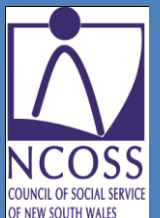




The New South Wales Community Sector Charter

*Endorsed by the Forum of Non Government Agencies
on 7 October 2011*



www.ncoss.org.au/charter

The NSW Community Sector Charter is endorsed by





Note: Logos last updated 16 April 2012

Purpose of the Charter

This Charter has been prepared to define and communicate to other sectors of society (governments, business and the broader community) what the community sector is, and to raise awareness of its vital role and invaluable contribution to society.

The Charter promotes a unified community sector by presenting a shared identity, vision and values. It is intended to empower community organisations across NSW by providing a vehicle for asserting a strong collective voice, and in doing so, increase our influence towards achieving our vision of a fair and just society for all.

The development of this document is an initiative of the Forum of Non Government Agencies (FONGA) which is comprised of state-wide community peaks, regional and state wide organisations, and is convened by the Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS).

The New South Wales Community Sector Charter

The Community Sector

The Community Sector works to promote community and individual well-being.

We

- work for change so that everyone has a fair go
- strengthen communities and individuals to take charge of their own future
- provide practical support so people achieve their full potential

We

- use our resources efficiently and solely for our work and the communities we work with
- are independent of government and commercial interests
- strive to be ethical, accountable and professional

Who we are

The Community Sector is made up of service delivery, community development, social justice and advocacy organisations operating across a range of areas including health, housing, homelessness, employment and education, disability, aged care, services for children, young people and families, Aboriginal affairs, multicultural affairs, and justice.

Our sector is made up of organisations that are diverse in size and scale, ranging from small voluntary groups to large national organisations. Organisations operate in neighbourhoods, local communities, regions or across the whole state. Some focus on areas of specialist service delivery or advocacy while others engage with a broader range of issues.

A Shared Vision for the Community Sector

The NSW Community Sector strives for a fair and just society for everyone.

We do this by:

- supporting communities to build skills and find solutions;
- providing effective and inclusive services; and
- reducing disadvantage in our society through advocacy

Together we will build and promote a Community Sector comprised of organisations that are committed to shared values and is strong and sustainable.

Shared Values for the Community Sector

We value:

1. Human rights
2. Individual and community well-being
3. Diversity
4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination
5. Cooperation and participation
6. Excellence
7. Independence
8. Inclusion
9. A sustainable environment

1. We uphold and advance fundamental human rights.

- All people have the right to freedom, justice and equality.
- We aspire to – and work towards – a fair and just society for all.
- We believe that all people in NSW must have access to decent standards of health, education, housing, safety and economic and social wellbeing.

2. We share a commitment to advancing the well-being of individuals, communities and society as a whole.

- Through direct service delivery, community development and advocacy, we seek to help everyone achieve their full potential.
- We recognise that individual disadvantage affects whole communities and we strive to enable communities to support and sustain people.
- We seek to influence public policy and practice to overcome systemic and other barriers to individuals and communities achieving a fair go.

3. We embrace all forms of diversity.

- We strive to understand – and respond appropriately to – the needs of individuals and communities with whom we work.
- We welcome informed debate and differences of opinion and approach, among people who access our services, stakeholders or organisations within our sector.
- We believe that by considering different perspectives and experiences we are better placed to make good decisions about what we need to do.

4. We stand for self determination and an end to disadvantage for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the traditional owners of the land.

- We seek to redress the inequities between the wellbeing of Aboriginal communities and other communities.
- We work with Aboriginal peoples and organisations to achieve Aboriginal self determination where Aboriginal people are in charge of their own decisions and have ownership of their services.

5. We believe in cooperation.

- We work together with other organisations across our sector and beyond to develop and deliver the best results for people in our communities.
- Working together means we can utilise specialist and different skills to resolve issues and address needs.

6. We value excellence.

- We strive towards excellence in what we do, to deliver high quality services and to continually review and improve.
- We value the commitment, knowledge and skills of workers within our sector. Our volunteers and paid workers are vital to the work we do and enrich our governance.
- People in our sector are characterised by their professionalism, qualifications, expertise and breadth of experience which they use to ensure the best possible outcomes for people and communities.
- We are committed to supporting and developing our sector, our organisations, our volunteers and our paid workers so they can meet the changing needs of communities and the people who access our services.

7. We affirm the importance of our autonomy from government and commercial interests to maintain diverse voices and approaches within a democratic society.

- Our independence from government is one of our strengths. Within this context we strive for mutually beneficial and fair relationships with government.
- We are united by our emphasis on people, rather than profit and play a vital role in supporting and empowering the most vulnerable people and communities.

8. We work towards a society where all people are valued and respected and where each person has a fair standard of living that enables them to participate fully in community life.

- We value the voices of the communities we work with and people who use our services.
- We seek participation from communities, and people who use our services in identifying needs and developing solutions.
- We identify and work to remove barriers that prevent people from participation in decisions affecting them and making the most of their opportunities.

9. We believe that individual and community wellbeing is enhanced and supported by promoting a sustainable environment.

- We work to ensure that our activities and behaviour support the sustainability of our environment for current and future generations.

How the Community Sector makes a difference

The Community Sector has a positive impact on NSW society and plays a vital role in the delivery of important services. The sector's contribution is far reaching and includes:

- promoting a fairer, more tolerant society through advocacy, by raising awareness of disadvantage and injustice and by proposing solutions;
- encouraging participatory democracy by fostering community involvement in our organisations and in broader systems and processes;
- developing strong, cohesive, self-reliant communities by bringing people and groups together;
- building the skills base of the community through development work with volunteers, workers, communities and people who use our services; and
- undertaking work that may not be commercially viable, delivering needed services to people who would otherwise not have access to them.

Our role in service delivery includes:

- applying specialised knowledge and expertise to meet the needs of particular groups within our society;
- working closely and collaboratively with communities and people who access our services to ensure they meet real needs;
- exercising flexibility and innovation in our practices;
- learning from our experiences and adapting our approach to deliver better outcomes;
- providing cost-effective services focusing on public benefit rather than economic returns;
- protecting and embracing diversity, including differences of approach or opinion within our sector.

Strengthening our collective influence on Government and the Community

A strong, united voice allows the Community Sector to effectively advance necessary change to achieve a fairer and more just society.

To achieve this, we will develop:

- mechanisms to prioritise issues of importance and shared positions through cross-sector engagement and robust interaction;
- strategies to gather credible information and evidence to inform our decisions and to support our positions;
- fluid participation and advocacy mechanisms, reflecting the diversity of our organisations and their users, to represent positions relating to smaller subgroups and particular issues;
- peak organisations to represent constituent organisations and build expertise; and
- communication and marketing strategies and tools to help us present our messages effectively.

The NSW Community Sector Charter is endorsed by

1. Aboriginal Child, Family & Community Care State Secretariat
2. ACON
3. Aged & Community Services Association NSW & ACT
4. Aged Care Rights Service
5. Albury Wodonga Community Network Inc
6. Alzheimer's Australia NSW
7. Anglicare Sydney
8. Association Of Children's Welfare Agencies
9. Australian Red Cross
10. Baptist Community Services - NSW & ACT
11. Barnardos Australia
12. Benevolent Society
13. Brain Injury Association NSW Inc
14. Cancer Council NSW
15. Carers NSW Inc
16. Catholic Community Services
17. Catholic Social Services NSW/ACT
18. Central Coast Community Council
19. Centre for Volunteering, The
20. Combined Pensioners & Superannuants Association Of NSW Inc
21. Community Child Care Co-operative Ltd
22. Community Connections Solutions Australia
23. Community Legal Centres NSW
24. Council of Social Service of NSW
25. Disability & Aged Information Service Inc
26. Early Childhood Australia
27. Ethnic Communities Council of NSW Inc
28. Family Planning NSW
29. Homelessness NSW
30. Illawarra Forum Inc
31. Inner South West Community Development Organisation
32. Inner Sydney Regional Council
33. Integricare
34. KU Children's Services
35. Life Without Barriers
36. Local Community Services Association
37. Mental Health Association NSW Inc
38. Mental Health Co-ordinating Council Inc
39. Mid North Coast Regional Council for Social Development
40. Mission Australia – NSW State Office
41. Network Of Alcohol & Other Drug Agencies
42. Northcott Disability Services
43. Northern Rivers Social Development Council
44. Northside Community Forum Inc
45. NSW Association for Youth Health
46. NSW Community Transport Organisation
47. NSW Council For Intellectual Disability
48. NSW Family Services Inc
49. NSW Federation of Housing Associations Inc
50. NSW Meals On Wheels Association Inc
51. NSW Women's Refuge Movement
52. Older Women's Network NSW Inc
53. Physical Disability Council NSW
54. Public Interest Advocacy Centre
55. Quality Management Services
56. Salvation Army, The
57. SDN Children's Services Inc
58. Sector Connect
59. Settlement Services International
60. Shelter NSW
61. St Vincent de Paul Society
62. Tenants' Union Of NSW Co-op Ltd
63. UnitingCare NSW ACT
64. Welfare Rights Centre
65. Wesley Mission
66. Western Sydney Community Forum
67. Women's Health NSW
68. Workers Health Centre
69. Y Foundations
70. Youth Action & Policy Association NSW Inc

Note: List last updated 16 April 2012