

Courtney Henry
Joondanna
WA, 6060

Dear Alex Robson, Julie Abramson & Krystian Seibert,

My name is Courtney Henry - I am a mid-career environmental professional of mixed Eurasian descent, identify as female and am an advocate of Effective Altruism. I have spent many years leading the Perth group of Effective Altruists, and I would like to clarify that we are not all "young males" as your report suggests. Many mid-career professionals and women are involved in the movement.

I previously submitted a response to your call for submissions, advocating for an expansion of Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status, with a focus on preventive issues like animal suffering and catastrophic risks. I am now writing in response to your draft report.

I am pleased that the Commission's draft report aligns with my previous thoughts on expanding DGR status to include a wider range of charities. I am particularly pleased with the proposal to expand DGR status for animal welfare charities. Currently, many charities doing important policy work and advocacy are excluded from DGR status because they do not provide direct care or rehabilitation for animals. This change will level the playing field for animal charities, and allow them to direct more funding towards high-impact activities which are currently underfunded.

The lack of DGR status has disproportionately affected animal welfare policy and advocacy charities, as these organisations receive significantly less government funding than the 50% average cited in the draft report. By extending DGR status to this sector, we can increase the effectiveness of animal welfare charities and improve societal treatment of animals.

I am concerned that powerful organisations may resist these changes. My worry is that they might try to convince the Commission that the report's approach is flawed, or exploit any ambiguities to hinder its implementation.

As animal welfare is one of the top causes supported by Australian donors, I believe that expanding DGR eligibility criteria will not only have a positive impact but also help charities reach new communities. This change will open up new fundraising channels, giving a much-needed boost to charities working hard to make a difference.

In terms of impact evaluation, I believe that the Commission's discussion in response to terms of reference 3.ii could be improved. The terms of reference do not ask for "universal, mandated standardised quantitative measures". Rather, they direct the Commission to consider how proven overseas charity evaluators operate, using opt-in models and cooperating to understand the theory of change.

Research shows that highly impactful interventions can often do 10 or 100 times more than average interventions, while some charitable programs can even do harm. This wide disparity in impact is far greater than in typical markets. I encourage the Commission to consider this when reviewing the impact of charities.

In addressing these issues, I propose several ideas to boost the impact of the net benefit that the sector achieves without undue cost or risk. These include addressing the identified skills gap by providing charities with guidance and toolkits, implementing “optional, opt-in measures that suit participating organisations” instead of “universal, mandated standardised quantitative measures”, and recommending that government offer grants to organisations that can conduct impact assessments of services delivered in Australia.

In conclusion, I applaud the Commission's work on the draft report and support the proposed changes. However, I urge the Commission that the final report fully addresses the issues I have raised and makes the most of this opportunity.

Kind regards,
Courtney Henry