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## Barriers To Volunteering Highlighted

A report on the experiences of ethnic volunteers has been welcomed by the Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector (OCVS).

“The report tells us that members of ethnic communities need more help to become involved in voluntary organisations. That information is so useful to both the government and the sector and will assist our work to support the removal of barriers to volunteering,” OCVS Director Brenda Ratcliff says.

The report, ‘Volunteering and Ethnic Communities: A Dialogue with Ethnic Communities’, is by the NZ Federation of Ethnic Councils (NZFEC) and the NZ Association of Citizens’ Advice Bureaux (NZACAB). It found that barriers to ethnic communities becoming involved in voluntary groups included inappropriate selection procedures and a lack of targeted government funding.

NZFEC President Pancha Narayanan says two big obstacles are language barriers and the traditions of

organisations. There have also been some misunderstandings such as a migrant thinking CABs were only for New Zealand citizens, or some people thinking organisations like the Order of St John Ambulance Service (which uses a cross symbol) are only for Christians.

The report identified two initiatives that could encourage more involvement from ethnic communities – leadership training and teaching community groups to build relationships with other agencies.

The NZFEC is now focusing on the training of ethnic volunteers and relationship building.

For a copy of the report email [executive@nzfec.org.nz](mailto:executive@nzfec.org.nz)



Chung-Pui Chiu, a volunteer at the Wellington Central Citizens Advice Bureau, helps a client find the right information.

## Resourceful CommunityNet

Learning how to run a fundraiser, research, start a new organisation, review a management structure, or run a campaign, is now proving easier for community groups, thanks to the CommunityNet Aotearoa website.

CommunityNet, a website for community and voluntary sector groups is hosted by the Department of Internal Affairs.

It is used by thousands of

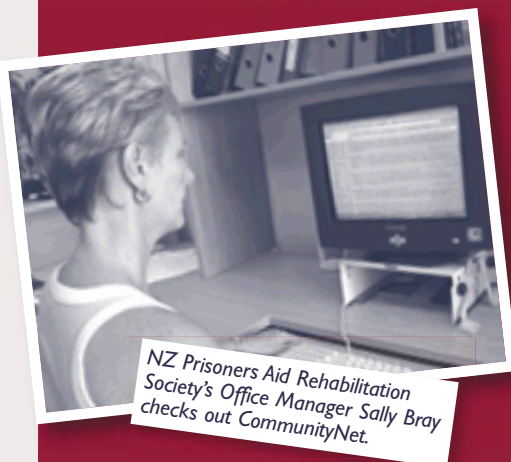
groups who download checklists, templates and access information. Visits to the site have increased 50% in the last three months.

The Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector sees CommunityNet as a useful resource for the sector and will be a regular contributor.

The latest addition to the ‘How To’ section on the website is on research. It explains how community groups can begin or continue researching. It also offers a list of resources, news and case studies.

Waipa District Council’s Te Awamutu Leisure Officer Andrea Duncan recommends the ‘How To’ section to sports and community groups she works with. The groups use it for ideas on assistance with funding, management structure and administration. She says she has used the website in her last three jobs and the email updates from the website are one of the first things she looks at in the morning.

CommunityNet can be found at <http://www.community.net.nz>



NZ Prisoners Aid Rehabilitation Society’s Office Manager Sally Bray checks out CommunityNet.

# Changes To COGS

One of the aims of the Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector is to ensure community and voluntary sector organisations are informed about changes in government policy and practice that impact on them.

Some recent changes have been made to the Community Organisation Grants Scheme (COGS) to bring about more transparent, nationally consistent processes.

## COGS Local Distribution Committee Election 2005

The first nationally co-ordinated election to appoint COGS Local Distribution Committee (LDC) members is underway.

Nominations for positions on the LDC have closed and postal ballot forms have been sent to all registered community groups.

Only registered community groups can vote in the election.

Public meetings are being held in each LDC region from 18-29 April. All voting forms must be received by your nearest Department of Internal Affairs office by 12 noon 6 May 2005.

For more information about the LDC election or public meetings in your area, visit [www.dia.govt.nz](http://www.dia.govt.nz), contact your nearest branch of the Department of Internal Affairs, or phone 0800 824 824.

commissioned by the Department of Internal Affairs and the National COGS Committee, and will be implemented during 2005. They involve:

### Election processes

- the election process will be co-ordinated nationally rather than locally and held every three years
- committees will be smaller (seven members), and in order to retain experience, members may serve two consecutive terms of three years (if re-elected)
- up to two additional members can be co-opted to rectify any imbalances of gender, ethnicity, age, geographical representation or skills.

### Accountability

- grant recipients will provide written reports outlining how the grant was spent and how the community benefited

The scheme is administered by the Local Government and Community Branch of the Department of Internal Affairs.

Every year, more than \$12 million is distributed to voluntary and community organisations through COGS local distribution committees (LDC).

The 37 committees, made up of volunteers, make decisions on grant applications from groups within their local communities.

Recent changes are the result of an independent review

## Briefly

Volunteer Awareness Week, held in March, highlighted the incredible work volunteers do for their communities. Events around the country drew attention to the range and diversity of activities volunteers carry out. The Government Policy on Volunteering states the Government's recognition of and commitment to supporting the work of volunteers. For a copy of the policy email: [ocvs@msd.govt.nz](mailto:ocvs@msd.govt.nz) or phone 04 918 9555.

A new helpline is being piloted by government to make it easier for families to find the right help at the right time. The Referral and Information Helpline pilot number is 0800 211 211. The helpline provides a universal portal to a range of family and community services. It enhances rather than replaces existing helplines. The advice is confidential, professional and prompt, and provides access to services from one number. An online database also provides information about programmes and services that support families – [www.familyservices.govt.nz](http://www.familyservices.govt.nz)

Looking for voluntary work? If you want to work with horses, there may be a job for you at Riding for the Disabled. Or you might prefer to drive someone to their craft group each week. Then again, you could use your design skills to develop a logo for a community group. Information on these positions, and many more, is available at [www.volunteernow.org.nz](http://www.volunteernow.org.nz). If you are part of a community organisation looking for volunteers, then you can list your vacancy through your local volunteer centre. Call 0800 VOL CNTR (0800 865 268).

- public meetings will change so that the public can hear financial reports, meet candidates standing for election, and identify community needs and funding priorities.

### Grants Online

- enhancements to Grants Online will provide a single web portal for both COGS and Lottery applicants (from 1 June 2005)
- groups that have received COGS grants will be able to write their accountability report online.