



# **Preliminary Submission to the Queensland Government on Funding Policy**

**On behalf of  
Queensland Community Sector  
Futures Forum**

**Representing Community Services  
Not-For-Profit Peaks, Networks and  
Statewide Organisations**

August 2007

## Introduction

This submission is made in response to the recent advice from Director General Linda Apelt that the Department of Communities will be undertaking work around funding policy. Our understanding is that the work is in response to the recent QAO Report which recommended “a whole of government policy to determine the most appropriate mode of delivery of government funded human services. This work will explore ... (and) clarify the relationship with the non-government sector” (QAO Report, p. 39).

The sector welcomes the move by State Government to progress work on a whole of government funding policy and makes this submission as a contribution to this important work.

The submission has been prepared on behalf of the Qld Community Sector Futures Forum.

The Forum is a coalition of twenty statewide human services peak organizations and networks in Queensland. It is in the process of being expanded to include Statewide service delivery organizations. The Forum has been meeting for a period of over two years and is working to create a positive future for the Community Services Sector in Qld through:

- Creating a unified Community Services Sector by developing a shared vision
- Developing a strong collective voice for the sector to increase our influence
- Raising the profile of the sector and raising awareness of its role and contribution to society
- Engendering proactive, cooperative action around key issues of concern.

The work of the forum to date has included the development of a Community Services Sector Charter (attached) which articulates values for the community services sector. The sector is committed to the core values of human rights, individual and community wellbeing, diversity, self determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cooperation and participation, excellence in service delivery, and autonomy from government and commercial enterprise

We have recently formalized our relationship by establishing the Community Sector Futures Forum and we are committed to:

- To identify and agree on state-wide strategic issues of concern for the sector and be a vehicle for exploring collaborative action to address agreed issues.
- To be a conduit (amongst others) for information flow to and from the state level to the regional, sub-regional and local levels of the QLD non government human services sector.

The Qld Aboriginal and Islander Health Council is a member of the Forum but as well we support the development of a separate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander human services agency coalition with whom we will work in partnership.

The coalition will play a crucial role in providing expert advice on matters relating to indigenous service provision such as cultural security and appropriateness.

# 1. The Benefits of Funding the Not for Profit Community Services Sector

The delivery of community services in Queensland currently involves a mix of government and non-government service providers.

In your consideration of appropriate criteria for choosing a service provider, we recommend that you take the following matters into account:

The sector's specific contribution to service delivery includes:

- Applying specialised knowledge and expertise to meet the needs of particular groups within society. This includes the provision of culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Achieving responsiveness by working closely and collaboratively with communities and people who access services
- Exercising flexibility and innovation
- Providing cost-effective services based with a focus on public benefit rather than economic returns
- Protecting and embracing diversity, including differences of approach or opinion within our community.

Moreover, we seek to further “add value” by contributing more broadly to the social and economic life of Queensland as part of our role in the “third sector” by:

- Building strong, cohesive, self-reliant communities by bringing people and groups together
- Building the skills base of the community through development work with volunteers, workers, community and people who access our services
- Delivering needed services to people who would otherwise not have access to them as well as responding to issues and needs as they emerge.
- Promoting a fairer, more tolerant society through advocacy and awareness raising activities
- Encouraging participatory democracy by fostering community involvement

These matters are outlined in more detail in the Queensland Community Services Sector Charter.

## **Recommendation:**

That the sector's specific contribution to service delivery and the “added value” they contribute more broadly to the social and economic life of Queensland as outlined above, be taken into account in considerations about the choice of the appropriate service provider for a range of human services in Queensland.

## 2. Building a Partnership Compact as the Base for Funding Policy

The work around funding policy and a consistent funding framework must take place within the consideration of the broader context of the relationship between government and the sector. The funding relationship is only one part of this broader relationship and should not dictate, nor lead the nature of this broader relationship. While the community sector is keen for the work around funding policy to commence, the sector strongly supports the development of a compact, or partnership agreement between Government and the Community Services Sector during the same period, so they are consistent and supportive of each other.

A Compact will outline the roles and responsibilities of government and the sector, values to underpin the partnership, and would provide protocols to guide collaboration. A compact is also an essential corollary to the Community Services Act as well as the other Acts under which Government Departments administer funds, as it will enable the guiding principles in the Act to be actioned alongside the implementation of the regulatory framework to be debated shortly.

A mechanism is now in place with the State Government to negotiate with the Community Services Sector with the formation of our Community Sector Futures Forum. Our Forum is broadly representative of the sector and provides a strong basis for collaboration across the whole of the not-for-profit human services sector in Queensland. This capacity will be enhanced when the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Human Services Coalition comes to fruition during the next year. Members of the Futures Forum strongly support this development.

Similar compacts and partnership agreements between state government and the non-government sector are already in place in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, the ACT and Western Australia. Additionally agreements are in place between federal governments and the community and voluntary sectors in the UK, Scotland and Canada.

In Queensland, a Statement of Partnership between Government and the Community Services Sector was developed by the Premiers Department in 2000: the *Community Services Strategy*. The document outlines principles to underpin the relationship between government and the sector and details the roles and responsibilities of each party.

The principles outlined in the statement include:

- Interdependence: government and non-government community service providers have distinct but complementary roles and responsibilities in developing public policy and delivering community services.
- Independence and autonomy: the role of community service providers in activities outside of those funded by State Government, includes the development of innovative service responses and the right, within the law, to publicly comment on, or challenge State Government policy and practice, and lobby when necessary.
- Meaningful communication: communication should be two-way, open, direct and timely, supported by structures that facilitate ongoing dialogue on all matters relating to community service delivery. This includes planning, policy development, program and organisational reviews.
- Accountability for public funds: community service providers are accountable for public funds in their care. Outcomes for government funded community services should be identified and negotiated in a collaborative manner, recognising the contribution community services make to achieving broader government objectives.

We strongly support these principles.

While the Partnership Statement was intended to guide the relationship between community service providers and government it does not contain enough detail to affect the partnership in practice. Additionally, while significant consultation was employed in its development the document was not co-signed by the sector and as a result there is no ownership of the document by the sector.

### **Recommendation:**

That a whole of government funding policy should not be the sole and most important driver of the relationship between the State Government and the Qld Community Services Sector.

That the finalisation of the whole of government funding policy be developed in parallel with and in accordance with a broader agreement in the form of a Compact between the State Government and the Qld Community Services Sector.

That this Compact is based around the principles outlined in the *Community Services Strategy: Statement of Partnership*, but also includes detail which will guide and ensure the implementation of the partnership in practice.

### **Conclusion**

The Community Sector Futures Forum looks forward to working closely with the relevant Government Departments and with Minister Pitt in the development of a whole of government Compact and a whole of government funding policy in the near future.