

To
Department of Social Services (DSS)
Australian Government

From,
Jaya Manchikanti
PhD Candidate and Community Development Practitioner
Melbourne
Australia

7/11/2023

Dear DSS team,

Re: A stronger, more diverse and independent community sector

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Australia government's Issues Paper titled 'A stronger, more diverse and independent community sector'.

At the outset, I am pleased that DSS has undertaken background research and consultations to write a well-considered issues paper towards improving government's interaction with community sector organisations (CSOs), in five key areas, as indicated in the paper:

1. Giving the sector the voice and respect it deserves through a meaningful working partnership.
2. Providing grants that reflect the real cost of delivering services.
3. Providing longer term grant agreements.
4. Ensuring grant funding flows to a greater diversity of CSOs
5. Partnering with trusted community organisations with strong local links.

I agree with these points, having had much experience in the last three decades as a community development practitioner in Melbourne. I am currently half-way through my PhD studies at Victoria University looking at the role of community sector organisations in progressing the Sustainable Development Goals* (www.sdgs.un.org). In addition to my studies, I am involved in leading two community service organisations in Melbourne, both of which I assisted in establishing a decade ago.

(* Please see the Appendix for more detail on the Sustainable Development Goal framework which is based on three key pillars – economic, social and environmental).

I believe that the community sector deserves more recognition for the good work that it undertakes, and I am therefore keen to connect the work of this sector to the global Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) framework. In doing so, it could potentially bring about two outcomes – 1) lift the community sector to a greater platform to have more prominence in our society and 2) assist in progressing the SDGs, especially in a more even manner, which currently Australia is not doing well.

Unfortunately, Australia has not paid much attention to the SDG framework, although it is a signatory to these Goals (signed in 2015) along with every other country in the world, with the aim of reaching the Goals by 2030. However, being a signatory to these Goals has not translated into any mandatory requirements. It is unlikely that the 169 targets related to these Goals will be reached by 2030.

While the scope of the DSS Issues Paper is based on the five effective points stated above, I believe that DSS should consider aligning those points with the SDG framework, to provide greater robustness to the work of the CSOs and to address the critical and existential issue of sustainability. In doing so, I believe DSS will be a leading department in the Australian government and the CSOs will be at the forefront of change for a more sustainable Australia.

I would be pleased to provide you further details about the point I raised, and I can be contacted on [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Jaya Manchikanti

Appendix

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework.

SDG Goal	Issue	Statement
Goal 1	No Poverty	End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
Goal 2	Zero Hunger	End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
Goal 3	Good health and wellbeing	Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
Goal 4	Quality education	Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
Goal 5	Gender equality	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
Goal 6	Clean water and sanitation	Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
Goal 7	Affordable and clean energy	Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
Goal 8	Decent jobs and economic growth	Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
Goal 9	Infrastructure, Industry, Innovation	Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
Goal 10	Reduced inequality	Reduce inequality within and among countries.
Goal 11	Sustainable cities and communities	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
Goal 12	Reduced consumption and production	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
Goal 13	Climate action	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact
Goal 14	Life under water	Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
Goal 15	Life on land	Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
Goal 16	Peace, justice and strong institutions	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
Goal 17	Partnerships for the Goals	Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.