

## CHAPTER 19: THE ADVANCEMENT OF SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY WELFARE

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‘The advancement of social and community welfare’ is deserving of a separate head of charity. It is one of the most significant areas of charitable activity but is not specifically mentioned in Lord Macnaghten’s four heads of charity. Charitable organisations in the community services field contribute almost a quarter of the gross product of the charitable sector and almost a third of employment by charities.<sup>1</sup> The higher proportion for employment reflects the labour intensive nature of such services.

‘The advancement of social and community welfare’ has been listed third in the proposed list of purposes in order to make it clear that it covers purposes other than those related to ‘the advancement of health’ and ‘the advancement of education’.

The relief of poverty is only one small part of ‘the advancement of social and community welfare’. The proposed head includes purposes that address a range of material, psychological, social and relational needs, and reflects the work undertaken by modern charities. It would encompass a variety of methods that charities may use to achieve their welfare goals, including relief, prevention and intervention. For example, it would include immediate or emergency financial, accommodation or material support as well as information, advice, education and training, assistance with personal and domestic tasks, referral, personal advocacy, legal assistance, counselling, protection and research.

The proposed category also extends to — but is not restricted to — purposes to improve the welfare of persons in a wide range of social circumstances. The category covers modern concepts of promoting social cohesion, social inclusiveness, social diversity, the productive functioning of groups in the broader community and the fostering of community capacity building.

The term ‘community’ has been included in the title to recognise that much welfare is directed not only to improve the welfare of individuals, but to improve the welfare of whole communities. As noted in Chapter 7, increasing

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1 Lyons, M. and Hocking, S. 2000, *Dimensions of Australia’s Third Sector*, Centre for Australian Community Organisations and Management, University of Technology, Sydney, pp 75-77. This estimate excludes the impact of child care as Lyons and Hocking exclude it from the legal definition of charity. If child care were included, community services would contribute over a third of employment by charities.

recognition is being given to the intrinsic public benefit associated with activities that generate social capital at the community level and that help communities take greater responsibility for dealing with their own problems.

Purposes aimed at reducing the disadvantage experienced by Australia's indigenous peoples, and enhancing their general wellbeing, would fall within this proposed head of charity. Similarly, it would include purposes aimed at redressing disadvantage experienced by other groups or people with special needs such as refugees and immigrants.

More specifically, the Committee considers that 'the advancement of social and community welfare' includes, but is not limited to, the following purposes:

- the relief, reduction and prevention of poverty;
- the care, support, development and protection of children (see Chapter 25 on the inclusion of child care as a charitable purpose);
- the care, support, development and protection of youth;
- the care, support and protection of the aged including the provision of residential and non-residential aged care;
- the provision of services to support families;
- the provision of services to people with a disability;
- the provision of assistance and support to people who are disadvantaged in the labour market;
- the provision of assistance and support for indigenous people;
- the provision of housing and accommodation support for people with special needs or who are otherwise disadvantaged in terms of their access to housing;
- the provision of assistance and support for a particular town, city or region;
- the advancement of community capacity building and enhancing the quality of life and social and economic opportunities in disadvantaged communities; and
- the provision of other social and community welfare services, including:
  - care, assistance and support of members or former members of the armed forces and the civil defence forces and their families. The civil

defence forces include police forces, fire brigades, ambulance services, other emergency services and crews of merchant ships or other private vessels and civilian aircraft used in times of emergency;

- assistance and support for refugees and immigrants;
- assistance and support for prisoners and their relatives;
- relief of distress caused by natural disasters or sudden catastrophes; and
- the provision of information, advice or advocacy on social and community welfare policy.

