

Review of the Contribution of the Not for Profit Sector

The not for profit (NFP) sector contributes in very significant ways to the personal and social well being of people and communities as well as to institutional capacity at local, state, national and international levels. This review of the NFP sector is very timely because of the need to maximise these contributions in light of today's social and economic contexts.

The focus of the submission is upon terms of reference concerned with the measurement of NFP sector's contributions (TOR 1 and 2), and the changing nature of relationships between organisations, and opportunities for enhancing such relationships to optimise outcomes (TOR 5).

The submission addresses:

- The value and contributions of the sector;
- Partnerships for improving access to human resources and organisational capabilities;
- Methodologies for evaluating the contribution of the sector; and
- The advocacy role of not-for-profit organisations.

The submission is based primarily upon the work of the Institute for Advancing Community Engagement, Australian Catholic University, with the NFP sector in the provision of transformative education for people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Value and contributions of the sector

The value and key contributions of the NFP sector are evident in Clemente Australia, one of Australian Catholic University's innovative transformative education programs. Clemente Australia is community embedded socially supported university education (CESSUE) for people and communities who are marginalised or disadvantaged. CESSUE is a transformative education program delivering key personal, social and economic benefits for people through partnerships with communities, and the NFP and corporate sectors.

This *CESSUE* program focuses on the individual person and the humanities subjects such as Literature, Indigenous History, Art, History, Philosophy and Ethics. Clemente Australia is community embedded and socially supported in that it is delivered in a community setting with not for profit agencies, including St Vincent de Paul Society, Mission Australia and The Smith Family, working in partnership with a university, learning partners from the corporate sector, and health agencies. The program provides the education, health and social supports that people, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds, need.

Clemente Australia is offered to small cohorts of students [12-15] who are usually marginalised and disengaged from society. This CESSUE program values and respects people for who they are and for where they are within their individual life journeys. Clemente Australia builds student capacity to be more proactive: to examine, contemplate and question the world around them, and to then engage with it. Clemente Australia focuses on learning and appreciating

one's potential and abilities to engage with others. Students are supported in their transitions into, through and from the program.

CESSUE provides access to higher education in ways which enhance self esteem and self efficacy; increase capacity to see new possibilities; develop communication skills and the capacity to work in a group; to provide a wider network of social and community contacts, networks and supports; and, to provide opportunities for increased interest in learning and different ways of learning, including on-line.

This case study of CESSUE identifies eight key contributions (See Table 1) of the NFP sector. These contributions are:

- quality service delivery;
- personal wellbeing;
- personal, community and institutional capacity building;
- enhancing social capital;
- accountability for quality and cost effective services;
- financial sustainability of services;
- innovation; and
- advocacy.

Table 1 Community embedded, socially supported university education (CESSUE) and key contributions of the not-for-profit sector.

Key contribution	Education	Welfare	Health	Corporate
Quality service delivery	Certificate of Liberal Studies	Structured pathways to re-engagement	Ready portal for community health services	Expression of corporate social responsibility
Personal wellbeing	Increased self efficacy and hope for learning and for the future	Increased capacity of clients for engagement in meaningful activity	Better self management of health & medications	Sense of fulfilment in engagement and learning
Personal, community and institutional capacity building	Capacity to offer community embedded, socially supported university education	Holistic delivery of services through university-community partnership	Provision of pathway to better health eg from depression	Employees engage with people and communities in the complexity of their lives.
Enhancing social capital	Social and community engagement across students, employees, volunteers, learning partners. Increased engagement of students with families, friends and colleagues.			
Accountability for quality and cost effective services	Quality assurance procedures within and across sectors. Research into cost-benefits of program in terms of personal, social, economic, social benefits for individual, community, society and government			
Financial sustainability of services	University carriage of cost of student fees, student administration	Provision of coordination and infrastructure		Contributing through cash and in-kind Philanthropic contributions
Innovation	Model of community embedded, socially supported education Clients are focus of the web of educational, welfare and health services			
Advocacy	Holistic support for students in transitions			Legal services for students

Further evidence of these contributions of the NFP sector in CESSUE are found in Australian Catholic University's and the Institute's work in transformative education locally through the Learning for Life program and internationally through transformative education programs in East Timor, Pakistan, Mauritius, and on the Thai Burma Border.

Partnerships

The bringing together of human resources and organisational capabilities of the partners has been key to the effectiveness of CESSUE programs. This access to quality and enhanced resources and capabilities comes from mutually beneficial, respectful and sustained partnerships. These partnerships are key to enhancing the contributions of the NFP sector.

Australian Catholic University created the Institute for Advancing Community Engagement to facilitate the university's development of mutually beneficial and sustained community engagement based upon transformative partnerships within and beyond sectors.

This focus upon transformative partnerships and engagement requires a substantive shift from the current emphasis within and beyond sectors upon transactional partnerships. In transactional partnerships each party is intent on its own agenda, and coming to the table with its own priorities and worldview. The parties are differently motivated even as they consider cooperative approaches. The essential difference between transactional and transformational partnerships and engagement is that where the former involves individual benefit, the latter provides shared benefit through mutuality.

The University's research on its partnerships locally, nationally and internationally has shown the need for a common vision and purpose across the leadership, relational, and operational aspects of the partnerships that are based on authentic, transformational engagement. The common vision needs to be embedded at all levels of a partnership. Collaborative leadership is crucial to developing shared ownership of vision and purpose. This requires educative, relational, and evaluative strategies that involve all stakeholders. All partners need to be represented in the decision making that occurs across organisations, and need to be aware of their capacity to influence the decision making.

Collaborative leadership is built upon genuine trust among those involved. Strong relationships and the development of trust are priorities in an engaged, transformational partnership. Honesty, reciprocity, and mutual respect are the building blocks that are created through the involvement of people across the partnership and its projects. Partners must be realistic regarding the resources required, including people, time, and money, and need to be committed to individual programs or projects and the partnership as a whole. They must be committed to sustaining a program for its planned duration, and hopefully beyond.

Maximising the value of the NFP sector requires a shift from transactional to transformational partnerships. The effectiveness of CESSUE and other transformative education initiatives was derived from the commitment of the organisations and people involved to pursue authentic engagement. All have

been learners, at all levels, and equally, all have been teachers, sharing perspectives, knowledge, and insights with one another. The readiness to learn and to be transformed was integral to this shift and to the outcomes of the programs.

When the creation of the vision is shared and purposes are aligned, when relationships are nurtured through time-rich communications, and when partners acknowledge the strengths of each other and are open to change, then sustainable, transformational partnerships and initiatives can develop. The outcome is mutual capacity building; the creation of new knowledge; the forging of deep, long-term connections; and the transformation of relationships to ones of genuine engagement. This engagement allows for the provision of new resources and capabilities including new inter-organisational capabilities for enhancing the key contributions of the NFP sector presented above.

Government policies and resourcing need to support the collaborative communication, genuine relationships, professional development and evaluation required for transformational partnerships. Such policies and resourcing will further enhance the contributions of the NFP sector.

Methodologies for evaluating the contribution of the sector

Evaluations and research are both required for identifying, measuring and assessing the contributions of the sector. Evaluations provide evidence regarding the programs or services in terms of:

- Benefits;
- Quality;
- Availability;
- Accessibility;
- Affordability; and
- Appropriateness.

Research using mixed-method research designs are needed to provide the longitudinal and cross-sectional data as well as the quantitative and qualitative data for identifying the:

- immediate, short term and longer term outcomes of programs;
- processes and supports which impact upon these outcomes;
- costs and benefits of the programs including their net social benefits; and
- policy implications of the findings of the research.

Program evaluation and its resourcing are essential elements of program planning and budgeting and need to be included in grant funding. Government has a key role in giving priority to and resourcing research through competitive research funding, such as the Australian Research Council). Such research has often included partner cash or in-kind contributions. Research into transformational partnerships and their benefits needs to be a government research priority. Such a research priority will have a strategic role in changing the NFP sector's competitive inter-organisational culture to a collaborative culture for transformational partnerships and programs.

Advocacy role

The advocacy role of the NFP sector is essential for addressing the structural and social causes of issues which are related to the core business of an organisation. Without such advocacy and subsequent changes to policies and programs the problems just continue.

Research by Australian Catholic University and partner organisations in the NFP sector has informed public advocacy and policy in the areas of:

- refugees and asylum seekers;
- whole of agency programs for refugees;
- community embedded, socially supported education for people from disadvantaged communities;
- NFP and corporate partnership pathways to employment for unemployed people;
- accessible and appropriate services for victims of violence or abuse; and
- community capacity building for transitioning from disadvantage.

Policy makers, including government departments, are able to draw upon such research and advocacy work through public hearings and invitational consultations. An open and collaborative sharing of knowledge and community engagement based research gives policy development and implementation a much needed authenticity.

Recommendations

1. The eight key contributions of the NFP sector identified above be used in mapping and assessing the social and economic value of the sector. These contributions are to be assessed at local, national and international levels.
2. Transformative partnerships be adopted as a strategic means for moving from a competitive to a collaborative inter-organisational capacity building culture in the sector.
3. Government and philanthropic grants be formulated so as to contribute to the development and sustainability of transformational partnerships.
4. Funding for evaluations be included as an essential requirement for program grants and submissions.
5. The development of a national, sophisticated and contextually relevant knowledge base for informing public policy and program options in this area be made a national research priority. Mixed-method research by universities and NFP sector partners become the preferred strategy for addressing this priority. This research is to attend to program outcomes, processes, supports, and costs and benefits including net social benefits.
6. Effective means are to be developed for including the NFP sector and universities, with their research based advocacy, in the consultation, development and implementation of public policies and programs.