



Developing a Not-for-Profit Sector Blueprint Response to issues paper

Date: 20 December 2023

About us

Established in 1914 and by [Royal Charter](#) in 1941, Australian Red Cross is an auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field. We have a unique humanitarian mandate to respond to disasters, emergencies and armed conflict. This partnership means governments can benefit from a trusted, credible, independent, and non-political partner with local to global networks, who will work to implement humanitarian goals in a way that maintains the trust of government and Australian society.

Australian Red Cross is one of 190 National Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Crystal Societies that, together with the International Committee of the Red Cross and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, make up the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) – the world’s largest and most experienced humanitarian network.

The Movement is guided at all times and in all places by seven [Fundamental Principles](#): Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary Service, Unity, and Universality. These principles sum up our ethics and the way we work, and they are at the core of our mission to prevent and alleviate suffering.

We remain neutral, and don’t take sides, including in politics; enabling us to maintain the trust of all and to provide assistance in locations others are unable to go. Volunteering is in our DNA, and thousands of volunteers and members support us every day, helping solve social issues in their own communities. All our work is inspired and framed by the principle of Humanity: we seek always to act where there is humanitarian need.

Core areas of expertise for Australian Red Cross include Emergency Services, Migration, International Humanitarian Law (IHL), International Programs, Community Activities and Programs.

Highlights from our [2022-23 Annual Report](#):



18,000+
members and volunteers
acting for humanity



324,000+
Australians supported during
33 emergency activations

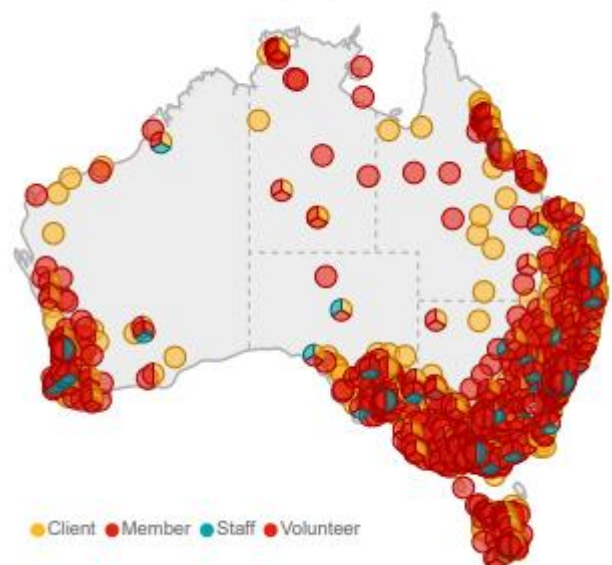


216,000+
social support hours
delivered



19,700+
people from 125 countries
supported through migration
programs

Location of Red Cross people and clients



Purpose

The Australian Government has committed to develop a national blueprint for Australia's not-for-profit sector. The blueprint will establish a ten-year vision, along with priorities for action.

Australian Red Cross welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the Government, through the Blueprint Expert Reference Group, in response to the ['Not-for-profit Sector Development Blueprint Issues Paper'](#) and Summary Vision.

Rather than responding individually to all questions, we have focused on those areas where we can add most value. Our key priorities are reflected in our recommendations.

Summary of recommendations

Australian Red Cross recommends that the Not-for-Profit Sector Development Blueprint:

Recommendation 1

Acknowledges and draws on the unique strengths of not-for-profit organisations, based on a clear understanding of purpose, roles, and responsibilities, vis-à-vis those of governments, and on agreed ways of working in times of crisis and in peace.

Within this context, there is an opportunity to formally define where and how the work of Australian Red Cross, as a distinct humanitarian organisation, supplements humanitarian programs and services in Australia to realise the full potential of our auxiliary relationship with Government.

Recommendation 2

Recognises the inherent value that not-for-profit organisations deliver for the nation through modern, sustainable, and fair funding arrangements, allowing us to deliver what is needed for communities, when it is needed most.

All proposed actions under the Blueprint rely on acceptance of recommendations made in response to 'A stronger, more diverse, and independent community sector' issues paper and the Productivity Commission's Philanthropy Inquiry, which we re-present throughout this paper.

Recommendation 3

Is centred on building on the strengths of communities – elevating community agency, voice, and mobilisation capability, so that the nation remains strong at its foundations for whatever challenges lay ahead.

The proposed key qualities of the blueprint should explicitly call out the mutual responsibility that governments and community service organisations have in building on community strengths, and that this must be embedded and recognised across all partnerships; the key qualities must also give priority and emphasis to genuine partnerships with First Nations people.

Our vision for the not-for-profit sector in Australia

The not-for-profit sector is fundamental to realising a nation in which all people are offered respect, equality, dignity, and the opportunity to participate fully in social, cultural, and economic life.

Amid disruption and uncertainty, social outcomes delivered through the not-for-profit sector are essential for building communities that can withstand concurrent and compounding shocks, including those caused by disasters, health pandemics and the impacts of conflict.

This Government has committed to a respectful partnership with the sector¹ to realise such aims. Australian Red Cross believes that such a partnership must:

- acknowledge and draw on the unique strengths of not-for-profit organisations, based on a clear understanding of their purpose, roles, and responsibilities vis-à-vis those of governments, and on agreed ways of working, including in times of crisis and in peace;
- recognise the inherent value that not-for-profit organisations deliver for the nation through modern, sustainable, and fair funding arrangements – allowing the sector to deliver what is needed for communities, when it is needed most; and
- be centred on building the strengths of communities – elevating community agency, voice, and mobilisation capability so that nation remains strong at its foundations for whatever challenges lay ahead.

1. Partnership model

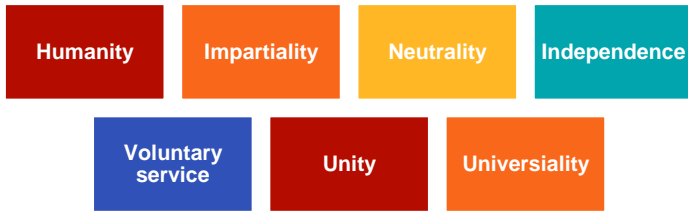
- 1.1 A more deliberate approach that brings together and leverages the unique characteristics and strengths of individual organisations to operate with governments, other sectors, and one another – as part of a greater whole – would benefit all parties.
- 1.2 A blueprint for the next ten years could include the identification of themes under which partner organisations, commissioned by Government under longer-term standing arrangements (that span multiple portfolios), deliver services and/or coordinate and convene sector activities among communities, to achieve desired outcomes in accordance with a strategic plan.
- 1.3 Under these standing arrangements, the Government could call upon partner organisations to deliver in-scope services according to agreed fees, without the need to re-tender each time.

2. Our role within this model

- 2.1 Australian Red Cross has a distinct and permanent status as auxiliary to the humanitarian services of the public authorities – a feature officially recognised in international and domestic frameworks and common to each of the 190 National Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Crystal Societies around the world.
- 2.2 This means that Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Crystal National Societies are neither governmental institutions nor wholly separate non-governmental organisations. Their relationship to the authorities in their country is defined by their role as auxiliaries and by the Fundamental

¹ [ALP National Platform 2021](#)

Principles of the Movement, and how the relationship is defined within each country reflects that country's social context and humanitarian needs.



Humanity and impartiality motivate us to alleviate suffering based on need alone. Neutrality and independence guide us in achieving this goal – keeping the trust of stakeholders to ensure there is space to act. Voluntary Service enables our work and keeps us focussed on our purpose, unity on ensuring we have the diversity within and reach across the country, and universality reminds us that responding to suffering is shared responsibility.

- 2.3 The Government has already broadly recognised the auxiliary status of Australian Red Cross, and this is enshrined in the [Royal Charter](#). The benefits that this provides the Government include access to the largest humanitarian network in the world and a partner that is fundamentally required to prevent and respond to humanitarian crises in the context of natural disasters, armed conflict, and other large-scale emergencies. In doing so, we also act in a manner that is consistent with globally recognised legal frameworks and principles, and under a universally recognised and protected emblem. Our reach is local to global.
- 2.4 In Australia, we align our operations to our purpose, focusing on delivering value in the areas in which we have mandate.



- 2.5 In the context of a partnership model, there is an opportunity to formally agree and define where and how the work of Australian Red Cross supplements humanitarian services in Australia as part of a national blueprint, to realise the full potential of this relationship.
- 2.6 By formalising a partnership with Australian Red Cross in the context of adaptation, preparedness, response, and recovery from natural disasters, and in managing the flow-on effects of international conflicts on Australian individuals, families and humanitarian arrivals to Australia, the Government would be investing in an enduring capability and foundation necessary to meet the needs of the civilian population in disasters and should conflict in Australia ever become a reality.

3. Actions under the blueprint

Protecting the right to advocacy

- 3.1 As outlined in the 'Not-for-profit sector development issues paper', the Government recognises the role of civil society in Australia's democracy and in protecting the rights of not-for-profit organisations to participate in this democratic process.
- 3.2 Australian Red Cross provides evidence-based, neutral, independent, and impartial humanitarian advice directly to governments and departments at the federal, state and territory level, as well as to the wider not for profit sector, corporate partners, and local communities.
- 3.3 As a National Society within the broader International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, we recognise our vital role in advocating with and for people and communities in Australia and around the world.
- 3.4 Our humanitarian diplomacy activities include regular direct and confidential engagement with various levels of government on issues of humanitarian concern and where appropriate, coordination and collaboration with sector partners. In this and through all our humanitarian diplomacy efforts – private and public, in collaboration with others or on our own – we are guided always by our Fundamental Principles.
- 3.5 While our activities are guided by the ways of working of the Movement and in particular the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies policy of [Humanitarian Diplomacy](#) we strongly believe in the value and complementarity of various approaches to advocacy and encourage the protection of the rights of the sector to undertake such approaches, including through relevant legal and policy frameworks.
- 3.6 Our experience is that it is this complementarity and the ability of organisations to share their insights and views, and be heard by decision makers, that can contribute significantly to ensuring key individual and systemic humanitarian needs are met.

Case Study:

The not-for-profit sector played a vital role during the COVID-19 pandemic. Australian Red Cross, with support from donors, federal and several State and Territory governments, provided Emergency Relief and casework support to tens of thousands of people on temporary visas, or without visas, who did not have access to mainstream social services, could not work, and/or could not return home. We provided Government with regular data and insights on their humanitarian needs, including evidence to show an increase in risks of family and domestic violence².

Based on emerging trends, we engaged with the Department of Social Services, which resulted in the establishment of the Temporary Visa Holders Experiencing Violence Pilot. The pilot commenced in April 2021 and provides eligible temporary visa holders experiencing family and domestic violence with financial assistance, casework, referrals and access to legal advice for migration and family law.

² [COVID-19 Impacts us all \(p.19\)](#)

Following continued sharing of data and insights, and constructive, evidence-based advocacy in collaboration with key sector partners, the pilot was extended, and level of assistance increased in July 2023.³

Attracting, retaining, and developing the not-for-profit workforce

- 3.7 Partner organisations could assist the sector to build and retain talent collectively, building skill sets and capabilities that are unique to not-for-profit operations and strategy, enabling a lift in talent retention.
- 3.8 Partner organisations could work with education and training providers to design and deliver relevant offerings that go beyond traditional ‘corporate offerings’ – these would build social and community impact capabilities, stakeholder engagement skills and explore contextual implications.
- 3.9 These offerings could also focus on building capability to engage effectively with governments. As part of the [Australian Public Service Charter of Partnerships and Engagement](#), there is an opportunity for partner organisations to work with the Australian Public Service Academy to realise mutually beneficial learning outcomes.
- 3.10 The approach could include secondments between the not-for-profit sector and public service to enhance appreciation of respective operating environments, and training courses that connect public servants and community service workers to engage in policy-making and service delivery with the public.
- 3.11 This approach need not be limited to the Australian public service and could be pursued with state and territory public sector commissions.
- 3.12 Importantly, the not-for-profit workforce includes volunteers. The role of partner organisations in building and retaining capability would therefore extend to the volunteer workforce, including volunteer training, volunteer leadership development and support.
- 3.13 This could include the coordination of volunteering efforts across thematic lines or in response to events as well as leading on the design and implementation of future models for volunteering that are responsive to the changing ways community members donate time. For example, partner organisations could help to harness the opportunity presented by ‘spontaneous’ volunteering, to ensure positive outcomes for the community and volunteers.

Driving an outcomes-focused approach

- 3.14 The issues paper raises the benefits and risks of outcomes-focused funding arrangements.
- 3.15 Australian Red Cross is committed to delivering positive outcomes for communities and supports funding arrangements that provide a clear line of sight between inputs, outputs, and outcomes rather than the cost of activities.
- 3.16 Australian Red Cross supports the use of consistent outcomes and indicators across programs, and investment in monitoring and reporting capability aligned to this. It is important for

³ [Increasing financial support for visa holders experiencing violence | Department of Social Services Ministers \(dss.gov.au\)](#)

governments and the sector to understand not only the impacts of individual programs, but how this rolls up into a view of whole-of-sector impact.

- 3.17 While it is an aspiration under the Government's [National Wellbeing Framework](#), there is more work to be done to establish a consistent whole-of-government approach for identifying and measuring the social outcomes to which the sector contributes, and mapping sector costs and government investment to these outcomes.
- 3.18 As part of the blueprint, the Government could define outcomes by theme and align program activities across departments and portfolios, with common outcome definitions and reporting requirements. This would provide a framework within which partner organisations then operate.
- 3.19 As outlined in our response to 'A stronger, more diverse, and independent community sector issues paper', establishing consistent minimum (and maximum) reporting requirements, including data definitions, based on the nature and size of projects, would allow the sector to standardise reporting requirements, creating efficiencies in systems and processes regardless of the funding entity.
- 3.20 Where the Government provides reporting tools, these should be maintained and upgraded to ensure that they are accessible, user-friendly and enhance productivity.
- 3.21 Care must be taken when determining whether and how government payments might be linked to the achievement of outcomes, recognising that costs are incurred by not-for-profit organisations up-front and in accordance with program logic and design, rather than at prescribed contractual milestones or when pre-defined outcomes have been achieved.
- 3.22 As alluded to in the issues paper, this is especially true when it comes to the delivery of preventative or highly responsive activities. While such work can (and should) be linked to outcomes (noting that outcomes can be pre-determined), funding arrangements must recognise that measuring impact and outcomes for preventative work may require longitudinal studies, and that to deliver such outcomes for highly responsive work, organisations must develop and maintain an enduring base capability.
- 3.23 By way of example, in the context of natural disasters, current funding arrangements do not recognise the costs incurred by the not-for-profit sector in 'normal time' to maintain a base capability upon which governments then rely, including volunteer capability, in crisis, or the role that the sector plays in identifying unmet community need to which Government may then respond.
- 3.24 Payment for activating this capability is generally made on a reimbursement basis and for the duration of activation alone, without recognition of the full costs of service delivery. While the Australian Defence Force and State Emergency Services are funded to ensure an ongoing and enduring capability, the not-for-profit sector is expected to meet such expectations without Government support.
- 3.25 We explore this issue further in our discussion on fair and sustainable funding arrangements and consideration of social impact investments (below). This issue could be addressed through the proposed standing arrangements under a partnership model.

4. Recognising the sector's inherent value through fair and sustainable funding arrangements

- 4.1 The Government has emphasised a partnership with the sector that is based on trust and respect, and this is fundamental to the creation of sustainable funding solutions and enduring business models.
- 4.2 The Blueprint must enable collaboration, agility, and innovation – where the sector is supported to try, test, learn (including fail) and improve together. The approach must look beyond individual grant or program funding cycles and include measurement of successes and failures over the longer term.
- 4.3 We note that all actions under the Blueprint rely on acceptance of recommendations that we have made already in response to the Department of Social Services' ['A stronger, more diverse, and independent community sector issues paper'](#) and the Productivity Commission's [Philanthropy Inquiry](#) which we re-present throughout our discussion below.
- 4.4 At the outset, for funding to be adequate, all costs must be fully covered by funders. This point is made well in the ['Paying what it takes'](#) report (Social Ventures Australia and Centre for Social Impact, 2022).
- 4.5 Such costs include, but are not limited to, co-design with communities and cross-sectoral partners, project establishment and delivery, systems, volunteer recruitment, training and compliance, administration, reporting, management of risk and compliance, program design, evaluation, and impact measurement.

Case study

Under the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Australian Red Cross Partnership 2019-2024, both organisations have committed to equally share core costs to a select number of Red Cross National Societies in the Asia Pacific region. This arrangement has been in place for four years and ensures that the foundational infrastructure is in place to ensure the societies are able to support their communities to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters and crises.

As outlined by a senior staff member of Vanuatu Red Cross following Tropical Cyclones Judy and Kevin in early 2023:

If we didn't have core cost funding for branch staff [staff based outside the capital and typically on outer islands] I don't know how we would fund them so the branches can operate.

This was reinforced by a senior leader of a Pacific Red Cross National Society:

Core Costs has been the most useful multi-partner solution to an ongoing problem in 20+ years.

With increased natural disasters and impacts on communities forecasted in the years ahead due to the impact of a changing climate, the core cost initiative fills a gap between project funding and emergency response funding to maintain a core capacity for humanitarian organisations and the communities they operate within.

If is achievable for national societies in the Asia Pacific region, it is also achievable for the Australian Red Cross operating at home.

- 4.6 Australian Red Cross has recommended that the Government adopt multi-year funding agreements to provide certainty for service delivery and sustainability of impact.
- 4.7 Longer-term agreements are particularly applicable to the proposed partner model, where standing arrangements would allow the Government to commission services that are in scope for that arrangement across multiple years, noting that these must include flexibility to adjust along the way.
- 4.8 To this end, we have recommended that the Government allow for the periodic and ad hoc review of contract terms to accommodate changes in the operating environment, including provisions for adequate indexation, supplementary funding and to accommodate changes in the external environment (e.g. cost of living, housing crisis) and legislation.

Case study

A positive example of such an arrangement is that established between the Attorney General's Department and Australian Red Cross under the Grants to Australian Organisations Program.

This agreement, which spans five years, allows the Australian Red Cross flexibility to deliver activities that will achieve 'a just and secure society through the maintenance and improvement of Australia's laws, justice, security and integrity frameworks.'

This arrangement has reduced almost by half grant application and renewal processes, allowed funding certainty to allow us to meet the Government's expectations regarding more secure employment arrangements for workers and – because of reduced staff turnover and change management – greater consistency and quality in service delivery.

A downside to a five-year agreement is the reduced frequency of adjustments to funding or the scope of service delivery, in line with new or increasing cost drivers or unforeseen changes in the external operating environment. Hence our recommendation for periodic review.

- 4.9 Related to contract duration is the issue of maximum-term contracts. While Australian Red Cross supports the Government's commitment to increase job security – which has been given effect through recent changes to the *Fair Work Act 2009* (the Act) – the ways Government funds the sector could better facilitate this aim.
- 4.10 Funding to the sector needs to be aligned with the expectations of the Act. A partnership model, with longer-standing funding arrangements would help to address the challenge of funding uncertainty, allowing longer-term workforce planning which, in turn, supports retention and capability building within the sector.
- 4.11 The issue of funding uncertainty could also be addressed through our recommendation that the Government provide a minimum of three months' notice for contract variations and extensions, allowing greater certainty in business decision-making.

- 4.12 Current funding agreements frequently contain arbitrary caps on administrative or overhead costs associated with delivery service (for example, 10 per cent). At times, guidelines stipulate that administrative or overhead costs are ineligible to be included in our budget, or such costs are eligible only where they can be directly attributed to a project. Further, definitions vary between agreements and departments. These are challenging factors for the sector.
- 4.13 Strong delivery needs back-end support. However, enabling functions (including human resources, learning and development, information technology, data management and security, legal and risk) are shared across multiple projects to realise efficiencies. This makes it challenging to demonstrate how these costs directly attribute to each project.
- 4.14 Other costs need to be fully considered. These include volunteer recruitment, training, support, and retention (full volunteer life cycle), increasing cost of compliance and safeguarding, investing in the tools used by our staff and IT systems (including management of cybersecurity risk and data privacy).
- 4.15 Regarding safeguarding, government reform to support the transferability of police and working with children checks would help to reduce costs and improve timeliness within the sector. A partnership model may be conducive to such reform, creating the parameters (through head agreements) within which such transfers could occur.
- 4.16 The not-for-profit sector works with some of the most vulnerable people and communities, however tight overheads do not support better practice when it comes to handling the unique sensitivities and vulnerabilities of these groups.
- 4.17 A blueprint for the future that includes consistency in the treatment of all costs, allowing not-for-profit organisations to claim genuine expenses necessary for the delivery of agreed outcomes including to support those who are most vulnerable, will strengthen the sector as a whole.

Social impact investment

- 4.18 The 'Not-for-profit sector development issues paper' considers ways to support the delivery of social outcomes through social impact investment. This is related to the issue of payment by outcomes.
- 4.19 Australian Red Cross notes that social impact investment offers new ways to support the achievement of our impact and mission. It supports revenue diversification and mitigates against declining revenue through traditional funding channels. It provides an enticing proposal for mid and high-level donors to directly engage with our programs and activities.
- 4.20 Social impact investment funds come from outside of traditional philanthropic grant-giving budgets – beyond gifts and grants, donors may also choose to deploy their corpus to impact investments to maximise their impact towards social change.
- 4.21 The concept of social impact investment must be carefully weighed against the realities of its application, including whether it aligns with, and is appropriate for, an organisation's operating model.
- 4.22 It is most relevant to Australian Red Cross where:
- we operate a social enterprise ourselves or can achieve the impact through supporting an external social enterprise – therefore the opportunity exists to scale the enterprise through impact investments;

- we require the funding of real assets (property, healthcare assets, renewable energy assets) and we do not need to own the asset but need it to deliver impact; or
- someone is willing to pay for the outcome, but we need capital to do the work (payment by outcomes).

4.23 However, it can be complex and resource intensive and may not be appropriate or accessible for many not-for-profit organisations.

4.24 In this respect, social impact investment can have similar risks to payment by outcomes – organisations may therefore be excluded due to the requirement for upfront capital or the financial and reputational risks of not achieving outcomes.

Case study

An example of social impact investment in the context of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movements is the International Committee of the [Red Cross Humanitarian Impact Bond](#), which raised around AUD \$34.6 million in capital to build three physical rehabilitation centres to support people with disabilities in countries impacted by conflict (Nigeria, Mali, DRC).

At the end of the fifth year, 'Outcome Funders' – governments of Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, the UK and "la Caixa" Foundation – will pay the International Committee of the Red Cross according to the results achieved.

These funds will in turn be used to pay back the social investors partially, in full or with an additional return, depending on how well the International Committee of the Red Cross performs. Returns are expected to be in the vicinity of seven per cent.

Mobilising and accessing philanthropy

- 4.25 The Government has committed to doubling philanthropic giving by 2030, and we welcome this commitment.
- 4.26 As outlined in our submission to the Productivity Commission's Philanthropy Inquiry, it is often through reputable not-for-profit organisations that private donors trust their funds.
- 4.27 With mass marketing fundraising, there is no 'one size fits all' in terms of the work in which donors are interested. Current donors support Australian Red Cross because they want to help and give back through an effective and capable organisation, with high levels of trust, impact, and reach.
- 4.28 As stewards of this trust, we must keep pace with the digital preferences and behaviours of our givers, including those who are reactive, leveraging the motivation among many Australians to give money securely where it will make the most difference on the ground.
- 4.29 In 2022-23, our work was supported by around \$95 million in donations and philanthropic gifts ([Australian Red Cross Annual Report](#)). However, we rely on other sources of funding to invest in the work required to understand the needs and preferences of givers, track emerging trends and maintain accessible digital systems and capabilities.

- 4.30 Further, while most donors are comfortable with a percentage of their investment going to the administration costs that safeguard their funds, there is a general perception that no or low administration, overheads or indirect costs are preferable. This is despite evidence⁴ that indirect costs do not equate to a lack of efficiency or effectiveness on behalf of not-for-profit organisations. This perception is reinforced through Government grants and tenders that do not recognise indirect costs or arbitrarily cap such costs.
- 4.31 The not-for-profit sector requires the Government's support to ensure that the true and total cost of delivering responsible and impactful assistance to people in times of need is understood and recognised by all funders.
- 4.32 To grow Australia's philanthropic culture, we welcome greater government investment in education and awareness raising to reinforce the value of giving – whether it be of time (through volunteering) or financially (through donations).
- 4.33 In our response to the Inquiry, we have:
- recommended a broader definition of the Public Benevolent Institution (PBI) status to reflect the realities and trends of social services delivery, which are moving to proactive social services interventions limited under the current definition;
 - welcomed the recent harmonisation of fundraising legislation, noting that it is imperative that the regulatory framework is reasonable and operates uniformly across the country; and
 - recommended a humanitarian exemption to Australia's autonomous sanctions regime to promote philanthropy from risk-averse donors, partners, and commercial service providers (such as banks) and to dramatically reduce unintended consequences of sanctions in the form of administrative burden, time, and resources.

⁴ ['Paying what it takes'](#), Social Ventures Australia and the Centre for Social Impact, 2021

5. Building of the strengths of communities

- 5.1 Australian Red Cross recommends that the blueprint is centred on the strengths of communities – elevating community agency, voice, and mobilisation capability, so that the nation remains strong at its foundations for what challenges lay ahead.
- 5.2 The proposed key qualities of the blueprint should explicitly call out the mutual responsibility that governments and community service organisations have in building on community strengths, and that this must be embedded and recognised across all partnerships.
- 5.3 Community building requires time. Inclusion must be built into all steps of the policy development, program design and delivery lifecycle. Metrics and reporting must be tailored to need.
- 5.4 Noting the significant work that lies ahead for our nation in ensuring the ongoing strength and resilience of First Nations people, and sustaining the world's oldest living cultures, any future state must prioritise meaningful partnerships with First Nations people. This should be explicit in the key qualities and embedded throughout blueprint actions and should align with the new [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#).
- 5.5 In a partnership model, Australian Red Cross brings evidence-based approaches to all our focus areas to ensure that these conditions are met.

First Nations centrality

- 5.6 First Nations Centrality is core to how we deliver our organisational strategy. First Nations centrality ensures that our work and organisational practices address the issues that matter to First Nations staff, volunteers, members, and communities of interest, and that our programs, services, and work environments are culturally safe and welcoming to First Nations people.
- 5.7 Our work is informed by the voices of First Nations people, drawing upon their wisdom, knowledge, and leadership, and acknowledging their deep cultural and spiritual connection to land, waters, and ocean.

Strengths-based approaches

- 5.8 Our humanitarian program design strategy ensures that our programs are:
 - responsive to real-time emerging needs through timely capture and analysis of data;
 - adaptive to emerging contexts, needs and concerns, using co-design and co-governance mechanisms to learn from and adapt to changing community needs;
 - delivered and sustained in networked and connected ways – we work across sectors, locations and partners and build upon existing community strengths;
 - future-fit for the impacts of climate change;
 - evidence based – we learn from what works;
 - informed by lived experience; and
 - are flexible with the ability to surge and scale.

5.9 Further, Australian Red Cross' Practice Framework underpins our service model, to evidence-informed and consistent standards. The Framework include the following foundations:

- Strengths-based: working in ways that complement strengths, resources, and expertise in people's lives, maintaining flexibility and collaboration.
- Trauma-informed: we seek to prevent re-traumatisation noting that trauma experiences can have pervasive and lasting impacts on mental, physical, emotional, or spiritual wellbeing.
- Person-centred: respecting individual's dignity, autonomy and right to live a life they choose, support is tailored to needs and circumstances where each person is in control of outcomes, goals, and activities.
- Culturally respectful: recognising that cultural identity, expression and belonging are rights and strengths.
- Diversity and inclusion: creating a safe and inclusive culture, by embracing and welcoming people with different lived experiences, abilities, genders, ethnicities, ages, and sexual orientation.

Concluding remarks

5.10 Australian Red Cross welcomes further discussion on any of the matters raised in our submission.

5.11 We note that the International Conference of Red Cross and Red Crescent will occur in October 2024. This is a unique forum bringing together the world's largest humanitarian network and nearly every government, including the Australian Government to agree to shared humanitarian commitments over the next four years.

5.12 Pledges are one of the most creative and flexible outcomes of the Conference. They are an important tool, giving members and observers the freedom and creativity to take concrete, measurable and action-oriented voluntary commitments on issues of priority for their local, national, and regional contexts – or even at the global level.

5.13 They are used to initiate or advance dialogue and cooperation among participants, leading to concrete action in the interests of the most vulnerable.

5.14 Australian Red Cross would welcome a discussion with Australian Government officials regarding the option of a pledge aligned with the aspirations of the blueprint.

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**Australian
Red Cross**