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## AUSTRALIANS LIVING ON THE EDGE



SURVEY OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES SECTOR

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## Background

The Australians Living on the Edge survey is a unique survey of community service organisations which assist low income and disadvantaged Australians. By providing a deeper understanding of the size, shape and experiences of this sector over time, the survey is an important tool for the development of social policy and strategies to support the ongoing work of the sector.

This is the fifth *Australians Living on the Edge* survey of the community services sector conducted by ACOSS and the state and territory Councils of Social Service. The survey examines key changes in the operating environment of community organisations, major issues of concern to organisations, and how the community services sector is responding. Indirectly, the survey also aims to provide a sense of how the primary users of community services – low-income and disadvantaged Australians – are faring.

The 2,638 agencies surveyed represent a substantial proportion of the Australian community services sector. Together, the 685 respondents to the survey (a 26% response rate) delivered services to nearly 2.3 million low income and disadvantaged clients in the 12 months to June 2002.

To give some context to the scope of this Survey, some information is provided below from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) survey on community services in 1999-2000 on the shape and size of the community services sector in Australia.<sup>1</sup>

The ABS has estimated that as at the end of June 2000 there were 9,287 employing businesses and organisations involved in the provision of community services. The 9,287 'businesses' and organisations comprised 2,800 'for profit' organisations, 5,938 'not for profit' organisations and 548 government organisations. While the number of government organisations has remained virtually the same since June 1996, the number of 'for profit' and 'not for profit' organisations have increased by 32% and 10% respectively.

In total, the ABS has estimated that \$12.6 billion was expended on community services and community services related activities during 1999-2000, which represents a 32% increase since 1995-96. The total expenditure comprised \$2.1 billion by 'for profit' organisations, \$7.1 billion by 'not for profit' organisations and \$3.4 billion by government organisations.

According to the ABS, direct community services expenditure by these organisations has increased by 28% since 1995-96. Increases were different by sector, with expenditure by 'for-profit' organisations increasing by 16%, 'not for profit' organisations by 47% and government organisations by 6%.

At the end of June 2000 the ABS estimated that there were 341,447 employees working for community service organisations within the scope of its survey, which was a 7% increase since

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2001), *Community Services Australia*, ABS Catalogue No. 8696.0

June 1996. The majority (81%) worked directly on community service provision. In addition, there were 299,413 volunteers working at some time during June 2000 on community service activities, which was a 25% increase since June 1996.

In terms of employees and volunteers, 'not for profit' organisations accounted for the greater proportion with 64% of employees and 93% of volunteers.

In comparing the results of the Australians Living on the Edge survey with the ABS survey, it is important to note that the type of community service organisation captured in each survey is quite different.

For example, in the ABS survey child care services accounted for 38% of the total number of organisations while children's services accounted for only 6% in the Australians Living on the Edge survey. Similarly, the ABS survey found that nursing homes and accommodation for the aged accounted for 16% of the total number of organisations, while aged care (which is broader than just residential care) accounted for just 6% of organisations represented in the Australians Living on the Edge survey.

However, there are also some interesting parallels. For example, 18% of respondents to the Australians Living on the Edge survey were involved in individual and family support services, a level of activity which closely reflects the ABS finding that personal and social support services account for 20% of all direct community service expenditure.

One explanation for these differences lies in the structure of the community services sector and the relative importance of 'for profit', 'not for profit' and government organisations. Child care services, for example, are dominated by 'for profit' organisations while personal and social support services are dominated by 'not for profit' organisations. Given that the Australians Living on the Edge survey draws on the membership base of the state and territory Councils of Social Service which is primarily comprised of 'not for profit' organisations, it is more likely that correlations will be found between the two surveys where 'not for profit' service provision dominates.

There are many other possible reasons for the differences between the two surveys. The most obvious is differing surveyed populations. One example of this is that the ABS survey includes only employing organisations, whereas the Australians Living on the Edge survey includes both employing and non-employing organisations. Another explanation is that the ABS survey produced estimates based on a sample of the target population whereas the Australians Living on the Edge survey relies on organisations within the Council of Social Service membership network completing the survey and does not therefore ensure that the returns are representative of the target survey population.

## Key findings

- There has been a 12% increase in the estimated number of people assisted by respondent agencies between the 2000-01 and 2001-02 financial years, rising from 2,135,331 to 2,382,799 people.
- There has been a 19% increase in the estimated numbers of people seeking but not receiving the service(s) they sought from respondent agencies between the 2000-01 and 2001-02 financial years, rising from 151,720 to 180,956 people. This problem is most acute in the housing area where 29% of the client population base did not receive the services they sought.
- Community sector organisations continue to work under increasing pressure, with only 2% of responses indicating they had experienced no increase in pressure. The main reasons given for the increase in pressure were an increase in operating costs (18%), an increase in the number numbers of clients seeking services (16%), and the increasingly complex needs of clients (15%).
- In response to the increase in pressure, agencies continue to rely heavily on staff to provide additional unfunded work and/or are turning to volunteers (17%). The creation and extension of waiting lists, increased referrals and closer targeting of services were used by 28% of organisations as ways of dealing with the pressures they faced.
- There have been only slight variations in the proportion of income derived from government sources, client fees, business contributions and 'other' sources. Overall, the figures suggest that an increasing number of organisations are looking to 'other' forms of income generation to support their activities.
- Many organisations (42%) expect not to be able to meet an increase in demand and/or costs over the next 12 months.
- Volunteers provide an immense contribution to the work of sector organisations, particularly in the actual delivery of services. While the average number of paid staff employed by respondent agencies is 25, the average number of volunteers (including board, clerical and service delivery volunteers) is 40.
- A third of respondent agencies indicated that they had experienced difficulties in obtaining insurance in 2001-02 with 71% indicating that the cost of insurance was the major difficulty. Sixty six per cent of all respondents indicated that they are paying more for insurance in 2002-03 than in 2001-02, with an average increase per agency of \$5,287.

- The level of training within the sector appears to be patchy and generally inadequate. Of particular concern is that voluntary service delivery workers, who are at the critical interface between the service delivery agency and members of the community, received on average of \$23 worth of training per person in the 2001-02 financial year.

## Methodology and response rate

The survey was distributed by mail to the community services sector through the state and territory Councils of Social Service organisational membership. Three survey returns were excluded from the survey because the figures supplied substantially skewed the overall results of the survey and were considered atypical. A small number of adjustments were also made to exclude or modify outliers in the range of values for particular survey questions.

**Table 1: Response rate**

State/Territory	Number of responses	Number sent out	Response rate as a %	Response rate for previous survey
QLD	168	773	22	32
WA	112	257	44	38
SA	44	151	29	37
ACT	31	130	24	29
TAS	70	225	31	67
NT	67	313	21	20
NSW	141	529	27	32
VIC	52	260	20	38
<b>Total</b>	<b>685</b>	<b>2,638</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>33</b>

The average response rate was 26%, with response rates ranging between 20% and 44%. The average response rate was significantly below that of last year's survey (33%).

The reasons for this may include:

- Other competing work demands, including the increasing volume of email and paper flowing through agencies and requests for feedback within increasingly shortened timeframes;
- The increased length of the survey, with eight additional questions on insurance and training;
- Major policy initiatives taking place at the state and territory level which are consuming agency time;
- A number of other sector viability projects initiated by some Councils of Social Service during the year;
- Poor badging of the survey form not sufficiently highlighting it as an ACOSS/COSS survey;
- A perception by some organisations that they may not benefit from the time spent filling out the survey; and
- In some states, a significantly larger and more variegated cross-section of organisations being surveyed.

ACOSS and the state and territory Councils of Social Service will undertake a post-enumeration survey to refine the survey and its administration to achieve higher future response rates.

## Survey results

### I. Types of work performed by participating agencies

Most agencies engaged in more than one type of service delivery (1,193 responses were provided by 685 agencies). Eighteen per cent of these responses fell into the category of individual and/or family support services. The next most common response was community development and/or support work (16%).

The percentage of responses in each category are very similar to last year's survey, which suggests that there has been no significant change in the set of sector agencies being surveyed between 2001 and 2002.

**Table 2: Type of work done**

<b>Types of work / focus</b>	<b>No. of responses<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>%</b>
Aged Care	75	6
Disability Services	131	11
Individual and/or Family Support	215	18
Children's Services	77	6
Employment	30	3
Advocacy	88	7
Crisis Assistance	135	11
Housing Assistance	85	7
Multi Service	102	9
Health Services	68	6
Community Development and/or Support	187	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,193</b>	<b>100</b>

<sup>2</sup> Multiple responses were invited for this question.

## 2. Size of agency by income

The majority of organisations have an annual turnover within the \$100,000 to \$500,000 band (44%). While the proportions across each of these income categories are similar to the proportions obtained in the previous surveys, there has been a distinct upward trend in income levels over the past four surveys. This is likely to be a reflection of the overall growth of the sector as reported in the background to this report based on ABS findings.

**Table 3: Size of agency by income**

Income	No. of responses	%	% change from 2000-01
Less than \$25,000	55	8	- 1
\$25,000 - \$100,000	107	15	- 1
\$100,000 - \$250,000	146	21	Nil
\$250,000 - \$500,000	156	23	- 3
\$500,000 - \$1m	109	16	+ 4
\$1m - \$5m	80	12	+ 1
Over \$5m	32	5	Nil
<b>Total</b>	<b>685</b>	<b>100</b>	

## 3. Source of agency income

Between 2001 and 2002, there has been a slight decline in the proportion of income derived from government sources, client fees and donations and a slight increase in the proportion of income derived from business contributions and other sources. Overall, the figures suggest that an increasing number of organisations are looking to 'other' forms of income generation to support their activities.

**Table 4: Source of agency income**

Income	2002 (%)	2001 (%)
Government grants	74.2	75.2
Client fees	9.6	10.3
Contributions from business	2	1.6
Donations	4.9	5.8
Other	9.3	7.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

*Business contributions*

The survey asked agencies to briefly describe any contributions made by business.

The 225 agencies that answered this question (33%) had generally received some form of support from business organisations, although a small proportion indicated that they had received no support or minimal support or that the question was not applicable to them.

While businesses (and to a significant extent local councils, clubs and other community groups) provided a wide range of support to community service organisations, the major form of assistance were in-kind donations of goods and services such as legal work, IT support, use of premises, food and clothing. Sponsorship of community organisation products and events was another common form of business support.

Many organisations also received small cash donations and a few organisations received larger cash donations.

While very few organisations specifically mentioned that they received support from businesses through partnership arrangements, it is apparent from the responses to this question that a significant number of community organisations and businesses enjoy quite close relationships which are based on a shared understanding of, and commitment to, their local community.

#### 4. Number of people who received a service from participating agencies in the 2000-01 and 2001-02 financial years

The 685 participating agencies delivered services to 2,382,799 people in the twelve months from July 2001 to June 2002,<sup>3</sup> compared to 2,135,331 in the 12 months from July 2000 to June 2001.

These results suggest that there has been a 12% increase in the estimated numbers of people who received a service between the 2000-01 and 2001-02 financial years.

**Table 5: Number of people who received a service from participating agencies in 2001-02 and 2000-01**

Type of Service	No. of clients (July 01 to June 02)	%	No. of clients (July 00 to June 01)	%
Aged Care	100,575	4	90,702	4
Disability	100,172	4	92,019	4
Individual and/or family support	316,937	13	286,488	13
Children's services	124,803	5	106,460	5
Employment	53,004	2	34,821	2
Advocacy	185,061	8	164,844	8
Crisis	326,428	14	312,120	15
Housing	43,284	2	38,927	2
Multi-Service	399,894	17	348,501	16
Health	276,968	12	260,127	12
Community Development and/or Support	455,673	19	400,322	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,382,799</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2,135,331</b>	<b>100</b>

<sup>3</sup> These totals should be viewed with some caution and do not necessarily reflect the total numbers of people actually receiving a service. The same person may be recorded as seeking a service on several different occasions over the period and possibly from a number of different providers.

## 5. Number of people who sought but did not receive a service in the 2000-01 and 2001-02 financial years

The results below show that there has been a 19% increase in the estimated numbers of people who did not receive the service they sought between the 2000-01 and 2001-02 financial years (from 151,720 to 180,956 people). The areas where the greatest proportional increases have occurred are in employment, health and children's services. However, these increases are coming off a low client base compared with other service types.

**Table 6: Number of people who sought but did not receive a service from participating agencies in 2001-02 and 2000-01**

Type of Service	No. of people (July 01 to June 02)	% of total	No. of people (July 00 to June 01)	% change
Aged Care	5,407	3	4,712	+15
Disability	4,916	3	4,394	+12
Individual and/or family support	24,866	14	19,656	+27
Children's services	6,771	4	4,810	+41
Employment	3,015	2	1,538	+96
Advocacy	24,345	13	23,900	+2
Crisis	35,485	19	30,503	+16
Housing	17,887	10	15,573	+15
Multi-Service	20,729	11	17,833	+16
Health	14,732	8	10,073	+46
Community Development and/or Support	22,803	13	18,728	+28
<b>Total</b>	<b>180,956</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>151,720</b>	<b>Avg: +39</b>

Table 7 compares the estimated number of people who sought but did not receive a service with the total number of clients for that type of service.<sup>4</sup> The purpose of this calculation is to illustrate which areas are experiencing the greatest mismatch between overall capacity and demand. As the final column of Table 7 shows, the worst affected area is housing (29.2%), followed by advocacy (11.6%) and crisis services (9.8%).

**Table 7: Number of people who sought but did not receive a service from participating agencies in 2001-02 as a percentage of total client base**

Type of Service	Total client base	Persons not receiving a service	Persons not receiving a service as a percentage of client base
Aged Care	105,982	5,407	<b>5</b>
Disability	105,088	4,916	<b>5</b>
Individual and/or family support	341,803	24,866	<b>7</b>
Children's services	131,574	6,771	<b>5</b>
Employment	56,019	3,015	<b>5</b>
Advocacy	209,406	24,345	<b>12</b>
Crisis	361,913	35,485	<b>10</b>
Housing	61,171	17,887	<b>29</b>
Multi-Service	420,623	20,729	<b>5</b>
Health	291,700	14,732	<b>5</b>
Community Development and/or Support	478,476	22,803	<b>5</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,563,755</b>	<b>180,956</b>	<b>Avg: 7</b>

<sup>4</sup> Number of persons who received a service plus number of persons not receiving a service

## 6. What are the sources of increased pressure on the capacity of agencies to deliver services?

Agencies were asked to identify the sources of any increased pressure on their capacity to deliver services. There has been a significant increase in the percentage of agencies which identified increases in operating costs as a causal factor (up from 16% to 18%).

Sixteen per cent of agencies said that the increased number of clients seeking their service was a source of increased pressure while 15% of agencies reported that the increasingly complex needs of their clients was an important factor.

Increases in referrals from other agencies was the next most important reason for increased pressure (12%).

**Table 8: Sources of any increased pressure on agencies**

Source of any increased pressure	No. of responses	% 2002	% 2001
No increase	39	2	<1
Increase in referrals from another agency	311	12	11
Another agency has closed down/reduced its services	109	4	3
Existing clients have more complex needs	408	15	15
More people are seeking service	423	16	16
Increased operating costs	473	18	16
Decrease in income	116	4	5
Difficulty in retaining skilled/experienced staff	181	7	7
A particular state govt. policy affected clients	126	4	6
A particular federal govt. policy affected clients	153	6	10
A particular state govt. policy affected organisation <sup>5</sup>	131	5	N/a
A particular federal govt. policy affected organisation <sup>6</sup>	96	4	N/a
Other	89	3	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,655</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

<sup>5</sup> This year's survey asked organisations to identify any state or federal government policies affecting them directly as organisations, as distinct from government policies affecting them indirectly through the effects of policies on their clients.

<sup>6</sup> As above.

***A particular government policy***

Ten per cent of responses identified a particular federal government policy as causing an increase in pressure due to the effects of the policy on either their clients, their organisation or both.

While a wide range of responses were given to the question asking agencies to identify any federal policies affecting their clients, two policy areas dominated:

- Social security policies and the administration of the social security system, including the impact of breaches and debt recovery and the low level of Youth Allowance payments; and
- the failure of housing policy to deliver low cost and crisis housing (which is a joint Commonwealth and State/Territory responsibility).

Agencies were also asked to name specific federal government policies which affected them as an organisation. While the specific responses varied, the key issue continues to be insufficient funding to provide the services needed at the appropriate standard, and account for performance.

A specific issue mentioned by a number of respondents was the Commonwealth's failure to fund increases in the Social and Community Services (SACS) Award. Many respondents also identified areas of joint Commonwealth/State responsibility as being of particular concern, including the renegotiations of the Commonwealth State Disability Agreement and Commonwealth State Housing Agreement.

At the state and territory level, 9% of responses identified a particular policy as causing an increase in pressure due to the effects of the policy on either their clients, their organisation or both.

Housing policy and disability services dominated the list of concerns, but other areas included child protection policy, childcare regulations, lack of mental health and drug and alcohol treatment services, OH&S legislation and difficulties obtaining insurance.

As was the case at the federal level, the key issue at the state/territory level which continues to affect the operation of organisations is insufficient funding to provide the services needed at the appropriate standard, and account for performance.

## 7. What impact is the increased pressure having on service delivery and management

Agencies which indicated increased operating pressures were asked to indicate what strategies they used to cope with this.

The responses show that increased (unfunded) effort by staff and volunteers was again the primary way that agencies coped with increased pressure (17%). The continuing reliance on the increased unfunded effort of staff and volunteers has the potential to significantly undermine both the quality of services provided and the sustainability of the sector.

The creation and extension of waiting lists, increased referrals and closer targeting of services were used by 28% of organisations as ways of dealing with the pressures they faced. These strategies can operate to separate the most urgent cases from the less urgent, but can at times be counter-productive – the risk is that people seeking services simply return at a later date (or go somewhere else) with greater and even more complex needs. Preventative or early intervention strategies for service delivery - which are often more efficient or effective – can be compromised by the need to deal more often with critical and serious human and social problems at a crisis point.

Sixteen per cent of respondents sought additional resources from government, 8% sought additional resources from business and 9% advocated for systemic change as strategies to overcome increased pressure.

**Table 9: Impact of any increased pressure on service delivery and coping strategies**

<b>Impact on service delivery and coping strategies</b>	<b>No. of responses</b>	<b>% 2002</b>	<b>% 2001</b>
Met increased demand within existing capacity	107	4	3
Greater targeting of services	212	9	9
Increased referrals to other agencies	234	10	9
Creation/extension of waiting lists	221	9	9
Using up financial reserves	227	12	13
Rationalising assets	83	3	4
Increased (unfunded) effort by staff/volunteers	393	17	17
Sought additional resources from government	372	16	16
Sought additional resources from business	189	8	7
Advocacy for systemic change	209	9	9
Other	67	3	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,364</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

## 8. Where agencies have experienced a decrease in pressure, what are the causal factors?

Nearly three quarters of all respondents to this question indicated that there had been no decrease in pressure and 11% of respondents did not answer this question.

Six per cent of all responses (36 agencies) reported an increase in funding resulting in decreased pressure. This compares with 5% of all responses last year and constitutes a small but positive trend.

In the 'other' category (4% of responses) some of the reasons given for a decrease in pressure included:

- the recruitment of more skilled volunteers;
- improved management structures;
- provision of education to carers;
- provision of paid administrative support to another charity which enabled cross-subsidisation of other services; and
- an increase in the availability of exit housing.

**Table 10: Sources of any decreased pressure on agencies**

Source of decreased pressure	No. of responses	% 2002	% 2001
Not applicable	450	74	74
Cyclical/seasonal factors	15	2	2
Less demand for services due to increase in well-being of clients	8	1	1
Fee increases have led to a drop in demand	10	2	2
More agencies have opened to share workload	19	3	3
Increased targeting of services	27	4	4
Decrease in referral from other agencies	9	2	1
Lower operating costs	9	2	1
Increased funding	36	6	5
Other	25	4	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>608</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

## 9. Expectations about organisations' capacity to deal with changes in demand, costs or other significant changes over the next 12 months

Most organisations (42%) expect **not** to meet an increase in demand or an increase in costs over the next 12 months and a further 9% of responses indicated that there was no change expected.

On the other hand, 34% of agencies expect to meet an increase in demand and/or meet an increase in costs. A minority of agencies (8% of all responses) expect a decrease in demand. While some of the reasons for this are likely to be positive, others, such as tighter targeting and rationing of services, are less so.

**Table 11: Expectations over the next twelve months**

<b>Expectation</b>	<b>No. of responses</b>	<b>% 2002</b>	<b>% 2001</b>
No change expected	95	9	8
Expect increased capacity due to decreased demand	85	8	7
Expect increased capacity due to decrease in costs	23	2	1
Expect to meet increase in demand	178	18	18
Expect not to meet increase in demand	249	25	23
Expect to absorb increase in costs	157	16	15
Expect not to meet increase in costs	176	17	15
Other	146	5	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,009</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

## Insurance

Following the well-publicised difficulties that community organisations have faced in obtaining insurance cover and reports of rising costs, this year's survey included a number of questions about insurance.

### 10. Type of claim made by state/territory

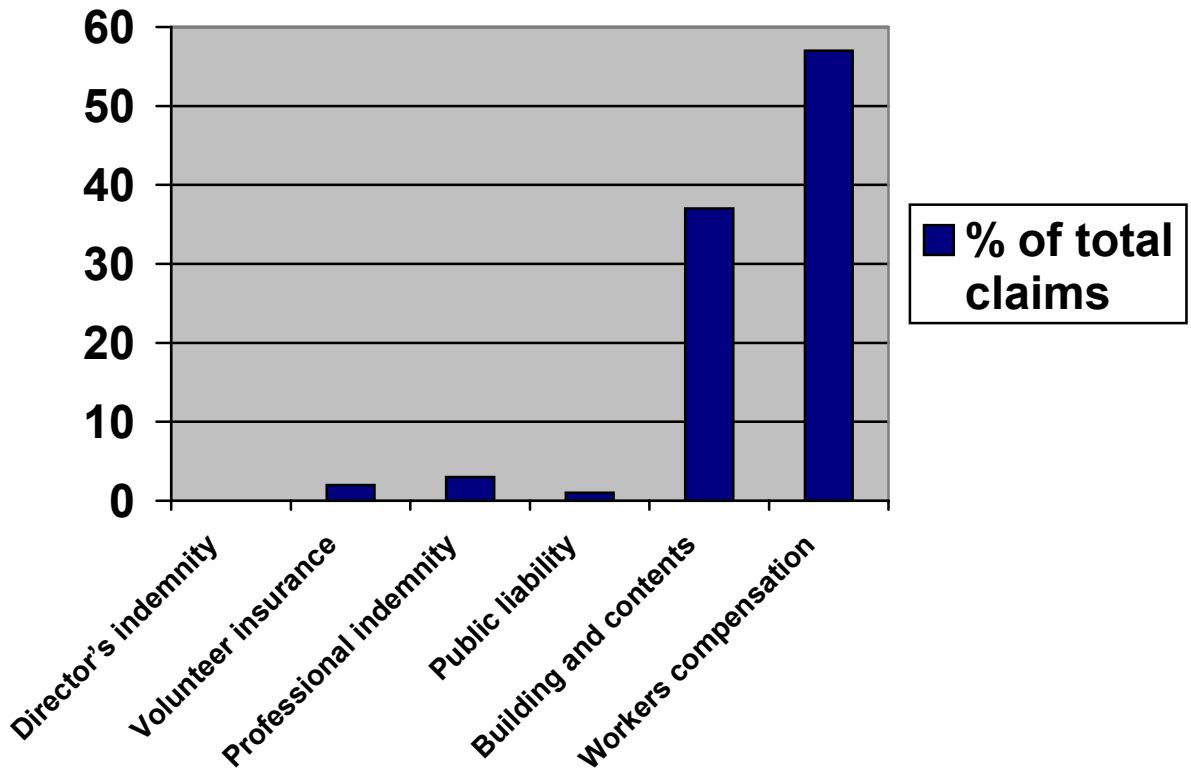
Agencies were asked how many insurance claims they had made in the last **two** years. The results show that few agencies have made professional indemnity and public liability claims compared to the number of claims made for building and contents and workers compensation.

The average number of claims made per agency across the states and territories shows some variation. South Australia had the largest number of claims per agency while Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia recorded the lowest number of claims per agency. New South Wales, the ACT and the Northern Territory occupied the middle ground. Some of this variation is due to variations in the number and size of agencies responding to the survey in each state and territory.

**Table 12: Insurance claims made by community sector organisations in the last two years, by State/Territory.**

State	Director indemnity	Volunteer	Prof. indemnity	Public liability	Building and contents	Workers comp.	Total	Avg total per agency
ACT	0	0	0	1	20	44	<b>65</b>	<b>2.1</b>
NSW	3	14	31	3	91	195	<b>337</b>	<b>2.4</b>
NT	0	0	2	1	72	62	<b>137</b>	<b>2.0</b>
Qld	0	5	2	6	85	101	<b>199</b>	<b>1.2</b>
SA	0	3	0	3	43	101	<b>150</b>	<b>3.4</b>
Tas	0	1	0	0	30	69	<b>100</b>	<b>1.4</b>
Vic	0	1	0	0	22	44	<b>67</b>	<b>1.3</b>
WA	0	4	0	2	87	76	<b>169</b>	<b>1.5</b>
All	3	28	35	16	450	692	<b>1,224</b>	<b>1.8</b>
<b>% of total claims</b>	<b>&lt;1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>100</b>	

### Types of insurance claim by percentage



## II. Type of claim made by service type

Multi-service, disability services and children's services accounted for the largest number of insurance claims in total. When the number of claims are divided by the number of respondents under each service category, these services also accounted for a higher than average number of claims per agency. Children's services made an average of two claims per agency, multi-service 1.9 claims per agency and disability services 1.5 claims per agency. The average number of claims per agency for all service categories was 1.1 claims per agency.

**Table 13: Insurance claims made by community sector organisations in the last two years, by service type**

<b>Service type<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>Director indemnity</b>	<b>Volunteer</b>	<b>Professional indemnity</b>	<b>Public liability</b>	<b>Building and contents</b>	<b>Workers comp</b>	<b>Total claims</b>	<b>% of total claims</b>
Aged Care	1	8	0	1	12	43	65	<b>5</b>
Disability	1	2	0	1	42	188	202	<b>16</b>
Ind./Family	1	1	0	2	69	61	134	<b>11</b>
Children	0	0	0	0	73	84	157	<b>13</b>
Empl.	0	0	0	0	3	24	27	<b>2</b>
Advocacy	1	6	15	1	20	19	62	<b>5</b>
Crisis	1	1	0	3	55	39	99	<b>8</b>
Housing	0	0	0	2	34	66	102	<b>8</b>
Multi-service	0	5	1	3	71	215	195	<b>16</b>
Health	0	1	2	2	31	33	69	<b>6</b>
Community	1	7	16	1	41	86	119	<b>10</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>451</b>	<b>693</b>	<b>1,231</b>	<b>100</b>

<sup>7</sup> Note that some totals here are different to those given in table 12. This is because many agencies deliver more than one type of service and the one insurance claim is counted against each of the service categories ticked in Question 2. On the other hand, some agencies did not identify in Question 2 the type of service(s) they deliver, but answered Question 14 on insurance claims. Use Table 12 for the precise figures on the number of insurance claims.

## 12. Difficulties in obtaining insurance

A third of respondent agencies (229) indicated that they had experienced difficulties in obtaining insurance cover in the 2001-02 financial year. Of these, 162 (71%) indicated that the difficulty was due to the increased cost of cover and 90 (29%) indicated that the difficulty was due to being refused cover.

## 13. Costs of insurance

The data received from respondent agencies shows that the collective cost of insurance cover for these agencies was \$9.8 million in 2001-02, while the cost of cover in 2002/03 was \$12 million. This represents a \$2.2 million (or 22%) increase between 2001/02 and 2002/03.

Of the 592 agencies that completed this part of the survey:

- 76% are paying more for insurance in 2002/03 than they did in 2001/02, with an average increase per agency of \$5,287;
- 18% are paying the same; and
- 6% are paying less, with an average decrease per agency of \$4,464.

Of the 449 agencies that are paying more for insurance:

- 34% are paying between \$1 and \$999 more
- 41% are paying between \$1,000 and \$4,999 more
- 14% are paying between \$5,000 and \$9,999 more
- 9% are paying between \$10,000 and \$49,999 more; and
- 2% are paying between \$50,000 and \$90,000 more.

Of the 37 agencies that are paying less for insurance:

- 38% are paying between \$1 and \$999 less;
- 46% are paying between \$1,000 and \$9,999 less; and
- 16% are paying between \$10,000 and \$36,000 less.

## Training

The quality of community services provided to the community is strongly dependent on the skills and experience of the people that work in the field. This year's survey asked a series of questions about the labour force of community services agencies, expenditure on training and future training needs<sup>8</sup>.

### 14. Labour force structure

The average number of paid staff employed by respondent agencies is 25 while the average number of volunteers (including board, clerical and service delivery volunteers) is 40.

The following table gives a more detailed picture of the overall labour force structure of respondent agencies. It shows that:

- the vast majority of organisations employ between 1 and 10 paid staff;
- of the organisations that engage clerical volunteers, a large majority of organisations engage between 1 and 4 volunteers; and
- of the organisations that engage service delivery volunteers, there is a reasonable spread across the spectrum, with 145 engaging between 1 and 10 people, 99 engaging between 11 and 50 people, 41 engaging between 51 and 200 people, and 17 engaging between 201 and 1200 volunteers.

**Table 14: Number and percentage of agencies utilising paid and unpaid labour by workforce number categories**

Number of persons	1-4	5-10	11-20	21-50	51-100	101 – 200	201 – 1200	>1201
<b>Number and percentage of organisations utilising labour by the above workforce number categories</b>								
<b>Paid staff</b>	264 43%	172 28%	76 13%	57 9%	24 4%	6 1%	11 2%	0
<b>Board/Mgt C'tee</b>	35 6%	397 69%	131 23%	13 2%	2 <1%	0	0	0
<b>Volunteers (clerical)</b>	180 73%	40 16%	14 6%	8 3%	1 1%	0	0	2 1%
<b>Volunteers (service)</b>	92 30%	53 17%	40 13%	59 20%	24 8%	17 6%	17 6%	0

<sup>8</sup> Thirty two agencies did not answer this question.

## 15. Expenditure on training

The survey results show that the average amount spent by respondent agencies on training for paid staff was \$345 per person. The average amount spent on voluntary board or management committee members was \$43 per person while \$48 per person was spent on voluntary clerical workers. The average amount spent on training voluntary service delivery workers was \$23 per person.

**Table 15: Training by expenditure category**

<b>Training expenditure</b>	<b>Zero or no entry</b>	<b>\$1 - \$499</b>	<b>\$500 - \$999</b>	<b>\$1000 - \$1,999</b>	<b>\$2,000 - \$5,000</b>
	<b>Number and percentage of organisations spending by the above expenditure categories</b>				
<b>Paid staff</b>	170 (25%)	327 (48%)	114 (17%)	51 (7%)	23 (3%)
<b>Board/Mgt C'tee</b>	507 (74%)	169 (25%)	6 (1%)	2 (<1%)	1 (<1%)
<b>Volunteers (clerical)</b>	632 (92%)	45 (7%)	5 (1%)	2 (<1%)	1 (<1%)
<b>Volunteers (service)</b>	565 (83%)	113 (16%)	5 (1%)	2 (<1%)	Nil (0)

As training takes many forms, including in-house and on-the-job training (which are difficult to cost out) and may also be paid for by external sources, it is not possible to conclude that the training of people in the sector is necessarily inadequate. However, the figures do suggest some areas of real concern.

It is apparent that survey respondents draw heavily on the contribution of volunteers to manage, administer and deliver services. Indeed, increased (unfunded) effort by staff and volunteers was identified as the major strategy for coping with the increased organisational pressures reported by most survey respondents.

In terms of the quality of services provided to the community and the ongoing contribution of volunteers to community work, it is important that volunteers are properly supported and resourced. At least in terms of expenditure on training, the signs are that volunteers receive very little. It is of particular concern that voluntary service delivery workers appear to receive an average of only \$23 worth of training when they are involved in the critical interface between the service delivery agency and often vulnerable members of the community.

ACOSS was unable to locate any other data on the amount of money spent on, or number of hours devoted to, training volunteers in the community services sector and believes that further research is warranted. Further research should also be undertaken within the community services sector to understand:

- how voluntary work is distinguished from paid work in practice;
- the barriers to training and development opportunities for volunteers; and
- the costs and benefits to organisations of using volunteers;

The large number of respondent agencies that appear to spend nothing on training either paid staff or volunteers is also a cause for concern and worthy of further investigation.

## 16. Training provided in 2001-02 and training needs for 2002-03

The table below shows that service specific training was the most common type of training provided in 2001-02 (26% of all responses) and that agencies continue to identify this as the main type of training needed in 2002-03 (22%).

The next most common types of training provided in 2001-02 were service management and computer/IT training (both constituting 18% of all responses). In 2002-03 the proportion of service management training sought remains stable, but the relative importance of computer/IT training rose to 20% of the total.

While policy and advocacy training represented only 7% of training provided in 2001-02 it has been identified as an increasingly important training need in 2002-03 (10% of all responses and the fifth rated training need).

**Table 16: Training provided by agencies in 2001-02 by type of training and identified training needs for 2002-03**

<b>Type of training</b>	<b>No. of agencies which provided training in 2001-02<sup>9</sup></b>	<b>% of total</b>	<b>No. of agencies which identified training needs for 2002-03</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Service management	343	18	323	18
Admin/clerical	235	13	230	13
Computer / IT	329	18	350	20
Service delivery	478	26	396	22
How to train	150	8	157	8
Policy & advocacy	129	7	176	10
Other	194	10	153	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,858</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,785</b>	<b>100</b>

<sup>9</sup> Note that each agency providing more than one type of service (eg disability and family support) will be counted as having provided training under each of the service categories it identified in Question 2 of the survey.

## **Appendix I: Stories from the sector**

### **Emergency relief agency**

Joanne came to see us for help with her rent. Her husband Nigel had recently lost his job as a labourer when the contractor he worked for closed down. He contacted Centrelink but was told there was no appointment available for two weeks and that it would be at least another two weeks before he received payment. Because of a delay in receiving his separation certificate, he had to wait another two weeks. Meanwhile Joanne was trying to manage on her \$180 per fortnight Family Payment. Now they are three weeks behind in their rent, had an electricity bill due and were running low on food for themselves and their two children, aged 7 and 10.

One of our workers contacted the landlord and offered to pay one week's rent for Joanne. Joanne would also try and get another week's rent from another agency, and then pay back the rent owing by paying one and a half week's rent each week, once Nigel's Centrelink payment came through. The landlord agreed to this plan. However, when our worker contacted the electricity supplier, they were unable to give Joanne an extension of time to pay her bill and said the electricity would have to be cut off if the bill wasn't paid by the end of the week. We could only afford to help with either the electricity or the rent. It was a hard choice for Joanne but she decided to take help with the rent. We gave Joanne a cheque for \$150 for the rent and a large food parcel.

In many situations we are unable to help clients to the extent they need.

### **Childcare service**

Our service is in a remote location. The area is predominantly made up of young child-rearing families who do not have access to their extended family for respite and support. Our service is full with the children of working families. We cannot offer respite or emergency support for our non-working parents or meet the needs of all working parents.

In regard to training and retaining skilled staff we pay 20% above award rates to keep our staff due to the competitive pay rates of the mining company, public service and casual pay rates of shop keepers. Our staff do not get networking opportunities with peers in other childcare services. Funding is not available to fly staff to urban areas for training and networking. We resource ourselves.

### **Domestic violence crisis centre**

Many clients come to our centre seeking basic assistance like food, shelter and clothing. There has been a noticeable increase in demand which we cannot meet due, I think, to harsh Centrelink breaching policies and the decision of (a large welfare agency) to move away from direct support.

### **Community development and support agency**

One of the three direct services we provide is computer training for people over 50 years old. Charges for the course are kept to a minimum and do not cover the cost of operating the service. Most people who use the centre are on full pensions and are women. We are always booked out one course in advance. We receive an average of eight calls a day from people wanting to enrol. We do not keep waiting lists. If you are lucky enough to call when a new list opens you can get on a course. Funding for trainers, computers, maintenance and floor space would improve our situation and the ability of older people on limited incomes to access information.

### **Domestic violence service**

Our service has been funded for ten years and during this time there has not been a review by the Department of Families on the increased cost of operating community services. There have been, for example, dramatic increases in the cost of phone calls due to contacting clients with mobile phones, and huge increases in the cost of electricity and rent as well. Due to these increases, many services are running at a deficit as utilities **must** be paid.

### **Cancer support group**

Mr X was referred to our group by a social worker from the Oncology Department. He is in his late 40's and is married with four children, one of whom has Down's Syndrome. Mr X had collapsed at work and was subsequently diagnosed with liver cancer. The family has now lost their home as Mr X is no longer able to work. They are paying private rental market rates in a rented house and are unable to gain public housing because on paper, based on last year's income, he is earning a decent wage. In reality, they are living on the wage of his wife who works part time. Mr X now has to travel to Sydney for treatment, adding to the already huge burden on their tight and stretched financial situation.

This is not an unusual case history; it happens to quite a few of our clients. Children diagnosed with cancer in the region have to go to Sydney as there are no oncology services for children in the area. Families therefore have the added financial burden of living away from home while trying to maintain their family home.