



Inquiry into the Disclosure Regimes for Charities and not-for-profit organisations

Submission from: Volunteering Wingecarribee Inc (Volwing)

We wish to address clause (b) of the enquiry: models of regulation and legal forms that would improve governance and management of charities and not-for-profit organisations and cater for emerging social enterprises.

Background

Volwing is a not for profit charity operating in the Southern Highlands area of New South Wales - the Wingecarribee Council. We receive some financial support from council, but the majority of our annual \$50k operating budget we raise by our own events.

We were established by Community groups such as Adult Day Care, Food Services, Community Health etc who require volunteers for their operations, but being so busy with their own operations, and stretched with their own funding needed to outsource efforts to attract more volunteers. We were guided in this period by Volunteering Illawarra. Many groups we work for have Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status, as direct providers to the community, or grandfathered, but Volwing as a direct provider to this sector is precluded.

Other similar but not identical groups qualify for HACC (Home and Community Care) funding as they provide a single, direct service to the community, and require volunteers. For example, they may focus on Aged care. We seek to work for the whole community and all community groups.

Our application to the Tax Office for DGR status was declined. Separately we are working with Volunteering Australia and Volunteering NSW to have this impediment to our operations removed.

Our Operations

By our marketing, events, publicity and operations we increase the pool of volunteers available to the community. We conduct appraisals of potential volunteers, and then refer them to a group that is best suited for their planned contribution. We conduct training courses for these volunteers, and their Managers.

Proposal

Volwing requests that this new model of operations be included as an acceptable entity for DGR status, either individually or across the whole not for profit sector.

Benefits of Volunteering to the Community

These are well documented in a number of areas, and are not repeated here for brevity.

Emerging Model.

Many community groups focus on their core skills to improve their effectiveness. The majority of these groups require volunteers to reduce the impact on the public purse. These skills may be in scheduling bus and car drivers, or helpers for needy family support, or in wider community health issues. These skill sets are best retained in the area where the volunteer is most suited.

As our community is ageing, and perhaps community values changing we postulate that in the future there will be a wider need and incentive for groups to focus on a core business of developing the pool of available volunteers, and thus our model of operations will become more wide spread. There is a need to ensure that these individual volunteers, and the Managers of the community groups using volunteers are suitably trained. To obtain scale effectiveness, such training would best be outsourced.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that volunteering peaked at the time of the Sydney Olympics, and more recent surveys appear to not state with clarity the truth of this, but support it. It is clear though that with an ageing, and longer living population the number of senior Australians participating may diminish over time to the detriment to community health and well being.

Volunteering needs to adapt to this challenge, by better marketing, better training, more focussed use of skills, by more flexible volunteering options to attract groups like stay at home parents, and youth, among others. Apart from money, which is always an issue we will need to identify and remove structural impediments to youth volunteering.

The Impact on Fundraising.

Volwing raises funds directly from the community, and if we are extremely successful, and the pool of funds remains unchanged in our small community, then other groups must suffer diminished operations, due to financial restrictions.

A part solution is to allow groups similar to Volwing to access philanthropic funds, this widening the size of the available pool to smaller communities. Tax deductibility is required to achieve this. Groups similar to Volwing having DGR will have a modest impact on Federal Funds, while significantly stimulating volunteering over time. Such a step should have disproportionate benefit to smaller, remote and rural communities, as many philanthropic funds are based in larger population areas.

This submission is signed by the President of our Committee, and our part time Manager and has the approval of our full committee.

G.D. Bowe
President

J. Rose
Manager