

PC Research study into the Not for Profit sector

Submission by the Australian Council of National Trusts

The points we wish to make are as follows

1. The need for all governments to better appreciate and measure the contribution of the National Trust movement to the economic and social capital of Australia. The current official statistics do not have a sufficiently developed classification system to allow this to happen
2. A better measurement of the volunteer contribution of the National Trust to the economy
3. The need for the current taxation position of the National Trust movement to be retained and enhanced. Enhancement will allow the Trusts to better carry out their role and achieve their objectives, which in 6 jurisdictions are of a statutory nature. In particular we would mention the desirability of gaining exemption from the FBT to allow us to better compete with industry and commerce in the attraction and retention of resources.
4. The need for regulators (either ASIC or the governments where the NT is a statutory body) to take a more flexible approach to reporting and other legal requirements. The current approach suggests that ASIC has a “one size fits all” approach to the reporting responsibilities it places on those Trusts that are companies.
5. A recognition that the Trusts perform essential tasks for government that are not often recognised in terms of the financial return to the Trusts (eg in the case of property management for government agencies)
6. A better recognition that the Trusts carry a burden in their participation with government in statutory approval processes under, say, heritage and planning law. Whilst consultation with the NFP and community sector in such processes is to be applauded, effective participation in many instances stretches the professional capacity of the Trusts. Government agencies and the public make many demands on Trust resources for advice and information (eg details from heritage registers, access to libraries) It is not generally understood that Trusts are not government agencies and that there is invariably insufficient resources to support these activities.
7. The evaluation of performance is one of the terms of reference. This becomes difficult in times of stretched and pressured resources. Ideally, Trusts should be equipped to have the resources to evaluate how well boards of management are performing, how well qualified the members of the board are, how well do they understand their responsibilities. Similarly, effective staff performance review and evaluation are essential for increased efficiency.

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