

**The Hon. Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister of Australia
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600**

Copy to: The National Cabinet

Dear Prime Minister

Re - Charities seeking to work with government on critical COVID-19 responses

We write to you in our role as Chairs of the [Charities Crisis Cabinet](#) (CCC). The CCC was formed in response to COVID-19 and its impact across the broad charities sector. Charities play a critical role in supporting and rebuilding both our communities and our economy.

We believe there are six issues that could quickly and effectively be addressed should your government choose to prioritise the needs of communities facing lockdowns across Australia.

1. Commonwealth funded food support and emergency relief should be available to those in need regardless of whether the food comes from charities large or small, local or national. Restricting which charities can offer food relief to only Commonwealth funded agencies excludes thousands of charities from the program and means needy people are missing vital help. This is particularly true in regional areas and within some non-English speaking communities where many charities are predominantly run by volunteers and receive no Federal government funding.
2. Volunteers play a critical role in many charities and the delivery of many important community services. All governments need to ensure volunteers are included in vaccine roll out planning for face to face caring services including aged care, disability, health services, homelessness, and others.
3. The Federal government has already removed visa restrictions on overseas students working hours in various employment sectors – a welcome move. The charities sector would like the same removal of Visa restrictions on students working for the charities sector and those involved in supporting charities including members of the Public Fundraising Regulatory Association.
4. A version of the Coronavirus Supplement is desperately needed in lockdown communities to support the thousands of Australians currently excluded from disaster relief payments who are unable to maintain their regular work or income.

5. Many government directories and services are on-line. There is a major digital divide in Australia making it very difficult for those without digital technology and good internet to access home schooling, vaccine bookings, vaccine certificates, workplace certificates, border passes, etc. Alternative ways of accessing these services are needed. While some charities have been very active in supporting internet access to marginalised students and others, there are very limited resources to enable this important work to be more broadly available to those in need.
6. Never has adaptability and flexibility been more important in the way charities respond to community needs. While many governments have been supportive of a more flexible approach, unfortunately responsiveness from charities is not always encouraged or supported by government officials. We urge you to instruct your government departments to adopt a more flexible approach in enabling charities to support their communities. We do not seek reduced accountability, only increased flexibility in how obligations are fulfilled. This is especially true in relation to the imposition of additional regulations in areas like fundraising regulations which are in desperate need of streamlining and reform to enable on-line fundraising without having to meet all the requirements of every separate government imposing their own registration and compliance requirements.

Charities large and small are a critical part of Australia's economic and social infrastructure, especially in times of emergency or crisis. You have recognised this role in some of the measures put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic, and we welcome this recognition.

As you frame policies in critical areas including vaccine roll out and beyond, charities are keen and ready to be included in policy discussions and to contribute to the development and design of new initiatives. Charities and not-for-profits want to be part of the solution, part of rebuilding our communities and boosting our economy.

We hope you will continue to acknowledge our role and support us in our work to strengthen Australian communities through this pandemic and into the future.

We are available at any time to discuss any of the issues or measures raised in this letter with you or your team – please contact the Charities Crisis Cabinet secretary David Crosbie on 0419624420.

Yours sincerely

Yours sincerely



Rev Tim Costello AO
Co- Chair, Charities Crisis Cabinet
26th July 2021



Adj Prof Susan Pascoe AM
Co- Chair, Charities Crisis Cabinet
26th July 2021