

SES NATIONAL VOLUNTEERS ASSOCIATION



Leading and Influencing Change

The National State Emergency Service Volunteers Association was established in 2015 to provide a collective voice on nationally significant issues for the State and Territory associations which represent over 43,000 State Emergency Service volunteers. We are building a sustainable organisation that will represent and advocate on behalf of volunteers.

Background

The National State Emergency Service Volunteers Association was established in 2015 after years of work and negotiations between each State and Territory State Emergency Service Volunteers Association. The National State Emergency Service Volunteers Association is an incorporated association established as a not for profit entity that is registered with the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission (ACNC).

The Association is actively working to achieve nationally consistent goals that represent the interests of its members, advocating for them when appropriate.

The Association also provides a forum for national cross jurisdiction communication, collaboration and coordination on common issues in the emergency management arenas that affect State Emergency Service volunteers.

As a peak body the Association provides financial and administrative support to each State and Territory Association.

Our Structure

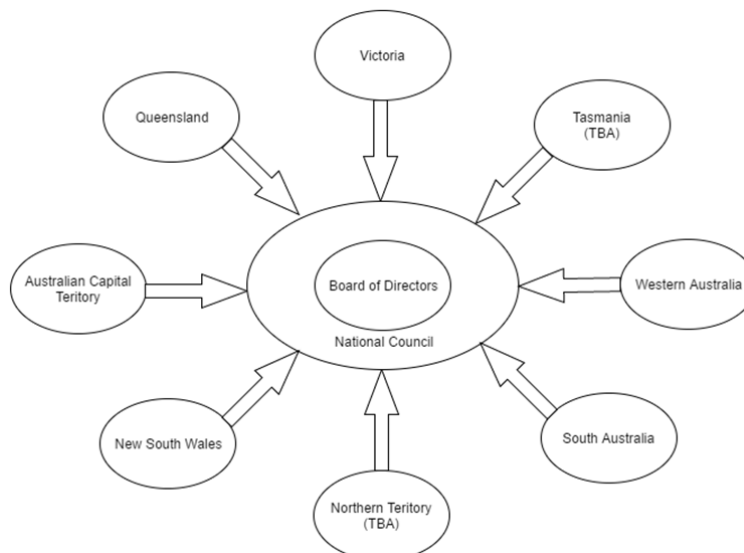
The National State Emergency Service Volunteers Association is a coalition of each State and Territory Volunteers Association.

A Board of Directors oversees the operation of the organisation. The President (or equivalent) of each State and Territory Volunteers Association is appointed as a Director of the organisation. The positions of Vice and Secretary/Treasurer of the National Association provide leadership to the Board in formulating strategy, policy, risk and financial management.

Each State and Territory may also nominate an independent representative from their own State Association to become a member of the National Association. The Board and the Members form the National Council. The National Council considers, researches and makes recommendations to the Board on issues that are relevant to State Emergency Service Volunteers.

The Vice and Secretary/Treasurer are elected on rotation by the National Council. No person may serve for more than six (6) years in a position.

The following diagram provides a high-level view of the structure of the National Association.



Our Mission

Advancing SES Volunteers through National Representation and Advocacy.

Our Vision

To lead and influence change.

Our Objectives

The objectives of the National State Emergency Service Volunteers Association are to:

- Provide a collective voice on issues of common interest to SES volunteers
- Enable national collaboration and coordination of responses on matters of national importance
- Assist State and Territory Volunteer Associations
- Provide a collective voice on issues of common interest

Our Values

- **Trust**
 - To provide effective stewardship of the organisation for the benefit of our members
- **Respect**
 - To accept everyone and appreciate them for their differences and points of view
- **Volunteering**
 - To give, without benefit or gain, to our organisation in order to support and represent other volunteers
- **Leadership**
 - To make decisions for the benefit of our members
- **Integrity**
 - To apply moral and ethical standards to all decisions that we make
- **Professionalism**
 - To use our skills and experience to grow and build a sustainable organisation

Context

According to Our Community

“The Australian community sector - sometimes referred to as the not-for-profit sector, nonprofit sector, third sector, or social sector - encompasses a broad range of organisations that are neither commercial nor governmental, all pursuing a range of charitable purposes through service delivery, grantmaking and other activities which advance health, education, social welfare and religion. It includes entities of all sizes - hospitals, community services, universities, sports clubs, religious groups, day care centres, recreation clubs, environmental groups, job-training centres, family counseling agencies, and many more.”

The Australian Charities Report 2014 states that the sector contributed 3.8% of Gross Value Added to the Australian economy and employed more than 1 million people in FY2014, representing 9.7% of the workforce.

Around 20,000 of the 600,000 not-for-profits in Australia have Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status or 3.3%. A quarter of these rely on donations for more than half of their income. The overwhelming majority of these are registered charities, granted tax exemption by the Australian Taxation Office on the basis that their work is to the public or community benefit.

Public Confidence

It is therefore extremely important that organisations that have DGR status do not damage the confidence of the philanthropic community that supports their activity by donating. Transparency and accountability are key.

The Australian Charities and Not for profit Commission (ACNC) has been set up and is now confirmed as the national body to oversight the compliance of the sector. It is the ACNC that should be charged with the sole responsibility to regularly review compliance with its operational and governance standards.

Comment

Point 20 on page 5 of the Discussion Paper and point 53 on page 10 indicate a fundamental philosophical flaw in the paper's approach which demands addressing.

The Government does NOT provide "a substantial financial contribution to Not For Profit (NFP) entities through tax concessions". The contribution through tax concessions is from the donor community, which OWNS its money until it generously donates it to such NFP's for the purpose of achieving one or more elements of the public good. That achievement of the public good is work the government is relieved of doing and therefore doesn't need the tax revenue to undertake it.

A second concern that demands comment is the 10% of DGR's are government entities (which are precluded from being classified as charities). There are a number of examples of government entities raising funds from the broader community to achieve their core purpose by backfilling budget shortfalls. There are examples in the Health and Arts sectors.

This has the effect of government entities competing for the philanthropic community's support. Government clearly has no business competing with charities for the donors' dollar. Therefore, government entities should be precluded from DGR status. Should donors wish to support such entities, this should be done by giving through a separate entity, such as a foundation, with a separate board, which can hold DGR status and has control over the application of the donated funds, so they are not used to underpin core operating costs or returned to consolidated revenue.

Response to Consultation Questions

1 & 2 Currently registered charities and ancillary funds are eligible for DGR endorsement. This should be through registration with the ACNC in the first instance. This registration should then automatically qualify the entity for DGR1 (charity) or DGR2 (ancillary fund). The current rules should remain where DGR2's can only support DGR1's.

3 Nil response

4,5 & 6 Once registered with the ACNC, its Annual Information Statement process is the appropriate vehicle. If additional information about advocacy is thought to be necessary, then it should be requested on a case by case basis. There is no need to burden the majority of entities with supplying information, when questions will arise in only a few cases.

7 Nil response

8 To maintain the public trust, donated funds should always be applied to the purposes for which they were solicited. It is more relevant to apply a level of accounting standard and transparency of reporting than the current public fund requirements. Donors to disaster relief understand that there is a cost involved in getting the assistance to the victims it was given for. It's important to measure and accurately report that cost of administration rather than restrict organisations to a system of quarantined buckets. It makes sense to allow organisations to be endorsed in multiple DGR categories, which will facilitate more effective and efficient administration and reporting.

9 & 10 A rolling review program is an imposition on hard working organisations that are already complying with adequate ACNC requirements. Any such distraction will divert resources from serving the public good to serving bureaucracy. Annual certification is a reasonable way to prompt senior managers to review their compliance, especially where those managers change and take on the responsibilities of predecessors. When the ACNC has cause to look deeper at a DGR, either through failure to file or through complaints or tip-offs, then it should do so. It should begin with offering a helping hand and progressing the process and any revocation of DGR should be a last resort in the interest of protecting public confidence in the sector.

11 & 13 A sunset clause of any time frame is an unnecessary impost. Where there is reason to investigate a DGR's practices, the ACNC should do so, backed by the power to impose sanctions in order to prompt improved practices. The ultimate sanction would be the withdrawal of DGR status.

12 Arguably, advocacy and public education constitute environmental remediation.

In summary, all DGR's should be registered with the ACNC, probably as charities, including all ancillary funds and excluding all government entities. The ACNC should be the sole instrument of compliance and should have the power to impose sanctions to prompt compliance, with the power to withdraw DGR as a last resort.

Finally, there is a disturbing tone from the bureaucratic side of this community consultation. DGR is not a gift or support – the support comes from the philanthropic community. The work done by DGR's is the responsibility of government, which in many cases it has shifted its duty to NFP's and charities. The beneficiary is the broader community. In this context, the bureaucratic approach should be to minimise the burden of compliance, while protecting the public interest.