

Embargoed to Friday, May 15, 2020

Released Wednesday, May 13, 2020



## Survey Reveals COVID-19 Impact on Community Sector

### Rev. Tim Costello describes COVID-19 challenge as “seismic”

A Generosity Registry is being launched to combat the dramatic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Australia’s 600,000 community organisations. The impact has been revealed by a survey showing the \$146 billion dollar sector battling significant drops in revenue, severely limited capacity to deliver services and, in many cases, a battle for survival.

The national **COVID-19 Community Sector Impact Survey** questioned 366 community and not-for-profit organisations from the volunteer-run to those with turnover in the millions. The survey is part of [#GivingTuesdayNow](#), a global campaign encouraging generosity, volunteering and gratitude, which is overseen in Australia by Our Community.

“There’s no way to sugar coat this – the COVID-19 pandemic is seismic,” says GivingTuesdayNow Ambassador Rev. Tim Costello. “Community groups are the social infrastructure of our economy – they need fast-tracked investment from government, philanthropy and individuals before it’s too late. JobKeeper is a great start but we need to go further.”

Some key findings from the survey:

- Nearly all (85%) respondents have been impacted by social distancing laws with many having to cease all activity.
- Two thirds (67%) have seen a drop in fundraising.
- One third (35%) have reduced staff, with 40% unsure if there will be further reductions.
- More than half (57%) have seen a drop in volunteer activity.
- 39% believe they have not received the support they need from government, philanthropy and peak bodies.
- There is huge uncertainty about the future. 33% believe COVID-19 poses a “significant threat” to their ongoing viability; 53% describe their post-pandemic future as uncertain; and 14% describe their future state as “weaker”.

In response to the crisis, a COVID-19 Giving Register, launching Friday May 15, will enable passionate individuals with the ability to give to find local groups to help by volunteering, donating or by providing other forms of support. Already the register has 100+ groups keen to meet new supporters.

The survey responses reveal some high- speed innovation, with groups that delivered services face-to-face now operating online, groups combining, working from home, sharing resources and re-inventing themselves.

“Community groups have always had to innovate to thrive,” added Rev Costello. “Now it goes to their ability to survive.”

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Interviews with Tim Costello available and community groups nationally including:

- a medical research foundation that had to throw its \$1.2 million fundraising ball online;
- a 130-year-old Sydney charity working with vulnerable children now acting as a food bank;
- a theatre troupe working with Aboriginal communities in Queensland forced to halt business;
- the Neighbourhood Houses that have downed tools and found a master tailor with a science degree to make PPE for medicos;
- a rural retreat and mentoring program for vulnerable boys that’s expecting a post-COVID surge;
- a charity helping low-income families meet technology costs.

**Full survey results including graphics and respondent comments :**

<https://communitydirectors.com.au/research/covid-19-community-sector-impact-survey>

**The Generosity Registry:** <https://www.givenow.com.au/giving-tuesday/>

**#GivingTuesdayNow:** <https://www.givingtuesday.org.au/>

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### **About the Australian not-for-profit sector:**

There are more than 600,000 not-for-profit organisations in Australia, together employing more than 1 million people (almost 10% of the Australian workforce). The 2017 Australian Charities Report found the sector had a total revenue of \$146.1 billion – while recognised for its enormous social contribution, the sector makes a massive economic contribution as well.

The sector covers many activities and services, spanning the areas of health and wellbeing, housing and homelessness, disaster relief, animal welfare, sports, religion, the environment, education and social justice.

### **About Our Community:**

The survey was conducted by Our Community, a social enterprise and highly-rated accredited B Corporation that services the Australian not-for-profit sector, and the organisations that support the sector.

Our Community’s mission is to build stronger communities through stronger community organisations. We work towards that goal by providing advice, connections, training and easy-to-use tech for the people and organisations sharing the same motivation.