



OCVS Celebrates First Year

The Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector celebrated its first year of operation on 15 September with a party and the launch of the Good Practice Funding website.

The party was well attended by a mix of people from both the government and community sectors. The new Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector Hon Rick Barker highlighted the commitment of the Government to improved government/community sector relations and expressed enthusiasm for his new portfolio.

The Minister also officially launched the Good Practice Funding website at the event. The site was initiated by the Community-Government Relationship Steering Group. It is aimed at public servants who are involved in funding voluntary organisations. The site address is www.goodpracticefunding.govt.nz



The new Minister for OCVS Hon Rick Barker cuts the cake. He holds two other ministerial portfolios - Courts and Customs, and is Associate Minister for Social Development and Employment and for Justice. The next issue of OCVS News will feature an interview with Minister Barker.

Consultation On Advocacy Policy

The Ministry of Health has released a draft instruction for its contracting staff designed to ensure that the Ministry does not fund Non Government Organisational (NGO) lobbying activities. At its September NGO Forum, Director General of Health Dr Karen Poutasi, encouraged community and voluntary sector organisations to respond to the draft instruction by the end of November. She said the Ministry of Health will be providing details on the consultation process in the near future.

New Study Explores Mahi Aroha And Cultural Obligation

The immense contribution made by Māori to their whānau and wider communities through unpaid work, mahi aroha, has been the subject of a new study completed by the Office of the Community and Voluntary Sector (OCVS).

Pam Oliver & Associates, with Dr Catherine Love acting as quality assurance advisor, examined a range of mahi aroha through visits to marae, sports clubs, Kaupapa Māori service providers and other organisations.

Interviews were conducted with Māori aged from 25 to 65.

The study explored the motivations behind mahi aroha, and how these are tied to the importance of whānau for personal wellbeing and self-esteem. It also examined the obstacles and risks involved, and the often considerable personal cost for Māori who donate their labour freely.

The value of mahi aroha has often not been appreciated by government

agencies in the same way as other unpaid work. Māori too have generally not seen it as voluntary work, as it is carried out in a spirit of cultural obligation and reciprocity.

OCVS will now get feedback from Māori, government agencies and the voluntary sector around issues raised in the study.

OCVS plans to release a document by February 2005 that will provide government and Māori with strategies for valuing the significant role played by mahi aroha in the functioning and wellbeing of whānau, marae and communities, and for supporting the needs of Māori in this area.

Similar Cultural Obligations For Māori, Canadians

A visit to the Akwesasne Mohawk reservation on the Canadian-US border by the Office for Community and Voluntary Sector (OCVS) Senior Analyst Joyce-Anne Raihania, Nga Puhī, highlighted the similarities between Māori and Canada's First Nations Peoples (FNP).



Joyce-Anne Raihania (centre) was privileged to attend a Pow Wow, a formal cultural ceremony of dance and chanting that ensures the legends of Canada's First Nations Peoples are kept alive.

“Volunteering is a cultural obligation for FNP in a similar way that it is for Māori. The reservations are set up to care for families and to ensure that cultural knowledge and practices are passed on to the children. They rely heavily on volunteers to provide programmes that maintain cultural connectedness, such as language programmes, and that target the growing number of unemployed FNP youth,” Joyce-Anne says.

“That said, I also noted that the struggle with high unemployment, substandard housing and a low standard of living is a real issue for the reservations.”

Joyce-Anne also met organisations involved with the Canadian voluntary sector and Canada's indigenous peoples after appearing as an international keynote speaker at the Aboriginal Injury Prevention Conference held in Winnipeg in June. She was attending in her capacity as a member of the Injury Prevention Network Aotearoa/NZ.

The Voluntary Sector Forum, OCVS' Canadian counterpart, discussed the Canadian voluntary sector's long-established relationship with government. This relationship was extended by a new accord signed in December 2001 and by a significant injection of government funding over the last five years.

“We can draw on the lessons learned by the Voluntary Sector Forum, especially around the development of the relationship between the sector and government,” Joyce-Anne says.

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Briefly

OCVS is involved in addressing how risk and liability are managed in the sector. Cabinet's Social Development Committee approved an issues paper submitted by OCVS in July. Six workshops will be held around the country to gather feedback. Meanwhile, OCVS and the NZ Federation of Voluntary Welfare Organisations are writing a risk and liability resource kit, expected to be launched in December. The resource kit will include procedures and lists of relevant websites and other contact information.

A group representing NGOs, government and academia met again in mid-August to consider options for establishing a Community and Voluntary Sector Research Centre, which will undertake and support research in, by and about the sector. Collaboration is to be a central value, including a participatory, community-based approach to research. A mission statement and a final proposal will now be presented to potential partners and sponsors.

The Social Services Select Committee began the hearing of oral evidence on the Charities Bill on 22 July. A total of 753 submissions were received. In August, OCVS was invited to join the Ministry of Economic Development (lead agency), Treasury and the Inland Revenue Department as an advisor to the committee. OCVS will have an ongoing role in providing advice on the changes to the Charities Bill.

Guidelines for central government agencies distributing information to Citizens Advice Bureaux have been produced by OCVS and sent to government agencies. The new guidelines will ensure that agencies communicate regularly with the NZ Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux (NZACAB) about new and updated information.

Financial Reporting Changes Proposed

Government will reconsider proposed financial reporting changes that would have imposed significant new requirements and compliance costs on the not-for-profit sector.

The Financial Reporting Act 1993 (FRA) is being reviewed in the context of government moving to adopt International Financial Reporting Standards.

An initial proposal released by the Ministry of Economic Development (MED) in March met with some concern from the community and voluntary sector. The Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector took a particular interest in the MED proposal and in its submission pointed out that under the proposed plan all non-government organisations would have greater reporting requirements than most commercial operations.

A revised proposal will be issued later this year in Part 2 of the FRA review. A Bill is expected to be introduced in mid-2005.