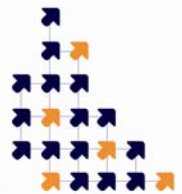


Queensland Community Services Sector Charter

August 2007

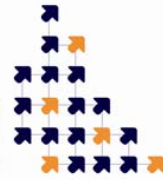
Futures Forum

Queensland Community Services Futures Forum



Futures Forum

Queensland Community Services Futures Forum



Australian Red Cross
THE POWER OF HUMANITY



"Protecting children against sexual assault"

Cairns Alliance of Social Services



Churches Community Service Forum



Queensland Community Services Sector Charter

The Charter has been prepared on behalf of the Queensland Community Services Sector to define and communicate to other sectors of society (Government, business and community) what the community services sector is, and to raise awareness of its vital role and invaluable contribution to society.

The Charter gives rise to a unified community services sector by presenting a shared identity for the sector - outlining a collective vision and shared values. It is intended to empower community service organisations across Queensland by providing a vehicle for asserting a strong collective voice to increase our influence and enable us to achieve our vision of a fair and just society for all.

The Charter has been developed through extensive consultation with the community services sector. The development of this document is an initiative of a collaboration of state-wide community service peaks and networks, and is part of the ongoing Future of the Sector Project. For more information on the process and the organisations involved please see the Appendix.

The Queensland Community Services Sector

The Queensland Community Services Sector incorporates a range of service delivery, community development, social justice, and advocacy organisations operating across a range of areas, including but not limited to: health, housing, employment, disability, aged care, services for children and young people, Indigenous affairs and multicultural affairs.

While the community services sector may include organisations working within these areas, inclusion in the sector is less about the specific service being provided and more about commitment to a shared vision and a set of values. Organisations which are not for profit, community based and agree with the shared vision and central values as laid out in the Charter are considered to be part of the community services sector.

A Shared Vision for the Community Services Sector

The Queensland Community Services Sector will strive for a fair and just society for all.

We will do this by providing effective and inclusive human services, by supporting communities to build skills and find solutions, and by advocating to remedy disadvantage in our society.

Together we will build a community services sector that is strong and sustainable, comprised of organisations that are committed to shared values.

Shared Values for the Community Services Sector

We value:

1. Human rights
2. Individual and community wellbeing
3. Diversity
4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination
5. Cooperation and participation
6. Excellence
7. Independence

Human rights

1. As a sector, we uphold and advance fundamental human rights.

- We maintain that 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 residents of Queensland must have access to decent standards of health, education, housing, safety and economic and social wellbeing.

Individual and community wellbeing

2. Our sector's work is underpinned by a shared commitment to advancing the well-being of individuals, communities and our society as a whole.

- Through our direct service delivery, community development or advocacy work, we seek to help each person achieve his or her full potential.
- We strive to enable communities to support and sustain people.
- We seek to influence change to systemic and societal factors impacting negatively on people within our communities.

Diversity

3. We embrace all forms of diversity, including cultural and linguistic diversity.

- We strive to understand – and respond appropriately – to the needs of our communities and people who access our services.
- We welcome differences of opinion and approach, whether these differences be among people who access our services, our stakeholders or organisations within our sector.

**Aboriginal and
Torres Strait
Islander self
determination**

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

- We proactively seek to redress the inequities between the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and other communities.
- We work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations to achieve justice and improved quality of life.

**Cooperation
and
participation**

5. We believe in cooperation and participation, rather than competition.

- We actively seek participation from communities and people who access our services in identifying needs and developing solutions.
- We value the voices of our communities and people who access our services. We will work to ensure they are heard by our own organisations, by the wider society and by government.
- We work together with other organisations from our sector and beyond, to develop and deliver the best results.

Excellence

6. We value the commitment, knowledge and skills of the paid and unpaid workers within our sector.

- We recognise that volunteers and paid workers enrich our governance and support our operations.
- We are committed to supporting and developing our sector, our organisations, our volunteers and our workers so they can meet the changing needs of our communities and the people who access our services.

Independence

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 greatest strengths. Within this context we strive for mutually beneficial relationships with our government partners.
- We are united by our emphasis on people, not profit. We believe that the community services sector has a vital role in supporting and empowering the most vulnerable people and communities.

Unique Contribution of the Community Services Sector

Through our work, the community services sector has a positive impact on Queensland society and on the delivery of community and human services. The sector's contribution is far-reaching.

Our contribution to the social and economic well-being of society includes:

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

Our contribution to service delivery includes:

- applying our specialised knowledge and expertise to meet the needs of particular groups within our society
- achieving responsiveness by working closely and collaboratively with communities and people who access our services
- exercising flexibility and innovation
- providing cost-effective services based on our focus 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 Community

To more effectively advance a fair and just society, the community services sector needs to increase its influence by developing a stronger, more united voice. We need to be able to present clear positions to government, business and the community on behalf of our sector and the people who access our services.

To achieve this, we will develop:

- mechanisms to prioritise issues of importance and develop shared positions on them 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 sub-groups and particular issues
- supporting peak organisations to represent constituent organisations
- communication and marketing strategies and tools to help us present our messages effectively.

Appendix:

Background to the Community Services Sector Charter

The development of the Community Services Sector Charter is an initiative of the Future of the Sector Project. For more information visit www.futuresforum.org.au.

The purpose of the project is to create a positive future for the community services sector through:

- Creating unified community services sector by developing a shared vision
- Developing a strong collective voice for the sector to increase our influence
- Raising the profile of the sector and raising awareness of its role and contribution to society
- Engendering proactive, cooperative action around key issues of concern.

The Future of the Sector project was initiated in late 2005 by a collaboration of Queensland community service state-wide peaks and networks. The collaboration includes representatives from:

- Centre of Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies, Qld University of Technology
- Combined Churches Community Service Forum
- Community Centres and Family Support Network Association of Qld
- Council on the Ageing Qld
- Ethnic Communities Council Qld
- Health and Community Services Workforce Council
- National Disability Services
- Peakcare Qld
- Qld Aboriginal and Islander Health Council
- Qld Alliance
- Qld Association of Independent Legal Services
- Qld Community Housing Coalition
- Qld Council of Social Service
- Qld Disability Housing Coalition
- Qld Domestic Violence Services Network
- Qld Public Tenant's Association
- Qld Shelter
- Volunteering Qld
- Women's Health Services Network Qld
- Youth Affairs Network of Qld Inc

The content of the Community Services Sector Charter has been developed from consultation with the sector through the following activities:

- Creating a Future for our Sector (Aug – Nov 2006) – A state-wide consultation process tapping into the views of more than 200 organisations.
- Future of the Sector Roundtable (March 2007) – A forum bringing together 60 representatives from 20 community service state wide peak bodies and networks to discuss the consultation findings and agree which information would form the basis of the charter.
- 2007 QCOSS Conference – Poverty, Prosperity & Progress: Ensuring the Inclusion of all Queenslanders (March 2007) – A workshop attended by 20 conference delegates to discuss the first draft of the charter document.

