

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

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Contents

1. [Community View: Fine Tuning the Board](#)
2. [Embezzlement Could Never Happen in *my* Group ... Could it?](#)
3. [Surviving the Financial Crisis: Fundraising Tips](#)
4. [Yes we Did! Lessons from Obama](#)
5. [Giving Week 2009: How your Group can Take Part](#)
6. [Value of Volunteering: New Report a Must-Read for Community Organisations](#)
7. [Zip Those Lips: Carrying out your Duty of Confidentiality](#)
8. [Saying Thanks: 2009 Alcoa Foundation Community Worker Award Opens](#)
9. [Bequests Under Threat: Study](#)
10. [Marketing Guru](#)
11. [Community Classifieds: Notices, Offers, Awards, Giveaways & Tips](#)
12. [Community Briefs](#)
13. [Good Moves: Community Jobs & Board/Committee Vacancies](#)
14. [Fast Forward](#)
15. [About Our Community](#)

I. Community View: Fine Tuning the Board



Rhonda Galbally AO
CEO

One of the things that has become crystal clear through all the mess that has been created by the global financial crisis is the value of the board.

Whether you're a large organisation or small, a business or a community group, it's the board that sets the direction, reviews the procedures, oversees compliance, picks the CEO, and ensures the organisation is serving its mission.

It's the board that plays the most crucial role in determining whether a group will survive and thrive, or wither and die.

Now more than ever before, your board – or management committee; in essence they're the same thing – needs to be on top of its job. Unsettled times are not good occasions for winging it.

Despite their importance, boards and committees are often the most neglected aspect of a community group's operations. If your group is like most, it's operated by a well-trained and well-resourced group of staff and volunteers, who are professionally recruited, properly paid, housed and equipped, and supported to carry out the direction of a part-time board that's untrained and unevaluated.

You put a lot of effort into getting the administration right, but you think that good decisions are just going to happen.

There are ways to make a board or committee operate better.

- Give your board some of the supports you give to the office workers. Put some money into skills development, from short courses to conference trips. They're not perks – they're essential tune-ups.
- Take the board off on a retreat for a weekend. Again, not a perk – a chance for board members to lift their gaze off each month's crises and take the long view. The board can think through the problems and see what lies on the other side.
- The board may need some technical fixes. Is everybody on broadband of some kind? Do any of the less advanced members need a crash course in internet possibilities? Do you need to shake up your recruitment and look to a younger cohort?
- Do you need a faster turnover of members? How about an active board recruitment program, targeted at finding the particular skills you're looking for? One of the things you can do on that board retreat of yours is take a long hard look at whether every member is pulling their weight in debating, fundraising, and providing necessary expertise.

Our Community has been active in the community sector for years, identifying the people who actually know what works and how good boards make things go right. Have a look at our free help sheets at www.ourcommunity.com.au/boards – there's a lot of good stuff there, including a self-assessment checklist.

It's not always easy to get a board to work out what the problems are and what's needed to fix them.

But it takes a lot more work to revive a flagging board. Better to put in the work now before things go pear-shaped.

There may well be arguments about diverting resources from the day-to-day to get your board in shape, but if your core decision-making body isn't right then your core decisions – the decisions that impact on your main goals – aren't going to be right either.

The purposes of the board are large and central:

- To keep the organisation true to its mission
- To responsibly and ethically manage its finances
- To safeguard its assets and
- To operate in the public interest.

Put some resources into building yourself a board that has the capacity to deal with it.

Our Community's annual **Board Builder Conference** will be taking place at the Telstra Dome in Melbourne on Friday, February 27.

Among the key sessions are a presentation by Federal Treasurer, the Honourable Wayne Swan and Westpac CEO Gail Kelly of the 2009 Westpac Community Treasurers' Awards; a 'Treasurers' Tales' panel session; a keynote presentation on good governance by Chair of the Australian Social Inclusion Board, Patricia Faulkner; and a panel session on board-staff relations.

Plus there are sessions on Board Basics; Good Chairing; Managing Obligations; Burning Legal Questions; and Financial Survival.

For more information visit www.ourcommunity.com.au/boardbuilder2009

[Back to Top](#)

2. Embezzlement Could Never Happen in *my* Group ... Could it?

This year's Westpac Community Treasurers' Awards have closed, and judging is under way. It's been wonderful to see how much groups do value their humble servants, and just how good so many community treasurers are.

There are also, however, some grounds for concern. One of the ways a group can show that its treasurer is out of the ordinary is to compare them to other treasurers – specifically, to their last treasurer.

And a large number do. A total of 2.2% of the applications mention that when their current treasurer took over, the association's books were in a total shambles.

It's good to see that there was a knight on a white horse who rode in and turned the situation around – but what about the groups that never found their white knight?

Even more concerning, a further 1.5% of nominating organisations say that among the problems the new and brilliant treasurer had to deal with was the fact that somebody had been embezzling the group's money.

One shouldn't exaggerate the scale of the problem here. The sums of money don't seem to have been large, and some of the missing funds could probably be put down to confusion or misunderstanding.

Still, that's not necessarily the whole story. In the nature of things, after all, applications for an award are likely to come from the better-run groups. If the budget was in chaos under the last treasurer and are still in chaos today then you probably wouldn't bother to enter a nomination.

Given that our sample is surely the top third of the organisations – the ones that are still in shambles mode presumably crumple up the Treasurers' Awards form and bin it – that would suggest that the total average shambles rate in the 700,000 community groups in Australia could be double the 3.7% that emerges in the responses, or 7.4% of all groups. Within that 7.4%, the actual embezzlement rate might be as high as 3%, or higher.

Across the community sector as a whole the figure is likely to be even higher – larger organisations with bigger budgets presumably attract more fraudsters. The [BDO Not-for-profit Fraud Survey 2008](#) reports that fraud cases peak in organisations that have budgets of more than \$1 million and more than 50 employees (and few volunteers). They report that 16% of respondents had suffered a fraud in the previous two years.

The rates at the cheaper (volunteer) end of the community sector will be lower (in the BDO 2008 study, only 8% of fraud was committed by volunteers) – no reason to panic, but certainly a level at which a reasonable person would want to take precautions.

The first precaution is to take the treasurer's position seriously. Don't just hand the job out to the next person around the table. Try to find someone who knows something about figures, can use basic computer programs – Excel is often enough – and who is willing to do a little reading or take a course. Don't change treasurers without a good reason, and make sure you have a stand-in ready.

That done, take systemic precautions against fraud – precautions that are scaled to the amount of money at risk.

BDO reports that the most common forms of fraud are

1. **Cash theft (33%)**
Keep the petty cash secure, document its use, and have someone independent check it regularly.
2. **Kickbacks and bribery (12%)**
Don't let any one person have complete carriage of your contracts. Require tenders, and keep an eye out.
3. **Theft of inventory or assets (10%)**
Let's not fuss about the odd bulldog clip, but for items of value keep a stocklist and have an annual stocktake.
4. **Online payments fraud (8%)**
Keep hard copies of all transactions. Don't set aside your existing precautions just because the payout occurs online.
5. **Credit card fraud (8%)**
Have a **credit card policy** that covers authorisation, documentation, and regular review.
6. **Cheque Fraud (5%)**
Cheques are the next best thing to cash. That's why we suggest that you require two signatories for each cheque issued by your group.

Think bad things don't happen to good organisations?

This November 4 article from ABC online shows you never can be too sure.



It's also important, of course, to have a culture in place that discourages fraud – one that is focused on the mission and doesn't foster a sense of entitlement among staff.

And it's important to have a culture where people are prepared to speak up – where whistleblowers aren't targeted and people aren't too polite to question someone else's figures.

It's important to reduce fraud to the minimum not only because it takes resources away from your goals but also because it's rotten PR.

Your gift will bring happiness to many

- \$20 will buy books to allow a girl to go to school for a term
- \$50 will buy a water purification plant for a village
- \$100 will pay for Susy Jones's night at the races

... It's not a big drawcard. The public expect us to be good stewards of their money, and part of that is maintaining a business-like level of impersonal suspicion.

No organisation is immune from these risks. Don't let it happen to you.

[Back to Top](#)

3. Surviving the Financial Crisis: Fundraising Tips

Last month we asked you to share with us some of your stories about how the global financial crisis is affecting your group.

One theme common to the responses we received was the sharp up-turn in people seeking the help of community and financial services organisations.

"We are seeing an increase in older people accessing the service and also people are starting to lose their jobs or are experiencing cut-back of hours," one Cairns organisation wrote. "Housing continues to be a major issue."

Particularly worrying is the news that some of those seeking help have fallen into difficulty after using "payday" type lenders to borrow small amounts of money.

"The high interest and repayment rates makes paying the money back very difficult and so people are then talked into borrowing more to cover the rent or repayments," a NSW neighbourhood centre told us. "People are spiralling into out of control finances in a very short space of time and for very small amounts of money."

Added to the concern of many community groups amid the increasing demand for their services is the prospect of dwindling fundraising returns.

As Our Community CEO Rhonda Galbally wrote in a recent column, people who carry out the fundraising for community groups haven't exactly been slacking off over the past 10 years.

"It hasn't been easy to sell people on the pleasures of giving; any time you slow down for five minutes you can hear the galloping hooves of disaster poised to overtake," she wrote.

"Which is why it does provoke the odd shiver to realise that we may have been living in what we'll come to see as fundraising's golden age.

"People had (compared to people today, and still more to people tomorrow) more money, more jobs, and more willingness to spend. Slipping house prices and the threat of lay-offs have now made everybody feel less prosperous and more prone to count the pennies."

Not everyone is forecasting doom and gloom. The UK's Community Foundation Network, for example, has suggested that small organisations might in fact experience an increase in donations amid the economic contraction.

"Where major donors become involved with a local community then our experience is that they respond first and foremost to increased demand, rather than a squeeze on finances," argues the CFN's incoming chair Matthew Bowcock.

If you've already got strong relationships in place, you may be in a better position to weather the crunch. In any case, all the old rules apply even more strongly in a tougher fundraising environment:

- **Diversify your funding.** If you're relying heavily on one donor, or even one income stream, you're setting yourself up for a king-hit. Our Community recommends spreading your fundraising across six pillars: donations, grants, community-business partnerships, memberships, special events, and earned income. Diversity means resilience.
- **Build your relationships.** You'll need to get in closer to your donors and your partners, and mean more to them. You'll need to get more from them – not just more money, but more assistance, and even more information (for example, do you know where your members work? That's important in considering which business partnerships to pursue).
- **Foreground your marketing.** If you can't sell it, you can't do it. Effective marketing isn't an add-on, it's a prerequisite. Australia Post and Our Community have developed the Media, Marketing and Post Centre (www.ourcommunity.com.au/mmp) to help show you how it's done.
- **It's not about you.** Your group is doing it hard. Boo hoo. Nobody cares. People give their support to groups they think are doing well, so powder over your bruises and put on a smile.
- **Look for your opportunities.** Difficult isn't the same as impossible, or even as unbearable. People will always commit to what they see as important. All you have to do is to make other people care as much as you do.

[Back to Top](#)

4. Yes We Did! Lessons from Obama

Barak Obama will be the next President of America in part because his campaign took advantage of every aspect of the new communication technologies, right down to placing advertisements on billboards in video.

We mustn't make too much of this – the main burden of the victory came from having a candidate who was young, smart, unencumbered, and awesomely focussed on message – but it remains the case that Obama's campaign has redefined the limits of the possible in volunteering and fundraising.

Defining up, defining down

Overall, Obama raised some \$640 million – and he raised much more of it from small donors than anybody had ever done before. In September, for example, he raised some \$150 million, with the average donation less than \$100.

He encouraged people to go online and donate as little as \$10 – not enough to make a difference in itself, but enough to make contact.

At the end of the campaign he had 3.1 million names on his donors' list and 750,000 volunteers.

Not only did Obama define down the size of the gift you had to give to be of interest to the campaign, he then defined up the amount of work that could be expected from a casual volunteer.



“We’ve tried to bring two principles to this campaign,” Joe Rospars, Obama’s media director, told the press. “One is lowering the barriers to entry and making it as easy as possible for folks who come to our website.

“The other is raising the expectation of what it means to be a supporter. It’s not enough to have a bumper sticker. We want you to give \$5, make some calls, host an event. If you look at the messages we send to people over time, there’s a presumption that they will organise.”

Basically, the four key strategies that Obama’s team developed were

1. Smart website design and functionality
2. Active engagement with social networking media – Facebook, MyBatanga, LinkedIn, Twitter.
3. A merging of old practices with new technology – e.g. Obama organised hundreds of “BYOP” (bring your own phone) parties in which supporters gathered in private homes to make campaign calls on their mobile phones.
4. Choice; users decide how they want to receive information – the organising tools available on My.BarackObama.com migrated almost anywhere a digital conversation could take place

Obviously, Obama’s campaign didn’t invent these techniques, but they’ve provided a demonstration of how any community group can increase its reach without spending up big.

And it’s not just for fundraising. When he arrives at the White House, Obama will have not just a political base, but a database – millions of names of supporters who can be engaged almost instantly.

And there’s every reason to believe that he will try and use the network not just to campaign, but to govern. His email to supporters on election night included the line, “We have a lot of work to do to get our country back on track, and I’ll be in touch soon about what comes next.”

A full account of the lessons from the Obama presidential campaign will appear in the December edition of Our Community’s *Raising Funds* newsletter – www.ourcommunity.com.au/raisingfunds

[Back to Top](#)

5. Giving Week 2009 – How your Group can Take Part

Your organisation relies on people giving.




The more people see giving highlighted, the more they see other people giving, the more they see giving as a significant part of the culture, the readier they will be to give.






It will be easier for you to find donors, and the ones you have will give more.

Australian Giving Week is taking place around the country next week – from 1-7 December. Get behind it. It’s an investment in the future.



Ten things to do:

-  Put a splash on your home page reminding people to give. There are images on the Giving Week website (see example, above) –that you can download and use on your own site.
-  Link to the Australian Giving Week website – and make sure you’ve signed up for a free Our **Community** online giving facility, so you can trap any donations that follow.
-  Encourage your members and supporters to buy Giving Cards and list your group as the recipient of their \$1-per-card donation – like Halo has done, [here](#).

-  Write an item for your next newsletter, explaining why you support Australian Giving Week, and how members of the community could support your group.
-  Send out a flyer about Australian Giving Week (and any activities you're undertaking to mark it) with your group's AGM papers, and make an announcement at the meeting inviting people to support Giving Week. Put up a poster. Print and distribute some postcards.
-  Send an announcement to your local media, telling them what your group is doing and why it's worth supporting. Download the sample media release at the Giving Week website if you need help getting started.
-  Link your home page to the list of '50 Ways for Individuals to give to the Community this Christmas' to show people how they can do more.
-  Link to the Sustainable Christmas Checklist as well, to encourage people to minimise their impact during the Christmas period.
-  Send out a copy of the 2008 Good Gifts Guide, also available on the Giving Week website, to show people how their money can be better spent this Christmas.
-  Let us know if you have any Christmas trees that you're selling as a fundraiser (we list them for the community at www.ourcommunity.com.au/christmastrees), or if you're selling goods that we should be listing in the 2008 Good Gifts Guide. Email to donations@ourcommunity.com.au

As we say on the Australian Giving Week website, December is a very good month for pitching in to help the community – something, incidentally, that it has in common with the other 11 months.

For more information about Australian Giving Week go to www.givingweek.com.au

[Back to Top](#)

6. The Value of Volunteering: New report a must-read for community organisations

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth recently put out a discussion paper on volunteering in the community and welfare sector.

The Value of Volunteering is a careful and bipartisan examination of the issues facing volunteering today.

It called on a wide range of experts and should be studied by any organisation that depends on volunteers.

“According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, more than 5 million Australians aged 18 years and over did voluntary work in 2006,” the report says.

“These volunteers contributed a total of 713 million hours of unpaid work to the Australian economy, with economic value of approximately \$42 billion per annum.

“There are indications, however, that the rates and patterns of volunteering are changing and that many organisations are finding it difficult to attract and retain volunteers.”

Statistics in this area are bedevilled by small survey size, changing definitions, and unclear concepts, and all general statements are subject to various reservations.

With those preliminary cautions, we can say with reasonable confidence that

- The vast majority of volunteering occurs in private not-for-profit organisations (84%), though a surprisingly high proportion (approximately 14%) occurs in government sector organisations.

- The four most common types of organisation for which people volunteer, accounting for 74% of volunteering involvements, are sports and physical recreation, education and training, community and welfare, and religious. Almost 46% volunteering hours were for sports and physical recreation (26%) and community and welfare (19%).
- The most popular reason for volunteering, identified by approximately 57% of volunteers, was 'helping others or helping the community'. However, volunteers also commonly identified other benefits, including benefits to themselves such as 'personal satisfaction' (44%), 'social contact' (22%) and 'learning new skills and gaining work experience' (11%) as reasons for volunteering.
- Women volunteer more commonly than men (36% versus 32%). The volunteering rate was highest at 43% in the 35-44 year age group, followed by the 45-50 year age group with 39%.
- People in employment have a higher rate of volunteering (37%) than those who are unemployed (26%) or not in the labour force (30%). People with higher levels of educational achievement and with higher incomes also have higher volunteer rates.
- People born in Australia are more likely to volunteer than people born elsewhere (36% versus 29%), with the volunteering rate falling to 26% for people born in non-English speaking countries (though this is rising steadily).
- The most frequent volunteering involvements are fundraising (47%), preparing and serving food (31%), teaching and providing information (28%) and management/committee work (23%). The most significant change in volunteering activity over a 10-year period is the precipitous decline in management/committee work, from 41% in 1995 to 23% in 2006.
- The number of people volunteering has gone up from 24% of the population in 1995 to 32% in 2000 and 35% in 2006. However, the volunteer rate appears to have risen during the 1990s and then largely plateaued in the next decade.
- The greatest increase in the rate of volunteering occurred in the 18-24 year age group, rising from 17% in 1995 to 32% in 2006. This age group is more likely to participate in sports/recreation, education/training or religious volunteering activities rather than community and welfare volunteering.
- In 2006, the median number of volunteer hours contributed per annum was 56 hours or 1.1 hours per week. Generally, the median number of volunteer hours contributed was greater for older adults.
- Approximately 40% of volunteering involvements were undertaken on a weekly basis. Of these around 16% were 'regular, high time commitment involvements' accounting for approximately 62% of total annual volunteer hours.
- Infrequent, low-hour volunteer commitments were also reported to be relatively common, with 36% of volunteer involvements being for less than 20 hours per annum.
- There's been an overall increase in the total number of volunteer hours contributed, rising from 512 million hours in 1995 to 730 million hours in 2006. However, the data also reveals a decline in the median number of volunteer hours contributed annually per individual, falling from 74 hours (1.4 hours per week) in 1995 to 56 hours (1.1 hours per week) in 2006.
- In 2000, regular weekly volunteering involvements accounted for 73% of all annual volunteer hours contributed, compared to only 62% in 2006. Furthermore, volunteers contributing less than 20 hours per annum were 28% of volunteers in 2000, rising to 36% of volunteers by 2006.

What all this means is that the stereotypical image of the volunteer – the housewife with time on her hands – is no longer applicable.

Changing patterns of volunteering indicate a trend for a larger number of generally younger volunteers to contribute a smaller number of volunteer hours per individual, with a decline in regular commitments of large amounts of time.

And anecdotal evidence also suggests that organisations are experiencing increasing difficulty with sustaining ongoing engagement.

We're all going to miss that stereotypical housewife. She was practical, reliable, and easy to work with. She was giving to the voluntary sector the commitment and the productivity that she'd been denied the chance to offer to the more sexist and less adaptable private sector. Those times are (thankfully) gone for good, though, and we have to rethink our strategies.

With younger volunteers in particular, the reasons for volunteering are moving away from volunteering due to a sense of responsibility or family tradition and towards volunteering more out of self-interest and for personal development (personal satisfaction, social contact, learning new skills, and gaining work experience). As one witness to the Inquiry said,

The older generation seem, from our experience, to volunteer out of a sense of responsibility. They grew up in a culture of responsibility and they felt a responsibility to contribute. The younger generations seem to us to have grown up in a culture of rights where – I think somebody said earlier – they often volunteer to meet a need of their own. There's nothing wrong with that, but it is a reality.

In some cases volunteers were primarily using the experience gained through volunteering as a pathway to a career, staying only for a short period of time before moving on.

Not only are individual volunteers contributing a smaller number of hours, volunteers increasingly have restricted availability, requiring volunteer organisations to be more innovative and flexible in their operations.

Volunteers in full-time employment, for example, frequently have restricted availability during the working week, requiring volunteering opportunities only after work hours or on the weekends.

The report looks at a number of possible ways the government could increase meaningful volunteering – HECS breaks? TER bonuses? A larger share of the higher Australia Day awards? Much of the responsibility, though, falls on community groups themselves.

Volunteer demographics, motivations and expectations are changing. Community groups need to adapt to these changing patterns by developing more flexible models of volunteering and by giving volunteers more control of their activities.

As one witness said: "Today's volunteers don't want to just stuff envelopes, they want to control what goes in the envelope."

More than anything else, we need to understand who are volunteers are and what they want.

If your organisation has a major focus on volunteers, or if you're planning to have one, or if you just want some, [read the whole thing](#).

Oh, and make sure you're posted on the Our Community [directories](#) so you can take advantage of any volunteers coming from the Join In, Join Up initiative.

[Back to Top](#)

7. Zip Those Lips: Carrying out your duty of confidentiality

An Australian law firm has issued a timely reminder on the duty of confidentiality required of board/committee members/directors serving Australian community groups.

[Thomson Playford Cutlers](#) has warned that even though directors are volunteers, they are still subject to the Corporations Law and have the same general duties as directors of public companies.

According to the firm, there are four key steps that group directors and board members should take to minimise the risk of breaking the law.

1. Know the standard

As first step, directors need to familiarise themselves with the law and the standards that apply. They need to act in good faith and for the benefit of their group; something which includes ensuring the group’s confidential information remains confidential.

The key laws are contained under The Corporations Act (2001). Importantly, a director owes the duties outlined under the Act to his or her group even after he or she ceases to be a director.

2. Know what is confidential

Most of the time, what exactly constitutes confidential information is obvious. But sometimes, it is not.

If information is publicly available from other sources then it will rarely be confidential, unless presented in such a way (perhaps with other sensitive information) which makes it “confidential”.

In addition, while certain information might not seem confidential, directors should always consider if disclosure might have a negative effect on the group as a whole. For example, details of board members’ voting preference in relation to a certain decision.

3. Knowing who to talk to

Confidentiality is not just about the information, it is also about whom a director can and cannot share information with.

Most of the time this is obvious – for example, a director shouldn’t disclose confidential information to a competitor of their group, or to another person who could get an improper benefit.

But it can sometimes be harder to decide whether to disclose information within the group itself.

Directors who are elected with the support of a certain section or faction within their organisation’s membership can feel an obligation to “represent” that faction. The law says they cannot allow themselves to be compromised by looking out for the interests of any particular section of the group.

4. If in doubt ...

There are clear steps which a director can take if they are in doubt about whether information can be disclosed, including:

- Raising the issue with the board to get a resolution on the matter;
- Seeking professional advice if the board is unsure, and;
- If the board will not obtain advice, or a director is still uncertain, that director can obtain independent legal advice.

Directors should also undertake ongoing training and education to keep up to date with changes in the law and make sure they have a clear understanding of their obligations.

Thomson Playford Cutler’s full story will be published in the November edition of the Board Builder newsletter: www.ourcommunity.com.au/boardbuilder



[Back to Top](#)

8. Saying Thanks: 2009 Alcoa Foundation Community Worker Award program opens

Nominations are now open for the 2009 Alcoa Foundation Outstanding Community Worker Award.

This program has been designed by the Alcoa Foundation and Our Community to recognise and celebrate the contribution to the nation's life made by the men and women working in Australian community groups.

A prize of \$5000 will go to the community sector worker who best exemplifies the sector's ideals of dedication, excellence and service.

Any worker from an Australian community organisation can be nominated for the Award (volunteers aren't eligible; this one's for the staff who don't usually get thankyou's).

A worker in a small community group has as much chance of winning as one in a larger community organisation. As long as they're working for a community organisation they can be nominated for the award.

Two nominations are required for each nominee to give different perspectives on their work. Any board member, committee member, employee, volunteer, client or participant, of any Australian community group – anyone who is close enough to know what is going on – can be a nominator.

The nomination needs to explain why the community worker is so respected for their work. Tell us what the worker has contributed to their organisation, to the community sector, and to their community.

Last year's award generated a huge response. Nominations came in from all over the country and it was clear that without community workers Australian society would be unworkable.

So what are you waiting for?

Go to www.ourcommunity.com.au/communityworkeraward to nominate a community worker – it's a great way of saying thanks.



Alcoa Foundation
Outstanding Community Worker Award

[Back to Top](#)

9. Bequests Under Threat: Study

Charities are losing millions of dollars in bequests as more short-changed relatives challenge the wills of deceased relatives in a bid to gain a share of the estate, according to new research from the University of Queensland's Centre of Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies (CPNS).

The report – *Every Player Wins a Prize?* – looked at 46 wills which included bequests to charity, finding that:

- In 35 of the 46 cases, the intended bequest to charity was significantly reduced after relatives challenged the will.
- In a further six cases, the charity lost its bequest entirely.

CPNS director Myles McGregor-Lowndes said century-old “family provision laws” in each state and territory of Australia lay at the heart of these challenges. Australia is one of only four countries with “family provision laws”, which were originally designed to ensure the will-maker’s spouse and children were properly provided for.

“State legislation and the courts have a firm policy that family comes first, so that family members left out of a will, or other proper applicants, can almost always succeed in family provision applications,” the CPNS report says.

“Your charity might be left a large bequest in a will. However, a family provision application will be granted if the application is allowed by the legislation of your state, and if the court decides that the applicant’s provision in the will was inadequate.

“Costs, which can be substantial, are usually borne by the estate. Both the new or extra provision and the costs will generally be taken from the charity’s share of the estate, so a charity can be very adversely affected by a successful family provision application.”

The report makes some suggestions of how groups can avoid the problem, both when the donor is alive, and if a family provision law claim is made on a will which includes a bequest.

While the donor is alive, groups should:

- Encourage them to give in a tax-effective way – possibly through a Prescribed Private Fund;
- Ensure there is an arm’s length relationship between themselves and the will-maker, and;
- Ensure independent legal advice for the will-maker and provide the opportunity for a family member or legal representative to be present during bequest negotiations to avoid any allegations of undue influence or coercion.

If a family provision law claim is made on a will which includes a bequest to your group, you should:

- Stand up for your bequest – engage a qualified legal advisor, take their advice, and if appropriate, file an affidavit defending the bequest at the least.
- Always appear personally at mediations with your lawyer (unless advised otherwise). Explain clearly what the money is to be used for, and the public benefits of your organisation.
- Instruct your lawyers clearly in relation to any demonstrable connection to the testator making the bequest, and keep good file notes of contact, discussions and links between your group and the will-maker. This could strengthen your case and save you time and money later on.

Both *Every Player Wins a Prize?* And CPNS’ *Keeping Giving Going* research project, which examines charitable bequests in Australia, are available via the CPNS’ wiki – <https://wiki.qut.edu.au/display/CPNS/Planned+Giving+-+Bequests>

[Back to Top](#)

10. Marketing Guru



Q. We want our website to rank near the top of the results when people search for it through Google. How do we achieve this?

Lifting your group's website up the search results “ladder” is not an exact science. There are, however, a few relatively simple actions you can take to improve your site's listing.

The first is to figure out the types of keywords – the words people use when searching for websites via search engines – that could lead them to your site.

As an example, the local football club might list their name and nickname, the name of the league they play in, home town, home ground, sponsors' names, names of star players and even its coach's name.

These words should then be used as often as possible on your homepage and other pages on your site.

Another way is to include these keywords as “meta tags”. While this will probably not help you with Google, because Google ignores most meta tags, it may assist with other search engines. Meta tags are HTML code placed around specific pieces of information. They are generally invisible to all on the web bar search engines, which pick them up to provide keyword information about the contents of a particular website and rank the site in order of relevance to the search query.

There are websites which can help you create your own HTML code which includes meta tags and can be inserted in the coding of your website's homepage and other pages.

The third way is to get as many other websites as possible to link to yours. Google's rankings are based in part on how many other pages link to yours, so the more links your group's site has, the higher up the search engine rankings it will appear.

Find some “link buddies” – groups you work with, firms that sponsor you or donors and members –that can link to your site, particularly organisations that do similar or related work.

Also think about which sites your donors/members/users/supporters/friends might visit, and see if you can get a link from those.

[Back to Top](#)

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

TO GIVE AWAY: Books (Melbourne)

A Melbourne woman has a collection of thousands of books, including textbooks and novels, that she would like to donate to a community group.

If your group might have a use for these books, and the ability to pick them up from an address in Glen Waverly, please email details of your organisation – name, location, and basic information about what your group does – to kathyr@ourcommunity.com.au

SHARE THE KNOWLEDGE: Internet-based phone services

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) is the term that describes the technologies used in delivering voice communications over the internet.

Increasingly, individuals and businesses are using VoIP telephone services as an alternative to traditional “land line” services.

What are your group's experiences in using Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP)? Have you found it reliable enough for your needs? Which company do you use? What are the benefits? What are the downfalls? How do the costings stack up? Are there providers that specialise in communications for community groups?

Send your stories to kathyr@ourcommunity.com.au so we can share them with other community groups.

TO GIVE AWAY: Tables (Melbourne)

A Melbourne based business has some steel and laminex tables to give away.

There are five rectangular tables (60cm x 120cm) available, as well as eight trapezium-shaped tables that are 120cm at their longest point and 51cm wide.

The tables are available for pick up from Glen Waverley. If your group could use these tables please contact Michelle on 0418 170 222.

PRO BONO: I.T. services (Melbourne – inner suburbs only)

A Melbourne I.T. firm is offering to provide a free report to community organisations on how to optimise their networks and servers and utilise the technology to create more efficiency.

Real I.T. will provide a one-hour on-site check that will involve evaluating everything used by the organisation.

The company also reduces its current fees of \$100 + GST per hour to \$85 + GST to community groups as well as special rates for videos and documentaries.

For more information contact Damian Blumenkranc by emailing damian@realit.com.au

YOU TOLD US: A Fundraising Stamp of Approval

Last month's call in *Our Community Matters* for information about the use of postage stamps in fundraising generated a massive amount of feedback.

Thanks to everyone who responded. The stamps have now been distributed among a couple of groups operating near the donor.

It was interesting to see the variety of organisations which used stamps to raise money – from Scout and Guide groups to hospitals and medical centres, churches and church-based charities, and organisations which provide overseas aid.

Most of the groups collected the stamps themselves and either:

- Sold them in bulk to a “middleman” who then on-sold them to a stamp dealer, or;
- Gave them directly to someone to sell on their behalf to collectors or buyers.

In both arrangements, the stamps ultimately end up in the hands of collectors. In many cases, stamp dealers will on-sell the stamps they receive in the form of themed packs or other bulk packs comprising several hundred stamps.

The December edition of the *Raising Funds* newsletter examines in more detail how organisations can raise money by collecting and selling stamps, including some of the basic requirements of success and how practical it is as a method of fundraising.

[Back to Top](#)

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

Wind farm project share offer extended

A pioneering community energy project is seeking the help of community organisations around Australia in generating community support.

Hepburn Wind, which is hoping to build Australia's first community wind farm near Daylesford, Victoria, has received applications for shares worth \$2.6 million from more than 470 investors.

"This is a very positive result considering the global financial paralysis of recent weeks, but is not yet sufficient to enable this ground-breaking initiative to go ahead," said board chair Simon Holmes à Court.

"For this reason the Share Offer is being extended until 12 December to give investors more time to consider the project."

The initial share offer closed on October 30 but applications fell well short of the initial target of around \$9.6 million.

"Apart from taking practical steps to reduce the impact of climate change, an investment in Hepburn Wind is an investment in one of the fastest growing industry sectors in the world – renewable energy," Mr Holmes à Court said.

"A few thousand dollars invested by a few hundred more people will be enough to ensure that the wind farm on Leonards Hill can be built, and those investors can look forward to regular and attractive dividends from energy sales for the next 25 years."

It is hoped that the Hepburn Wind project will serve as a model for other community wind projects across the nation, and community groups are being encouraged to throw their support behind the venture by sending information about the project to their members.

For further information visit www.hepburnwind.com.au or call (03) 9429 5629.



Funding for schools

There are currently a number of great grant opportunities around specifically for schools.

For those that are interested in improving their environmental credentials, you should be aware of the Tank A Day program, which helps primary schools kick start their water saving journey and educates students about the importance of conserving our precious natural resources. A total of 200 rainwater tanks will be on offer for primary schools.

Participating students will learn about the water cycle and the importance of rainwater harvesting, conservation and management.

Many schools take groups of students to Canberra to learn about our electoral system. If your school does this, or is considering doing it, you should find out more about the Parliament and Civics Education Rebate. This program provides a subsidy for schools travelling more than 150 kilometres to visit the national capital as part of a civics and citizenship education excursion.

The rebate is available for year 4 to year 12 students and is paid on a per student basis at rates varying according to the distance travelled.

Both of these grants are open for application on an ongoing basis. These are two examples of the Grants listed in Our Community's EasyGrants newsletter and database. For more information, go to www.ourcommunity.com.au/easygrants.

Giving Cards generate money for your group

A number of community groups have taken up the opportunity to use the upcoming Christmas Cards season to raise some funds.

Through the Giving Cards program, which is run by Our Community and Australia Post, we're encouraging politicians, local government councillors, businesses and individuals to purchase Giving Cards to send to their contacts.

green
The Christmas Giving Card
The Christmas card that supports communities and the environment



Cards cost \$3 each, which includes the cost of the card, envelope, stamp and a \$1 donation to the community group of the sender's choice. Senders may also opt to have a logo or personal message printed on their cards for no extra cost.

How to kick start a Giving Cards fundraiser – three simple steps:

1. Contact your supporters and ask them to buy Giving Cards this year - direct them to the Giving Cards webpage (www.ourcommunity.com.au/givingcards), or send them a copy of the order form (also available from the above site).
2. Ask them to nominate your group as the recipient of their \$1 per card gift.
3. Receive your cheque for \$1 per card purchased.

For more information visit www.ourcommunity.com.au/givingcards or telephone (03) 9320 6800.

DGR review reveals large number of 'ghost groups'

Of Australia's 700,000 community groups, a tiny twenty-odd thousand have been endorsed by the Australian Tax Office (ATO) as entitled to Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status, which means that donations to these groups may be deducted from your taxable income.

As many groups have discovered, it's very difficult to become a DGR, and the requirements are very restrictive.

The ATO has recently contacted a sample of endorsed charities to make sure they are aware of their ongoing obligation to self-review their entitlement to endorsement.

"We asked them to advise us of the steps they had taken to meet this obligation. We also asked them to tell us in writing if they were no longer entitled to be endorsed," the ATO says.

Unsurprisingly, the percentage of groups announcing to the ATO that they were no longer entitled to be endorsed was a resounding 0%. Other findings from the exercise, however, included the news that:

- approximately 10% of organisations contacted had ceased to operate or were otherwise uncontactable and are presumed to have ceased operation – the ATO will be taking steps to remove the endorsed status for these dormant entities, and
- approximately 24% of organisations contacted advised that either their address or their authorised contact details were incorrect.

It's slightly worrying to know that 10% of Australia's top charitable entities have gone away and left no forwarding address. That's a figure that would seem to support the position of those seeking a rather more interventionist oversight body along the lines of the UK Charities Commission.

ATO releases fundraising guide

The Tax Office's treatment of fundraising activities is the focus of a new *Fundraising Guide for Not-for-Profit Organisations* released by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO).

The guide examines tax-deductible gifts and contributions, the requirements that make either a gift or a contribution tax deductible, and then works through how various types of tax, including:

- Income tax;
- Fringe Benefits Tax, and;
- Goods and Services Tax

can impact on your group.

The final part of the guide looks at the state and territory fundraising requirements in place around Australia, as well as what types of local government requirements there might be for groups to follow.

The guide can be downloaded from the ATO's website at www.ato.gov.au/content/downloads/NPO56536.pdf

Victorian Government places ban on lollies

Sales of chocolate and lollies through Victorian Government school canteens and vending machines will be banned from 2009 in a bid to boost student health and stamina.

State Education Minister Bronwyn Pike announced the changes earlier this month, saying the banned items would be replaced with fruit, salads and fresh wraps.

Ms Pike said almost 25% of children aged between two and 16 were overweight or obese – with many students getting more than 35% of their total energy intake at school.

About 100 schools will be audited in 2009 to ensure they comply with the confectionery ban. In 2007 the government banned schools from selling high-sugar drinks to students.

The ban comes only a month after a major online survey of schools found that while more than 90% of respondents felt schools had "a responsibility to teach children about healthy food and lifestyles", 70% had staged at least one confectionary-based fundraiser in the past year.

More than 70% of those that had staged such a fundraiser had found it successful.

Last chance to vote for your favourite community photo

If you haven't visited [Community Photo Bank](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/photobank) and viewed the fantastic images submitted by hundreds of community groups throughout Australia, be quick because you only have until December 1 to vote for your favourite shot.

Remember, you can vote on as many photos as you like. So if you're having trouble choosing between your favourite two, three, or 10, why not give them all a vote?

The winners will be announced late December.

There's a people's choice prize as well as a judge's prize for the photo the judges think best exemplifies the work of Australian community.

Have your say now at www.ourcommunity.com.au/photobank.

Local government welcomes infrastructure funding boost

More than 400 mayors from across Australia have welcomed the Federal Government's \$300 million Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program, which will see councils across Australia receive a minimum of \$100,000 each to put towards local community projects.

The government announced the program earlier this month, and local governments have until September next year to spend the money.

Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) president Paul Bell said the funding was the culmination of over two years of work by the Association and meant a "great deal" to communities.

"The acceleration of funding for community infrastructure has been a critical plank of ALGA's advocacy on behalf of local communities," Cr Bell said.

"(It) will see swimming pools, community centres, libraries, sporting grounds, parks and council-run meals-on-wheels kitchens renewed and brought into the 21st century. These facilities are the life-blood of our suburbs and our towns."

Cr Bell said local governments had shown they could successfully work in partnership with the Federal Government.

Funding Submission Tools: More stats online

Our Community's statistics page – www.ourcommunity.com.au/stats – has been updated with a number of new links to resources your group can use to strengthen its applications for funding and grants.

The additions include:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics' fact pages covering statistics in major metropolitan centres around Australia;
- New sections listing stats sources for the Australian Capital Territory, the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia; and
- The National Regional Profile, which presents a range of social statistics and other data covering small regions across Australia. Data is available for local government areas, statistical local areas and other larger geographies.

The page is constantly updated and will continue to grow. If you have a source of statistics you believe should be listed on the page, send it to chriss@ourcommunity.com.au.

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 December and January include:

- **Australian Giving Week:** December 1-7
- **World AIDS Day:** December 1
- **International Day of Disabled Persons:** December 3
- **International Volunteer Day:** December 5
- **Cards for Planet Ark:** December 26 – January 31
- **Australia Day:** January 26
- **Chinese New Year:** January 26

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

FEATURED EVENT

The Homeless World Cup: December 1-7

From 1-7 December 2008 Federation Square and Birrarung Marr in Melbourne will come alive with the grit, spirit and glory of the Melbourne 2008 Homeless World Cup.

This annual international football tournament unites teams of people who are homeless and excluded from society to represent their country and shine a light on the issue of homelessness.

More information can be found at: www.homelessworldcup.org/

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



Good Moves :: Jobs Bulletin

www.ourcommunity.com.au

JOB VACANCY LISTINGS (Paid Positions)

Australian Capital Territory

Job Title	Organisation	
Executive Officer	Pedal Power ACT Inc.	Details

New South Wales

Job Title	Organisation	
Community Welfare Worker	Hewitt House Neighbourhood Centre Inc	Details

Victoria

Job Title	Organisation	
Networker	Network of Inner East Community Houses	Details
Admin/Communications Officer	Friends of Same	Details
Administration Officer	Waterkeepers Australia Ltd	Details
2Faze Teacher	St Kilda Youth Service	Details
Indigenous Information & Liaison Officer	Australian Drug Foundation	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

Queensland

Job Title	Organisation	
Chair, General Board Member, ATSI Representative	Booval Community Service Inc	Details

Victoria

Job Title	Organisation	
Treasurer, Secretary, General Board Member	Australian Prison Foundation	Details
Treasurer	The Bridge	Details
Treasurer	Victorian Association for Environmental Education	Details
General Board Member	Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement	Details

Western Australia

Job Title	Organisation	
Secretary, General Board Member	SIDS and Kids Western Australia	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.

Intensive Winning Grants Seminars

Are you frustrated at putting time and effort into grants submissions only to be rejected again and again?

Are you looking for grants to support your new projects or to extend tried and true programs?

YOU WILL LEARN

- **The best ways to present your proposal** - tell the story of your project and your group to the greatest advantage
- **How to develop your statement of need** - choosing data to support your project proposal
- **How to develop an "organisation template"** - to save time in writing applications
- **How to humanise your story** - presenting a compelling picture
- **How to navigate the grants landscape** - sorting out which grants are best for your project
- **How to write a proposal** - every word matters; style, treatment and content
- **Making friends and long-term relationships with grantmakers** - managing relationships, acknowledging funders
- **Giving the grantmaker what they want** - how to tailor your proposal for multiple grantmakers
- **Creating winning project plans & realistic budgets** - ensure project plans and budgets get the proposal across the line
- **Meeting different requirements from different sources** - different levels of government, philanthropic and corporate

BOOK IN YOUR STATE NOW:

visit: www.ourcommunity.com.au/winninggrants

email: service@ourcommunity.com.au

call: 03 93206800

