



Sector Group Report

Kia ora koutou,

On 24 September 2020, Charities Services' Sector Group (SG) met online via Zoom. 14 sector leaders and specialist professionals (listed below) met with staff from the Charities Services Group of the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) to discuss matters of common interest, and to review the operation of the SG.

The purpose of this document is to communicate some of the points of discussion during the SG, and allow members to communicate the discussions to their member organisations.

Update from Charities Services

Natasha Weight, General Manager Charities Services, spoke of the coming year's key priorities for Charities Services. These are:

- The Piki Kōtuku project - upgrading our I.T. platform for the register to ensure it is secure and make some improvements to how our data is presented
- Implementing a new triage process within the Registration Team to reduce the time it takes to register a charity
- Working on operational guidance for Charities Services to ensure our internal policies are up to date and consistent
- Improving our website to make it easier to navigate, and make it more accessible for people with visual impairments.

COVID-19 Response

The Charities Services COVID-19 response is now considered core, everyday work. Natasha acknowledged and thanked the SG members for the incredible contribution the sector has made in the COVID-19 response.

Charities Services' General Manager - parental leave

Natasha let the SG know that she is going on parental leave from mid-October 2020 to mid-April 2021 and that an announcement would be made soon on who the GM will be over this period.

Leaders from each team of Charities Services - investigations, registrations, capability and customer support gave updates on their work.

Charity Registrations

The Registration team noted recent changes to their processes. They introduced a risk-based registration approach, meaning low risk applications can be registered faster and the team can focus on more complex higher risk applications. The wait time for registration has reduced for most charities because of the new approach.

There were questions from the group around the risk criteria for the risk-based registration process. Charities Services noted that our priority risk areas are available in the [Charities Services compliance approach which is on the website](#). There was also a question about the average time for new applications to be processed. Charities Services noted that last year the average approval time for registrations was 12 weeks. This is currently sitting at 8 weeks. Low risk applications are being processed quicker.

Charities Services AGM

The Capability team noted that the Charities Services Annual Meeting will be held on 1 December, and invited all participants to attend.

Website Improvements

[The release of a Te Ao Māori section of the website, Te Puna Atawhaitanga](#), was announced. Feedback on the content of the pages, and any additions that would be useful is encouraged. Please email info@charities.govt.nz with your feedback.

Governance Guidance

The team will also focus on improving the look and feel of the website, and improving its accessibility for users with visual impairments. The Capability team is also planning for the next stage of the governance project. They will be working on the On Board initiative with the Companies Office and Te Tumu Paeroa, making sure that new officers have access to clear guidance on what their obligations are.

Improving Communications

Responding to a question from the SG, Charities Services noted that there will be sector input into any governance guidance for new trustees. In response to a suggestion a SG member made about videos being used to explain governance duties, Charities Services explained they are currently creating a short video on compliance with the reporting standards, and that they plan to make videos on governance in the future. Offers to help from subject matter experts from the sector were noted and appreciated.

The Customer Support team, who deal with all incoming emails, is focussing on ensuring communications they are sending to charities are clearly worded. They will be looking at the Charities Services templates and making sure that advice is framed in a way that charities understand.

Handling Complaints

One of the focus areas of the Investigations team in the upcoming year is their complaints policy which outlines the team's approach when responding to complaints received about registered charities.

Recent Investigations

The Investigations team discussed a recent investigation outcome, highlighting the importance of good governance and reporting in charities. The team noted this case would be discussed in the upcoming Annual Review Report.

Research Strategy

A discussion on Charities Services' research strategy was led by Charities Services.

Charities Services noted that they are focussing on improving the accuracy of information on the Charities Register, improving the access to the information on the Charities Register and promoting research into the charitable sector.

To improve the accuracy of data on the Charities Register, Charities Services is working on improving their forms to give more information on what certain questions mean, undertaking a targeted data validation process for tier 1 and 2 charities, and stabilising platforms to improve data quality.

One member suggested Charities Services support research by distributing surveys. Charities Services noted it was always open to sharing appropriate surveys through its newsletter. It was highlighted they can only share politically neutral surveys, and will try to consolidate and minimise surveying where possible, recognising the burden on the sector from over-surveying.

Other members had some specific research recommendations that will be responded to individually.

Volunteer Data

Charities Services led a discussion on the collection of volunteer data on annual return forms.

There are concerns about the quality of volunteer data collected and Charities Services is looking into how to address these concerns. Charities Services discussed rewording the help text on the annual return form that describes a 'volunteer' as many charities are unclear who should be included as a volunteer. Charities Services noted it will also look into how to best

calculate volunteer numbers and how charities are asked to report these numbers on the annual return form.

A discussion was had about what best describes a 'volunteer'. It was noted that Charities Services could include an example on their forms to show how volunteers could be counted. It was agreed that a broad, accurate, understandable definition of volunteering is needed to improve data accuracy. A number of members usefully indicated they would provide direct feedback to Charities Services.

Charities Services noted that the new annual return forms won't be in place until after 31 March 2020, so there was plenty of time for the sector to provide suggestions for improving these questions on the forms.

SG Sector Only Discussions

Sector Co-Chair Sarah Doherty outlined what the members of the sector discussed during their sector only time. The Charter document and the job description for the co-chair role had both been accepted by the group. It was agreed by the whole group that both documents should be reviewed in one year.

The SG discussed the values in the charter which include: transparency, diversity, inclusion and integrity. The Sector Co-chair will work with Charities Services to finalise these values.

The members of the sector noted that they want the work of the SG to be more visible within the sector. They suggested the work of the SG and the sector members be available on the Charities Services website, along with agendas and meeting summaries from each meeting.

The SG, agreed the new co-chair will be Rochelle Stewart-Allen of Hui E!, Steven Moe of Parry Field Lawyers will continue as Deputy co-chair and Michelle Kitney of Volunteering New Zealand, will support these roles. The co-chair role will be rotated every year.

Charities Services noted their thanks and appreciation to Sarah Doherty for all of her work in the past year to help get the co-chair roles established, and the Charter for the SG clarified and agreed.

Membership Criteria

The group discussed what the membership of SG should look like, in the context of the changes to the charter.

Several members agreed that the group should be more diverse and include Māori, Pasifika, Asian and youth representatives. In response to a question, Charities Services noted its preference that the size of the group remains a maximum of 25 to 30. It was noted that SG should send their ideas of who should be included in SG to the Charities Services Co-Chair. The two co-chairs will compile a list of members based on recommendations and then seek

feedback from the SG. Then Charities Services will make a final decision, and report it to the SG.

Advocacy Decisions

Charities Services provided an update on consideration of two recent decisions around appeals of charities with an advocacy focus (Greenpeace and Family First).

Noting that the Attorney General has decided not to appeal the Greenpeace decision, they reported the Charities Registration Board is in the process of considering what the decision means and how it should be applied. Referring to the statement of the Board, Charities Services highlighted this would mean organisations that advocate for charitable goals, such as protecting the environment or promoting human rights, will more easily qualify for registration.

Charities Services noted they will look at current and past applications that may be impacted by the decision. They have identified approximately 450 organisations that the decision may impact, and Charities Services will discuss with the Charities Registration Board providing information to those groups. This would support the groups to reapply if they decided the change in position applied to them. Charities Services will provide information about the changes in the law relating to advocacy to inform the sector once direction is received from the Board.

The sector members of the SG considered that significant rethinking about advocacy will be required on the part of the Charities Registration Board, and Charities Services, and given their experience with alternative viewpoints, insisted that they should be included in that rethinking. Charities Services confirmed they will convey this request for sector involvement to the Charities Registration Board.

General Business

One member wished to bring to the SG's attention to Marion Blake's resignation from Platform Trust. Marion has been a member of the SG since it began in 2017, and provided vital leadership to the charitable sector - and particularly for the mental health and addiction sector. The SG acknowledged Marion's significant contribution to the sector and the group, and wished her the best for the future.

Sector Group Attendees

Chris Glaudel (Community Housing Aotearoa), Rochelle Stewart-Allen (Hui E! Community Aotearoa), Rachel Jaquiere (Interchurch Bureau), Peter van Hout (Methodist Church of New Zealand), Sue Barker (Sue Barker Charities Law), Valerie Williams (Todd Foundation), Michelle Kitney (Volunteering New Zealand), Sarah Doherty (Co-Chair/New Zealand Navigator Charitable Trust), John Godfrey (Fundraising Institute of New Zealand), Sai Lealea (SDL Consultancy), Marion Blake (Platform Trust), Steven Moe (Parry Field Lawyers), Juliet Chevalier-Watts

(University of Waikato), Dave Henderson (Trust Democracy), Helga Wientjes (Cancer Society of New Zealand).

Apologies: Craig Fisher (RSM Hayes Audit), Dianne Armstrong, Emma Wethey (Philanthropy New Zealand), Brenda Pilot (Social Service Providers Aotearoa), Michelle Berriman (Fundraising Institute of New Zealand), Aaron Davy (Council for International Development), Peter Bain (The Salvation Army).