

Our Community **MATTERS**

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



Resources, News, Innovations and Tips on:

- ✓ Funding, Finance & Membership Management
- ✓ Leadership & Advocacy
- ✓ Management & Training
- ✓ Marketing & Media
- ✓ Boards, Committees & Governance
- ✓ Community & Business Partnerships
- ✓ Insurance & Risk Management

www.ourcommunity.com.au

September 2008 – Issued September 23, 2008

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By Rhonda Galbally AO
CEO

Here's today's health tip: Get off that couch, walk next door to talk to your neighbour, and get moving on making our society more equal.

Health isn't only, or even mainly, about what you do yourself as an individual; it's much more about the kind of place you live in. We could all live longer if our society was better.

This isn't lefty speak, either, it's the best science there is.

Have a look at the new and weighty World Health Organisation report, *Closing the Gap in a Generation: Health Equity through Action on the Social Determinants of Health* (online [here](#)). Its key finding is that health is not primarily determined by how often we see the doctor, take our medication, or see advertisements about giving up smoking, but rather, by the conditions in which we are born, grow, live and work.

And they're not good.

"A toxic combination of poor social policies, unfair economic arrangements and bad politics is killing people on a grand scale," says Sir Michael Marmot, chair of the WHO commission which produced the report. "Taking action to deal with preventable causes of illness means taking social action," he says. Social injustice is killing people on a grand scale.

In Australia we tend to look at health mainly as a matter of morality and force of will. Good people lead healthy lives, weak self-indulgent people lead unhealthy lives, or so this way of thinking goes. Our favourite stories are redemption narratives, glory hallelujah for the biggest loser who was lost but now is found. We're systematically discouraged from looking at the larger picture, where two suburbs a mile apart have 10-year differences in their life expectancy.

The WHO report's key recommendations focus on changing social structures and reducing inequality, in order to prevent disease and improve people's health and happiness. It calls on governments to back policies that redistribute power, money and resources more fairly.

This is definitely the way to go, and I ought to know – I spent many years in VicHealth supporting exactly the kind of work that involved giving out information to change individual behaviour that the report points out doesn't help. Only after I'd seen how badly this worked did I switch to a new prevention approach that focused much more on changing structures and emphasising participation by disadvantaged groups.

The report sets ambitious targets for "closing the gap" – fixing health inequalities within a generation, an aim already being described as a commendable goal, but utterly unrealistic. Similarly, the report will be criticised for promoting policies of collectivism and redistribution in an era that we all know has its core culture built around the ideas of individual responsibility.

"Central to the Commission's recommendations is creating the conditions for people to be empowered, to have freedom to lead flourishing lives," the report says. "We must tackle the inequitable distribution of power, money and resources – the structural drivers of those conditions – globally, nationally and locally."

One of the authors of the report is Fran Baum, public health professor at Flinders University – one of the speakers at this year's Communities in Control Conference. She's willing to take the risk of being called idealistic. "We ran the risk of being labelled unrealistic and idealist, but the evidence took us in that direction," she says.

Baum's keynote address at the conference – online at www.ourcommunity.com.au/cic – brought these global problems back down to earth by telling us how community groups working in our local communities can bring about the kind of change that the report says is needed.

“I think the power of local groups is that they can tell local stories of the impact of these policies. They organise and mobilise and you can link globally. We’ve really got to start funding services which are community controlled and based on trust, not regulation – multi-disciplinary services with local management, where people are seen as citizens rather than consumers.

We have to support poor communities to develop skills and abilities with a range of resources. We have to remember that inclusion is not just a fuzzy feeling but is about sharing power more equally. That will be a struggle – but I’m sure it’s nothing new to you guys, I’m sure.”

Let’s take up her challenge.

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2. WHAT WORKS: The Book a Brain initiative

A community group in the Queensland coastal hinterland region of Maleny has hit upon a great idea to ensure idle local brains do not go to waste.

The town’s new Book a Brain initiative is designed to ensure community individuals or groups have access to local resource people who can assist them in developing ideas or projects that will benefit the broader community.

Projects might include festivals, awareness-raising exercises, community care programs, and community sharing programs.

The initiative, which operates out of the Maleny Branch Library, provides a good template for other communities wanting to ensure they are putting local human resources to good use. Organisers say the main components of the Book a Brain initiative are:

- A recognised and legal entity to sponsor the initiative (in their case the Maleny Branch Library);
- An advisory group, which is responsible for managing the initiative, carrying out tasks including development of policy, promotion, recruitment of Brains, record-keeping, etc.;
- An identified and readily contactable coordinator (in their case, library staff);
- Volunteer ‘Brains’ – local residents with knowledge and expertise that they are willing to share;
- Project applicants – local residents who want to get access to knowledge and information from a living local source.

Find out how to do it yourself: templates now online

At Our Community we have been working on a method of helping community groups, government and communities spread the word about the hard-won lessons from all the great work that is being done throughout Australia.

The Centre for What Works – at www.ourcommunity.com.au/whatworks – has been conceived as a place where you can extract the lessons of others or contribute your own through the:

- **Lessons Bank:** providing a collection of case studies that go beyond a description of what was achieved to detail **how** it was achieved – what worked and why. This resource will build over time, eventually emerging as a fully indexed and searchable database of lessons, and an invaluable resource for community organisations and funders.
- **Policy Bank:** bringing together an ever-expanding library of sample policies and procedures relevant to community organisations. The Policy Bank already contains more than 60 policies, loaded in Word format to allow for easy adaptation for your own organisation’s needs.
- **Linkages Bank:** Our Community’s website contains almost all the resources you need to run a successful community group. For everything else, there’s the Linkages Bank – a categorised and fully linked guide to hundreds of resources from around Australia and across the world.



- **Plans and Tools Bank:** This section of the Centre for What Works is designed to bring together a range of free plans and tools that your community organisation can use to save you time and money when putting in place a project or program.



The Book a Brain project tools are the first to be lodged in the Plans and Tools Bank.

Thanks to the generosity of the project organisers, anyone wanting to set up a project like this in their own community can now download information sheets, forms and publicity materials relating to the project.

We need your help to keep building this valuable resource.

If you have a great story to tell and tools and lessons you're willing to disseminate, log on to www.ourcommunity.com.au/whatworks and find out how you can contribute.

The Book a Brain resources are also available via the above link.

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3. Don't judge a book by its cover (especially if the book's a person)

In another example of library-based innovation, a community-building initiative focussed on developing connections and reducing prejudice has begun to spread across Australia from the far north coast of New South Wales.

Australia's first Living Library was established in Lismore almost two years ago, based on a European model established in 2000.

The program involves people from different backgrounds who wouldn't usually meet being brought together for half-hour conversations. "Patrons" can borrow a "book" – which is in fact a person – and talk with them in the library (which may or may not be an actual library).

The human books might, for example, be from different religious faiths, diverse cultures, have different sexual preferences or have a disability.

Encouraged by the project's success, Lismore City Council secured a grant from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship to create Living Libraries Australia.

There are now 60 across the country.

National Living Library Strategy project manager Shauna McIntyre, from Lismore City Council, said Living Libraries had been very successful in increasing understanding and developing connections in local communities.

Through conversation, communities are brought closer together, attitudes change, prejudice and fear are reduced and social inclusion is strengthened.

If you would like to establish a Living Library in your area, the Living Libraries Australia site – www.livinglibraries.org.au – provides plenty of information.

A Living Library can be established as a one-off or regular event, and it can stand alone or be part of another event.

Living Libraries Australia suggests that in early development, the idea should be discussed with others in a community to generate support. It recommends establishing an organising committee and a memorandum of understanding, to ensure aims are shared.

They also suggest you choose as a patron someone who is widely supported in the community, but who also has experienced discrimination.

You are encouraged to include in the program people who bring challenging issues with them – such as homeless people – as well as high-profile people who also experience negative stereotyping, such as police officers and veterans who served in the Vietnam War.

A resources kit says recruiting "living books" is probably easier than you imagine, and can be done through word of mouth or by approaching people from groups in your community which you know experience discrimination.

The kit says a good living book is:

- reliable; someone who answers questions honestly;
- willing to help others learn; someone who can be clear about their lifestyle without preaching about it;
- willing to talk with a range of different readers; and
- a good listener; not too talkative.

It also suggests you have a volunteer coordinator and run orientation sessions. Librarians also require orientation, and they can be community organisers, council staff or trained librarians.

To access all the resources, and to find out more, go to www.livinglibraries.org.au.

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4. Ushering in a new era in banking for Australian community groups

Westpac has created a new Community Markets division and appointed Vanessa Nolan-Woods, a senior employee of the bank, to head up the new program.

Sustainability is about keeping communities viable and Westpac has embarked on this new program to help change the way financial institutions deal with the not-for-profit sector.

Vanessa says that Westpac's new approach will help to equip community customers with advice, products and specialist bankers to help them grow their organisations or simply help them to maintain their purpose.

"We're having a long, hard look at the community sector. What we're working on now with community customers will ultimately build solutions for them from the ground up," she says.

"The community sector covers a broad spectrum, from small local organisations operating from a kitchen table through to huge global organisations. What we're very conscious of not doing is presuming that we know what all not-for-profit organisations want from a bank. It's definitely not a one-size-fits-all approach."

Vanessa says Westpac bankers across the country are being asked to partner with their local not-for-profit customers to help them grow and develop.

"This could include our bankers providing advice on how to manage cash flow, how to invest endowment funds and how to manage growth," she says.

"We're also working with our local bankers around the country to get behind initiatives such as the Community Treasurers' Awards, as well as the distribution of the free *Guide for Community Treasurers* and the continued development of the online [Community Financial Centre](#) – an online resource that is helping to improve the financial literacy of community organisation staff and volunteers.

"Westpac's support of the [Australian Giving Centre](#) is also helping to ensure that community groups of all sizes across the country have access to a free online donations portal, another way we are helping to shore up the financial sustainability of the Australian community sector.

"We're very proud to be partnering with Our Community on delivering these initiatives for the community sector," Vanessa says.

For more information about Westpac community initiatives visit the Community Financial Centre at www.ourcommunity.com.au/financial.

Watch this space for more news about important Westpac community sector initiatives.



The new head of Community Markets at Westpac, Vanessa Nolan-Woods

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5. Supporting Volunteering

Everybody's always been in favour of volunteering, but now some governments are actually starting to do something to help support it.

The UK Workforce hub has issued a set of National Occupational Standards 2008 for Management of Volunteers (see [here](#)) to put together all the things that a volunteer coordinator – paid or unpaid – might have to do.

These National Occupational Standards define the whole spectrum of activities involved in the management of volunteers and will help you to carry out this role effectively, with emphasis on

- A. Developing and evaluating strategies & policies that support volunteering
- B. Promoting volunteering
- C. Recruiting, placing, & inducting volunteers
- D. Managing & developing volunteers
- E. Managing yourself, your relationships & your responsibilities
- F. Providing management support for volunteering programs

Each section goes into more detail – the section on Management Support, for example, includes information on promoting your organisation and its services, managing projects involving volunteers, obtaining funds to support volunteering, and more.

Each of these points is broken down further, too, and running an eye down them as a checklist would be a useful exercise for anybody who's been given the job.

One of the things that's too new to make the standards under Recruiting also comes from England, where they're giving universities the option of allowing their students degree credits for their voluntary work – for “experiential learning” they've done in the workplace or while volunteering.

Although credit systems are already in operation in most UK universities, up to now there's been no single system operating across the whole of the country.

So not only are we behind the UK in the medal tally, their universities have also got a much better grasp of the value of volunteering than ours have.

And why are the British doing this? Because, as they say,

The emerging agenda for higher education (HE) in the United Kingdom (UK) promotes lifelong learning, social inclusion, wider participation, employability and partnership working with business, community organisations and among HE providers nationally and internationally. Consequently, higher education institutions (HEIs) are increasingly recognising the significant knowledge, skills and understanding which can be developed as a result of learning opportunities found at work, both paid and unpaid, and through individual activities and interests.

Seems sensible. You can read about this British initiative [here](#).

Over in America, meanwhile, they're conducting the kind of fine-grained research into volunteering that we need if we are to hold our own.

The American Time Use Survey (ATUS), sponsored by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, has done surveys to find that

- Volunteers, on average, are about as busy as other people.
- Volunteers don't make time for volunteering by simply trading paid work for unpaid work.
- Volunteers trade off more than an hour a day of TV watching, on average, to engage in voluntary service. On average, recent volunteers watch approximately 15 hours of television per week, compared to approximately 21 hours for former volunteers and 23 hours for non-volunteers.
- Volunteers spend substantially more time caring for children than either former volunteers or non-volunteers do.

- In a typical day, volunteers tend to be more socially connected and interact more with others. For instance, recent volunteers spend 78% of their mealtime hours eating with other people, compared to about 70% for non-volunteers.
- Good health is preserved by volunteering; it keeps healthy volunteers healthy.

What's not to like?

Back here in Oz, though, the Australian Bureau of Statistics funding has been cut, and its coverage of the Australian voluntary sector is cursory at best. Do the American findings also apply here? We can only guess.

Out of Pocket – Out of Luck

Meanwhile, Volunteering Australia has released the finding of the 2008 National Survey of Volunteering Issues. The survey attempts to work out where volunteers are satisfied, where they're concerned, and what moves them. It's found, for example, that 98% of volunteers said that they believed their work as volunteers made a difference to their organisation and its work, and 86% of volunteers believed their volunteering increased their sense of community belonging – figures that help the sector's quest for government recognition of its effect on community health and social cohesion.

The survey looked at Corporate Volunteering for the first time – 38% of surveyed organisations with volunteers had corporate or employee programs, and 57% of those respondents reported that corporate volunteers made an extremely valuable contribution to their organisation.

On the downside, it seems that Australian community groups are being forced to take a harder line on repaying out-of-pocket expenses.

Does your organisation offer to reimburse any out of pocket expenses?

	2007 (n = 117)	2008 (n = 194)
Yes – in full	27%	28%
Yes – in part	52%	38%
No – we can't afford it	18%	22%
No – it's against our policy	1%	7%
No – we haven't thought about it	1%	4%
Don't know	1%	3%

On the other hand, when asked, "Do out of pocket expenses affect your ability or desire to volunteer?" the proportion who said "No, they don't," went up from 36% to 60%, so the net effect probably wasn't large.

Have a look at the figures and see how your organisation rates. (And see this item later in the newsletter for an idea on how you might help to fund your volunteer costs this financial year.)

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6. OUR COMMUNITY HERO: Captain Peter Somerville

This month's Community Hero is Captain Peter Somerville, who has for many years passionately shared his knowledge of Melbourne's often overlooked Maribyrnong River, and campaigned to retain the heritage and environment of the river and its surrounding area for future generations.

Peter's nominator, Karen Woo writes:

"Captain Peter Somerville is a living treasure of the Maribyrnong River.

"For many years, Peter has been tireless in passionately presenting the rich local history of the Maribyrnong River Valley aboard his vessel *The Blackbird*.

"Many residents, visitors, school groups, business representatives, government agencies and community organisations have been given magnificent insights into our heritage past and present, including various land uses along the river and its impact on our physical environment.

"For many years Peter and his sons would also retrieve cars that were dumped into the Maribyrnong River.

"Peter is also a founding member of Friends of the Maribyrnong River Valley, Melbourne's Living Museum of the West, Friends of Sandy and the Australian Light Horse Association. "

Peter 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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7. Using collective bargaining power to save money for your group

The term "Whole of Government Contracts" may not mean a lot to you, but if you're in the business of saving money (and which community organisation isn't?) it's probably time you added it to your vocabulary.

The Whole of Government Contracts resource is available through the Victorian State Government's Department of Human Services (DHS) and it gives selected organisations the opportunity to save hundreds of dollars when purchasing everyday goods and services.

Here's how it works: Because the State Government buys large amounts of goods and services across a variety of fields, it is able to use its bargaining power to negotiate contracts to supply these items at cheaper rates.

Eligible community organisations are also able to tap into that bargaining power, but you need to meet four criteria:

1. The majority of your group's annual income must be derived from Victorian State Government funding;
2. Your group must be tax exempt;
3. Your group must be a not-for-profit, and;
4. Your group must be associated with philanthropic or public good activities.

Once you've proven your group's eligibility, you will be asked to sign and adhere to a special Deed of Agreement. From there, you can begin exploring the benefits Whole of Government Contracts can bring your group.

Contracts range across a variety of products and services, including:

- Banking and financial services;
- Electricity;
- Fuel and associated products;
- Human resources services;

- Information and information technology;
- Risk management services;
- Stationery and office products;
- Travel services, and;
- Vehicles.

According to the DHS, the list of contracts available is constantly growing and constantly being updated. For more information on the program, on eligibility criteria or on how to apply, visit the website:

<https://fac.dhs.vic.gov.au/home.aspx?TabID=content&type=4&contentID=4223>.

Non-Victorian Groups – what’s happening in your state?

Does your state run a similar scheme? Should it? Let us know your saving and fundraising ideas by emailing service@ourcommunity.com.au.

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8. Warning on community impact from emissions trading

The Federal Government appears to have overlooked the community sector in its consideration of which groups will require compensation when an emissions trading scheme is introduced, a public policy research centre says.

A research paper from The Australia Institute says that unless compensation is provided, services to the most vulnerable members of society will be cut.

The emissions trading scheme – officially called the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) – is expected to come into effect in 2010.

There are six greenhouse gases included the Kyoto Protocol. The most well-known is carbon dioxide, and the six are collectively known as CO₂ equivalents.

Under an emissions trading scheme, the government will issue a number of permits up to a total amount, or emissions cap, for the sectors of the economy covered by the scheme.

Each permit will allow the emission of one tonne of CO₂ equivalent gas. Organisations with emissions exceeding their permits will face penalties.

While only the 1000 biggest emitters will have to purchase permits, they are expected to pass the costs on to other groups, including households and community groups, by increasing prices.

The Australia Institute estimates that the introduction of the CPRS will cost the community sector between \$822 million and \$1191 million. If wages are increased in line with the consumer price index, the Institute says the impact will be at the upper estimate of \$1191 million.

The calculations are based on Australian Bureau of Statistics figures for the community sector’s contribution to gross domestic product, the number of people it employs, and its total expenses, as well as the Federal Government green paper’s indication that emissions would be priced at \$20 a tonne.

The Australia Institute says it is important to highlight the “probable severity” of the impact on the community sector, because unlike the corporate sector, in many instances there will be no capacity for community organisations to pass on the costs they incur by increasing the costs of providing their services.

Energy and food prices, for example, are expected to increase, and the CPRS will also impact on the consumer price index, and therefore wages.

“Either the community sector will need to fund a 0.9% wage rise to maintain real wages or employees in the sector will experience a real reduction in their pay,” the Institute warns.

“Unless significant compensation is paid to the community sector, there is little doubt that the ability of these organisations to provide services to the most vulnerable groups in society will be significantly reduced.”

The paper says that the introduction of the CPRS is likely to cost local governments \$344 million, and unless compensation is provided, they too will either need to reduce the quality of services provided, pay employees lower wages or increase the rates paid by residents.

State governments and the Federal Government were also overlooked in the green paper, according to the Australia Institute, and face costs of \$1.4 billion and \$991 million respectively.

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9. Join In, Join Up, and tell us a tale!

The community connection project Join In, Join Up! is continuing to spread the word of the huge health benefits that joining a community organisation can have.

Earlier this year we unveiled the project, created to harness the potential of The Pharmacy Guild of Australia’s 5000 community pharmacies across Australia to help people ‘get connected’ with a great community group in their local area.

The pharmacies will help to create a link between the public and the community organisations listed on the Our Community Directories at www.ourcommunity.com.au/joinin.

Since then we’ve been urging community groups around Australia to make sure they have an up-to-date listing in the Directories so they don’t miss out on this unique opportunity to find new members and supporters.

In the process, we’ve had the chance to review a lot of the groups already listed, and we’ve been amazed by the variety and depth of the listing – no matter what someone’s area of interest there is no excuse for not joining in and joining up!

- Avid Sir Arthur Conan Doyle fan? Why not get in touch with The Sydney Passengers – a Sherlock Holmes enthusiasts’ society in Sydney?
- Music more your thing? How about contacting the Handbell Society of Australasia whose aim is to foster the art of handbell ringing?
- A computer buff? How about supporting the Australian Computer Museum Society – motto ‘Control-Alt-Preserve’!
- Or maybe your interests are sportier? Amongst the myriad sporting groups listed we have a Surfing Mums group, several darts groups, and an axemen’s association – for those who have always wondered about the art of wood-chopping.

It’s not too late to get amongst these groups in the Join In, Join Up! Community Directories. Join them in taking advantage of the opportunity offered to share your organisation’s great work with a wider audience.

Sign up now at www.ourcommunity.com.au/list.

We’d also like you to share your ‘Join In, Join Up!’ stories with us to celebrate the strength of the sector.

Do you have a great story about how joining a community group has made a difference to your life or that of someone you know? An uplifting story about joining in, joining up and making a contribution?

Our favourites will be published on the Join In, Join Up! webpages to encourage others to get connected with a community group in their area.

Please submit your stories, in no more than 200 words, to: louisemt@ourcommunity.com.au.



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10. IDEAS YOU CAN STEAL: Making it Personal

The World Hepatitis Alliance's website is doing a great job of ensuring people in the community know the relevance of the problem they're trying to solve.

As part of World Hepatitis Day, which took place on May 19, the Alliance took the opportunity to remind us that this is not a disease that people can afford to be ignorant about.

"Shockingly, one in 12 people worldwide are living with either chronic hepatitis B or chronic hepatitis C," the Alliance says. "While this is far higher than the prevalence of HIV or any cancer, awareness is inexplicably low and the majority of those infected are unaware."

Carrying on the "12" theme, the organisation also developed a list of "12 Asks" for governments nationally and internationally.

It's a very neat example of a web-based exercise that provides a visually appealing and personally arresting human element to a cause – and one that any group that's in the business of awareness-raising could do well to study. The website's at www.aminumber12.org.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the World Hepatitis Alliance website. At the top left is the logo for the World Hepatitis Alliance. Below it, there are links for 'The WHA Who are we?' and 'The Public Health Panel What is this?'. The main heading is 'World Hepatitis Day Are you number 12?'. Below this is a photograph of a bus stop with a person sitting on a bench. To the right of the main heading is a 'Latest News' section with three items: 'Scottish Government Leads the Way in Tackling Viral Hepatitis Epidemic', 'WHA calls on governments to take urgent action to tackle chronic viral Hepatitis B & C epidemic', and 'Why the world should ask 'Am I Number 12?'. Below the news section are three icons: 'Get involved', 'The risk factors', and 'Information'. At the bottom left is a photograph of a man wearing a white t-shirt with 'AM I NUMBER 12?' on it. To the right of the man are three callout boxes: '12 Asks What can you do?', 'Get Involved World Hepatitis Campaign is more than just a day', and 'Around the world What is happening around the world'. At the bottom right is a 'Partners and Sponsors' section with a paragraph of text.

World Hepatitis Alliance

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Am I Number 12? Talking B & C 12 Asks Get Involved Around the World Press It's time to act

The WHA
Who are we?

The Public Health Panel
What is this?

World Hepatitis Day
Are you number 12?

Latest News

- > Scottish Government Leads the Way in Tackling Viral Hepatitis Epidemic
- > WHA calls on governments to take urgent action to tackle chronic viral Hepatitis B & C epidemic
- > Why the world should ask 'Am I Number 12?'

Get involved

The risk factors

Information

Because shockingly [one in 12 people worldwide are living with](#) either chronic [hepatitis B or hepatitis C](#). While this is far higher than the prevalence of HIV or any cancer, awareness is inexplicably low and the majority of those infected are unaware.

12 Asks
What can you do?

Get Involved
World Hepatitis Campaign is more than just a day

Around the world
What is happening around the world

Partners and Sponsors

The [World Hepatitis Alliance](#) is proud to partner with a large number of organisations in the [hepatitis community](#) as well as many non-governmental organisations.

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Q. How regularly do media need to be contacted to keep an environment issue alive?

There is a fine line for groups to walk when it comes to keeping the media updated on a long-running issue that has been – and will continue to be – in the news.

Not contacting the media often enough can see your story fade from the headlines. But if you contact specific media outlets or journalists too often, you run the risk of being tagged a serial pest and being ignored by the very media you seek to carry your story.

One easy way to decrease the chances of being labelled a serial pest is to build solid relationships with the media outlets and journalists you deal with.

This will allow you to bounce ideas off journalists, to call more informally and update them on the latest news about your issue, or to ask them if they are interested in a certain story or angle.

These relationships are especially important when working with the media on a long-term or ongoing issue – if a journalist knows you, and is familiar with your story, they are more likely to give you more of their time and a friendlier ear.

It also means you can cut down on the amount of “backgrounding” you have to give journalists, allowing you to quickly “cut to the chase” when talking with them.

One key tip: Find out when the journalists in your contact list are “on deadline”. Avoid those times when you make contact and you’ll be less likely to be given short shrift.



Q. As small community not-for-profit organisation in what ways can I market the broad range of services we offer? How do I develop a marketing strategy?

A marketing strategy is not something that can be whipped up at the drop of a hat.

Assembling a good, solid marketing plan can take hard work, analysis, preparation and knowledge of your current standing and resources.

The first thing you should look at is your group’s current situation: its current stakeholders and partners, its current standing and performance, and the current context or environment it operates in.

From there, a SWOT analysis will build on this information and further clarify the **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities and **T**hreats which face your organisation.

All this information will help your group know the issues it needs to focus its plan around, and form strategies to let you do that – for example: “We want to sign up 50 new sponsors between now and the end of the year.”

Take particular notice of your SWOT analysis – using your strengths and opportunities to best achieve your marketing aims while avoiding or fixing your weaknesses and noting the threats your group might face.

Then, work through an action plan or list of things your group must do in order to achieve its stated objective. What must you do? Who will do it? When will it be done? How much will it cost? How will you know if you’ve achieved those aims?

Finally, examine your resources – your people power, your finances and technology – as well as those resources you might need, and draw up a budget for the marketing effort.

Of course, once the plan is approved, it will only succeed if there is constant monitoring, appraisal and review. Keep track of the plan’s progress and, if necessary, modify it.

Devote a generous amount of time to the plan’s development to ensure the process is thorough and to increase its chances of success.

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. You can send your marketing and media questions to guru@ourcommunity.com.au.

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12. Running an Annual General Meeting

As branches across the country begin to bud and flower we enter the season of Annual General Meetings, when boards and management committees start worrying about how to raise a quorum for an hour of formalities on a Thursday evening followed by a mug of weak tea.

Theoretically, the AGM is an important event. It gives members and the general public a broad overview of the organisation's current directions and its financial health. It's also the time to revitalise the organisation through electing the right people into key positions.

More often, though, the AGM is treated as an unpleasant formality – something that has to be done to comply with government regulations. Your organisation should try to make the AGM a positive experience, from which people can go away firmly committed to the organisation and its goals.

At the minimum, this means running the meeting efficiently by the rules. Run through the following pointers to make sure you're on top of all that needs to be done before, during and after the event.

WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

Be transparent: Whether you are an incorporated association or not, organisations need to be accountable to the public and to their members. This is your opportunity to report on the results of your strategic plan. Did you achieve all your expected outcomes over the past year and what do you plan to do in the next as a result.

Communicate with your members: The AGM provides a good opportunity for the office bearers and the management to interact with the membership – to answer their questions and seek their views. Ordinary members are able to raise their concerns and participate. There should, of course, be opportunities for members to be involved throughout the year, but the AGM provides a minimum safety net to make certain that this is not overlooked in the rush of work. You may wish to send special invitations to local dignitaries, local members, and donors and prospective donors.

Raise awareness: In some cases the AGM can be used to gain publicity for the organisation. For example, if you have a guest speaker or an announcement that you think may be of more general interest than just to your own membership, you could prepare and circulate a press release. This must be handled with care – like any meeting, AGMs can sometimes bring up quite sensitive issues that you may not wish to publicise. You must weigh up your priorities for promoting the organisation carefully.

PREPARATION

The AGM is usually organised by the Secretary, with assistance from the rest of the organisation, but this can be altered if someone else volunteers. It is important, though, that everybody in the organisation knows who is responsible.

Date: The rough date of the AGM will be set by the state legislation – within three or six months of the end of the financial year, for example. Otherwise just try and strike a time that doesn't clash with school holidays, festivals, or the like.

Advertisement: If you are an incorporated association, the legislation in most Australian states requires that you advertise your AGM to your members two weeks or a month beforehand, by mail. There used to be a requirement that you also advertise it in a newspaper circulating in your area. Though an advertisement is not now required by law, you may consider doing it anyway to encourage public involvement and an inclusive atmosphere. A small block in the classifieds is enough. Give the name of the association and the place, date and time of the meeting.

Office bearers and Committee: Confirm which of your current office-bearers will be re-nominating for the coming year and who will be retiring. Check your constitution to see if anybody's ineligible to stand. If there are vacancies, make sure that you have approached people who are willing to fill them. Don't leave it till the last moment – your constitution will probably say that nominations have to be received at least a week in advance. Most importantly, try

to ensure that you have enough good nominations to fill the available positions. If people are to be nominated in their absence, have them sign a document saying that they are willing to stand.

Minutes: There's an irremovable problem with AGM minutes – as you have this meeting only once a year you can either send the minutes out shortly after the last meeting, when people lose them, or just before the next meeting, when people have forgotten what happened at the meeting. On balance, we favour doing both. Note that voting on accepting the minutes is not confined to those who were present at the meeting.

Auditor: All incorporated associations have to produce accounts, but in general only large organisations are required to have them fully audited by a registered auditor. If you are required or decide to present an audit of your accounts at the AGM, leave enough time for the auditor to go through your books and prepare your accounts. Make an appointment well in advance; this is a busy time for auditors. Ensure that the auditor knows the exact date of the AGM. Have a nomination ready for the position of next year's auditor from somebody who you have approached and who is willing to act. It's customary to elect the auditor at the AGM, but this is in fact not a legal requirement.

Publicity: If you're intending to put on a bit of a show for your members or the media – a guest speaker, a video showing, or an important announcement - organise it well in advance so that you can be sure that everybody knows what they are supposed to be doing and you have all the necessary technical equipment in good working order.

Meeting papers: Prepare the following documents and post them out to all members and office bearers in advance of the meeting:

- A set of accounts – balance sheet and financial statement – in the required format.
- Annual Report – the annual report must contain the accounts, and should also contain a summary of the year's activities, a record of the year's achievements, and a preview of what's planned for the next year
- The Agenda for the meeting
- Minutes – the relevant minutes are the minutes from the previous AGM, not the previous Committee meeting.

On the Day (or Night): Have copies of the constitution on hand. If you have to look at them, the meeting is in difficulties. When in doubt, the Chair's ruling is decisive.

Members: Many organisations make a practice of signing up new members and renewing old members before the meeting. Strictly speaking, new members don't become members until approved by the board/committee and so can't vote at that AGM.

Chair's Report: While there's no legal obligation to do so, it's a good idea to have the Chair report on behalf of the board/management committee and the organisation on the achievements and developments of the past year. This gives people a chance to find out what's happening and a chance to ask questions, and is your opportunity to show new members that it's not all routine formalities.

Financial Reports: Incorporated associations are legally obliged to pass out particular financial documents at their AGMs; basically,

- the income and expenditure of the association during its last financial year,
- the assets and liabilities of the association at the end of its last financial year,
- the mortgages, charges and other securities of any description affecting any of the property of the association at the end of its last financial year.

Legislation in most states provides that you must have your accounts audited if your budget is above a certain level. If you are below this level, you can still have your accounts audited; it may be more expensive, but it provides some assurance that nothing has been overlooked that is likely to damage the organisation.

Note, again, that because you have to make a report to your members at the meeting doesn't mean that you have to send that particular set of financial reports out to anyone else. The annual report that you send to stakeholders and donors can be different and better focussed.

Business: It's unusual to have any consequential business discussed or passed at the AGM. Any business except constitutional amendments can be handled at a board/committee meeting, and if something can be done in a smaller meeting with fewer complications then it's generally safer to do that.

Elections: At the meeting you need to validly elect key office-bearers. Depending on the size and nature of the organisation, the AGM is the time to publicly elect the Chair, Deputy Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, and other

board/committee members. General outlines of the election procedures will be in the constitution. If the board/committee hasn't got around to directing a proper manner for its elections, keep it simple. Have the meeting elect a returning officer, pass out ballot papers to members (it's rare for there to be any disagreement about who's a member, but keep a list handy just in case), collect the papers, count them, and announce the new office bearers.

Documentation: Most Australian states require you to send in an annual report after your AGM. The content varies from state to state – some just want the accounts, some ask for a list of office bearers, some charge extra for the forms or the lodgement.

Meeting Procedure: The procedures at the AGM are basically the same as those at an ordinary committee meeting. Motions must be moved

- to accept the minutes of the last AGM
- to approve the Chair's Report (the Annual Report)
- to approve the Treasurer's Report (the Financial Statement)

Motions must be seconded, and a vote (generally a show of hands) taken.

The only special procedural provisions at an AGM are that:

- the quorum may be different (consult your constitution)
- if the position of Chair is being contested, the Chair should stand down from the Chair during the election and be replaced by an acting Chair (someone who is not standing for any position) specially elected just for the period of the election

Guest Speaker: Guest speakers can be people you want to use to impress those at the meeting, or people you want to be impressed by the meeting, or both.

Other Entertainment: If your organisation lends itself to visual presentation, consider preparing a display of your work during the year.

AFTER THE AGM

Documentation: Make sure that the minutes are written up shortly after the meeting. If (as sometimes happens) they are left to the evening before the mailout, the Secretary may have difficulty finding last year's notes. Ensure that you send any necessary documentation, for example the audited statement and change of public officer to the appropriate state/territory government department.

Handover: Retiring office bearers must hand over the operations to the new person, together with all documents, rubber stamps, bank details, computer programs, etc. Retiring officers should also give their successors briefings describing key processes and current priorities and challenges.

Banking: If any of the people who are retiring from the board/committee are signatories to the organisation's bank account, try to have the necessary forms on hand so that the new signatories can be authorised after the meeting.

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

WANTED: Garden/Kitchen Specialists (Gold Coast)

Three Gold Coast primary schools would like to begin piloting the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden scheme, and are on the look-out for helpers.

The kitchen garden scheme aims to help children develop life-long skills in the kitchen and garden, and enjoy all the benefits of growing, harvesting, preparing and sharing home-grown food.

Students from years three to six are given the chance to help design, build and maintain a school-based organic kitchen garden, as well as spending time each week preparing and sharing meals created from their produce.

Three Gold Coast schools will potentially receive funding from the Federal Government to take part in the pilot but are looking for people who may be able to lend their time, skills, knowledge or experience as garden or kitchen specialists.

If you are able to help out please contact the relevant school directly – Ashmore State School (Carmel Ryan, Principal) on cryan28@eq.edu.au or 5656 1333; Coolangatta State School (Sharyn Mahony, Principal) on smaho4@eq.edu.au or 5589 0111; and Upper Coomera State College (Janet Tucker, College Dean) on jtuck46@eq.edu.au or 5580 7566.

TO GIVE AWAY: Stationery (Melbourne)

Melbourne-based packaging and recycling company Amcor is moving offices and has a large quantity of office stationery to give away to a community group.

Items need to be picked up from Amcor offices in East Burwood or Alphington.

Items to give away from Burwood include A5, DL, and A3 envelopes (600), 'with compliments' slips (100), two-ring arch folders (200), in-trays (5), screen protectors, footstools and more.

At the Alphington office, the company is giving away folders, hole punches and around 2000 polystyrene cups.

If you have a use for these items and are able to pick them up from the relevant Amcor office, contact Kathy Moutsos (Burwood) on (03) 9425 1111, or Kirrily Short (Alphington) on (03) 9490 3121.

TO GIVE AWAY: Stationery (Sydney)

Sydney Water is moving its 32-floor head office from Sydney to Parramatta and has a number of ring binders and suspension files it's willing to give away to community groups. There are two, three and four-ring binders available, as well as lever arch folders and suspension files.

If you have a use for these items please email Sydney Water's waste minimisation coordinator Liz Maher on 0414 664 124 and let her know your requirements (size, colour, number of rings, etc.), as well as your organisation's name, address, contact person and a mobile number if possible. Liz will contact you when the items are packed and ready for collection, probably within a week or two.

This offer is most suitable for organisations in the Sydney metropolitan area, particularly those close to Sydney Water's offices near Town Hall Station.

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14. Community Briefs

Tell us what you really think of us – and win a \$2000 training package!

Our Community has been around for eight years now, and in that time we've seen rapid innovation and tremendous growth, resulting in all the great resources, tools and training that come together to comprise our services.

Now it's time to pause (only for a moment or two) and try to find the words that most reflect the services and products we provide – and we want you to help!

Tell us the words that you think describe Our Community best. It might be a few words (e.g. Red Cross: *Crisis, Care, Humanity*), or it might be a slogan (e.g. Nike: *Just Do It*).

To help get your creative juices flowing, **we're offer a \$2000 gift voucher for the best entry.** The voucher will be valid for 12 months and for any Our Community training program – short courses, seminars, conferences or even the Certificate IV in Business (Governance) – plus resource guides, books and newsletters.



This is your chance to provide a massive capacity boost for your community group, and help us understand ourselves better at the same time.

Tell us your thoughts by emailing kathyr@ourcommunity.com.au.

What's new at www.ourcommunity.com.au

As long-term Our Community members would know, barely a month goes by without something new being added to our website. Additions this month include:

- A new Board Induction Policy – [Click here](#) to download
- A help sheet on the power of the constitution – [Click here](#) to go to the web page
- A help sheet on winding up a not-for-profit organisation – [Click here](#) to go to the web page
- A help sheet on changing an organisation's name – [Click here](#) to go to the web page.

Another key point to note is that the **Board Matching Service** is now being promoted among accountants' professional bodies, giving organisations on the look-out for new board talent more opportunity than ever before to reach a high quality pool of motivated professionals.



The Board Matching Service is easy to use and, thanks to the support of Hesta, it's free to both community groups listing a vacancy and those searching for opportunities to give more to the community through board service.

You can list your vacancy or find out more at www.ourcommunity.com.au/boardmatch, or click the button above.

Money for petrol

The Hot Grant this month in Our Community's EasyGrants newsletter is the eagerly anticipated Volunteer Grants Program.

Through this program, volunteer organisations can apply for grants to help with the price of fuel and equipment. It is anticipated that around 6000 community organisations will benefit from this grant.

The Volunteer Grants Program, which is provided by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), provides funding of between \$1000 and \$5000 to help not-for-profit organisations to:

- buy tangible, small equipment items to help volunteers, and/or
- cover costs such as club sporting equipment and uniforms, training of volunteer sports coaches, and travel for specific sports-related purposes, and/or
- contribute towards fuel reimbursement for their volunteers.

If you think your community group can benefit from this grant, be sure to apply before Friday October 17, 2008.

Please feel free to forward this great opportunity from the EasyGrants newsletter and grants education service on to your networks, so that everybody can benefit.

To receive regular updates of all grants that may be available to your organisation, please go to www.ourcommunity.com.au/easygrants.

Treasurers' Awards program hailed a success

The 2008 Westpac Community Treasurers' Awards have unearthed some terrific stories of financial innovation and sheer dogged hard work, as judges start the unenviable task of sifting through applications to create a shortlist.

More than 270 nominations from all corners of Australia and all sections of the community sector were received before entries closed on September 10.

Awards will be given in three classes – for small, medium and large organisations, with winners to be decided by a panel of eminent community leaders with expertise in finance and treasurer roles.

