

**Tasmanian Council of Social Service Inc  
Inaugural Dorothy Pearce Address  
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It is a special privilege and pleasure to be invited to present the inaugural Dorothy Pearce Address for the Tasmanian Council of Social Service.

Tonight I want to add my words of praise for Dorothy, for her courage and commitment in the development of the COSS movement, not only here in Tasmania, but throughout Australia. It is right and fitting that TasCOSS has previously awarded you life membership, which is only a small but important recognition of the work that you have done.

Dorothy, tonight, has already given us a snapshot into the early days of TasCOSS and the many other people who were involved in those pioneering years. As the Australian Council of Social Service reaches its fiftieth year, it is timely that we remember the extraordinary contribution of those men and women from the sector who came together from a diverse background of beliefs, values agencies and fields of endeavour in order to pursue social and economic policies that would improve the quality of life of disadvantaged Australians.

Their work lives on today. Tonight we celebrate those past achievements. We also congratulate those currently involved in this sector and we look forward to an exciting and dynamic role for the social welfare sector in Australia in the decades ahead. All of those that are or have been associated with TasCOSS should be rightfully proud of their work and be assured that their courage to care and their commitment to improving the quality of life of all Australians is just as valued, as the endeavours of those who founded this organisation.

But what of the future?

*“The 21<sup>st</sup> Century will be the century of the social sector organisation. The more economy, money and information become global, the more community will matter. And only the social sector nonprofit organisation performs in the community, exploits its opportunities, mobilises its local resources, solves its problems. The leadership, competence, and management of the social sector nonprofit organisation will thus largely determine the values, vision, the cohesion and performance of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Society.”*  
Peter F Drucker 1999 – Drucker Foundation

I wonder how many people involved in nonprofit organisations actually believe this statement. I do! I believe that the nonprofit sector holds within its grasp the ability to shape or at least significantly influence the future of our society, in partnership and dialogue with other sectors of our community. Yet we must face the hard reality that nonprofit endeavour in Australia is in a perplexed position.

First, there is greater confusion around the nonprofit sector than ever before. There has been a general blurring between:

- government and non government roles and responsibilities
- for profit and not-for-profit endeavour
- paid and voluntary effort
- commercial and mission activity

These blurrings have led to uncertainty in the public mind about the sector.

Second, the work of the sector and nonprofit endeavour in Australia and internationally is subject to greater scrutiny and contestability than at any time during its history. Whilst this criticism and scrutiny may be levelled specifically at nonprofit organisations, it is worthwhile bearing in mind that all institutions are now under attack. We have seen political parties, the churches, national corporations and most other institutions under greater scrutiny and challenge. Perhaps it is that nonprofit organisations and peak bodies themselves are perceived as institutions in their own right. Whatever the reasons this does require greater examination and a careful response by the sector.

Third, it is a sector challenged by the changing nature of the world within which it operates and the test of this sector will be its ability to respond to those changes, see those challenges as opportunities and respond in a way that strengthens its integrity and its value to the Australian community.

To be an effective leader in the nonprofit sector, one must be able to read the changing trends and signs of our time, and to respond quickly and appropriately to those changes. Yet, at the same time nonprofit organisations need to be faithful to their heritage, core values and mission, and by doing so remain especially valued by the community.

As Commissioner, I have been provided with a unique insight into the practical delivery of community services and the leadership of nonprofit organisations.

The Ombudsman's Office, and principally the Community Services Division, which is an independent statutory watchdog established in NSW, monitors, reviews, handles complaints and conducts investigations in relation to issues concerning the delivery of community services by both government and non government agencies. Its jurisdiction includes the delivery of such community services as disability services, child protection, out of home care, homelessness services, home care, child care and related services. Whilst often it is seen as a complaints handling body, it is much more than that.

Its role is to monitor and review, from very many different aspects, the way in which services are delivered, having regard to the best interests of consumers and to their rights and changing needs and aspirations. It provides me with a great insight into the way in which non-government as well government providers operate in an ever increasingly complex and demanding environment.

Added to that experience, I am also pleased to have been a member of the Commonwealth's Inquiry into the Definition of Charities, Religious Institutions and Other Related Organisations. This Inquiry, which was chaired by former Justice Ian Sheppard, with David Gonski as a fellow member, offered each of us an opportunity to review over 370 submissions and talk with sector representatives about the evolving nature of the charitable and nonprofit sector, and the environment within which they operate.

The Inquiry does provide further valuable insight into this sector. It also raises issues relating to the integrity and identity of nonprofit agencies and how they are or should be valued by the community.

Let me set the scene by briefly explaining the size and impact of the nonprofit sector. As you may be aware, Mark Lyons in a recent book entitled "The Third Sector - the Contribution of Non Profit and Cooperative Enterprises in Australia", highlighted that there are over 700,000 third sector organisations, associations or entities. The third sector of which Mark talks about is not simply comprised of the traditional nonprofit or voluntary agencies but also includes mutual organisations and cooperatives.

The figures that we are now able to collect from many sources about the nonprofit sector in Australia, including the Australian Bureau of Statistics, demonstrate its extraordinary economic contribution to the nation. They also demonstrate the huge commitment by over 3 million Australians who volunteer over 600 million hours of labour to nonprofit organisations each year. The scale of giving to the sector also represents the high regard within which Australians hold nonprofit organisations.

The breadth of the sector is also remarkable. Only about 26% of the sector organisations are social service organisations. The rest are in education, research, culture and recreation, health and professional associations and so on. This is a sector as broad as the business and government sectors in terms of its activities.

## **The Nonprofit Sector in Australia**

### Size

- Approximately 380,000 nonprofit organisations incorporated in some way
- About 35,000 nonprofit organisation employ staff

### Economic Contribution

- Employed 604,000 people
- Contributed \$21 billion, or 3.3%, to GDP
- Made an economic contribution larger than the communications industry and about equal to that of the agriculture industry; a contribution almost twice as large as the entire economic contribution of the state of Tasmania.

### Philanthropy

- In 1997, 8.6 million Australians donated \$2.8 billion to nonprofit organisations.

### Volunteering

- During 2000, 3.7 million Australians volunteered a total of 600 million hours of labour for non-profit organisations of all sizes.

### Sources of Income (in 1999/2000)

- 58% - sale of goods and services
- 30% - government
- 9% - households

### Components of the Sector

- Social Services – 26%
- Education and Research – 24%
- Culture and Recreation (including registered clubs) – 21%
- Health – 15%
- Business and Professional Associations and Unions – 2.5%
- Others – 11.5%

## **A Changed Environment**

I indicated at the commencement of this speech that we are living in a changed environment. It is interesting to reflect for a moment on the recent Inquiry into the Definition of Charities. This is not the first time that the charities have been examined, but the very large number of submissions received provide a broad and comprehensive insight into the nonprofit sector today.

A central task of the Inquiry was to identify features of the modern social and economic environment which may affect the attributes, purpose and behaviour of organisations in the sector. In the issues paper some examples of how the social and economic environment in which the sector operates has been changing over recent years were highlighted including:

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- *communities being encouraged to take greater responsibility for developing their own solutions to their problems and needs, through an emphasis on community capacity building and development of social capital;*
- *a movement within the sector towards a greater focus on self-help, prevention and advocacy activities, and a less predominant emphasis on the provision of direct assistance;*
- *an increased range and volume of government funded services being delivered by non-government organisations;*
- *changes in the relationship between governments and the sector, such as:*
  - *government funding support to the sector being provided increasingly through outcome based funding agreements for the provision of defined services, as opposed to broader grant-in-aid funding;*
  - *contracts for the delivery of government programs and services through non-government organisations being awarded increasingly on the basis of competitive tendering processes; and*
  - *the community sector being encouraged to work in partnership with government and business in delivering outcomes for communities and individuals.*

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The changing environment within which nonprofit organisations operate was also recognised by many of the submissions. One of the most interesting was from the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, which in its submission said that the definition for charities should:

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- *support the promotion and sustainability of civil society based on the values of self sufficiency, equity and shared endeavour;*
- *support preventative/educative activities as well as assistance in times of crisis;*
- *encourage social entrepreneurship, and involvement in active social responsibility by givers, not just donations;*
- *balance the needs of givers with the recognition that not all causes necessarily attract donations or sponsorship;*
- *encourage appropriate competition between service providers, but not at the cost of community cohesion and collaboration;*
- *support diversity of organisational entities ranging from national corporatised welfare organisations to small scale community endeavour; and*
- *maintain strictures on boards, members of staff gaining financial or other benefit from distributions of profits or funding surpluses in any form.*

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This is a good articulation of the environment and some of the issues that confront nonprofits in the delivery of services and sets out many of the contemporary social concepts that are currently guiding human services policy in this nation. It is interesting to note that the Department itself places the sustainability of civil society at the head of its list. This is a welcome recognition that nonprofit bodies are not simply concerned with the delivery of services but rather that all activities should promote the sustainability of a strong civil society. The values of self sufficiency, equity and shared endeavour may be acceptable foundations, but I am sure that many here would also believe that there are other values, such as trust, honesty, fairness and justice that are also important in the sustainability of civil society as we know it or would like it.

In the Inquiry some challenging arguments were put against the maintenance of the current definition of charities, and the preferential taxation treatment of charities. Whilst the Inquiry did not directly look at the tax implications of the definitions, nevertheless let me list, if I might, some of the propositions that were put:

- that there is a strong disincentive for not-for-profit service providers to be efficient;
- that many not-for-profit organisations are now targeting middle to high income earners rather than the poor and disadvantaged;
- that many service providers now rely on "fee for service" operations and directly compete with for-profit organisations;
- others dismissed the quality of care arguments as a basis for differentiating not-for-profit organisations from for-profit organisations because uniform and mandated standards now ensure quality across the sector;
- submissions attacked the high levels of so called commercial activities by charities and not-for-profit organisations and there was a healthy debate as to whether or not the level of commercial activity should affect the definition of charity or the taxation of those charities.

Conversely, there were many arguments from nonprofit providers of health, aged and community services including Aged and Community Services Australia, the churches and many individual organisations. In short they argued that charities:

- are mission driven rather than market driven;
- value add services by access to additional resources through the re-investment of surpluses into services;
- target those most in need;
- contribute to the development of social capital and the notion of mutual obligation;
- serve the public good and should be actively encouraged accordingly;
- some argued that taxation concessions attempt to rebalance the scales which otherwise favour for-profit organisations;
- the purpose, not activity, should continue to determine charitable status.

I don't wish to canvass and debate the merits of these arguments, nor the impacts of these arguments on the recommendations of the Inquiry, but the point I raise is that you cannot assume that there is an automatic acceptance of the work nonprofit organisations do as being deserving of special treatment. Nonprofit bodies are now being examined more intensely than ever before. Their identity and their right to special support is in part dependent on their integrity and their special claims as charitable or not-for-profit bodies. It is this integrity that is under scrutiny by the public and critics.

## **A Contested Environment**

This contestability can also be demonstrated by the recent attacks on such organisations as The Smith Family, St Vincent de Paul Society, Australian Red Cross, overseas aid organisations, environmental agencies, the churches and nonprofit peak bodies. These recent attacks in Australia do appear to have their source overseas.

In June of this year, the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) launched a US website specifically "to expose the funding, operations and agendas of international NGOs". To mark the launch of the site, the AEI held an all day conference entitled "NGOs: The Growing Power of An Unelected Few". Interestingly the conference was co-sponsored by the Australian think tank The Institute of Public Affairs.

The theme of this conference became evident with such extraordinary statements as follows:

- *"NGOs have created their own rules and regulations and demanded that governments and corporations abide by those rules";*
- *"Politicians and corporate leaders are often forced to respond to NGO media machine, and the resources of taxpayers and shareholders are used in support of ends they did not sanction";*
- *"The extraordinary growth of advocacy NGOs in liberal democracies has the potential to undermine the sovereignty of constitutional democracies, as well as the effectiveness of credible NGOs".*

It is interesting that the attack was not only directed at governments in order to reduce their support for NGOs and to limit the influence of NGOs generally, but there were also attacks on corporations who enter into partnerships with nonprofit organisations. One of the presenters, Professor Jeremy Rabkin of Cornell University strongly attacked the relationships between NGOs and corporations saying, *"Why are NGOs in a position to confer legitimacy?"* he asked. *"A lot of this is a kind of protection racket".*

These themes have been taken up by some in Australia, arguing that nonprofit organisations may have a legitimate role in developing democracies but become troublesome and problematic in advanced democracies. Indeed, there is and has been a campaign for some time questioning the legitimacy of nonprofit organisations, their right to speak out and their right to influence public policy.

An entry point for these attacks has often been the lack of accountability of nonprofit organisations. In a recent Australian Financial Review article (22 July 2003), Don D’Cruz, a Research Fellow at the Institute of Public Affairs, speaking of the Australian Red Cross, said *“it highlighted a central problem in the charitable sector – a disconnect between how charities spend their money and why people give them money. In Australia, the relationship between donors and charities can best be described as don’t ask, don’t tell.”* He went on to say, *“whether the sector likes it or not it will have to reform if it is to survive and regain the public’s trust. Otherwise, many other charities will find out for themselves what the Red Cross discovered: when you wear a halo and sprout wings you hit the ground harder when you fall because you have further to fall”.*

The very integrity of nonprofit organisations in Australia is likely to remain under sustained scrutiny and attack.

How should the sector respond? Should it remain silent? Is the sector “anti accountability”? The answer is no! – Or at least I hope that is our response.

Surprisingly, on two recent occasions in Australia where the sector has broadly endorsed significant changes to improve the regulatory and accountability framework for nonprofits, governments have failed to respond.

In the Industry Commission’s 1995 Report on Charitable Organisations in Australia, it sought to strengthen the contribution which the charitable sector made to Australia. It recognised the extraordinary importance of the sector and also that important issues needed to be addressed. Many of its recommendations sought to:

- improve quality of service for clients;
- improve resourcing of the sector;
- improve national accountability measures;
- support mechanisms such as benchmarking to improve performance;
- develop a notion of co-responsibility between the sector and governments.

Its report provided a strong blueprint for improving the national regulatory framework and the accountability of nonprofit organisations. Yet, the government was silent in its response and no significant recommendations were adopted.

In the report of the Inquiry into the Definitions of Charities, again, a central recommendation in relation to improving the regulatory framework for nonprofit organisations in Australia was the possible creation of a separate independent commission such as the Charities Commission in UK. This body would have responsibility for looking at the overall regulatory regime of charities throughout Australia. It would take certain responsibilities from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), giving greater clarity to all charities whether they operated on a state or national basis. Interestingly, however, this was only one of two recommendations on which the government did not respond at all, neither objecting nor accepting the measures, simply ignoring it.

It is 'a bit rich', therefore, for outside organisations to be attacking the nonprofit sector for its failure to embrace better accountability when, on at least two separate occasions, it has been prepared to do so. I have no doubt that whilst all organisations should be cautious in adopting any new proposals until the details of such are known, I believe the majority of the nonprofit sector is willing to explore new frameworks which will strengthen the public's trust and confidence in the sector.

Another area of contestability has been the emergence of a contest between so called traditional charities and those that like to classify themselves as social enterprises led by social entrepreneurs. Ironically, I believe that this is a false contest, but nevertheless one that seems to have emerged in more recent times and has gained currency in the media. It has also been picked up as a rally point for those who are critical of nonprofit organisations and the way in which they operate. Let me explain why I believe this is a false but damaging contest.

Social enterprise should rightfully be strongly encouraged in nonprofit endeavour. Yet this is not new. If we look back at the very foundations of many of community organisations, this is a term that one could use for the works that were created decades ago. Often those works were opposed by the rest of society as they were targeted at those ignored, excluded and even rejected by society. Often, the works tackled problems in new and very different ways. Yes, they were charitable, but also they were very enterprising. They were not entrepreneurial in the sense of seeking a monetary return for effort, but were entrepreneurial in that there was a commitment to be imaginative, creative and risk taking with social rewards as their goal. Daring to be different was a given - not an exception.

These institutions were at the cutting edge of social services. They pushed and led government policy. They garnished popular support. They often challenged the secular values of their times.

Many of today's aged services had their genesis in the caring of the sick, elderly and the homeless by religious and charitable institutions in the 1800's. Today's government initiated home care programs had their essence in the visitation programs, often conducted by religious or charitable organisations to the homes of the poor and the vulnerable.

Today's modern business services for people with disabilities grew out of activity centres and sheltered workshops for disabled people formed over forty years ago. The sector responded to their clients' needs by seeking to embrace business enterprises and only latterly by governments who supported such initiatives.

That is why I believe that there is a false contest. The sector has throughout its history been entrepreneurial.

However, it is true that from time to time organisations need to re-evaluate what they are doing, why they are doing it and how they are doing it. To some extent, the competitive tendering regime that has been in place for community service organisations have reduced the capacity and incentive for nonprofits to be innovative. It is also the case that some boards have become risk adverse rather than active risk managers. There is a need to once again liberate nonprofit

organisations to be as enterprising as they have been in the past and to use all of the skills, from all parts of the society to achieve that aim.

I sometimes wonder whether nonprofit organisations have become captive of mainstream agendas and are losing their freedom and willingness to be different. Free to do different things because those most marginalised need it. Free to do things differently because our values demand them be done differently. Free to explore, to innovate and to create new ways of doing things that entail risk. Too many leaders and their nonprofit organisations have become timid and captives of other's agendas. This is easy to do and understandable, yet such is not the way of authentic leaders. Nonprofits are not businesses even if they are in the business of delivering similar services. Nor are they simply government contractors. They are innately different. Authentic nonprofit leadership understands and nourishes that difference.

By all means let us actively engage with and learn from business. Agencies should forge strong partnerships and alliances with business to maximise their outcomes. Nonprofits should use "best practices" adopted from their business partners to provide the most efficient and effective services possible. Yet, they should always maintain their essential integrity and promote the values that differentiate them and make them so especially valued.

### **Challenges and Opportunities**

The changing context of our times for nonprofit organisations and the challenges that I have outlined clearly require a strong sector wide response.

To summarise some of the challenges confronting nonprofit sector are:

- its right to special treatment by the community through the tax system;
- its right to speak out and to influence public policy;
- its need to be accountable;
- its need to embrace modern entrepreneurial approaches;
- its need to encourage new forms of engagement and philanthropy.

The sector itself can identify others including:

- a lack of an appropriate framework within which to operate in its relationships with governments, both State and Commonwealth;
- the level of inappropriate, burdensome and sometimes meaningless program accountabilities;
- serious workforce issues both in relation to employed and voluntary staff and carers;
- a narrowing of innovation and creativity due to constrained funding agreements;
- an increased cost pressure not matched by government or private sector support.

If these are the challenges, what will be our response?

As Chair of the National Roundtable of Nonprofit Organisations (the Nonprofit Roundtable), I and those that are participating in that body strongly believe that it is time for a proactive national agenda to be developed by the nonprofit sector. Whilst each organisation must make its own decisions about how it will respond to the challenging issues of our time, a new national agenda is required. The elements of that agenda need to be worked out in consultation with the sector, and have regard to the views of government and business. Such an agenda might have several key components.

### **1. *Good Governance***

This is about establishing a national regulatory framework that promotes good governance by nonprofit organisations. It should be about reducing or eliminating barriers to efficiency caused by multiple regulatory regimes at State and Commonwealth levels. It is about ensuring that the governance of nonprofit organisations is appropriate to the work they do, and to the special trust which nonprofit organisations are held by the Australian community. This trust must be earned. It is too easily lost.

### **2. *Accountability***

We need to establish clear, consistent and coherent measures of accountability for the sector, rather than the ad hoc, costly and wasteful accountabilities that exist at the moment. Accountability measures must add value to the work of nonprofit organisations, be proportionate to the work done, and lead to improved outcomes. Nonprofits are accountable to many people, to members, service users, regulatory bodies, donors, the public, employed staff, volunteers, and importantly to the organisation's mission and values. It is not about creating greater accountabilities, rather it is about creating better accountabilities.

### **3. *Quality, Responsive Services***

The vast majority of nonprofit organisations are about the delivery of services. Nonprofit organisations need to embrace a culture of continuous service improvement. Boards need to be mindful of further developing the capacity and sustainability of their organisations. This is not simply about resourcing. It is about improving the knowledge within the organisation, the capacity to deliver the services required by its clients and to embrace continuous learning strategies within each organisation.

#### **4. Innovation and Enterprise**

We need to embrace the economic prosperity of our time and use that to enhance our nonprofit endeavour. We need to ensure that we are continuously seeking to improve our services through innovation and creative responses. We need to enter into venture or enterprises with businesses where to do so will further our mutual goals. Whilst always prudent in our assessment of risks, we are risk takers, not risk avoiders. We also need to embrace new technologies and improved means to achieve cost effective outcomes. Finally, we need to explore new philanthropic approaches including so called “venture philanthropy” to optimise our outcomes.

#### **5. Value People in the Sector**

A positive proactive agenda for the sector must be based on the valuing of the people that work within it. This includes board members, staff, carers and volunteers. Just as the sector must rightfully recognise the contributions of donors and other parties, the people that work within the sector itself need to be valued in practical ways. Building the workforce capacity of this sector is an urgent goal and huge task. Indeed, this is a challenge in all fields of human services endeavour.

#### **6. Courageous and Competent Advocacy**

This sector has a fundamental principle which could be summarised as “the right to have a go and the right to have a say”. Never must this dual right be diminished. Advocacy often makes you unpopular with some, but for many nonprofit organisations their very mission is to stand with and provide services to people who are otherwise vulnerable, marginalised and excluded in our society. Even for those nonprofit organisations involved in more mainstream, less controversial activities such as sports, arts and culture, these are areas where advocacy is often necessary. The tax system must never be used as a way to control or inhibit the activities or voice of nonprofit organisations.

If governments don't like particular organisations then they don't have to fund them. If the community overall doesn't like the advocacy of a particular organisation, it won't support it - it won't provide money, nor will it provide voluntary effort, and in the end the marketplace will have its effect. We must always guard against regulatory regimes and contracted requirements that seek to limit the ability of any organisation to “have a go and have a say”. As the Industry Commission said in 1995, nonprofit organisations are at the very heart of a truly participatory democracy.

*“The charitable sector underscores many basic values in Australian democracy. It exemplifies the principles of pluralism, free choice and the rights of citizens to participate in and take responsibility for their community. It helps ensure that no government has a monopoly on the way society deals with its citizens – especially those who are most vulnerable because of economic or personal need.”*

Let's reject those that seek to in any way falsely claim that nonprofit organisations are a threat to legitimate democracy. The real threat to democracy would come if these organisations were silenced. Australia would be the poorer as a nation and our democracy weaker if we ever allowed the silencing of nonprofit organisations.

## National Roundtable of Nonprofit Organisations

The Nonprofit Roundtable was founded in October 2002 as a positive response to many of the challenges outlined. Broad in its representation it is an initiative of and from the sector – from sports to churches, health to environment, arts to community welfare, education to research, many other areas are included.

Importantly, the Nonprofit Roundtable brought together in addition to those representing the sector, those organisations who encourage and promote philanthropy and fundraising in the sector including Philanthropy Australia and the Fundraising Institute of Australia together with those at the cutting edge of research and teaching in this area through the Third Sector Research Institute (UTS, QUT, Deakin University).

The purpose of the Nonprofit Roundtable is to promote the general wellbeing and advancement of the community. It does this by presenting an effective voice to the Australian community on common and shared issues affecting the contribution, performance and reputation of nonprofit organisations, as part of the third sector.

Its objectives include:

- encourage voluntary and philanthropic endeavours through nonprofit organisations and to promote the public benefit and contribution of such endeavours.
- enhance the recognition of and promote support for the work of nonprofit organisations and the sector by the Australian community and their governments.
- provide a national forum for the exchange of information, research and knowledge in relation to issues affecting nonprofit organisations and undertake collaborative work on issues of common interest.
- initiate, undertake or co-ordinate research which contributes to the improved management, accountability and effectiveness of nonprofit organisations, and improve public policies and legislation which affect such organisations and the sector.
- develop policies, advice and information to help inform decision makers in respect of issues affecting nonprofit organisations and the sector.
- whilst respecting the independence of each participating member, to be a national voice on issues which affect nonprofit organisations and the sector.
- enhance cooperation and engagement between business, government and other sectors of the society with nonprofit organisations and the sector.

Common Issues already identified can be classified under four headings:

1. *Regulatory*
  - Accounting, transparency and disclosure issues
  - Regulations (State and Commonwealth)
  - Definitions and taxation

2. *Recognition and Resourcing*
  - Promoting greater recognition of not-for-profit organisations within the business, community and government sectors
  - Philanthropy
  - Government funding contracts
  - Ethical frameworks
3. *Relationships*
  - Business and community dialogue
4. *Other Capacity Building Issues*
  - Workforce development

Through taking a constructive and proactive approach to building a national agenda for nonprofit organisations, and by combining the talents and skills of the diverse group of nonprofit organisations, funding bodies and research organisations, it is our hope that the Nonprofit Roundtable will be a powerful catalyst for enhancing the already important contribution of nonprofit organisations.

## **Conclusion**

Authentic nonprofit leadership is enterprising, ethical, empowering and indeed, enlightened. It is about doing things differently and taking the risks accordingly. It is about embracing clear values and maintaining those values. It is about shaping the agenda, not being helplessly shaped by it.

Today, let there be no doubt that the Councils of Social Service throughout Australia and their participating members have within their grasp the opportunity to help shape the future agenda. Such an agenda will not only benefit nonprofit endeavour in this country, but more importantly, will give us the means by which we can continue to fight for an improved quality of life and standard of living, especially for those most vulnerable or marginalised in Australia.

The social welfare sector has never been a timid or frightened sector. More than ever, in a contested and confused environment the sector must take the lead. Together with other parts of the nonprofit sector I look forward to the day that people can say that the sector responded with enthusiasm, creativity and renewed commitment to the challenges that face them. I look forward to looking back at this time and saying that the sector did take hold of and shaped the agenda, an agenda that was good for nonprofit endeavour in this country and an agenda that was good for the most vulnerable in our community.

Let those of us here tonight make Dorothy Pearce, her friends and colleagues proud of what we do today! Let them be assured that the courage, commitment, energy and sheer hard work that they put in to building the sector has not been squandered or lost by those who are involved today.