

Dear Productivity Commission,

My name is Benjamin Anderson, I am a Political Science and Economics student at the Australian National University. My professional experiences in the non-profit sector, specifically at the NGO Policy Foundry where I conducted research into a National Risk Assessment, have given me a solid understanding of the importance of granting Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status to disaster risk-focused charities. Currently, I am undertaking further research into disaster risk at the ANU, which only solidifies this belief. Alongside this, I currently spend a lot of my time volunteering for an animal welfare charity that lacks DGR status.

The purpose of my letter is to provide feedback on the Commission's draft report regarding philanthropic giving in Australia. I hope to shed light on the importance of expanding DGR status to a broader range of impactful causes, especially to charities focused on preventive issues such as animal welfare and catastrophic risks.

The draft report was encouraging to see, acknowledging the necessity to extend DGR status to a wider array of charities working on animal welfare and catastrophic risks. However, I am aware that well-funded incumbent organisations with vested interests may resist change. I fear they may attempt to persuade the Commission to revise its approach or exploit any ambiguities in the draft report to impede its practical implementation.

The draft report's recommendation to extend DGR status to charities advocating for policy change is of particular importance. Despite the likelihood of opposition from influential for-profit sectors, it's vital to protect the right of these organisations to voice differing policy perspectives. I urge the Commission to anticipate any potential obstacles to its proposals and include more comprehensive recommendations to address these.

For example, incumbent for-profit organisations may challenge the legal standing of policy advocacy organisations, arguing against their public benefit or asserting that their purpose is contrary to public policy. While I find these arguments unconvincing, well-funded organisations may deploy persuasive tactics to support their case.

In terms of the draft report's recommendation to grant DGR status to advocacy charities, I was pleased to see this suggestion. My own involvement with advocacy charities has deepened my engagement with our democracy, empowering me to understand and contribute to the conversation around global catastrophes and animal welfare. However, I believe that the draft report should clarify that DGR status extends beyond advocacy activities to include supporting work such as policy development and community engagement, which underpin advocacy efforts.

Particularly for animal charities, supporting work may involve providing expert advice on animal welfare, collaborating on global health initiatives, exposing illegal practices, or investigating non-compliance with animal welfare standards. I recommend that the Commission explicitly state in its final report that the proposed DGR status encompasses both advocacy and this type of supporting work.

I am also supportive of the draft report's recommendation to include public interest journalism within the scope of DGR status. The role of public interest journalism in facilitating informed decision-making, promoting accountability, and fostering active participation in democratic processes is vital. Yet, as noted in the draft report, only 40% of registered charitable news organisations currently enjoy DGR status. Therefore, I suggest that the final report incorporate a more detailed

rationale for this expansion, potentially supported by a clear definition of public interest journalism to facilitate the creation of a new charity category.

Finally, I concur with the draft report's conclusion that the current DGR system requires reform. The recommendation to extend DGR status to animal welfare charities, particularly those focused on policy and advocacy work, is especially welcome. This change will significantly enhance the effectiveness and impact of these charities, enabling them to attract more significant donations and grants, and ultimately improving societal treatment of animals.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my feedback. I believe that these suggestions, if incorporated into the final report, could significantly improve the DGR system and create a fairer, more consistent landscape for philanthropic giving in Australia.

Regards,

Benjamin Anderson