

More than Money: How to ensure philanthropy remains a ‘mass participation sport’ by better supporting fitness philanthropy fundraising events

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Firstly, thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this timely review. There is much to be optimistic about when it comes to Australia’s culture of giving. In the Charities Aid Foundation’s *World Giving Index 2022* – determined by the proportion of citizens who recently helped a stranger, donated money, or volunteered time – Australia ranked as the fourth most generous among 119 countries.¹ This is testament to a welcoming, empathetic, and enthusiastic generosity of spirit among Australians.

However, the Commissioners – and likely the vast majority of those penning submissions to this review – would be acutely aware of several broad trends:

- While overall charitable and philanthropic contributions in Australia remain steady, the proportion of taxpayers who donate appears to be declining (from a peak reached in around 2011).²
- Likewise declining is the proportion of Australians who undertake formal volunteering, with more than 80% of volunteer-reliant organisations needing more volunteers (and 10% requiring *drastic* increases in the near future).³ Similarly declining is participation in voluntary associations.⁴ Meanwhile, cost of living pressures has resulted in rapidly increasing demand for relief, placing immense strain on already depleted charities.⁵
- Our volunteer workforce is ageing, and rates of volunteering among young people are not proving sufficient to replace their valuable service. However, this is decidedly *not* due to apathy and waning solidarity among young people. Rather, young people are intensely

¹ Charities Aid Foundation (2022) *CAF World Giving Index 2022*, available at <https://www.cafonline.org/about-us/publications/2022-publications/caf-world-giving-index-2022>

² Mcgregor-Lowndes, M., Balczun, M. & Williamson, A. (2022) An examination of tax-deductible donations made by Australian taxpayers in 2019-20: *ACPNS Working Paper no. 75 Tax-deductible giving*.

³ Volunteering Australia (2023) *National Strategy for Volunteering, 2023-2033*, available at <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/National-Strategy-for-Volunteering-2023-2033.pdf>

⁴ Leigh, A. & Terrell, N. (2020) *Reconnected*, La Trobe University Press

⁵ Davis, J. (2023) ‘Charities struggle to survive rising costs, increasing demand, dwindling resources’, *ABC News*, available at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-04-22/charities-struggle-to-survive-amid-rising-costs-crisis/102222732>

invested in the pursuit of more equitable, just, and sustainable worlds, but are contending with study demands, insecure and unpredictable work, and financial pressures that make formal volunteering difficult, if not impossible.⁶

- Mounting research indicates an accumulating loss of social capital among Australians e.g. fewer friends, less engagement with neighbours, attending fewer local activities, having limited or no reliable sources of informal support during times of need, lower union membership, and declining trust in political institutions.⁷

We will not belabour these observations, as we believe there is widespread consensus on these trends. Of course, there are exceptions that demonstrate potential ways of countering downward trends, but solely relying on exemplary and entrepreneurial figures to ‘innovate’ our way out of these problems is likely wishful thinking. Deeper reforms and long-term planning are needed, hence the extraordinary value of this review, to which we enthusiastically offer our support.

Some widely-supported recommendations offered by many – including Philanthropy Australia – include: extending DGR status to a wider and more accommodative array of organisations and causes; better fostering structured and corporate giving; enabling bequests from superannuation; rejuvenating and incentivising workplace giving; improved support for community foundations (especially in regional areas); and developing a national giving campaign. These are all valuable pursuits, which we strongly endorse, but they may still not get to the crux of why the proportion of Australians who give their time or money is declining, and why Australia lags noticeably behind comparable countries in the proportion of GDP dedicated to charitable and philanthropic causes.⁸ One answer, in short, is that a growing proportion of Australians are financially precarious and time poor, which is likely to exacerbate an already troubling *participation gap* in everyday philanthropic practice.

Dr Andrew Leigh, Assistant Minister for Competition, Charities and Treasury, has urged that ‘philanthropy shouldn’t be an elite activity; it should be a mass participation sport’.⁹ We wholeheartedly agree, though we lament that accompanying appeals to foster a ‘national culture of giving’ come at a difficult time, given that cost of living pressures are squeezing the capacity of many Australians to contribute to causes they support. In contrast, we anticipate that ‘big’ philanthropy – broadly characterised by the extremely wealthy making significant philanthropic contributions – is likely to grow substantially in Australia (in part through initiatives like ‘The Giving Pledge’). Indeed, this already proving the case, with Australia’s 50 highest-giving philanthropists now contributing over \$1b per year, more than double what was given in 2017.¹⁰ This growth in big philanthropy is welcome and praiseworthy in many respects, often driving initiatives – such as exploratory medical

⁶ Deloitte (2022) *Striving for balance, advocating for change - THE DELOITTE GLOBAL 2022 GEN Z & MILLENNIAL SURVEY*, available at

https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/insights/articles/glob175227_global-millennial-and-gen-z-survey/Gen%20Z%20and%20Millennial%20Survey%202022_Final.pdf

⁷ Leigh, A. & Terrell, N. (2020) *Reconnected*, La Trobe University Press

⁸ Philanthropy Australia (2023) *Giving Trends and Opportunities*

⁹ Kutchel, D. (2022) ‘Labor promises to double giving, answering Philanthropy Australia’s call’, *Pro Bon Australia*, available at <https://probonoaustralia.com.au/news/2022/04/labor-promises-to-double-giving-answering-philanthropy-australias-call/>

¹⁰ Murray, L. (2023) ‘Australia’s 50 biggest givers top \$1b in donations for the first time’, *Australian Financial Review*, available at <https://www.afr.com/wealth/people/australia-s-50-biggest-givers-top-1b-in-donations-for-the-first-time-20230321-p5cu3u>

research into complex conditions, or other similarly ‘risky’ ventures – that governments are understandably hesitant to substantially back.

Likewise, ‘big’ philanthropy can deftly avoid accusations of undermining liberal democratic ideals and unjust ‘capture’ of public debates¹¹ by dedicating itself to forms of reparative and empowering pluralism.¹² That is, providing voice and agency to marginalised groups and causes through the provision of substantive resources, while avoiding overly strict conditionality on how such resources are used (or insistence on reciprocal gratitude and esteem for their support).¹³ Though we must be acutely wary not to overstate the case nor excuse its failings, philanthropy has historically played a role in significant markers of social progress, including anti-slavery advocacy, prison reform and de-incarceration efforts, decriminalisation of homosexuality, and suffrage movements.¹⁴ We likewise acknowledge thoughtful arguments that urge caution in adopting overly sceptical attitudes towards large-scale philanthropic giving.¹⁵ Nonetheless, we are concerned about the participation gap that is likely to emerge if (a) ‘big’ philanthropy continues to grow while (b) smaller philanthropic contributions by typical citizens shrink even further.

While competing definitions abound, philanthropy is usually characterised by having an aim for *reform*, rather than simply *relief*. Philanthropy is intended to change, refashion, and reimagine society in some way, rather than simply preserve the existing social order through basic amelioration. This entails that philanthropy is inevitably *political*. Of course, this is not necessarily a bad thing, but it does raise concerns if there is a widening participation gap in who may contribute to philanthropic endeavours. If philanthropy veers too sharply into only accommodating the top-end of town, then we risk forms of donor domination that unduly shape what causes are supported, and which causes languish. The OECD cautions that while governments should continue to support the philanthropic sector, safeguards are needed to ensure wealthy donors do not disproportionately influence allocation of public resources or pursue reform agendas that unduly diverge from the public interest.¹⁶ Similarly, if everyday citizens are not afforded the opportunity to demonstrate their support for worthwhile causes – even simply by being a willing and enthusiastic presence in public gatherings – then we risk further atrophying our waning social capital and exacerbating the current ‘civic crisis’ and ‘collapse in community life’.¹⁷ Supporting mass participation in cause-based events is one way that varieties of philanthropic pluralism can be sustained, even amid times of growing wealth inequality.

Therefore, a running theme throughout this submission is to consider how ‘big’ philanthropy – in partnership with government support – can be used to foster Dr Leigh’s aspiration for a ‘national culture of giving’. We acknowledge some may argue that this pushes upon the bounds of the terms of reference for this review. However, we firmly believe that ‘business-as-usual’ and tinkering with

¹¹ Goss, K. A. (2016). Policy plutocrats: How America’s wealthy seek to influence governance. *Political Science & Politics*, 49(3), 442-448.

¹² Saunders-Hastings, E. (2022). *Private Virtues, Public Vices: Philanthropy and democratic equality*. University of Chicago Press

¹³ Silver, I. (1998). Buying an activist identity: Reproducing class through social movement philanthropy. *Sociological Perspectives*, 41(2), 303-321

¹⁴ Davies, R. (2023) *What is Philanthropy For?*, Bristol University Press

¹⁵ Beth Breeze, *In Defence of Philanthropy*, Columbia University Press

¹⁶ OECD (2020) *Taxation and Philanthropy Policy Brief*, available at <https://www.oecd.org/tax/tax-policy/policy-brief-taxation-and-philanthropy.pdf>

¹⁷ Parke, E. (2022) ‘Federal government inquiry into ‘civic crisis’ amid fall in volunteering indicates ‘collapse in community life’, *ABC News*, available at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-08-16/civic-crisis-community-life-collapse-sparks-volunteering-inquiry/101334760>

existing models will not address the core challenges of fostering genuinely democratic models of philanthropy during strained economic times. Removing unnecessary regulatory barriers is obviously welcome, along with – as the call for submissions noted – further ‘strategies to enhance the status of giving’. However, philanthropy cannot solely be about the redistribution of funds, or pointing to popular esteem and legacy-building as a means to motivate significant contributions from the wealthy. Rather, for philanthropy to grow within an Australian culture generally suspicious towards self-regarding motives, it must be driven by the pursuit of *inclusion*. We need philanthropy that fosters bottom-up participation, making it easier for people who are otherwise cash-strapped and time-poor to express their support for causes they care about (even if that support is simply being a willing and enthusiastic body in a charity walk).

The multi-faceted value (but increasing challenges) of staging mass participation fundraising events

According to the Australian Mass Participation Sporting Events Alliance, prior to COVID-19 there were typically around 21,000 mass participation sporting events across Australia each year, in which 3.4 million participants took part, raising money for over 2,500 charities.¹⁸ Such events range from the scale and spectacle of the Cancer Council’s annual Mother’s Day Classic and Relay for Life – with the latter attracting over 130,000 participants and raising over \$14 million each year – to the gruelling challenge of the Tour de Cure, the more leisurely toil of The Bloody Long Walk, and countless smaller all-ages and all-abilities events organised by local chapters of voluntary associations, such as Rotary and Lions Clubs. Some events – usually those directly organised by charitable organisations – are wholly oriented around fundraising, while other for-profit events enable individual participants to fundraise for a range of causes. This generates some tensions, as for-profit mass participation events risk eroding the potential pool of participants for charity-run events (which may not be able to match the spectacle, scale, and resourcing of for-profit events, due to the need to achieve key fundraising outcomes and avoid perceptions of wasteful expenditure). However, complementary partnerships between for-profit companies and charitable organisations in staging mass participation events are common and worthwhile encouraging as a mode of social enterprise.

In any case, the cumulative effects of COVID-19, floods, bushfires, housing displacement, cost-of-living pressures, and declining volunteer support has resulted in many local communities and organisations (both non- and for-profits) struggling to re-establish once regular mass participation events. Such difficulties have been particularly noticeable in regional and rural communities, adversely impacted by all the above factors to a greater extent than those in metropolitan areas. Many mass participation community events fall under the broad banner of ‘fitness philanthropy’, encouraging sport and leisure activity while also (a) serving a charitable fundraising purpose, (b) fostering community cohesion, and (c) delivering public health benefits.¹⁹

Fun runs and walks, bike rides, long hikes, and other ‘play-for-purpose’ events can support physical activity, charitable fundraising, advocacy efforts, awareness raising, and foster community inclusion and belonging. Of course, such events can also prove inadvertently exclusionary, intimidating, or

¹⁸ Australian Mass Participation Sporting Events Alliance (2023), available at <https://www.ampsea.com.au/>

¹⁹ Palmer, C., Filo, K., & Hookway, N. (2021). Fitness Philanthropy: Exploring a Movement at the Nexus of Leisure, Charity, and Events. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 39(1), 70-77

otherwise unwelcoming. Nonetheless, their ostensible aim is to build collective social capital, improve individual wellbeing, and advance 'active citizenship' in pursuit of an overarching cause. Such events have proven hugely popular, reflecting the changing nature of philanthropic giving and active citizenship, with participants embracing the opportunity to 'play-for-purpose'. Fitness philanthropy also aligns with broader trends in 'embodied philanthropy'²⁰, where participants – with perhaps limited resources for other forms of giving – can render their own bodies as willing 'billboards' in support of causes, whether in light-hearted and humorous forms (e.g. growing a moustache for 'Movember'), or modelling resilience and resolve during times of collective struggle (e.g. Sir Captain Tom Moore's 'Walk for the NHS').²¹

As more Australians have shifted away from formal, organised sport (e.g. team sports in club settings), to informal exercise (e.g. running, cycling, swimming), the importance of mass participation sporting events as a means of sustaining social capital – along with encouraging physical activity and healthy lifestyles – has only grown in importance. Also, their relative accessibility, often low cost to participate, and typical focus on inclusivity means mass participation events can partially alleviate persistent equity issues for children and adolescents in participating in organised sport and physical activities.²² Similarly, volunteer-driven efforts – such as the 462 weekly parkrun' events across Australia – have proven crucial in aiding access to mass participation physical activities, especially for disadvantaged communities, though some inequities remain.²³

However, particularly for more logistically challenging events, an array of compounding factors has rendered some mass participation events unfeasible, while others rely on dwindling volunteer support within already depleted communities. For example, for entirely reasonable and prudent reasons, community events and festivals require first-aid support on site, ready to respond to any emergency situations. Particularly in regional areas, such assistance is often provided by volunteers through St John Ambulance. However, declining volunteer numbers entails that some events may not be able to continue.²⁴ Stories abound of such challenges, felt across an array of community events.²⁵ As Mass Participation World CEO Chris Robb has observed, even well-established for-profit entities in this sector are struggling to retain a viable business model amid accumulating pressures

²⁰ Robert, J. (2018). Practices and rationales of embodied philanthropy. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 23(3)

²¹ Wade, M., Hookway, N., Filo, K., & Palmer, C. (2022). Embodied philanthropy and Sir Captain Tom Moore's "Walk for the NHS". *Journal of Philanthropy and Marketing*, 27(3)

²² Owen, Katherine B., Tracy Nau, Lindsey J. Reece, William Bellew, Catriona Rose, Adrian Bauman, Nicole K. Halim, and Ben J. Smith. "Fair play? Participation equity in organised sport and physical activity among children and adolescents in high income countries: a systematic review and meta-analysis." *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity* 19, no. 1 (2022): 1-13

²³ Smith, Janette L., Lindsey J. Reece, Catriona L. Rose, and Katherine B. Owen. "Improving access to public physical activity events for disadvantaged communities in Australia." *BMC Public Health* 22, no. 1 (2022): 1-8.

²⁴ Smyrk, K. (2022) 'St John Ambulance in Wodonga struggles after 70 per cent drop in volunteers', *ABC News*, available at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-05-27/st-john-ambulance-in-wodonga-struggles-drop-in-volunteers/101106224>

²⁵ Parke, E. (2022) 'Community events cancelled, emergency services stretched as volunteer numbers fall', *ABC News*, available at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-08-14/decline-in-volunteering-see-events-cancelled-ses-stretched/101297094>

(i.e. reduced participation, less sponsorship, high staff turnovers, supplier issues etc.)²⁶. Consequently, a sense of trepidation is widely felt among event organisers in the sector.²⁷

But mass participation *fitness philanthropy* events serve far greater purposes than simply the generation of profits. The potential loss of such events will have accumulating impacts, not only for charitable organisations in their fundraising outcomes, advocacy efforts, and sustaining support for admirable causes, but also for the communities no longer able to stage such events, resulting in a loss of social cohesion and collective play. There is a greater role for both government and philanthropic organisations to serve in *creating the conditions to make it possible for cash-strapped and/or time-poor persons to still contribute to philanthropic endeavours*. Ensuring that mass participation fundraising events do not languish due to current challenges is one way to revive ideals of philanthropic citizenship. Here are some potential measures to assist in this regard – ordered roughly in their order of relevance and priority – which may help foster opportunities for mass participation philanthropy in Australia:

1. **A Federal Government-backed insurance scheme to assist charities and non-profits to stage mass participation events that serve both fundraising and community-building purposes.** In opening back up following extended Covid-19 lockdowns, various Australian State governments offered start-up grants to help revive regular events that had become dormant. But to better incentivise organisations to foster mass participation philanthropy, for-purpose organisations – especially resource limited and understandably risk-averse charities – need greater protection against the hazards of staging major events. With the Federal Government launching a new national cultural policy to better support the arts sector – which has been similarly impacted by the increasing difficulties in staging mass participation events – the time is right to seek novel approaches in rejuvenating community life through charitable fundraising events that accommodate people from all walks of life. Notably, in the wake of lengthy COVID-19 lockdowns, the UK Government successfully implemented a ‘Live Events Reinsurance Scheme’ to reduce risks for event operators and incentivise the return of mass participation events.²⁸ The Victorian Government similarly implemented a ‘Covid-19 Event Insurance’ scheme for creative, sporting, business and community events held in Victoria with an estimated revenue or cost of between \$20,000 and \$10 million.²⁹ For a very brief period, it appears the Federal Government also established a ‘Live Performance Support Fund’ that allowed eligible event organisers to access coverage up to a defined percentage of their anticipated revenue.³⁰ However, such initiatives are no longer operating, despite ongoing challenges and risks. As already noted, there are wide-ranging benefits in charities staging mass participation events that go far beyond just fundraising. However, charities cannot undertake such high-risk ventures without sufficient backing. Moreover, as previously highlighted, charities staging mass participation events are somewhat compelled to compete with for-profit ventures, thus

²⁶ Australian Mass Participation Sporting Events Alliance (2022), available at <https://www.ampsea.com.au/ampsea-conference>

²⁷ Laity, A. (2020) *What does the recovery from COVID-19 look like for mass participation event organizers?*, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/what-does-recovery-from-covid-19-look-like-mass-event-andrew-laity/>

²⁸ UK Government (2022) ‘Live Events Reinsurance Scheme’, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/live-events-reinsurance-scheme>

²⁹ Andrews, D. (2021) ‘Extra Certainty For Much-Loved Events With New Insurance’, *Victorian Government*, available at <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/extra-certainty-much-loved-events-new-insurance>

³⁰ Burke, T. (2022) ‘Live Performance Support Fund’, *Australian Federal Government*, <https://minister.infrastructure.gov.au/burke/media-release/live-performance-support-fund>

increasing their risk exposure. Therefore, a limited insurance scheme that applies only to charitable organisations pursuing fundraising or other core advocacy work through mass participation events is worthwhile considering (even if initially tightly restricted only to extreme weather event coverage, and perhaps later expanded to accommodate further risks).

2. **Improve data collection on mass participation events in Australia (and philanthropy more broadly).** For such an incredibly popular activity, with wide-ranging benefits across Australian society, there is a frustrating paucity of data on mass participation fundraising events. This lack of data is part of a wider, ongoing issue in philanthropy, not just in Australia, but across the world. We would urge the government to consider ways that data collection on philanthropic activities may be improved, without imposing burdensome reporting obligations on organisations. Nonetheless, we can observe that in the UK – where fitness philanthropy is similarly popular – around half of all adults under 65 have participated in a mass event for charity over the last five years, despite the challenges of COVID-19.³¹ In 2023, over 80% of UK charities aim to be involved in mass participation events in some form.³² Again, we suspect comparable trends are happening in Australia, but it is currently difficult to provide definitive empirical support. A central repository of mass participation events that measures: participant demographics; types of physical activity undertaken; geographic locations of events; charitable causes supported; motivations for taking part; and barriers or disincentives to participation could prove an immensely valuable resource across a range of governing bodies and research institutions.

3. **For long-successful fitness philanthropy events run by well-established charities, consider registration subsidies to encourage participation.** While, to our knowledge, there is insufficient data on the Australian context, UK-based research indicates that mass participation event participants tend to be wealthier and older than the general population, and 44% of participants duly fundraise for charity through the event.³³ Meanwhile, young people (aged 18-24) are most likely to cite time pressures as a barrier to taking part in mass participation fundraising events, and participate in significantly lower numbers than older demographics.³⁴ We suspect similar trends are occurring in Australia, raising questions on how to better include people on lower incomes and younger people. If organised sport is on the decline among children, then school-driven programs and subsidies to foster participation in mass participation sport events could prove beneficial, both in encouraging physical activity and cultivating civic-mindedness and philanthropic spirit. Of course, many schools already engage in fitness philanthropy through school fun runs and ‘walkathons’, but more outward-looking forms of civic-mindedness are worth encouraging, wherever possible.

³¹ Enthuse Intelligence (2023) *Mass Events 2022: What have we learnt?*, available at <https://enthuse.com/insights/mass-events-2022-report>

³² Roethenbaugh, G. (2023) ‘81% of charities aim to be involved in UK mass participation events in 2023’, *Endurance.biz*, available at <https://endurance.biz/2023/industry-news/81-of-charities-aim-to-be-involved-in-uk-mass-participation-events-in-2023/>

³³ Massive (2023) *The Mass Participation Pulse 2023*, available at <https://wearemassive.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/THE-MASS-PARTICIPATION-PULSE-v9.pdf>

³⁴ Enthuse Intelligence (2023) *Mass Events 2022: What have we learnt?*, available at <https://enthuse.com/insights/mass-events-2022-report>

4. **Consolidation of tools and resources to assist charities staging mass participation events.** The former ACNC Commissioner, Dr Gary Johns, suggested a consolidation of Australia’s approximately 60,000 charities may be needed.³⁵ While winding down non-operational charities is perhaps sound, proposing an overall reduction in the number of Australian charities is unnecessary, unhelpful, and an excessive focus on rationalisation is likely to unduly impact regional and rural areas. Rather, what may prove beneficial is a consolidation and pooling of tools, assets, suppliers and other resources and insights, through which new efficiencies in staging mass participation events may be found. For example, while Volunteering Australia has urged for more user-friendly and efficient volunteer screening systems³⁶, we would likewise raise the possibility of consolidating digital fundraising tools for charities seeking to stage mass participation events. This may be achieved through fostering further partnerships with established, Australian-owned peer-to-peer fundraising platforms, such as MyCause and Chuffed.
5. **Expanding operational definitions (and popular understandings) of charitable giving.** As noted above, there is a widespread consensus that strong consideration should be given to extending DGR status to all registered charities. Beyond this, greater recognition – and means of measuring the impact – of forms of giving beyond money (such as giving time, items, or informal acts of everyday kindness and generosity) could prove helpful in fostering mass participation philanthropy.³⁷ Data from the United States shows that in 2021, only 7% of Americans who gave to charity exclusively gave money. However, expanding notions of ‘charity’ to accommodate giving skilled labour, items, and acts of kindness translated to 82% of Americans making charitable contributions. Better recognition of multiple forms of giving may help foster a national culture of giving, especially when paired with platforms and mechanisms that can quickly translate *impassioned interest* to *impactful action*, particularly during times of disaster. In Australia, the extraordinarily beneficial impact of platforms like GIVIT also shows what can be achieved in shifting beyond a narrow focus on solely redistributing money, but rather *items, time, skills, and efficiently mediating urgent needs with latent capacities to give*. Thus broadening both operational and popular definitions of what constitutes ‘giving’ will better account for these shifting priorities and capacities, assist in navigating many of the economic constraints outlined above, and further work towards achieving Dr Leigh’s objective of making philanthropy ‘a mass participation sport’.
6. **Better incentivise not just workplace giving, but workplace *volunteering*, especially for episodic, infrequent, or one-off forms of volunteering.** It has long been recognised that Australians are finding it hard to commit to ongoing, scheduled, formal volunteering. Survey evidence shows that declines in formal volunteering is related to diminishing leisure time and opportunities for social and community interaction.³⁸ Unfortunately, this is unlikely to

³⁵ Johns, G. (2022) ‘Charity – Enhancing its value to Australian society’, *Ramsay Centre for Western Civilisation*, available at <https://www.ramsaycentre.org/news-and-media/watch/the-hon-dr-gary-johns-charity-enhancing-its-value-to-australian-society%ef%bf%bc/>

³⁶ Volunteering Australia (2023) *National Strategy for Volunteering, 2023-2033*, available at <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/National-Strategy-for-Volunteering-2023-2033.pdf>, see also Submission 64 of this review from Volunteering WA.

³⁷ Bernholz, L. & Pawliw-Fry, B. (2020) ‘How We Give Now: Conversations Across the United States’, *Stanford Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society*, available at <https://pacscenter.stanford.edu/publication/how-we-give-now-conversations-across-the-united-states/>

³⁸ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2021) *Volunteers*, available at <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/volunteers>

change in the foreseeable future. The effects of this shift are already being felt in local organised sport in Australia, which is currently experiencing a decline in volunteers and with current volunteers taking on more roles, creating potentially unsustainable strain.³⁹ However, better supporting Australians through workplace programs to assist with episodic volunteering (e.g. helping in staging a charitable fun run) could prove highly beneficial in ensuring mass participation fundraising events can continue. Beyond workplace giving, consideration could also be given to offering more volunteering opportunities to university students (who typically do not have time for formal volunteering, due to study and work demands). In a typical three-year undergraduate degree, a student would be expected to commit around 3,600 hours of study. By redirecting even just a small proportion of those hours to dedicated volunteering programs – voluntarily undertaken, of course – we may unlock a significant pool of labour that could greatly benefit from such opportunities. While La Trobe University’s ‘Aspire’ program can enable applicants to get automatic conditional offers in recognition of their charitable work⁴⁰, and ANU’s ‘ANU+’ program allows for formal recognition of volunteer work on academic transcripts⁴¹, we believe it may be possible to go further in incorporating optional volunteer placements *directly within certain undergraduate degrees*. We recognise that this latter proposal is a delicate undertaking that would require careful consultation with an array of stakeholders, and is perhaps beyond the manageable scope of this review.

7. **Encourage ‘big’ philanthropy to consider ongoing support to mass participation events and other initiatives that can help to alleviate the participation gap.** The Australian public are acutely wary of big philanthropy, for understandable reasons. Rather than traditional philanthropic models of top-down domination, major philanthropic contributions should be nudged towards bottom-up community building. Not only might this increase the transparency of philanthropic endeavour and foster more democratic pluralism, but could also enable a rejuvenation of social capital and wider participation in community-based physical activities, both of which promise significant benefits to individual and collective wellbeing.
8. **Work with charities to improve impact stories.** Prospective donors are increasingly curious about and scrutinising the impact of their donations and charity effectiveness. Meanwhile, individual-based, peer-to-peer crowdfunding campaigns and the mutual aid movement present mechanisms that allow donors to see the direct and immediate impact of their contributions. These mechanisms have been deemed particularly appealing among younger generations, with 57% of Gen Z believing that giving directly (to individuals and individual campaigns) has more impact than giving to non-profit organisations.⁴² These beliefs compound perceptions – unjust or otherwise – that large established charities are cumbersome, lacking in innovation, and retain excessive cash reserves. Charitable

³⁹ Australian Sports Commission (2022) *AusPlay: How Australians’ participation in sport and physical activity is adapting to COVID-normal – July 2022 update*, available at https://www.clearinghouseforsport.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1060399/Ausplay-COVID-update-July-2022.pdf

⁴⁰ La Trobe University (2023), *Aspire Community Contribution*, available at <https://www.latrobe.edu.au/study/aspire/community-contribution>

⁴¹ Australian National University (2023) *ANU+*, available at <https://www.anu.edu.au/students/student-life/leadership-volunteering/anu>

⁴² Independent Sector (2022) *Trust in Civil Society: Understanding the factors driving trust in nonprofits and philanthropy*, available at <https://independentsector.org/resource/trust-in-civil-society/>

organisations can learn and borrow from the persuasiveness of crowdfunding campaigns⁴³ to create compelling narratives to encourage donations and engage a community of donors.

Again, we express our thanks for the opportunity to contribute to this timely review. We are continuing our work on the multifaceted benefits of mass participation fitness philanthropy events, and will be very happy to assist the Commission further in their inquiries.

⁴³ Wu, Y., Zhang, X., & Xiao, Q. (2022). Appeal to the head and heart: The persuasive effects of medical crowdfunding charitable appeals on willingness to donate. *Information Processing & Management*, 59(1), 102792