



Australian Government Initiative

National Compact



part of the social inclusion agenda

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PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE



The National Compact promotes a better way of working between the Government and the not-for-profit sector. It recognises that there is a role for everyone to play in strengthening our nation and offers us the chance to forge meaningful and collaborative relationships based on greater trust, insight and unity.

We must harness the talent of all our people and move forward together to address challenges facing Australian communities.

There are over 600,000 not-for-profit organisations serving our community. I strongly encourage organisations who have not yet signed up to the Compact to get behind this joint initiative to help give life to the Compact's principles and to help the Compact to reach its enormous and valuable potential.

Together we can achieve great things for our nation's future.

FOREWORD

The Australian Government (the Government) believes a strong, vibrant, independent and innovative not-for-profit sector (the sector) is essential to underpin a productive and inclusive Australia. Our Social Inclusion Agenda also has at its core a commitment to create communities where all Australians can participate, learn, engage and have a voice.

The National Compact: *working together* outlines how the Government and sector organisations will work together in new ways based on partnership and respect. It is the culmination of extensive consultation between the Government and the sector.

The National Compact: *working together* recognises the vital contribution of the sector to Australian communities, especially in supporting the most vulnerable in our society. It is through sector organisations that governments and communities are able to work together to support and strengthen our democracy. Sector organisations contribute to good public policy, enrich our culture, protect our environment and promote health and wellbeing as well as advocate on behalf of Australian communities including marginalised groups.

The National Compact: *working together* reflects the commitment of all parties to find innovative and better ways of working together. This collaborative relationship will allow us to work on the challenges we face, build a stronger not-for-profit sector in Australia and through this, drive innovation, wellbeing and sustainability in our communities.

NATIONAL COMPACT

Context

This Compact has been developed by the Government in consultation with Australia's not-for-profit sector – the broad range of not-for-profit organisations that exist to provide services, advance causes, share enthusiasm, preserve traditions or worship together. The Compact is an agreement setting out how the Government and the sector want to work together to achieve their shared vision.

This Compact is a starting point for a stronger, more productive relationship. As the relationship matures over time, the sector and the Government may need to refine this document to reflect their new ways of working together.

Shared vision

The Australian Government and the not-for-profit sector will work together to improve social, cultural, civic, economic and environmental outcomes, building on the strengths of individuals and communities. This collaboration will contribute to improved community wellbeing and a more inclusive Australian society with better quality of life for all.

Purpose and status

The National Compact represents a commitment by the Australian Government and the not-for-profit sector to genuinely collaborate to achieve this shared vision. The Compact's shared principles provide a foundation for action to improve working relationships, strengthen sector viability and develop and deliver better policy and programs. Compact signatories from the sector agree to work with all Australian Government agencies to achieve these goals.

SHARED PRINCIPLES

The Australian Government and the not-for-profit sector will work together according to these principles to achieve their shared vision:

- We believe a strong independent sector is vital for a fair, inclusive society. We acknowledge and value the immense contribution the sector and its volunteers make to Australian life.
- We aspire to a relationship between the Government and the sector based on mutual respect and trust.
- We agree that authentic consultation, constructive advocacy and genuine collaboration between the sector and the Government will lead to better policies, programs and services for our communities.
- We believe the great diversity within Australia's not-for-profit sector is a significant strength, enabling it to understand and respond to the needs and aspirations of the nation's varied communities, in collaboration with those communities.
- We commit to enduring engagement with marginalised and disadvantaged Australians, in particular, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities.
- We recognise the value of our multicultural society and we will plan, design and deliver culturally responsive services.
- We share a desire to improve life in Australia through cultural, social, humanitarian, environmental and economic activity. To achieve this, we need to plan, learn and improve together, building on existing strengths and making thoughtful decisions using sound evidence.
- We share a drive to respond to the needs and aspirations of communities through effective, pragmatic use of available resources.
- We recognise concerted effort is needed to develop an innovative, appropriately resourced and sustainable sector.
- We acknowledge the need to develop measurable outcomes and invest in accountability mechanisms to demonstrate the effectiveness of our joint endeavours.

SHARED ASPIRATIONS

The National Compact is a starting point towards a stronger, more productive relationship between the Australian Government and the not-for-profit sector.

We will work together to achieve the following goals. We will know that we have achieved the Compact's purpose when we can see real evidence of these aspirations in all our interactions.

Aspirations for our relationship

We all will:

- understand and value the sector's contribution;
- work together respectfully, based on mutual understanding;
- communicate openly with each other;
- support networks and mechanisms that strengthen our ability to work together; and
- develop new skills to work more effectively together.

Aspirations for engagement and consultation

We all will:

- develop and implement codes of engagement together;
- find ways for people who are vulnerable and excluded to have a direct, strong voice in policy and planning processes;
- protect the freedom of not-for-profit sector organisations to contribute to public debate without impact on their funding or status; and
- work in real partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and multicultural community organisations.

Aspirations for achieving better results

We all will:

- improve our focus on achieving outcomes for individuals and communities;
- better coordinate policy, programs and services to improve these outcomes;
- share relevant information and data to help us all plan and evaluate our efforts;
- improve funding and procurement arrangements;
- reduce red tape and streamline reporting;
- implement consistent, simple financial arrangements across government;
- continue to improve management and efficiency of service and program delivery; and
- achieve more transparent, accountable decision making and program delivery.

Aspirations for a more sustainable sector

We all will:

- foster research and innovation;
- work together to strengthen the capacity of the sector;
- collaborate on workforce strategies to improve attraction, retention, development and recognition of paid workers and volunteers in the sector; and
- investigate and support opportunities for diverse funding sources and partnerships.

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

Many respondents in the consultation process highlighted the need for the National Compact to deliver measurable change which led to the identification of the following priority action areas:

1. Document and promote the value and contribution of the sector.
2. Protect the sector's right to advocacy irrespective of any funding relationship that might exist.
3. Recognise sector diversity in consultation processes and sector development initiatives.
4. Improve information sharing including greater access to publicly funded research and data.
5. Reduce red tape and streamline reporting.
6. Simplify and improve consistency of financial arrangements including across state and federal jurisdictions.
7. Act to improve paid and unpaid workforce issues.
8. Improve funding and procurement processes.