What do Australia’s nonprofits really want?

THE YEAR OF LISTENING
The big picture issues, daily challenges and priorities for Australia’s Third Sector

A National Research Project 2009-10
Researcher: Karen Gryst (nee May)

Connecting Up Australia
A social research project commissioned and conducted by Connecting Up Australia to explore the capacity development priorities of the nonprofit sector in Australia 2009-10

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Connecting Up Australia
Level 8, 108 King William Street
Adelaide, South Australia 5000

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What was the “Year of Listening” research project about?

Connecting Up Australia commissioned the Listening Project to explore the Australian nonprofit (or Third) Sector’s emerging and persistent priorities in terms of operational and strategic challenges to inform possible responses, programs and services that address the issues that have emerged.

What is a nonprofit?

When we refer to ‘nonprofits’ we refer to community organisations or charities that have Income Tax Exempt (ITE) status via our taxation system in Australia. These are entities which exist to serve a social mission, with any profit or surplus re-invested in the organisation’s programs and not to individual or institutional shareholders. This sector is often referred to today as the Third Sector (as distinct from the Business and Government sectors). Another emerging description being used is organisations which are ‘Profit for Purpose’ - emphasising what it is, rather than what it is not.


Summary of findings

When you take a close look at the nonprofit sector, the breadth of the task to “listen to” a real cross section of the sector becomes apparent. It is a diverse sector estimated at approximately 600,000 organisations across our vast country. A year of case studies with a sample of different types and sizes of organisations in each state and territory in regional and metropolitan Australia was a significant undertaking. It was both humbling and rewarding due to the vision and impact of these organisations combined with the time generously given by the busy employees with limited resources and pressing work within them. “Why do they willingly participate?” I asked myself time and time again, and the response given repeatedly by these nonprofit professionals indicated that they were upholding an ethic of commitment to the development of the sector and ultimately the community: “if this project can possibly help us improve, strengthen, gain support or resources to do more, I’ll go that extra mile.”

Talking about the daily challenges of operations with these organisations, as well as the strategic “big picture” challenges produced some unique issues but mainly strong themes and commonalities across sub-sectors and the sector as a whole. Many small community-based organisations highlighted the very same issues as larger national organisations.

The project’s case study data was then enriched further by a national online survey Connecting Up Australia conducted producing further quantitative statistics and qualitative cases, which supported and virtually mirrored the case study findings.
The issues as expressed by research participants can be categorised under the following headings:

**Structure and resourcing of the sector**

A. Government funding

B. Fundraising and alternative income development or social enterprise

C. Human resources: volunteers, staff, board

D. Research, capacity development and evaluation
Researcher’s commentary

Nonprofits grapple with many challenges from the missions they undertake to simply existing or sustaining. How is this different from any other entity, business or organisation? Underpinning many of the challenges in the structure and resourcing of the sector is, in my view, a historical but ongoing lack of recognition of philanthropic, welfare and social justice services as being a fundamental aspect of a fully functioning economy and political arena. Welfare services and investment in non-government human services are often viewed by economists and politicians purely as a necessary expense line in a civil society – effectively a drain on the economy to support the dependent or unproductive population in society. It is often not viewed or understood fully as an important investment in a highly performing society which reduces disadvantage, halting its generational cycle and the exponential cost that will result if it is not addressed. We need only to look to developing nations with problematic political structures and economies for examples of what happens when it is not addressed.

Developing the nonprofit sector is also not well understood as a strategy of creatively accessing the altruistic energy of a society to engage, participate, innovate, self-sustain and be more politically aware and responsible, providing a significant in-kind contribution. The estimates of dollars saved or work produced by volunteers is just one example of this, let alone corporate social responsibility and social enterprises. A strategy of better measurement, quantification and evaluation of the Third Sector economy and social capital is required to address this lack of understanding and enable targeted, informed and fully supported investment in causes and the capacity development of the organisations which uphold them.

Another challenge for nonprofit organisations comes from a growing divergence of focus within them; one focus on the cause and its beneficiaries and best practice in serving this need, and the second focus on surviving in a very competitive market of causes, stakeholders, supporters and funding bodies which requires a different and often new types of expertise. This requires a very demanding business model and very intelligent and agile operators. This is the reality of the modern nonprofit in a highly competitive market place, where the income potential is not necessarily growing proportionately to the need/expense lines, with more organisations vying for the same grant, philanthropic or donor dollar.

This divergence of focus, coupled with the lack of appropriate investment in these organisations, results in an industry trying to stretch the cause or donor dollar further to do more, risking ineffectiveness within this Third Sector and a lack of capacity to deal with growing health, social and environmental crises, as some sectors are already indicating. Ultimately the impact of burgeoning social crises is a concern for everyone, with risks to our whole economy and our quality of life.

Time for action

In this project’s findings there are some key points being reported by the sector about the structure and the resourcing of the sector and the issues hindering nonprofit operations, some of which are reinforced by other studies. For example, the recent Federal Government’s Productivity Commission Findings 2010 highlights some issues with grant processes for government funding. Issues such as these are clearly expressed and are tangible matters that can be addressed to improve the overall experience, effectiveness and return on investment for public monies spent. We must act without delay on the issues that have been defined and that are within our power to effect now. The issues which are not yet defined that require broader cultural, political, and economic scoping and change management also need urgent action through investment in research and evaluation.
Capacity development = good economics

Capacity development for the nonprofit sector is a sound economic strategy, a win-win. The nonprofit sector is dealing with shifts in strategy and operations – new pressures, demands and new markets. Support should be concentrated in incubation, training, and capacity development services to support organisations facing these challenges. Ultimately this support will assist organisations to be more successful, more self-reliant, better at fundraising and attracting corporate sponsorship, and better at business planning and management within social enterprises.

Capacity development is a social investment and will involve substantial monies being made available for capital items, staffing and operational costs. Effective volunteer managers will manage more volunteers who can achieve more and reduce social impact. Effective financial managers, fundraisers, CEOs etc will achieve greater efficiencies, leading to greater outputs and outcomes. We have some major social demographic issues, occurring such as an ageing population – we need to respond to these proactively rather than be in the middle of a costly crisis trying to find staff and solutions in the future.

New business and export incubation is an obvious step for the business sector for clear economic reasons – why aren’t we giving similar attention to the nonprofit sector for the same economic argument? The more self reliant nonprofits are, the lesser the burden on public funds which can go further towards social development that will result in the reduction and impact (including cost) of social issues.

Nonprofits themselves will also need to prioritise capacity development and allocate resources, including allocating time for learning, planning and development. Professionals will need to (and be supported by management to) lift their heads from the daily crisis that inevitably arises, and prioritise these capacity development activities to take their organisations forward with greater planning, skills and positioning.

A paradigm shift

Governments need to address the ways they perceive of the sector, as well as fund and evaluate it. The business sector needs new integrated relationships/partnerships with the nonprofit sector. And many organisations need to go through a change period requiring internal paradigm shifts.

Nonprofits need to start looking outside of their entities, their histories, demographics, their traditional networks and start to consider their future positioning in the broader nonprofit sector and realistically assess how the growing number of nonprofits competing for the same pool of funds can be sustained. Hoarding knowledge and protecting our patches may buy short term perceived security but long term it will make our propositions unsustainable. Strategic groups of nonprofits will be forging collaborations, partnerships, joint lobbying forces, joint buying power, better deals, greater sharing of intellectual property, greater efficiency and will ultimately make the sole player redundant. If we want to retain ownership of our “patch” and the diversity and specialisation of many smaller entities we will need to form partnerships, cooperatives of nonprofits; yes there will be some sticking points, hurdles etc, but would we rather that than one player take over the patch? Maybe that makes more sense? These are the sorts of things we will need to consider.

What do we need to share? Some ideas: shared costs for training to develop the skills we need, shared staffing pools to retain staff and provide greater job security and opportunity, possibly even shared funding pools with different roles. The other big thing we are going to need to share is knowledge. If we can share the lessons we have learned, share expertise, share models, policies developed etc we are reducing cost and innovating to strengthen the sector.

By the same token, Government needs to take a close look at the paradigm of competitive tendering and the tendency to place funds with larger organisations, which may adopt smaller organisations but may also create new ones and leave existing smaller
organisations de-funded and having to close their doors. The risk here in the loss of social innovation – a special dynamic quality and history which is often embedded in a small group which began out of a passionate few who recognised a need and fought for funding or services to address that need. This quality of community development and local ownership, local heroes and local champions can be the difference in achieving participation in a community and a deep rooted sense of empowerment. The loss of these groups can create resentment for new services to replace these even though they provide for the apparent need. When we think strategically in terms of social innovation and hope to replicate models which have been successful, we need to keep in mind that these small creative communities may seem easily replicable or replaceable, but if and when they exist – we should make every attempt to nurture and work with them and harness their special qualities.

Ezio Manzini, a world leading social innovator presenting at The Australian Centre of Social Innovation recently, quoted Michelle Obama from the White House Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation (05.05.09) on her capture of the concept of replicating social innovation to take the micro instance to the macro level or mainstream, “The idea is simple, to find the most effective programs and provide support or capital, then replicate”. I think we need to take heed of this approach in Australia and not always look at the pure economics of our decision making, rationalising the efficiency of one large organisation taking over diverse programs, but considering who is most effective and how can we support them and replicate this whilst maintaining those unique qualities.

The recent Productivity Commission, Australian Government (2010) report also talks about this as a key recommendation: “There is potential for greater social innovation but the business planning capabilities and incentives for collaboration need to be strengthened. Further, there is a need to strengthen the capacity for NFPs to access debt financing for social investment.”

What next?

While the challenges for the nonprofit or Third Sector may seem diverse and complex from one angle – there is an underlying simplicity in the way forward which is shown by the common ground and many of the same issues being expressed by all the different types of organisations interviewed and surveyed. There is a need for paradigm shifts in the way we understand and value this sector - from the views of government and business sectors through to the nonprofit sector itself. One of the most important shifts will need to be innovation through collaboration between nonprofit organisations. There is also a great need for investment from all sectors and stakeholders in capacity development to equip the nonprofit sector to deal with the contextual pressures it faces and to support it to thrive.

If we take heed of the call for action, we can begin to implement what we know and have the power to change, such as existing process improvements and bring immediate benefits to the sector and its effectiveness. We also need to act now to invest in research about the broader issues for which we require further exploration, further testing and learning, to provide some of the deeper cultural and systemic changes needed and also to address some of the demographic and environmental factors that present potential future crises.

Underpinning these 3 key points which are about paving the way to address challenges faced by the sector, is perhaps the greatest challenge of all; the need for a collective position of understanding and valuing the nonprofit or Third Sector as an integral part of the whole economy - some would go further to say whole ecology. The struggles, functioning or thriving of this third sector will have a direct impact on our futures. As a country that values “quality of life” defined by levels of security, freedom, access to basic services, education, clean water, quality food produce, family life, community life, a beautiful and unique environment, health, happiness and opportunities to excel - our Third Sector which enables this must be firmly placed alongside our other priorities.

How can the nonprofit sector change its status and perceived value in society? We need to get better at learning the languages of our political context, identify the target markets and perceptions we seek to change, get better at measuring the value and most importantly articulating and amplifying it. It will need coordination, collective support from the sector and champions from all sectors.

The condition of the Third Sector will be the best indicator of our society’s success and well being.
What nonprofits are saying - a snapshot

Bill Petch; Marketing Manager of Barnardos, Sydney, NSW (service for high risk, marginalised young people including foster care) said:

One of the big issues for the nonprofit sector is the structure of the sector e.g. competitive tendering. Does this corporate model fit the community sector? Is the result innovation or replication? Perceived insecurity threatens much needed collaboration and sharing of resources and knowledge across the sector.

The face of philanthropy and social engagement is changing. Sustainability should be something this sector addresses more directly and that means addressing the way NGO’s, business and government engage and their future roles in terms of social sustainability.

Keiran Kevins; Senior Youth Worker of Glebe Youth Service, Sydney, NSW (local centre for disadvantaged young people to access support and programs) said:

I believe the sector (social and human services) would benefit from a broad scale campaign that has as its aim ‘Improving Social Outcomes through Efficient and Effective Interagency Collaboration Communication and Cooperation’. Key issues to be addressed would be education and awareness training - addressing the role and operating process of various key sector stakeholders (government and non-government). However perhaps most important would be the looking at a broad strategic approach to the coordination, communication and cooperation between the government and non-government sector. Perhaps establishing national (or state) best practice protocols.

Carol Mead; Chief Executive Officer of Directions ACT, Woden, Canberra (holistic drug and alcohol support and rehabilitation service for users and their families) said:

The grant seeking process needs an overhaul: it needs to be made simpler with allowance for expressions of interest prior to a full application, reportable outcomes against project plan rather than just facts and figures. Small services can’t afford to hire consultants to do applications and reporting for them - they are disadvantaged even though they may have the best relationship with clients and the best expertise.

Ric Norton; General Manager of Laynhapuy Homelands Association, Yirrkala, NT (Complex support services for the region – covering all the local lands communities, with an airline service, building company and more.) said:

Human resources is a big issue. It is very expensive to recruit staff to remote locations, even if the wages/salaries are not particularly high. There is the cost of relocation/repatration, but in particular the cost of employer provided housing which can exceed $50,000 per annum to rent a three bedroom dwelling in a town like Nhulunbuy, there is also additional leave and airfares. It is also very hard to compete with mining companies, or the Australian and Northern Territory Governments or the Shire in terms of salary and conditions.

Some staff thrive in remote locations and working cross culturally with Yolnu, while others struggle... and these challenges also confront their spouses and children. All in all it is often difficult to attract and retain the right people.
A closer look at the issues | Structure of the sector/resourcing the sector

The nonprofit sector is resourced through various funding, income development and social enterprise models. Some organisations are wholly government funded and others are a combination of government, fundraising, investment portfolios and social enterprise. The comfort levels or sustainability of organisations participating in this study varied. There are some organisations with a large machinery of fundraising and social enterprise, with reserves to support security and longevity and others barely surviving week to week. But the large majority of medium to small organisations expressed a great challenge in balancing financial management with appropriate service levels and increasing demands.

Solesly government funded organisations generally reported a struggle to meet human resource requirements to deliver effective services and so operated with less than ideal numbers of staff or had to trim services to minimum output levels. The sector is also resourced partly by volunteers, who essentially subsidise operational costs, but there are limitations to what volunteers can do and the management and support of volunteers needs close attention for best practice. Human resource issues will be discussed in more detail under heading C in this section.

Organisations with more diverse portfolios of income generation faced different challenges – the adoption of new strategies which vary greatly from historical or traditional models of operation for charities and nonprofits meant a dramatic internal change management process from Board level to operations. The recently published “Finding Australia’s Social Enterprises Sector” (FASES) Report produced by Social Traders and Queensland University or Technology’s Australian Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies tells us that 29% of nonprofits have some kind of business venture (Giving Australia Project by DFC, 2005) and current (2009) estimates of social enterprises sit at 20,000 organisations.

A. Government funding

The majority of the sector expressed issues with the current approach to government funding. The core issues expressed were:

General government funding issues:

a) Competitive tendering

Putting aside funding levels for one moment, one of the major issues was the corporate model of competitive tendering. It is reported by nonprofits as having a great deal of negative impact on the sector. It should be noted that this report does not include the perspective of funding bodies and departments about the perceived success or failure of this model.

The negative issues expressed are:

a. Decreased collaboration and networking in the sector – a direct clash with the majority of government policy wishing to see more collaboration. So as a result:

   i. Resources not being shared

   ii. Knowledge not being shared
iii. Replication of work

iv. Duplication of cost

v. Reduced client outcomes due to competition for ownership of clients and reduced referrals.

Peter Beaton; Business Development Manager of Intework, Perth, WA (job placement service for people with high support level disabilities) said:

The competitive field of disability and job placement services, means that organisations in this field often don't work together to lobby or share knowledge and resources.
b. Bigger organisations who are better resourced to apply are winning tenders over smaller organisations who may be best placed with already existing client target groups and services to deliver a specific service. Some big organisations are staking/expanding territory rather than engaging specialist services and collaborating.

As a result:

i. Smaller specialist services losing funding/closing

ii. Client groups either losing services or undergoing interruption to service and continuity of their treatment.

iii. Some of the newly created services to replace old services simply don’t have the established knowledge and relationships in communities developed over many years and so fail to deliver outcomes, whilst the previous service provider has disbanded.
Theresa Moore; Executive Officer of Youth Network of Tasmania, Hobart (YNOT is the youth sector peak body for Tasmania) said:

The single biggest issue is competitive tendering. Sometimes it is bringing more organisations into Tasmania instead of building on the existing partnerships. Organisations are competing rather than collaborating. It is easier for larger organisations to gain a large contract which becomes its core and attaching other tenders for smaller, outreach and regional services and programs. This competitive tendering model is at risk of having a few big groups receiving funding and smaller specialist groups being extinguished.

b) Grant application, reporting and acquittal processes

The grant process from application to reporting needs the establishment of some best practice guidelines for funding bodies to adhere to and seekers to be educated about.

Some of the issues mentioned were:

a. Consistent approach across funding bodies with best practice guidelines underpinning this.

b. A support service available to reduce disadvantage for smaller – already underfunded organisations.

c. Clauses to highlight room for contract negotiations to customise parameters of grant terms where appropriate – with a procedure for this made clear to all concerned. This would aim to reduce the occurrence of “fudging” where perhaps 90% of the grant is achievable but 10% has to be creatively covered, it would enable the tightening up of accountability with realistic terms to fit realistic objectives for an organisation.

d. Grants are rarely inclusive of or designated for capital items e.g. building/facility/equipment capital item grants. Many services are operating out of very old, poorly equipped and sometimes dangerous or detrimental facilities for staff and beneficiaries. Besides obvious issues of safety for all concerned and the inefficiency of operating without sufficient equipment, this issue also affects human resource recruitment, retention and client access and perception of self worth and value in society.

Carol Mead; Chief Executive Officer; Directions ACT, a holistic drug and alcohol support and rehabilitation service for users and their families expressed:

Pride in premises/office space is important for staff morale and client morale – old decrepit buildings give a very poor message of value to all concerned.
Specific context government funding issues:

a) Retrospective funding models

e.g. By bed - accommodation, some health services, immigrations settlement services for refugees and others, employment. For example the payment per head for someone using an emergency refuge accommodation service does not recognise the establishment of support for that individual, follow up counselling or referral to other support services. The payment per head of a disabled person being placed in employment takes in no consideration for all the preparation work of the individual and their support networks to get them job ready, the employer to educate them and increase the chance of success and then the ongoing support.

These kinds of funding models and levels only allow organisations to scratch the surface of the social issues they are trying to deal with, but these services are faced with the reality of closure or persisting with limited resources rather than see people in need have no option at all.

Jenny Burling; Resident Manager of Glennon House, Toowoomba, QLD (Temporary accommodation for people and their families from regional areas needing medical treatment in Toowoomba), said:

*We receive funding per head for patients from remote or regional areas accessing medical care at a hospital. With this type of funding it is hard to get capital items such as pillows and bed covers let alone technology.*

Peter Beaton; Business Development Manager of Intwork, Perth, WA (job placement service for people with high support level disabilities) said:

*For our core business of placing people with disabilities in employment, the funding which is provided by individual job placement does not cover the cost of infrastructure and job readiness preparation work. There is a lack of recognition of the issues and the level of work involved. Our constant challenge is financial management - how do we balance the service levels needed with the cost.*

Heather Lee; Operations Manager of Melaleuca Refugee Centre, Darwin, NT (support and settlement service for refugee survivors of torture and trauma) said:

*It is difficult to manage and plan ahead with retrospective funding for refugee referrals – per head. We seek other grants as well, but our experience is that many medium and small grants are often onerous from application to reporting. Many are hardly worth it - we once had a grant that was $1500 and they wanted it to have an audited financial statement costing $1500.*

b) Regional and remote contexts

Special allowances and support need to be given to groups which are identified as having high contextual challenge factors such as: regional and remote locations, disproportionate incidences of need, special unique circumstances due to distance/climate and other environmental challenges, severity of social issues etc. Perhaps a register or special clause in funding or department to deal with special cases of highly challenged nonprofits based on some risk criteria could be established.
Ben Johnson; Captain, Corps Officer of the Salvation Army - Batemans Bay, N S W (support services to all disadvantaged people) explains his community context:

*We are regional with high unemployment, 4% have tertiary education and this is the highest indigenous population besides Moree. Health services are thin and there is a lack of specialists. Housing is very limited and the nearest office for Government Housing is NOWRA. There are 340 government houses in the area. The town is sometimes hard to convince of the need for change.*

Ray Woodhouse; Director of Business Services, Upper Murray Family Care Inc – Albury/Wodonga/Wangaratta, NSW/VIC (Complex family support services including Out of Home Care (Foster Care), Post Separation Services, Family Relationship Centre, Community Financial Services, Children’s Services, Family Services, Child First, Community Legal Service, Aged and Disability Services and Family Pathways Network) said:

*A major challenge is the cost and logistics of operating extensive services across large distances e.g. managing multiple branches or staff working across areas, travel, vehicle and phone costs, and costs of finding, purchasing, learning, supporting and introducing new technologies such as video conferencing for some meetings.*

**B. Fundraising and alternative income development or social enterprise:**

Modern fundraising and alternative income development such as social enterprise, corporate social responsibility partnerships and sponsorships (CSR), online fundraising strategy, has given the sector in many ways a breath of fresh air to find ways of creating greater autonomy through independent funding sources. This autonomy impacts the freedom of decision making for that organisation around how it spends those funds and enable boards and staff to prioritise core needs for their target beneficiaries and expand services to meet this. It does however present challenges too and some major shifts for traditional nonprofits:

**General issues for fundraising and alternative income development or social enterprise:**

**a) Cultural change within organisations to enable good business/administration operations e.g.**

a. New models and ways of operating

b. More emphasis on quantification and efficiency

c. “Supporters” being viewed as potential customers who can be encouraged to support in many ways.

d. Marketing the cause – vying for market share. Learning how to articulate and differentiate the cause to various market segments, utilising new tools and strategies.
b) New skill sets required for Boards and staff and salaries sufficient to compete with other sectors employing these business skill sets.

Inability to afford, find or attract specialist skill sets to increase an organisation’s sustainability through income development and fundraising strategies such as: Marketing, Public and Media relations, Corporate sponsorship seeking, Business Development, ICT management, Financial management.

c) New technology required e.g. effective database or Client Relationship Management (CRM) systems, web sites and strategies

Technology remains a major challenge for organisations – not only in respect of funding of capital items to set up infrastructure or in terms of the ability to employ IT staff, but in relation to some support and information to navigate the myriad of options, suppliers and work out what they may need in the first place. Technology is underpinning many aspects of inefficiency in organisations from managing contacts in a database to basic internal communications via email. CRM’s/databases and web sites though have to be the two most common challenges requiring some more strategic support.

Robyn McGregor; Digital Marketing Manager of Circus Oz, Melbourne, VIC (One of Australia’s most prominent arts organisations – the Australian Circus) said:

*Technology and CRM database systems are a big challenge for us with diverse ticketing and event management, collaborations with various venues plus fundraising/merchandise activities. We would love support and be able to hear what other organisations have used and found effective.*

**Specific context issues for fundraising and alternative income development or social enterprise:**

a) Attracting new skill sets not only to nonprofits, but nonprofits based in regional areas and associated costs.

Ray Woodhouse; Director of Business Services Upper Murray Family Care Inc - Albury/Wodonga/Wangaratta, NSW/VIC (Complex family support services including Out of Home Care (Foster Care), Post Separation Services, Family Relationship Centre, Community Financial Services, Children’s Services, Family Services, Child First, Community Legal Service, Aged and Disability Services and Family Pathways Network) said:

*The usual recruitment challenges are exacerbated in regional areas by the smaller pool of local expertise, limited local training institutions and costs of hiring and relocation to bring people in to the region.*

b) Lack of technology support in regional areas. One IT person may service vast regions making it very difficult for nonprofits to transition to new systems such as databases requiring hands on support frequently.
C. Human resources: volunteers, staff, boards

Funding levels not meeting service delivery requirements is a real problem facing many organisations. It results in underpaid staff doing extensive hours leading to staff burn out resulting in low productivity and or high staff turnover with an ultimate result of poor outcomes for beneficiaries.

A lack of professional recognition for community/welfare workers has been one explanation for low pay rates creating pressure on employers to try and pay above award rates or simply meaning that they can’t compete with "better offers" from other sectors and so they deal with very high turnover rates.

This situation has numerous implications:

- Difficulty in recruiting appropriate staff and skills sets,
- Poor retention of staff and cost from replacement to the loss of knowledge and intellectual property
- Risk to funding if grants reporting is compromised by lost knowledge and continuity.
- Inefficiency in the repetition of training and work,
- Lack of continuity of service for beneficiaries,
- Insufficient staffing levels increases risks affecting Occupational health and safety for staff and also for clients
- Staff “burn out” - low or ineffective productivity

Many organisations describe the staff that do stay in the industry as passionate about the cause.

Donna Selby from Peel Community Development Group, Mandurah, WA (office to work with local community groups on priorities for development) said:

Staff in this industry are time poor with limited wages and limited resources. Qualified people are often moving out of the sector. Some people with “big hearts” stay - but then these people are doing excess hours, and they can burn out and leave or they may stay and become unproductive because they are negative about the possibility of change or progress.

This resignation to the status quo can be just as damaging to an organisation as staff turnover.

These comments by Keiran cover a few of these points: Keiran Kevins; Senior Youth Worker at Glebe Youth Service, Sydney, NSW (local centre for disadvantaged young people to access support and programs), said:

We have high expectations but low resources. We simply need more staff. We could have a far higher impact if we had more staff. We could work with the families on long term change. Our time to work on grants is so limited. Youth work or community work being recognised as a profession and related pay rates are a major issue. Recruiting and keeping experienced staff is hard- once they have families of their own or want to buy property. This also breaks the continuity of service for young people with staff constantly changing.
The new SACS award top-up scheme, which has been rolled out in some States, may go some way towards combating the loss of nonprofit workers to public service alternatives, but this scheme will need to be scrutinised and monitored. Many are concerned that these top-ups may mean cuts in other areas which just transfers the problem and will not change issues of poor staffing levels.

Volunteer recruitment and management is another major area requiring support. It is an issue which touches the majority of nonprofit organisations from their Boards of Management to their operations. Organisations grapple with the rights and responsibilities of volunteers and Volunteer Managers require a great deal more recognition and value as Human resource managers.

Evelyn O’Loughlin; CEO of Volunteering SA/NT, Adelaide (Peak body for volunteers and volunteer organisations) said:

*Volunteer managers are often undervalued despite the fact that they are Human Resource managers, often recruiting and managing 100's of people and balancing their rights with the demands of the organisation.*

As touched on under the Government grants section, regional and remote contextual issues need special consideration. This is especially true for recruitment and staff retention.

Ric Norton; General Manager of Laynhapuy Homelands Association, Yirrkala, NT (Complex support services for the region covering all the local lands communities, with an airline service, building company and more) said:

*Human resources is a big issue. It is very expensive to recruit staff to remote locations, even if the wages/salaries are not particularly high. There is the cost of relocation/repatriation, but in particular the cost of employer provided housing which can exceed $50,000 per annum to rent a three bedroom dwelling in a town like Nhulunbuy, there is also additional leave and airfares. It is also very hard to compete with mining companies, or the Australian and Northern Territory Governments or the Shire in terms of salary and conditions. Some staff thrive in remote locations and working cross culturally with Yolnu, while others struggle... and these challenges also confront their spouses and children. All in all it is often difficult to attract and retain the right people.*

There are also specific demographic issues which are creating grave concerns about the current difficulties in obtaining sufficient staff reaching crisis point. This needs to be given major attention by the Government to prepare for and avert this social crisis. This should be done in consultation with major service providers, considering state and territory context differences.

Ruth Leslie-Rose; CEO of Alzheimer NT, Darwin (dementia services for the Northern Territory (NT)) said:

*Nt's population is spread across the 3rd largest land mass in Australia but has only 1% of Australia population which makes it hard to service. However 1/3 of our population in NT is indigenous and although quite young is indicated as developing dementia at a rate 4 times higher in Indigenous communities than in non Indigenous communities due to poor education levels and chronic health conditions eg. Diabetes and vascular disease. We have a 1.5 Geriatrician to service the whole of NT - there is a shortage of doctors generally let alone specialists.*

The Australian Productivity Commission report also raised this issue: “NFPs and others delivering community services face increasing workforce pressures and long-term planning is required to address future workforce needs.”
D. Research, capacity development and evaluation

The issue of capacity development for the sector becomes a chicken and egg proposition. How do you know that you don know what you need to know? It is also a symptom of the need to give greater value to the sector; that is, if we value the outcomes of the sector we will invest in it to increase its impact and outcomes. So how do we know and promote the value? Well we need to develop capacity and skills to research and measure these outcomes, articulate them better to society and decision makers, to encourage investment. Once we have investment in capacity development we need to evaluate what working, leverage success, research new angles and continually report back to maintain this momentum and cycle.

The need for capacity development was expressed across the study with expressed need/desire for research grants to measure and demonstrate need, evaluation to identify the gaps, training opportunities for skills development, hiring in expertise or accessing external consultants. Many organisations are feeling at a loss to know how to find out what you need to know. Areas of high support needs included common topics such as: governance and boards, technology/web site planning and support, database/client relationship system (CRM) establishment and management, branding and marketing strategy, media relations and publicity, sponsorship seeking, human resource management, competitive grant writing, research and quantification.
Gayle Mather; Project Officer of Umeewarra Aboriginal Media Association Port Augusta, SA (Radio Station) said:

*We need skills development in sponsorship seeking. Sponsorship is very hard in a small community where racism is still a strong reality within local businesses. As funding decreases for services in the local area e.g. the withdrawal of the CDEP funded programs, the demands on existing services like ours increase. We are the major communication channel (via radio) to Aboriginal local communities from Port Pirie to north of Port Augusta. We also support: employment, native title, family support, funerals and vents, community announcements, reconciliation locally and youth advocacy. We need to find new sources of funding.*

Governance was raised as an issue by most of the case study participants with issues ranging from structure and process through to the need for evaluation, external expertise, training opportunities, strategies for succession planning, balanced skill sets and access to resources and templates for governance functions.

Bill Petch; Marketing Manager of Barnardos, Sydney, NSW (service for high risk, marginalised young people including foster care) talks about some of the issues he sees in nonprofit governance:

*A good Board needs a balance between business/philanthropic types and service/social welfare types. Too many business heads won't scrutinise the service expansion and spending - they just trust that "it's all good work" and too many service people don't understand or prioritise some of the other sustainability priorities.*

There was a general sense that it would be useful to have better or more organised and qualified sources of suppliers and consultants which cater to the nonprofit sector.

Theresa Moore; Executive Officer Youth Network of Tasmania, Hobart (YNOT is the youth sector peak body for Tasmania) said:

*Technology is a big challenge: CRM, websites, blogs, resources to fund it, what to use, who to use, guidelines, and a way to find suppliers. We really need support with this because in our role as a peak body it is important that we have a good interface for the sector. We need good quality technology systems to facilitate corporate interest in the sector to support funding and partnership opportunities with them.*

Many nonprofit senior managers discussed a desire for more peer/mentoring/networking support from within or external to the nonprofit sector.

Mimi Wang; Business Services Manager of RSPCA, Adelaide, SA (Organisation for the protection of animals) said:

*Peer support is ad hoc. Networking is ad hoc. There aren't really support groups for nonprofits around business matters - HR, business management, finance etc. Also there is little senior manager peer support - a network would be great for CEOs and others.*
See the chart below, from the Listening Project online survey detailing the topics that are challenging for nonprofits - ranked from most popular to least popular - top to bottom:

Q12 : Do any of these areas present challenges for your organisation?
Who provides capacity development services to the nonprofit sector?

- Nonprofit peak bodies
- Businesses -nonprofit service providers/consultants
- Government
- Academic
- Philanthropic

How do nonprofits seek information and support?

The online survey data showed that an overwhelming majority of organisations are searching for services and suppliers via the web through major search engines such as Google. Refer to the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>86.5%</td>
<td>636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print publication</td>
<td>62.9%</td>
<td>462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-newsletter</td>
<td>64.1%</td>
<td>471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peak body</td>
<td>67.3%</td>
<td>495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry Association</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultant</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonprofit colleagues</td>
<td>63.1%</td>
<td>464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_The chart above shows the current use of various resources for finding information for nonprofit organisations._

Nonprofits reported that they would like easier access to finding resources and information including suppliers and consultants. There was also a high demand for training and a sense that there needed to be more “basics” training available in short courses. With the shortages in staffing and pressures on time longer professional development training courses were a) not affordable and b) not accessible due to time constraints on being away from core work. A common topic mentioned was “computer basics”.

Capacity Development was also highlighted as a key recommendation of the Productivity Commission report (2010):

“Building sector capabilities to improve governance and enhance productivity Recommendation 9.2 : State and territory governments should review their full range of support for sector development to reduce duplication, improve the effectiveness of such measures, and strengthen strategic focus, including on:

- developing the sustainable use of intermediaries providing support services to the sector, including in information technology
**improving knowledge of, and the capacity to meet, the governance requirements for not-for-profit organisations’ boards and management**

**building skills in evaluation and risk management, with a priority for those not-for-profit organisations engaged in delivery of government funded services.**

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**Conclusion**

The Listening Project held at its core the spirit of open mind and open discussion to unearth the challenges and priorities of the nonprofit or Third Sector in Australia, as expressed by the sector itself - in its breadth of size and diversity. This open ended approach at first may have seemed like a potentially over ambitious minefield of variant data, but instead the project produced much common ground and some clear themes, data with detail of tangible issues and proposals about how these can be addressed. Participants in the case studies and the online survey have produced many insights and collectively uncovered important themes which we can now share with each other and stakeholders to pave the way for development of programs and strategies to address them.

The research was enriched by the candid level of discussion and willingness of participants to share their experiences and thoughts, at times exposing their weaknesses but also their strength and courage, displaying a commitment to confront and work through the issues. This quality of courage and this ethos of sharing for the greater good is what makes this sector so resilient, adaptable and innovative. Perhaps if we take nothing else from this study it is that while we operate in a highly competitive environment, identifying and uniting for our common cause, could be the key to strengthening our value proposition and unlocking the doors to the capacity development and paradigm shifts our sector needs.

The nature of action research not only produces rich data but establishes relationships, that are built through the process of exploring the subject matter and one of the benefits is that this can continue beyond the scope of the research project. Connecting Up Australia feels privileged to have established these connections and aims to continue the dialogue and sharing of information. We look forward to monitoring developments and engaging stakeholders about the findings and possible strategies in addressing the issues raised.

We endeavoured to listen. Now we need to show that we have heard.

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1. Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden - Primary school children work in an organic vegetable garden in their school and share meals created from their produce. 27 projects in Victoria. www.kitchengardenfoundation.org.au


Research approach

Premise/purpose for research

In 2009, Connecting Up Australia (CUA) was pleased to be a co-sponsor of Genevieve Bell’s sojourn as Adelaide Thinker-in-Residence on digital inclusion issues. The Board and staff spent time with Genevieve and we were impressed by her anthropological approach to problem solving i.e. observe what people do and listen to what they say, rather than make assumptions about how they are addressing any particular issue. As CUA considered its approach to addressing the capacity development needs of the nonprofit (or Third) Sector, we decided to make a major investment into action-based research to try to ensure we were hearing about what the sector really needed.

Connecting Up Australia has a 29 year long history of working with the nonprofit sector specialising in community information and resources. It has had a strong program of supporting organisation’s capacity development. Connecting Up decided to canvass a broad picture of the emerging and persistent priorities of the nonprofit sector in terms of strategic and operational challenges, to inform capacity development strategies. So the “Listening Project” was born.

Methodology

The methodology for the Listening project was based on a critical thinking Participatory Action Research model, with primary data collected through case studies. It provides extensive qualitative and quantitative data for evaluation and ultimately ongoing active engagement with participants - typical of this type of research. The reason for choosing this methodology is its alignments with the ethics of the organisation; Connecting Up which has a commitment to authenticity and community engagement - to find the true/real picture of the nonprofit sector it serves.

The Listening project conducted its research through two levels: First level Case studies and Second Level Survey.

First level - case studies

Interviews and time spent onsite with a number of organisations across a cross section of Australian nonprofits from small to large, from regional and remote to metro centres. These were conducted by Karen Gryst in person. Scope of case study research:

29 Case study organisations across regional and metro Australia in all states and territories: New South Wales (NSW), Australian Capital Territory (ACT), Victoria (VIC), Queensland (QLD), Northern Territory (NT), Western Australia (WA), Tasmania (TAS), South Australia (SA). The specific locations were:

• Sydney, NSW
• Batemans Bay, NSW
• Albury, NSW
• Canberra, ACT
• Melbourne, VIC
• Wodonga, VIC
• Brisbane, QLD
• Toowoomba, QLD
• Darwin, NT
• Yirrkala, NT
• Mandurah, WA
• Bunbury, WA
• Hobart, TAS
• Launceston, TAS
• Albury, NSW
• Adelaide, SA
• Port Augusta, SA
The type of organisations participating were small, medium and large based on number of staff (paid and unpaid) and members and turnover. Participating organisations included the following type categories:

- arts and culture
- maternity
- women’s
- men’s
- children’s
- youth
- fundraising, charity
- indigenous
- migrant/refugee
- elderly
- disability
- disease
- mental health
- volunteers
- drug and alcohol
- disadvantage
- environment and conservation
- agriculture
- housing and accommodation
- education, employment and training
- legal and justice

Second level - survey

The Listening Project conducted a survey which provides quantitative and some qualitative data from a broad cross section of nonprofits in Australia. The online survey sent out via email and conducted through the online survey platform www.surveymonkey.com had 888 respondents. A copy of the survey format and questions is attached - Appendix A.

See chart below for the breakdown of online survey representation by cause category.

Q. What is your organisation’s cause category?
Appendices

APPENDIX A - Online survey format and questions

Nonprofit / Community Sector Priorities Survey - The Listening Project

The "Listening Project" is a national research into the needs and priorities of community organisations in Australia. Our organisation Connecting Up Australia provides a number of free support and information services to the community organisation sector across Australia including the well known DonorTec program.

This research aims to build understanding around the sorts of challenges faced by nonprofit / community organisations operationally and strategically and what support is available and needed. We know new and small businesses can get support or incubation services – where do nonprofits get assistance?

Research findings will be published and shared with the sector. It will also be used to inform Connecting Up’s services to the sector and collaborations with other nonprofit service providers, business, government and academic sectors.

All data /comments will be confidential. For more information contact researcher Karen Gryst : (08) 8212 8555 or kg@connectingup.org

There was a survey draw to win 2 x iPods which closed midnight 23rd March and was drawn 24th March.

Thanks to all those who have responded so far - we welcome further responses to build the picture.

1. Contact Details required for notification of winner
   Name
   Contact email/ phone
   Organisation name

2. What is your organisation's purpose/mission?

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/JCGSMWS

25/03/2010
3. What is your organisation's cause category?

4. What is your job title and role?
   Job title
   Role

5. Is your organisation based in or near a capital city
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No

6. State

7. Suburb

8. Does your organisation have more than one site?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No

9. Does your organisation have branches across Australia?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No

10. Number of staff?
    Total (best estimate)
    Full time
    Part time
    Volunteers

11. Describe one or two achievements / accomplishments / areas going well for you and your organisation

12. Do any of these areas present challenges for your organisation:
    ☐ Funding structure
    ☐ Access to local staff training courses
    ☐ New technology
    ☐ Competitive tendering
    ☐ Social Media

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/JCGSMWS

25/03/2010
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grants process - application</th>
<th>If you are regional is training available locally</th>
<th>Using video</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grants process - reporting/acquittal</td>
<td>Do you use online training / webinars</td>
<td>Legal advice/services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising strategy</td>
<td>Affordable training</td>
<td>Sharing and or protecting Intelectual Property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social enterprise</td>
<td>Length of training courses - too long</td>
<td>Documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Development expertise</td>
<td>Length of training courses - too short</td>
<td>Risk management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing expertise</td>
<td>Database / Client relationship management systems</td>
<td>Financial Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public relations / media expertise</td>
<td>Reporting on organisational data</td>
<td>Green strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate sponsorship seeking</td>
<td>Case management systems</td>
<td>Sourcing suppliers generally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>Technology infrastructure</td>
<td>Managing growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attracting new staff with needed skill sets</td>
<td>Technology upgrades</td>
<td>Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient Salary levels</td>
<td>Funds for new capital items</td>
<td>Peer support/ networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient Staffing levels</td>
<td>Technology budgetting</td>
<td>Interagency collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance processes</td>
<td>Web site existing</td>
<td>Access to Mentoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Succession planning</td>
<td>New website plans</td>
<td>Staff morale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required skill sets on the Board</td>
<td>Website suppliers</td>
<td>Organisation culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessing training for Governance</td>
<td>Cost of website / upgrades</td>
<td>Organisational leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding Volunteers</td>
<td>Access to local ICT suppliers</td>
<td>Community understanding of issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing volunteers</td>
<td>Finding the right ICT suppliers</td>
<td>Advocacy and awareness strategy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Other (please explain)

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/JCGSMWS
25/03/2010
13. What are some of the challenges for your organisation - strategic or operational in relation to any topic?
1
2
3

14. If you could have 3 new things/services to support your organisation what would they be?
1
2
3

15. What resources/support services do you currently use to find information for your role or organisation's needs?
Website
Print publication
E-newsletter
Peak body
Industry Association
Consultant
Nonprofit colleagues
Other

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/JCGSMWS

25/03/2010
Examples of context specific challenges and issues

1. Gayle Mather; Project Officer

Umeewarra Aboriginal Media Association – Port Augusta, SA (Radio Station)

- We need skills development in sponsorship seeking. Sponsorship is very hard in a small community where racism is still a strong reality within local businesses.

- As funding decreases for services in the local area eg. the withdrawal of the CDEP programs, the demands on existing services like ours increase. We are the major communication channel (via radio) to Aboriginal local communities from Port Pirie to north of Port Augusta – we then also support – employment, native title, family support, funerals and events, community announcements, reconciliation locally, youth advocacy.

2. Ray Woodhouse; Director of Business Services

Upper Murray Family Care Inc– Albury/Wodonga/Wangaratta, NSW/VIC
(Complex family support services including Out of Home Care (Foster Care), Post Separation Services, Family Relationship Centre, Community Financial Services, Children’s Services, Family Services, Child First, Community Legal Service, Aged and Disability Services and Family Pathways Network)

- The usual recruitment challenges are exacerbated in regional areas by the smaller pool of local expertise, limited local training institutions and costs of hiring and relocation to bring people in to the region.

- The cost and logistics of operating extensive services across large distances eg. managing multiple branches or staff working across areas, travel, vehicle and phone costs, and costs of finding, purchasing, learning, supporting and introducing new technologies such as video conferencing for some meetings.

3. Ben Johnson; Captain, Corps Officer

Salvation Army - Batemans Bay, NSW (support services to all disadvantaged people)

- Context - regional - high unemployment area, 4% have tertiary education, highest indigenous population besides Moree, health services thin/lack of specialists, housing is very limited

- Nearest office NOWRA, 340 govt. houses, the town is sometimes hard to convince of the need for change.

4. Ruth Leslie-Rose; CEO

Alzheimer’s NT, Darwin (dementia services for the Northern Territory)

- NT’s population is spread across the 3rd largest land mass in Australia – but has only 1% of Australia’s population which makes it hard to service. However 1/3 of our population in NT is indigenous and although quite young is indicated as developing dementia at a rate 4 times higher in Indigenous communities than in non Indigenous communities due to poor education levels and chronic health conditions eg. Diabetes and vascular disease.
- 1.5 Geriatrician to service the whole of NT - shortage of doctors generally let alone specialists.

5. Ric Norton; General Manager

Laynhapuy Homelands Association, Yirrkala, NT (Complex support services for the region – covering all the local lands communities, with an airline service, building company and more.)

- Human resources is a big issue. It is very expensive to recruit staff to remote locations, even if the wages/salaries are not particularly high. There is the cost of relocation/repatriation, but in particular the cost of employer provided housing which can exceed $50,000 per annum to rent a three bedroom dwelling in a town like Nhulunbuy, there is also additional leave and airfares. It is also very hard to compete with mining companies, or the Australian and Northern Territory Governments or the Shire in terms of salary and conditions.

- Some staff thrive in remote locations and working cross culturally with Yolngu, while others struggle .... and these challenges also confront their spouses and children. All in all it is often difficult to attract and retain the right people.

Examples of general sector challenges and issues

1. Bill Petch; Marketing Manager

Barnardos, Sydney, NSW (service for high risk, marginalised young people including foster care)

- Governance - A good Board needs a balance between business/philanthropic types and service/social welfare types. Too many business heads won't scrutinise the service expansion and spending - they just trust that "it's all good work" and too many service people don't understand or prioritise some of the other sustainability priorities.

- One of the big issues for the nonprofit sector is the structure/s of the sector: competitive tendering. Does this corporate model fit the community sector? Is the result innovation or replication? Perceived insecurity threatens much needed collaboration and sharing of resources and knowledge across the sector.

- The face of philanthropy and social engagement is changing. Sustainability should be something this sector addresses more directly and that means addressing the way NGO's, business and government engage and their future roles in terms of social sustainability.

2. Keiran Kevins; Senior Youth Worker

Glebe Youth Service, Sydney, NSW (local centre for disadvantaged young people to access support and programs)

- We have high expectations but low resources. We simply need more staff. We could have a far higher impact if we had more staff. We could work with the families on long term change. Our time to work on grants is so limited.
- Youth work or community work being recognised as a profession and related pay rates are a major issue. Recruiting and keeping experienced staff is hard - once they have families of their own or want to buy property. This also breaks the continuity of service for young people with staff constantly changing.

- I believe the sector (social and human services) would benefit from a broad scale campaign that has as its aim ‘Improving Social Outcomes through Efficient and Effective Interagency Collaboration Communication and Cooperation’. Key issues to be addressed would be education and awareness training - addressing the role and operating process of various key sector stakeholders (government and non-government). However perhaps most important would be the looking at a broad strategic approach to the coordination, communication and cooperation between the government and non-government sector. Perhaps establishing National or State best practice protocols.

3. Robyn McGregor; Digital Marketing Manager

Circus Oz, Melbourne, VIC (One of Australia’s most prominent arts organisations - the Australian Circus)

- Technology and CRM database systems are a big challenge for us with diverse ticketing and event management, collaborations with various venues plus fundraising/merchandise activities. We would love support and be able to hear what other organisations have used and found effective.

4. Carol Mead; Chief Executive Officer

Directions ACT, Woden, Canberra (holistic drug and alcohol support and rehabilitation service for users and their families)

- Pride in premises/office space is important for staff morale and client morale – old decrepit buildings give a very poor message of value to all concerned.

- The grant seeking process needs an overhaul: it needs to be made simpler with allowance for expressions of interest prior to a full application, reportable outcomes against project plan rather than just facts and figures. Small services can’t afford to hire consultants to do applications and reporting for them - they are disadvantaged even though they may have the best relationship with clients and the best expertise.

5. Peter Beaton; Business Development Manager

Intework, Perth, WA (job placement service for people with high support level disabilities)

- For our core business of placing people with disabilities in employment, the funding which is provided by individual job placement does not cover the cost of infrastructure and job readiness preparation work. There is a lack of recognition of the issues and the level of work involved.

- Our constant challenge is Financial management - how do we balance the service levels needed with the cost.

- The competitive field of disability and job placement services, means that organisations in this field often don’t work together to lobby or share knowledge and resources.
6. Donna Selby; Regional Coordinator

Peel Community Development Group, Mandurah, WA (office to work with local community groups on priorities for development)

- Staff in this industry are time poor with limited wages and limited resources. Qualified people are often moving out of the sector. Some people with “big hearts” stay - but then these people are doing excess hours, and they can burn out and leave or they may stay and become unproductive because they are negative about the possibility of change or progress.

7. Heather Lee; Operations Manager

Melaleuca Refugee Centre, Darwin, NT (support and settlement service for refugee survivors of torture and trauma)

- Difficult to manage and plan - retrospective funding for refugee referrals – per head.

- Other grants- medium and small are often onerous from application to reporting. Many are hardly worth it - we had one once that was $1500 and they wanted it to have an audited financial statement costing $1500.

8. Theresa Moore; Executive Officer

Youth Network of Tasmania, Hobart (YNOT is the youth sector peak body for Tasmania)

- Technology is a big challenge: CRM, websites, blogs, resources to fund it, what to use, who to use, guidelines, and a way to find suppliers. We really need support with this because in our role as a peak body it is important that we have a good interface for the sector. We need good quality technology systems to facilitate corporate interest in the sector to support funding and partnership opportunities with them.

- The single biggest issue is competitive tendering. Sometimes it is bringing more organisations into Tasmania instead of building on the existing partnerships. Organisations are competing rather than collaborating. It is easier for larger organisations to gain a large contract which becomes its core and attaching other tenders for smaller, outreach and regional services and programs. This competitive tendering model is at risk of having a few big groups receiving funding and smaller specialist groups being extinguished. A change of social services structure is seeing larger organisations becoming lead agencies and smaller organisations understanding local needs and issues disappearing from our landscape.

9. Jenny Burling; Resident Manager

Glennon House, Toowoomba, QLD (Temporary accommodation for people and their families from regional areas needing medical treatment in Toowoomba)

- We receive funding per head for patients from remote or regional areas accessing medical care at a hospital. With this type of funding it is hard to get capital items such as pillows and bed covers let alone technology.
10. Evelyn O’Loughlin; CEO

Volunteering SA/NT, Adelaide (Peak body for volunteers and volunteer organisations)

- Volunteer managers are often undervalued despite the fact that they are Human Resource managers, often recruiting and managing 100’s of people and balancing their rights with the demands of the organisation.

11. Mimi Wang; Business Services Manager

RSPCA, Adelaide, SA (Organisation for the protection of animals)

- Peer support is ad hoc. Networking is ad hoc. There aren’t really support groups for nonprofits around business matters - HR, business management, finance etc.

- Also there is little senior manager peer support- a network would be great for CEOs and others.

Further information

Connecting Up Australia
Level 8, 108 King William Street
Adelaide, South Australia 5000

ABN 13 903 061 955

Phone: +61 (08) 8212 8555

Karen Gryst; Researcher
Connecting Up Australia
kg@connectingup.org or karengryst@gmail.com

Doug Jacquier; CEO
Connecting Up Australia
dj@connectingup.org

References

Department of Families and Community Services (2005) Giving Australia: Research on Philanthropy in Australia, Canberra


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References

Further information