



Blueprint Expert Reference Group

Terms of Reference

September 2023

Context

Over recent decades, Australians have become less likely to join community groups, less likely to volunteer, less likely to play organised sport, less likely to attend religious services, and less likely to know their neighbours. This decline in social capital has broad implications for wellbeing, health and social connectedness.

The not-for-profit (NFP) and charities sector builds social connectedness and social capital by bringing Australians together. The crucial role NFPs and charities hold in our communities has been highlighted in recent years, with organisations mobilising monetary donations, supplies, and volunteers to support those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, and the rising cost of living. As we confront these and other challenges, NFP's and charities will continue to play a vital role in strengthening and reconnecting our communities. The NFP's and charities also bring great value to our economy, and comprise around one-tenth of employment, and a significant amount of Gross Domestic Product.

In the 2022-23 October Budget the Government announced the measure *Development of the Not-for-profit (NFP) Sector Development Blueprint (the Blueprint) and doubling philanthropic giving by 2030*. The measure is a two pronged approach to provide a roadmap for Government reforms and sector led initiatives that will provide NFP and charity sector organisations with sustainable solutions and business models through the development of a Blueprint. This will include support to expand services in the coming years.

The Department of Social Services (the department) will work with the Community Services Advisory Group (CSAG) to develop a sector-led Blueprint; the Treasury will deliver the *Review of Philanthropy* through the Productivity Commission ([Budget Measures, Budget Paper No. 2, Treasury Portfolio page 193-194 refers](#)).

The Blueprint is intended to be a visionary document to ensure the NFP and charity sector is 'future ready'. A Blueprint to enable the sector to set its own direction and support Australians in need now and in the future.

Objective

The Blueprint Expert Advisory Group (BERG) will deliver advice to Government including the development of a fully consulted Blueprint charting out a better future for the Australian NFP and charities sector. The Blueprint will be used to develop a suite of sector-led workable and effective options for reform to strengthen social capital and a vibrant sector. A stronger charities sector will contribute to stronger, more cohesive communities and lead to a more inclusive society.

Scope

Recommendations in the Blueprint will focus on the 60,000 charities and not-for profits that are regulated through the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission (ACNC). While the focus is on the regulated NFPs and charities, the recommendations in the Blueprint will have flow on effects for the broader NFP sector, regardless of size.

BERG incorporates expertise and a diverse representation of perspectives to ensure efficient progress on the Blueprint. The direct involvement of the identified sector experts and representatives is expected to provide vital perspectives in developing workable and effective options for reform. In addition, BERG consultations will ensure engagement from the broader NFP and charities sector.

BERG will conduct consultation with the sector to further develop priority areas for reform, publishing an issues paper as the basis for broad public consultation. The BERG Issues Paper will be published on

engage.dss.gov.au, with BERG conducting extensive consultations that are accessible and culturally safe and appropriate on the issues identified in the paper.

The final Sector Development Blueprint to be delivered to Government will be shaped by BERG recommendations around options to increase the sector's effectiveness, including long-term sustainable solutions. BERG will submit the final Blueprint to the Minister for Social Services and to the Treasurer.

Areas of Focus

The BERG will address the following matters in the development of the issues paper:

- Measurement, Outcomes, and Quality of Services, including but not limited to:
 - outcome reporting and data analysis tools; and
 - greater accountability in terms of outcomes.
- Governance, Organisation Structures and Legal Environments, including but not limited to:
 - drivers of organisational legal structures and governance frameworks;
 - actual cost of administrative obligations; and
 - streamlining reporting obligations.
- Leadership and Staff Development, including but not limited to:
 - workforce sustainability and development, including challenges faced by providers in regional and remote Australia;
 - improving disability responsiveness so that staff with disability and diverse needs are valued and supported and that all staff are equipped to engage with people with diverse access needs;
 - recognition of prior experience and learning in times of critical sector skill shortages; and
 - recognition of volunteers in sector workforce capacity.
- Policy, Advocacy, Communications and Engagement, including but not limited to:
 - formalising the role of the sector in policy development;
 - ensuring communications and engagement opportunities are accessible by people with disability and other diverse cohorts, and are culturally safe and appropriate; and
 - funding to include an additional portion to resource research development.
- Philanthropy* and Volunteers, including but not limited to:
 - the National Strategy for Volunteering;
 - Deductible Gift Receipt (DGR) status of organisations; and
 - efficiency of some conditions of innovation seed funding for philanthropy.
- Government Funding, Contracting and Tendering**, including but not limited to:
 - provide opportunities for sector experts to provide input into grant program and funding design;
 - greater flexibility in contracts; and
 - ensuring outcomes demonstrate the impacts of Government funded intervention.
- IT, Communication and Marketing, including but not limited to:
 - improving efficiency and effectiveness of data sets; and
 - equipping the sector to address IT risks, cyber security threats and the accessibility of IT systems for diverse users.
- Impact Investing and Leveraging Assets, including but not limited to:
 - defining sector assets;
 - creating opportunities to leverage off provider networks and assets, including opportunities to take advantage of existing capacity.

There is concurrent policy work being undertaken on Support for Community Sector Organisations including the development of innovative approaches to grant funding, and an inquiry into Philanthropy. The BERG will monitor and address the synergies across these projects.

* The Australian Government has asked the Productivity Commission to undertake an [inquiry](#) to analyse motivations for philanthropic giving in Australia and identify opportunities to grow it further. The terms of reference assign the Commission three broad tasks:

- analyse trends in philanthropic giving in Australia and the drivers of these trends
- identify opportunities for, and obstacles to, increasing philanthropic giving in Australia
- recommend ways to respond to these opportunities and obstacles.

The terms of reference also ask the Commission to examine the effectiveness and fairness of the DGR framework and the ability of donors to assess and compare charities.

**The *Support for Community Sector Organisations* budget measure includes *A Stronger and more Diverse and Independent Community Sector* in which the Community Services Advisory Group will develop a package of recommendations to Government on innovative approaches to grant funding for consideration.

Definitions (Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission)

Not-For-Profit: A not-for-profit is generally an organisation that does not operate for the profit, personal gain or other benefit of particular people (for example, its members, the people who run the organisation, or their friends or relatives).

Charity: [The Charities Act 2013](#) (Cth) clarifies that to be a recognised as a charity, an organisation must be not-for-profit; have only charitable purposes that are for the public benefit; not have a disqualifying purpose; not be an individual, a political party or a government entity.

Membership

BERG membership comprises of selected Community Services Advisory Group (CSAG) Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and experts with broad NFP and charities experience. Each member is required to be representative of the diversity of consumers and relevant stakeholders across the sector. BERG members may invite one observer, to attend meetings online.

Subject matter experts can join the BERG by invitation as the need arises.

BERG membership may change depending on members' availability to participate. In the event that a member of the BERG is unable to carry out their duties, they may appoint a proxy to act on their behalf, delegating any or all of their powers to the proxy member as they see fit.

BERG members

- Toby oConnor, Chief Executive Officer, St Vincent de Paul Society National Council of Australia
- Mark Pearce, Chief Executive Officer, Volunteering Australia
- Matt Gardiner, Chief Executive Officer, 54 reasons
- Catherine Liddle, Chief Executive Officer, SNAICC – National Voice for our Children
- Kasy Chambers, Chief Executive Officer, Anglicare Australia
- Cassandra Goldie AO, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Council of Social Service
- Mary Ann Baquero Geronimo*, Chief Executive Officer, Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia
- Jeff Smith, Chief Executive Officer, Disability Advocacy Network Australia
- Ian Hamm, Chair, First Nations Foundation
- Chris D'Souza**, BERG Chair, Department of Social Services

* was Mohammad Al-Khafaji for period December 2022 to September 2023.

** was Karen Pickering for the period December 2022 to March 2023.

Expert advisors

- Professor Jo Barraket, Director, Centre for Public Value, University of Melbourne
- Professor David Gilchrist, Director, Centre for Public Value, University of Western Australia

BERG members must declare any potential conflicts of interest ahead of each meeting. The Chair is responsible for regularly updating the register of any potential conflicts at each meeting. If potential conflicts of interest are noted, members must actively work to address them.

The BERG term is ongoing for the life of the Blueprint measure from October 2022 to 30 June 2025.

Meetings

During the initial 12-month implementation period, BERG meetings will be held in the first week of each month as best practice. Flexibility will be provided for the timing of meetings depending on outcomes that are needed at particular times. The initial BERG meeting will be attended in person with all other meetings virtual (by videoconference or teleconference).

Agendas and supporting papers will be provided to all BERG members within reasonable time (at least 3 working days) prior to each meeting, with BERG members having the opportunity to provide feedback on meeting agendas before each meeting. Papers and recommendations may be considered out-of-session via email or teleconference, if necessary.

The BERG secretariat will compile a record of outcomes from each meeting and email a copy to members within five working days from meeting being held.

Scheduled meetings will not proceed without a quorum. It will be the responsibility of the Chair to determine, as part of scheduled business before opening a meeting, whether a quorum is present. For the BERG, a quorum will consist of a simple majority of members (at minimum five members or their proxies).

Decisions will be made by consensus. Members must be satisfied with the decision, even if it may not be their first choice. If no consensus is reached, it will be the responsibility of the Chair to arrive at the final decision.

There is no remuneration for participation in this Group. Members will organise and pay for their own travel, accommodation or incidental expenses for meetings, as required.

Confidentiality

The content of the BERG meetings will be confidential, with information shared outside the BERG following the agreement of all BERG members and the express permission of the Chair.

Roles and Responsibilities

BERG members will:

- oversee the timely and effective development of the Blueprint, including making all related decisions, consistent with the commitments expressed within measure
- manage, coordinate and report on the development of the Blueprint, including risk management, across the sector
- assess, monitor and determine proposed inclusions to the Blueprint, in accordance with the principles of the measure to maintain consistency
- facilitate sector collaboration on key policy and operational issues related to the Blueprint development
- consult and test with stakeholders and consumers, as appropriate and relevant.

The department is responsible for providing active and ongoing secretariat support and will offer support to BERG members as the need arises.

Reporting

BERG will develop a high-level communique after each meeting to be shared via CSAG networks and the department's website. In addition, BERG will provide written progress updates to the next scheduled CSAG meeting until the final delivery of the Blueprint to Government.

Deliverables

BERG to deliver:

- An issues paper to map out priority areas for reform; and
- A Sector Development Blueprint as a grounded plan for action to enhance the effectiveness of the sector, to Government. This will include a final report on findings and consultation. ***

*** Timeframes for the NFP Blueprint are currently under revision.