mainstream media.

New Australia Media, a not-for-profit association, has launched the new website – an online news service featuring stories about multicultural Australia.

Young people from refugee and migrant communities have been mentored by professional journalists to write stories for the website. New Australia Media “aims to make the mainstream media more multicultural and the multicultural media more mainstream”.

New Australia Media hopes the website will raise the profile of the multicultural media sector and improve the quality of information available to new and emerging communities.

The organisation also hopes it will go some way towards correcting misconceptions and the misrepresentation of these communities in the mainstream media.

Take a look at the website at www.newaustraliamedia.org/

Australia's diversity

The children and grandchildren of immigrants are absorbing the cultural influences of their ancestral country and successfully blending them into mainstream Australia, according to a report launched by the Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services, Laurie Ferguson.

The People of Australia publication, released every five years, draws on Census data to show a range of demographic trends in local government areas including birthplaces, ancestry, languages and religious affiliations.

The publication shows that between 2001 and 2006:

- Chinese, Indians and New Zealanders were the most rapidly growing overseas-born groups
- Greater Dandenong became Australia's multicultural capital, with more than 25 different nationalities represented among its population
- The number of South-African-born people in Western Australia grew by 42%
- Australia's fastest growing languages were Mandarin, Arabic and Hindi
- Buddhism (up 17%), Islam (up 20.9%) and Hinduism (up 55%) were our fastest growing religions
- People born in Greece, Croatia and Slovenia had the highest rates of Australian citizenship
- A total of 72% of the population claim to be Christian (though only a third of these will go to church this Christmas), with 4.9% for Buddhists, Moslems, Hindus and Jews taken together, in order of size, and 18.9% for No Religion.

The publication is available online [here](#).

Body image, drugs, conflict concern young people: survey

Body image, drugs and family conflict remain major concerns among young people, according to a sweeping survey of young people recently released by Mission Australia.

The *National Survey of Young Australians* surveyed more than 45,000 Australians between the ages of 11 and 24. More than 97% of respondents were aged between 11 and 19.

More than a quarter of those surveyed cited body image as a major concern, while a similar proportion cited drugs and family conflict as the cause of their worries.

The number of young people expressing concern about drugs has increased since last year – up from about a fifth of respondents in 2007 to a quarter this year.

When asked about what they valued, more than three-quarters cited family relationships as an important aspect of their lives, while another 60% said friendships were vital.

The full survey is available for download from the Mission Australia site: <http://tinyurl.com/592lm4>.

Here we go round the mulberry bush

First of all, the Australian Tax Office announces in its regular email newsletter to not-for-profits that

The Assistant Treasurer has released a discussion paper to provide a point of reference for public submissions on the Government's 2008 Budget commitment to improve the integrity of prescribed private funds (PPFs). <http://www.ato.gov.au/distributor.asp?doc=/content/Content/00173201.htm>

Fascinating! Let's see it.

Not so fast. As you can see, if you click on that link (1) you get sent to a page that tells you

An extract of the Assistant Treasurer's press release No. 101 dated 26 November 2008 is below. The full press release can be viewed on the Assistant Treasurer's website at <http://assistant.treasurer.gov.au>.

Clicking on this link (2), we come to the [Assistant Treasurer's website](#), where we find a link (3) to a [media release](#) where the Hon. Chris Bowen tells us that

The Assistant Treasurer, Chris Bowen MP, today released a discussion paper to provide a point of reference for public submissions on the Government's 2008 Budget commitment to improve the integrity of prescribed private funds (PPFs).

The Assistant Treasurer encourages interested parties to provide their comments on the paper by 14 January 2009.

The discussion paper is available on the Treasury website www.treasury.gov.au.

Clicking on that link (4) we come, as promised, to the [Treasury home page](#), with no immediate link to any paper.

However, our blood is now up, so we type the keywords 'Prescribed Private Funds' into their search engine, and, to be sure, when we click on that (5) we do indeed have the discussion paper come up at the head of the list, so when we click on that (6) we get a [page](#) that gives another summary but also at last lists a PDF file and a word document so that when we CLICK FOR THE SEVENTH TIME we can in fact find out what everybody is seeking our comments on (see below for details).

Whatever the bureaucratic etiquette that leads to this guided tour through the Australian system of government, it is hard not to feel that there might be a less Byzantine way of doing it.

Prescribed Private Funds under review

The Federal Government has proposed changes to legislation governing Prescribed Private Funds – trusts to which businesses, families and individuals make donations which are then distributed to other deductible gift recipients.

Among the proposals is the suggested introduction of powers to remove or disqualify trustees, or to apply fines or criminal, civil or administrative penalties to address breaches of the law.

A Treasury discussion paper says the current approach is “all or nothing,” and sometimes no action is taken in response to a breach, because the only available remedy – revoking deductible-gift-recipient status – is considered too harsh.

It also notes that the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) currently cannot take action against trustees whose management has been inappropriate, and cannot remedy the related loss of funds.

Previous breaches noted in the paper include PPFs carrying on a business and PPFs making loans to or purchasing property for associates of a founder or major donor.

Other considerations for discussion include suggestions that PPFs be required to distribute minimum amounts each year; that PPFs not receiving donations be wound down; and that a minimum size be set for PPFs because a large proportion of the value of small PPFs can be eroded by operating expenses.

To read the full discussion paper – *Improving the integrity of Prescribed Private Funds (PPFs)* – go to <http://tinyurl.com/65kubf>.

UK giving frenzy brings down servers

In another sign that predictions of giving fatigue may be a little exaggerated, a UK giving website was twice forced to shut down a £2 million online giveaway earlier this month because its website was unable to cope with demand.

The Big Give website was so overwhelmed by demand for its pound-for-pound match funding offer, it crashed just 18 minutes after launching – by which time £600,000 had already been donated.

A total of £2 million (that’s around \$4.5 million) was distributed after the Reed Foundation donated £1 million for a matched funding scheme, encouraging donors to give big with the promise of having their donations doubled.

“A staggering £600,000 was donated in the first 18 minutes, overwhelming the servers and causing the site to crash,” the Big Give said. “The £1 million total was reached after the scheme relaunched for a further 27 minutes, with an average donation of over £1400.”

The matched funding scheme was the first of its kind to take place on The Big Give but it’s hoped that more will follow. It had been expected that the fund may last months.

Community Calendar: What’s on in the community sector

Our Community’s online Community Calendar features all of the nationally significant events focussed around a major community or advocacy/awareness issues in Australia. Some of the events taking place in January and February include:

- **International Year of Reconciliation:** 2009
- **International Holocaust Remembrance Day:** January 27
- **International Duchenne Awareness Week:** February 8-14
- **International Asperger’s Day:** February 18
- **International Mother Language Day:** February 21
- **National Sunnies for Sight Day:** February 27
- **Schools Clean Up Day:** February 27

More events, plus the full listing for each event, can be found at www.ourcommunity.com.au/calendar.

FEATURED EVENT

Library Lovers Day: February 14
<http://www.librarylovers.org.au/>

For centuries February 14 has been known as St. Valentine's Day. Now is the time for a new era, with Library Lovers everywhere being encouraged to claim the day for the objects of their special affection – Australia's libraries.

Australia's public libraries will offer special programs, displays, treats and competitions to celebrate Australians' love of libraries.

This promotional campaign is a combined advocacy event organised by the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) and Public Libraries Australia (PLA).

13. Good Moves – community jobs & board/committee vacancies



Good Moves :: Jobs Bulletin

www.ourcommunity.com.au

JOB VACANCY LISTINGS (Paid Positions)

New South Wales

Job Title	Organisation	
Assistant Coordinator	New Horizons Enterprises	Details
Settlement Policy Officer (Can operate in either Sydney or Melbourne)	RCOA- Refugee Council of Australia	Details

Queensland

Job Title	Organisation	
Disability Support Workers	Qualtime Association Inc.	Details
Member Networks Coordinator - Townsville	Spinal Injuries Association	Details
Manager Volunteer Services	Spiritus Volunteer Services	Details
Casual Trainers (Community Welfare)	Sterling College	Details

South Australia

Job Title	Organisation	
Community Development Worker	Aboriginal Family Support Services (AFSS)	Details

Victoria

Job Title	Organisation	
Global Homework Program Leader	The Centre	Details
Victorian Indigenous Youth Advisory Council State Coordinator	Youth Affairs Council of Victoria	Details
Manager	YMCA Victoria	Details
Team Leader - Child Protection	VIC Department of Human Services	Details
Senior Project Officer in Consumer Participation	Health Issues Centre	Details

Western Australia

Job Title	Organisation	
Disability Support Workers	HCSG- Hills Community Support Group Inc	Details
Youth Workers	St Vincent de Paul Society	Details

BOARD/COMMITTEE VACANCY LISTINGS (Volunteer Positions)

The following is a list of the most recent Board/Committee vacancies listed at Our Community. To view other board or Committee vacancies [please click here](#) (This matching service is free)

New South Wales

Job Title	Organisation	
Treasurer	Blacktown Youth College	Details

Continued ...

Queensland

Job Title	Organisation	
Chair, General Board Member, ATSI Representative	Booval Community Service Inc	Details
Treasurer	Impact: Youth organisation reducing crime limited	Details

Victoria

Job Title	Organisation	
Treasurer	Victorian Association for Environmental Education	Details
General Board Member	Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement	Details
General Board Member	Western Storm	Details
Treasurer	Western Edge Youth arts	Details
Secretary	Spanish American Foundation for the Arts	Details
Treasurer	Slow Food Victoria	Details
Secretary, General Board Member	Counsellors Without Borders Australia	Details
General Board Member	Little Big Shots International Film Festival for Kids	Details

www.ourcommunity.com.au/jobs

14. Fast Forward

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

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

15. About Our Community

Our Community is a world-leading social enterprise that provides advice and tools for Australia's 700,000 community groups and schools, and practical linkages between the community sector and the general public, business and government. Our major offerings include:

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 Centres – accelerating the impact of Australia's 700,000 community organisations
2. [Australia's Giving Centre](#) – Helping individuals and businesses give in every way
3. [Australian Institute for Community Practice and Governance](#) – practical and accessible certificated training delivered locally through our training Institute
4. [Institute for Best Practice in Grants Management](#) – the unique suite of grants management services for government
5. [Australian Institute for Corporate Responsibility](#) – cutting edge corporate responsibility resources for large, medium and small business and community organisations

Read more about us at www.ourcommunity.com.au/aboutus.