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Where not-for-profits go for help



# Our Community Matters



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## It's time for less spending and more giving



BY DENIS MORIARTY, GROUP MANAGING DIRECTOR, OUR COMMUNITY

*It used to be so simple: your neighbourhood was your village, that tiny clear patch in the wilderness where people knew your name, your family, and your worth. Then cities came along, and things got fraught.*

What is a neighbourhood now? And who, now, is our neighbour? Back in the day, Jesus came up with the parable of the good Samaritan, in which the answer is “the person who’s willing to pitch in and help those who need it”. In our time, that’d be the not-for-profit volunteer. ►



Back then, mind, they didn't have advertising to speak of. And what advertising does is to encrust everything you can see, and most of the things you can't, with brand names, prices, and transactionalism until the underlying altruistic impulse becomes overlaid and forgotten.

That's why Christmas is generally so unsatisfying. A cheerful feast with the family has been switched in front of our eyes for a pointless spending competition. We're all with greater or less enthusiasm indulging in paroxysms of generally misdirected spending, peaking with the exchange under the tree of a large number of items which long experience has told us do not make us happy.

Kicking the cash out of Christmas would be quite an exercise, mind you, and we probably need to warm up to it gradually. We could begin by trying harder to see the underlying altruism that's around us all the time, making things happen and pushing against dog-eat-dog everyone-for-themselves I'm-all-right-Jack commercialism. The cash nexus doesn't have to be the baseline assumption.

At **Our Community House**, it's remarkable how fast the users are building neighbourhood spirit – bringing in marmalade for the communal

dining-room, for example, and collecting breadbag ties for recycling, and using the free library. It's sensitised me to the ways our environments build or displace community spirit.

One of our tenants is **Wise Employment**, which finds jobs for people with disability, very successfully. Each month it places more than 750 people with disability into employment. In the lobby, we drink not-for-profit coffee from **The Mission Caters**. Our Community itself, by the way, isn't a not-for-profit – we're a social enterprise, which lets us progress the general good without having to shoehorn our operations into the poorly fitting and archaic formwork of Australian charities law.

One of the reasons why community solidarity is hard to pick out from the background signage is that it's nobody's job to compile a list of community-building organisations. If you want to know who's doing what in your local area, where do you look? Your local government website will have a community directory; that's a start. It's not exhaustive, though, and social enterprises still miss out. In this country, charities employ about one worker in every ten, but if you want to see not-for-profits at work in your community you've still got to keep your eyes open.

Now's a good time to start looking, though, what with Christmas and all. The Australian Retailers Association **says** we'll spend about \$7.6 billion online over peak present season, enough to buy nearly half a Gina Rinehart. Do the people you love really want another jokey pair of socks? Let's face it, the word 'gift', as in 'gift shop', means 'something you wouldn't in a pink fit want to own yourself'.

Wouldn't your friends and family prefer you to spread the load around a little, to make a gift on their behalf to people who have less and aren't quite as overwhelmed by excess?

Not-for-profits are the glue that holds society together. Money actually isn't everything. Sometimes we need to pull back the curtain and find the human feelings it's concealing. Christmas isn't a bad place to start.

***Still set on buying gifts this Christmas? Make it a gift that gives twice. For a range of gift ideas that support not-for-profits and social enterprises – and the people they help – check out the Our Community Christmas Gift Guide on [page 12](#).***

### **Our Community tackles more big issues**

This is an edited version of Denis Moriarty's monthly Australian Community Media column, published in 160 rural and regional newspapers across Australia, including the *Bendigo Advertiser*, the *Illawarra Mercury*, the *Goulburn Post*, the *Cootamundra Herald* and the *Jimboomba Times*. Read more of Denis Moriarty's opinion pieces [here](#). ■

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# More Aussies embracing Giving Tuesday

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BY MATTHEW SCHULZ, JOURNALIST, OUR COMMUNITY

***Thousands of Australians have backed hundreds of good causes across the country for Giving Tuesday, a fast-growing donations movement that's an antidote to end-of-year excess.***

By lunchtime yesterday the hashtag #GivingTuesdayAUS had gone viral as hundreds of participating organisations attracted thousands of donors and dollars to their causes.

Victorian animal sanctuary Edgar's Mission had hoped to raise \$33,000 for its animal rescue farm, but by early afternoon had already raised more than \$40,000.

Kidney Health Australia was also well on the way to exceeding its \$100,000 target.

Experts had **predicted** that the global movement – now in 60 countries – would raise more than \$700 million on the day, December 3, up more than a quarter on the previous year.

That's not including the millions of hours spent on volunteering and advocacy on the day, as the event cemented its place as a push-back against consumer greed.

Australia was among the first to begin the wave of giving that swept the globe under the #GivingTuesday banner, and under #GivingTuesdayAUS here.

The Australian movement built on the massive support Giving Tuesday attracts in the United States from corporate giants, celebrities and donors, the presence here a powerful counter to the online spending sprees fueled by Black Friday, Cyber Monday and Click Frenzy. The event is now the biggest giving movement in the world.

Former World Vision chief Tim Costello, now chair of the Community Council for Australia and a director of Ethical Voice, was among charity leaders supporting the day.

Mr Costello said the growing support for Giving Tuesday reflected people's desire to make a "counter-cultural statement" against pointless spending in the lead-up to Christmas.

"This has been a magnificent response to consumerism and really pointless greed. We all have far too much stuff," Mr Costello said.

Participating in Giving Tuesday was a great way to demonstrate support for a favourite cause, and to honour "loved ones and friends who already have everything," Mr Costello said.

ACNC Commissioner Gary Johns described Giving Tuesday as a "great initiative" and reminded donors to do their due diligence.

"If you're donating to a charity as part of Giving Tuesday, don't let your donation go astray – make sure you use the ACNC Charity Register to do your background checks and be confident that you're supporting a registered charity," he said.

The movement's global chief and co-founder, Asha Curran, said Giving Tuesday had raised billions of dollars since 2012, generated 14 billion social media impressions last year, and was creating "a more generous world".

Those involved in Australia included charities, businesses, neighbourhood houses, councils and every community group under the sun. Among those signed up:

- **1 million women**
- **Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia**
- **Alannah and Madeleine Foundation**
- **Anglicare Victoria**



Charity leader Tim Costello said Australia's response to Giving Tuesday had been "magnificent".

- **Alzheimers Research Foundation**
- **Brisbane Youth Service**
- **Cat Haven WA**
- **Children's Cancer Foundation**
- **Disabled Surfers Association**
- **Girl Guides, NSW, ACT & NT**
- **Good360**
- **Lifeline**
- **Little Things for Tiny Tots**
- **Musica Viva**
- **Positive Aid**
- **Redkite**
- **SecondBite**
- **St Vincent de Paul Society**
- **Toy Libraries Australia**
- **Unicef Australia**

In Brisbane, the **Ballet Theatre of Queensland** campaigned for \$10,000 to pay for tutus for an upcoming performance of Swan Lake; in Melbourne, **Mecwacare** sought funds to bankroll therapeutic baby seal robots for dementia patients; and all over the country, volunteers from **Knitted Knockers Australia**, which produces knitted prosthetic breasts for cancer survivors, got the needles clicking. ►



PARO the therapeutic seal robot can help to improve brain function in dementia patients.

Most of the organisations campaigned with a social media blitz and a callout to supporters on every available channel, using ready-made campaign materials.

Fundraising Institute Australia (FIA) – which represents thousands of professional fundraisers – also gave the campaign a big tick.

FIA CEO Katherine Raskob said part of the attraction of Giving Tuesday was the campaign's ability to tap into the Aussie instinct to help in the lead-up to Christmas, with many smaller charities taking part for the first time.

"I'm delighted that so many FIA members and the broader fundraising sector got behind Giving Tuesday this year; this is something to be applauded. This campaign is about more than raising money.

"It's also about encouraging philanthropy, volunteering, lending one's voice and getting people to think about what's really important at this time of year. It's also a chance to make a statement that a modest gift can be transformative," Ms Raskob said.

Our Community, through its donation platform [GiveNow.com.au](https://www.givewith.com.au), donated resources and staff time to give the movement a kick-along in Australia by coordinating communications, hosting a website and social media, and offering free training and resources to help organisations get involved.

"We want this event to get bigger and bigger. We're powered by a desire to help the country's

600,000 not-for-profits and charities, and to spread support for a fair go for all Australians," Our Community executive officer Kathy Richardson said.

"Every act of generosity counts, so it's been amazing to see the Giving Tuesday movement come to life in Australia. This year hundreds of not-for-profits of all types and sizes have joined their peers across the world in adding Giving Tuesday to their calendar of major events.

"There are not many opportunities in Australia for the entire not-for-profit sector to move in the same direction at once so it's been really inspiring and energising to see that play out.

"We also had some brilliant support from peak bodies, not-for-profit news outlets and other not-for-profit 'influencers'. That's been invaluable in spreading the word and getting so many organisations mobilised.

"We've had a fairly steep learning curve in our first year as Australian co-ordinators but we're thrilled with how it's gone, and our heads are spinning with all we've learned about how to build engagement in the movement.

"We've seen some fantastic creativity that we'll profile to help push next year's event along – I'd encourage people to check out the hashtag #GivingTuesdayAUS to see if it sparks ideas for next year, so you can get started right away."

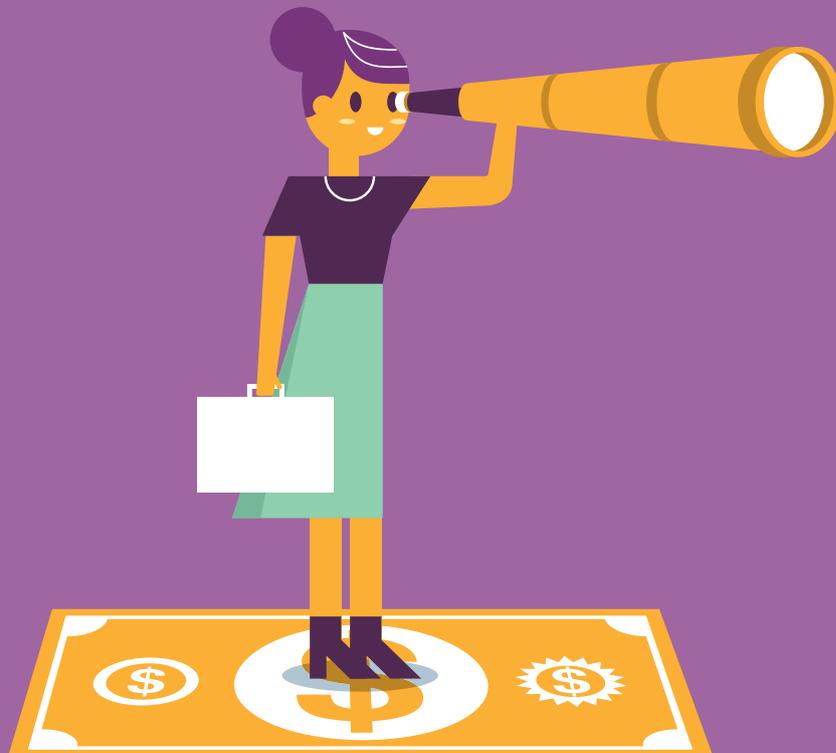
Ms Richardson said ThinkImpact, specialists in measuring social impact, would analyse Australian case studies with a "social impact scorecard" to measure how well the event had percolated through the community, and help organisations plan their 2020.

And at Our Community House, home to Our Community and 40-plus other social purpose organisations, staff supported "A Beautiful Food Experience", which aims to spread joy and provide a shared meal by connecting restaurants, volunteers, and people facing isolation.

To check out how Giving Tuesday activities unfolded, and to find out more, search [#GivingTuesdayAUS](https://www.givingtuesday.org.au) on social media or visit [www.givingtuesday.org.au](https://www.givingtuesday.org.au). ■

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Where not-for-profits go for money

# How a phone app, a “tattooed angel” and community connections saved a life



Cardiac arrest victim Suzi Young and her husband Ross Wyatt. Picture: Matthew Schulz

BY KERRY N BURGESS, EDITOR, OUR COMMUNITY MATTERS

## ***Being active in your local community is rewarding and feels good – but it can also save your life.***

That’s the experience of Melbourne woman Suzi Young, 38, who experienced a sudden cardiac arrest at a community working bee in July this year and was brought back to life by people around her.

“I’d been intending to get to a working bee for the 10 years that I’ve lived in the area, and on this particular Sunday the stars aligned. I was there with my husband and my son who’s six years old, and there were other local volunteers there. It was a really lovely atmosphere.”

Ms Young and the other volunteers were part of Merri Stationeers, a local group committed to

beautifying and maintaining the land along the train line through the inner northern suburb of Northcote, planting it with indigenous shrubs and grasses.

Ms Young had just started working again after enjoying a chat and a cup of tea with some other volunteers when she collapsed.

“I wasn’t doing anything particularly rigorous at the time. I just stopped and dropped dead, basically.”

A cardiac arrest, unlike a heart attack, is triggered by an electrical malfunction in the heart. About 25,000 people have a cardiac arrest out of hospital in Australia each year, and the Heart Foundation estimates that as few as five percent survive to be discharged from hospital.

Ms Young has no memory of what happened next, but her husband, Ross Wyatt, recounts it vividly:

“Paul – another volunteer – and I had only just met and we were shovelling mulch onto a garden bed. We both saw her go down and immediately went to her aid. Paul called 000 while I placed Suzi in recovery position and tried to get a response. Her breathing stopped and I could feel no pulse.”

Fifteen years earlier, Ms Young had been diagnosed with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM), a disease in which the heart muscle becomes abnormally thick. Many people with the disease have no symptoms and lead normal lives. Ms Young had been one of them until that Sunday in July.

But it had already been an atypical weekend for the family. Often, Sunday mornings saw them at home, each preoccupied with chores, tasks and play in separate rooms of the house – a routine that on this Sunday could easily have had deadly consequences. With every minute that passes without CPR and defibrillation following a cardiac arrest, the odds of survival decrease by about 10 per cent. According to Ambulance Victoria, the chances of survival double if someone is defibrillated before paramedics arrive on scene.

“Fortunately, I was in a very public place, where people saw me collapse,” said Ms Young.

When Paul Hosking dialled 000, he didn’t know



“Tattooed angel” – off-duty paramedic Jess Fitzgerald led the effort to save Suzi Young’s life.

that his call would trigger an alert via GoodSAM, a mobile phone app that connects qualified first-aiders to patients in the first critical minutes of cardiac arrest while paramedics are on the way.

Jess Fitzgerald, 29, visiting from New Zealand, was one of those first-aiders whose mobile phone sounded the GoodSAM alarm. She’d just missed a train from Merri station into the city when a siren alarm on her phone alerted her to the medical emergency unfolding only ►



Suzi Young was volunteering with the community group Merri Stationeers when she collapsed near the train station. Picture: Merri Stationeers

100 metres away, but out of sight from where she stood.

Seconds later, she was on the scene, where Mr Hosking and Mr Wyatt had started CPR with guidance from the 000 operator.

Mr Wyatt could hardly believe his ears. “A few minutes into CPR, with no idea how this was going to turn out, I heard the words behind me that I will never forget:

‘I’m a paramedic, can I help?’

“I looked around and there was Jess. I didn’t know where she had come from or why she was there, but obviously I yelled, ‘Yes!’

“Paul and I were so impressed at how she immediately took competent and effective control of the situation – repositioning Suzi and taking over CPR compressions while calmly but assertively giving direction and reassurance to Paul and me. Her work was exemplary, respectful, considerate and, above all, competent.

“Meanwhile, a fire engine equipped with a defibrillator approached the scene, but it got stuck on the wrong side of the railway tracks as the boom gates came down.

“When the fire engine arrived, Jess just yelled, ‘Scissors! Defibrillator! Now!’ She was all over it, as a trained person on the scene knowing exactly what to do.

“A few minutes after that a MICA unit and an ambulance arrived and Jess immediately merged with the team, who allowed her to continue her work.”

Ms Young spent a week recovering in hospital and undergoing tests related to her condition. Surgeons implanted a defibrillator in the side of her chest to restart her heart if she suffered another cardiac arrest.

In October, the implant saved her life when her heart stopped again while she was walking her son to school. This time, she passed out for 20 seconds. She came to after the defibrillator fired, called triple zero herself, and spent one night in hospital.

How does Ms Young make sense of having died twice in three months?



GoodSAM app co-creator Mark Wilson explains the technology to BBC News.

“I can tell you, the universe has my attention,” she told Our Community Matters, referring to the search for meaning.

“I’m just being very reflective, you know. It’s taken me a little while to return to work and I’m still kind of doing that, in a reduced way. So I’ve had lots of time to just be with my family and just hang out. And just being able to witness life. It’s pretty simple. Just making [my son] Alex’s lunch, you know, it’s pretty simple. I don’t ask for much, but I feel very grateful that I can do that.”

She refers to Jess Fitzgerald as her “tattooed angel”, although Ms Fitzgerald doesn’t see herself that way.

“I don’t really feel like I’ve saved someone’s life!” she told Our Community Matters.

“It was the quick actions of Paul and Ross, beginning CPR and calling 000. Without them and GoodSAM partnering with Ambulance Victoria, I would have still been waiting for a train, oblivious to the situation.

“I’ve worked for many years as a lifeguard and duty manager in the community, and as an outdoor education teacher all over the world. Those careers both require me to have CPR and AED training as a minimum.

“I’m simply grateful to be in the right time and place to assist and offer everyone support with what I’m trained to do.”

Mr Wyatt is grateful too, to both Ms Fitzgerald and the GoodSAM app.

“What the GoodSAM app does is find a way to instantly connect people at the right time with the right skills and the right needs. It’s pretty clever like that, and it made a massive difference in our outcome,” Mr Wyatt said.

“There’s a few apps around that if you’re experiencing mental health issues or it could be loneliness or it could be marriage break-up – there’s apps around now that connect you to other people that are going through the same thing, so you can kind of form communities around that. And for me, that’s a much healthier use of apps than seeing what the Kardashians are up to.”

But the app alone doesn’t save lives. Mr Wyatt says community connectedness is crucial when it comes to staying safe and well.

“It does speak of the need for people to be aware and watching out for each other, and the more that we have connection with other people, the more likely you are, when you need help, to get that help.

“When I think about it now, it’s about the increasing trend towards isolation and



Ross Wyatt, Paul Hosking and Jess Fitzgerald received the Community Heroes Award for saving Suzi Young’s life. Watch the video produced by Ambulance Victoria.

connecting only through social media... There’s no substitute for being physically with people to keep yourself safe in so many ways – safe from loneliness, isolation – so that when you really do need help, whether it’s help to put out the bins or help to restart your heart, having people around is really important.” ■

## What Suzi Young wants you to take away from her near-death experience

- Learn CPR, encourage people you know to learn CPR, and don’t be afraid to use it in an emergency.
- Know where your nearest defibrillator is.
- If you have first aid qualifications, download the GoodSAM Responder app today: go to <https://www.goodsamapp.org>.
- Keep your ambulance service membership current.
- Make a will, make an emotional will, and make arrangements for life insurance if you need to.



# The Our Community Christmas gift guide

*This Christmas, give gifts that keep on giving. We've put together a gallery of great gifts that support Australian not-for-profits, charities and social enterprises – and the communities they support in turn. Or show your love directly by making a donation to a group or charity that's close to your heart.*



## Baby romper, \$50, Magpie Goose

Magpie Goose is a fashion social enterprise showcasing textiles designed by Aboriginal artists and screen printed by hand in Australia. "In this design there's Warrarrnkarr (my grandmother's dreaming), turtle (my grandfather's dreaming), Wurtherri – that's jellyfish," says textile designer Nancy McDinny. [\*\*Buy now\*\*](#)



## Beeswax wraps, \$28, SisterWorks

SisterWorks is a Melbourne-based social enterprise with a mission to support women who are refugees, asylum seekers or migrants to improve their confidence, mental wellbeing and sense of belonging. Its beeswax wraps are a natural, sustainable alternative to plastic cling-wrap. [\*\*Buy now\*\*](#)



## Social Blend coffee beans, \$14.50, Streat

You can't go wrong with a gift of coffee. A hospitality social enterprise, Streat has supported more than 1,100 young people from across Victoria since it started in 2010. [\*\*Buy now\*\*](#)



## Youngcake Christmas cake, 350g, \$26.95, Youngcare

Based in Brisbane, Youngcare provides housing and housing support for young people with disabilities who require a high level of care. This is the Christmas cake for people who don't usually like Christmas cake: blonde instead of dark, and sweet without any bitterness. [\*\*Buy now\*\*](#)



## Upcycled notebooks, \$5–8, Green Collect

Green Collect diverts office materials from waste and provides training and employment programs to people who might otherwise have difficulty accessing them. These cool notebooks are created from reclaimed letterhead and suspension files. [\*\*Buy now\*\*](#)



## The Big Issue gift subscription, from \$74.40

The Big Issue magazine provides work opportunities for hundreds of homeless, marginalised and disadvantaged people each year, but most of its vendors are men. Selling magazines on the street is simply not a safe or viable option for many women, including those fleeing domestic violence or caring for children.

The Women's Subscription Enterprise gives women work opportunities that don't rely on selling on the streets. Under this model, there's no pressure on women to make sales and they work in a safe and secure environment. [\*\*Buy now\*\*](#)



## Share the Dignity menstrual cup donation, \$25, Juju

Juju has partnered with the charity Share the Dignity to make Australian-made menstrual cups and pads available to women in refuges. A menstrual cup is the ultimate genuinely useful eco-friendly Christmas gift, so buy one for a friend and buy another one at a discounted price for Share the Dignity at the same time.

[\*\*Buy now\*\*](#)



## Torres Strait Islander doll, \$60, Yarn Strong Sista

Move over, Barbie. Yarn Strong Sista sells dolls that represent the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, as well as super-cute clothes to fit the dolls. [Buy now](#)



## Underwear subscription, from \$45, Buy Undies Give Undies

Get three pairs of men's undies delivered to your letterbox, and support kids overseas who need undies. This Aussie social enterprise sells Chinese-made undies but also partners with international communities who purchase materials and sew underwear for local school kids. This delivers revenue as well as better health. [Buy now](#)



## Cooking with Kindness, \$35, Edgar's Mission

Edgar's Mission is a not-for-profit farm sanctuary that provides a safe haven for over 450 rescued animals. In this cookbook, 50 chefs from around Australia share their favourite vegan recipes. All profits from the sale of the book go to Edgar's Mission.

[Buy now](#)



## Beards of Australia tea towel, \$24.99, KE Design

If the men in your life have beards and dry the dishes, here's your Christmas shopping sorted. KE Design, a family business, employs 14 special needs workers in its factory in the Melbourne suburb of Brunswick.

[Buy now](#)



# Reservoir

BY JODY LETTS

My brain is hardwired to react positively to water. I was introduced to it early in life, almost from my first breaths. My father's career saw him roaming the rural landscape, ensuring townships and farmers had adequate water supplies. Country Victoria offered beautiful landscapes, indigenous plants, rich cultural heritage and endless opportunities for play.

Water has shaped the backdrop of almost every memory I hold dear. Even now, being near water calms and connects me, increases my innovation and insight, can even help heal what's broken.

For our family's three young explorers, the historic Crusoe Reservoir was a treasure trove. From its abundant natural and man-made features, we created endless storylines. Dressed in old flannelette shirts, baggy jeans and wide-brimmed hats, we panned for fool's gold around the reservoir's three-kilometre perimeter, celebrating our success as rich, famous prospectors.

We made fishing poles from sticks, string and unwilling worms we dug up, trying our hand at fishing for mighty Murray cod, yellowbelly or redfin to take home for dinner. We'd recycle those sticks into swagman's poles, wandering around until we found the coolibah tree, where we'd

wait for the jumbuck to come and drink from the billabong.

On the hillside was a mound of excavated chalk rocks that we used to build forts, from which we'd keep watch for tall ships entering the bay. Or we'd create an old-fashioned school, using the thin flat rocks as slate writing tablets.

In the surrounding bush, elaborate costumes and makeup artistry set the scene for Mary, Joseph, baby Jesus and their donkey voyaging across the desert to Jerusalem, lugging a picnic basket packed with drinks and sandwiches.

The concrete filter beds that stored the township's water became the belltowers of the Notre Dame Cathedral. We'd stage many devious spells, manhunts, attacks and captures before Quasimodo freed Esmerelda and re-entered the world, hailed as a hero.

Whenever we found a 'lost' frog, rabbit or bird, we'd collect vegetation and recreate their habitat at home, taking shifts to nurse them back to health. We remained hopeful, despite all the times Mum said: 'You should've left the damn thing where you found it! You're wasting your time, it will die by the morning.' She was always right. ►

Surrounded on all sides by water storage facilities, we'd receive a daily warning from Mum: 'Don't you kids go near that water! You'll get sucked down the pipes and spat out someone's kitchen tap.' We weren't sure how seriously to take this threat, but it lingered in the back of our minds.

Mum would go wild if we came home with holes in our pants, or mud all over the new clothes she'd sewn overnight, ready for Sunday school or ballroom dancing with our grandparents. Even worse if we came home wet: big trouble was an understatement.

Spying a turtle floating in the dark water, entangled in plastic packaging, we'd lean out as far as humanly possible, the others holding our legs, in an effort to rescue the poor creature without getting wet. Who knows how deep the water really was? Testing it out was never an option. Saving the wildlife and returning home bone-dry was our only objective.

We weren't always successful: our white lies about water fights with hoses rarely passed our mother's truth test, and we'd be sent to bed without dinner, just like young Max in *Where the Wild Things Are*. Drifting off to sleep we'd imagine floating across the reservoir in a tiny wooden boat, encountering magical forests, monsters lurking in the trees, and wonderful adventures awaiting us on our own forbidden ocean.

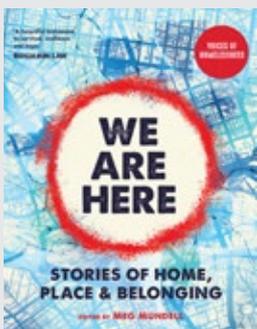
Those memories are almost forty years old. Standing on the reservoir's banks today, the place carries a ghostly feeling of the past – half there, half not. Our old house is gone, and the area has been redeveloped for public use: bushwalking, swimming, fishing.

Places change. But in my heart and mind, the reservoir remains a place of enchantment, mystery and exploration. The home ground of my childhood imagination. A place like nowhere else in the world. ■

## About the author



**Jody Letts** is a former defence force worker who found herself living out of a van in the Melbourne CBD while suffering from work-related injuries, illnesses and mental health issues. Jody is committed to sharing her lived experiences through the Peer Education and Support Program (PESP), run by the Council to Homeless Persons. Working with PESP, she educates the public around homelessness and advocates for positive change. She also contributes to consumer participation with Dental Health Services Victoria and the Department of Veterans Affairs.



## About the book

'Reservoir' by Jody Letts is one of the true stories published in *We Are Here: Stories of Home, Place and Belonging*, out now (Affirm Press, \$29.99). Edited by Meg Mundell, the book showcases the creative talents of people who have known homelessness. All profits from the sale of *We Are Here* will be donated to charities that work with people experiencing homelessness.



# Hot topics, speakers revealed for 2020 Communities in Control conference



The dates, the themes and many of the speakers are set for next year's Communities in Control conference, the one event that all community organisations and leaders should have in their diaries.

Set aside May 18–19 in your calendar right now and book your flights for an event under the banner “Connection, Creativity, Community: Finding Hope in a Climate of Crisis.”

Unlike other conferences you might have been to – conferences that have seen you nodding off or overwhelmed by a truckload of tedious instruction – Communities in Control is all about sparking new ways of thinking and acting. It presents a diverse, talented and entertaining group of speakers and performers who show the way to boost the power of community.

At the same time, it's a chance to rub shoulders with the movers and shakers in your industry.

Among them in 2020 are acclaimed singer-songwriter Katie Noonan, gender equity advocate Georgina Dent, leading expert on the

health effects of climate change Professor Hilary Bambick, problem-solving DJ Tom Nash, who survived a life-threatening illness but lost his arms and legs in the process, and social impact expert Professor Kristy Muir. ►



At Communities in Control 2019, Mariam Veiszadeh spoke passionately about battling discrimination in all its subtle forms.



Clockwise from top left: Professor Hilary Bambick, Georgina Dent, Katie Noonan, Kristy Muir, Tom Nash.

More speakers will be revealed soon, including a household name who will deliver the landmark Joan Kirner Social Justice Oration.

Communities in Control 2020 will look at tackling the biggest issue of our time: climate change. But that's not all. Also featured on the program is a parade of ideas for better lives, powerful advocacy, social justice, tackling inequality in

all its forms, seeking solutions in technology and data science, and reinforcing progressive agendas.

Registrations are now open.

### **More information**

Latest information, past events:  
**[communitiesincontrol.com.au](https://communitiesincontrol.com.au)** ■

2020

# COMMUNITIES IN CONTROL

**Connection, Creativity, Community:  
Finding Hope in a Climate of Crisis**

May 18-19 2020



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**Communities in Control**  
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**ourcommunity.com.au**  
Where not-for-profits go for help



# Why not-for-profits are Australia's sleeping giant

BY MATTHEW SCHULZ, JOURNALIST, OUR COMMUNITY

***Not-for-profits are yet to truly embrace the power they wield, former World Vision chief Tim Costello believes.***

Now chair of the Community Council for Australia and a director of Ethical Voice, an organisation guiding not-for-profit leaders to ethical decisions, Reverend Costello has seen time and again the failure of community organisation to stand up for themselves, and he plans to do something about it.

“Most not-for-profits feel awkward about ‘self pleading’, saying, you know, ‘We need more resources,’” Mr Costello said.

But big corporates have no such qualms, and it’s reflected in their exercise of power.

“The Minerals Council [of Australia] doesn’t feel that. The Business Council of Australia doesn’t feel that. They just have their lobbyists go in and get self-interested outcomes. I think not-for-profits have to flex their muscle a bit, raise their voice, organise, come together.”

He is helping guide the Community Council for Australia’s new mission to create a “charities blueprint”, using his unparalleled connections and persuasiveness to press for improvements to the sector, and to encourage organisations to work together.

Mr Costello believes his latest mission reflects his own goals.



Community Council for Australia chair  
Tim Costello

“I have been in the not-for-profit sector all my working life, and I love this sector. It is so important, so in stepping up it’s to ask: ‘How can this sector actually have a voice, and resources to match the sacrifice and service that it’s offering?’”

“Because we’re in silos, because we’re just focusing on our particular charity’s interests, we don’t speak with one voice.”

And it's for that reason not-for-profits' power is not realised, he said.

"We're not invited to the table by government if it's discussing productivity, if it's discussing the drought, if it's discussing wages. It's about not-for-profits coming together and saying, 'You. Must. Recognise Us. We are the voice of the community.' This is really what this blueprint is about."

Increased recognition for a sector that turns over \$146 billion in essential services and employs 1.3 million Australians is overdue, and at the same time the sector is squeezed by growing needs, shrinking resources, and an expectation it will simply focus on delivering services, he said.

"Most not-for-profits know that they are under enormous stress, that there are so many unmet demands for services: whether it's mental health, whether it's homelessness. In just about every area, the pressure is on not-for-profits just to be 'transactional' and not on building community, not on building relationships, which we know is the answer for people."

The result of this additional pressure on organisations is "they're really seeing corners cut, they're under stress".



WATCH NOW: Tim Costello talks about what every not-for-profit and charity can do to advance the sector.

He said the blueprint will highlight the fact that the whole community is hurting as a result of the unrealistic demands on not-for-profits, and will build "an architecture for flourishing", with the backing of a coalition of not-for-profit leaders.

The benefits of the blueprint would flow to the nation, to help battle the biggest issues facing the country, such as the "epidemics" of anxiety and loneliness, in which nearly 40% of ►



Tim Costello: "Empathy is simply ... saying, 'I can do something about that. I can visit, I can cook a casserole, I can give, I'll reach out.'"



Not-for-profits have to “flex their muscle a bit”, says Tim Costello.

all Australians eat dinner alone each night, with “only a TV or a laptop” for company.

That’s because not-for-profits, as the “glue that holds society together”, are better placed than any other group to address those issues, he said.

“For-profits only exist if they’re making a profit, otherwise they’re out of existence. Government exists for the policy settings, and so we have elections. But most Australians know that the community, and where they live, and who actually cares for them – often in a voluntary way, in a sacrificial way – is what really matters. That’s the glue.”

“Not-for-profits build community, build care, build purpose.”

And underlying that community-building work is a level of empathy found wanting in other sectors. So what does Mr Costello think community groups can do to ensure they cultivate empathy?

“I think empathy is the most important trait of being human. Deny it and we deny our humanity.

“Empathy is simply saying, “What if that was me? What if that was my children?’ It’s imagining yourself in that situation, and then saying, ‘I can

do something about that. I can visit, I can cook a casserole, I can give, I’ll reach out”

But Mr Costello said Australians had varying levels of empathy, depending on the group in need.

“We have empathy when we hear about our farmers in drought. There’s been great empathy, because we know this is the driest continent on Earth. But there are other areas where we struggle, [such as] empathy for the homeless person.

“In some ways, the government has a war on the poor, [suggesting for instance that] people on Newstart ... well, they should be just in job transitioning. Well, try and live on less than \$40 a- day! But they haven’t been provided enough social housing, and that’s why we’ve got homelessness.

“Empathy is leading to advocacy, and then to public policy change. And that is what charities and not-for-profits are on about.”

### More information

**Our Community hosts talks for new charities blueprint** ■

# Meet the tenants at Our Community House



WATCH NOW: Meet some of the organisations that have joined Our Community House recently.

***Everyone’s doing real cool stuff.” That sums up what it’s like to work at Our Community House, according to the founder of Braneshop, Noon van der Silk, one of the newest tenants at the Melbourne social sector co-working space.***

We caught up with Noon – and also with Ruth Dearnley, CEO of **Birth for Humankind** – to find

out what their organisations do and why they decided to join the fold.

Braneshop and Birth for Humankind are among the 40-plus not-for-profits and social enterprises now calling **Our Community House** home.

**Watch the video** to find out more. ■

# HESTA celebrates community sector's unsung heroes



Terese Edwards (left) and an addiction centre run by Heather Pickard (right) took out top honours in the HESTA Community Sector Awards last week, as did Just Reinvest NSW.

***A South Australian woman who advocates for the rights of single mothers, a Victorian organisation that supports people overcoming addiction, and a New South Wales organisation that aims to help reduce the number of Aboriginal people in prisons received top honours at the 2019 HESTA Community Sector Awards held in Canberra last week.***

HESTA CEO Debby Blakey said this year's winners had all shown outstanding leadership in helping people to overcome disadvantage and inequality.

"This year's winners have developed services and programs that rise to the challenge of addressing some of the nation's most pressing social justice issues. Through their dedication and professional excellence, they've supported so many people across the country, helping them to pave a pathway to a better future," said Ms Blakey.

"We're immensely proud to be able to help shine a light on their achievements through the 2019 HESTA Community Sector Awards."

The winners were selected from 11 national finalists, and recognise exceptional service provision, advocacy, and leadership in social justice and community services:

### **Unsung Hero Award: Terese Edwards**

Terese Edwards is CEO of the National Council of Single Mothers and their Children, in Hilton, South Australia.

Ms Edwards was awarded for her work advocating for single mothers, and for connecting them to vital services and a support network of women to help them overcome isolation, hardship, and violence.

“It’s so much more than a job, we run on love and determination,” Ms Edward said.

“My day revolves around women who head up a sole parent family whilst contending with enormous challenges such as financial hardship.

“Social media allows me to reach women from across Australia 24/7. Our Facebook page provides single mothers with an important connection, especially those who are isolated geographically, socially, or financially, as well as those who may be affected by domestic violence.”

Ms Edwards also advocates on issues affecting single mothers to ensure they are represented fairly in government policy review and development.

“For women across Australia, our advocacy is a statement to say we’re hearing you and we’re trying our best. It’s such a privilege to help women who are often in really terrible situations and have them come back and ask how they can pay it forward.”

### **Outstanding Organisation Award: Self Help Addiction Resource Centre (SHARC)**

SHARC, based in Carnegie, Victoria, uses self-help, peer-led approaches to assist people, including families, to recover from addiction.

CEO Heather Pickard said SHARC combined the lived experience of people who had successfully recovered from addiction with other successful self-help treatment approaches to ensure its addiction interventions not only empowered people but were effective.

“Overcoming addiction can be a difficult and long journey for people. Maintaining their recovery and rebuilding their lives is a long-term challenge that requires ongoing support. Our treatment approaches are different because they focus on harnessing the community to support the community,” said Ms Pickard.

“We work closely with individuals, families and the community. By taking this multipronged approach we’ve seen first-hand how significant change across the continuum can be brought about in an area that’s often viewed as an area with limited success”.

Established in 1995, SHARC works with over 8,500 individuals and families across Victoria annually.

“Seeing a real change in people’s lives is one of the most rewarding things that we do,” said Ms Pickard.

“We’d like to use the prize money to further develop our online and digital platforms, enabling us to better reach people in rural and regional areas.”

Just Reinvest NSW was awarded for advocating to reduce the number of young Aboriginal people in prisons by supporting community-led justice reinvestment initiatives and calling for systemic change to the criminal justice system.

“Everything we do at Just Reinvest NSW is about having a social impact. Our work aims to redirect resources away from prisons and towards early intervention, crime prevention and diversion in communities,” said Just Reinvest NSW chair Sarah Hopkins.

Over the past five years, Just Reinvest NSW has ►



Just Reinvest NSW chair Sarah Hopkins with youth ambassador Isaiah Sines (left) and executive member Daniel Daylight (right).

worked alongside Aboriginal leaders in Bourke as part of the community-led initiative known as Maranguka, which means “caring for others” in the Ngemba language.

“Just Reinvest NSW look at ways to use data in community-led collaboration to create better outcomes for Aboriginal children, young people and their families to keep them away from the justice system,” Ms Hopkins said.

“We also address this issue from a policy perspective, by identifying legislative and policy

changes at the state-wide level that can put downward pressure on the Aboriginal prison population.”

Ms Hopkins said Just Reinvest NSW is in the early stages of working with other NSW Aboriginal communities interested in utilising a justice reinvestment framework and is going to use the \$10,000 prize for staff professional development and capacity building.

*HESTA is an Our Community partner.* ■



# New resources for volunteer managers

Peak body Volunteering Australia is establishing a national Volunteering Resource Hub, a centralised repository of resources, tools and templates for volunteer management professionals.

If your organisation has volunteering resources to contribute, Volunteering Australia would love to hear from you. Email them to [projects@volunteeringaustralia.org](mailto:projects@volunteeringaustralia.org), send them via [WeTransfer](#), or upload them to [Dropbox](#).

For more information, [visit the Volunteering Australia website](#).



# Fundraising study highlights global trends

BY MATTHEW SCHULZ, JOURNALIST, OUR COMMUNITY



***A report spanning nine countries shows that trust in Australian charities and fundraisers remains high despite growing levels of annoyance about some of the fundraising tactics being used.***

The 21-page study by UK-based charity consultants nfpSynergy, working alongside Australian consultants More Strategic, is based on surveys conducted in Australia, Canada, Germany, Holland, Ireland, New Zealand, South Korea, the United Kingdom and the United States. The project was assisted by Fundraising Institute Australia, which worked with Our Community to help promote #GivingTuesday yesterday.

The study examined:

- fundraising and volunteering habits
- attitudes to charities generally
- favourite causes
- giving patterns linked to religion, donation size and attitudes.

The study found a wide spread of levels of trust in charities across those countries, with Australians still giving very high ratings, yet trailing behind the United States. The study found Australians felt the most “overwhelmed” by the number of requests for donations, and thought there were “too many” charities.

That finding, though, is tempered by the fact that the vast majority of Australians (74%) still see the role of charities as vital. Australia’s favourite causes in descending order include cancer charities, children and youth, animals, other health causes, homelessness and social welfare, and the environment.

The study provides a useful addition to the work being done by Our Community’s giving arm, GiveNow, which has also produced an extensive examination of giving trends.

## **More information**

**[nfpsynergy.net/free-report/charity-fundraising-around-the-world](https://nfpsynergy.net/free-report/charity-fundraising-around-the-world)**

**[GiveNow analysis: \\$100m study reveals gender differences in giving](#) ■**

# Damn Good Advice for School Councils available now



BY MATTHEW SCHULZ, JOURNALIST, OUR COMMUNITY

***A new book targeting school councils is now available free for download or order from the Institute of Community Directors Australia (ICDA) website.***

*Damn Good Advice for School Councils* tackles “25 questions a school councillor needs to ask”.

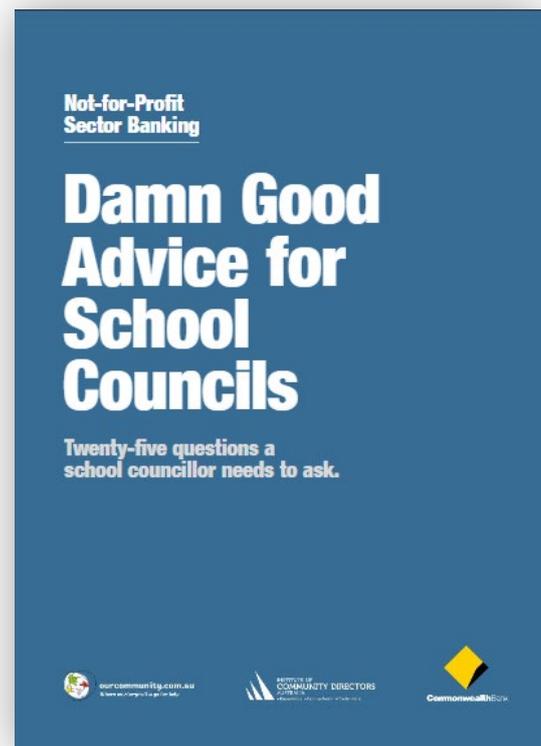
The answers to those questions provide practical advice about the what and how of better school governance and learning partnerships.

The 92-page book links governance with policy, strategic planning, and learning communities, which aim to improve student learning, engagement, development, wellbeing and achievement.

Our Community group managing director Denis Moriarty said the book was part of a significant commitment to improving schools’ governance, a commitment that also comprises training and ongoing support from ICDA.

The project is a joint effort between ICDA and the Commonwealth Bank’s not-for-profit arm.

**Download now: *Damn Good Advice for School Councils* (14MB) ■**





# Thefts, cyberattacks the biggest not-for-profit crime threats

BY MATTHEW SCHULZ, JOURNALIST, OUR COMMUNITY

***Thousands of crimes targeting Australia's not-for-profits are going unreported, ICDA's Spotlight Report: Fraud & Cybercrime reveals.***

The finding stems from a landmark study of the state of not-for-profit governance commissioned by the Institute of Community Directors Australia (ICDA). Nearly 1900 not-for-profit leaders responded to ICDA's national Not-for-profit Governance Survey 2019.

The results are in the final stages of analysis by Our Community's Innovation Lab, which will release its final report on December 11. So far ICDA has released six Spotlight reports, including the one on criminal activity.

*Spotlight Report: Fraud & Cybercrime* shows that one in five organisations suffered a crime of some sort in the year leading up to the survey.

Applying those figures to the estimated 600,000 not-for-profits in Australia – many of them small ►

## Key Findings



Up to **one in five** not-for-profit organisations has **experienced some sort of crime relatively recently** (and some organisations experienced multiple crimes).



**Theft of assets, cyber-hacking, credit card fraud and theft of cash** are the **most commonly reported** crimes.



Around **two-thirds** of the crimes experienced by not-for-profit organisations are **not being reported to the police**.



**Theft of cash and theft of assets** are **more likely to be reported** to the police than other types of crime.

organisations with limited resources – would suggest as many as 114,000 organisations nationally have been affected by fraud or cybercrime.

Yet nearly two-thirds of those crimes are not reported to police, according to survey results, and just one in five is reported to an insurance company.

According to the study, asset theft and cyber-hacking are the most common crimes suffered, followed by credit card fraud and cash thefts.



Your Call CEO Nathan Luker says organisations can't ignore the results of the study.

In about a quarter of asset theft cases, the perpetrator was either a staffer or a volunteer.

Cash thefts were the most likely to be reported to police.

Other serious crimes, such as payroll fraud, bribes, data theft or ransom, and expenses fraud were reported by less than 3% of organisations.

Your Call CEO Nathan Luker said the latest Spotlight study carried significant short- and long-term implications for organisations.

“Numerous risks face any not-for-profit that does not tackle crime and fraud properly. These risks include – and are not limited to – reputational, commercial, funding, cultural, leadership, legal, regulatory, safety and performance.”

“Not reporting crime corrodes an organisation's culture and sets its ethical standards amongst its employees and volunteers. It is how leaders act ‘in the shadows’ which truly matters,” Mr Luker said.

He said with up to one in five not-for-profits experiencing crime, a good whistleblower plan is essential.

“Whistleblowing plays a crucial role to both deter and detect crimes and misconduct. Providing an avenue to report misconduct or illegal activity via a range of reporting pathways – including anonymously and externally – can cultivate a ‘speak up’ culture.”

He said the other side of that coin is a culture in which members of an organisation know that the organisation will not tolerate misconduct.

### More information

- ICDA Spotlight Report: Fraud & Cybercrime: [download here](#)
- Full suite of ICDA Spotlight reports, including final findings and commentary when released on December 11: [download here](#)
- Is your organisation required by law to have a whistleblower policy? [See page 33](#).
- Your Call whistleblowing solutions: [www.yourcall.com.au](http://www.yourcall.com.au)
- Apply to Your Call’s NFP Community Program for pro bono services and pricing concessions: [nfp@yourcall.com.au](mailto:nfp@yourcall.com.au)



Download the full report.

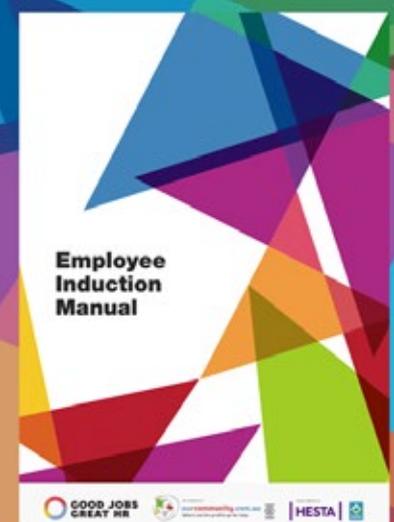
- Whistleblowing resources from the Institute of Community Directors Australia (currently under revision in line with the new ASIC guidance): <https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/icda/tools/?articleId=7517> ■

**yourcall** *Your Call is an Our Community partner.*

## Free Human Resources Help

Download the 70 page induction manual

[www.goodjobs.com.au/job/manual](http://www.goodjobs.com.au/job/manual)



# Digital tech study shows many not-for-profits still lagging

***A survey of technology use by not-for-profits shows mixed results for the sector, with many groups still failing to keep up with the digital revolution.***

According to *Digital Technology in the Not-for-Profit Sector*, which examines trends in Australia and New Zealand, youth services are among the furthest behind.

Key findings include:

- Youth services had the lowest average score across three areas, including: organisational approach, staff capability and overall satisfaction, while employment services ranked the highest.
- 64% of not-for-profits are less than satisfied with the way they use technology, with 54% of staff “not confident” or only “a bit confident” when using new technology.
- Forty-one percent of not-for-profits described their approach to technology as “challenged” or “basic”.
- Not-for-profits spend an average of 6% of their operating budget on technology, on par with small to medium businesses, but disability services spent 50% less than average.
- 43% of not-for-profits are using the cloud now, up from 35% in 2018.
- The vast majority of NFPs (89%) are using social media, led by Facebook.

The report highlights the fact that the nearly 500 organisations in the survey identified staff capability as a big challenge, but 40% weren’t offering any chances to improve those skills.

It is the fourth year of the report, but the first since Infoxchange, Connecting Up and TechSoup New Zealand merged in November 2018.

Infoxchange Group CEO David Spriggs said the report provides a valuable snapshot and a benchmark for organisations.

“It’s vital for our sector to understand where the opportunities are to improve, so we can ensure no one is left behind and we’re all reaping the full benefits that our digital world has to offer,” Mr Spriggs said.

## More information

- Download the report and compare your organisation: [infoxchange.org/au/node/727/](https://infoxchange.org/au/node/727/)
- **ICDA Spotlight report: NFPs missing the data train** ■





Whistleblowing plays a crucial role in managing risk and cultivating an ethical culture in your not-for-profit organisation.

# Changes to whistleblower laws: what not-for-profits need to know

BY SALLY MCDOW, HEAD OF CLIENT ADVISORY, YOUR CALL WHISTLEBLOWING SOLUTIONS

***There's never been a better time for all not-for-profits to review their whistleblower policies and procedures – but if your organisation is incorporated under the Corporations Act, a review is crucial.***

*The Treasury Laws Amendment (Enhancing Whistleblower Protections) Act 2019* took effect on July 1 this year, amending the Corporations Act 2001 so that a single, strengthened

whistleblower regime covers the corporate, financial and credit sectors.

And the Act is about to show its teeth, with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) indicating it will commence compliance audits in January 2020.

Criminal and civil penalties for non-compliance with the Corporations Act include fines of up to \$1 million for individuals and \$525 million for organisations. ►

A new guide published by ASIC last month, *Regulatory Guide 270: Whistleblower Policies*, outlines the changes, which include an exemption from the requirement to have a whistleblower policy for not-for-profits and charities with annual revenue of less than \$1 million.

All incorporated companies remain bound by the whistleblower protection provisions in the Act, regardless of whether they are required to have a whistleblower policy.

The ASIC guide includes best-practice tips covering everything from encouraging whistleblowers to speak up, to focusing on the substance of whistleblower disclosures rather than on the motive of the whistleblower.

If your organisation's whistleblower policy was drafted before November this year, you should review it before January 1 to ensure it takes ASIC's new guidance into account.

### **Actions for not-for-profit directors**

#### **1. Understand the consequences of non-compliance**

Breaches of the whistleblowing protection provisions attract serious penalties. These include fines of up to \$1 million and jail sentences of up to two years for individuals, and fines of up to \$525 million for organisations.

#### **2. Demonstrate active and tangible leadership**

Provide active leadership and support for disclosers in your organisation. Ensure management provides the board with regular reports on the whistleblowing program.

#### **3. Conduct a risk assessment**

Ensure a risk assessment is conducted for your organisation's whistleblower program, and allocate appropriate resources to ensure compliance.

#### **4. Ensure your policy is legally compliant by 1 January 2020, and provide associated training**

By 1 January 2020, you should have in place a whistleblowing policy that is legally compliant and also in line with the guidance issued last month by ASIC. If your organisation is listed on the ASX or is a large private company, you must also

**a)** issue the policy and guidelines to everyone to whom the policy applies, and

**b)** provide training to all staff (ASIC has provided specific guidance on this).

#### **5. Establish key roles and accountabilities**

Establish key roles responsible for protecting or safeguarding disclosers and witnesses from victimisation or detrimental action, and key roles for investigating reports.

#### **6. Establish "eligible recipient" internal reporting pathways**

Designate and train specific staff members as "eligible recipients" for receiving disclosures internally and directly from disclosers.

#### **7. Establish additional reporting pathways for disclosers**

Provide alternative means for disclosers to make disclosures, including a secure and safe means which allows disclosers to remain anonymous if they wish. These should include an external independent channel to receive reports of misconduct.

#### **8. Implement continuous review processes**

Allocate senior personnel responsible for periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the policy and procedures, and updating them accordingly.

#### **9. Understand that breaches of confidentiality will lead to significant penalties and reputational risk**

If a whistleblower makes a disclosure, ensure confidentiality is maintained throughout the process that follows.

#### **10. Ensure timely and effective management of whistleblowing reports**

Ensure that disclosures are managed,

assessed, investigated and progressed and finalised within a reasonable timeframe and in accordance with the policy and new laws, including providing effective and timely communication with the whistleblower.

### Does the new law require your organisation to have a whistleblower policy?

You can use the flow chart below to check whether your organisation is required by law to have a whistleblower policy.

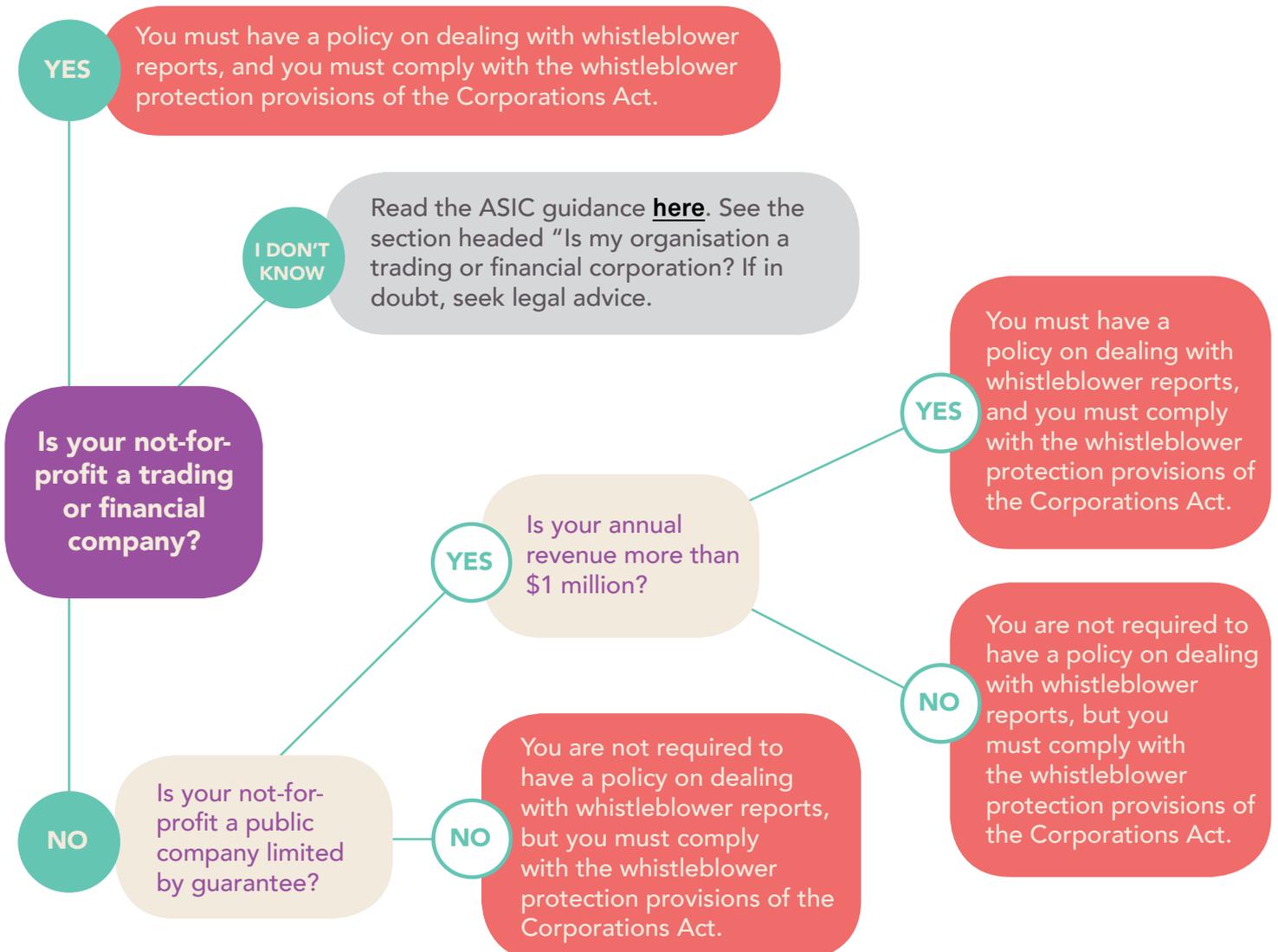
But even if the law doesn't insist on it, why wouldn't you have such a policy?

Thousands of crimes targeting Australia's not-for-profits are going unreported, the ICDA

*Spotlight Report: Fraud & Cybercrime* reveals (see [page 29](#)). According to the study, asset theft and cyberhacking are the most common crimes suffered, followed by credit card fraud and cash thefts. In about a quarter of asset theft cases, the perpetrator was a staffer or a volunteer.

Whistleblowing plays a crucial role in managing risk and cultivating an ethical culture in your not-for-profit organisation. It's an essential and effective tool in your good governance toolkit.

Research conducted in 2014 by BDO Australia found that tip-offs from whistleblowers were more effective in uncovering fraud within a not-for-profit organisation than any other method, including strong internal controls, internal audits and external audits. ►



### More information

- Whistleblower protections for not-for-profit organisations, an ASIC web page: [here](#)
- *Regulatory Guide 270: Whistleblower Policies*, published by ASIC: [download here](#)
- Your Call whistleblowing solutions: [www.yourcall.com.au](http://www.yourcall.com.au)
- Apply to Your Call's NFP Community Program for pro bono services and pricing concessions: [nfp@yourcall.com.au](mailto:nfp@yourcall.com.au)

- Whistleblowing resources from the Institute of Community Directors Australia (currently under revision in line with the new ASIC guidance): <https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/icda/tools/?articleId=7517>
- *ICDA Spotlight Report: Fraud & Cybercrime*: [see page 29](#) ■

*Your Call is an Our Community partner.*

**yourcall**

## Not-for-profit beats big corporates to win top honours at national awards



The homelessness charity Dignity has been named 2019 Telstra Australian Business of the Year, the first time ever the award has gone to a not-for-profit organisation.

Since its inception in 2015, Dignity has assisted more than 70,000 vulnerable people throughout New South Wales, providing shelter, food, clothing, advocacy and education, and empowering people to regain control of their lives.

The organisation also won the 2019 Telstra Australian Social Change Maker Award.

“It takes courage and resilience to build a future-thinking, customer-centric business, and this year’s winners are an outstanding example of this,” said Telstra group executive Michael Ackland.

“Inspired by Dignity’s passion for breaking the homelessness cycle, the judges commended the not-for-profit organisation for its commitment to truly learning from their clients, while building a robust business model that has created systemic social change.

“With a belief that every person should be treated with dignity, the organisation has grown from strength to strength, a credit to its strong business acumen while demonstrating how homelessness can be eradicated through business thinking to provide a viable solution to a real world problem.”

More about Dignity: [www.dignity.org.au](http://www.dignity.org.au)



Picture: University of British Columbia Library via Flickr

# Unsporting bullies take control of croquet club

BY CHRIS BORTHWICK, THINKER IN RESIDENCE, OUR COMMUNITY

Dear Agony Uncle,

We have two very strong and determined people who have taken control of our croquet club – the secretary and the treasurer. Transparency at the club has been wanting, and accountability has been unclear.

I have been voted onto the committee because the club members are concerned about their proprietorship of the club.

There has been bullying of members, and most of them are north of 70 so it's very unpleasant.

I am a professional manager in my 50s and not afraid to stand up but I need some direction.

*A. Mallet, New South Wales*

Dear Ms Mallet,

I have every sympathy with your predicament, but I'm not at all sure that we can help.

If people are behaving badly on a board, there is absolutely no way round it that does not involve some level of face-to-face confrontation. If, as here, the problem is that people don't want to have that confrontation and would rather buckle when faced with it – which is just about the definition of "being bullied" – then it's not going to get fixed.

To rephrase that in constitutional terms, you can do nothing on the board unless you can get a majority of the votes, and if people's votes can be changed by bullying then the bullies seem to have an advantage. ►

One way to limit bullying might be to introduce a bullying policy, such as the one in the Our Community **Policy Bank**, and that might be a first step here. However, the policy can only be adopted if people vote for it, and it can only be enforced if people are then willing to call it out, and both those contingencies depend on the will of the board to resist the bullies. Similarly, you might tighten the rules on transparency and accountability, if you can get the votes. If not, not.

It's conceivable that calling the bullies out at a board meeting might bring the issue to a head, enabling you to set new boundaries, but it's equally conceivable that this might go wrong in a variety of ways, underlining the fact that this just isn't a situation where outsiders can give useful advice.

If you find a person willing to stand up – or if you think you're the right person – then you can use the disputes procedure and go to mediation, but this has the disadvantage that it takes two to mediate. There are no external bodies that will intervene unless the behaviour involved is actually arguably criminal, which is very, very rare. Breaches of the rules have to be sorted out inside the organisation, by votes on the board (see above).



Agony Uncle: Chris Borthwick

I'm sorry to sound pessimistic. As I say, I know how easy it is for governance to be compromised by individuals acting undemocratically. However, it's a burden I can't take off your shoulders.

*Has your organisation got a problem? A dealmaking dilemma or a constitutional conundrum? Found yourself in a personality pickle or a media muddle? Our Community's resident Agony Uncle, Chris Borthwick, is here to help. Email your question to [chrisb@ourcommunity.com.au](mailto:chrisb@ourcommunity.com.au). Some of the details in the letter above have been anonymised. ■*

## Sesame Street turns 50

Oscar the Grouch, Big Bird, Bert and Ernie last month celebrated 50 years of helping kids from low-income families and minority groups to overcome educational disadvantage.

Sesame Street, the much-loved kids' TV show based on "the people in your neighbourhood", was an instant hit with two- to five-year-olds when it first screened in November 1969.

Today, the show created by education professionals and child psychologists reaches a global audience of close to 200 million and is produced in 70 languages including Urdu, Arabic and Mandarin.

**[Read more from ABC News](#)**





# Why art and music matter in the fight for social justice

BY VU LE, NONPROFIT AF, SEATTLE, USA

*Last week, I gave a keynote at the conference held by the Association of California Symphony Orchestras (ACSO), whose staff and board are some of the nicest people ever. And extremely talented, with everyone seeming to play one or more instruments. There was beautiful, moving music everywhere. At one point, I stood in the corner, sipping on a margarita and*

*listening to a duo of mandolin and fiddle players whose virtuoso performances for a few minutes lifted me away from thoughts of the gradual apocalypse our country is going through.*

In my conversations with folks from arts and music organizations these past few years, though, I sense some existential angsts. A colleague asked me, “People are wondering what the role of art and music is when there’s ►

so many more pressing problems. Is there a place for us in the fight for social justice?" This question has made me think, and my answer, which I gave in my talk, is that yes, not only do we need art and music, but right now we need it kind of badly.

When I was eight, my family moved to the US. Like other immigrants and refugees forced to leave their homeland due to war and poverty, we lost the community we knew. Each morning, I watched Care Bear and Thunder Cats, dreading when those two shows ended, because I knew I would have to walk to the bus and be taken to a place where I understood nothing and couldn't say much. I was teased constantly, in large part because I had a terrible haircut. My father is talented at many things, but his haircutting skills were negligible, and he insisted on carrying his rusty jagged-tooth scissors from Vietnam and cut our hair to save money. You know those kids with the bowl haircuts? I envied them. I was an awkward, lonely kid with a bad haircut who hated school.

What first saved me was music. It was the holiday season, and all the kids had to learn songs to perform at the school assembly. Our music teacher was Ms. Adair, and the kids were not very nice to her. They were loud and tossed things and made up their own inappropriate lyrics, and she was always on the verge of exasperation. I was confused how children could behave like this and not get their hands smacked with a long ruler, like I had experienced in Vietnam.

Eventually the class did calm down, and we were able to coalesce into some sort of chorus. With my budding English, I could only understand bits and pieces. I did not understand what a "rain deer" was, or why it had a red nose. And Frosty was terrifying, a monster made of snow that, through some ancient arcane magic, came to life and followed the village children around. Math, reading, science, and everything else were overwhelming and I sucked at them. In our little portable classroom reserved for music, however, I could follow along, I could contribute. I could blend in with other voices and seem like any other kid. Ms. Adair was patient and encouraging, helping me pronounce tricky words

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and pieces. I did not understand  
what a “rain deer” was, or why it  
had a red nose.”***

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like “thumpity.” When I sang with the other kids in front of the school, for the first time since my family left everyone we knew, I felt a sense of belonging. (And this is why, to this day, I still love Christmas songs, as repetitive and annoying as many of them are.)

It would take me a couple more years before my English developed. I did everything I could to keep up, including leaning over and copying from the kids next to me. One time, I was sent home for lice, along with a few other kids. I didn't completely understand why; I sat on the curb, scratching my head and crying while waiting for my parents.

School got slightly easier, especially when a hairstylist friend of my mother's started giving us kids free haircuts. But I still dreaded going. One day, my fifth-grade teacher, Ms. Moss, pulled out a snowflake she had made. It was black. She held it to the light and all these colors came through. She showed us how to fold and cut black construction paper and glue bits of tissue paper to create a stained-glass effect. I became obsessed. I struggled with every subject and I was filled with constant anxiety that I would get called on to answer a question or read a passage out loud. But that day, I could make a beautiful stained-glass snowflake.

Kids gathered around, whispering. I had an intricate, kickass snowflake. Mrs. Moss called her friend, another teacher, Mrs. Barton, over, and they hovered above me, smiling, as I glued little pieces of tissue paper. I could tell they were impressed. All the snowflakes were hung up on the window, where they stayed the rest of the year. I began to look forward to the art



Bondi street art. Picture: Successful 4 via Pixabay.

projects. For so long I had sucked at everything that required English, including gym (I could not understand the rules of various activities, like volleyball). With art, I felt competent and respected and sure of myself. My being good at something changed the way the other kids saw me. Art motivated me to continue to learn, to explore. It gave me confidence. It kept me in school.

I'm telling you these stories because when there is so much going on, so many problems to solve, sometimes we think of art and music as indulgent. Who has time for singing and dancing and stained-glass snowflakes when kids are starving or locked in cages? By thinking this way, we forget about art and music's power to heal, mobilize, build community, and so much more. There are amazing organizations I know, like **Totem Star**, which started working with youth released from detention, and now works with young people from many cities who have few or no other music learning opportunities. I've met many kids and adults who have been transformed by photography or writing or theater. There are countless examples of artists and musicians using their gifts to fight against oppression, to bring hope and joy to those who are most affected by unjust systems.

Art and music are critical in our work for social justice, as frequently they are the only things

that can reach people, that can provide comfort or generate the visceral, raw emotions needed for social change. After the election in 2016, when many families and children were terrified, **Families of Color Seattle** gathered the kids and used art—having the kids draw themselves as superheroes, for example—to help them process their feelings. And this year **protesters in Hong Kong are singing** “Do You Hear the People Sing” from *Les Miserables* as they do a sit-in at the airport.

Yes, there are plenty of things to improve on. Art and music are not always accessible to marginalized communities. Resources are not equitably distributed to artists of color, artists with disability, LGBTQ artists. And in public schools, art and music programs are always the first to get cut, and the schools with the most low-income kids and kids of color are disproportionately affected. Symphonies, orchestras, ballets, and other art forms continue to struggle with diversity and community engagement.

**Vu Le blogs at [Nonprofit AF](#). This article has been reproduced with permission.**

**For opportunities to contribute to the arts and music in Australia, see our special feature on [arts board vacancies: page 42.](#) ■**



# Conduct a search for board talent or audition for a place, free, with the Board Matching Service



*This month, we've put arts boards in the spotlight. Here's a selection of the not-for-profit arts board vacancies currently advertised with the Institute of Community Directors Australia (ICDA) and Good Jobs. To find or advertise a board position, visit [www.goodjobs.com.au](http://www.goodjobs.com.au).*

## **New South Wales**

### **General board members, Music & Opera Singers Trust Ltd, Sydney**

Music & Opera Singers Trust (MOST) is seeking to appoint two directors to its board.

Established in 1982, MOST has a long and rich history creating and managing elite music and opera competitions, awards, and scholarships on national and international levels. We use the crucible of competition to identify only the very best talents so that the prizes and opportunities we offer can have the biggest impact.

Currently under management by MOST are the ABC Young Performers Awards (YPA); the IFAC Handa Australian Singing Competition (ASC); and the Opera Awards (OA). Many of Australia's most recognised opera singers and musicians have come through our competitions, including such luminaries as Nicole Car, Jessica Pratt,

Stuart Skelton, and Simon Tedeschi. Many more have donated their time behind the scenes as adjudicators and advisors.

MOST is a public company limited by guarantee and regulated by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission. As a registered charity with a public fund, the directors of MOST play an active role in fundraising and promoting the organisation to the broader community and to diverse stakeholders.

## **Victoria**

### **General board members, Wangaratta Festival of Jazz & Blues**

We are a volunteer board working on the 30th Wangaratta Festival of Jazz and Blues. 2019 has been a structural and strategic year, and in 2020 we return to hosting our event. We are seeking board members. Please contact us at [businessmanager@wangarattajazz.com](mailto:businessmanager@wangarattajazz.com).

### **Australian Capital Territory** **Chair and general board members,** **Luminescence Chamber Singers**

Luminescence Chamber Singers Inc. is seeking a new chair with a commitment to the arts, vocal and choral music, and music education, as well as expertise in strategic development, planning and implementation. The organisation also seeks regular board members with expertise in fundraising, philanthropy, human resources or governance

Founded in 2015, Luminescence Chamber Singers is a small arts organisation in north Canberra. It comprises a semi-professional vocal consort (Luminescence Chamber Singers) in addition to a high-achieving children's choir and music education program (Luminescence Children's Choir).

Performing repertoire from the Renaissance to the 21st century, Luminescence champions excellence and professionalism in all forms of ensemble singing, and is a leading music organisation in Canberra. It regularly

commissions new works from emerging and established composers, and works alongside many of Australia's leading arts organisations and ensembles.

Interstate candidates will be considered.

### **Northern Territory** **Treasurer, Digi Youth Arts**

Digi Youth Arts is a not-for-profit arts organisation that brokers opportunities for Indigenous young people to tell their stories through their words. It creates change through artistic excellence, advocacy and ensuring young people are at the core of all that it does.

Digi Youth Arts has grown rapidly in the last two years, and is now searching for a new treasurer for our Indigenous-majority-led board. The ideal candidate would be enthusiastic about young people, Indigenous arts and outcomes, mentoring and growth of young people, and ideally with financial oversight and skills to supplement and expand the current board's skill set. ■

## Coming soon: 2020 training opportunities



We're putting the finishing touches on our 2020 training schedule and will be announcing dates for enrolment very shortly.

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